

Africa 2014 in Review: Counterrevolution, Neocolonialism and the Mass Struggle

Lessons from false starts and imperialist interventions

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Mrs. Simone Gbagbo, the former first lady of Ivory Coast, made an appearance in court inside the country on Dec. 26. She is charged with alleged crimes in connection with the tenure of her husband, the ousted President Laurent Gbagbo, who is now under the custody of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague.

President Gbagbo was targeted by the former colonial power France and the United States for removal beginning in late 2010. French forces eventually put Gbagbo under siege and raided his hold-up residence in April 2011, taking him, his wife and other leading officials of the Ivorian government into custody.

A politician and functionary of international finance capital, Alassane Quattara, had opposed President Gbagbo in the 2010 elections. A dispute over the outcome and a less than adequate resolution by the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), lead to a political crisis and the French-led counterrevolution that imposed the candidate who was favored by the imperialist s.

Former First Lady Gbagbo, who has been held in northern Ivory Coast since the overthrow of the government, was transferred to the commercial capital of Abidjan for the court appearance. She sat in the dock alongside 83 other political and military opponents of the Paris-backed coup which extended over several months from late 2010 until April 2011.

The trial conducted by the existing pro-imperialist regime is expected to last for a month. Reports say that nine jurors will be impaneled to hear evidence and make a decision with respect to her guilt or innocence.

“If she is found guilty, she will get 20 years to life because we are talking about a crime against state security,” said prosecutor Soungalo Coulibaly.

Nonetheless, even within the imperialist camp there is controversy surrounding the highly-politicized trial. The ICC ordered on Dec. 11 that the former first lady be handed over for trial in the Netherlands along with her husband and his chief aide Charles Ble Goude.

In a judicial statement from the ICC it says that “After a thorough assessment... the Chamber concluded that the Cote d’Ivoire domestic authorities were not taking tangible, concrete and progressive steps aimed at ascertaining whether Simone Gbagbo is criminally responsible for the same conduct that is alleged before the ICC. (Dec. 11)

Since the French-U.S. supported counterrevolution against Gbagbo in 2010-11, the security

situation inside the country has worsened particularly in the northern region where rebels were used in the plot to undermine the former government. The existing security forces appear incapable of addressing the lawlessness despite their endorsement by the West.

“People living, working, and travelling in northern Ivory Coast are being terrorized by armed men who appear to operate with little fear of being stopped, much less prosecuted,” Corinne Dufka, the West Africa director of the Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a press statement.

According to an article published by the French Press Agency (AFP), “Buses, cars and homes were being targeted in near daily attacks by gunmen armed with assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades, among other weapons, the report said. Many victims had said they had ‘given up reporting attacks because of the lack of response’ HRW added.” (Dec. 15)

Consequently, the counterrevolution against the Gbagbo government weakened the Ouattara regime’s ability to stabilize Ivory Coast as well as increasing the dependency of the post-colonial state. Only a reconsolidation of patriotic forces can provide hope for a better future.

Post Gaddafi Libya and the Anomaly of the So Called “Arab Spring”

At the same time that Washington and Paris were effectively destabilizing the West African state of Ivory Coast, the imperialists led by the Obama administration moved rapidly to launch a counterrevolution against the Jamahiriya in Libya. On Feb. 17, 2011, a rebel war was launched in Benghazi against the central government in Tripoli, seeking to undermine its authority.

When the loyalist forces mobilized to repel the counterrevolutionaries, the U.S., France and Britain, engineered two United Nations Security Council resolutions. The first, UNSC 1970, placed an arms embargo on the government of Muammar Gaddafi but allowed large shipments of weapons and personnel through Benghazi and other areas that border waterways and contiguous states. The second resolution, UNSC 1973, provided pseudo-legal cover for the massive bombing of the North African country under the guise of establishing a “no-fly zone.”

After the Pentagon and NATO along with their allies bombed Libya from March 19 to Oct. 31, 2011, the destruction of the country was sealed. Millions were displaced in the aerial bombardments, estimates claimed that 50,000-100,000 people were killed and the terror carried out by the western-backed rebels took on a decisively reactionary and racist character.

Today Libya is in chaos with oil terminals being burned and population groups under direct assault from various rebel factions, two of whom are contesting the control of the capital and the coveted oil resources and revenues. The imperialist-recognized faction that has taken refuge in a Tobruk hotel after being driven out of the capital, have called in Egyptian and United Arab Emirates (UAE) warplanes which are carrying out airstrikes against the rival militias labelled as Islamists.

Both Tunisia and Egypt, considered the birthplaces of the “Arab Spring” from Dec. 2010 to Feb. 2011, border Libya. Even after the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt which toppled the regimes of longtime western-allied dictators Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, the military regimes that preempted a genuine people’s revolution allowed their military forces

to be utilized in the imperialist war against Gaddafi.

Egyptian special forces were used as ground troops during the Pentagon-NATO bombings. Tunisian authorities allowed the counterrevolutionaries in Libya to take control of a key border crossing where arms and rebel forces were allowed to enter the theater of war.

Absent of an anti-imperialist and Pan-Africanist approach to the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt both countries were bound to revert to a neocolonialist reconfiguration of domestic state power and foreign policy. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's political organization, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), although elected in June 2012, made no fundamental changes in Cairo's relationship with the U.S. and the State of Israel.

Consequently, with the military overthrow of the government of President Mohamed Morsi on July 3, 2013, the "Egyptian Revolution" had come full circle. Even the temporary suspension of the regime of Field Marshall Gen. Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi by the AU, which mandates that any military seizure of power must be rejected by the continental organization, as soon as the general took off his military uniform and secured the presidency through an election where the FJP was excluded, Egypt was immediately restored to full status within the successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

In Tunisia, the recent elections which saw the rise of a reformed party of Ben Ali, known as Nidaa Tounes (Tunisia Call), resulted in the ascendancy of 88-year-old Beji Caid Essebsi as president. The left parties, centrists and Islamists remained divided and unable to stave off the return of the career politicians who were stalwarts of the governments of Habib Bourguiba and Ben Ali.

Even the BBC admitted in a recent article that "His critics say his election victory marks the return of the former establishment, pointing out that he served under President Ben Ali, and was also interior minister under the country's first president Habib Bourguiba. Essebsi's emphasis has been on maintaining western influence in Tunisia in alliance with France and the U.S.

Lessons for 2015: From Uprisings to Revolutionary Pan-Africanism

Despite these challenges that have been outlined in this series of articles on developments in 2014 and their socio-historical context, there are clear indications that neocolonial dominance is not effectively guaranteed. Events in Burkina Faso provide an illustration of the potential for people to rapidly mobilize to overthrow a military-turned-civilian dictatorial regime operating in the interests of imperialism

In Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaore, who led a coup against Pan-Africanist and Marxist leader Capt. Thomas Sankara in Oct. 1987, remained in power for 27 years. His removal was swiftly countered with regional plans fostered by the West to derail any potential revolution led by the working class, farmers and youth of the country who had the most to gain in the uprising against the Compaore regime and its allies in parliament.

The existing interim coalition government in Ouagadougou is designed to dissuade the people and channel their energies into a multi-party political electoral campaign in 2015 that will not provide solutions to the massive unemployment, poverty and repression characteristic of neocolonialism in Africa. Popular organizations which championed the

legacy of Sankara during the Oct. rebellion must consolidate their forces into a revolutionary alliance of political parties and worker organization to seize power in the name of the people.

Throughout the West Africa region, strikes have taken place over the recent period. In Ghana, public sector, educational and healthcare workers walked off the job during 2014 demanding better conditions of employment, the securing of their pensions and salary increases to guard against the social impact of the decline of the cedi, the national currency.

Also in Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone, workers have struck and protested in the similar sectors as in Ghana. Many of these states where strikes and rebellions have occurred are being labelled as examples of phenomenal economic growth in Africa. Nonetheless, the profits accrued as a result of the foreign direct investment driven policies are not being shared with the masses.

In Nigeria, which is now designated as having the largest economy on the continent, has not been able to effectively contain and eradicate the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast. The kidnapping of hundreds of high school girls in Chibok was indicative of the breakdown of the dysfunctional post-colonial political dispensation with regional divisions in the body politic that are reflected within the military and security forces.

All of these struggles aimed at winning a decent standard of living for workers, youth and farmers; the ideological and political campaigns to battle reactionary ideas and movements; the quest for genuine all-African unity; and the revolutionary imperative for the empowerment of the majority of the people within society, should be at the top of the agenda of all progressive forces on the continent and their supporters internationally.

With the decline in commodity prices on the global markets, many African states are already feeling the impact of this looming crisis. These post-colonial governments and the national bourgeoisies in these countries are more vulnerable than ever since they are largely dependent on the foreign exchange earnings from exports to ensure their dominance within these societies.

It is quite obvious that the neo-liberal agenda in operation for the last three decades is running its course. The only real solution to the crisis is socialist reconstruction and planning within a continental and global Pan-African framework.

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