

# Africa Liberation Day 2019: Continental Path at the Crossroads

From South Africa to Sudan decisions needed on fundamental questions of the present and future

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Global Research, May 27, 2019

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*This year's Africa Day (aka Africa Liberation Day) comes at period of significant transformation for the continent and its people throughout the region and the world.*

It was 56 years ago that the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union (AU), held its founding summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on May 25.

During this period there had been a whirlwind of African independence campaigns which had won the national liberation of over 30 former colonial states. Ethiopia, theoretically had never been colonized although it was under occupation by Italian imperialist-fascism during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

In 1963, nonetheless, there was still much work to be done. Portugal was refusing to relinquish control of Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola, Sao Tome, Principe and Cape Verde to the African people. The settler-colonial regimes in the-then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), South Africa and Namibia (formerly known as South West Africa) were contested zones where revolutionary guerrilla armies were forming to overthrow the system of national oppression and economic exploitation.



African Union Summit on Free Trade Area, March 17, 2018

The theme for the official statement released by AU Commission Chair H.E. Moussa Faki

Mahamat for Africa Day 2019 was “Year of Refugees, Returnees and IDPS: Towards durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa.” Africa has been impacted severely by imperialist wars, economic strangulation and climate change which have dislocated communities. Coordinated policy among the agencies within the AU is desperately required to meet the ongoing crises.

Mahamat noted in the AU release that:

“After centuries of domination, oppression, enslavement and slave exploitation, Africa woke up and became aware of its strength and the underlying force behind that strength: its dignity in unity.... It is the solemn affirmation of this imperative that we celebrate today. However, there are still many hurdles to overcome before Africa’s independence and unity fully blossom. This would only come about when every African lives in peace, has free access to quality universal education, to full physical and mental health, to decent and remunerative job, to social and cultural development, to good democratic governance in the strict respect of his fundamental rights.” (See [this](#))

Significantly on May 25, there was the celebration surrounding the inauguration of Republic of South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa, a former negotiator for the demise of apartheid and secretary general of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), to a full term as head-of-state in Africa’s most industrialized state. Ramaphosa, also the president of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party, was sworn in once again to office after winning a more than 57% majority in the recent national parliamentary, provincial and presidential elections.

The ANC took power in South Africa 25 years ago in 1994 under the leadership of former President Nelson Mandela. Over the last quarter century the ANC and its allies inside the country has keep South Africa together and made tremendous strides in the areas housing, access to water, healthcare and technology development.

Despite these accomplishments, the challenges facing President Ramaphosa are not unique to South Africa. All AU member-states are reeling from the catastrophic economic changes being perpetuated by the West through the ascendancy of conservative and ultra-right regimes, trade wars and encroaching militarism.

#### The Current Political Situation in Africa Today

Since the escalation of production of oil and natural gas by the United States under the administration of former President Barack Obama, Africa and other energy-producing nations have experienced profound economic decline. The continent had been praised during the years leading up to the middle 2010s for its phenomenal economic growth rates. Although oil prices have risen over the period of 2018 and early 2019, substantial damage has already occurred.

South Africa has been facing an official 27% jobless rate along with other problems in the consumer energy, transport, agricultural, mining and service sectors. In neighboring Zimbabwe, the Second Republic under President Emmerson Mnangagwa is working diligently to have sanctions removed by the imperialist countries led by Britain and the U.S.

Under such circumstances in Southern Africa, the recent impact of Cyclone Idai and Kenneth has been devastating. Millions have been affected in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique with massive flooding resulting in the destruction of housing, schools, businesses, workplaces and crops.

These cataclysmic incidents are very much a part of contemporary life internationally as greater consciousness related to climate change has sparked demonstrations demanding the need to reduce carbon emissions and other harmful chemicals in the environment. Moreover, these factors tend to have a greater negative impact on regions which are underdeveloped. A major part of the reconstruction of Africa would have to include the effective capacity to respond to natural disasters placing the well-being of the people as being paramount.

West Africa has now been targeted by the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in the Sahel region as a major source of “Islamic extremism or terrorism.” Along with France and other European Union (EU) military and naval forces, imperialism has in essence subsumed national armed forces on the continent into the strategic framework of the Pentagon and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Africa can point to the rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia during 2018 as a sign of progress in the movement towards unity and unification of the continent. Nevertheless, it will remain to be seen what influence this model of peacemaking between African states has on the role of imperialist militarism among AU member-states.

AFRICOM has its largest military base in the Horn of Africa state of Djibouti where Camp Lemonnier serves as a major platform for offensive operations on both the continent and adjacent areas. The ongoing genocidal war in Yemen has the participation of regional client states along with the Republic of Sudan, which has stated even after the overthrow of former President Omer Hassan al-Bashir, that their troops will remain a staunch ally of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) led Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), who are carrying out the massive bombing and ground operations with the facilitation of Washington and London.

### The Continuing Role of Imperialism: Nkrumah’s Legacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Africa, the founder of the modern national liberation and Revolutionary Pan-Africanist movements, referenced the presence of European and U.S. troops on the continent as a threat to the sovereignty of the people. This was the message distributed at the first OAU Summit in Ethiopia in 1963 when Nkrumah published and circulated his groundbreaking study “Africa Must Unite.”

Nkrumah advanced the notion along with other revolutionary leaders of the period that African independence and unity could not be secured without the construction of socialism. Imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism were responsible for the enslavement and super-exploitation of the continent. Consequently, the overthrow of the capitalist system was a prerequisite for genuine and sustainable development.

A pamphlet released by the Ghana First Republic Government under Nkrumah and the Convention People’s Party (CPP) entitled “Forward to Socialism”, emphasizes:

“For we are determined to create a society in which no man (human beings) shall fear oppression; a society in which all shall be free within the law; in which there shall be work for all and in which the condition for the happiness of each is the condition for the happiness of all; a socialist society that will be a blessing to all living within it.”

This same speech which was delivered at the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of “Positive Action”, on January 8, 1963, goes on to say:

“And to succeed—as succeed we must, for the sake of the masses, whose interests are our prime concern and whose welfare is our supreme law, you must each devote yourselves without stint or thought of self to this sacred cause of Ghana’s and Africa’s redemption. Forward with the Party! Forward to African Unity! Forward to Socialism!”

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