

Dr. Alexandra A. Arkhangelskaya

Head of the Centre for Information and International Relations

Institute for African Studies

Russian Academy of Sciences

30/1, Spiridonovka str.,

Moscow, Russia, 123001

Tel. +7 (495) 695 5848

Mob. +7 903 148 3535

e-mail: aarkhangelskaya@gmail.com

Images and Prospects Of BRICS in Africa

The system of international relations is gradually exposed to substantial changes. Among the new actors in the international arena are the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Competition for access to raw materials - one of the major substantive aspects of international relations, and in that sense, Africa is included in the global rivalry between the world's biggest actors, as an object of the application of capital market and a source of resources. The continent is rich in resources - taking 1st place in the world reserves of manganese ore, chrome, gold, platinum group metals, vanadium, diamonds, phosphate, 2nd largest reserves of copper ore, uranium, and third largest reserves of oil, gas and iron ore. In general, Russia's economy is deprived of the critical dependence of African resources. Russia is less interested in increasing imports of raw mineral resources in Africa, which distinguishes her from other major actors on the continent (the former colonial powers, the USA, and partners in the BRICS). However, Russian industry is experiencing shortages of some types of minerals, particularly manganese, bauxite, chromium, which could be imported from Africa. In this contest for African spatiality and resources an important part is played by images of the respective countries in the Africans' mass consciousness as a significant prerequisite for consolidation of their positions and implementation of their goals

on the continent. Thus, the crucial role these countries' images' historical background plays in Africa is essential for the analysis of the current perceptions and understanding of the prospects of the BRICS countries on the African continent. Understanding of the experiences of bilateral and multilateral approaches of the BRICS in Africa with a special focus on BRICS images in Africa is essential for estimation of the possibilities of common outlines regarding their policies. In this regard, the study and analysis of the experiences of BRICS in Africa represents an interesting research problem.

Concept of the BRICS

BRICS is a group of five fast-developing countries - Brazil, Russia, China, India, South Africa. For the first time an acronym BRIC was proposed by analysts from Goldman Sachs in November 2001 in a research note from that bank. According to experts of Goldman Sachs, by 2050 economies will exceed the total size of the economies of the richest countries (the Group of Seven). In December 2010, South Africa acceded to the BRIC countries and the formation has been transformed into BRICS.

Today BRICS combines three billion people (43% of the population) in the territory of 39.7 million sq.m. (more than a quarter of global land surface), producing almost 13 trillion. U.S. gross domestic product per year (21% of world production). Each of these five countries on three continents, has influence in their respective regions in particular and in the world.

It should be noted that analysts of Goldman Sachs did not assume the existence of economic policy coordination between the BRIC countries. Especially since it was not assumed that the BRIC countries would form an economic bloc. But over time, there were signs that the four BRIC countries are seeking to form a political club or formation to convert its growing economic power into greater geopolitical "influence." The first summit at the foreign ministers level was held in 2008 in Ekaterinburg, Russia, as well as the first Summit of leaders of BRIC countries in 2009, in 2010 in Brasilia, in 2011 in Sanya, 2012 in New Delhi.

BRICS members are characterized as the most rapidly developing major economies of the world. Large number of important resources for the global economy provides an advantageous position for the states. The main common feature was that they are all developing countries with growing economies and influence, and they all strive for a free and more equitable agreement on global leadership, in which they and others will play an important role.

The BRIC became a union, which now integrates into itself new states. Acceptance of South Africa in this group reflected the fact that in recent years there has been increasing global attention to the problems of Africa. The continent is of particular importance in connection with the sprawling economic problems in the world. Africa becomes a zone of strategic interests of new poles of power. Thus, the interaction of BRICS, both individually and as an association with African countries is an important aspect of foreign policy activity. Thus, in the last decade, there has been a surge of economic activity in China and India, and Brazil in the continent. It should be noted that South Africa is the largest supplier of mineral raw materials to developed countries, has significant scientific and technical potential. South Africa is regarded as a gate of the continent. The involvement of this country in a "club" is a confirmation of the importance of the African component in the modern system of international relations. The entry of South Africa in BRICS allows the country to raise its international status and increase the role of so called "powers" in the emerging new world order, as well as to strengthen its position as a representative of the African continent, as well as possibly increase the inflow of foreign investment into the country.

Identities and political discourse

Identifying the image of the BRICS in Africa is important from several points of view, from deepening the economic ties between the countries, as to improve understanding of BRICS Africa relations in the political sphere, as at the bilateral level and in the international arena to develop corrective action of existing

imbalances and stereotypes. The main attention is paid to the analysis in the study of representations of Africans on the current state of relations between BRICS and Africa and the structure of BRICS's image in African societies.

The model, which is applied by the BRICS countries in their African strategies is not unique, although the levels of benefits provided and the specific conditions may differ from those offered by the West. An important factor in the success of the BRICS in Africa, is the image of these countries in the eyes of Africans. This image is composed on the basis of historical, cultural and other links: none of the BRICS is a new actor on the continent, and each of them has certain socio-cultural and political ties with the continent.

Considering the prospects of the BRICS it is more important to understand the relations with African states formed on the basis of the formation of new identities in the framework of cooperation among developing countries, their common destiny, the construction of the axis of the "South-South cooperation" and the promotion of these identities by certain political discourse.

In that respect we can analyse the socio-cultural links of the BRICS countries with African states with respect to the roles of diaspora and historical heritages, as well as the images of the BRICS created on the African ground within the concepts of "soft power". Later, it is essential to touch upon the political discourse of the interaction of the elites and to examine the role of countries identities in the tendency of the developing countries prospects.

Societies and cultures

An important role in the relationship of the BRICS countries and African countries is in the views of the past on the major developing countries. These views are formed both on the basis of historical memory, and on the basis of modern processes. Since all of the BRICS countries have a long relationship with the African continent, in their current expansion an important role is played by different socio-cultural aspects.

Beijing maintained relations with African countries in the 50s of the twentieth century, and these relationships were based primarily on an ideological basis for a common struggle against imperialism. China as a member of the 1955 Bandung Conference was considered by African countries as an equal partner, which helped to retain some influence in the region and take advantage of it during the expansion of its influence in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. According to Dr. TL Deitch, Institute of African Studies RAS, business was gradually replaced the anti-imperialism as the basis for relations.¹ Today, the ratio for China in Africa is beginning to change - a sharp expansion of Chinese companies, along with the increasing number of Chinese citizens living in Africa to about one million may cause of dissatisfaction with the African people, as a reminder to some degree about the colonial past.²

Migration processes of Chinese people on African continent also represent huge differences in culture, language and values.³ This promotes the growth of resentment criticism of Chinese expansion into Africa, particularly the Western media is creating a neo-colonialists image of China in Africa. China began to support the expansion of cultural ties with Africa and trying to support their economic efforts through "soft power". Chinese representatives enjoyed a solid ideological base – which is focused on the common Chinese and African cultures, their antiquity, rich heritage and tradition.⁴ Chinese artists and filmmakers, organize exhibitions and displays of Chinese films in Africa. In 2003 one third of all foreign students in China were Africans. Everything is aimed at creating a community of people in Africa who are interested in cooperation with Beijing.

¹ Дейч Т.Л. Африка в стратегии Китая. М.: Институт Африки РАН, 2008. С.105.

² Rice X. China's economic invasion in Africa // <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/06/chinas-economic-invasion-of-africa>> The Guardian, 6 February 2011. Информация просмотрена 12 мая 2011 г.

³ Park Y.J. Occasional Paper №24: Chinese Migration in Africa // <http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/occasional_papers/saia_sop_24_park_20090218_en.pdf> SAIIA, January 2009. P.15-16. Информация просмотрена 12 мая 2011 г.

⁴ Дейч Т.Л. Африка в стратегии Китая. М.: Институт Африки РАН, 2008. С.129.

India also supported African countries in their struggle against colonialism, and it remains in the memory of the people. An important factor in India's African policy is the Indian diaspora in Africa, emerging from the nineteenth century, which comprises about 2.8 million people, primarily in the south and east of the continent (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa).⁵

Diaspora does not only simplify business interaction of Indian companies in Africa it also creates a more favorable image of India. These immigrants have better knowledge of local conditions and they have become accustomed to the African realities. In India there is also the image of the "alternative" to China, whose aggressive policy causes some degree of irritation. The Indian approach is supported by the membership of India in IBSA and associated with the discourse on democracy and development and it is considered to be more calm and reasonable for many Africans.⁶

The image of Indians in Africa is also linked by some spirit of entrepreneurship, which is also considered as a positive by African people. Cultural ties are rather narrow, due to the presence of Indian diaspora in Africa, but they are not supported by the state as in the Chinese case.

Russia still enjoys some support from many African countries gradually due to the legacy of the USSR. Many Africans were studying in Soviet higher educational establishments, and some are still studying in Russian. However, Russia did not take advantage of this resource and did not develop it further. According to surveys conducted - most of the African population has a positive image in relation to Russia, but the generation that has kept good memories of the Soviet Union, is disappearing.⁷ Today, there are Africa two basic views on Russia that have developed - Russia as the successor to the Soviet Union and Russia – as a country that has made a step back. Researchers from the Institute for African

⁵ Freemantle S., Stevens J. BRIC-Africa in 2015: Tectonic shifts tie BRIC and Africa's economic destinies // <<http://ws9.standardbank.co.za/sbrp/LatestResearch.do>> Standard Bank, 14 October 2009. P.1. Информация просмотрена 12 мая 2011 г.

⁶ Африка и мир в XXI веке. / Ред. Т.Л. Дейч, Е.Н. Корендясов. М.: Институт Африки РАН, 2010. С.191.

⁷ Бондаренко Д. Африка: "Советское наследие" в образе России // Азия и Африка сегодня, №7, июль 2007. С.42.

Studies in Russian Academy of Sciences noted that Russia's image in Africa is directly dependent on its domestic and foreign policy, given the criticism of Russia and the Western media, today more and more is composed of the controversial relationship with Africans.⁸

Brazil also has very deep and close ties with Africa, formed in the era of colonialism and slave trade (more than 4 million African slaves were brought to Brazil). Around half of Brazilians have African ancestors, and only Nigeria is home to more Negro population than Brazil⁹. Brazil's cultural affinity with Africa is evident. In 2003, Brazilian President Lula da Silva became the state of the historical debt of Brazil to Africa and African's foreign policy in Brazil has increased, mainly in the field of foreign assistance and cooperation in social development, agricultural development, poverty, disease etc. Brazil's expansion in Africa is mainly in - Mozambique, Angola, Sao Tome and Principe, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau - Portuguese speaking countries, and with these countries Brazil has very close cultural ties. In general, the positive attitude of Africans to Brazil also relies on its image of "soft power"¹⁰ and the personal charm of President Lula, who began the new wave of Brazil- Africa relations where Africa is a priority.

South Africa itself is an African country and is acting a dubious role on the continent – on one hand a recipient of all the advantages and disadvantages of the African state and on the other acts by itself as a player and a growing economy on the continent influencing and conquering the African ground. South Africa has in the past earned international recognition on the basis of its own intellectual and normative weight. It has always championed multilateralism, offered innovative ideas on vital global governance issues and demonstrated leadership in conflict resolution, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction in several parts of

⁸ Россия – Африка: новые ориентиры взаимоотношений. / Ред. Т.Л. Дейч, Е.Н. Корендясов. М.: Институт Африки РАН, 2010. С.112.

⁹ Kingstone S. Lula's historic Africa tour // <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3238979.stm>> BBC News, 4 November 2003.

¹⁰ Sotero P., Armijo L.E. Brazil: To be or not to be a BRIC? // Asian Perspective, Vol.31, №4, 2007.

Africa. Thus, the image of South Africa has a positive reflection of brotherhood but with a hint of acting outside the interests to the common African agenda but in its own economical priorities.

Images of developing countries

BRICS countries as a growing political force have a commitment to positioning itself as an alternative to the representatives of the developed countries as a developing ones. This theme emerges in each of the joint statements. This discourse is conducted almost entirely by China, although it is relevant to the other BRICS countries to some degree. The emphasis on common destiny and the differences from "them" (the West) is, on the one hand, the further economic convergence with the developing countries and, on the other hand, as already mentioned, the formation of a new axis of "South-South cooperation," as an alternative to the dominance of the West.

A thesis of common destiny and goals inherent in all developing countries is very common for Chinese rhetoric. According to the doctrine, which contained the main aspects of China's Africa policy, China is a Third World leader and defender of the interests of all developing countries, including Africa, which corresponds with the actions and statements of its officials, as well as its position in the international arena.¹¹ China (in this document) is described as the biggest developing country, and Africa, as a continent with the largest number of developing countries, plays a key role in the development and world peace. China aims to maintain and protect the interests of Africa and promote South-South cooperation. Thus, African countries are included in this political discourse of China representatives and China's special economic and political interests.¹² According to Dr. TL Deitch, China is trying to play the role of counterweight of the South in its relations with the United States. At the United

¹¹ China's African Policy // <<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t230615.htm>> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 12 January 2006.

¹² Дейч Т.Л. Африка в стратегии Китая. М.: Институт Африки РАН, 2008. С.86-87.

Nations, China's position largely coincides with the position of other developing countries.

As for India, Indian representatives since the formation of IBSA Forum in 2003, have emphasized the outline of cooperation among developing countries through the "South-South cooperation." The fact that this discourse was adopted by African countries is evidenced by the statement by Zambian Minister of Trade during the India-Africa forum in March 2008 stating that India and Africa have a better understanding of each other, as they are from the South.¹³ This is also the anti-colonial discourse and, thus, to some extent anti-Western. Although the expansion of India in West Africa is considered far less negative than the expansion of China, India has rejected the proposal of Great Britain and Germany to work together in Africa. According to the Indian representatives, they prefer to work with developing partners who are not former colonizers.¹⁴

A similar discourse with an emphasis on collaboration in views of "South-South cooperation" can be found in the rhetoric of representatives from Brazil. This discourse does not exactly fit into the Russian rhetoric due to its specificity as a country in transition, and the former superpower.

The relationship of the BRICS countries with African states are multi-faceted. Discourse and sociocultural context supports the efforts of these countries, aimed at both the economic cooperation, and access to African natural resources. Any kind of economic and other assistance also contributes to these efforts, while developing African economies.

¹³ Усов В.А. Индия и Африка на рубеже тысячелетий: прошлое, настоящее, будущее. М.: Институт Африки РАН, 2010. С. 111.

¹⁴ Африка и мир в XXI веке. / Ред. Т.Л. Дейч, Е.Н. Корендясов. М.: Институт Африки РАН, 2010. С.191.