

US Secretary of State Blinken Returns Empty Handed from Africa Tour

Secretary of States travelled to three countries seeking to undermine the influence of China and Russia

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United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited three African Union (AU) member-states during early August in an attempt to enhance the presence of Washington on the continent.

This tour came amid an escalation of tensions between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China in regard to their relations with Washington.

Blinken first visited the Republic of South Africa where he had a joint meeting with Naledi Pandor, his diplomatic counterpart. Pandor reiterated the views of the African National Congress (ANC) government which has refused to denounce Moscow over its special military operation in Ukraine.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has stated that the U.S. should encourage a diplomatic resolution to the war in Ukraine. This view is at extreme variance with that of the administration of President Joe Biden which has sent billions of dollars in military equipment and other support aimed at continuing the war.

Biden and Secretary of State Lloyd Austin have called for the weakening and removal of the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The Biden administration has imposed unprecedented draconian sanctions against Moscow, forcing U.S.-based firms to leave the country and making it even more difficult for nations around the world to conduct trade with Russia.

Historically during the period of the Soviet Union, the socialist state supported the national liberation movements and progressive governments on the continent during the 1950s through the 1980s. Those states in Eastern Europe which were allied with the Soviets also participated in providing scholarships, military training and joint economic projects.

As hundreds of U.S.-based corporations and the Pentagon provided direct economic, intelligence and military support to the racist apartheid system prior to the democratic breakthrough of April 1994, the socialist countries including the Soviet Union, the Comecon sector, China, Cuba, Yugoslavia, among others, were diplomatically and materially bolstering the struggle to win independence and non-capitalist development.

Since the ascendancy of the ANC to power in South Africa in May 1994, successive administrations have sought to rebuild and sustain normal relations with Washington and its allies. However, there are issues which have continued to divide Pretoria and Washington.

Ukraine is not the only point of disagreement involving geopolitical positions. South Africa has remained a staunch proponent of Palestinian liberation along with calls for the departure of the Kingdom of Morocco which has occupied the Western Sahara for more than four decades. In contrast, the administrations in the U.S. since 1948 have provided unconditional diplomatic, material, military and public relations support to the State of Israel. In regard to the Western Sahara question, the previous administration of President Donald Trump recognized the “sovereignty” of Morocco over the political, military and economic control of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), the provisional government representing the Western Sahara, previously a colony of Spain until the 1970s.

In an [article authored by Elliot Smith published by CNBC](#), it notes that:

“The underlying purpose of the trip — Blinken’s second since President Joe Biden’s administration took office — will be to try to contain Russian and Chinese geopolitical influence on the continent, according to Alex Vines, director of the Africa program at Chatham House. ‘South Africa is a country which doesn’t have a good relationship with the United States. The party of government, the African National Congress, regularly issues declaration communiques criticizing the United States, and so the effort there is how to improve the relationship and at least have a more constructive dialog with South Africa,’ Vines told CNBC on Monday (Aug. 8). He suggested that this is the reason why South Africa is Blinken’s first port of call, and that particular attention will be paid to aligning the two countries’ perspectives on Russia’s war in Ukraine. ‘There’s a big difference between how Pretoria sees the Russia-Ukraine issue, and Washington,’ Vines added.”

Beyond an emphasis on the economic trade between the two countries, there was no progress in regard to convincing South Africa to move closer to Washington’s policies toward Palestine and Ukraine. Pretoria is a member of the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Summit which meets on a regular basis to enhance diplomatic and economic cooperation independent of the complete domination of Washington and Wall Street.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the U.S. Legacy of Imperialism

After leaving South Africa, Blinken landed in Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC. This visit came just weeks after the attempts by the former colonial power of Belgium to recalibrate relations with the Congolese government.

When the DRC gained independence in June 1960, the U.S. and Belgium worked closely together to overthrow the administration of revolutionary Pan-Africanist leader Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who was later assassinated in January of 1961. The remains of

Lumumba were just returned from Brussels after more than sixty years.

Blinken expressed his concern over rising conflict on the border between the DRC and neighboring Rwanda, also a former Belgian colony. In the east of the DRC, the rebel M23 organization has reportedly increased their attacks which have impacted civilians. The United Nations Peacekeeping Forces of more than 17,000 soldiers in the DRC known as MONUSCO, has drawn the ire of the civilian population in recent months due to the worsening security situation.

According to the [DRC mission statement](#) it emphasizes:

“MONUSCO took over from an earlier UN peacekeeping operation – the United Nations Organization Mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) – on 1 July 2010. It was done in accordance with Security Council resolution 1925 of 28 May to reflect the new phase reached in the country. The new mission has been authorized to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate relating, among other things, to the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the Government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts.”

However, demonstrations led by local residents in and around Goma erupted in recent weeks demanding the withdrawal of the MONUSCO forces which are largely composed of soldiers from numerous African and Asian states. A [report published by the New Humanitarian](#) said of the situation in eastern DRC:

“Prior to the protests, MONUSCO had drawn up a withdrawal plan that envisaged a 2024 departure date contingent on security improvements in DRC. But the upswell of anger has led the Congolese government to announce it is re-evaluating that plan.

The current protests come amid a rebellion by the M23 armed group that has captured parts of the eastern province of North Kivu. Protesters say MONUSCO has shown inaction and failed to clearly acknowledge alleged Rwandans backing for the group.”

Blinken in his talks with DRC President Felix Antoine Tshisekedi indicated that the U.S. was concerned about the continuing instability in the eastern region and would raise the issue with neighboring Rwanda. Although Rwanda has denied that it is supporting the M23 rebel groupings, this issue became the central focus of interactions during the last leg of the Blinken tour.

Rwandan Press Criticizes White House Africa Policy

Even prior to the arrival of Blinken to Kigali, the state media in Rwanda had published an open letter penned scholars from the continent and North America to the U.S. Secretary of State related to the situation on the border with Eastern DRC as well as the prosecution and imprisonment Paul Rusesabagina, who the government accuses of supporting rebel groups in opposition to the administration of President Paul Kagame. Rusesabagina was the subject of the U.S. film “Hotel Rwanda” that portrayed the businessman as being sympathetic to the victims of the 1994 genocide.

[The New Times said of the letter](#) to Blinken:

“Regarding the crisis in Eastern DR Congo, they invite him to adopt a holistic approach

considering the political, economic, and socio-cultural ramifications of the Congolese situation. On the case of Mr. Rusesabagina, the African and U.S. scholars remind the Secretary of State that the lives of Rwandan citizens matter as much of those of American citizens.”

A week after Blinken’s departure from Rwanda, [Veronica Mbaye wrote in the New Times](#) pointing out the contradictory character of Washington’s foreign policy saying:

“Whatever residue of faith persisted after George Bush lied about mass destruction weapons existing in oil-rich Iraq, as an excuse to invade the country and cause decades-long instability, was exhausted during the Barack Obama years. Obama, who ran a successful campaign by feigning an impeccable moral core (which I suppose Americans did want to see in him to prove they were not racist) positioned himself as anti-war, only to line the pockets of gun lobbyists and drop bombs on innocent Syrian children when elected. As Antony Blinken will recall, having served as Obama’s close aide for years, the Obama Administration orchestrated the assassination of an African leader on African soil, despite the full awareness that it would send Libya and the entire region into deathly, dehumanizing turmoil. So frankly, I am dazed and amazed that a single American, State official or not, would think their act is convincing when claiming to have the interests of the Africans they so casually kill at heart.”

Therefore, the Blinken second Africa tour passed with no fanfare in the U.S. corporate and government-controlled media. These developments are indicative of the failure of U.S. imperialism to shift its foreign policy orientation to meet the contemporary issues of the 21st century.

From Bush, Obama, Trump to Biden, Washington has maintained its commitment to world hegemony over the majority of the people now living within the oppressed nations and geo-political regions. It is up to the African workers, farmers and youth in alliance with the international proletariat to bring into existence a world devoid of inequality and economic exploitation.

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