

New Berlin Conference In Paris: The Re-Colonization Of Africa

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–“A case in point 50 years later is the painful issue of Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. There are other cases such as Côte d’Ivoire, which is a ticking time-bomb”.

Last week the world was treated to the spectacle of the Paris Conference where one Western leader after the other – together with a few token Arab dictators – patted themselves on the back for “liberating” Libya from the rule of Muammar Gaddafi. It quickly brought to mind the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884 at which Africa was sliced up among its European colonisers.

Quite rightly so, South Africa’s President Jacob Zuma let it be known – as any self-respecting African should have done – that he would have nothing to do with this cynical circus initiated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron, ostensibly to decide Libya’s future...as if Libyans and Africans themselves should not be doing that.

In the end there was a conspicuous absence of influential African leaders, with a number of African countries and the African Union (AU) having refused to recognise the Nato-installed National Transitional Council (NTC) as the new government of Libya. Libya’s neighbour, Algeria, was there, but only as an observer and perhaps only because its shared border with Libya gave it a pressing reason.

Russia and China – both of which opposed the Nato-led military campaign to oust Gaddafi – attended as observers, with Russia having recognised the NTC only days earlier. However, both these countries have major vested interests in Libya, with China having enormous interests further afield in Africa, such as Angola now being its biggest supplier of oil.

For many Sarkozy and Cameron’s 2011-style “scramble for Africa” conference also brought to mind erstwhile ANC leader Chief Albert Luthuli’s acceptance speech in Norway in 1960 when he received the Nobel Peace Prize and said: “Our continent has been carved up by the great powers. Alien governments have been forced upon the African people by military conquest and by economic domination”.

As Vusi Gumede of the University of Johannesburg so eloquently reminded us in an opinion piece in the Sunday Independent this weekend: “A case in point 50 years later is the painful issue of Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. There are other cases such as Côte d’Ivoire, which is a ticking time-bomb”.

To these Gumede could have added the growing “economic domination” of many African countries by China, or the mess the United States left behind after its attempted “military

conquest” of Somalia.

The latter country first became a geopolitical pawn in the cold war between the US and the Soviet Union in their quest to control the Horn of Africa. The US maintained good relations with the murderous regime of Siad Barre until he was ousted, the country disintegrated into lawless anarchy and the US fled tail-between-its-legs after its “Black Hawk down” tragedy at the hands of marauding war lords.

Today the US has indirectly returned to Somalia, supporting one faction in the conflict there against the Islamist movement al-Shabaab, which is blamed for the deepening crisis. But this time the US military is not openly involved. Instead, according to a number of respected media sources, Washington has sent Richard Rouget, a French-born mercenary to Magodishu to head a 40-man team of “mentors” who are training a “peace-keeping” force in Somalia. Rouget works for a private Washington-based security company and has a criminal record and suspected ties to several African coups and a murder. He also once was the right-hand man of erstwhile mercenary supremo Bob Denard.

Former British, French and, sadly yes, South African soldiers are among those working with him. The US State Department is funding Rouget’s company, yet everybody knows to what destructive levels these types of clandestine US operations usually develop.

African countries also refused to allow the US to base its military Africa Command – one of 10 US Armed Forces regional commands around the world – on African soil. Instead it was forced to base the command in Germany “until 2012” when it will review the situation.

General William E. Ward, [former] commander of US Africa Command, has recently paid several visits to Botswana as part of sharply increased military cooperation between the two countries. It was that and the rumour that the US was to set up a base in Botswana which led South Africa’s ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema to make his infamous statement regarding his organisation’s support for regime change in Botswana, a statement that now has him in trouble with South Africa’s ruling party.

Meanwhile, a group calling itself Concerned Africans, of which Vusi Gumede is a member, has authored an open letter to all the peoples of Africa and the world, drafting it within the context of the United Nations having failed the world, and particularly Africa, through taking inappropriate decisions.

“As concerned Africans we have no choice but to stand up and reassert our right and duty to determine our destiny in Libya and everywhere else on our continent,” writes Gumede. He points out the ingenuous manner in which Nato interpreted and implemented the UN Security Council resolution to impose a “no-fly zone” over Libya, a decision into which South Africa had also naively been suckered into supporting.

Along with South Africa, many African countries and the other BRICS countries all condemned France and Britain’s arrogant move to use only military means instead of the proclaimed “use of all means” to protect Libyan civilians, and their further move to shift the campaign from protecting civilians to implementing regime change at all costs in Libya. In the end many, many civilians were killed – not protected – by Nato’s relentless bombing campaign, with Libya’s vast oil resources of course being the ultimate prize.

Ironically it started at the United Nations in which South Africa’s greatest living leader,

Nelson Mandela, had such faith when international deliberations were under way as to whether or not the US and Britain should invade Iraq to rid it of its alleged arsenal of weapons of mass destruction...weapons it never had.

At the time Mandela said: "There is one compromise and one only, and that is the United Nations. If the United States and Britain go to the United Nations and the United Nations says we have concrete evidence of the existence of these weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and we feel that we must do something about it, we would all support it."

Britain and the US eventually did as they pleased anyhow - they invaded on the basis of their lie and the pretext that they would save millions of lives by doing so. On a similar pretext of humanitarian aid and saving lives, Britain and France abused the UN Security Council resolution to invade Libya and effect regime change. Several commendable initiatives by the AU in which South Africa played a leading role and which sought a negotiated settlement in Libya that would avoid a bloodbath, were simply ignored by Britain, France and their Nato allies. Africa was not allowed the space to bring about an African solution to an African problem.

"Therefore Africa and the developing world are right to be appalled, as Libyans are Africans and are part of the developing world that has suffered a lot under imperialism and colonialism. Libyans have paid, and will continue to pay, with their lives for the Western agenda of regime change," writes Gumede. Indeed.

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