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Modern Humanitarianism and Societal Security in African Countries

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The subject matter of studies on the African continent has become especially popular in the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) in the current socio-economic and cultural conditions, which is understandable. Our university is a recognized leader among Russian higher education institutions in organizing and running international activities and recruiting international students. It has accumulated many years of experience in educational, research, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation with African countries. Thus, more than one and a half thousand African students study at multinational RUDN. Over the years of its existence, more than ten thousand highly qualified specialists from 49 African countries graduated from RUDN. The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities has one of the few departments of African Studies and Arabic Studies in Russia, headed by A.M. Vasiliev, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Honorary President of the Institute of Africa of the Russian Academy of Sciences, President of the Center for Civilizational and Regional Studies of the Russian

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Academy of Sciences. The teachers of the department provide high-quality training of specialists through the involvement of highly qualified personnel from the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IAFR RAS), the world's largest and the only scientific institution in the Russian Federation that comprehensively studies the development of African societies in the context of global changes. Finally, the intensification of socio-cultural and spiritual searches by representatives of the African continent for their place in the world should be named as a clearly defined trend in modern scientific, social, and humanitarian life. On the one hand, this presupposes efforts to form a proper national ideology and self-awareness, identity, and spirituality, and, on the other hand, attempts to transform and adapt the achievements of colonial civilization, including the Western one.

These processes are reflected in the joint activities of the Department of Social Philosophy of RUDN, the Department of International Relations of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs of Higher School of Economics, and the Laboratory for Diplomatic Research and Actions of Gabon (LaRAD) on organizing and holding scientific conferences, round tables, forums, and participation in international projects. Here are some of the most notable events of this kind. They are united thematically and with the participation of a postgraduate student of the Department of Social Philosophy of RUDN, a researcher at LaRAD J.Ch. Mbina.

On June 21, 2021, a round table "Modern Humanitarianism — Societal Security in African Countries" was held within the framework of the seminar of the Department of Social Philosophy of RUDN "Social Knowledge: Problems and Prospects." The main speaker was J.Ch. Mbina. The topic of his speech was "Problems of Societal Security in Central Africa: The Case of Gabon."

In his report, J.Ch. Mbina presented a brief historical background about Gabon and spoke about its inhabitants. He particularized the state's migration policy, informed about the impact of migration and the values of migrants on society.

The question was raised about the language policy in Gabon and the influence of bilingualism on the national identity of the Gabonese: do they form a hybrid identity because of bilingualism (native language and French). The speaker mentioned that Gabon, like most African countries, is a multilingual country with ten languages spoken. French is the official state language. It coexists with the *fang* and *guisir* languages of the people of Gabon. These languages predominate largely among the uneducated part of the population.

Particular attention in the report was paid to the issue of local religions: Bwiti, Njembe, Njobi, Mouiri or Mviri, Mwett, Bayeri, Ikokhu. One of the most widespread traditions and religions is Bwiti. Among the many esoteric traditional beliefs in Gabon, the Bwiti is one of the most important. Bwiti is a cult, philosophy, primary teaching, and therapy (both physical and psychological) simultaneously. The Bwiti practice is intended only for men and allows them to gain access to the other world, to get in touch with spiritual beings. Those who are initiated in Bwiti communicate with these spiritual beings due to absorbing the juices of the sacred

iboga plant and special spells. Bwiti is both a way of life and a specifically Gabonese religious belief, with song and traditional dance included in the Bwiti initiations.

The relationship between the Bwiti and the imported religions (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism) is vital in ensuring Gabon's societal security. J.Ch. Mbina gave examples of conflicts over religious and ethnic identity. However, Gabon is the only country in the subregion that has not had religious or ethnic wars. Freedom of religion is respected. In many exceptional cases, the leaders of religious confessions (Protestants, Islam, Bwiti) cooperate to solve social problems such as poverty, lack of access to medicine, and education.

The growth of xenophobic sentiments in society and the strengthening of anti-Benin sentiments in the capital are of particular concern to government bodies and church officials. French citizens living in Gabon are reporting an increase in anti-French sentiment in the Gabon capital Libreville. According to a 2020 study by the Ichikowitz Family Foundation, 71% of Gabonese have a lousy attitude towards France. This feeling grows after every presidential election.

The main conclusion of the presented report was formulated as follows: Gabon remains a cultural and religious melting pot. In it, many cultures, religions, and languages have never created open conflict. However, the state and society need to constantly solve current societal problems to remain a conflict-free country.

The questions to the speaker concerned the connection of the presented topic with the societal problems in the world, with the religions of Gabon. The discussion focused on the issues of Gabon's internal politics and attitudes towards the migration aspect. The speaker was asked to talk about the population's attitude to their identity, to outline the value aspect in the communication practices of the Gabonese. When asked whether the Gabonese consider themselves primarily Gabonese or a French colony, J.Ch. Mbina replied that the feeling of colonization is gradually disappearing from the minds of the Gabonese, although this is not an easy but a long process. The participants of the discussion also debated the consequences of an increase in the migration flow in Gabon at present and the plans to use the economic potential of the region to take a significant place in the world economy and raise the standard of living of the population.

Roundtable participants (M.A. Glaser, I.V. Krivushin, D.D. Romanov, M.L. Ivleva, N.N. Novik, P.A. Slusarchuk, O.Y. Bondar, P.A. Rudanovskaya, E.M. Gureeva, A.V. Ganin, S. Kim, P.-E. Tommen, A. Otsavnova, P.A. Vladimirov, A.V. Lebedeva, V. Gatskovskaya, V. Moshkova, R.V. Savvinov, O. Savvina and others) reasoned different positions on these issues, actively using the results of their observations and research. Other issues were also raised at the round table. Thus, the topic of the speech by A. Nadzharov (RF, HSE) was "Ethnic and religious factor in the Sahel conflict, the factor of France in the marginalization of a part of local peoples."

Continuing the discussion of African Renaissance issues, on July 6, 2021, the Mandela Institute (France), in collaboration with the Doctorate of Governance for

Africa and the Middle East (GAMO-UM5 /Maroc) and the Laboratory for Diplomatic Research and Action (LaRAD/Africa) held a video conference on the topic "Rethinking National Diplomacy in a Pan-African Vision." Participants include prominent political figures from Gabon and the African continent, including Prime Minister of Madagascar Olivier Mahafaly, Minister José Brito, Ambassadors Ezzeddine Zayani, Dieudonne Ndabarushiman, scientists Tall Nadia Mohamedel Hamedel (Maitre Tall Nadia Bioule), Mohamed Harakat, Aube Kouame. Jude Mbina, an employee of LaRAD and a postgraduate student of the Department of Social Philosophy of RUDN University, made a presentation. According to the conference participants, a new strategic and independent Africa should carve out its path leading to sustainable development, based on 4 points: a strategic vision, tactical decision, joint operational actions, and diplomacy.

Another notable event for Central and West Africa — on August 12, 2021, the Pan-African Young Leaders Forum was timed to coincide with World Youth Day. Jude Mbina gave a presentation on "The Responsibility of African Youth to Create and Maintain Peace." He highlighted the psychological, ethnic, and moral qualities of African youth in detail, stressing their positive and negative manifestations. He focused on describing the main causes of African conflicts, combining them into four groups: socio-economic, religious, personal, and ethnic reasons. Special attention was paid to the various instruments, initiatives, and technical resolutions adopted by young Africans to prevent and resolve conflicts, referring to the African Youth Charter (2006), the African Youth Alliance Peace Program (Youth for Peace). At the end of his speech, Jude Mbina emphasized that war and violence are destroying the best of African youth. Efforts should be made to further work with youth and proceed with the research in crowd psychology, emotion management, and the development of emotional intelligence in young Africans.

Those as mentioned earlier and similar events underline the importance of intensifying contacts and continuing joint scientific activities in African studies. It is evident that at the present stage of development of the world economy and international relations, when there is a transition from a monocentric to a polycentric model of the world, the African continent attracts the world's leading players as a new pole of world development, and shortly, it will play a special role in world development thanks to its resource base and demographic potential.

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Современный гуманитаризм и социетальная безопасность в странах Африки

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