

Biden Foreign Policy has Alienated Africa: Russia-Africa Summit to Reconvene in Ethiopia

Moscow is seeking to strengthen relations with states and geopolitical regions which have not condemned their operations in Ukraine

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After a visit to Russia by the two leading officials of the African Union (AU), an announcement has been made that President Vladimir Putin is ready to hold another gathering to work towards key issues facing both geopolitical regions.

The last Africa-Russia Summit was held in Sochi during 2019 prior to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent impact on the world economy.

Today there is the Russian special military operations in Ukraine which has provoked the United States and their allies within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to engage in a failed attempt to isolate Moscow on a global scale. The current administration of President Joe Biden has placed the plight of people in Ukraine above many other burning humanitarian and political crises.

Inflation is a major concern of working people and the oppressed while the Democratic administration and Congress are attempting to shift the focus of the public to the atrocities committed by the former government of President Donald J. Trump. Whether the January 6 Congressional hearings will be sufficient political capital to stave off a potential defeat of the Democrats in the midterm elections remains to be seen.

As far as the AU member-states are concerned, there has been no enthusiasm for the efforts of the Biden administration to build support for the arming of the Ukrainian military and the imposition of sanctions against Russia. Many African states abstained from the United Nations resolutions attacking the Russian Federation while on a grassroots level, there have been expressions of solidarity for the position of Moscow.

Senegalese President Macky Sall and AU Commission Chair Moussa Faki Mahamat held talks in Sochi on June 3 with President Putin. African states are facing monumental crises related

to economic development, climate change and food deficits. The sanctions imposed by Washington and the EU have had a disastrous impact on the importation of agricultural products.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has repeatedly stated that there needs to be a negotiated settlement to end the fighting in Ukraine. This view conflicts with Washington and Brussels which have continued to engage in vitriolic propaganda and psychological warfare campaigns against the Russian government. Efforts by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Molly Phee, to influence journalists operating on the continent failed miserably when media workers raised critical questions regarding the contradictions within Washington's foreign policy.

One source on the upcoming summit scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the headquarters of the AU, says of the current situation that: "A coordination council has been established under the aegis of the Secretariat of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum (RAPF). According to Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, 'Concrete proposals for consolidating Russian-African cooperation are being worked out by three councils (co-ordinating, public and scientific ones) reporting to the Partnership Forum Secretariat. They represent ministries, agencies, business and public organizations engaged in the development of relations with the African continent.' Moscow is poised to build relations of strategic partnership with pan-African organizations and regional integration associations, Lavrov added. Lavrov said that the two most important goals of the summit will be to sign off on a 'memorandum of understanding between the government of the Russian Federation and the African Union on basic principles of relations and co-operation' and a 'memorandum of understanding between the Eurasian Economic Commission and the African Union on economic co-operation.'" (<https://www.intellinews.com/russia-preparing-for-second-africa-summit-to-build-closer-ties-as-it-pivots-away-from-the-west-247188/>)

The holding of such a meeting between Russia and the AU during this period of heightened international tensions represents a repudiation of the U.S. foreign policy in Eastern Europe as well as on the African continent. There is much discontent over the failure of the U.S. to build relationships with the AU states based upon mutual interests.

Since the founding of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2008 and the creation of Operation Barkhane and the G5 Sahel groups by the French government, the overall security atmosphere in Africa has deteriorated. Armed opposition groups which claim to be allied with al-Qaeda and ISIS, both of which have their origins within U.S. counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, are carrying out attacks on civilians and military personnel at an increasing rate in Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, among other states.

As a result, some states such as Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR) have reached out to the Russian military services firm known as the Wagner Group. France threatened to withdraw all of its military assistance to Mali if Wagner continued to advise the government in Bamako. In turn, the military regime in Mali demanded that the French armed forces and diplomatic personnel leave the country.

BRICS Convenes Virtual Summit Hosted by China

The Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) grouping was scheduled to open its

14th Summit on June 23. This organization founded in 2006, brings together governments which represent billions of people from South America to Africa and Asia.

Not even one of the states involved in the BRICS alliance have condemned Russia for its intervention in Ukraine. As emphasized in the June 3 talks between the AU and the Russian government in Sochi, the summit will further work towards building economic networks which are not dominated by Washington, London and Brussels.

People's Republic of China President Xi Jinping will lay out additional plans for the establishment of ambitious proposals for a Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Africa is in dire need of infrastructural development projects related to healthcare, education, transportation and sustainable energy. Although the U.S. and its NATO allies have escalated their military presence in Africa, China and Russia are seeking relationships which improve the well-being of people within society.

Of primary concern to the White House, State Department and Pentagon are the ideas raised in April by President Xi related to a new Global Security Initiative (GSI). An article published by one mainstream U.S.-based news agency says of the role of Beijing: "Chinese President Xi Jinping is likely to seek support from BRICS for his vision of an alternative world order, which he introduced at a forum in April as his signature Global Security Initiative. The main premise of the GSI posits that seeking 'absolute security' is counterproductive. It opposes the building of 'national security on the basis of insecurity in other countries.' GSI may have a backer in Putin, who was in Beijing weeks before he launched the Ukraine invasion on Feb. 24. At the time, China and Russia signed a 5,000-word 'no limits' partnership aimed at challenging 'global hegemony' without explicitly naming the U.S." (<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/06/22/vladimir-putin-to-address-brics-russia-invasion-of-ukraine.html>)

No one should be surprised that the BRICS states are discussing these issues in light of the crisis in Ukraine. The proxy war between the two largest nuclear powers in the world requires the intervention of other blocs. Biden's strategy in Ukraine has resulted in the deaths and injuries of untold numbers of people. \$55 billion has been pledged to continue the war as the U.S.-backed Ukrainian military is suffering tremendous losses in lives and equipment transported by the NATO states.

Many leading African scholars view the BRICS Summit along with the Forum on China-Africa Relations (FOCAC), which has been in existence since 2000, as avenues for the continent and its people to foster social and economic development. Prof. Ahmadu Aly Mbaye, an economist on the faculty of Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal, noted that: "The BRICS can present new alternatives to financing African economies and [facilitate] better integration of Africa into the world economy,' as African countries 'felt excluded from the international system,' Mbaye said, noting that the continent has been the least funded amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Mbaye stressed the importance of infrastructure in a country's development. However, many African countries have limited access to international financing to build quality infrastructure, as international rating agencies 'overestimate the level of risk in African countries,' he said." (http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/tpzx/202206/t20220618_10705956.html)

A central focus of the Biden administration's foreign policy has been aimed at alienating AU states from Moscow and Beijing. However, despite the horrendous humanitarian crises

taking place from Eastern Europe to East Africa and South Asia, in the short term it appears as if the aggressive imperialist approach by NATO at the aegis of the U.S., has not gained any significant political traction. The fact that these international gatherings of a substantive nature are occurring portends much for the future of Washington's waning influence internationally.

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