

Is Africa a Cold War Battleground?

By [Sam Akaki](#)

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

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Thanks to the dwindling primary natural resources, oil and gas, the West is hounding Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and Sudan's al-Bashir, and heaping blame on Russia and China for protecting them; thus setting the stage for a new Cold War to be fought in Africa.

The last Cold War saw the savage murder or violent overthrow by the British, Americans, Belgians, French and Portuguese of nationalist African leaders including Patrice Lumumba, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, Luis Cabral, Eduardo Mondlane, Samora Marcel, Milton Obote, Hamed Sekou Toure, Gamel Abdel Nasser and Ahmed Ben Bella who were dubbed terrorists or Russian and Chinese sympathisers.

The lucky ones – Jomo Kenyatta, Robert Mugabe and Nelson Mandela were given long prison sentences from which they were never expected to come out, alive. Today, Mandela's statue stands as a monument of British cynicism, in Parliament square, London. The statue stood there for three years until last week when the USA finally removed Mandela's name from the list of international terrorists!

The human, social and economic wounds inflicted on Africa by the last Cold War are still very raw. Mozambique, Angola and Namibia are littered with millions of land mines and other unexploded military ordinances, which will kill people for centuries to come. Algeria, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Chad, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Sudan and Uganda are fighting self-destruct wars, while Somalia ceased to be a state in 1992, thanks to western weapons.

Overall, the last Cold War left Africa on the life-support machine of western food aid administered by the World Food Programme, while their leaders pay lip service to cure the patient.

Recently, the Africa Progress Panel (APP), headed by the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, issued a report, "Africa Progress Panel responds to the G8 Summit in Hokkaido" which said:

"G8 countries have done little to show how they will fund the shortfall of US\$ 40 billion in programmable aid and debt relief identified by the Africa Progress Panel last month...The G8 has yet to present clear timetables outlining future aid provision or to provide increased transparency required to improve the quality of aid".

On "Global food crisis", the report said, "The Panel welcomes the commitment of US\$ 10 billion to support food aid and measures to increase agricultural input as a necessary first step... More needs to be done, however, to increase the supply of food to the world's most

vulnerable citizens, and immediate measures must be taken to relax export restrictions on commodities such as rice”

On trade, it said “The Panel welcomes the G8 leaders’ commitment to the conclusion of an ambitious, balanced and comprehensive Doha agreement... As WTO negotiations enter this crucial period, all parties need to understand that the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals rest in large part on the ability of the continent to trade its way out of poverty”.

And in conclusion, Mr Annan declared “The success in supporting African development will not only result in tangible benefits for her people but ensure a more secure and prosperous future for the world. For G8 leaders, helping Africa to help itself is not a question of altruism; it is a matter of self-interest.”

The July 11 UN resolution accused Robert Mugabe of “killing 100 opposition supporters and displacing 2,000”, and called for punitive sanctions including imposing an arms embargo, a clear signal for attacks on Zimbabwe. Thankfully, China and Russia, which were not at the Berlin Conference, rejected the resolution, saying it would “open the way for interference by the Security Council in internal affairs of Members States, which is a gross violation of the UN Charter.”

To disorganise the AU, the international Criminal court (ICC), is planning to arrest Sudan’s president, Omar al-Bashir, for “leading a campaign of murder, rape and mass deportation in Darfur”. The plan is advancing despite the AU statement, which “reiterated the AU’s concern with the misuse of indictments against African leaders”.

Incidentally, the conflict in Darfur started 18 years after the one in northern Uganda which killed over 300,000 civilians, caused the abduction of 20, 000 children and drove 2 million into concentration camps. Yet, the ICC never investigated the role of the Ugandan troops in these atrocities, leave alone issuing an arrest warrant for Museveni.

That is not surprising. The West is less interested in human rights in Africa than in justifying and setting the stage for a new Cold War. The BBC reported on 13th July it “has found the first evidence that China is currently helping Sudan’s government militarily in Darfur”.

Yet, China’s real crime is its dominating investments in Africa which now exceeds British, USA, European Union, World Bank and IMF aid budgets, combined.

A recent World Bank confirmed that China is financing infrastructure projects in more than 35 African countries with Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mosambique, Nigeria, the Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe among the biggest recipients. In the DRC, China has agreed to build thousands of kilometers of roads, several hospitals and three universities. Unlike the West, China gives Africa quality projects on time and much more cheaply.

In their most direct statements yet recorded, African leaders made their views about the West clear during the Chinese Africa summit, held in Beijing in November 2006. Speaking to Lindsey Hilsum of British Channel Four television, former president Festus Mogae of Botswana said “”I find that the Chinese treat us as equals. The West treats us as former subjects (read slaves). Which is a reality. I prefer the attitude of the Chinese to that of the West.”

For his part, President Museveni who is seen as a darling of the West said, "The Western ruling groups are conceited, full of themselves, ignorant of our conditions, and they make other people's business their business. Whereas the Chinese just deal with you, you represent your country, they represent their own interests, and you do business."

And Russia is an enemy because it is sitting on huge gas and oil reserves, and opposing not only the expansion of North Atlantic treaty Organisation (NATO) to its borders, but also US plans to build Missile Defence facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Given the devastation of the last Cold War, won't a new one be a double crime against humanity exceeding not only the massacres by the Germans of 6 million Jews, but also the genocide committed by Belgians in Congo in the last century, and the slave trade?

Aren't African leaders facing a simple choice: stand firm and tell the west not to touch al-Bashir, or keep silent and wait to be picked off one by one?

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