

Neo-Colonialism and “Africa’s Relations with the World”

African Union 23rd Summit: Renaissance or Continuing Dependency? Meeting in Malabo Exemplifies the Contradictions in Continental Affairs

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Equatorial Guinea was the scene of the latest African Union (AU) Summit convened on June 26-27. This oil-rich nation has become more prominent in recent years for its rhetorical defiance of the West as it relates to both the domestic and foreign policy of the 54-member regional body.

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema opened the AU 23rd Summit warning that the continent could no longer look to the West for economic development or political culture. These words were clearly related to the overall theme of the meeting which prioritized agricultural production and the need for increasing inter-continental and South-South trade.

The host of the gathering said “Africa should not continue to depend on the economies of developed countries. The continent has to seriously consider its relations with the world.”

These are axioms that have been articulated by successive generations of post-colonial African leaders dating back to Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea-Conakry and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. All of them were quite aware of the perils of political independence absent of genuine growth within the fields of heavy and light industry as well as the modernization of farming.

According to Nguema, “Africa now has 50 years of independence, so we do not need to suffer neo-colonialism and perpetuate it. We have adopted measures that have led to the stagnation of parity of our currencies.”

Of course there must be an African path towards the future based upon its own interests and way of thinking. Nkrumah advanced the concept of the “African Personality” where the history and struggle for national liberation and socialism would be imbued in the character of domestic and international relations.

Nguema went on to say that

“Africa cannot be content to continue with the current dependence on the economies of the developed world. Africa is sailing upstream against a dependency that prevents them from moving toward sustainable development. Africa should rethink its relationship with the developed world to reduce as far as possible the gap that prevents access to development.”

AU-China Relations Praised

These sets of values are reflected in the role of the Africa-China partnership and its expansion over the last decade-and-a-half. In 2000, the Forum on Africa-China Cooperation (FOCAC) was formed and since that time and five summits afterwards, Beijing is the largest trading with the AU member-states.

In a press release issued by FOCAC on the occasion of the AU 23rd Summit it said

“On June 25, 2014, the Special Envoy of the Chinese Government and Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming, during his attendance at the 23rd Summit of the African Union (AU), met with Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of African Union Commission (AUC) in Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea. Zhang Ming forwarded to Zuma the message of congratulation from President Xi Jinping on the 23rd Summit of AU.”

Illustrating the importance to Beijing of the China-AU alliance, the current leader of the world's second largest economy visited several African states briefly after assuming office in 2013. Although the United States government has made unfair criticism of the nature of relations between Africa and China, most informed opinions indicate that it is a partnership that is proving beneficial to both sides.

This same press release from FOCAC also emphasized that

“Zhang Ming said President Xi Jinping in his first visit to Africa in March last year after assuming office and Premier Li Keqiang in his visit to the four African countries and AU headquarters in May this year reached broad consensus with African leaders on further strengthening China-Africa relations and China-AU relations, and charted the course for the development of bilateral relations. The AU side is willing to continue to intensify cooperation with the Chinese side in such fields as infrastructure, agriculture, human resource development, and peace and security building in Africa, to promote Africa's industrialization, modernization and integration process, and to achieve mutual benefits and win-win results between Africa and China.”

Other Highlights of the Summit

Revolutionary Cuba has played a tremendous role in the struggle for the national liberation and development of Africa. The politico-military contributions to the people and governments of Algeria, Ghana, Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Ethiopia and others remains a treasured part of African history.

Of the AU Summit, the Cuban News Agency reported that

“Cuban vice-president Salvador Valdes, met in Equatorial Guinea with the president (chair) of the Commission of the African Union, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. The Cuban official who is attending the Summit of the African organization in the capital Malabo, conveyed greetings from Revolution leader Fidel Castro and from President Raul Castro and he reiterated Cuba's permanent commitment to supporting Africa in all aspects, particularly in human development.” (June 27)

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon attended the meeting in Malabo where he stressed the importance of the AU in the quest for sustainable peace and security on the continent. At present the UN is set to deploy a so-called peacekeeping force of some 12,000 military forces in the Central African Republic, (CAR) a mineral-rich state which has been plagued by instability and foreign intervention.

Ban said

“We are committed to your goal of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena. As you develop and implement Agenda 2063, the United Nations will remain by your side – promoting peace, human rights and sustainable development.” (UN News Center, June 26)

Jewish Delegation Attacks Malabo Summit

Of all of these positive statements and accolades delivered at the AU 23rd Summit, a group of Jewish American observers who attended the deliberations in Malabo came away denouncing the manner in which they were treated by the continental organization. The delegation was representing the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and reportedly prompted protests from members of at least three governments, Egypt, South Africa and Iran.

Although it was not clear under what circumstances or purpose this U.S. Jewish delegation was invited to the Malabo Summit, but the JNS.org press service quoted one prominent American representative, Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the above-mentioned organization, as saying that they were accused of being from the State of Israel and therefore compelled some officials in attendance to object to their presence. Hoenlein said that they were invited as an official delegation and “were initially treated very well” along with meeting many African leaders.

Nonetheless, in a quote from an Israeli-based organization, it objected to the American Jewish delegation’s treatment in Malabo saying

“If this despicable lack of hospitality was indeed the result of efforts by the Egyptian and Iranian delegations, the former should be disciplined according to the steps available to the African Union under such circumstances, while the latter should be permanently barred from all future summits,”

said Efraim Zuroff, who is the director of the Jerusalem office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.” (Jerusalem Post)

“The positive thing is that this is the first time a Jewish delegation was invited to the AU [summit],” Hoenlein noted. However, if there are AU member-states and partners of the regional organization who categorically oppose the attendance of a pro-Israeli delegation the very existence of such a grouping will continue to be a source of conflict and division.

Imperialist Militarism and Terrorism

One major point of discussion was the threat of terrorism in various African states, with

specific reference to the ongoing clashes between the Boko Haram sect and the Nigerian military. This growing problem of bomb attacks, abductions and mass killings have provided a further opening for intelligence and military forces from the U.S., France and the State of Israel.

With the designation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as having the largest economy in Africa yet the government in Abuja is exposed as being incapable of resolving an insurgency in the northeast of the country, such a situation represents a profound contradiction in continental political development. The wealth-gap and deepening class divisions within Nigeria and other African states will continue to taint the notions of phenomenal economic growth.

Africa cannot be genuinely independent and sovereign without taking control of its internal security which is essential for developing its infrastructural capacity and the raising of the standard of living for the majority population of workers, farmers and youth. This transformation in the fields of agriculture, science, education and technological advancements cannot be carried out within the realm of the present and historical capitalist divisions of economic power, trade and distribution.

The continent must move toward the socialist organization of the society and economy. This will ensure the equal distribution of resources emanating from the vast mineral, oil and hydro-electric wealth in existence on the continent.

Empowering the majority of workers, farmers and youth will inevitably guarantee internal, regional and continental security. The current involvement of the imperialist states in the economic, intelligence, military and consequently political affairs of Africa has weakened the capacity of state institutions and these realities are in evidence from Egypt to South Africa.

These challenges must be overcome long before the conclusion of the 2063 plan which emerged from the 50 year anniversary AU Summit in Addis Ababa last year. Neo-colonialism is the final stage of imperialism and if the continent is to move forward in seizing its rightful status in world affairs western influence and control must be eradicated.

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