

Africa in Review 2018: Imperialist Militarism and the Quest for Reconstruction

Part III. Continental unity obstructed by continuing outside interference and destabilization

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Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Bombing operations by the United States military against the Horn of Africa state of Somalia have escalated during the course of 2018.

Once the administration of President Donald Trump came into office nearly two years ago, purported “restrictions” placed on Pentagon operations through the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) were lifted.

Nonetheless, this notion of lifting restraints on aerial strikes against what is said to be “terrorists” operating inside the country should not be misunderstood on the continent or in the international community. The war against Somalia is part and parcel of numerous attempts to install surrogate regimes in the mode of Washington, efforts which can be traced back for decades.

There is also the enhancement of special commando units which although claiming to have a principal focus on training of the Somali National Army (SNA), are directly engaged in attacks against identified “enemies” which include the two major factions of Al-Shabaab. As a result of the escalating AFRICOM involvement, dozens of people have lost their lives over the last several months.

A regional military peacekeeping force known as the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) has been operating in the country for over 11 years. The more than 20,000 troops from AMISOM have grown war weary due to the fact that no foreseeable end to the war in Somalia is apparent.

At the same time in 2018 Washington has reestablished a diplomatic mission in Mogadishu after 28 years. In 1991, the U.S.-backed government of Mohamed Siad Barre collapsed and since this time period there have been periodic direct invasions (1992-1994), the utilization of surrogate regional armies (2006-2009) and ongoing diplomatic maneuvering in the quest for potential profits from the exploration of petroleum resources in the north of the country.

In neighboring Ethiopia and Eritrea, the two nations which had been at war since 1998, reached a peace agreement in July. Heads-of-state from both governments, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia and Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, have visited each other’s respective capitals of Addis Ababa and Asmara. There is much optimism that these developments hold promise for the opening up of trade and joint economic projects in the Horn of Africa. United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions against Eritrea have been lifted in light of the peace agreements in the region.

However, looking at the fact that the signing of at least one of the agreements between Asmara and Addis Ababa during September took place in Saudi Arabia while the United Arab Emirates (UAE) played a role in facilitating talks gave pause to many inside and outside of Africa. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are continuing to carry out a genocidal war on behalf of imperialism in Yemen. These monarchies are notorious for violating the political and human rights of their own citizens and residents.

Motivations for this rapprochement in the Horn of Africa carry the possibility of strong financial benefits for Abu Dhabi and Riyadh through the construction of an oil pipeline in the region. Military considerations as well in the efforts to isolate the Islamic Republic of Iran from cultivating diplomatic relations with Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Djibouti can only serve the interests of Washington and its allies among the Gulf monarchies.

A report published by the Belgium-based International Crisis Group in November emphasized:

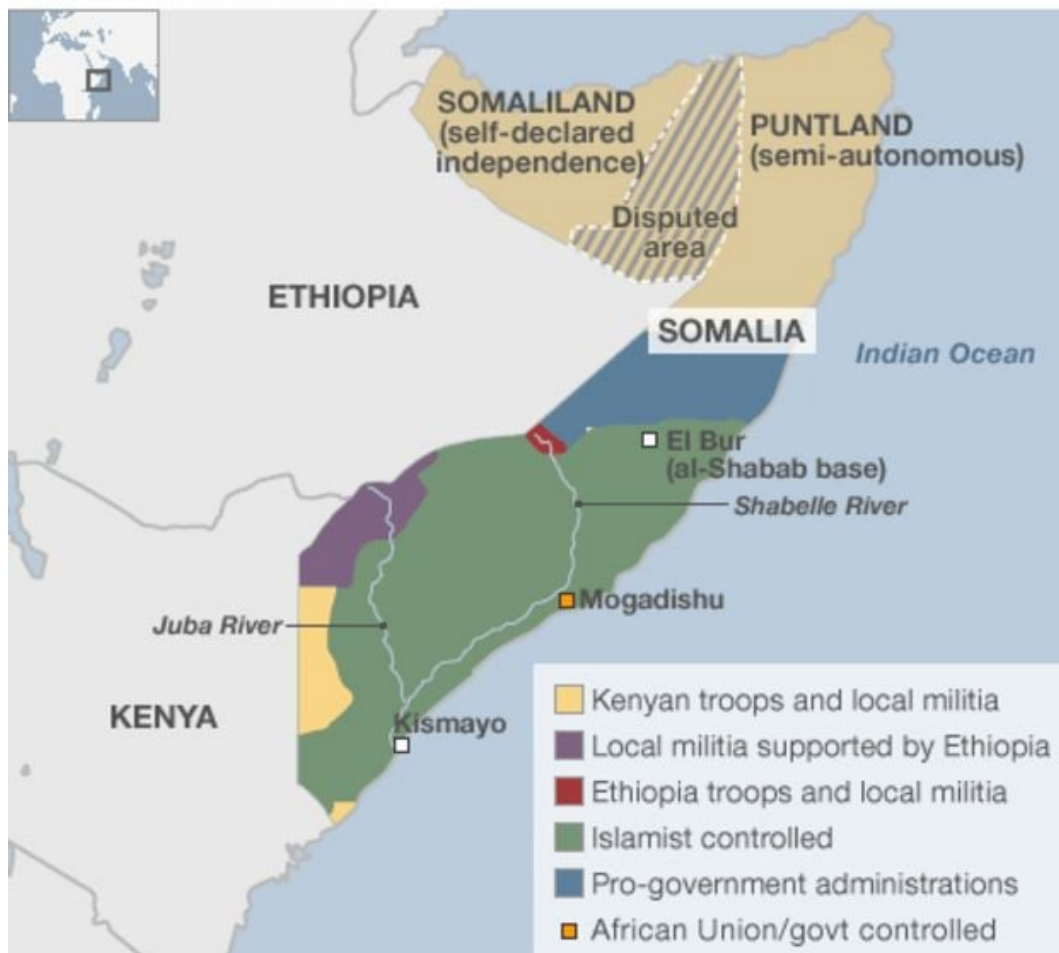
“In its anti-Iran drive, Riyadh sought assistance from past allies Sudan and Eritrea, both of which had strengthened ties with Tehran while all three countries were under international sanctions. Beginning in the 1990s, Sudan had built its defense industry with Iranian assistance and know-how; Eritrea had offered use of its port, Assab, to the Iranian navy. In 2014, however, both countries ejected Iranian diplomats. A year later, both agreed to contribute troops and resources for the Yemen war.” (Eritrea Hub, Nov. 7)

This same article goes on to illustrate how:

“The UAE took de facto responsibility for operations in Yemen’s south and quickly found itself in need of a naval and air base along the Red Sea. The natural candidate was Djibouti, where DP World had built the port. By then, however, Abu Dhabi’s relationship with Djibouti was souring over allegations of corruption related to DP World’s contract (DP World disputes the allegations). Officials from the two countries had a falling-out in April 2015, when the UAE, with DP World’s infrastructure, sought to use Djibouti as a military launching pad into Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition turned to another port, Eritrea’s Assab. Riyadh signed a security agreement also that April to use Assab, leaving Abu Dhabi to carry out the deal’s terms. By September, the Emirati military was flying fighter-bombers from the Eritrean coastline.”

A meeting between the leaders of Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea in Mogadishu was historic as well since Asmara has been accused of supporting al-Shabaab, a charge in which it has vehemently denied over the years. Other complications in interstate relations stem from the territorial dispute simmering for a considerable time period between Djibouti and Eritrea.

Who runs Somalia?



Somalia conflict map

The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has spoken to the disagreement while expressing optimism over the meeting also held in Saudi Arabia, bringing together Eritrean President Afwerki and his Djiboutian counterpart Ismail Omar Gullen. A report on the meeting said that this disagreement:

“started over 10 years ago and stems from a border dispute over the status of Dumeira Mountain and Dumeira Island, off the coast of both Djibouti and Eritrea, which have been claimed by both nations. The meeting in Jeddah follows a request made in July by Djibouti’s ambassador to the UN, Mohamed Siad Doualeh, for help in settling the dispute with Eritrea. On Sunday (September 16), the UN chief applauded another major step for peace in the region with the signing of the peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which ended decades of hostilities over a disputed border area.” (UN News Center, Sept. 18)

Djibouti is the foremost outpost of AFRICOM on the continent. Thousands of U.S. troops are stationed at Camp Lemonnier which is also utilized by France, Italy, Spain and Japan. The People’s Republic of China has a small presence in Djibouti for the sole purpose of resupplying its troops involved in peacekeeping operations in the region.

Unity efforts among these Horn of Africa states cannot be viewed without considering the role of imperialist-allied military forces. All of these western capitalist governments are there

in order to advance their own exploitative and containment strategies which are divergent from the interests of the masses of people on the continent and the Arabian Peninsula.

Southern Africa in Transition: The Land Question and the Quest for Sustainable Sovereignty in South Africa and Zimbabwe

Image on the right: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Foreign Minister Lindiwe Sisulu at AfCFTA in Kigali, Rwanda, March 20-21, 2018



President Cyril Ramaphosa inherited a South African economy which is facing recession due to high unemployment, declining export earnings and the uncertainty among multi-national corporations over the intensifying debate surrounding proposals for a radical land redistribution program. Elections could take place in South Africa, the continent's most industrialized state, within less than four months where the ruling African National Congress (ANC) will once again seek to remain the majority party.

The ANC has been dominant in every administration since the overthrow of apartheid in 1994 when liberation movement leader President Nelson Mandela went from being the most prominent political prisoner of the 1980s to occupying the halls of government in Pretoria and Cape Town. Ramaphosa must engage in a delicate balancing act of trying to maintain some semblance of economic stability while at the same time seriously addressing the aspirations and concrete needs of the workers, farmers and youth of South Africa.

Image below: Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa and First Lady Auxilia at his inauguration after winning the July 30, 2018 national election.



Many lessons can be learned from neighboring Zimbabwe where after over one year of the presidency of Emmerson Mnangagwa, Harare is still under the sanctions regime established by London and Washington, a blockade which has lasted for two decades. The Zimbabwe

African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) ruling party has maintained its grip on power since national liberation in 1980.

The internationally monitored harmonized elections on July 30 sent ZANU-PF back into the government in Harare. Yet western sanctions remain in force because the real objective of the capitalist states is not bourgeois democracy in Zimbabwe. Imperialism seeks to reverse the revolutionary trajectory through the overthrowing of ZANU-PF, a party born in the struggle against settler-colonialism.

South Africa could very well be subjected to similar sanctions if the ANC government moves to expropriate land and mining interests from the multi-national firms which are appendages of international finance capital. U.S. President Trump has already warned of grave consequences if the European settler farmers who stole land from the African people are forced to relinquish their farms and extractive industries.

The Republic of Namibia, which was under the occupation of the racist apartheid regime up until 1990, is also discussing land reform. Herero and Nama communities have initiated legal actions demanding reparations for the genocide inflicted upon them by Germany in the early years of the 20th century.

All of these states, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, won their independence through a combined methodology of mass, trade union and armed struggles. Although they have not been able to move towards a non-capitalist economic system, the character of their respective movements were the beneficiaries of international solidarity from the socialist states of the former Soviet Union, the still existing People's Republic of China and the Republic of Cuba. Angola and Mozambique as rear bases of the national liberation movements from the mid-1970s through the early 1990s underwent their own experiments in socialist orientation during the initial years of independence.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) remains the most stable and unified regional grouping on the continent. SADC is committed to opposing internal conflicts from its furthest northern affiliate of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) down through Mozambique, Malawi, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Zambia and others all the way out into the Indian Ocean member-states of the Union of Comoros, Seychelles and Madagascar. In order for this process to reach its ultimate realization the sub-continent must eventually merge with other regional organizations for the implementation of workable All-African free trade zone enforced through viable legislative structures which are backed up by an integrated military high command operating independently of the Pentagon, NATO and its allies.

Reconstructing Africa: The Imperatives of Sustainable Sovereignty

These developments over 2018 in various areas of Africa only confirms our thesis that in order for the AU member-states to achieve genuine development a concerted unification campaign involving all major elements within contemporary society must be launched. There is literally everything which is needed for such a program internally: an abundance of natural resources, agricultural potential, a burgeoning workforce, essential and strategic waterways along with an ideological heritage which speaks directly to the necessity of unification along an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist path.

This Revolutionary Pan-African development program has and will continue to be opposed

by the leading imperialist centers located in Western Europe and North America. The empowerment of Europe, and subsequently the U.S., was derived from the enslavement, colonization and neo-colonization of Africa and other regions of the globe.

Therefore it is only logical to consider that the workers, farmers and other popular strata in Africa will only overcome their plight of impoverishment and social instability through a concerted movement to eradicate the final vestiges of western domination. Such a course of action will require courage, programmatic conviction and political discipline aimed at acquiring a secure existence independent of the institutions of national oppression and economic exploitation.

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