

Libya and the Modern Colonial Legacy of the Berlin Conference

Germany hosts summit seeking path forward for North African state destroyed by imperialism in the 21st century

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Once a leading force in the Pan-African Movement on the continent, Libya today, provides a profound illustration of the detrimental and destructive character of neo-colonialism in the present epoch.

During February and March of 2011, the United States and its NATO allies, utilized the United Nations Security Council to engineer two resolutions which provided the rationale for a blanket bombing of the country and a rebel-ground operation which killed tens of thousands and displaced millions.

Longtime Revolutionary Pan-Africanist leader and theoretician, Col. Muammar Gaddafi, was assassinated in October of that same year. In the aftermath of the imperialist-generated crises, scores of militia groups have battled for an elusive political and economic supremacy.

During late January, the German government led by Angela Merkel, held an international gathering featuring the leading western capitalist powers in another failed effort to draft a roadmap for establishing some semblance of stability inside the country. Not surprisingly, the summit ended without a peace accord signed by the main belligerent in the continuing war, being renegade military strongman Khalifa Haftar, who has been a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative for decades, having spent much time in the U.S. after defecting from the Gaddafi administration in Chad in the mid-1980s.

Over four years ago, a German career diplomat, Martin Kobler, had served as the principal negotiator in the establishment of the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), under the titular guardianship of Fayez al-Sarraj, the prime minister. Nonetheless, the PM has never been able to consolidate power in the East of the country which has a rival and divided as well legislative structure, the House of Representatives, based in Tobruk in alliance with Haftar. See [this](#).

The power vacuum in Tripoli has partly resulted from the de facto recognition of the Libyan National Army (LNA), directed by Haftar, on the part of Washington and Paris. There are also rumors that the Russian Federation is backing Haftar, although President Vladimir Putin has denied this allegation.

The GNA regime is bolstered by various militias which have prevented the LNA from overrunning the capital city. LNA frustrations have led to the carrying out of bombings of civilian areas and the capture of vessels belonging to Turkey which has entered the fray on

the side of the GNA.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has announced the deployment of his troops, an affiliate of NATO, in order to shore up Prime Minister al-Sarraj and to ensure that the LNA does not take control of Tripoli. Turkey was present at the recent Berlin Summit as well.

In the aftermath of the Berlin Summit, the 55-member African Union (AU) issued a short communique which raises more questions than answers. In 2011, at the onset of the Libyan crisis three members of the AU voted in favor of the UN Security Council resolutions imposing a no-fly zone over the country. This proved to be a colossal error, in effect creating further a political calamity with the ostensible backing of leading African states within the UN structures.

Soon enough the AU members recognized the mistake made and deployed representatives in an effort to bring about a ceasefire. However, by that time it was far too late. The imperialists and their rebel underlings rejected the AU diplomatic interventions which further marginalized the continental organization on its own soil.

The Role of the AU in the Present Crisis

The latest AU statement during January said of the summit and the contemporary situation in Libya that:

“The Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat attended a conference on Libya in Berlin, Germany, at the invitation of Chancellor Angela Merkel, alongside President Denis Sassou Nguesso, Chairperson of the AU High-Level Committee on Libya. The conference, which invited international actors including all the permanent member states of the United Nations Security Council, had for its objective to assist the United Nations to unify the international community in their support for a peaceful solution to the Libyan crisis.” (See [this](#))

Well of course, the notion of a peaceful settlement in Libya sounds quite remote. In 2011, the AU had put forward a program for resolving the crises in the North African state through the adoption of an immediate ceasefire, the convening of talks among the Gaddafi government and the western-funded and armed counter-revolutionary rebels, along with the holding of “internationally supervised” elections. Nevertheless, the imperialists and the rebels would not consider these proposals whatsoever. They wanted to remove the Jamahiriya and create a Libyan state in the image of the West. This is a construct of an illusion which has still not been realized some nine years later.

The same AU statement in the aftermath of the January 2020 Berlin Summit concluded by noting:

“The Chairperson reiterated the African position in support of a full and unconditional ceasefire, the respect for the UN arms embargo and the need for violators to face sanctions, and the return to an inclusive Libyan-led and owned political process that includes an effective follow-up monitoring mechanism. The African Union High Level Committee on Libya, established in 2011, is expected to convene a follow up meeting in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, on 30 January 2020, to study the evolution of the situation in Libya, ahead of the

February 2020 AU Summit of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.”

Even the German press said of the aftermath of the recent Berlin Summit emphasizing in a report that:

“Several countries that participated in a Berlin peace summit last week and agreed to respect an existing United Nations arms embargo have violated their commitment, the UN said on Saturday (January 25). The agreement, signed by 16 states and organizations at the Libya peace summit in Germany, set out plans for international efforts to monitor the embargo’s implementation. ‘Over the last 10 days, numerous cargo and other flights have been observed landing at Libyan airports in the western and eastern parts of the country providing the parties with advance weapons, armored vehicles, advisers and fighters,” the UN mission to Libya (UNSMIL) said in a statement. The mission condemns these ongoing violations, which risk plunging the country into a renewed and intensified round of fighting,’ UNSMIL said. The UN criticized several countries that attended the Berlin summit for violating the embargo, but stopped short of naming them.” (See [this](#))

Legacy of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85

The original Berlin Conference of the late 19th century (1884-85) resulted in the partitioning of Africa by the imperialist powers of Europe and the U.S. This conference was held after four centuries of enslavement and colonialism on the continent and in the Western Hemisphere.



There was always resistance by the African people to imperialism and this culminated during the post-World War II period when numerous colonies rose up demanding national independence and sovereignty. However, the new phase of imperialism in Africa, known as neo-colonialism, which was enunciated and popularized by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, has become the dominant mechanism to perpetuate the global domination of Western Europe and North America. (See [this](#))

At the third summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor to today’s

AU, held in Ghana in October 1965, Nkrumah urged the immediate formation of a United States of Africa encompassing political, economic, military and cultural integration of the continent. The call was prophetic since it was the last OAU Summit prior to the CIA-engineered coup against Nkrumah which took place on February 24, 1966.

With decades past and lessons learned, the OAU Summit in Libya during 1999 issued the Sirte Declaration, reiterating a form of the Nkrumah program, although on a minimal basis, calling again for continental unification. The Sirte Declaration led to the reformation of the OAU to the AU. Yet the AU cannot realize the objectives of genuine Pan-Africanism absent of a revolutionary program which is anti-imperialist and socialist in character. Such a program will require the empowerment of the majority of workers, farmers, revolutionary intellectuals and youth as the center of development strategies and tactical considerations.

Therefore, the Berlin Summit of 2020 can only lead to the continuation of neo-colonialism. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) initiated in 2018 faces tremendous obstacles. These impediments are rooted in the continuing legacy of the period of enslavement and colonization. Neo-Colonialism must be defeated before Africa can be totally liberated.

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Featured image: Libya Leader Col. MUammar Gaddafi and South African counterpart Nelson Mandela during the early 1990s.

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