

Is Obama Keen on Relations with Barons of Kenya or with the People?

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While there is real joy that Obama is visiting Kenya, this moment should provide another platform for progressives to push for the demilitarization of the relations with Africa. This calls for the dismantling of the US Africa Command, the withdrawal of the Special Forces from Somalia and the end of drone strikes.

Barack Obama is visiting Kenya and Ethiopia when the people of Eastern Africa are desperate for peace. Last week Wednesday July 15, top Kenyan athletes, including former world marathon record holders, set off on a 22-day "Walk for Peace" against ethnic violence. The 836-kilometer (520-mile) walk is organized by a former Commonwealth marathon champion. This walk for peace is a striking example of the initiatives being undertaken in a country where the people want an end to all forms of violence. As President Barack Obama heads to Kenya to participate in the 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) in Nairobi this week, the peoples of Kenya are excited and there is pride that the President of the USA will be visiting Kenya. Obama will be meeting with entrepreneurs but this should be an occasion where the government of the USA should seek to work with the peoples of Kenya and Somalia who want peace. This visit should be an occasion to spell out the process of demilitarizing the relations between the peoples of East Africa and the United States.

Kenya inherited the massive investment in the militarization of the Horn of Africa from the era of anti-communism and this militaristic link to the West was deepened during the so called War on Terror. This Global War on Terror has now backfired against the peoples and the insecurity generated within Kenya and East Africa reinforce the influence of the US military when Barack Obama and his Administration want to focus on "Doing Business with Africa." In 2014, the Obama Administration with much fanfare called the first major US Africa summit but the present Washington sequestered bureaucracy has not worked to turn the page with the new engagement with African peoples. There have been no resources from Congress to support the much touted Power Africa.

We will maintain here that there are personal and political pressures for the USA to change its policies in Africa and the trip to Nairobi by the President is one of the most explicit efforts to turn against the securitization of relations with Africa. Kenya is one of the spaces in Africa bursting with innovative entrepreneurship ideas, especially in telecommunications and banking. The infrastructure planning of Kenya with the Lamu Port-South Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) is being undertaken to transform the economies of Eastern Africa, without significant US participation. China is the principal partner in the infrastructure projects in Kenya.

As one of the vibrant centers of capital accumulation in Africa, Obama recognizes the vitality

and energy of the Kenyan people. Prior to his departure he said that, “Despite poverty, despite conflict, there is a strength and a resilience there. The opportunities are extraordinary, and we just have to break down the stereotypes and the barriers.” Obama is traveling to break down stereotypes, but this is insufficient to change the 50 year program of militarism. There is in Kenya a vibrant popular force of progressives who are willing to work to ensure that the entrepreneurship engagement does not reward the current rich barons who are intent on rolling back the positive gains of the Kenyan Constitution of 2010.

Context of the Visit

When the Obama Administration negotiated with the leaders of Iran to seal the nuclear deal to end the sanctions, he was working against the conservative wing of the political establishment in the USA but he also had the gaze of the US on the potential economic might of Iran in Eurasia. With the Iran deal under his belt after the success of the cementing of the Affordable Care Act along with the Diplomatic breakthrough with Cuba after 54 years, Barack Obama was seeking to extend his break with neo conservative wing of the US polity. On social questions such as the rights of gays and lesbians, the Obama Administration took credit for the Supreme Court ruling in June 2015 that States cannot keep same-sex couples from marrying and must recognize their unions. At the funeral of those who were slain in Charleston, South Carolina, Obama spoke forcefully against racism and for the placing of the Confederate Flag in a museum.

Barack Obama, as the 44th President, in the pursuit of a credible legacy was moving outside of the paths of the consensus of the old status quo in the USA. The opening to Cuba and the renewal of diplomatic relations with Cuba on July 19 was celebrated in Washington by progressives who had long called for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the USA. These progressives are now calling on Obama to use Executive powers to lift the embargo against Cuba.

What is important about the thrust of the Cuba policy or the decision on marriage equality was that Obama was acting in concert with a vocal constituency in the USA. The decision on Cuba and the negotiations with Iran have not been welcomed by those sections of the militarists who oppose the closing of Guantanamo Bay as a base for the US military. The militaristic elements in the USA oppose what they see as the reversal of aspects of US foreign policy that have underpinned the projection of force by the United States for decades. The US right wing establishment along with the Murdoch papers such as the Wall Street Journal and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) are publicly opposing this shift that is being pushed by the Obama Administration.

In Eastern Africa, this section of the US establishment are working with those “traditional allies” of the USA such as Saudi Arabia and Israel to ensure that there are no dramatic shifts in the US alliances in Eastern Africa and in the Persian Gulf. The same Saudi Arabia that opposed the Iran deal had been named as one of the financiers of radical extremists in Somalia and other parts of East Africa. Essentially, all over the coast of Eastern Africa, from Beira up to Djibouti, the resources of the Wahabists are being poured into the pockets of groups that had been set in motion in the waning days of the Cold War when the CIA recruited Jihadists to fight in Afghanistan.

In seeking to devise new initiatives such as the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, Barack Obama was looking for ways to turn a new corner. In 2013, after he was elected for the second term, President Obama announced at West Point in May that “The War on terror is

over.” This declaration, that the USA will not wage war on a tactic, was accompanied with the words that the military and intelligence agencies will not wage war against a tactic but will instead focus on a specific group of networks determined to destroy the U.S.

“We must define our effort not as a boundless ‘Global War on Terror,’ but rather as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America. “ This attempted policy shift in Washington by Obama had threatened the long standing relations that had been established in East Africa that led Kenya to be compromised in the rendition schemes and in the duplicitous relationship with military entrepreneurs in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Eastern Congo and Rwanda. The Kenyan army had invaded Somalia in 2011 and since that incursion the levels of attacks inside Kenya have intensified. The US military, private contractors and Special Forces are operating out of Kismayo in Somalia, bringing further spotlight on how the Kenyan military had been integrated into the old War on Terror. In a report in the magazine Foreign Policy in early July it was reported that US Special Forces were carrying out counter terrorism operations in Somalia with “Boots on the Ground” in areas “controlled” by Kenyan troops, operating under cover and involved in a massive drone operation. [1] What this report did not say was that the presence of the US military personnel and private contractors in Somalia have guaranteed intensified attacks on Kenyan targets in Somalia and in Kenya.

Kenya had been caught in the vortex of the militarization of US foreign policy and the trip of the President to Kenya is coming at a moment when the investments from the Global War on Terror have unleashed insecurity in all parts of Kenya. The Global War on Terror had created another layer of violence in Kenya on top of the Cattle rustling, militia intimidation and revenge killings between rival communities that became common in certain regions of Kenya where there were loads of automatic weapons in the hands of unemployed youth open to manipulation by regional leaders.

The bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi in 1998 and the siege of the Westgate Mall in 2013 were two of the most publicized episodes of extremist violence, but all along the Coast of Kenya there have been attacks on civilians, with one attack in Mpeketoni killing more than 60 persons in 2014. The massacres of innocent students at the University College in Garissa in April took the lives of over 148 persons and in the aftermath the tourism industry had a further downturn with Western embassies issuing travel advisories. According to the New York Times, Kenya was caught in a Catch 22 in so far as Western terror alerts gave greater publicity to the extremists who are termed terrorists.[2]

Reaping the Fruits of Military Investment

From the first year after independence in 1964, sections of the US political establishment had decided to mobilize the Kenyan government as a base to undermine the true independence of Africa. This episode in the US relations with East Africa is celebrated in the book by William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*. Inside Kenya this external involvement was accompanied by the politicization of ethnicity and region. The assassination of Tom Mboya and the early passing of Barack Obama Sr. were seen as episodes on the intersection of local accumulation and alliance with Western forces, especially the British.

At the end of the Cold War when saner voices in the US establishment wanted to demilitarize the US engagement with East Africa, the neo- conservatives decided to use the people of Somalia as a pawn and manipulated the sectional differences in the society. Even a former Cold Warrior, such as Smith Hempstone Jr., became an advocate for human rights

and democracy in Kenya when he was appointed ambassador in 1989. However, the requirements of an alliance with President Arap Moi to secure the US incursion into Somalia in 1992 meant that the Administration of George Bush Sr. ignored the warnings of Ambassador Hempstone about the endemic corruption in Kenya and how the US “humanitarian” mission in Somalia was linked to this corruption.

Up to today, the US military have not learnt the lessons of Black Hawk Down (that humiliation of the US military in Mogadishu in 1993) and have doubled down in the region of East Africa extending the militarization of Somalia and building up a massive military presence in Djibouti, for the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). Although the Djibouti base is the military space on the soil of the Somali peoples, it is from Kenya where the planning and logistics were organized. From time to time Western papers reported on front organizations such as Bancroft Global Development, which has the contract to train African Union (AMISOM) troops in Somalia. Terms such as terrorists and terrorism have been mobilized by the ruling elements in Kenya to disguise all forms of repression and conceal business relations with their Somalia class allies.

This current investment in militarism and NGOs in Kenya had been recounted by this author in the experience of the Office of Transition Initiatives in Kenya to ensure that the revolutionary capabilities of the Kenyan youths were not realized.[3] CIA and the militaristic operations in Kenya and Somalia reached its apogee when the US security establishment financed the military entrepreneurs (called Somali Warlords) of the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT) in the duplicitous engagement with the Kenyan and Somalia peoples. Over US \$100,000 per month was being paid to Somali operatives who were business partners for warfare with a section of the Kenyan establishment under Daniel Arap Moi. A top US official (Michael Zorick) handling Somalia in the US embassy in Nairobi was transferred from his job (as Somali Political Affairs Office, Kenya) after criticizing payments to militarists who were at the core of the fueling some of Mogadishu’s worst-ever fighting. Zorick’s exposure of the CIA in Somalia had exposed a rift inside the US government on how to handle Somalia — whether efforts to build peace should come before counter-terrorism — and the effect Washington’s perceived role has had in inflaming fighting there.

Obama’s Engagement with Kenya

Barack Obama had personal links to Kenya, and there is genuine excitement in Kenya at the prospect of the visit of the President of the USA to Kenya. Kenyan newspapers have been printing the names of all of the known living relatives of the current President of the USA. He first journeyed to Kenya for five weeks when he visited the grave of his father in 1988 and his recollections of the apartheid forms of political life in Kenya at that time was explicitly spelt out in the book, *Dreams from My Father*. Obama had returned to Kenya in 1992 with Michelle, then his fiancé. Again in 2006 during his first year in the US Senate Obama visited Kenya and in that journey he had demonstrated his knowledge of the malaise of the forms of accumulation in Kenya that is called corruption.

It is usual that Presidents of the USA identify with their ancestry (most publicized example was John F. Kennedy’s trip to Ireland) but with the vitriolic campaign by the neo-conservatives (called Birthers) that Obama was not a US citizen, Barack Obama had retreated from overt identification with his very close relatives in Kenya. In private, however, Obama was very much preoccupied with the absence of democratic participation. During the primary campaign in Iowa in January 2008, we learnt that candidate Obama had

invited his sister Auma to Iowa who briefed him on the contradictions between the Kenyan peoples that had exploded into violence after the elections in December 2007. Later, in June 2013 when as President he made his first trip to Senegal, Obama invited the Chief Justices of Africa to focus on the role of the judiciary in the democratization process in Africa.

The Kenyan political leaders (President Uhuru Kenyatta and Vice President William Ruto) had been indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for complicity in mobilizing the elements who killed over 1000 persons, and the cloud over their heads had meant that these same leaders became vocal anti-imperialists. The Kenyatta Administration worked hard to mobilize the African Union against the ICC. Although the United States was not a signatory to the Rome Convention, US diplomats were active in calling for the ICC to pursue what it called “justice.” In the face of the activism of the US and EU diplomats on the ICC question, Kenyan leaders of the ruling Jubilee Coalition started to project a diversified foreign policy for Kenya. In their offensive against “Western imperialists,” the Kenyan leadership threatened to revoke the Defence Cooperation Agreement that had sustained relations between British and Kenyan intelligence elements since 1963. In the process of the active foreign policy to minimize dependence on Western sources of capital and security, the Kenyan leadership started a Look East policy seeking to strengthen relations with China and India. One by-product of the new orientation of the Kenyan leaders since 2008 was that the financial barons of Nairobi started to invest heavily in real estate in Kenya.

Fearing the sanctions against the leaders and the freezing of their vast assets, the Kenyan economy received a boost as the real estate barons and the financial barons transformed the urban landscape of Kenya. Nairobi had become a magnet for “entrepreneurs” and accumulators from all over Eastern and Central Africa; resources looted from Eastern Congo, South Sudan, Somalia, Uganda and Rwanda found their way into the financial institutions and social networks of Kenya strengthening the Kenyan barons who understood the linkages between political, military and economic power.

The People Intervene and the 2010 Constitution

This consolidation of power in the hands of a few induced a climate of intensified struggles by those who wanted a new form of political governance. Progressives in Kenya had worked hard since 1992 on a new Constitution and when this Constitution was put before the people in 2010, it was overwhelmingly ratified, despite opposition from the ruling circles around President Mwai Kibaki. The new constitution bought a more decentralized political system, which limited the powers of the President and replaced corrupt provincial governments with local counties. This 2010 Constitution also created a second chamber of parliament – the Senate – and set up a land commission to settle ownership disputes and review past abuses. Despite this new Constitution, the 2013 elections was fought against the background of the ICC charges hanging over the Presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta and the Vice Presidential Candidate William Ruto.

Before the elections, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa (Johnny Carson) who had been a former US Ambassador to Kenya made the statement that Choices have consequences. In a radio interview before the elections Mr Carson said. “We live in an interconnected world and people should be thoughtful about the impact that their choices have on their nation, on the region, on the economy, on the society and on the world in which they live. Choices have consequences.”

This statement was interpreted to mean that the US government opposed the election of

Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto and this statement itself became part of the election campaign. Uhuru Kenyatta and Ruto represented themselves as nationalists defending the sovereignty of Kenya and rallied supporters with the claim “that foreign nations must not dictate who should lead Kenya.” The Jubilee Coalition of Kenyatta and Ruto won the elections in March 2013, so when Obama visited Tanzania in 2013 he bypassed Kenya.

Kenya Looks East

In the past ten years, the orientation of the Kenyan capitalist class has been to develop closer relationship with India, China, Turkey and other emerging powers. The 50 kilometer highway from Nairobi to Thika stands as one of the construction projects of the new leaders and confident peoples of Kenya. By the time the government of Kenya rolled out their Vision 2030, Chinese Construction companies were at the forefront of the planning stages for the ambitious projects being launched by the government of Kenya. About 50 Chinese companies have been contracted for 80 projects with a value of billions of dollars in sectors including transport, housing, water processing, power upgrading, energy, and sea ports and airports. The Chinese English language news service, CCTV, established its African base in Nairobi and the University of Nairobi hosted one of the Confucius Institutes in Africa.

However, in all those projects, it is in infrastructure and specifically road construction that China has stood head and shoulders above others. Of these mega projects, probably the biggest was the \$11 billion Lamu Port and Lamu Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) This LAPSSET project includes the construction of the massive Lamu port at Manda Bay, road and rail links from the port to South Sudan and Ethiopia, and the construction of crude oil and product oil pipelines from South Sudan. This infrastructure will be more significant than any kind of competition going on now and will propel the transport barons of Kenya at the center of trade and commerce at precisely the moment when the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern Africa Development Community initiated the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA).

The US establishment had no answer to this LAPSSET and the neo-con scribe Robert Kaplan wrote for many in the foreign policy and military circles when he opined that the LAPSETT project was part of a larger strategy in the “ Geography of Chinese Power: How Far Can Beijing Reach on Land and at Sea?.” US planners received the answer when over the next five years the massive infrastructure plans were laid out for the upgrading of the port of Mombasa, for the Chinese involvement in road, port and bridge construction in Tanzania and the deals all over the region worth close to \$100 billion dollars. These projects of East Africa were integrated into the African Union project of the Programme for the Infrastructural Development in Africa (PIDA).

Obama’s Visit in This Context

While the US was concentrating on drone strikes in Somalia and operating out of Kenya, the tourism industry suffered in Kenya while the general climate of insecurity intensified. US policy makers were concerned about the inroads of China in Kenya and the vitriolic anti-imperialist rhetoric coming from the leaders. In 2013 Senator Chris Coons of Delaware chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs, said in a report issued by his office that “China, which has made dramatic inroads across the continent in recent years, may undermine or even counter value-driven U.S. goals in the region, and should serve as a wake-up call for enhanced American trade and investment.”

In order to respond to this wakeup call, the Obama presidency had called and launched the GES, US Africa Summit and launched the Young Africa Leadership Initiative. President Obama elevated entrepreneurship to the forefront of the United States' engagement agenda during a speech in Cairo in 2009. Since 2010, when the U.S. hosted the first Summit in Washington, D.C., GES has expanded to a global event, subsequently hosted by the governments of Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and Morocco. According to the communique from the White House,

The 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, on July 25-26. It will be the sixth annual gathering of entrepreneurs at all stages of business development, business leaders, mentors, and high-level government officials. The established tradition demonstrates the U.S. Government's continued commitment to fostering entrepreneurship around the world.

In August 2014, over 40 African heads of States and governments were feted in Washington when Obama again touted the Power Africa project. On June 30, 2013 in Cape Town, South Africa, President Barack Obama had announced the Power Africa as an initiative to increase the number of people with access to electric power in Africa. Kenya is supposed to be one of the first six countries targeted for this project. However, because this initiative remains unfunded, Obama was seeking to link African billionaires to US corporations such as General Electric and Blackstone. Obama mobilized his personal charisma to entreat African billionaires such as Aliko Dangote, Tony Elumelu, Mo Ibrahim, James Mwangi (among other tycoons) to align with US corporations.

What came out of this US Africa summit were pledges and nationalistic African business persons questioned the efficacy of Obama's call for partnering with US corporations. At one meeting on Capitol Hill, a prominent Kenyan business person said to the other Africans: "Why are you here in Washington looking for money? We have money enough in Kenya to invest in all of Africa."

The Obama Administration was not blind to the new confident posture of the Kenyan society. What is known is that the Kenyan youths are among the most innovative and vibrant in the areas of telecommunications. New applications such as Mpesa and Ushaidi have set the Kenyan society apart in the novel use of new technologies. In a country where that are over 100 new Universities in the past 15 years, the state is planning an entire technology location called Konza City with a new University to tap into this energetic section of society.

Obama's Global Entrepreneurship Summit is also one other attempt to tap into the energy of the Kenyan youths and to mobilize the society ideologically to be more positive to the ideas of neo-liberalism. Progressives are very clear that the neo-liberal order has been quite compatible with the militarization of the planet. The Obama Administration wants an end to the War on terror without curbs on the other sections of the military, financial and information complex. The GES is seeking to buck the plans of the Pentagon and the neo-con section of the State Department to intensify the militarization of the Indian Ocean. This year, for the first time John Kerry, the Secretary of State, visited Somalia and the US sent an envoy to Mogadishu for the first time in over 20 years.

Israel, Saudi Arabia and sections of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are not keen on peace in Kenya and Somalia and the demilitarization of the Indian Ocean. These forces are

aligned to one wing of the Kenyan leadership who have invested in the military and security. To strengthen these forces, neo- conservatives and right wing Christians have fanned out over rural Kenya spewing hatred of humans who are same gender loving beings. These right wing Christian forces seek to associate followers of the faith of Islam with terrorism.

Uhuru Kenyatta and His “Anti-Imperialism”

According to Forbes Magazine, the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, is reputedly the richest man in Kenya. As such, his leadership is based on the consolidation of the top financial barons in the country. When the charges against Uhuru Kenyatta were withdrawn by the ICC, he was emboldened to be more aggressive in establishing himself as a leader who could rally African opinion against Western imperialists. His challenge to the British about the renewal of the British military training has been followed by seeking to make links with the progressives inside and outside of Kenya. In June he met with Ngugi wa Thiongo who for the past two decades has lived in exile in the USA. Kenya will host the regional Pan African Congress for East Africa in Nairobi in August.

In seeking to establish himself as a leading statesman, Kenyatta has invited the Pope to visit Kenya. The World Trade Organisation ministerial conference will take place in Nairobi, bringing together 200 ministerial delegations from around the world. Uhuru will have a sense of being on the world stage when he co-hosts the Global Entrepreneurship Summit with President Obama. He had only recently opened the Japan-Kenya Conference on Infrastructure.

Obama will be giving legitimacy to this section of the Kenyan financial barons in his Entrepreneurship conference because in the past ten years US officials have been unconcerned about sweat shop conditions of workers in Africa. Kenyan entrepreneurs have been lobbying Washington for the renewal of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), but there is no discussion in the media about the rights of Kenyan workers.

Obama will travel to Ethiopia after Kenya where the human rights record of the political leaders are as atrocious as those of the government of Rwanda. Obama will not welcome the leaders of Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda to Kenya but the deployment of military forces from Uganda and Burundi to Somalia has emboldened these leaders to defy constitutional arrangements in their own societies to extend their hold on to political power. One immediate task in relation to this visit is for a clear program for the demilitarization of Somalia and for the USA to identify and expose those forces from the Arabian Gulf who are financially supporting Al Shabaab.

While there is real joy that Obama is visiting Kenya, this moment should provide another platform for progressives to push for the demilitarization of the relations with Africa. This calls for the dismantling of the US Africa Command, the withdrawal of the Special Forces from Somalia and the end of drone strikes. Normal air traffic and commerce in the area of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia has been negatively affected by the drone strikes being launched in this region. Real entrepreneurship and commerce cannot prosper in conditions where one section of capitalists want to engage in warfare as a business.

African progressives can take a leaf from the progressive forces in the USA who for five decades have called for the renewal of diplomatic relations with Cuba. These same progressives must take the political initiative to expose the Israeli and Saudi alliances that support elements who do not care about the lives of Africans.

Both the USA and Japan are very concerned about the foothold of China all over Eastern Africa but as long as the priority of the USA is for extending military relations with Africa via the US Africa Command and the so-called NGOs such as Bancroft Development, there will not be much traction for initiatives such as the US Africa Summit, Power Africa or the GES. Obama has surrounded himself with elements such as Susan Rice, Gayle Smith, Samantha Powers, John Brennan and others whose careers have been linked to military support for warlords in Libya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda.

From the start of his Presidency, Obama was caught between different forces in the United States and in Kenya. On the one side were the accumulated investments of the US military and private contractors in league with the neo-conservative Christians who proclaimed themselves to be Born Again Christians. These neo-conservatives had a base in the media with subsidiaries of the Rupert Murdoch Empire very involved in information manipulation inside Kenya. Western, especially US supported, non-governmental organizations were aligned with this section and they were silent on the role of the US military and the US Africa Command in Eastern Africa.

Obama is very concerned about his historical legacy and in the past year he has pushed by the organized forces in the USA who wanted to end the isolation of Cuba. The struggles against police killings and brutality in the USA have inspired a new movement organizing to defend Black lives. The Kenyan athletes who have embarked on 836-kilometer (520-mile) walk for peace are also proclaiming that the lives of ordinary Africans matter. Progressives in Kenya cannot stand aloof from the debates about entrepreneurship, electric power, infrastructure and mobile applications. Kenya needs peace and an end to the violence that is killing innocent people. Patriotic entrepreneurs who are not compromised by the cut throat forms of accumulation must stand out to push for conditions where business practices do not rob the peoples of Kenya of basic dignity.

The barons of real estate, banking, telecommunications, drugs, land and agriculture, sugar and transportation now dominate the agencies of government in Kenya and came into conflict with sections of Western Capital as they accumulated immense fortunes. The financial barons were willing to use violence to stay in power and were sophisticated enough to develop multilateral relations with new emerging economic behemoths such as India, Turkey, China, and sections of the European Union, especially France.

The processes of accumulation of wealth in Kenya were not sufficiently independent of state power for the barons to yield to popular votes in elections so the violence of the aftermath of the elections in 2007 was one manifestation of the huge stakes in Kenya. By travelling to Kenya at this time, Obama is caught between the homophobic neo-cons and the drone, Special Forces types on one side and the barons who want respectability on the other. This visit to Kenya has left Obama between the devil and the deep blue sea. Ultimately, in the short run, it is the Uhuru Kenyatta branch of the robber barons who will make hay out of this visit, regardless of what Obama says in his speeches to the Kenyan people.

Kenyan progressives must remain vigilant, be engaged with the debates about infrastructure and entrepreneurship to build a different relationship between the peoples of Kenya and the USA than that which has produced violence and insecurity over the past fifty years.

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Notes

- [1] "U.S Operates from Secret Bases in Somalia," Foreign Policy, July 2, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/02/exclusive-u-s-operates-drones-from-secret-bases-in-somalia-special-operations-jsoc-black-hawk-down/>
- [2] Jeffrey Gettleman, "A Catch-22 in Kenya: Western Terrorism Alerts May Fuel Terrorism, " New York Times, February 25, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/world/africa/as-tourism-sags-on-kenyan-coast-terrorists-could-lure-the-unemployed.html>
- [3] Horace G. Campbell, " the Office of Transition Initiatives and the Subversion of Societies, " Counterpunch, May 2, 2014 <http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/05/02/the-office-of-transition-initiatives-and-the-subversion-of-societies/>
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