

BIG CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE: RESOURCE DEFICIT AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS IN AFRICA¹

The modern stage of the world civilization development is characterized by completion of transfer from the monocentric to the polycentric model of the world. This transfer affects all without exception fields of human activities – economic, political, social, cultural, etc. New active players, who recently occupied peripheral positions in global civilization space, appear on the international scene. Their growing influence on international processes is manifested not only in socioeconomic and political spheres but in cultural as well. China, India, Brazil, Southeast African countries actively engage “soft power” elements, including the cultural component, to promote their interests in all locations on the globe. The continent of Africa is referred to the new world development poles. Just by virtue of the fact that this is the region with the population exceeding 1 billion people, covering approximately one fifth of the inhabited land area, it’s impossible to create a scientifically reliable polycentric world picture without fully taking into account special features and characteristics of this element of the total global system. At the same time, the increasing inter-dependence of elements of the globalized world system means increase of reverse influence on it by the most urgent and pressing socio-political, economic, ethnic and confessional, and other problems of Africa of global dimension. Africans directly affect transformation of Western culture and formation of a new European identity already today via increasing migration flows.

Africa will play a special role in the forming world order today and in the foreseeable future as well as in global transformations of the future. Here contradictions of transfers that are taking place are interlaced. Collision of old and new meanings spills beyond the limits of ideological and cultural discourse and goes into the material sphere. It’s well-known that besides semantic definitions of

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the meaning, there are also pragmatic ones that assess this phenomenon from the actor's position as of a subject of activities.

Exactly because of that collision of new and old meanings is nothing else but fighting for the future. It takes the form of new and old power centers' struggle for resources and markets, for preservation or taking over economic, political and cultural positions in the world. In this case, the meaning becomes the value, significance or characteristic of the expansion object's usefulness for the user.

Fighting for leading positions by old and new players in the environment of the world economic, political and cultural space breakup will grow incessantly and affect all without exception fields of human activities.

The escalating resource deficit is one of the real, root motives for the already aggravated and brewing everywhere local, regional and global conflicts of the new millennium. The living standards of the residents of the globe, prospects of socioeconomic development of states, world economy's stability and international security directly depend on availability or lack of the required natural resources. As numerous events in the beginning of this millennium clearly demonstrated, it turns out that the basis of the states' real actions on the international scene is to a considerable extent their striving to control scarce natural resources, which are running short. At the same time, selfish and mercenary interests are camouflaged by the highest goals and ideals – protection of the world, freedom, democracy, fighting against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and change of climate, environmental protection, etc.

The contemporary state of the society is characterized by the highest natural resources consumption rates, and that in its turn provokes the disturbance of balance in reproduction of the components, comprising the biosphere affected by the all the time increasing human economic activities. Inequality in distribution of natural resources on the Earth makes states not only integrate into the world economy, but also fight for the spheres of influence on the world resource market. The sphere of vital interests of highly economically developed countries spreads both to the territories with resource potential and regions with high-quality

environment, where its assimilation potential turned out to be less violated. First of all, this refers to the continent of Africa, partly to Asia and Latin America as well as some regions of Russia.

Today, the world community torn apart by contradictions, which divided the world and not once according to this or that principle, entered a new era, when territorial expansion led to resource division. Countries with natural resource potential have become the object of economic and political interests of technologically developed countries. The latter developed and go on developing their technologies at accelerated rates at the expense of energy and mineral resources of less developed countries, foredooming them to be politically, technologically and, consequently, economically dependent.

International relations in the sphere of natural resources economy in the 21st century are determined by the following main trends:

1. The world economy entered the era of globalization with integration of ties in development, extraction and trade in natural resources and, first of all, fuel and energy, minerals (ore and non-metallic minerals), food. The similarity of economic interests of various countries leads to setting up various associations, unions for production, processing, delivery of natural resources. The natural resource rent and its components – resource and assimilative rents – are the subject of new redistribution and appropriation.
2. The main globalization factors in the raw materials sector of the economy are sustainable demand, production and consumption of natural resources with territorial inequality of their placement and unequal level of socioeconomic development of countries.
3. The economy of the United States and EU countries entered the new phase of economic growth's slowing down on the threshold of the third millennium, and that is manifested in decrease of growth rates for the total consumption and production level. The new US administration and to a less extent EU countries can find (and are already finding) a way out of the existing state of affairs in

activating the military industrial complex and launching local and regional conflicts under the guise of promoting the so-called “democratic ideals” and fighting terrorism. All that leads to strengthening political tension as a part of redistribution of global natural resource rent between countries consuming and supplying natural resources in the environment of transfer from the monocentric to the polycentric world.

4. With the formation of the new power centers in world economy and politics, in particular China, India, Brazil, etc., which are also the biggest consumers and buyers of resources today, there originate new opportunities for the countries having natural wealth in their struggle for their interests on the global market.²

In our opinion, it's especially important to acknowledge as one of the original causes *the existing disproportion between the level of the countries' socioeconomic development and the share of consumed by them resources, on the one hand, and the population of these countries and availability of scarce natural resources on their territory, on the other hand*, for understanding the main problems of global development in the 21st century. Generally, this disproportion is manifested already in the fact that the population of developed countries amounts to 16%, and the population of emerging nations amounts to 52% of the total world population, while mineral raw materials' consumption ratio is just the opposite – 52% and 21% respectively³. Even more blatant discords and contradictions are at the back of the generalized average world data. Because of that it will be hardly excessive to say that striving to provide control over the resources was and still is one of the main motives for redistribution of geopolitical realities – on the global level for some, on the regional level for the others, on the sectorial or branch level for the third. For example, it is said in the US Congress proceedings that the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are a region rich in human and natural resources, and the continent as a whole has a giant economic potential

² Abramova I.O. The New Role of Africa in World Economy of the 21st century. Moscow, 2013. P. 116.

³ Calculated by us according to: Eremin A.I., Dergachev A.L. The Economy of Mineral Raw Materials. Moscow: University Book House, 2007. P. 4

and because of that it is of long-term political importance for the United States⁴. The economic and political interests on the continent are confirmed by increased attention of American military to Africa, expressed in establishment of the AFRICOM – the United States Africa Command as a part of the US Armed Forces top military command. One of the main tasks set for the AFRICOM is promotion of the US national security interests in Africa and the surrounding seas, including uninterrupted access to natural resources⁵. A permanent military infrastructure of the United States on the continent has been formed, the basis of which is Camp Lemonnier in Djibuti. Besides it, Washington arranged a chain of Cooperative Security Locations (according to official Pentagon terms) on the continent in accordance with bilateral agreements in Algiers, Botswana, Gabon, Ghana, Zambia, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Uganda.

In this connection, research of resource potential of African states acquires big scientific importance and urgency from the point of view of understanding the reasons and already existing conflicts and forecasting future conflicts.

Strategic rivalry of the leading world economies for African resources in today's world is increasing all the time. Africa is rich in various kinds of natural raw materials. Deposits of practically all known kinds of extractable resources have been found there. Africa is the first among the regions of the world in deposits of manganese, chrome iron ore, bauxites, gold, platinum-group metals, cobalt, vanadium, diamonds, phosphates, fluorite, the second in deposits of copper, asbestos, uranium, stibium, beryllium, graphite, the third in deposits of oil, gas, mercury, iron ore; deposits of titanium, nickel, bismuth, lithium, tantalum, niobium, tin, wolframium, precious metals, etc. are also considerable.

⁴ US 110 Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The Strategic Competition for the Continent of Africa. Washington. 2007.

⁵ <http://www.africom.mil/AfricomFAQs.asp>

Today, African countries totally produce nearly 15% of world energy raw materials (if calculated per consumed energy), and there is a trend for considerable growth of this figure⁶.

The importance of hydrocarbon resources of the continent of Africa acquires some new aspects for the world economy. They are connected with at least four special features of African oil and gas extraction, transportation, consumption and sale on world markets.

First, Africa is one of the few regions of the world where, according to expert evaluations, the so-called Peak Oil (maximum rate of crude oil extraction) has not been reached yet⁷. Second, the countries on the continent are more attractive for oil and gas multinational corporations (MNC) developing hydrocarbon resources of the sea shelf and other environmentally vulnerable territories as a result of on the whole more lenient environmental standards and requirements set forth by national governments. This allows MNC to save a lot of money. Third, Africa is a fairly attractive source of raw materials geographically from the point of view of their transportation to both old centers of consumption (North America, Western Europe, Japan) and new centers (China, India, South-East Asia, Brazil).

Another factor, the fourth one, is no less important. The West proceeds from the fact that its military, political and geostrategic risks will reduce in case sustainable-supply sources, providing its economies with hydrocarbons, shift from the Middle East and Russia to Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to open data, most oil fields are territorially concentrated in five countries – Libya, Nigeria, Algeria, Angola and Sudan. More than 90% of proved oil resources on the continent belong to them. Gas fields (91.5% of proved resources) are on the territory (and within the boundaries of exclusive marine economic areas) of Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Nigeria. It seems that exactly these

⁶ Oil and Gas in Africa. Oxford University Press. Oxford, 2016, P. 75.

⁷ However, it's already over for many North African states (Libya, Algeria, Egypt). At the same time, the said critical figures are the issue of the middle-term or long-term future for most oil exporters from SSA. Besides, certain countries joined the globally important oil exporters only recently.

states, with the exception of Angola only, are either the arena for civil wars and conflicts (Libya, Sudan) today, or the territories where various terrorist organizations operate (Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and ISIL in Egypt, Algeria and Libya).

If we speak about the resource component of the Libyan conflict, fighting for oil (Libya has the biggest oil fields in Africa – about 6 billion tons) is developing both between two competing parliaments and governments based in Tripoli and Tubruq, and external powers at the back of them – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria and Western powers. One of the most negative consequences of the Libyan crisis is the end of the state monopoly for selling oil. National Oil Company (NOC) broke into “Eastern” and “Western”, which opens a lot of opportunities for the black market. Today, foreign investors and businessmen don’t see a single state subject of economic activities in this principally important sector of Libyan economy. Western Oil Company established close relations with Swiss dealer Glencore and ships big volumes of oil to it at reduced prices. The state of affairs in the eastern part of the country is even worse, the main oil terminal there, Marsa Al Hariga Oil Terminal, is controlled by Ibrahim Jadran’s fighters. There is direct oil smuggling, and that is used by French Total, Spanish Repsol, Italian Saras, Chinese Sinopec. Some of these companies are trying to provide for their interests, including by armed forces. The King of Jordan Abdullah told in January, 2016 about English special mission units of the English SAS on the territory of Libya. At the same time, there was information in Arab mass media that French special mission units assisted the government in Tubruq when Benghazi was stormed. “National unity” of Libya stays fictitious and just on paper, while there are no ruling mechanism, commanders fight incessantly and with foreign intervention, and foreign companies will continue looting the country. We should not stop reminding of these “fruits” of Western intervention in Libya.

In recent 5-6 years, the geography of oil and gas fields on the continent of Africa considerably expanded at the expense of such countries from East Africa as

Tanzania (gas), Uganda (big oil field of Albertine Graben was discovered), Kenya (oil) and Mozambique, where giant gas reserves on the shelf were discovered. It is supposed that new big oil and gas fields will be discovered along the East African Rift in the near future.⁸ It's rather noteworthy that terrorist organizations activated in recent 1-2 years exactly in these countries. We all remember atrocious terrorist attacks in Kenya: in Nairobi in 2013 and carnage in Garissa, at the University campus in 2015, Al-Shabaab militant group took the responsibility for that. According to terrorists, the reason for the carnage was "the Christian government of Kenya invading the territory of our country".⁹ This happened in 2011, when Al-Shabaab controlled the capital of Somali and half of the territories of this state, which disintegrated into several parts. Kenyan military units entered Somali as a part of the peace-bringing mission of the African Union. They pushed radical Islamists from its border with the support of the US unmanned aerial vehicles and helped to throw Al-Shabaab out of all big cities. At the same time, the Americans, providing help for Kenyan units in Somali, got preferences in development of oil fields of this country on Lake Turkana after that, pushing away the English who discovered this field, and the Chinese. In 2017, a terrorist group calling itself Al-Shabaab appeared in the north of Mozambique. At the same time, it's rather noteworthy that in 2015 the international consortium with American corporation ExxonMobil at the head won the right to geological prospecting on the Mozambique shelf.

Actually, Al-Shabaab is turning into Al-Qaeda on the Horn of Africa, mingling with the population of the surrounding countries and actively maintaining contacts with its fellows all over the globe.¹⁰ Besides ideological goals, the group can be used in the interests of various international players in their struggle for control over fuel and other resources of East and Southeast Africa.

⁸ L. Fituni and I. Abramova. Resource Potential of Africa and Russia's National Interests in the 21st Century. Moscow, 2013. P. 113.

⁹ <http://www.pravmir.ru/den-uzhasa-dzhihadisty-ubili-147-chelovek-v-universitete-kenii/>

¹⁰ <https://ria.ru/analytics/20130924/965475032.html>

Africa is rich in another kind of fuel – uranium. In the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, uranium reserves in Africa amounted to 570 thousand tons, or 16% of world reserves. The biggest resources of uranium ore are in South Africa, the proved reserves are estimated at 337 thousand tons, which make 60% of total African reserves. The biggest owners of uranium deposits in Africa are Niger (166 thousand tons), Namibia (97 thousand), Algeria (26 thousand), Central African Republic (16 thousand) and Gabon (15 thousand).¹¹ Increase of demand for uranium on the world market is accompanied by intensification of competitive struggle for the right to survey and development of uranium deposits on the continent between European, Canadian, Chinese and Russian companies. One immediately remembers the conflict between Moslems and Christians in the Central African Republic, which in 2013 transformed into civil war. The number of refugees, who left their homes over the three years of the conflict, amounted to 20% of the population. The interests of the Western capital, first of all French, were at the back of the ethnical and confessional conflict. France is one of the world leaders in nuclear power engineering, and exactly 1,200 Frenchmen entered the country to maintain order as a part of the UN resolution.

Africa stays a big player on the world diamond market. The continent's share amounts to 82% of world reserves of these precious stones. The biggest diamond deposits were discovered in Ghana, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Tanzania and Namibia as well as Burundi, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo. In recent years, the whole complex of problems related to the origin of conflicts in the vicinity of the African Great Lakes is concentrated exactly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Illegal exploitation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's resources is the source of enrichment of multinational corporations and the narrow circle of the local political elite and the military. Illegal export of diamonds, gold and tin from Congo goes on,

¹¹ *Abramova I., Fituni L.* Competing for Africa's Natural Resources. // *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations.* 2009. V. 55. No. 3. P. 47-48.

especially from the Eastern province as well as South Kivu and North Kivu. At the same time, there is connection between profits from sale of smuggled raw materials on the world market and illegal arms traffic in the Eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.¹²

The United States are a big player in the vicinity of the African Great Lakes. Their defense industry and power engineering depend on the import of African cobalt for more than a half – it's the metal used for making heat resistant and especially strong alloys, including for turbine blades, turbines for jet engines among them. Another important sector of cobalt use is production of magnetic alloys for electronics. There are cobalt deposits in the USA but most of them are already exhausted, and extraction of the rest is too expensive and noncompetitive as a consequence. Because of that, all cobalt consumed by the US industry has been also brought from abroad since 1971. 52% of world resources are in four African countries – Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, Morocco and Botswana. The lion's share of that amount (60% of world output without taking the former USSR republics into account) is mined by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it alone satisfies 65% of the US requirements in this metal.¹³

Besides, it should be taken into account that in contrast to nickel and chrome, which can be substituted by other materials to a certain extent, cobalt can't be substituted in a big number of production processes. Thus, it can be supposed that the resource component of the conflict in the vicinity of the African Great Lakes will preserve its importance for a long time.

Former European mother countries cannot allow themselves to lose positions in the environment of global resource deficit either, even to strategic allies or partners in associations for integrative activities, to say nothing of new rivals from Asia or Latin America. To put it differently, rivalry between Western countries in Africa objectively exists and tends to intensify.

¹² OECD due diligence guidance for responsible supply chains of minerals from conflict affected and high risk areas. Paris. OECD, 2016. P. 24.

¹³ *Fituni L.L.* Africa: Resource Wars in the 21st Century. Moscow, 2012. P. 98.

American-European rivalry mostly refers to traditional competition between MNC on African markets, both commodity and capital markets. However, the political component of the rivalry cannot be written off either. The latter, first of all, took the form of the United States advancement on the positions of France on the Black Continent in the end of the 20th century and the very beginning of the 21st century. There were riots and armed conflicts of various intensity in a number of states, which some time in the past were considered traditional areas of French influence – Burundi (1993–2005), Ruanda (1990–1994), Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo (1998–2002), Chad (2006, 2008), Togo (2005), Cote d’Ivoire (1999, 2002). Though these actions of “democratic forces” were never anti-French from the outside, they nevertheless were objectively directed against pro-French governments in these states, and they were often replaced by pro-American leaders. Actually, they were African-style colour revolutions.

And still the United States and former mother countries gradually lose their positions as the main importers of African resources and the main suppliers of finished products to African countries. The states on the continent of Africa now have a rather alluring alternative in the face of China, India, Brazil, Turkey and other quickly developing economies, at the same time the latter are historically not antagonistic to African countries as formally they are still with them in the same “boat” of emerging nations or periphery countries. The loss of its position on the continent of Africa by the West, which began in the 21st century, can be accompanied by intensification of competitive struggle up to employment of economic or military levers. Competition of world powers for African resources will intensify more and more in the next years. New powerful and active players on the continent of Africa – China, India, Brazil, Turkey and recently Iran as well – do not participate directly in triggering conflicts in Africa, making emphasis on development of economic relations with African states. However, the stepping up of their activities on the Black Continent escalated rivalry in struggle for resources and may indirectly become the reason of new “resource wars”, including those taking forms of armed conflicts.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs S.V. Lavrov presented the standpoint of the Russian Federation on settlement of conflicts in Africa at the time of his recent tour over African states on March 5-9, 2018. He mentioned that there had been the UN resolutions adopted on all conflict situations, including on the continent of Africa. Russia is for strict fulfillment of all those decisions of the world community.¹⁴

¹⁴ <http://tass.ru/politika/5007116>