

Is there a New Cold War that Impacts Africa?

By [Abayomi Azikiwe](#)

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This paper was presented at the Left Forum held at John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York (CUNY). The Left Forum took place from May 30-June 1, 2014, where several thousand people gathered from various progressive, radical and socialist tendencies and movements. This panel was hosted by the International Action Center (IAC) and was entitled "The New Cold War: What's Driving It and Will It Escalate?" In addition to Abayomi Azikiwe, the discussion featured Bill Doares as chair of the IAC, Meejin Richard and Seyeon Lee of Nodutdol for Korean Community Development, Berta Joubert-Ceci of the Women's Fightback Network in Philadelphia and Jess Sudin of Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO).

Many people today are describing the renewed political and military tensions between the Russian Federation and the United States-European Union alliance as a manifestation of a so-called "New Cold War." The previous Cold War developed after the conclusion of World War II when the U.S. and the Soviet Union emerged as the major powers on the international scene.

Coinciding with the Cold War between 1947-1991, was the rise of the national liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the struggle for civil rights, empowerment and social justice in the western countries during the same time period. The Cold War did not only have foreign policy implications but also influenced the character of oppression, class exploitation and race relations inside the imperialist states.

The question of a Cold War cannot be fully answered without dealing with the political character of international racism in the overall world capitalist ideological and military struggle against Communism. During the course of World War II the peoples of the oppressed nations were thrust into protracted conflict by demanding both social equality and national independence.

In October 1945, the Fifth Pan-African Congress was held in Manchester, England. The meeting represented the apex of a series of similar gathering that were organized between 1893 in Chicago to the First Pan-African Conference in London in 1900. After the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, there was an upsurge in national consciousness and class struggle.

The Niagara Movement of 1905 lead directly to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), co-founded by Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois and Mrs. Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Both of these prominent African American leaders were militant opponents of racism in the U.S., where African Americans were being lynched in the hundreds during this period.

With the conclusion of World War I, a previous upsurge in national consciousness arose. Another Pan-African Congress was held in 1919 in Paris. Du Bois had become the chief proponent of these summits which continued in 1921, 1923, 1925 and 1927.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association-African Communities League (UNIA-ACL) founded by Marcus and Amy Ashwood Garvey in 1914, drew millions of members and supporters throughout the western states and within occupied colonial territories in the Caribbean, Central America, South America and on the African continent.

Trade unions were formed in various parts of Africa during this period; for example in the Gold Coast railway industry in the late 1930s to the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union in South Africa after World War I and continuing through the African Rand Miner's Strike of 1946 after the second World War.

In 1919 there was a series of so-called race riots in the U.S. with Chicago being the most violent. Also in Egypt during the same year a rebellion erupted which brought new social forces, including women, into the anti-colonial struggle in Africa.

Pan-Africanism, World Revolution and the New Cold War

The national liberation movements achieving independence in Africa and the gains of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in the U.S. had a profound impact on the character of world capitalism and imperialism. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the founder of the modern state of Ghana and the chief tactician and strategist of the African Revolution during the 1950s through the early 1970s, identified neo-colonialism as the principal impediment to the achievement of genuine liberation and economic development.

After World War II the U.S. capitalists consolidated their global hegemony. Nonetheless, periodic crises within the economic system of exploitation were never fully resolved.

Even with the collapse of the former Soviet Union and shifts within the domestic and foreign policy of the People's Republic of China and other socialist countries, the ruling class inside the U.S. and Western Europe are by no means socially secure. The declining rates of profits and the ongoing resistance of the working class and the national oppressed have continued to be a cause for concern by those who control the means of production and the state.

This ongoing domestic war against the working class and oppressed inside the U.S. is in evidence through the attacks on public employees, public assets, unions, municipal pension funds, public and low-income housing and the evisceration of public education, both K-12 as well as colleges and universities.

Today China is considered by the U.S. imperialists as a major impediment to their control of various geo-political regions of the world including the Asia-Pacific region and the African continent. Developments in Africa have landed China the status of being the largest trading partner with the continent.

In relationship to the role of the Russian Federation, the U.S.-engineered coup in Ukraine and the utilization of fascist organizations is by no means unique. Many of these same fascist elements were recruited by the U.S. after World War II where they played a role in framing the political character of the intellectual and political nature of contemporary society.

The present hostility directed against Russia and China is a clear reflection of the crisis within the imperialist system led by the U.S. By attempting to demonize and criminalize the governments of China and Russia, the ruling class and the state are extending their domestic policies used against the oppressed nations inside the U.S. who disproportionately represent the incarcerated populations and those which remain under legal and law-enforcement supervision.

Nonetheless, these efforts by the ruling class have not halted the struggle for liberation, social justice, socialism and peace. In Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, the Philippines, Sudan, and all throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the imperialists have not been able to win an outright victory.

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