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**Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes in
Africa**



MEDIA MONITORING

28 July 2015

GENERAL NEWS

What exactly is Obama's Africa legacy?

OPINION

Source: Al-Jazeera

By Hassen Hussein

27 July 2015 - President Barack Obama today concludes his triumphant fourth trip to Africa, which featured a return to Kenya and a controversial stopover in Ethiopia, the seat of the African Union. During the visit, he attended an entrepreneurial summit in Nairobi and held discussions with Kenyan, Ethiopian and other regional leaders on matters ranging from U.S.-Africa trade and investment and regional security to human rights.

Obama is the first sitting U.S. president to visit the two countries. And as the first African-American president, he is still a subject of pride to Africans and their vast diaspora. Yet the question must be asked: What exactly is Obama's Africa legacy? What are the symbolism and substance of what is likely his final trip to Africa as president? Did the U.S. Africa policy evolve or regress during his administration? Although I would like to join those celebrating the homecoming of a local son, I am filled with melancholy and mixed emotions. Obama's presidency has fallen short of our admittedly high expectations.

It is inevitable to compare Obama's Africa legacy with his immediate predecessors'. President Bill Clinton oversaw the "Blackhawk Down" debacle in Somalia, a botched

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military intervention in which Somali militias shot down two U.S. helicopters; apartheid's end in South Africa; and the Rwandan genocide and its effects on the Democratic Republic of Congo. East Africans remember the Clinton administration's christening Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, Rwanda's Paul Kagame, Eritrea's Isaias Afworki and Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi as a "new generation of African renaissance leaders" before they joined the ranks of Africa's Big Men — tyrannical, predatory and unaccountable. Clinton helped pass the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which offers incentives for African countries to build free markets and open their economies, in his final year as president. AGOA provides tariff-free access to the U.S. market for 40 African countries and has created thousands of local jobs since 2000, significantly boosting U.S.-Africa relations.

President George W. Bush's "war on terrorism" set in motion a bloated security regime across the region. But the reauthorization of AGOA, the Millennium Challenge Corp., which aims to eradicate poverty, and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a robust U.S. government initiative designed to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic and help save the lives of those suffering from other diseases in Africa, cemented his positive Africa legacy.

This is why Bush was given a warm welcome on his final trip to Africa as president. "George Bush is a hero in Africa," Sudanese philanthropist Mo Ibrahim said in 2012. "In his last trip to Africa, I think he was absolutely struck by the warmth of people and how he was treated as a hero when things were really going wrong in Iraq ... I think it was probably the happiest of his trips abroad."

Obama's two main pet projects, Power Africa, a partnership with African governments that aims to double access to power in sub-Saharan Africa, and the Young African Leaders Initiative (which aims to strengthen U.S.-Africa partnerships by investing in "the next generation of entrepreneurs, educators, activists and innovators") don't measure up to his predecessors' bold initiatives. The U.S. responded vigorously to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, but during Obama's tenure, many African states — notably South Sudan, Libya and the Central African Republic — have become failed states. A part of Somalia, where the U.S. funds a multinational peacekeeping force, is still under the grip of Al-Qaeda-affiliated militants.

Africa has registered tremendous growth in the last two decades. However, Washington's engagement with the continent continues to prioritize security over investment and economic partnership. The U.S. is now being forced to play catch-up with China, which invests billions of dollars on building Africa's infrastructure and maintains robust trade and investment relations with many African states. (China overtook the U.S. as the biggest trade partner with Africa in 2009.)

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During a press conference with Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in Addis Ababa on Monday, Obama stressed the Ethiopian military's ruthless "efficiency" in fighting Al-Shabab in Somalia and Addis Ababa's contribution to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. The emphasis on security cooperation speaks to the fact that, from Nigeria's Boko Haram to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Somalia's Al-Shabab, under Obama, the U.S. has increased its military footprint in Africa.

U.S. strategic priorities in sub-Saharan Africa have largely knocked democracy promotion and human rights off the radar. Obama's trip to Addis Ababa comes in the aftermath of a lackluster May election, in which the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) "won" all 547 seats in the national parliament, improving on 2010's 99.6 percent rate. This is why Ethiopian human rights and free press advocates fear Obama's visit will be construed as an endorsement of the EPRDF's quarter-century hold on power.

The EPRDF has devastated free press and civil society through a slew of draconian laws that equate dissent with treason. The political space has significantly narrowed. Opposition politics is criminalized. Ethiopia's civil society institutions are brittle. The country's storied economic progress, including double-digit GDP growth over the last five years, has benefited only those who are politically connected. Resentment is rife over EPRDF hard-liners' domination of the top brass of the military, the security forces and the commanding heights of the economy.

Obama's trip to Africa has been dismissed as a legacy hunt, but he could still redeem his record. Beyond private discussions, Obama needs to openly and publicly press African leaders to relax oppressing their people. In Kenya, Obama urged his hosts "to end corruption, treat women as equal citizens, overcome tribal and ethnic rifts." In his first public comment in Ethiopia, Obama appeared restrained by diplomatic niceties and the quid pro quo necessitated by the "war on terrorism" and the two countries' strategic relations.

Africa's despotic leaders may not listen, but Obama could still inspire a young generation of Africans, who are hungry and yearning for change, to fight for their future. Unfortunately, his otherwise historic visit to the seat of the African Union, in which he shockingly referred to Ethiopia as a democracy, might be remembered most for, as opposition leader Merara Gudina put it for Reuters, choosing "to wine and dine with dictators" who steal elections behind the cover of economic development.

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BURUNDI

Burundi opposition in parliament despite 'not credible' polls

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

Bujumbura, 27 July 2015 - Burundi's main opposition leader Agathon Rwasa took his seat as parliament met for the first time Monday since legislative elections last month, saying he would "play the game" despite criticising the polls as not credible.

Rwasa, who has denounced the third consecutive win by President Pierre Nkurunziza, garnered almost 19 percent of the presidential vote last Tuesday despite saying he was unable to properly campaign.

But Rwasa said he was right to take up his seat as a member of parliament after the June legislative vote.

"Should we abandon to their fate all those people who voted for us?" Rwasa said.

Rwasa has said he would not oppose the formation of a unity government if its main aim is to prepare new elections. On Monday, 104 of a total 212 lawmakers turned up to parliament.

"As long as the negotiations have not been completed, play the game," Rwasa said. "I think everything will be determined by the outcome of the dialogue being conducted between the parties."

Nkurunziza's candidacy was condemned as unconstitutional by the opposition and provoked months of protests and an attempted coup in mid-May.

His victory -- who took more than 69 percent of the vote in the July 21 poll to give him an immediate first-round victory -- could trigger donor sanctions against the already impoverished nation.

There are also widespread fears the country, situated in the heart of central Africa's troubled Great Lakes region, could be plunged back into civil war.

US President Barack Obama on Saturday denounced the presidential election as "not credible", and urged the government and opposition "to come together in a dialogue that leads to a political solution to the crisis and avoids the loss of more innocent life".

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Months of anti-Nkurunziza protests rocked the capital after he announced his intention to run again in late April. The demonstrations were violently repressed, leaving at least 100 people dead and hundreds others wounded or in detention.

Many opponents have also fled, joining an exodus of more than 150,000 ordinary Burundians who fear their country may again be engulfed by violence.

In mid-May, rebel generals attempted to overthrow Nkurunziza in a coup, which failed. They have since launched a rebellion in the north of the country.

Clashes were reported in the southwestern region near the Nyanza Lac area over the weekend, police said.

UN mission finds overall environment in Burundi ‘not conducive’ to credible election process

NEWS STORY

Source: UN news Centre

27 July 2015 - While the 21 July election in Burundi that won President Pierre Nkurunziza a controversial third term was relatively peaceful and conducted adequately, the overall environment was ‘not conducive’ for an inclusive, free and credible electoral process, the United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in the country (MENUB) announced today.

This was the main conclusion of MENUB’s preliminary findings on the conduct of the presidential polls in Burundi, which took place after two postponements in an environment of “profound mistrust” between opposing political camps. The decision of the incumbent President to run for another term precipitated a deep political and socioeconomic crisis, the mission said.

“The Constitutional Court’s ruling on the admissibility of the President’s candidature for a third mandate did not solve the wider political problem of presidential term limits in Burundi, but rather exacerbated further controversy, protests and tensions,” the Mission explained in a statement issued today.

Freedoms of expression, assembly and association, essential conditions for the effective exercise of the right to vote, remained severely impaired. “Violence, although observed in a less intense degree than during the period preceding the 29 June

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[legislative and communal] elections, remained an unfortunate feature of the entire process.”

The various dialogue efforts, including the most recent initiative under the leadership of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and the East African Community (EAC), remained inconclusive, stated MENUB.

“Also, the parties did not reach agreement on a consensual electoral calendar. Nevertheless, on election day, Burundians in most places went peacefully to the polls to cast their ballots.”

Out of the eight presidential candidates, four declared that they would withdraw from the race. However, their names remained on the ballot, pointed out the Mission.

It also found that media freedom remained severely restricted. “Private and independent media outlets that were destroyed during the failed coup did not reopen, despite national and international appeals to the Burundian government to enable media to operate. State-owned media did not provide balanced media coverage to all presidential candidates.”

The Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI) conducted adequate logistical preparations for the presidential elections and polling activities in the observed polling sites largely followed procedures, the UN observers noted.

But tabulation at the observed municipal and provincial locations was carried out expeditiously, albeit in a disorganized manner, they said.

In conclusion, MENUB reiterated the Secretary-General's call “for the cessation of all forms of violence respect of basic human rights and resumption of dialogue.”

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Congo opposition holds talks to resist third-term push

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters

Brazzaville, 27 July 2015 - Congo Republic's opposition parties have convened an Alternative National Forum in rejection of a government-sponsored conference that opens the door to President Denis Sassou Nguesso seeking a third term next year.

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The government-backed talks this month, boycotted by the main opposition alliance FROCAD, recommended changing the constitution to remove a two-term limit on the president and to scrap an age cap of 70, both of which would have disqualified the 71-year-old Sassou Nguesso from running again.

The former military officer has ruled the oil-producing central African nation for a total of 31 years in two spells since 1979.

"Altering the January 20, 2002, constitution would be a constitutional coup because it would violate the spirit, the principles and the respect of that constitution," Guy Romain Kinfoussia, a senior member of FROCAD, said in an opening address to the conference late on Sunday.

Congo is on track to leapfrog Equatorial Guinea to become sub-Saharan Africa's third-largest crude producer by 2017, yet half of its 4.5 million population live in poverty, according to the World Bank.

The opposition forum, grouping some 650 delegates and 15 opposition groups, is due to run until Wednesday in the capital Brazzaville.

Sassou Nguesso has not spoken publicly about whether he intends to run next year but his ruling Congolese Labour Party (PCT) has urged him to do so. Ahead of this month's conference, he said he would put any constitutional changes to a referendum.

Opposition to veteran leaders extending their terms has triggered protests in several African countries in recent months.

Burkina Faso's president, Blaise Compaore, was toppled by demonstrations in October, while Burundi's Pierre Nkurunziza overcame popular resistance to win re-election to a third term as president last week, in polls that Washington branded "deeply flawed".

"Congo is living a dangerous period," said Jean Itadi, a member of the main opposition party, the Pan-African Union for Social Democracy (UPADS). "Since President Sassou came to power, we have not had a free and transparent election in this country."

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Congo's ruling party urges citizens to vote massively during referendum

NEWS STORY

Source: APA

27 July 2015 - Congo's ruling party has urged citizens to vote massively in a referendum after reaching a consensus at the inclusive national dialogue held from 13 to 17 July in Sibiti, reports said O Monday. "The eyes of the Congolese are now turned towards the President of the Republic for holding this referendum," the Secretary General of the ruling Congolese Labor Party (PCT) Pierre N'Gollo told a press conference held in Brazzaville.

"Whether to approve or reject an amendment or revision of the 20 January 2002 Constitution, the Congolese must vote during the referendum" he declared.

"The presidential elections will also be held in July 2016 as scheduled ... all will be done on due time" N'Gollo reassured.

According to the Secretary General of the PCT, the referendum will not undermine the current democratic gains of the country.

In the meanwhile the Congolese opposition bemoaned a lack of consensus during the Sibiti talks and participants have turned to President Denis Sassou Nguesso, the initiator of the dialogue, for him to look into the consequences of the stalemate in accordance with its constitutional prerogatives.

SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan should face extra pressure if it misses August peace deadline: Obama

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters

By Jeff Mason

27 July 2015 - South Sudan's warring factions may face further international pressure if they do not reach a peace deal by Aug. 17, U.S. President Barack Obama said on

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Monday, ahead of talks with east African leaders to study penalties if the deadline is not met.

Options discussed by those leaders ranged from applying sanctions to sending in a "regional intervention force," a U.S. official told reporters after the meeting.

The South Sudanese government responded by saying additional sanctions could harm the peace process.

Obama, in Ethiopia on a two-nation Africa tour, convened the talks in Addis Ababa to discuss the conflict raging between President Salva Kiir's government and rebels commanded by Riek Machar.

The group of leaders from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan and the African Union agreed on the urgency of the situation but did not reach a consensus on what to do if the deadline comes and goes as others have done, the U.S. official said.

"If we don't see a breakthrough by the 17th, then we have to consider what other tools we have to apply greater pressure on the parties," Obama told a news conference with Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, who has hosted peace talks.

Ateny Wek Ateny, a spokesman for Kiir, told Reuters: "What we need from the international community is support, so if more measures come it will jeopardize the chances of the people of South Sudan".

Rebel spokesman James Gatdet welcomed Obama's comments and urged the government to tackle key obstacles, saying "peace is possible".

The option of a regional force was not proposed by the United States, according to Obama administration officials who said such a force could be used to implement a peace deal if one were reached.

The United States and the European Union have already imposed sanctions on individual commanders from both sides. They could increase those sanctions with or separately from partner countries in the region.

Thousands have been killed and more than 2.2 million displaced since fighting broke out in December 2013. Both sides have been accused of human rights abuses and indiscriminate killings, which have often been carried out along ethnic lines, with Machar's Nuers pitted against Kiir's powerful Dinkas.

Hailemariam said Monday's meeting should send a "strong signal". "The people are suffering on the ground and we cannot let this go on," he said.

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The regional grouping IGAD, which includes Ethiopia and has been mediating, has threatened sanctions in the past, but more recently said they would not help.

Western diplomats have pushed countries in the region to put more pressure on the South Sudanese to make peace.

The United States, Britain and Norway were among the main Western states that sponsored South Sudan when it seceded from Sudan in 2011.

Those at the talks included Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibarahim Ghandour and the chair of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

UN voices concern over situation in South Sudan

NEWS STORY

Source: Petra

(http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?Site_Id=1&lang=2&NewsID=205933&CatID=-1)

27 July 2015 - The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien expressed deep concern over the deteriorated situation in South Sudan.

"I am deeply shocked by what I have seen. Innocent civilians are bearing the brunt of this brutal war."The UN chief said in a statement.

O'Brien, who is also the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, called on all the conflict parties, including the leaders of the warring factions, to "listen to their people," lay down their arms and halt the rapidly spiraling humanitarian crisis.

South Sudan: AU Reiterates Deep Concern at Continued Fighting in South Sudan

NEWS STORY

Source: Forum on China-Africa Cooperation

(<http://www.focac.org/eng/zxxx/t1284133.htm>)

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27 July 2015 - The African Union (AU) has reiterated its deep concern at the prevailing situation in South Sudan, marked by continued fighting and attacks against civilians.

The AU Peace and Security Council officially received the report of the AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan (AUCISS) and deliberated on it during a meeting held on Friday at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, according to a statement from the pan-African bloc later Saturday.

The Council reiterated AU's deep concern at the situation prevailing in South Sudan, marked by continued fighting and attacks against civilian populations and other serious human rights abuses, as well as by a dire humanitarian crisis, including forced displacement, acute food insecurity, access restrictions and other impediments to humanitarian assistance, said the statement.

The warring parties in South Sudan have continued the war since mid December 2013 in the world's youngest nation despite their agreement reached under the mediation of the East African bloc, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

The Council, once again, condemned in the strongest terms all the violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of 23 January 2014 committed by the parties, as well as the attacks and other egregious acts of violence and abuses of human rights.

SUDAN

Bashir arrives in Mauritania for regional summit

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

Khartoum, 26 July 2015 - Sudan's president Omer Hassan al-Bashir has travelled to Mauritania on Sunday to participate in the 4th summit of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI), state media reported.

This is Bashir's second visit to Mauritania since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for him in 2009 and 2010, charging him with genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity related to alleged atrocities carried out by the military and government-backed militias in the conflict in Darfur.

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Mauritania is not a state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC, and therefore has no obligations under the statute. However, the ICC chief prosecutor, Fatu Bensouda, had in the past asked Saudi Arabia and Egypt who are also non signatories to the statute to arrest Bashir.

Also, the ICC had previously asked Qatar, Congo, Kenya, and Ethiopia to arrest the Sudanese president who continued to travel to several African capitals despite the arrest warrants.

Since the issuance of the two arrest warrants, Bashir limited his trips abroad to ICC non-party states but he also traveled to five signatory states including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Malawi, Djibouti and South Africa.

His recent trip to South Africa drew international attention after he flew out of the country defying a High court order which order the government to ban his departure until an application calling for his arrest had been heard.

GGWSSI SUMMIT

Several ministers and experts from GGWSSI member states on Thursday have started their regular meetings in the Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott in preparation for the presidential summit which would convene on Monday.

The GGWSSI is a pan-African programme launched in 2007 by the African Union (AU). Its goal is to address land degradation and desertification in the Sahel and Sahara, boost food security, and support communities to adapt to climate change.

The initiative brings together more than 20 countries from the Sahel-Saharan region including Algeria, Burkina Faso, Benin, Chad, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, the Gambia and Tunisia.