

United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa Since World War II

A trail of imperialist militarism and super exploitation

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Global Research, June 06, 2017

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Media Disinformation](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Note: This paper was prepared and presented in part for a panel at the Left Forum held at John Jay College of the City University of New York (CUNY) on Sat. June 3, 2017. The panel was hosted by the United National Antiwar Coalition where the author serves as an administrative committee member. Other panelists included Margaret Kimberley, Editor and Senior Columnist for Black Agenda Report BAR, Ajamu Baraka, National Organizer at Black Alliance for Peace (BAP) and Joe Lombardo, Co-Coordinator of UNAC.

With the ascendancy of President Donald Trump to the White House a strong focus has been placed on his role as a promoter of racism, national oppression domestically along with warmongering abroad.

We observe keenly the escalation of tension in the Korean peninsula with the placement of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system. The president's posture in relationship to the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) threatened the full resumption of an unresolved war just several weeks ago.

There has been increasing aerial attacks against purported al-Qaeda targets in Yemen while the people in this Middle Eastern state, the least developed in the region, are suffering immensely from the Pentagon-coordinated war involving Saudi Arabian and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bombings which have continued on a daily basis since March 2015 killing an estimated 12,000 people and prompting widespread outbreak of cholera impacting over 60,000.

The deployment of the Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) in Afghanistan represented a new level of warfare in that Central Asian country which has been the focus of U.S. policy since at least 1979 when the Islamist forces were unleashed against the Soviet-backed socialist government then in power. Since 2001, the Pentagon and NATO have laid waste to the country further where thousands of foreign troops continue to occupy the area.

Somalia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Libya and Beyond

Although the Trump administration's foreign policy towards Africa has gained far less attention by the western media, there has been the continuation of already existing hostilities on the African continent. Somalia was singled out when Trump ordered the escalation of Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) personnel being stationed in

this Horn of Africa state. A U.S. Navy Seal soldier was killed by al-Shabaab guerrilla units several weeks ago while they were embedded in the American and European Union (EU) backed Somali National Army (SNA).



Protest in Michigan (Source: iacenter.org)

Although the administration claimed that it was doing away with the supposed restrictions on military actions in Somalia by former President Barack Obama, the interventions by the U.S. in Somalia go back as far as the late 1970s when it encouraged an invasion by the government of then President Mohamed Siad Barre against the Ogaden region of Ethiopia when another Democratic leader Jimmy Carter was in the Oval Office. The waning days of the presidential tenure of George H.W. Bush, Sr. was marked by the invasion of 12,000 Marines in Somalia in the failed "Operation Restore Hope" beginning in December 1992, a plan inherited by Bill Clinton which ended in disaster when the people rose up against the occupation.

Since 2006, the U.S. then under President George W. Bush, Jr. has encouraged and sponsored the intervention into Somali national affairs. First by seeking to empower warlords to subvert the efforts of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) and later after 2009, by recruiting elements of the UIC into the interim federal regime, Washington sought to guide the political events in the oil-rich state.

Several neighboring states have been drawn into the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) which now has approximately 22,000 troops from Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Burundi and Uganda. Police officers from Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria are also a part of the mission.

In the Southern African nation of Zimbabwe since 1998, the former British colonial power, the U.S., the EU among others, have imposed sanctions on the government of the Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) led by President Robert Mugabe. When in 2000 legislation was passed granting the right of the African people to radically redistribute land to the people, the sanctions and other forms of hostile propaganda was enacted.

During the period of 1998-2000, the administration of President Bill Clinton was in power. The same sanctions continued through the entire two terms of the Bush White House. When Obama took office in January 2009, his regime continued and intensified the punitive measures against the ZANU-PF ruling party and various political officials including President Mugabe.

Both Britain and the U.S. attempted to persuade the Republic of South Africa while former President Thabo Mbeki was in office to impose a blockade on Zimbabwe. Britain drew up plans for an evacuation of its settler population which held United Kingdom (UK) passports as well. These suggestions failed and through the assistance of successive African National Congress (ANC) governments, the support of the regional Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the People's Republic of China, the country has been able to remain afloat.

This of course was not the case in the North African nation of Libya, where under the Jamahiriya system headed by Col. Muammar Gaddafi, the oil-rich country had attained the

highest standard of living anywhere on the continent. It was the Democratic administration of Obama with Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State which coordinated a war of regime-change and genocide that destroyed Libya as a viable state. Gaddafi was driven from the capital of Tripoli in August 2011 and later captured and brutally murdered by imperialist agents on October 20 of the same year.



Civil war in Libya (Source: Sputnik/ Andrey Stenin)

Today Libya is a major source of instability and human trafficking internationally. Thousands have died off the coast of the country in the Mediterranean in attempts to flee the chaos and impoverishment in Libya and throughout other regions of Africa and the Middle East. There are at least three identifiable regimes in Libya which often engage in deadly military struggles for political and economic authority. The country has gone from being Africa's most prosperous to dire poverty and balkanization. Numerous attempts by counter-revolutionary elements backed up by the White House, EU member-states and the United Nations to form a viable government have failed.

The situation in Libya is a direct result of the foreign policy of Barack Obama towards the African continent. Since the launching of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2008 under Bush, the presence of U.S. military forces on the continent has increased substantially. Obama announced just two years prior to leaving office that his administration would deploy in excess of 3,500 Special Forces and military trainers across 36 nations. A military base in the Horn of Africa state of Djibouti has been expanded where it houses thousands of U.S. troops at Camp Lemonnier.

Imperialism in Africa today is at a critical stage impeding the capacity of nation-states to direct the future of their countries. Despite Africa's vast mineral, agricultural wealth and labor power, a renewed debt crisis compounded by Pentagon, CIA and State Department interference is reversing the gains that have been made in previous years.

U.S. Foreign Policy After World War II

Some of the most intense fighting during WWII took place in North Africa during the period of 1940-1943. Italian and later German military forces sought to establish a firm military base of operations in Egypt and Libya. They were defeated by the British and U.S. military in a series of battles over a period of nearly two years.

U.S. forces were deployed in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria in Operation Torch which bolstered allied occupations in North Africa. Italy had secured Libya as a colony in 1931 after the two decades-long war of occupation. The Wheelus Air Base was seized from the Italians by Britain in 1943. The large military facility in Libya, after the Italian and German losses, became the principal hub for the U.S. military in the region.

After the war with the rise of the National Liberation Movements across the continent, U.S. foreign policy was largely supportive of the colonial powers of Britain, France, Belgium, Spain and Portugal. In Algeria an armed revolutionary struggle was waged during 1954-1961 leading to the independence of the French colony which Paris had occupied for 130 years.

Although the State Department often claimed that it was in support of the right of colonial nations to self-determination and independence, the strategic alliances the U.S. maintained

through the post-WWII North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took precedence.

For example, in regard to the Portuguese role in waging a war to maintain its colonies during the 1960s and early 1970s, the U.S. did not interfere with Lisbon as it bombed civilian areas in efforts to halt the advances of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) in Guinea-Bissau. Other colonies in Mozambique, Angola, Sao Tome and Principe, the Portuguese ruthlessly suppressed independence efforts. Even after independence was won in Mozambique and Angola, counter-revolutionary elements tied to Portuguese intelligence were deployed against the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO).

With specific reference to legislative and State Department initial institutional responses to African liberation struggles, there was the establishment of the African Affairs Bureau under President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Senate Foreign Relations Sub-Committee on African Affairs which was chaired by the-then Senator John F. Kennedy. The Massachusetts Senator made comments that appeared to be supportive of independence movements against France in both Algeria and Vietnam.

These efforts by Kennedy in 1959-1960 served to position him for his successful bid for the presidency. Kennedy criticized the Eisenhower administration for not being supportive of the aspirations of Africa people.

Nonetheless, after taking power in January 1961, Kennedy upheld the U.S. policies toward the former Belgian Congo whom first Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba had been overthrown with the assistance of the United Nations. Lumumba had been placed under arrest, tortured and executed with the full complicity of Washington in the final days of the Eisenhower administration.

Although Kennedy invited more than two dozen African leaders to the White House during his presidency from 1961 to late 1963 when he was assassinated, Washington continued its Cold War efforts designed to undermine and limit the influence of the Soviet Union, China and Cuba in Africa. In October 1962, Kennedy welcomed the newly ascended Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella to the White House. However, the administration warned Ben Bella not to visit Cuba after leaving the U.S. due to a purported plot to shoot down his plane in route to the revolutionary Caribbean island-nation.



John F. Kennedy and Ahmed Ben Bella (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Later the U.S. would back a Moroccan invasion into Algeria designed to overthrow the new National Liberation Front (FLN) government. During this intervention the Cuban government under Prime Minister Fidel Castro sent in military advisers and pilots which assisted in the defeat of the western-backed coup attempt.

Conclusion: Imperialist Policy on Africa Continues Through Successive Administrations from Both Capitalist Parties

These illustrations of U.S. foreign affairs provide a glimpse of the ongoing efforts by Washington and its NATO allies to dominate post-colonial Africa. Socialist-oriented African states have been the principle focus of destabilization by the State Department and CIA.

Although President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana visited the U.S. in the early days of the Kennedy administration to discuss the crisis in Congo after the assassination of Lumumba and his two cabinet members, the unofficial policy of the White House and State Department was to remove the First Republic Government led by the Convention People's Party (CPP). Kennedy's successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, oversaw the overthrow of the CPP and the First Republic in February 1966.

Accounts from both the State Department and the CIA have proved conclusively in subsequent years that it was the machinations of the U.S. that removed the Nkrumah government. Former Michigan Governor G. Mennen Williams, who served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs under both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, set the stage for the Ghana coup when he sent a memorandum to the ambassador from Accra criticizing the publication of Nkrumah's landmark book entitled "Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism" released in October 1965 just four months prior to the coup which utilized lower-ranking military officers while Nkrumah was on an external mission to end the

Vietnam War.

To quote from Nkrumah's work:

"No one would suggest that if all the peoples of Africa combined to establish their unity their decision could be revoked by the forces of neo-colonialism. On the contrary, faced with a new situation, those who practice neo-colonialism would adjust themselves to this new balance of world forces in exactly the same way as the capitalist world has in the past adjusted itself to any other change in the balance of power. The danger to world peace springs not from the action of those who seek to end neo-colonialism but from the inaction of those who allow it to continue. To argue that a third world war is not inevitable is one thing, to suppose that it can be avoided by shutting our eyes to the development of a situation likely to produce it, is quite another matter."

Nkrumah concludes the book by saying:

"If world war is not to occur it must be prevented by positive action. This positive action is within the power of the peoples of those areas of the world which now suffer under neocolonialism but it is only within their power if they act at once, with resolution and in unity."

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