

НАУЧНАЯ ЖИЗНЬ

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AFRICAN MIGRATIONS AND DIASPORAS: A VIEW THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

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Abstract. *The parallel but disharmonious processes of globalization and regionalization, which at present are shaping world politics, cannot be duly considered without taking into account the perspective of human migrations. Despite the advent of digitalization and automation, intra-state, intracontinental and intercontinental movements of people will remain among the principal factors of global socio-political and economic dynamic in forthcoming decades. Correspondingly, interest in migration research has been and will keep expanding as the policy implications grow more complex.*

The Centre for Sociological and Political Sciences Studies of the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences held the conference "Africa in the Global Migration Flow: History and Modernity". The scope of the conference covered such migration-related topics as immigration policies, discrimination of migrants, diaspora, forced migration, economic development, integration and labour migration.

A particular focus of the participants was made on the dilemma that many countries receiving African migrants are facing: on the one hand, recipient countries need to attract both high and low skilled individuals to fill labour deficit and reduce costs, thereby increasing competitiveness of their industries; on the other, the population growth induced by migration puts additional pressure on social fabric, which leads to increases in public discontent and xenophobia. At the same time, donor nations seek ways to benefit from having expatriates in more developed countries not only through inward remittances, but also through enlisting their capital and expertise for the purposes of domestic development. In this regard, African diasporas may be viewed not only as contributors to international economic and cultural relations, but also as agents for national development.

Most participants agreed that migration processes will present both major opportunities and threats for political and economic development of the continent, which need to be regulated through the enhancement of corresponding government policies.

Keywords: *Africa, migration, diaspora, labour migration, economic development, social issues, refugees, Institute for African Studies (Moscow)*

АФРИКАНСКИЕ МИГРАЦИИ И ДИАСПОРЫ: ВЗГЛЯД СКВОЗЬ ПРОСТРАНСТВО И ВРЕМЯ

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Резюме. *Параллельные, но дисгармоничные процессы глобализации и регионализации, которые в наши дни во многом определяют мировую политику, нельзя должным образом проанализировать без учета феномена миграции. Конференция, проведенная Институтом Африки РАН, была посвящена обсуждению исторического и современного положения Африки в глобальных миграционных процессах и оценке роли миграции как фактора политического и социального развития. Главными темами дискуссии стали миграционная политика стран-импортеров и экспортеров мигрантов, эволюция диаспор, вынужденная и трудовая миграция, влияние миграции на экономическое развитие.*

Ключевые слова: *Африка, миграции, трудовая миграция, диаспора, экономическое развитие, социальные вызовы, беженцы*

In September 2020, an online Conference of the Institute for African Studies (IAS) took place on one of the most pressing topics of today: "Africa in the Global Migration Flow: History and Modernity". Specialists from the IAS, the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University), MGIMO University and the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation shared their views on the past, present and future place of Africans in the global architecture of migration.

In her opening remarks, the Director of the Institute for African Studies, Prof. **Irina Abramova** drew attention to the fact that migration processes are an integral part of globalization, which unites labour markets of different countries into a single world market for labour. However, at present the process of globalization itself is being called into question, and not only due to the epidemiological threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also owing to structural and economic constraints. In fact, COVID-19 is not a root cause but a trigger of fundamental changes in global migration flows, in particular between the Global South and the developed countries. The socio-economic foundations of these changes include the aging of population in most of the advanced economies of the planet, the demographic boom in developing countries, and the critical role of competitively priced labour resources in economic development. The latter factor determines the overall advantage of recipient countries, which compensate for wage costs with faster economic growth and more cost-effective production, and prompts them to

reshape their migration policies accordingly. I.O.Abramova expressed the hope that research on issues in African migration will contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon in Russia and facilitate the development of Russian-African ties across a broad spectrum of areas.

The *first session* of the Conference was dedicated to African diasporas around the world. Indeed, these diasporas may be considered the most visible representation of Africa for peoples of other continents, and at the same time they serve as the key facilitators of economic and cultural exchange and are not just a result of migration processes, but also a major factor affecting the current and future place and role of the Dark Continent in global migration flows.

The presentation by Dr. **Nadezhda Khokholkova** (IAS) focused on the emergence in the world of a “new African diaspora”, members of which have successfully mastered the virtual space, thereby engendering new, very different patterns of trans-cultural identity of Africans residing outside the home continent. On the example of the African diaspora in the USA, it was demonstrated that members of the new diaspora are often distinguished by a high level of education, professionalism, dedication, passion, trans-culturalism, as well as a longing for narration, i.e. the representation of their experience and identity by all available means.

Dr. **Tatyana Deych** (IAS) offered an analysis of China's African diaspora, in particular with regard to its situation amid the outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic brought out to the fore previously latent intercultural contradictions and demonstrated that many Africans who live in China are subjected to racism and discrimination.

Dr. **Olga Kulkova** (IAS), whose focus was on African immigrants to the EU, referred to a study by UNDP that had found that the key reason behind their arrival in Europe was the search for new opportunities and better life. Most European countries are currently facing the challenge of finding a balanced solution to the problem of immigration that would not deprive businesses in Europe of African labour but also would not pose risks to domestic socio-political stability.

Dr. **Sergey Kostelyanets** (IAS) presented a history of the evolution of the African diaspora in the New World, starting from the first “wave” of African migration to the Americas in the early 15th century aboard Spanish and Portuguese ships, which consisted mainly of free soldiers, sailors, artisans, or simply adventurers. Africans assisted Hernan Cortes in conquering Mexico and some of them later became successful entrepreneurs. As for the slaves, the first shipment of them was brought to the island of Hispaniola (modern Haiti) only in the early 16th century. There are two stages in the history of slavery. The first one is characterized by the capture and trade in slaves and the exploitation of their labour. During the second stage, due to the growing international criticism of the slave trade, the supply of new slaves to the markets decreased sharply, although their population continued to grow naturally. After the abolition of slavery, however, a new problem emerged - racial discrimination. In parts of the Americas, former slaves were not allowed to buy land for decades after emancipation. Fundamental positive changes in the life of the African diaspora took place in the 1950s and were associated with the gaining of political independence by a large number of African countries. By the end of the 1950s, the ideology of white supremacy had largely lost its meaning.

The *second session* centred on the socio-economic discourse, which encompassed the issues of education, labour migration, economic development and regional integration. Dr. **Lyubov Sadovskaya** (IAS) emphasized the nexus of migration and education as the key determinant of the so-called “brain drain”, as well as of its opposite - “brain gain”. The return of Africans who have acquired skills and capital abroad to countries of their origin has become a policy goal in many African states. In this connection, the Skills Mobility Partnerships programme has been rolled out in several African countries as an instrument of providing skills that meet international standards to potential migrants in their countries of origin at the expense of the recipient party.

Dr. **Evgeniya Morozenskaya** (IAS) distinguished the free movement of labour as one of the principal prerequisites and conduits of regional integration in Africa, but highlighted a number of corresponding risks, including the growth of the informal sector of the economy. At present, Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) adhere to the paradigm of linear market integration, which implies a gradual integration of the markets for goods, labour, capital and, preferably, of national monetary and tax systems of the member countries. An important feature of the migration of workers within RECs is the difficulty of drawing a line between various types of migration (non-return, temporary, seasonal and commuter) that are identified by statistics. In addition, the concepts of “internal migration” (movement of able-bodied persons within the country) and “external migration” (movement outside the country) are becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish. This is especially problematic in those RECs where migrants have the ability to officially gain the citizenship of the regional community (as is the case with ECOWAS).

Attitudes toward labour migrants, in particular in African and European countries, were in great detail discussed by Dr. **Inna Rybalkina** (IAS), who argued that migration had to be reconciled with the parallel growth of ethno-nationalist sentiment in recipient countries. **Oxana Ivanchenko** (IAS) touched upon the connection between attitudes toward labour migrants and the problem of modern slavery in Tanzania. **Nina Gavrilova** (IAS) focused on a distinct kind of migration - transboundary pastoralism, which has become a major source of conflicts in the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, and other countries. It was argued that prohibitive government measures currently in place must give way to new policy approaches that encourage alternative forms of cattle breeding.

Dr. **Olga Konstantinova** (IAS) concluded the session with an overview of the impact of migration on Africa's economic development. The effects of migration were found to be most significant for such sectors as mining, manufacturing, agriculture, construction and services.

The Conference's *third session* focused on the phenomenon of migration in North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The opening report by Dr. **Nataliya Krylova** (IAS) dealt with the topic of Russian migration to Africa en route to France after the 1917 Revolution. Russians interacted with autochthonous and colonial societies and voluntarily or involuntarily participated in the creation of a complex system of inter-civilizational relations within the framework of the hierarchy between the French metropolis and its dependent territories in North Africa.

Valery Matrosov (HSE University) on the example of the Libyan tribe Al-Awakir illustrated the process of transformation of an ethnically homogeneous group into a multinational community and consequences of this for the cultural identity of the entire tribal federation. In fact, a tendency emerged to promote the maximum homogeneity of self-perception among the tribe's members through the formation of ideas about the origin and ancestors of the tribe.

Dr. **Anna Milto** (Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation) spoke about the peculiarities of the Somali migration. The armed conflict that began in Somalia in 1991 led to the internal displacement of two and a half million Somalis and an exodus of almost 900,000 people from the country as refugees. The Somali diaspora, which has become one of the largest in world, does not constitute a single whole. On the contrary, it is distinguished by deep divisions along the clan lines. The resulting devaluation of the Somali identity facilitates the radicalization of members of the diaspora.

Vadim Shalupkin (HSE University) presented a history and analysis of the involvement of an Egyptian Sudanese conscript battalion in France's military operations in Mexico in 1861-1867. In 1863, the French, whose troops had suffered greatly from yellow fever and harsh tropical climate, requested Viceroy Said Pasha of Egypt the loan of a regiment to serve under the French flag. The battalion demonstrated outstanding commitment and bravery in skirmishes against guerrillas led by the Mexican nationalist Pablo Juarez. While many Africans from France's African colonies showed their inclination to desert and stay in the New World, the Sudanese fulfilled their duty in Mexico impeccably and then returned to their homeland.

The *fourth part* of the Conference was devoted to the phenomenon of migration in Sub-Saharan Africa. The topic was inaugurated by Dr. **Larisa Andreeva** (IAS), who discussed religious conflicts in the Sahel as a trigger of migration from Tropical Africa to Europe. The escalation of inter-confessional tensions between Christianity and Islam in Africa can largely be explained by the exhaustion of conversion as a resource for the expansion of their follower bases and corresponding increase in competition. At the same time, the actual line of demarcation between the Muslim and Christian parts of the African continent does not coincide with national borders. The fault line has attracted Islamists, who have turned the Sahel into one of the most dangerous and unstable regions in the world. Indeed, the spread of Islamist ideology is facilitated by political instability, weak governance, corruption, poverty and unemployment and is accompanied by extreme violence. The resulting refugee flows feed African migration to Europe, making these religious conflicts a global challenge.

Dr. **Tatyana Denisova** (IAS) drew attention of the participants to the issue of the Nigerian diaspora in South Cameroon. On the one hand, the border between Nigeria and Cameroon's English-speaking region has been a subject of disputes between the two states throughout the entire period of their independent development; on the other, it has always been transparent for massive movement of people and goods. As a result, a large community of Nigerian migrants, attracted by greater economic opportunities, has formed in Cameroon's south-western borderlands, especially in the disputed oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula. In 2008, Nigeria recognized the peninsula as part of Cameroon, but Nigerians still make up the majority of its population and face all the problems associated with the rise of Anglophone separatism in Cameroon since the 2010s.

Asiya Khalitova (IAS) focused on the migration policy implemented by the government and international stakeholders in Uganda. The Ugandan government has been implementing one of the most generous and effective

asylum policies in Africa if not the whole world, empowering refugees with the rights to employment, cultivating land and moving freely throughout the national territory, as well as granting them access to health-care and education. Accordingly, the Uganda model emphasizes the social and economic integration of refugees with host communities as the backbone of its migration policy.

The migration policy of Mauritius was illuminated by **Lyudmila Kalinichenko** (IAS), who paid particular attention to the institutional framework of labour migration to the island and to the membership of the Republic in various international programs on improving governance in the field of migration.

Lidiya Zatolokina (MGIMO University) reviewed history of migrations in Ethiopia since 1974, when the country had come to be governed by a military dictatorship. Consequently, millions of Ethiopians were forced to emigrate due to ensuing political repression and economic crisis. Despite processes of democratization and liberalization, Ethiopians are still some of the most active migrants in Africa. The government's measures aimed at curbing emigration include the creation of jobs for the youth and the enhancement of coordination with recipient countries. For instance, since 2017 Saudi Arabia has repatriated thousands of Ethiopians in collaboration with Addis Ababa.

According to Dr. **Yuri Skubko** (IAS), South Africa is undergoing a serious crisis due to its "confusing, inconsistent, reactive, defensive and visionless" immigration policy. The construction of a 40-kilometer fence along the border with Zimbabwe has failed to stop illegal migration and smuggling. The uncontrolled inflow of migrants from Zimbabwe and other neighbouring countries has already led to the exacerbation of the epidemiological situation in South Africa, which has already registered over half a million cases of COVID-19.

Darya Turyanitsa (IAS) continued the discussion of the continent's southernmost country with the focus on the problem of migration to its Western Cape province. The discrimination of migrants in the region has been especially visible in the sphere of employment. The government's policy of affirmative action, which aimed at increasing opportunities provided to blacks, has undermined the status of the "coloureds", including the Khoisan, which is an indigenous people of Southern Africa.

During a lively discussion, the speakers touched upon the labour market impact of immigration, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration flows in Africa, the need to adopt new migration policies, and also discussed possible changes in the organization of migration processes in the new "quarantine" world through the prism of world experience.

In summary, participants of the Conference concluded that the role of Africa in global migration processes is bound to expand, reflecting the continent's growing economy, population and the level of integration with the global labour market. While the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the normal routine of migrants, it is unlikely to change the general trend toward the intensification of intracontinental and intercontinental movements of Africans.