



Book Review “Russia in Africa. Resurgent Great Power or Bellicose Pretender?” by Samuel Ramani¹²

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The examination of the African countries' role in the system of international relations and its investigation become more relevant than ever before in African studies.

Several explanations are found for this, which, in our opinion, can be linked to the concept of a "compression of the world", rooted in the works of the Anglo-American Scientist R. Robertson. He characterized the process of globalization as "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole."

This process began long before its scientific explanation and was associated with the development of communications and the communicative space. Consequently, this facilitated the development of different types of technology.

The process of globalization can hardly be claimed as equal and simultaneous to all territories. However, it is quite obvious that at certain points in history, certain states become their engines and spread influence to the periphery by attracting resources, investing, and sharing technology.

In this regard, the African region, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, has long remained on the periphery of the globalization process, and its countries have been predominantly objects of influence rather than full-fledged subjects of international relations.

In the XXI century, a tendency to change is deploying, and there are several reasons for this. First of all, the world economy in its development requires an increase in human capital, therefore, it is gathering new regions that meet the principle of value for money. Many Asian countries by the end of the twentieth century had entered the post-industrial era and the production of goods and services required by the world economy on their territory became more expensive. This led to the need to develop new labor markets, including in African countries.

The second point is related to the development of logistics. The intensity and scale of goods transportation require the creation of new logistics routes. Accordingly, their development cannot bypass the territory of the African continent, and their

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² Samuel Ramani: *Russia in Africa - Resurgent Great Power or Bellicose Pretender?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. ISBN 978-0-19-774459-8, pp. 320.

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creation leads to the development of territories and their increasing participation in the process of globalization. The third point relates to demographic issues. After the decolonization of Africa in 1960, the population of the continent doubled, which led to intensive migration and increased consumer activity.

Under these circumstances, in the 21st century, the African continent has acquired key importance in global development and has become an integral part of it. This status, in turn, has become an object of heightened interest for global powers interested in joining this process and, if possible, moderating it in their interests. Yet, this moderating is no longer ideological, as it was during the Cold War. Nowadays it is related to the integration of individual countries of the continent into geocentric economic systems with centers in Paris, London, Brussels, New York, Beijing, Moscow, or Delhi, as each of these centers seeks to create its own economic space with resources and human capital. This desire creates fierce competition for partnerships with African states, which can now choose their partners and make demands.

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In this regard, the book "Russia in Africa. Resurgent Great Power or Bellicose Pretender?" is particularly interesting as it illustrates an understudied dimension of the interaction between African countries and one of the key global players - Russia. Moreover, it should be noted that even Russian contemporary studies have not been conducted, particularly a deep and inclusive analysis, which combines historical background, history of cooperation, analysis of legal documents, analysis of cooperation strategies, and even elements of forecasting the development of interaction.

At the same time, it can be stated the timeliness of the publication of this book from the point of transformation of the world order. In this regard, Russia's current position and strategy should be elaborated.

Imposed under sanctions and diverged with the Western political and economic space, Russia expectedly realized a "turn to the East", which was associated with building closer relations with China. Nevertheless, from the point of the Russian leadership, it would be short-sighted to limit to this area of cooperation. In this sense, successful attempts were made to establish relations with Iran, India, Turkey, the Persian Gulf countries, and many other important regional players. African countries were no



exception in this context and Russia hosted the first Russia-Africa summit in 2019, where almost all countries of the continent were represented and a large number of deals were concluded.

It can be stated that from this moment a new stage of close cooperation between Russia and many African countries has begun and their number is only growing, as demonstrated by the second summit in 2023. The success of cooperation was because the Russian state and large corporations made extremely favorable offers to African leaders in the field of infrastructure development, investment, supply of arms and technology, transfer of production facilities, joint development of the field, etc.

Meanwhile, Russia's position on political issues is crucial. Along with condemning the practices of colonialism and neo-colonialism of Western states, modern Russia, unlike the USSR, does not impose any conditions on African leaders to transform their political regimes, even when they are authoritarian, accepting all their traits. In this respect, Russia prevails over Western states, and especially France and England, which have long acted as metropolises for African territories, and after the end of colonialism, tied young African states to their political and economic systems and blocs, often taking action to support or overthrow certain regimes.

Many contemporary African states have spoken out against such dependence, examples of which include Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, CAR, Gabon, and several other countries. Russia has supported them in this context. This strategy has served to boost the importance of cooperation with Russia from the perspective of many African states leaders and has raised the prestige of Russia in the minds of ordinary Africans.

Another fundamental moment in the development of Russian-African cooperation was related to the expansion of BRICS, including Egypt and Ethiopia. This process was perceived by the African community as extremely affirmative and was seen as ascending to the global economic space, bypassing the global economic institutions that discriminate against African states. Besides, Samuel Ramani rightly points this out, the experience of cooperation of African states and liberation movements with the USSR, debts to which were forgiven by the contemporary Russian government in 2019, is also important for modern bilateral cooperation.

As a result, the author reasonably writes about it at the end of his book; cooperation between Russia and African countries has been developing very intensively and forms a crucial political agenda for the entire world development, both in political and economic aspects.