

FIGHTING FOR AFRICA AT A GEOSTRATEGIC LEVEL¹

Just like a hundred years ago, the second decade of a new century has been marked with a dangerous aggravation of contradictions and unresolved issues between leading powers of the world which have accumulated over the past years. Once again, there's an irreconcilable conflict of interests between long-time ("old") state and non-state actors firmly entrenched as masters of destinies on the global geopolitical and geo-economical arena in the previous years, and their newly emerging state and non-state competitors. The contradictions of the early 20th century, stemming from the division of the world into enormous colonial empires, which was carried to its natural geographical limits, were defined by both Marxist Socialists and their conservative opponents as "inter-imperialist" ones. Those contradictions resulted in two world wars, though neither of them brought about an unconditional global supremacy of one of the participants. It's no coincidence that some of the world's political leaders saw the events of the first half of the 20th century as an unfinished "big war" for the role of a final winner.

The Cold War ended with the demise of the USSR, and a rush of most of its former allies to join the NATO. For a historically short period of time, the world faced a delusional "end of the story" scenario, as the so-called "final winner" was revealed, and a new world order based on its unquestioned hegemony was established.

However, objective laws of social development would not let the world situation remain static indefinitely. Unequal tempo of socio-economic development of states and their alliances, emergence of new state-level, sub-state and non-state actors on the world arena, as well as a weakening of other actors, brought about an erosion of the monocentric world structure model, and has by now destroyed it almost completely.

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The beginning of the 21st century ushered in a new stage in the development of the global civilization – a gradual transition to the polycentric model. New actors entering the global stage are gradually changing the rules and conditions of the game. The global balance of forces is slowly shifting from the West to the East, and from the North to the South. Another factor transforming the international relations is the influence of the so-called “big challenges”. The economic power of China and India is growing: they already hold the second and the seventh place in the world by GDP volumes (12.263 and 2.488 USD trillion exchange-rate-adjusted in 2017 respectively). Thus, apart from Russia, they have already outrun such countries as Italy, Canada, Spain and Australia.² In 2017 China (23.301 USD trillion) and India (9.449 USD trillion) took the first and the third place respectively in purchasing-power adjusted dollars (the second place was taken by the USA)³, fully invalidating all forecasts made by Goldman Sachs and PricewaterhouseCoopers financial corporations. According to their experts, these countries were only supposed to get into the top ten of world economies by the middle of the 21st century⁴. In other words, all the current processes in the modern world are sped up, on the one hand, and become less and less predictable, on the other. Considering these factors, researchers and experts forecast an accelerated growth of economic capacities in Eastern and Southern countries, although it could be hindered by the interplay of market forces.

Notwithstanding this, the existing system of international institutions, aimed at establishing the rules of the game in contemporary politics and economics, is still configured to serve the interests of the so-called Golden Billion countries. In other words, there’s a deepening conflict between the basic structures of the world economy, which are gradually shifting from the West and the North to the East and the South, and the global “superstructure”, including the political, military, financial and informational institutions and management tools operating within the

² <http://investorschool.ru/rejting-stran-po-vvp-2017> (accessed at 09.07.2018)

³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD> (accessed at 09.07.2018)

⁴ <http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/archive/BRICs-and-Beyond.html>,
<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/economy/the-world-in-2050.html> (accessed at 09.07.2018)

framework of the Washington Consensus. The opposition is getting more and more heated: it is manifested in both regional armed conflicts and all-out information wars involving technologies of mass manipulation, which aim to impose the only "true" system of attitudes to certain events according to "established actors", while advocating the system of "Western values".

As the newly arising world order lacks a unified controlling centre, it is in a dire need of a system of bilateral or multilateral geostrategic checks and balances, aiming to avoid or at least minimize the threat of a global armed conflict.

With this in mind, the regions of the world are being reevaluated in accordance with their relative importance as zones of competing interests for the participants of a renewed competition. In the context of growing risks of a very undesirable direct confrontation between "old" and "new" actors, fraught with many dangers, the geostrategic and geo-political importance of "peripheral" competition zones, such as Latin America, Middle East and Africa, has increased.

Until recently, Africa has been regarded as an outsider of the global economy. The transition of developed countries to the postindustrial and innovative development model brought out the discrepancy in the more advanced economical spheres even sharper. Sophisticated "structural adjustment programs" imposed on African countries by the Bretton Woods system served to further aggravate the impoverished situation of the African population. Widely-advertised Western development assistance programs never got off the ground due to an alleged lack of money. The abundant natural resources of the African continent were mercilessly exploited by the former colonial powers and other countries of the West. In the African countries themselves, a high level of corruption prevailed. Based on the results of a high-ranking AU Commission, led by T. Mbeki, a former president of the SAR, the illegal capital outflow from Africa during the last 50 years amounted to 1 USD trillion, and the annual outflow exceeded 50 USD billion. That's the reason why Africa's share in the global GDP still hasn't

exceeded 3% (5% in purchasing-power adjusted dollars), and its share in global exports of goods and services is still 2.5%.⁵

But the situation is changing gradually. At the moment Africa develops quite successfully. During the last 10 years, the average annual rate of growth in the continent reached 4-5%, which was significantly higher than the average rate worldwide, in spite of negative tendencies stemming from the world economic crisis; the economies of 15 African countries are currently growing by 7–8 % per year, i.e. even quicker than in China. Besides, Africa has a huge demographic “bonus”: its young population increases at a swift rate to form both contemporary labor markets and an enormous consumer market. As a result, today's Africa is turning into one of the most strategically promising regions of the world. Western countries realize that they are losing an unequal competitive battle with new powerful economies of China and India, so they try to find new “power sources” for their development, and look for them on the African continent.

Over the last years, leading world political and economic centres came to recognize, more or less at the same time, a great importance of resources, human potential, and the growing economic potential of Africa in a new model of global development and global economy currently generated. An understanding of this fact resulted in an increased economic expansion into the resource-rich region by each and every state who see themselves as important actors on the global stage and a substantial force in the future of the global economy. Their objective was to grab a foothold in the region by investing into both existing and emerging economic links. Apart from trade relations with African countries, this would provide them with an opportunity to maintain a long-term position in Africa, by ensuring deliveries of significant volumes of exclusive local resources for their own development under new economic conditions, including innovative development.

⁵ https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/African_Economic_Outlook_2018_-_EN.pdf (accessed 24..07.2018)

While the global economic, political and cultural space is falling apart, the fight for resources and markets, as well as the preservation or capture of economic, political and cultural positions in the African continent by both old and new actors will be growing in intensity, to finally cover each and every area of human activity.

The group of “old actors” mostly considers Africa from three perspectives: the likely prospects of global economic development, resource management, and global military and political dominance. Each of these is presumed to be an area of contest with alleged major opponents and competitors, both existing and potential. The latter role is mostly assigned to China, and partly to Russia, notably when speaking about Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, the West pays close attention to increasing activity and influence of “second tier” competitors in the region, including India, Brazil, Iran, Turkey, the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, and both Koreas.

Geostrategic importance of the continent is naturally predetermined by its geographic location as the Southern Flank of NATO, with sites and theatres that control lines of communication passing through the Red Sea, from the Persian Gulf and on to the Indian Ocean, as well as across the South Atlantic Ocean.

Officially, most African military bases and significant military installations that are not legally documented as bases belong to France (Djibouti, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Reunion, Mayotte of Comoro Islands, Senegal). Similar facilities in the African region belong to England (Kenya, Ascension Island, British territories in the Indian Ocean), Italy (Djibouti), India (Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius), Japan (Djibouti), Turkey (Somali).

The US military created a wide network of more than 60 outposts and other facilities in Africa. Currently most of them are in use, while the remaining ones serve as a backup or are presumably closed, at least temporarily. They include bases, camps, communication centers/sites, and ports; between them, they cover at least 34 states on the continent. Formally, these sites are not considered bases, but Co-operative Security Locations (CSL), and they are allegedly designed for temporary deployment – “mostly of provisions and ammunitions”.

What are these bases for, what do they defend? Their declared primary goal is to protect critically important NATO communications, support peace, prevent conflicts in Africa and serve as a stronghold against terrorist threats and piracy. Although the role of foreign military contingents in solving at least part of their declared tasks is not to be underestimated, it should be admitted that all of the above-mentioned states consider these facilities important elements in asserting their geopolitical importance, as well as projecting their military force on the international level.

At the same time, external actors interested in exploitation of rich African resources and markets often interfere in the domestic affairs of African countries, stirring up internal conflicts, and instigating armed hostilities and color revolutions.

In late 20th and early 21st century, the economic growth rates of the Golden Billion countries slowed down, which resulted in a scaling back of consumption levels in developed countries. According to a large number of surveys we held in Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Great Britain, for the very first time in postwar history the citizens of these countries note that their living standards are lower than five years ago. The migration crisis is partly to blame; but more importantly, the internal development factors in Western countries within the framework of the present-day economic model seem to be exhausted. To find a way out of the current situation, these countries (primarily the USA that is losing its role of the globally dominant power) pump more money into weapons production, and then proceed to initiate local and regional conflicts under the guise of "promoting democracy" and "fighting terrorism". Establishing a number of military command centers on the territory of Africa with an alleged purpose to resolve conflicts, maintaining substantial military contingents, developing the military infrastructure, including the support of old and construction of new military bases, arms deliveries to western-minded African regimes and other similar actions don't just serve the purpose of expansion and successful operation of military industries of the USA

and EU countries (including economic success), but ensure control over African resources of strategic importance as well.

Despite multiple and often successful attempts to preserve Africa as an object of global economy and politics, the continent is currently striving for more independence, and a new “subject” role in international relations; in our opinion, its development in the next decades can change its position in a new model of global development.

According to analytical forecasts, the average GDP growth rate in Sub-Saharan Africa will be able, once again, to exceed 5% in the nearest decades (as from 2020). It is already higher than 7% per annum in 5 countries, including Burkina Faso (8.4 in 2017), Ethiopia (8.1%), Côte d'Ivoire (7.3%), Tanzania (7.2%) and Ghana (7.1%). As the previous model of the world economic development is falling apart, and a new one is arising instead, some analysts claim that by 2050 the African economy can grow from 2.2 USD trillion (as of 2017) to 29 USD trillion, to outrun the USA and the European Union by GDP.⁶

The possibilities for economic growth of the African continent are expanding due to the rise in prices for primary goods that has started in late 2016; however, this factor is not the defining one for the development of Africa.

It is projected (by the RAS Institute for African Studies as well) that from the 2030s on, Africa is to become a crucial and almost unique global strategic reserve of raw materials within the framework of the New Production Revolution (also known as the Next Production Revolution, abbreviated to NPR). Currently the African continent holds leading positions in the world in terms of those primary goods that don't have any analogues and are essential for the development of defense and innovative technologies of the 21st century. In other words, a number of metals imported by NATO member states (aluminium, cobalt, chrome, lithium, coltan, etc.) takes on military and strategic significance. Thus, for example, a

⁶ Abramova I. Potential of the African Continent in the Updated Strategy of Development of the Russian Federation. *African Studies in Russia. Yearbook 2014-2016*. Moscow. 2017. P.7.

degree of dependency of the US military industrial complex on non-ferrous and rare metals imported from some Sub-Saharan countries (DR Congo, SAR, Zimbabwe, etc.) and technologically necessary for advanced weaponry – engines for military aircraft in particular – amounts to 60%, and exceeds 70% for cobalt.

Other crucial factors of accelerated development of African countries are consumption growth on their internal markets, a diversification of economies in a number of states in the continent due to a greater share of services and manufacturing, and a significantly better business climate as a result of an improved investments legislation and a gradual stabilization of the domestic policy. Over the last 7 years, the index of competitiveness of the African countries has grown significantly. Such countries as Rwanda and Mauritius, where the respective indicator has reached 4.49, as well as Botswana (4.29), Kenya (3.9), Ethiopia (3.77), Senegal (3.74), Côte d'Ivoire (3.7) and Ghana (3.69), have successfully outrun the economies of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Cambodia and Myanmar, in this respect, where this indicator doesn't exceed 3.6.⁷

As per the Doing Business ranking, three African countries – Mauritius (25th place), Rwanda (41st place) and Morocco (69th place) – outrun such countries as Indonesia (72nd place), China (78th place) and India (100th place).⁸

In other words, investment attractiveness of Africa is no less than that of Asian leaders in economic development; Africa even outruns them in some positions.

However, it was the growth of private consumption that became the main trigger of development of the African economy in 2000s. As per our calculations, its contribution to economic growth amounted to 40-60% during that period. Private consumption was growing by 3.7% annually on the average during the period from 2010 to 2018.⁹ Such growth of consumption was largely provided by

⁷ <http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-index-2017-2018/competitiveness-rankings/> (accessed 04.07.2018).

⁸ <http://www.doingbusiness.org/~media/WBG/DoingBusiness/Documents/Annual-Reports/English/DB2018-Full-Report.pdf> (accessed 13.07.2018)

⁹ Calculations are based on World Bank. 2017. World Development Indicators 2017. Washington, DC. © World Bank.

the rapidly increasing African population, as well as a stepped-up formation of the middle class, which currently accounts for approximately 350 million people, or one third of Africa's population. As per our calculations, while the volume of domestic consumption in the continent exceeded 920 USD billion in 2017 (it was 680 USD billion in 2008), it can increase up to 2.2 USD trillion by 2030. It will happen mostly due to the increased purchasing power of the middle class population, which will at least double in number.¹⁰

Therefore, using resources as its competitive advantages, balancing actively between long-time and new partners, attracting financial and technological resources, promoting human capital, today's Africa gradually turns into a powerful player in global politics and economy, a necessary element to face the Big Challenges.

The econometric forecast and analysis performed by the RAS Institute for African Studies has shown that the curve reflecting the trend of “strategic interest of external actors in the region” in 2020-2025 is to change the angle and curvature of its ascent from fair and shallow to sharp and steep. According to the forecast, this tendency is likely to prevail for at least two forthcoming decades.

Besides, as per our estimations, the significance of subregions of the African continent will increase asynchronously. Today the greatest strategic interests of old and new actors alike lie in the South Mediterranean, which embraces both North Africa and the Sahel area, including Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Sudan and Eritrea.

In 2020s, a greater focus will be on the Wider Red Sea region, which partially overlaps the South Mediterranean area. It includes African and Asian countries with access to the Red Sea (apart from the abovementioned, these are Egypt, Eritrea and Sudan, Djibouti, Israel, countries of the Arabian Peninsula, the Socotra Archipelago, Seychelles and farther up to the Chagos Archipelago) plus

¹⁰ Calculations are based on abovementioned sources and https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/african-economic-outlook-2017_aeo-2017-en#page29

the African Hinterland without access to the coast, which includes Ethiopia, South Sudan, the eastern part of Chad and the northern part of Kenya.

Since the end of 2020s, significance of south-east and south African subregions (Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, SAR and related territories), known as the Southern Cone of Africa, will start growing rapidly.

In the next 10 years, the countries striving for global domination will escalate their struggle for dominance in North Africa and Sahel; a willingness of Western financial foundations to hold and support “research” events and discussions on this very subregion in cooperation with Russian scientific centers, which clearly intensified in recent months, is an indirect proof of that. First of all, the region is closely tied with the European Union, its closest Northern neighbor. And it’s not only a matter of geographical proximity, although the distance between Europe and Africa is no more than 14 km in the area of the Strait of Gibraltar. A struggle for African resources, including oil and gas, is one of the most important economic reasons of the European expansion in North Africa and Sahel, although not the only one. Countries of this subregion represent an important market for the products and technologies of those European states competing with other players in Africa – notably the USA, China and Russia.

The Red Sea region is expected to experience an economic boom in 2020-2030s, which will increase its geo-strategic significance because of its active integration into the global infrastructure, as well as transport, information and communication links. It is largely connected with closer attention to the region in the framework of the New Silk Road project and the Chinese Dream megaproject. The subregion has already become a place of rapid construction of military bases for external power centers, which is a clear evidence of its long-term importance for leading global powers. (Military bases and facilities belonging to the USA, France, PRC, Saudi Arabia, Italy, FRG, Turkey, UAE, Japan and other countries have recently been built or are in the process of construction in the African flank of the subregion).

Geostrategic significance of the South Cone of Africa is forecast to grow in a longer term of about *15-20 years*. It will depend on the intensity of bringing newly discovered huge but hard-to-obtain hydrocarbon resources in the Mozambique Channel, as well as supplies of strategic raw materials, mostly rare or rare earth metal ores in the area of the Copper Belt and in South Zimbabwe, into commercial operation; a factor in these operations is the intensity of China's trying to integrate these resources into its strategic potential.

Speaking of countries, three potentially significant regional centers of force can be defined in Sub-Saharan Africa and one in North Africa. Each of them will be able to aim for a significant role beyond the African continent in a medium-term (7-12 years) or a long-term (15-20 years) forecast. They are the SAR, Nigeria and Ethiopia in Sub-Saharan Africa, and Egypt in North Africa. Key factors on behalf of these countries are a rapidly growing population (191 million in Nigeria, 105 million in Ethiopia, almost 100 million in Egypt and 55 million in the SAR)¹¹, a locally powerful (Nigeria, Egypt, RAS) or a rapidly growing economy (Ethiopia), significant military forces as compared to other African countries, undisputed achievements and ambitions in a struggle for the role of the "African leader" and/or "a growth driver" of the continent (the African analogue of the role Germany plays in the EU; its integration model was adopted by the African Union as an example).

Unfortunately, it is only during the recent 2-3 years that Russia has fully realized the importance of using the "African vector" to solve the strategic tasks of its own economic development; economic sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries proved to be the decisive factor. Russian economic operators still don't feel like "pushing their way out of the comfort zone" to cross over to the South instead of the West. However it has to be done. A decision to develop a new Strategy for Relations of the Russian Federation with African States, made at the meeting of the Foreign Ministry Collegium in May 2018, is an evidence of a turn

¹¹ The World Factbook. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html> (accessed 31.07.2018).

towards Africa. A previous Strategy was adopted in 1994, so currently it doesn't meet the interests of either Russia or Africa. In this regard, radical reinforcement of Russia's focus on the African dimension is essential, including political, economic and cultural components (education and staff training in particular).

The Africa-Russia Summit in Sochi scheduled for October 2019 will involve participation of most leaders of the African countries and the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin as the first full-scale event of this kind, not only in the history of Russia, but in the history of the USSR as well, to become the most important step in the development of Russia's relations with Africa. The Russia-Africa Economic Forum, involving leaders of African countries and heads of international organizations, will be held as part of the Summit's program. Russia is trying to recover its positions in the continent, which were lost in the 1990s, but it's getting progressively harder each day, considering the continuously increasing competition, changes in the African ruling elites, and reduced financial opportunities of the Russian Federation. That's why our country needs to define those African countries most beneficial for political and economic interaction, and to decide on sectors of their economies deserving cooperation, in order to focus on them primarily.

Deliveries of manufactured goods to African countries can become a driver of development for non-resource-based industries of the Russian economy, and contribute to the solution of the problem about a greater share of the Russian non-resource-based export formulated by V.V. Putin in his decrees of May 2018. Specifically, it is about manufacturing of railway equipment, agro-industrial and transport machinery; agricultural production; nuclear, radio and digital technologies.

Russia needs to get back to Africa on a permanent basis, not just to catch up with the others, but clearly recognizing a need to interact with the Africans in all areas. Active Russian-African cooperation will let both countries obtain geopolitical and geo-economic dividends, by promoting development of their

economies and reinforcing positions of the Russian Federation and African states on the global arena.