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Взаимодействие России со странами
Глобального Юга

Russia's interaction with the countries of
the Global South

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Аннотация. Изменение геополитического ландшафта, произошедшее под влиянием пандемии COVID-19 и начала специальной военной операции, послужили для изменения внешнеполитического курса Российской Федерации. Пандемия значительно сократила численность населения и оказала разрушительное влияние на экономики практически всех стран мира. Специальная военная операция, объявленная Президентом РФ в феврале 2022 года, оказала влияние на все страны Евросоюза и США, которые стали на сторону Украины. Поставки боеприпасов, вооружения, военной техники, а также крупных финансовых средств были направлены на ослабление военного потенциала России. В этих условиях Россия выдвинула тезис о том, что однополярный мир больше существовать не может, и в новых геополитических условиях следует говорить о многополярности. Введение антироссийских санкций определило другой вектор развития экономики и политики России – Глобальный Юг. Страны африканского континента и Ближнего Востока, принимая политику России о невмешательстве в дела других стран, хоть и достаточно осторожно, развивают сотрудничество с РФ. Россия выбирает новый вектор сотрудничества в условиях построения многополярного мира, который должен быть выстроен на основе законов взаимного уважения, взаимовыгодного сотрудничества и международного права. Возвращение России на Ближний Восток и в страны Африки имеет под собой серьезную почву так, как опирается на опыт СССР по строительству предприятий, инфраструктурных объектов, созданию рабочих мест и подготовке кадров. Вместе с тем, время диктует новые области взаимодействия, среди которых наиболее актуальными являются: борьба с международным терроризмом, пресечение наркотрафика, недопущение незаконной торговли оружием, вопросы мирного урегулирования и информационной безопасности на территории африканского континента и Ближнего Востока. Россия выступает за расширение своего присутствия на региональных рынках вооружения, ядерного топлива, нефти и газа. Большое внимание в вопросах сотрудничества между Россией и странами Глобального Юга уделяется выстраиванию стратегического партнёрства в области сельского хозяйства, что способствовало бы недопущению продовольственного кризиса в отдельных странах, увеличению собственного сельскохозяйственного производства. Россия готова выступать главным поставщиком минеральных удобрений и сельскохозяйственной продукции. Наиболее актуальными проблемами, требующими решения в регионе, по-прежнему, остаются: строительство атомных электростанций, разработка нефтяных и газовых месторождений, и производство нефтехимических продуктов. В данных вопросах Российская Федерация готова выступать в качестве партнера, предоставляющего своих специалистов и технологии. Большую заинтересованность руководители стран Большого Юга проявляют в области развития цифровых технологий, банковского дела. Особое внимание уделяют участию в освоении космоса. Российская Федерация прилагает усилия для расширения дипломатического присутствия, налаживания политического диалога со странами Глобального Юга как результат – привлечения их к участию в долговременных альянсах.

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Ключевые слова: Глобальный Юг, развивающиеся страны, многополярный мир, специальная военная операция, антироссийские санкции, страны африканского континента, переориентация политики

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Abstract. *The change in the geopolitical landscape, which occurred under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the beginning of a special military operation, served to change the foreign policy course of the Russian Federation. The pandemic has significantly reduced the population and had a devastating impact on the economies of almost all countries of the world. The special military operation announced by the President of the Russian Federation in February 2022 had an impact on all EU countries and the United States, which sided with Ukraine. Supplies of ammunition, weapons, military equipment, as well as large financial resources were aimed at weakening Russia's military potential. Under these conditions, Russia has put forward the thesis that a unipolar world can no longer exist, and in the new geopolitical conditions, we should talk about multipolarity. The introduction of anti-Russian sanctions has determined another vector of development of Russia's economy and politics - the Global South. The countries of the African continent and the Middle East, adopting Russia's policy of non-interference in the affairs of other countries, although rather cautiously, are developing cooperation with the Russian Federation. Russia is choosing a new vector of cooperation in the context of building a multipolar world, which should be built on the basis of the laws of mutual respect, mutually beneficial cooperation and international law. Russia's return to the Middle East and African countries has serious grounds, as it is based on the experience of the USSR in building enterprises, infrastructure facilities, creating jobs and training personnel. At the same time, time dictates new areas of cooperation, among which the most relevant are: the fight against international terrorism, the suppression of drug trafficking, the prevention of illegal arms trade, issues of peaceful settlement and information security on the territory of the African continent and the Middle East. Russia stands for expanding its presence in the regional markets of weapons, nuclear fuel, oil and gas. Much attention in matters of cooperation between Russia and the countries of the Global South is paid to building a strategic partnership in the field of agriculture, which would help prevent a food crisis in individual countries and increase their own agricultural production. Russia is ready to act as the main supplier of mineral fertilizers and agricultural products. The most urgent problems to be solved in the region are still the construction of nuclear power plants, the development of oil and gas fields, and the production of petrochemical products. In these matters, the Russian Federation is ready to act as a partner providing its specialists and technologies. The leaders of the countries of the Great South are showing great interest in the development of digital technologies and banking. Special attention is paid to participation in space exploration. The Russian Federation is making efforts to expand its diplomatic presence and establish a political dialogue with the countries of the Global South, as a result of attracting them to participate in long-term alliances.*

Keywords: Global South, developing countries, multipolar world, special military operation, anti-Russian sanctions, countries of the African continent, policy reorientation

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Introduction. An analysis of official sources, studies and statements by politicians and political scientists, diplomats and government officials indicates that turbulence can perhaps be considered the main characteristic of the geopolitical state of the modern world. Since the end of the Cold War era, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and at the same time the socialist camp, the end of the confrontation between two military-political alliances: NATO and the Warsaw Pact, political scientists have increasingly begun to talk not about the confrontation between the West and the East, but about the confrontation between the North and the South. In this regard, the topic we propose for consideration is of interest and relevance from both theoretical and practical points of view.

Materials and research methods. It should be noted that political scientists consider the division of countries into the Global North and Global South to be quite arbitrary, however, this classification, proposed by German Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1980, according to which countries are divided according to the level of development of their economies (GDP per capita), remains the

most relevant today. The basis of the East-West confrontation until the 90s of the twentieth century was the political component, the so-called ideology of different political systems; today the economic component comes to the fore. The Brandt Line still divides countries with different levels of development. And if the Global North should include developed Western countries, the USA, Japan, Australia, etc., then the Global South is represented by the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, former colonial countries, many of which continue to defend their political and economic independence, accept active participation in the construction of a just and safe world order [11]. The countries of the Middle East stand somewhat apart in this classification, which, although classified as the Global South, are, however, with the caveat that these countries are too rich for the South and too poor for the North, among them there are Arab and non-Arab societies, secular and theocratic regimes, relatively stable and extremely unstable and fragile states. M. Müller speaks of them as countries falling into a “black hole” because they fail to fit into any of the categories. [7]

The relationship between Russia and the Global South has been closely examined in academic, research, and popular literature over the past thirty years. Among foreign political scientists, the most interesting are the studies of R. Haas, A. Gordon, V. Prashad, among domestic ones P. Yakovlev, A. Torkunov, A. Vartumyan, D. Mirgorod, K. Bondarenko, K. Mirzoyan, in which the economic, political and cultural interaction between countries in Africa, the Middle East and Russia. All authors emphasize that before the period of perestroika, African countries and some countries of the Middle East occupied a prominent place in the foreign policy and trade and economic relations of the Soviet Union.

Research results and their discussion. The collapse of the USSR, the liquidation of the Warsaw Pact Organization and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance violated the established system of international cooperation. The weakening of Russia's economic position in the world has led to a reorientation of partners - the countries of the Global South - to the West.

One of the main features of the countries of the global South is non-alignment with political alliances, maintaining their own position on political issues, in order to be able to build economic relations with countries on terms favorable to them. This system of relations was quite rightly described by the Indian scientist Vijay Prashad, who emphasized that the Global South is not a space, it is a project [14]. The destruction of this project and the acquisition by individual countries of the Global South of the path to independent economic development and participation in the political and economic life of the whole world allowed some countries of the South to express opposition to the North.

After the collapse of the USSR, analyzing the features of the world order, R. Haas put forward the statement: the United States is the most powerful country in an unequal environment... Any attempt to directly compete with the United States is hopeless.” [13] Seeing how the United States behaves aggressively in the international arena (expansion of NATO borders, intervention in conflicts in Rwanda, Somalia, Iraq and Libya, dirty mediation in the Arab-Israeli conflict, etc.), many countries of the South have become hostages of a kind to the unipolar world.

The events of the beginning of the 21st century changed the angle of study of many international problems. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has significantly reduced the world population, has shaken the economies of all countries. The global crisis that occurred amid the pandemic has become one of the largest in recent years, as evidenced by the figures: according to the World Bank, global GDP decreased by 3.2%; GDP of high-income countries - by 4.3%; The GDP of middle-income countries increased by 1.2%. [1]

The start of a special military operation also had an impact on almost all countries of the European Union and the United States, which took the side of Ukraine. Supplies of ammunition, weapons, military equipment, as well as large financial resources were aimed at weakening Russia's military potential. The introduction of sanctions, according to Western politicians, was supposed to force the Russian government to negotiate and end the armed conflict. Anti-Russian rhetoric intensified day by day, Russophobic sentiments grew, at the same time, the imposition of LGBT traditions, gender reassignment, same-sex marriage began, Western politicians began to talk about the unpopularity of Russia and its isolation. It seemed that all this served to show Russia that it must

change its policies and live according to the laws dictated by the Anglo-Saxons. But Russia continued the policy of “demilitarization” and “denazification” in Ukraine, despite countless sanctions. Russia has again put forward the thesis that a unipolar world can no longer exist, and in the new geopolitical conditions we should talk about multipolarity.

The refusal of Russian gas and oil products, the constant increase in aid to Ukraine, the placement of Ukrainian refugees and the payment of benefits to them caused a wave of protests in the European Union. Many Western countries are once again on the brink of an economic crisis. At the same time, the Russophobic sentiments of the European Union and the strong US lobby demanded new allocations of large funds in support of Ukraine. The introduction of anti-Russian sanctions determined another vector for the development of Russia’s economy and politics – the Global South. And although this is not a new direction for the Russian Federation, the level of relations with the countries of the Global South is acquiring a fundamentally different character. As A. Torkunov notes, Russia’s turn towards the East is an attempt to qualitatively center Russian politics and make it more balanced and pragmatic [10]. The countries of the Global South are constantly under pressure from the Anglo-Saxons, especially in matters of cooperation with Russia. However, in order to achieve their strategic goals, the countries of the Global South themselves prefer to choose partners who are ready for mutually beneficial cooperation. African countries demonstrated their position quite openly when voting for a resolution condemning Russia and demanding the withdrawal of troops from the territory of Ukraine (March 2022); almost half of the states did not support the resolution.

And the second Russia-Africa summit, which took place in July 2023 in St. Petersburg, continued the path of developing relations with the countries of the African continent not only in matters of economics and politics, but also in matters of cultural exchanges and training of specialists for various spheres of life, opportunities for research activities have opened up. The leaders of African countries found great interest in interacting with Russia, and primarily because Russia never had colonial interests in Africa, in the most difficult moments it collaborated with the countries of the so-called “third world”, providing them with food aid, medicine, fertilizers and agricultural machinery, provided support in their liberation struggle, Soviet specialists built enterprises, power plants, and steel mills in Africa. President of the Russian Federation V. Putin highly appreciated the results of the summit, noting that “they form a good basis for further Russian-African partnership in the interests of the prosperity and well-being of our peoples.” [3] The President emphasized the idea that Russia has never set as its goal to buy only raw materials from Africa, because our country is interested in partnerships in various fields of activity.

The final Declaration of the summit highlighted the tasks of strengthening foreign policy coordination, increasing trade and investment, cooperation in the field of nuclear energy and creating a free trade zone. Much attention in the final document was paid to the issues of mitigation and lifting of sanctions for all countries of the continent, which would make it possible to avoid a food crisis. The leaders of the countries also discussed changing logistics routes, which would allow Russia to supply grain to the African market. Considering that Russia is also an agricultural country, it could propose a program to increase its own agricultural production in Africa, thus increasing its food security. In addition, Russia remains the largest supplier of potash fertilizers and can count on strategic partnerships in the field of agriculture. The need to expand Russia's zone of diplomatic influence on the African continent, develop technology in the space industry, cooperate in the field of information security and counter international terrorism was repeatedly emphasized.

The United States is literally ready to fight for the African continent. American multinational corporations have an increased interest in African commodity markets. In order to counter the influence of Russia and China in Africa, US Vice President Kamala Harris and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited the African continent. The United States faces distrust from the leaders of African countries, so it chooses a policy of “soft power” on the continent and does not force Africans to support the American course in Ukraine. At the same time, Africans have a very flexible policy of building equal relations with world powers, in particular with Russia. [6]

The second Russia-Africa summit demonstrated that sanctions and international isolation do not work, and Russia continues to increase cooperation with the states of the African continent. The

head of EU diplomacy, Josep Borrell, was forced to admit this, noting that the world is becoming increasingly multipolar, and in developing countries “the demand for sovereignty and identity” is growing. [12]. In this regard, he condemned the countries of the Global South for not considering the conflict in Ukraine a serious global problem, viewing Western values as a relic of dominance, and focusing on Russia and China.

Russia is also returning to the Middle East on a wave of nostalgia for Soviet times, when the USSR built enterprises, infrastructure facilities, created jobs, trained personnel, teaching students in Soviet universities.

The goal of Russia's Middle East policy can be considered to be increasing its role and consolidating its status in one of the most unstable regions of the world and continuing to establish political dialogue.

In this regard, Russia's activities are aimed at containing Islamic radicalism and extremism in order to avoid its spread on the territory of the Russian Federation and its closest partners; expanding Russia's presence in regional markets for arms, nuclear fuel, oil, gas and food; containing energy prices through coordination with key oil and gas suppliers. Much work is being done to attract investment, primarily from the wealthy monarchies of the Persian Gulf. One of the tasks is to attract Middle Eastern countries to participate in long-term alliances.

Russia is also demonstrating a military-political presence in the Middle East. For example, Russia entered Syria as a serious military-political player, showing that it can manage crises by establishing ties with state and non-state forces. The systematic activities of the Russian Federation have made it possible to avoid full-scale military operations in Syria recently, as well as to prevent new military operations, which contributes to the development of positive dynamics in relations with Muslim countries whose interests intersect in Syria (Iran, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iraq). Russia initially entered Syria as a peacemaker, emphasizing that its goal was the destruction of terrorists, including those sponsored by the Gulf countries. At the same time, she never stooped to take revenge on rich monarchies, but constantly sought to resolve the conflict through negotiations, involving the UAE and Saudi Arabia in this process. In other words, the Russian Federation has demonstrated its readiness to work with all countries that are ready to cooperate [4].

The eastern vector of Russian foreign policy is still developing in the direction of expanding trade and economic ties, only now they represent trade not only in hydrocarbons, but also in technologies, the exchange of scientific research achievements and educational achievements. Russian President V. Putin noted that Russia traditionally pays great attention to the Middle East region. “We have many interests there, many friends and partners. This is a promising region for the development of our foreign economic relations, traditionally friendly for us.” [9]

Russia is entering the Middle East as a counterweight to the United States. In the context of worsening relations with the West, Russia is looking for the opportunity to expand cooperation with such Middle Eastern states as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, which increases geopolitical competition in the region. The Russian Federation traditionally adheres to a policy of non-interference in the affairs of Middle Eastern states, emphasizing that regional and internal issues should be resolved by regional powers independently. Russia's policy in the Middle East today is quite balanced and consistent, based on international law and humanitarian aspects, which certainly brings certain dividends to Russian diplomacy.

Thus, Russia is in a unique position because it can talk to almost everyone in the region, because... operates in accordance with international law and is based on UN resolutions. As a result, the UAE maintains relations with Russia and is not going to join the sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union for the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. Saudi Arabia supported Russia in reducing oil production, thus canceling the price ceiling on Russian oil set by the United States. This made it possible for the Russian Federation to sell oil to those countries that do not adhere to the so-called “ceiling”. Russia is improving relations with Middle Eastern countries at a time when US policy is irritating due to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, in which Washington has taken a pro-Israeli position.

Political scientists argue that “by giving Israel an indulgence to take further action, the United States undermined its moral authority and also weakened its ability to implement other priorities. For example, in the area of support for Ukraine. They have weakened their ability to win over the global majority to their side against Russia in the Ukrainian conflict. In addition, the United States is now forced to provide military support to Israel, which, in addition to moral and political damage, reduces its ability to provide assistance to Ukraine.” [5]

In December 2023, Russian President V. Putin paid a working visit to the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Western European and American media called V. Putin’s trip “a failure of Western policy, which could not isolate Russia.” [2] The Russian leader was greeted in the UAE with great honors. His plane was accompanied throughout the entire journey by four SU-35S fighters with standard weapons on board, which not only ensured the safety of the flight, but also demonstrated the capabilities of Russian military equipment. The President of the Russian Federation arrived in the UAE with a large delegation of representatives of the Russian government and business circles, which made it possible to discuss issues of cooperation with the largest Arab trading partner. During the working meeting, the leaders of the Russian Federation and the UAE discussed the strategy of bilateral cooperation, giving special priority to nuclear energy, infrastructure and advanced technologies, and also considered the prospects for the development of agriculture, industry, space and reducing oil production in order to maintain high prices. There was also a discussion of regional conflicts. Following a meeting between the two leaders in Abu Dhabi, the UAE submitted a draft resolution to the UN Security Council to increase and monitor the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

And on January 3, 2024, through the mediation of the UAE, an exchange of prisoners of war was carried out between Russia and Ukraine, which was preceded by a complex negotiation process. Such political steps are possible as a result of mutual understanding and cooperation between state leaders.

V. Putin also visited Saudi Arabia. During the official negotiations, not only issues of mutually beneficial cooperation were considered, but also strategic issues of peace and security in the region. The Russian side was represented by a delegation of about two hundred people, because a very wide range of issues was proposed for consideration. The first meeting of the Russian-Saudi Economic Council was held, within the framework of which in the future the business circles of both countries will be able to conduct direct and regular dialogue. During the meeting, more than twenty documents were signed, including a charter on long-term cooperation between oil-producing countries, a memorandum on mutual simplification of issuing visas and cooperation in the field of culture and healthcare.

V. Putin assessed the negotiations held in Riyadh as constructive and businesslike. Their result is agreements on mutual investments worth two billion dollars (agriculture, petrochemicals and railway development). In addition, an agreement was reached to expand the supply of Russian agricultural products to Saudi Arabia. It is planned to expand cooperation in the areas of energy, industry, transport, banking, digital technologies and space exploration. [8]

The beginning of 2024 is marked by Russia's chairmanship of BRICS and the entry into this international economic organization of 5 more countries: the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, and Ethiopia. As President of the Russian Federation V. Putin noted, the organization will continue cooperation in three areas: politics and security; economics and finance; cultural contacts.

Each country that has become a member of BRICS will help improve economic ties and improve interaction between member countries of the organization: the UAE plans to strengthen the role of BRICS in the West, Saudi Arabia can help increase the influence of BRICS in the global oil market; Egypt's accession is important for strengthening cooperation with developing economies; Iran plans to reduce the pressure of US sanctions and strengthen cooperation with China and other BRICS member countries, including Saudi Arabia, the importance of restoring relations with which the Russian President spoke during his visit to Airyard; Ethiopia is ready to make efforts to strengthen international peace and progress.

The expansion of the international economic organization will increase its role in the international arena, promote mutually beneficial cooperation between the countries of the Global South, and stabilize relations in the Middle East region and on the African continent.

Conclusion. Russia is choosing a new vector of cooperation in the context of building a multipolar world, which should be built on the basis of the laws of mutual respect, mutually beneficial cooperation and international law. Russia opposes the harmful presence of the United States and its satellites in the Middle East and other parts of the Global South, which lead to a direct threat to the world as a whole. Their thoughtless policies led to unjustified aggression against Yemen, Israeli bombings in Syria, the destruction of statehood in Libya, the “introduction of democracy” to Iraq, an increase in the flow of refugees, and an unprecedented surge in international terrorism, including on the African continent. The Russian Federation, as an extra-regional player and peacemaker, is ready to act as a mediator to resolve conflicts in the Middle East and the African continent.

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