RESEARCH ARTICLE:

The Ubuntu Principle in the Internal and Foreign Policy of South Africa

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Abstract

This article discusses the peculiar features of South Africa's foreign policy, which became the fifth member of BRICS in 2011. The decision for South Africa's accession to BRICS was based on the principles of the country's foreign policy; facilitating the establishment of a multipolar, just, and equitable world order, striving for the development and prosperity of Africa. The focus is on the notion of Ubuntu and the formation of foreign policy in South Africa since the 90s of the 20th century. Ubuntu is one of the basic philosophical concepts and organizational principles of the Bantu-speaking people of Africa. After the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa and the democratic transformation undertaken in 1994, the philosophy of Ubuntu was adopted by the leaders of the country and became an instrument regulating public life, became a regular fixture of domestic public policy as well as firmly entrenching itself as one of the key principles of foreign policy. The purpose of this paper is to determine when the philosophy of Ubuntu became part of the political landscape of South Africa, to establish the degree of this concept's influence on the external and internal political rhetoric, and to determine the tools for the dissemination of Ubuntu by the government of South Africa. The scientific novelty consists in a comprehensive analysis of state documents and their study with reference to content on the Ubuntu concept. Earlier, such an analysis has not been introduced into the scientific study of our country. The conclusions reached by the author assert a high degree of integration of the concept of Ubuntu in the strategic course of the South Africa's policy.

Keywords: *South Africa; BRICS; Ubuntu; African renaissance; public diplomacy*

Introduction

The changes in the global market that took place at the beginning of the 21st century resulted in an imbalance in the existing system of international relations. The traditional economic centers of influence have partially lost their positions and, on the contrary, the position of countries that were formerly classified as developing economies has strengthened. The ascent of new powers has also raised the question of changing the traditional world order, which should be based on a mutual accommodation of interests and an understanding of the need to think in terms of tomorrow (Yakovenko, 2008: 6). The last two decades have also been marked by the formation and strengthening of the position in the international arena of various interstate associations and structures that determine priorities for themselves. The BRICS group of countries is one of such associations; it is intended to become a multi-level dialogue platform between states representing various regions of the world. The rules that govern relations within this union of countries are based on the sovereignty and equality of all participants. South African President Jacob Zuma also stated this in regard of his country. He said that BRICS is a place where Africa is treated with respect and the views expressed are treated as identical to their own (Shubin, 2013: 65).

BRICS is a global phenomenon that unites the rising economic powers of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, all of which play a leading political and economic role in their regions. The population of the BRICS countries, according to the data for 2020 (The World Bank), exceeds 3.2 billion people, which amounts to 41.3 percent of the total population of the planet, the GDP of the BRICS countries comes to 24.3 percent of the global GDP. According to experts, in the 21st century the BRICS association will become the leader of the world economy in terms of its

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economic and statistical indicators. The BRICS group is unique in that each member of the association is a leader on its continent or sub-region within the context of a regional integration agreement: Russia in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Brazil in the Common Market of South America (MERCOSUR), South Africa in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), India in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and China in the Comprehensive Regional Economic Partnership (CREP). All the countries that are BRICS partners in these regional integration agreements represent the potential for the formation of a larger association - the "BRICS+ circle" (Lissovolik, 2017). This structure could become a new form of cooperation and a way to develop relations open to flexible and diverse forms of interaction.

The rise of developing powers to the leading positions has had an impact on the increase in demand for Africa's natural resources which has resulted in the growth of its economic indicators. Such structural changes in the global market have opened up new opportunities, positioning Africa as a significant player in the global economy. The accession of a new member, the Republic of South Africa, to the G4 has significantly expanded the possibilities of a partnership between Africa and the BRICS group, since South Africa is an active member of regional associations. Thus, in 1992, the Republic joined the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and in 2000 South Africa organized the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund to finance projects intended for developing inter-African relations, resolving inter-regional and ethnic conflicts, and improving the social and democratic environment (Political Systems of Modern States, 2014: 550). In 2001, it initiated the organization of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and in 2002 it initiated the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union (AU). The Republic of South Africa is also a member of international associations, it is a member of the ACT (countries of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific) and the G20. In 2003, the Republic of South Africa signed the Brazilian Declaration on the Establishment of South-South Cooperation, gaining the status of a representative and regional power of Southern Africa. In 2011, it became a member of BRICS.

It is important to note that South Africa is the largest investor in Africa. It accounts for about 90 percent of all portfolio investments in the countries of the continent (Avdokushin and Zharikov, 2013: 29). It is worth emphasizing that the Johannesburg Stock Exchange is regarded as the main platform for trading securities on the continent, and the financial sector of the Republic is one of the most developed in the world. South Africa pushes forward the rhetoric that BRICS is not an association of states, but an association of regions, where Pretoria positions itself as a "gateway" (Vasiliev, 2017) to the African continent. It voices a hope that its participation in the association will enhance the cooperation of the members of the group with other African countries. Speaking in Sanya during the first summit of the enlarged BRICS, the South African President Jacob Zuma called on companies from the four other countries to team up with Southern African countries to promote the development of Africa. In 2013, at the Durban summit, Pretoria made a proposal to hold a BRICS dialogue with partners from the countries of the Global South, which began to be practiced with subsequent chairmanships. In 2018, South Africa invited the leaders of Rwanda, Senegal, Gabon, Uganda, Ethiopia, Togo, Zambia, Namibia, Angola, and Chad to the summit in Johannesburg. The strengthening of the economic and political influence of South Africa on the continent allows it to ensure the support of a significant part of the African community when discussing continental problems at international forums. By attracting investment in this way and increasing export volumes, South Africa believes that such a multilateral influence on the African continent will allow it to strengthen its position in the international arena (Arkhangelskaya, 2013: 105).

All this speaks not only about the certain ambitions of the regional leader and the "Voice of Africa" (Vasiliev, 2017), at which the political leaders of South Africa have repeatedly announced in their speeches, but also about the country's foreign policy priorities. The accession of the Republic of South Africa into BRICS in April 2011 is worth considering as part of the foreign policy and economic course towards strengthening the country's influence both in the international arena and in the internal geopolitical space of the African region. December 24th, 2010, should be regarded as the date of the actual inclusion of South Africa in the BRICS group. It was on this day that the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, announced that she had received a telephone notification from Chinese Foreign Minister, Yang Jiechi, according to which China, the then chairman of the BRICS, in concordance with other member countries of the organization, invited South Africa to become a full member of the BRIC (BRICS) group, and Chinese President Hu Jintao sent an invitation to South African President Jacob Zuma to take part in the BRICS summit in China, Sanya, in early April 2011. A month later, in May of the same year, the South African government issued a White Paper entitled "Building a Better World: Ubuntu Diplomacy", which became a very significant strategic document. It was the first time since

the transition of South Africa to democracy in 1994 that a foreign policy document was issued, which was based on one of the key concepts of African philosophy, *Ubuntu.*

Ubuntu

The concept of *Ubuntu* first appeared in the written sources in South Africa in the middle of the 19th century. Some researchers believe that the term consists of the prefix *u-*, the prefix of the abstract noun *buand,* and the noun base *-ntu*, meaning "*man*", which is translated from the Xhosa and Zulu languages as *personhood* or *humanness* (Kamwangamalu, 1999: 25), in other words "*humanity*". *Ubuntu* is one of the main philosophical concepts and organizational principles of the Bantu-speaking peoples of Africa. The idea of *Ubuntu* has been popularized in terms of philosophy and worldviews since the 1950s, much through the writings of Jordan Kush Ngubane, an African intellectual, writer, and analyst (1917-1985). From the 1970s onwards, *Ubuntu* began to be interpreted as a philosophical system called 'African humanism'. According to *Ubuntu*, there is a common bond between all people. It is through this connection and the interaction of people with each other that a person can reveal his own human qualities. *Ubuntu* has many meanings. There is a saying in the Nguni language, *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, which means that "a person is a person through other people" (Gade, 2011: 303). In his essay, "Ubuntu: on the Nature of the Human Community", the South African Nobel Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu explained this expression as follows: "We need other human beings for us to learn how to be human, for none of us comes fully formed into the world. We would not know how to talk, to walk, to think, to eat as human beings unless we learned how to do these things from other human beings" (Tutu, 2011).

Desmond Tutu described the image of a man who in his daily life preaches the principle of *Ubuntu* as open and accessible to others and giving support to all members of society. He or she does not feel disadvantaged or threatened at the thought that others may be more gifted or have more qualities than he or she because he or she has the true self-confidence, which comes from knowing that he or she belongs to a larger whole, and therefore feels humiliated when others are humiliated or oppressed when others are tortured or oppressed (Isike, 2020:2). Nelson Mandela, a member of the Xhosa community, felt *Ubuntu* to be an inborn duty to support his kith and kin. In his opinion, people should enrich themselves, that is, nurture *Ubuntu* within themselves, but that true enrichment results from the actions directed to the spiritual growth of their community (Mandela, 2006). One of specific features of the *Ubuntu* concept is its complementarity that is expressed in the following correlation: "one is seen in the other and the other in the one". Kenyan philosopher, John Mbiti (1931-2019), reputed as the father of African theology, said that it is only in relation to other people that an individual begins to realize his own being, through the performance of his duties and being sensible of responsibility towards himself and towards other people. When a person suffers, he does not suffer alone but together with the entire group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his fellow tribesmen — neighbors and kin, dead or alive. The main social formula for the individual is the expression: "I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am." (UKEssays, 2018). The principles of *Ubuntu* reveal the inseverable linkage of the individual and the community, regard its existence as deeply interlaced with a social structure based on humanism and a collectivist way of life. The closest Russian analogue of this philosophical category is the concept of *sobornost* (conciliarity) (Political Systems of Modern States, 2014: 550).

However, there exists a misconception, described by the Russian Africanist, Bondarenko (2014), in his work "Communality: the fundamental principle of the historical, cultural and socio-political tradition of sub-Saharan Africa". It became widespread at the time when the first Europeans penetrated into the territory of Africa south of the Sahara and consists of the fact that in sociocentric cultures the individual is viewed as completely absorbed by the collective. Meanwhile, on the contrary, the scholar states, he is not dissolved in it, but rather has an obvious value of his own which is derived from the idea of the uniqueness not of the individual, but of each person's place in the Universe, his irreplaceability in it, and in the communal collective as its center (Bondarenko, 2014: 16). The Russian scientist notes that to be a person in an authentic African culture means not to exhibit individuality, not to strive to be different from other members of society, but to become like them. Only in this way does an African acquire and feel his irreplaceability and uniqueness. The exclusivity of a person does not consist in the singularity of his qualities and traits, but in the originality of his social role and position. The laws of the community, in return, require concerted actions from its members to maintain the universal balance and mutual responsibility for the correctness of behavior, encourage the individual to become similar to other members of the group, and adopt the generally accepted models of behavior. Bondarenko notes that "the principle of communality, in whatever spheres of relations it manifests itself, is based on the interaction of the individual and the collective, where the interests of the latter, although they do not suppress the interests of the former, are deemed to be a priority and serve as a

worldview basis for the existence of the community at all times as a comprehensive fundamental principle of African societies" (Bondarenko, 2014: 16). Recognizing the primacy and supremacy of the collective over the individual as an absolute social norm, an African in an authentic culture can perceive himself as a person. Only in a collective can he feel truly free (Bondarenko, 2014: 17). Such an understanding of the individual is in direct contrast to the established Western ideas that emphasize the priority of personal goals and interests and the freedom of the individual from society.

In the works of African scholars, one can encounter the counter position of *Ubuntu* to the concept of individualism, which is the basic principle of life organization in Western society (Andreev and Selivanov, 2001: 104). Thus, placing emphasis on competition as one of the characteristics of individualism, scholars such as Akinola and Okeke-Uzodike argue that it has a direct impact on such values as peace and security (Akinola and Okeke-Uzodike, 2018: 93), making them less sustainable. *Ubuntu* should be viewed through the prism of counter-ideology to the Western global hegemony in the social, cultural, and economic spheres (Qobo and Nyathi, 2016: 424). The ethics of *Ubuntu* were created in the process of interaction between God the Creator, ancestors, and people. In his opinion, this comes into contradiction with the Western worldview based on theories, each of which was developed by one person, "as in the case of Aristotelian eudemonism, Kantian deontology or Platonic dualism" (Isike, 2020: 2). The author insists that the normative standards of *Ubuntu* are developed by the community, not by a single person, as is the way of Western philosophy, and are implemented by the community since they are born in it. *Ubuntu* is a specific spiritual ideal, a way of life that exists in the worldview perception of a wide range of sub-Saharan African societies. Existing in different variations in African cultures and languages, each *Ubuntu* conceptualization retains the same core meaning, which is both the purpose and morality of human beings. Ntamushobora, a priest from the Democratic Republic of Congo and a professor at the African International University in Nairobi, believes that the sense of community that is contained in *Ubuntu* is conveyed to the fullest extent possible in the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians: "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Corinthians, 12: 12). The quintessence of *Ubuntu* is the absence of the idea of the superiority or inferiority of the other, the recognition of all created in the image of God, thereby making *imago Dei* (the image of God) the essence of human identity.

A Change of Foreign Policy Values: From Pariah to an Equal Partner

After the fall of the apartheid regime, the personality of the outstanding African figure Nelson Mandela, who became the first president of the country (1994-1999), played an indubitable role in the formation of South Africa's foreign policy. He had a significant impact on shaping the foundations of the new foreign policy of the state, which was continued by subsequent presidents Thabo Mbeki, Motlanthe Kgalema, Jacob Zuma, and Cyril Ramaphosa.

In 1993, in his keynote article entitled "The Future of South African Foreign Policy", which appeared in the International Politics Journal, the leader of the then African National Congress (ANC) party highlighted six main points which, in his opinion, South Africa's foreign policy should be based upon. Along with the provisions on human rights, democracy, respect for international law, and the development of international and regional cooperation, Mandela spoke about the necessity to reflect the problems and interests of the entire continent in the foreign policy of South Africa (Mandela, 1993: 87). He paid much attention to the thesis of increasing the economic cooperation between African countries and the development of trade (Mandela, 1993: 80). Finally, Mandela advocated for the full reintegration of South Africa into the global trade network. The leader of the Republic of South Africa urged citizens "not to avoid their African destiny and to direct their energies to the continent itself, so that they never become victims of the forces that have brought destruction to it".

In 1994, after the apartheid regime was abolished and the legitimacy of the new democratically elected government recognized, the diplomatic isolation of the country came to an end. The goals and objectives of foreign policy began to be developed with a focus on strengthening ties between developing countries, attracting foreign investment, creating a favorable image for the country, and protecting the interests of the states of the continent. It was necessary to define the role and place of the new Republic of South Africa on the continent, and the issue of a national idea was contemplated there. The concept of an African Renaissance was conceived in South Africa in the second half of the 1990s. According to this concept, Africans were to perceive themselves as the successors of the great civilizations of Africa, and to learn to respect themselves again after the suffering of the colonialism period and the hardships of the first decades of independence. The new ideological concept called on them to mobilize their potential (primarily intellectual) to revive their former greatness. The ideas of an African Renaissance reflected the growing expectations of the democratization process in Africa and in many respects became a

harbinger of the creation of the African Union Economic Development Program (NEPAD). However, despite its undoubted urgency and popularity, the concept developed by South African President Thabo Mbeki encountered many objective difficulties and was not implemented (Mandela, 1993: 80).

The *Ubuntu* philosophy first gained worldwide fame and recognition during the democratic transition in South Africa and as a result of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996. The main purpose of the investigation was to promote national reconciliation between the victims and perpetrators of apartheid, to preach forgiveness in order to heal the hatred that arose as a result of the crimes. There should be no room for revenge in a new democratic society. The specifics of the commission's work were the possibility of granting full amnesty for crimes committed in exchange for a public confession. Desmond Tutu, who headed the commission, was a proponent of the philosophy and spiritual power of *Ubuntu*. He was convinced that justice could be restored through the need to confess to the crimes committed. Tutu recalled that some perpetrators repented what they had done and stated that they wanted to correct their mistakes, and many victims, looking at their remorse, were able to forgive them. Based in its decisions, which were centered around the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, the commission granted amnesty to criminals who had confessed to human rights violations (Tella, 2021: 93). The successful experience of using the *Ubuntu* philosophy as a tool for uniting the people and fighting the apartheid regime made it possible to use its principles and implement them in the contents of the key state documents of the domestic and foreign policy of South Africa.

Ubuntu in the Foreign Policy of South Africa

Ubuntu was first mentioned in the epilogue to the Interim Constitution of 1993, which was intended to be a kind of a historical bridge between the past of the deeply divided society characterized by conflicts, suffering, and injustice, and the future was based on such dominant principles as human rights, democracy, peaceful coexistence, and equal opportunities for development for all South Africans regardless of skin color, class, views or gender. It is emphasized in the constitution that the aspirations toward national unity and the well-being of all citizens of South Africa and the world requires reconciliation between peoples and the re-establishment of a united society (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 200, 1993: 147). According to the Constitution, it is necessary to overcome discord and enmity, which in turn gave rise to gross violations of human rights, fear, and hatred in the society, through "... understanding but not revenge, reparation but not retribution, Ubuntu but not victimization" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 200, 1993: 147). The main theses of the interim document were entrenched in the subsequent Constitution of South Africa in 1996, which is still regarded as one of the most progressive in the world. In 1997, the National Assembly of South Africa adopted the White Paper of Social Security (Department of Welfare, 1997: 12), where *Ubuntu* was indicated among the key provisions approved for the implementation of programs such as democracy, partnership, and equality. It was viewed as a principle of concern for each other's well-being, which would be encouraged while developing the spirit of mutual support. It is pointed out in the book that the human qualities of each person can be expressed through his relationships with other people, and their relationships, in turn, through the recognition of their own humaneness. *Ubuntu* implies that people are people through interactions with other people. It recognizes both the rights and obligations of every citizen in promoting individual and public welfare (Department of Welfare, 1997: 12).

In 2011, four months after receiving the invitation to enter the BRICS, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) issued the White Paper "Building a Better World: Ubuntu Diplomacy". In the preamble to the document, South Africa is called a multi-faceted, multi-cultural, and multi-racial state, where the concept of *Ubuntu* is a way of self- determination and forming relationships to others. The inclusion of *Ubuntu* in South Africa's foreign policy strategy best illustrates the importance that the government has attached to *Ubuntu* as a strategic tool. The thesis that, being a beneficiary of many initiatives of disinterested solidarity in the past, South Africa considers as a benefit for its people the same that it wishes for the citizens of the whole world, finds its place in the document. The national interests of the country are focused on the person, and their main postulates are the well-being of its citizens as well as the protection of the planet for future generations and ensuring the prosperity of the country, of neighboring regions, and the continent. It is possible to achieve these goals subject to striving for a just, humane, and equitable world order that ensures security, peace, dialogue, and economic.

The White Paper also states that "the fate of the Republic of South Africa is inextricably bound up with the fate of the South African region ... regional and continental integrations are the basis for the development and political unity of Africa and are necessary for its own prosperity and security" (Department of Welfare, 1997). The principles of *Ubuntu* are also being actively implemented in the internal state policy, being reflected in the content of various

documents. Thus, in the 2021 report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, *Ubuntu* stands among such values as patriotism, loyalty, devotion, *Batho Pele* (People First), and constitutional values (DIRCO). It is also presented in the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in the Public Diplomacy section (DIRCO), in the Manifesto on Values, Education, and Democracy (Manifesto on Values. Education and Democracy), in the Strategic (2020-2025) and Annual (2022-2023) activity plans of the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (Manifesto on Values, Education, and Democracy). Along with this, the Manifesto of School Values for 2002, which specifies the values that should permeate the education system: democracy, social justice and equality, absence of racism and sexism, human dignity, an open society, respect and reconciliation, the rule of law, and *Ubuntu* is mentioned in the National Development Plan 2030 (National Development Plan 2030), in the section dealing with instilling constitutional values in children.

Various public diplomacy tools have been created to spread the ideas of *Ubuntu,* such as *Ubuntu* Radio, magazines *Ubuntu* (*Ubuntu* - South Africa's Public Diplomacy in Action), It's Your Voice, and *Ubuntu* Diplomat. Along with this, a partnership has been established with the SABC's Channel Africa, the largest international South African broadcasting corporation. In 2015, the annual *Ubuntu* Awards were established to award South African citizens who play an active role in creating a positive image of the state at an international level. All these resources are intended for informing the community and attracting public attention to the issues of South Africa's foreign policy, stimulating various discussions, and securing them as key image components and elements of South Africa's soft power. South African politicians actively operate with *Ubuntu* as part of African ethics in their rhetoric (According to the analysis of news published on government websites of South Africa). For instance, the public statement of the President of South Africa, tagged with the headline "Ramaphosa said that xenophobia is inconsistent with the values of South Africans", demonstrates such an example in a subsequent article. It informs the state leader's speech on the occasion of Heritage Day, where he calls upon South Africans to celebrate the diversity of cultures in the country and be more hospitable towards foreigners. Ramaphosa alludes to the spirit of *Ubuntu*, urging citizens to show compassion and kindness to other people, "especially those less fortunate, and also to those from foreign lands who have sought refuge here" (The Citizen: 24.09.2022). Among the headlines you can also find: "Let's return to principles of Ubuntu, Mantula urges South Americans" (*Thabo Mbeki African School on Public and International Affairs, Sipho Mantula*), (SABC NEWS); "Mthethwa calls on Africans to reclaim Ubuntu" (SABC NEWS); and so on. In the article entitled "The Coronation of His Majesty King Misuzulu kaZwelithini", we find a description of him as a man who "... exemplifies the best spirit of *Ubuntu*: that honour need not yield to ambition, that open-mindedness and willingness to listen are not inconsistent with devotion to principle, that civility can accompany tenacity, and that humility should go hand in hand with power" (Independent Online 2022).

The next example is taken from the introductory word of South African Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane to the report of the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Foundation (ARF) for 2016/2017, where *Ubuntu* is cited: "Our Ubuntu diplomacy requires that our participation in the life of the continent be based on humanity and collective responsibility. In this regard, ARF has allocated funds for humanitarian assistance to assist fraternal countries affected by natural disasters, namely: Madagascar and Namibia. This contributed to the restoration of the affected countries and the elimination of human suffering" (African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund, 2016/17: 11). Also, the researcher finds reference to *Ubuntu* in some ANC documents. For example, in a statement issued based on the results of the National Executive Committee (NEC) on April 24 to 25, 2022, stating that the NEC highly appreciated the manifestation of solidarity and spirit of *Ubuntu* demonstrated by South Africans across the country who donated food, water, clothing, and other essential items to the residents of the areas (ANC) affected as a result of the national disaster. It is worth noting that the popularization of *Ubuntu* has garnered a great response from South African society, resulting in a growing number of educational institutions and courses; non-profit organizations with *Ubuntu* in their names; many business programs have been launched that promote the principles of *Ubuntu* as the basis for their projects, for example, *Ubuntu*-trading and faire-trade. Product lines are created, such as *Ubuntu* Cola, *Ubuntu* Coffee, and so on. The Ubuntu worldview model has also resonated with the founders of the *Ubuntu* Cape Town football team, which welcomes boys growing up without fathers, providing them with elite football training, quality education, mentoring, and leadership training. In 2012, a political party named the *Ubuntu* Party was founded that promotes the rhetoric that the country belongs to its people, the mineral wealth and the right to create energy also belong to its people, and the government is appointed by the people as a servant of the people in order to meet the needs of the people at all levels.

Concluding Remarks

The Republic of South Africa is a unique example of an African state that has tried to implement *Ubuntu*, the direction of South African ethics and humanistic philosophy, the constituent element of African identity for more than 400 ethnic groups living in almost the entire territory of sub-Saharan Africa, into the state strategy. By making *Ubuntu* a key element of the strategy, South African leaders introduced an important concept for African society into international circulation, thus, declaring the existence of African values. Having appeared for the first time in political rhetoric in the 90s, *Ubuntu,* to a greater degree, served as a tool for regulating social relations. Almost two decades later, a month after participating in the first BRICS summit for South Africa, the White Paper "Building a Better World: Ubuntu Diplomacy" was published, where the new meaning of *Ubuntu* is revealed, that is as a way of self-determination for the African people. For South Africa, the development of national identity becomes an important basis for the formulation and implementation of a successful foreign policy. The introduction of a key concept for African society into the practice of public life also speaks to a tendency to reject universal ways. The peaceful transition from apartheid and the transformation from a racist society, the experience of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the repeatedly performed role of a mediator in peace negotiations that took place based on the principles of *Ubuntu* gives Africans grounds to declare their way and means of overcoming challenges. The introduction of a significant element of traditional social culture and ethical philosophy into the domestic and foreign policy of South Africa is an indicator of certain shifts that are taking place within African society. The trend towards the so-called Africanization of foreign policy has also been reflected in other states of the continent. Thus, in Botswana, the concept of *Ubuntu*, presented as *Botho*, is one of the five national principles embodied in the "Botswana Vision 2016" strategy. In Malawi, it is *uMunthu* while in Kenya, it is *Harambee*. *Ubuntu* is also found in the state documents of Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Congo, and the Republic of Chad.

At first glance, the concept of Ubuntu may seem naive and unviable. However, upon closer examination, we see examples of the consistent implementation of its principles in life. In particular, South Africa upholds the desire for the well-being and prosperity of the continent through an active investment policy, attracting new partners from BRICS and other associations. This is one of the key principles of *Ubuntu* - self-development through the pursuit of the well-being and prosperity of the community. Also, we should not forget about the peacekeeping missions of the state, including its role as a mediator, which reflect the principles of peace, security, forgiveness, and compassion. As for domestic policy, based on analysis, including the speeches of politicians, we can see that *Ubuntu*, to a greater extent, performs socio-regulatory and ethical functions. At the same time, the popularization of *Ubuntu* is a kind of protection of African identity and culture that invariably forms feelings of loyalty and patriotism, creates the necessary image of the state, and becomes an instrument of soft power. Through the prism of *Ubuntu*, this worldview model is close to many African states. Modern challenges compel participants in international relations to reconsider forms of interaction, as well as the global ideology that advocates theses about democracy, the primacy of capital, and various forms of freedom. The emergence of BRICS and its conversion into a key player in the global arena is one case study of the deep and rapid transformation of the entire world order, which entails the establishment of new rules of the 'game'. BRICS can become the basis of a new economic order that will not depend on the West. South African society sees *Ubuntu* as an opportunity to replace, rethink, and create an alternative to the current "destructive path of growing global injustice" (Swanson, 2012: 33). It is obvious that the Republic of South Africa is not the best example of overcoming social, political, and economic crises, but actual experience of using the principles of *Ubuntu* in various practices can become an example for the entire BRICS, to be used as a model and scaled in the BRICS+ range. Within the African continent, this concept, the language of Ubuntu will find proper understanding and support. The South African philosopher, Ramose (2003), one of the key thinkers who popularized the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* wrote: "In conditions of economic globalization, the peoples of South Africa should ... remain open to cooperation with all people around the world, determined to replace the deadly dogma of economic fundamentalism with the life-giving logic of Ubuntu, putting the preservation of human life through living together above the relentless pursuit of profit" (Ramose, 2003: 734).

One of the greatest researchers of post-colonialism, Bhabha (1993), in his work "The Location of Culture", wrote about the need for the emergence of the so-called "Third Space", which should become an alternative to existing social paradigms and the hegemony of being (Bhabha, 1993: 285). As a result of historical events and the experience of colonial subjugation, African society, and South African society in particular, has long realized the need for such a space. South Africans have chosen *Ubuntu*, thus returning to the philosophy and the ideas of which were molded by more than one generation of Africans. The publication of the White Paper "*Ubuntu* Diplomacy" is not accidental. It is obvious that Pretoria is trying to use African values to oppose global or European

values. The world must get to know the real Africa; deep, wise, self-sufficient, and able to go its own way and solve problems based on its realities. Nelson Mandela, a representative of the Xhosa community, knew that *Ubuntu* is the core of every human being and that its power can move mountains. The return to tradition is perceived by Africans not as a return to the past, but, to the contrary, as a way of moving towards the future.

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