STATES OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: THE POSSIBILITY OF THE BREAKTHROUGH

Prof. Dr. Konstantin A. Pantserev.
Saint-Petersburg State University, School of International Relations, Russia. E-mail: pantserev@yandex.ru

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Abstracts: The paper devotes to the problem of the determination of the place of States of Sub-Saharan Africa in the Global World. The author comes to a conclusion that during the postcolonial history of Africa the governments of African States have undertaken a number of attempts in order to ensure the sustainable growth of their countries. But all such attempts finished by the strengthening of the dependence of African countries from the well developed nations which pursued their strategic interests on the Continent. That’s why it becomes evident that it is necessary to change something in the relationship between African countries and their Western partners. The author argues that despite all efforts undertaken by African governments the idea of the establishment of the new system of the relationship between the Global North and the Global South has failed. So nowadays the only chance to reduce the dependence of African states from Western countries is to intensify the intra-Global south cooperation. Basing on the analysis of the activity in Africa of different intra-South integration groups such as COMESA, BRICS the author try to evaluate both the significance of such unions and their ability to ensure the sustainable economic growth of the Continent.
Nowadays in the age of globalization when a number of different globalized processes cause radical changes not only in the economy and social life but also in the consciousness of the human being which changes the structure of its personality one should think about whether States of Sub-Saharan Africa would be able to find their own self-reliant place in the Global World or they remain the world periphery dependent from the financial and technological aid coming from the West.

The Globalization as a process has both positive and negative features. From the one side there is taking place the process of integration of the market of goods and services, finances which causes the free floating between countries and regions. But critics of modern globalized processes suppose that the globalization would make the world space a homogenous one which may cause the situation where the vast majority of countries would lose their cultural identity and the entire World would be arranged according the Western pattern of the development.

We can conclude that nowadays in Africa they very often substitute the word “modernization” by the word “westernization”: “westernization is modernization”. And today Western countries and Western financial institutions such as World Bank and International Monetary Fund have so strong positions in the region that give them an opportunity to dictate main features of economic reforms in Africa which take a character of the full liberalization of almost all main sectors of the economy of African countries.

In current circumstances it is very difficult to say whether States of Sub-Saharan Africa would be able to find their own place in the Global world. During the postcolonial history of Africa the governments of African States have undertaken a number of attempts in order to ensure the sustainable growth of their countries and to reach the level of the development of their more developed Western partners. But all such attempts finished by the strengthening of the dependence of African countries from the well developed nations which pursued their strategic interests on the Continent. That’s why it becomes evident that it is
necessary to change something in the relationship between African countries and their Western partners.

In the year 2001 there has been adopted the Programme of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) which represented both the new strategy of the further development of the continent and the new platform which should form the backbone of the relationship between African countries and their more developed Western partners. Finally the NEPAD should become a “working instrument of the African Union” [1]

The programme NEPAD differs from the vast majority of similar documents by the point that African countries must play the key role in the solution of all problems of the continent. So there are African countries which should elaborate different strategies of the development of the continent, Agendas and Plans of Action and finally take a responsibility for the development of the continent.

On the web-site of the Programme NEPAD one can find a slogan: “NEPAD: obligations of African leaders based on the common understanding of the problems of the continent” [2]. But it is evident that it is not enough just to get the common understanding of the problems of the continent. African countries understand that they won’t solve all the problems of the continent without financial aid coming from the West. So they rely that the NEPAD would be supported by their more developed Western partners.

Western countries are ready to help African States in the realization of the goals mentioned in the programme NEPAD but on their conditions which are aimed on the strengthening of Western influence in the region.

That’s why the content of the programme NEPAD represents the simple enumeration of the most important challenges the final overcoming of which strictly depends on the aid of global community.

But the problem is that when elaborating the pattern of all the economic reforms African countries mostly follow the recommendations coming from the international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the
World Bank which impedes the possibility of the independent development and puts a serious obstacle on the establishment of equal characters of mutual relations. So taking to the account African realities there suits very well the following statement: in Africa there is the only worst thing than the presence of foreign investors - the lack of them.

Unfortunately nowadays in Africa there dominates the point of view that “We (Africans) need Europe to rescue from the poverty”. Such statement we have heard from the president of Ghana John Mahama in his speech on the opening ceremony of the Global convention on African studies which was held in the University of Ghana in October 2013. And as soon as one can hear such statements from heads of African countries it is completely impossible to estimate an independent development of States of the region.

So it is evident that despite all efforts undertaken by African governments the idea of the establishment of the new system of the relationship between the Global North and the Global South has failed.

Nevertheless African countries pretend to play the key role in the determination of the main features of the further social and economic development of the continent and to find solutions of the most significant problems of the region. Western countries has supported such initiative and agreed to support different agendas, plans of action and strategies elaborated by the African States. But as one can see from the history all those initiatives which are adopted by African countries represent the simple implementation of the recommendations elaborated on the “G8 Summits” and other meetings initiated by the well-developed Western nations. This means that Africa still waits when the world community would find the appropriate solutions of the main problems of the continent.

But even if such solution would be found it would mean the global solution of the global problems but not an African solution of African problems. And this is a great difference. Thus it is evident that if African countries pretend to play a significant role in modern political processes they should leave the solution of
African problems to the Africans themselves. But the question is how to solve all these problems without money and technologies? And there is the only solution of this problem – through the intensification of the intra-Global south cooperation.

There are two sides of this process. First of all speaking on the South-South cooperation we mean the penetration of BRICS on the continent, especially after the accession of South Africa to this alliance. But we can’t say that nowadays BRICS has a kind of a common policy on the Continent. And it is really very difficult to evaluate whether countries which form the BRICS are partners or competitors. China has its own interests on the Continent. So does India, Brazil and South Africa. The intensification of African stream of their foreign policy from the one side reflects very positively and is able to put the end to the hegemony of Western countries in the region. But from another side it may cause the change of the existing structure of the dependence of African societies but it won’t help to overcome it.

So to our opinion the sustainable and independent development of the region is possible only in case of the intensification of processes of internal African integration. We’d like to remind that the idea of the achievement of the real unity of African states in order to solve the most significant problems of the continent and to ensure an independent development is not a new one. Initially it belongs to Kwame Nkrume, the first president of Ghana who dreamed about the unity of African countries. In a great number of his speeches he stated that “Africa must unit” [3]. This statement has been made in 1960s but we can’t say that it is not urgent yet.

So it is evident that the solution of almost all problems of the Continent lies through the real Pan-African integration where all African countries join their forces in the face of common challenges. But at the same time almost all Sub-Saharan African countries have a great number of nationalities with their own values and expectations. And it is very difficult to achieve the real, not only on the paper, unity of such different societies. To our opinion nowadays there is in Africa
the only more or less effective regional alliance – the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

May be it is too early to speak of foundation of an effective multipurpose Pan-African alliance but it is quite possible for African countries to try to join their forces when solving problems which are common for all of them, for example the problem of the construction of self-reliant information society.

So we can come to a conclusion that the necessity of the development of information technologies and the elaboration of the joint strategy of the creation of information society would become the common idea which would consolidate the vast majority of African States.

Probably African countries should start from the creation of regional integration forms – on the West under the aegis of Nigeria and Senegal, on the South and the East under the aegis of South Africa, Mauritius and Botswana, on the North under the aegis of Egypt and Morocco. The abovementioned states have scored a relative success on the way of creation of information society and they can help their less-develop African partners in creation of their national information and telecommunication systems which would become a part of Pan-African information and communication infrastructure.

And we can come to a conclusion when analyzing African realities that today they start to use the necessity of the development of the ICT sector as an instrument which could initiate the process of real Pan-African integration. In 2007 in Kigali (Rwanda) there have been signed a special protocol concerning the future mutual cooperation in the sphere of ICT. Initially this protocol has been signed by Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

We’d like to name the main purposes of the protocol [4]:

1. Ensure the development of optic-fiber cable system in Eastern and Southern parts of the Continent;

2. Further the attraction of private investments to the development of information and communication infrastructure of the region;
3. Promote the integration of national information networks of African countries which already exist into the single Pan-African one;

4. Survey legal, political, bureaucratic obstacles on the way of creation of the Pan-African optic-fiber cable system and elaborate suggestions for African governments how to overcome them;

5. Further the creation and usage of the well-developed information and communication infrastructure of the region in order to ensure the trans-border exchange of information;

6. Ensure the creation of the information and telecommunication infrastructure which would be conducive to the strengthening of processes of economic, social and cultural integration of African countries;

7. Promote the access of Internet-providers to international transcontinental optic-fiber cable systems.

The appearance of such agreement indicates that countries of Eastern and Southern regions of Africa try to elaborate the common strategy of the development of information technologies on their territory and to join their forces when creating a common information and communication space of East and South Africa. So the Kigalian protocol could become a document which would promote the intensification of integration processes in South and East Africa.

And what about Western and Central parts of the continent? We’d like to mark that all attempts of countries of West and Central Africa to elaborate a kind of joint “road map” concerning the development of the ICT sector have failed. In June 2005 in Dakar (Senegal) there took place an international symposium where they have decided to develop optic-fiber cable system in the region. But due to the lack of financial and technological resources this forum didn’t elaborate any practical recommendations. To our opinion it was rather predictable because it was the Central part of the continent where there have been situated the poorest countries of the region. And it is evident that it would be very difficult to include such countries into the global information and communication space.
That’s why in order to promote the development of the ICT sector on the continent as a whole; countries of Eastern and Southern Africa have decided to give an opportunity for African countries of Central and Western parts of the continent to join the Protocol. The appropriate resolution has been signed on October 15 of the year 2007 in Johannesburg (South Africa) on the meeting of Ministers of countries which have signed the Protocol. On this meeting they have underlined that the Kigalian protocol doesn’t concern the development of optic-fiber cable system only on the South and East Africa. Any country can join the Protocol. That’s why the Kigalian protocol could become, in the future, a document which would initiate the process of real Pan-African integration and the cooperation between all African countries. To our opinion it is rather possible. This document is aimed on the solution of the common problem of every African country. Taking to account the scarcity of the realization of the project of the development of optic-fiber cable system in Africa from one side and the limited financial and technological base of African countries from another side, it is evident that the most realistic way of the creation of the well-developed information and communication infrastructure in Africa is to join forces by African countries. That’s why the words of the first president of Ghana nowadays didn’t lose their actuality. It is obvious that only the real unity of African countries can ensure an independent self-reliant development of the Continent under the face of challenges common for all African countries. Otherwise States of Sub-Saharan Africa will remain on the periphery of the world political processes and finally lose their identity.
REFERENCES


