

Neo-Colonialism, International Finance Capital and the Necessity of Pan-African Sovereignty

African Union member-states are facing a critical conjuncture as the looming threats of global conflict against imperialism threatens world peace

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Note: These remarks were prepared and delivered in part to a webinar entitled "AFRICOM, Corporate Dominance, Neo-Colonialism: How Do People Assert Their Humanity and Choices." The event was sponsored by the Pan-Afrikan Society Community Forum (PASCf) based in London, England. The other two panelists were Mahlet Ayele Beyecha, an independent Pan-African researcher and creator of Connect Africa media platform as well as the Pan-African wing coordinator of the Defend Ethiopia Task Force in Europe. Also, Tunde Osazua spoke representing the Black Alliance for Peace (BAP) U.S. Out of Africa Network. He is the coordinator of the October month of action demanding the dismantling of AFRICOM. This webinar was moderated by Jackie Lewis and Ola Balagun of PASCf.

"The neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage. In the past it was possible to convert a country upon which a neo-colonial regime had been imposed — Egypt in the nineteenth century is an example — into a colonial territory. Today this process is no longer feasible. Old-fashioned colonialism is by no means entirely abolished. It still constitutes an African problem, but it is everywhere on the retreat. Once a territory has become nominally independent it is no longer possible, as it was in the last century, to reverse the process. Existing colonies may linger on, but no new colonies will be created. In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism. The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside." (Taken from the Introduction to "Neo-Colonialism: The Last State of Imperialism", by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, 1965)

Over the last 57 years when these words were published by the-then First President of the Republic of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the situation in Africa has not changed

fundamentally as it relates to the overall international division of labor and economic power.

Since 1965, many African states have gained their independence while others have engaged in projects aimed at national revolutionary and socialist orientations. Nonetheless, the role of the United States and its European Union (EU) allies is still designed to dominate the world including the African continent while eradicating any semblance of non-capitalist development in Europe and other geo-political regions of the globe.

The purpose of this presentation is to objectively review some of the critical issues facing African people internationally. There is the tendency among journalists and scholars to view the clear and present dangers within the context of western imperialist narratives where the capitalist states of North America and Europe are viewed as the norm while the vast majority of governments and populations are characterized as somehow lacking or even inferior in regard to societal values and governance strategies.

However, events over the last decade have clearly illustrated the fragility of bourgeois democracy as it is practiced in the EU, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) states and most importantly, the U.S. and Canada. Although the collapse of classical colonialism has resulted in the revision of exploitative and oppressed mechanism which allow for the façade of diplomatic representation and recognition by the imperialist states and their ruling class, the loosening of the grip by the western capitalists has been noteworthy with the emergence of economic and political blocs which at least in theory are seeking to operate in their own national and regional interests.

For example, the recent meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+) agreed to take two million barrels of oil per day off the global energy markets causing further pressures on the world capitalist system. The Russian Federation collaborated with the Saudi Arabian monarchy to engineer this latest rejection of U.S. hegemonic policy implementation. U.S. President Joe Biden had travelled to Saudi Arabia in contravention to his own 2020 campaign pledges to isolate the monarchy in a failed attempt to secure a lowering of the price of oil under conditions which would benefit Washington and Wall Street.

The only response from Biden to the announcement by OPEC+ was to suggest a review of his administration's relationship with Saudi Arabia. Yet the people who live and work in the U.S. are facing inflationary pressures not experienced since the 1970s. The costs for gasoline, heating, electricity, food, public transportation and other consumer goods and services are increasing. This leading capitalist state has refused to even suggest the enactment of price controls and penalties against multinational corporations which are earning mega-profits while impoverishment is increasing among working people.

What the Biden administration has done in response to the global capitalist crisis is to intensify its war drive in Europe, Asia and the African continent. The administration has pledged at least \$US80 billion to Ukraine in their proxy war against the Russian Federation. Any effort to abide by the Minsk Agreements signed after negotiations which spanned several years. The talks which led to these agreements were designed to prevent a full-blown war over the status of Ukraine and particularly the Donbass region where large sections of people are of Russian ancestry. (See [this](#))

Many people in 2022 who would argue vehemently against the position of Moscow in the current U.S.-provoked proxy war have never even heard of the Minsk Agreements.

Information conveyed over the corporate and government-controlled media in the U.S. and Western Europe are only presenting distorted and one-sided narratives which justify the failed domestic and foreign policies of the Biden administration and their EU-NATO cohorts.

These untruths are not only incorrect, they have created a tense international situation where claims of first strike nuclear capability have entered the mainstream of dialogue taking place among world powers. The Biden administration's refusal to allow a negotiated settlement to the proxy war in Ukraine is being reflected in the current crisis gripping the African continent and other geo-political regions of the globe.

In fear of its waning influence within Europe and the Global South, the current administration in Washington has set out to establish new ground rules for their political engagement with the AU member-states. A recently released document from the State Department suggests a new partnership between U.S. imperialism and the AU. Since when has the unequal nature of economic, military and political power between two distinct geo-political regions resulted in a genuine partnership based upon mutual interests? The Biden administration has abused its electoral mandate which was spelled out during the 2020 campaign which drew enormous support from African Americans, Latin Americans, women and working people of all nationalities. (See [this](#))

The more than 80 million people who cast their ballots in 2020 to remove the former President Donald Trump from office did not do so in order to witness a worsening security situation in Europe and the efforts to reinforce neo-colonial domination on the African continent. As Nkrumah noted in seminal work *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* cited at the beginning of this work that:

“Foremost among the neo-colonialists is the United States, which has long exercised its power in Latin America. Fumblingly at first she turned towards Europe, and then with more certainty after world war two when most countries of that continent were indebted to her. Since then, with methodical thoroughness and touching attention to detail, the Pentagon set about consolidating its ascendancy, evidence of which can be seen all around the world.

Who really rules in such places as Great Britain, West Germany, Japan, Spain, Portugal or Italy? If General de Gaulle is ‘defecting’ from U.S. monopoly control, what interpretation can be placed on his ‘experiments’ in the Sahara Desert, his paratroopers in Gabon, or his trips to Cambodia and Latin America?

Lurking behind such questions are the extended tentacles of the Wall Street octopus. And its suction cups and muscular strength are provided by a phenomenon dubbed ‘The Invisible Government’, arising from Wall Street’s connection with the Pentagon and various intelligence services.” (See [this](#))

In 2022, this Wall Street octopus is doing everything in its power to not choke or suffocate on its own inability to properly devour the resistance which is continuing to emerge in opposition to unilateralism and hegemony. Since taking office less than two years ago the Biden administration has managed to widen an already existing low-intensity conflict in eastern Ukraine; raise the level of tensions between Beijing and Washington through consistent provocations surrounding the status of Taiwan; facilitate massive food deficits in Africa and Asia through its draconian sanctions against Russia related to its destabilization of the entire United Kingdom and EU geo-political region; while concurrently ignoring the

burgeoning domestic crises of the economy, national, class and gender oppression.

Our principal focus in this webinar is the African continent and its 1.4 billion people. However, Africa has never existed in a vacuum. Its history is one of origination, triumph and tragedy. Since the era of enslavement, colonialism and neo-colonialism an ongoing struggle has been waged which takes on different forms although in its essence is aimed at total emancipation and unification.

Lessons from the Sudanese Struggle for Democratic Transition

A profound testament to the character of neo-colonialism in Africa is the present social and economic crisis in the Republic of Sudan. This state which is strategically located is not only well-endowed with petroleum and natural gas, the country is a nexus between the northern, central and eastern regions of the continent.

Since January 1956, Sudan has been independent from British colonialism which ruled the country starting in the late 19th century. Many of the unresolved questions emanating from the post-colonial African situation are present in modern day Sudan. There is the partitioning of the country which stemmed directly from the divisive character of colonial rule. In addition, there has been periodic conflicts between the military and security apparatus against the civilian political parties, trade unions and mass organizations. Despite its vast energy resources, the majority of the population remains mired in poverty and underdevelopment.

Former President Omar Hassan al-Bashir was a career military officer who seized power from a civilian government in 1989. The administration which was overthrown in 1989 grew out of social unrest which unfolded during the early months of 1985 when another U.S.-supported military regime was overthrown through mass civil disobedience, strikes and rebellions. Even though multi-party elections were held in the aftermath of the 1985 uprising, similar contradictions among the political parties which emerged during the struggle for national independence were soon to resurface.

After taking power, former President al-Bashir switched his military uniform for civilian clothing and later formed a political party which was based heavily among the armed forces and Islamic institutions. The National Congress Party (NCP) ruled in conjunction with the military until April 2019 when al-Bashir was removed as head-of-state by top ranking soldiers. This seizure of power by what was later labelled as the Transitional Military Council (TMC) could by no means resolve the crisis which was spawned by the legacy of colonialism which manifested in the 2011 partitioning of the Sudanese state. Prior to the division of the country into two separate states, Sudan was the largest geographic nation-state on the continent.

This geographic fact of the post-colonial territorial configurations imposed by European imperialism placed Sudan in an advantageous position. Prior to the partition, Sudan was emerging as a significant oil producing state with substantial reserves. Even after the creation of the Republic of South Sudan in 2011, one source reported on the oil reserves saying:

“Sudan holds 5,000,000,000 barrels of proven oil reserves as of 2016, ranking 23rd in the world and accounting for about 0.3% of the world’s total oil reserves of 1,650,585,140,000 barrels. Sudan has proven reserves equivalent to 97.8 times its

annual consumption. This means that, without Net Exports, there would be about 98 years of oil left (at current consumption levels and excluding unproven reserves). (See [this](#))

Yet due to political and sectional conflicts, the wealth generated by oil reserves and their exploitation are not benefiting the majority of the Sudanese people in both the North and South. The United States Energy Information Administration (USEIA) concluded after assessing the contemporary crisis in the country that:

“Sudan has had two civil wars since it gained independence in 1956. The second civil war ended in 2005 and led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudanese government and the rebel factions in the southern region. The CPA established guidelines for oil revenue sharing and a timeframe to hold a referendum for independence of the South. The southern region overwhelmingly voted for secession, and in July 2011, South Sudan became an independent nation, separate from Sudan. The secession of South Sudan significantly affected Sudan’s economy because Sudan lost 75% of its oil reserve fields to South Sudan. Sudan and South Sudan’s oil sectors play a vital role in both economies and are closely linked; most of the oil producing assets are near or extend across their shared border. Since the split, oil production in Sudan and South Sudan declined because of continued domestic political instability in both countries.” (See [this](#))

Therefore, the division of the country has grave economic and consequent political ramifications. Rather than convene a national assembly aimed at resolving the internal conflicts in Sudan, the military leadership of **General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan** continues to meet all opposition demonstrations with the brutality meted out by the security forces. There can be no genuine development in Sudan or any other African state without peace and stability.

Consequently, those policy imperatives being forced on to the Sudanese people should be rejected categorically. Since the assumption of power by the TMC in April 2019, the Republic of Sudan has agreed to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation to U.S. residents whose relatives were killed in a series of terrorist attacks. This conditionality of readmission into the club of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and other financial institutions for Sudan remains the same as other states since the advent of independence.

No concrete evidence has ever been presented remotely suggesting that the origins of the bomb attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 along with the damage done to the USS Cole in 2000 are a direct result of the machinations of the former Sudanese government of President al-Bashir. However, a completely different regime is required to pay large sums of money to people who reside in the leading capitalist country in the world.

In addition, the previous U.S. administration of **President Donald Trump** demanded that the former interim **Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok** disavow the Israeli Boycott Act of 1958. Sudan historically has been a strong supporter of the Palestinian struggle for liberation and statehood and such an act could be viewed internationally as a betrayal of the actual founding documents of the AU and its predecessor the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This abdication to the influences of U.S. imperialism and Israeli settler colonialism sends the wrong message to the people of Sudan, the African continent and indeed the entirety of progressive humanity.

Moreover, the horrendous legacy of the IMF, World Bank and other financial institutions based in the imperialist states should be proof enough for any existing African government operating in the 21st century. The people's aspirations cannot be met with these policies being dictated by international finance capital. If the military cannot control the popular and working class struggles of the Sudanese people, their effectiveness as an intermediary class operating on behalf of Washington and Wall Street will be seriously compromised.

Regional Instability and the Continuing Libyan Counter-revolution

U.S. imperialism under the former administration of **President Barack Obama** destroyed the North African state of Libya in 2011, then the most prosperous country on the continent. Libya as a modern state emerged after the September 1, 1969 Revolution which brought the youthful Col. Muammar Gaddafi to power.

Image: Libya stamp of the Revolution



Before the 1969 Revolution, Libya had been controlled by a monarchy under the leadership of King Idris I. Prior to this the Libyan people waged an anti-colonial war of liberation against Italian imperialism between 1911-1931. After the ascendancy of the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini in 1922, a policy of settler colonialism was introduced which encouraged more than 150,000 Italians to take up residence in the North African state. Thousands of Libyans were forcibly conscripted into the Italian colonial and later fascist armed forces to fight against the interests of their own people.

The battles between Italy, Britain and the U.S for the control of North Africa during the early 1940s were important historical developments which shaped the post-World War II colonial and neo-colonial political constructs. A military base was built by the British and later taken control of by the U.S. after 1943. After the decisive defeat of Italy and their German fascist partners under Adolph Hitler by the Allied Forces in 1943 in North Africa, the country became an outpost for the now dominant forces of U.S. imperialism.

King Idris I was a supplicant of this post-WWII arrangement where after the discovery of oil in the late 1950s, there was huge profits to be earned by the multi-national corporations. The Wheelus Air Base served as a military monitoring and launching station aimed at assuring U.S.-dominance in North Africa and West Asia.

According to one historical interpretation of these events:

“A constitution creating a federal state with a separate parliament for each province

was drawn up, and the pro-British head of the Sanūsiyyah, Sīdī Muḥammad Idrīs al-Mahdī al-Sanūsī, was chosen king by a national assembly in 1950. On December 24, 1951, King Idris I declared the country independent. Political parties were prohibited, and the king's authority was sovereign. Though not themselves Sanūsīs, the Tripolitarians accepted the monarchy largely in order to profit from the British promise that the Sanūsīs would not again be subjected to Italian rule. King Idris, however, showed a marked preference for living in Cyrenaica, where he built a new capital on the site of the Sanūsī zāwiyah at Al-Bayḍā'. Though Libya joined the Arab League in 1953 and in 1956 refused British troops permission to land during the Suez Crisis, the government in general adopted a pro-Western position in international affairs." (See [this](#))

Despite its affiliation with the Arab League, Libya is located on the African continent and was a participant in the First Conference of Independent African States held in Accra, Ghana in April 1958 under the leadership of **Dr. Kwame Nkrumah**, then the founding prime minister of the former British colony of the Gold Coast. Later in May 1963, the monarchical-dominated regime in Libya joined the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the forerunner of the African Union formed in 2002 in the Republic of South Africa.



Ghana and Ethiopia leader Nkrumah and HIM Haile Selassie

After the initial phase of the African liberation movements between the early 1950s until the 1990s, it was widely recognized that a revised continental body was necessary to address the concerns of the governments and their people. During the time of President Kwame Nkrumah, his government and political organization, the Convention People's Party (CPP), placed the total liberation and unification of Africa as the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

Nkrumah's government was overthrown at the aegis of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and State Department in February 1966 when the administration of **President**

Lyndon B. Johnson viewed the CPP as pursuing policies which seriously conflicted with Washington and Wall Street's economic and political interests. In fact, Nkrumah's study on Neo-Colonialism was published just four months prior to the coup which removed the Pan-Africanist and Socialist leader. Nkrumah was invited to take up residence in the Republic of Guinea after the coup and was appointed co-president by President Ahmed Sekou Toure, the co-founder of the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG).

Although the CPP government of Nkrumah was removed from office in Ghana, the ideas they advanced continued to gain ground across the continent and the world. The armed phase of the African Revolution united various national liberation movements in the struggle to end direct colonial domination by Portugal, France, Britain and the settler colonial states of Southern Africa located at the time in Zimbabwe (then known as Rhodesia), Namibia (formerly South West Africa) and the Republic of South Africa. The emergence of the Frontline States during the late 1970s and 1980s helped facilitate along with the OAU Liberation Committee the material and political assistance required to end white-minority rule.

By the conclusion of the 1990s, it was decided that the OAU needed to advance its mission geared towards the restructuring of the continental grouping. A summit was convened in 1999 where a renewed set of priorities were enacted. This gathering in Sirte, Libya put forward a declaration which mandated the strengthening of continental structures in the areas of economic integration, military affairs, health and social welfare among other issues.

Experts from the Sirte Declaration read as follows:

"We, the Heads Of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), met at the fourth Extraordinary Session of our Assembly in Sirte, in the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, from 8 - 9 September 1999, at the invitation of the Leader of the Al Fatah Revolution, Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi, and as agreed upon during the Thirty-fifth Ordinary Session of our Summit in Algiers, Algeria from 12 - 14 July 1999.

2. We deliberated extensively on the ways and means of strengthening our continental Organization to make it more effective so as to keep pace with the political, economic and social developments taking place within and outside our continent.

3. In this endeavor, we were inspired by the ideals which guided the Founding Fathers of our Organization and Generations of Pan-Africanists in their resolve to forge unity, solidarity and cohesion, as well as co-operation between African peoples and among African States.

4. We recall the heroic struggles waged by our peoples and our countries during the last century of this millennium for political independence, human dignity and economic emancipation. We take pride in the achievements made to promote and consolidate African unity and we salute the heroism and the sacrifices of our peoples, particularly during the liberation struggles.

5. As we prepare to enter the 21st century and cognizant of the challenges that will confront our continent and peoples, we emphasize the imperative need and a high sense of urgency to rekindle the aspirations of our peoples for stronger unity, solidarity and cohesion in a larger community of peoples transcending cultural, ideological, ethnic

and national differences.” (See [this](#))

A decade after this historic summit which laid the groundwork for the creation of the AU, Gaddafi was serving as the Chairman of the continental organization. In 2009, Gaddafi would travel to the U.S. to represent the AU at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held in New York City. The AU Chair was subjected to an intense propaganda campaign which denied him the normal courtesy of a diplomat participating in the UNGA.

U.S. President Obama, a strong proponent of imperialist militarism in Africa, Asia and Latin America, refused to even address Gaddafi while at the UNGA. Obama was ushered out of the Assembly Hall so he would not have any direct contact with the AU Chair. These actions by the Obama administration represented its hostility towards genuine African unity and development. Just 17 months later, Obama would deploy hundreds of CIA operatives to Libya aimed at setting the stage for the war of regime change and genocide carried out against the North Africa state beginning in February 2011.

When the U.S.-NATO-CIA rebels ran into difficulties in their campaign to overthrow the Jamahiriya in Libya, two United Nations Security Council Resolutions, 1970 and 1973, were engineered through the elite body which served to provide a pseudo-rationale for the blanket bombing of the country after March 19, 2011. During the course of the imperialist war against Libya from March through late October 2011, tens of thousands of Libyans and foreign nationals were killed including members of the Gaddafi family. Gaddafi himself was captured and brutally murdered at the aegis the White House and the State Department headed then by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who laughed at the execution of an African leader.

Since October 2011, neo-colonial dominated Libya has not only failed to establish a unitary state, the territory still serves as a major source of instability throughout North and West Africa. In 2012, the rebel insurgencies in neighboring Mali began. The surfacing of armed Islamic jihadists has wreaked havoc on Mali and Burkina Faso prompting more military coups by Pentagon-trained officers. These imperialist war crimes remain as a major cause of dislocation resulting in the so-called migration crisis in North and West Africa extending across the Mediterranean Sea into Southern, Central and Western Europe.

The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) was formed under the administration of former **President George W. Bush, Jr.** during 2008. However, the Obama government expanded and enhanced AFRICOM which has now created numerous bases across the continent.

AFRICOM, although claiming to be working to stabilize the AU region, has done just the opposite. Africa is far more unstable politically and economically since the formation of this Pentagon Command structure designed to further stifle development and unity on the continent. The anti-U.S. and anti-French sentiments burgeoning in several areas of the Sahel in West Africa are a direct outcome of the imperialist policies of Washington, Paris, London and Brussels.

Africa and the Ukraine War

These events over the previous decade-and-a-half involving U.S., EU and NATO military operations within the AU member-states can easily shed further light on the current proxy war against the Russian Federation in Ukraine. The Biden administration could have easily avoided a war in Ukraine through the utilization of diplomatic initiatives.

However, the worsening crisis within U.S. imperialism has driven the world's leading capitalist state into a spiral of destructive desperation. During the second term of the Obama administration, the Ukrainian government led by **President Viktor Yanukovich** was overthrown in February 2014 by the machinations of the State Department and the CIA. Yanukovich sought to balance relations between the U.S.-EU on the one side and the Russian Federation on the other. This change of government was secured through the participation of ultra-right fascist elements which have played an historic role in Ukraine, particularly in regard to their alliance with the Nazi regime during WWII.

Why would a Democratic administration led by Obama and Biden engineer an undemocratic putsch while claiming that the source of instability is to be found among the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine in conjunction with Moscow? As mentioned before, the Minsk I and II Agreements have been routinely ignored by the White House and the State Department since 2014-2015. Obviously, the war policy of the U.S. ruling interests transcends both political parties which dominate the electoral landscape. Neither of these political parties, which while having differing constituencies based upon race, social class, gender and geography, are tolerant of ideological positions which uphold the notions of world peace and mutual cooperation on a global scale.

This same viewpoint has been extended once again to the African continent. A bill introduced in the U.S. House of Representative is a clear manifestation of 21st century neo-colonialism. The legislation seeks to punish AU member-states which maintain diplomatic and economic relations with the Russian Federation. When South African **President Cyril Ramaphosa** paid a state visit to Washington, D.C. in September, he spoke out vehemently against this measure which provides additional rationalizations for the blatant interference into the affairs of African people.

An article published by Business Standard reported on this disagreement between the Democratic administration of Biden and the majority of states on the continent. The report says:

“A U.S. Bill that seeks to act against African countries that support Russian activities on the continent has been described by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa as having the potential of punishing these countries. Addressing a meeting with the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus and anti-apartheid veterans on Friday (Sept. 16), Ramaphosa said that the bill if passed could have unintended consequences on the African continent. He strongly condemned the United States proposed Russian Malicious Acts Bill as harmful to Africa's development. The bill would oblige Washington to punish any governments in Africa that helps Russian malign activities, SA people News, a South African news portal reported. (If passed) the law could have the unintended consequence of punishing the continent for efforts to advance development and growth, Ramaphosa said. In terms of the Bill, the U.S. will assess the influence that Russia has on African countries, especially those which it believes undermines the interests of those nations. Analysts have long said that both Russia and China are having strong impacts on the continent with their investments in infrastructure, potentially creating obligations on the part of the African continent. ‘I think (the Act) will harm Africa and marginalize the continent. We should not be told by anyone who we can associate with, Ramaphosa told the media after his meeting.’” (See [this](#))

On the eve of the midterm elections, it does not appear as if the bill will be voted on by the Senate. Depending upon the outcomes in regard to which party will dominate both the

House and Senate could determine the future status of this legislation.

It is important that the anti-imperialist organizations say no to neo-colonial legislation which further encourages military involvement on the African continent. AFRICOM must be abolished along with all the other Pentagon and intelligence centers in existence around the world. Until this disarmament is achieved there can be no peace in Africa or anywhere else on the planet.

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