

# THE NEW SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA, TRAGEDY OR FARCE?

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 Analysis

Russia's last Africa summit in Sochi that hosted more than 40 African leaders eventually had turned into a military show displaying the latest developed Russian weaponry and war machines that definitely attracted African leaders dealing with “terrorism” at home. Then came Germany's initiative G20 Compact with Africa aiming to promote investment in the continent. The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) 2019 Global Business Forum was the latest event that also hosted various African leaders seeking to develop business relation with the tiny Gulf country.

If there is something for sure it is that after the millennium Africa entered another phase in which the demand for the resources of the continent has increased rapidly. As world production rises pressure on Africa's mineral wealth also escalates. Today, China, India, Japan along with traditional

Western partners of Africa and even the Gulf countries are all in a competition aiming to widen their sphere of influence on the continent. Major global actors compete to win Africa tirelessly. For some it is the new scramble for Africa; for the optimists it presents new opportunities for the Africans such as transferring technology, receiving foreign direct investments, low-interest rate loans and getting new infrastructure.

How should we see this new scramble? Is it really benefitting Africa? In this regard, reading Africa's history might provide a better understanding of today's Africa because the tragic past builds the present Africa. One should remember what Karl Marx once wrote: “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great, world-historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice. He has forgotten to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.”

As it well known, the first scramble for Africa resulted in the colonization of the whole continent in the 19th century. Resource-hungry European powers imposed foreign domination on African soil and transferred all African wealth to the West. The colonial system remained until the 60s and it created a complex system of exploitation. However, at the end of the day despite all unreturnable mental and material damage caused by the West, supporters of colonization said to Africans that they left modern buildings, roads, railways, ports and well-functioning infrastructure. What happened was actually not stealing Africa's resources but demolishing Africa's all production capacity. Response to colonial administrations varied from severe tone to compulsory cooperation. In some cases, for sure, it left people in insanity and poverty. Xhosa people deliberately killed crops and 400 thousand heads of cattle as a result of mass resistance to the British.

After the end of colonization the continent witnessed another rivalry called the Cold War. In this period two super powers reshaped Africa for the benefits of themselves. It was all about strategy and self-interest. Two global powers supported dictators, military interventions, arm conflicts and human rights abuses in order to gain more influence on the continent. At the end of the Cold War, the US cut foreign aid and military programs to Africa since the country did not feel the need to do so anymore.

Today, it is like history repeating itself on the continent. China is emerging as another polar pulling the African leaders who seek alternative partner to the West. Unconditional low-interest loans, cheap commercial items, various infrastructure projects and special Chinese zones in the continent strengthen China-Africa

relations and carry it to a level never been seen before. Japan, India, South Korea and Russia are also following China's footsteps. "African solutions for Africa's problems" or "win-win" are common slogans clung to tongues when it comes to formal statements delivered by Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi or Xi Jinping. However, unless profit is not distributed equally "win-win" is just a big lie!

Furthermore, in this century Africa is renamed as "China's China". However, China-Africa relations also have its ups and downs. Nowadays it is very surprising to hear that Kenya faces an interesting situation because of unpaid huge loans. As a result the Kenyan government risks losing the Mombasa port to China. This is not one of the extreme cases when it comes to China-Africa relations because most of African countries are in debt. Some experts claim that 40 % of sub-Saharan African countries are at high risk of debt distress although Chinese sources refuse such claims.

When we adopt Marx's determinant into the status of Africa it is becoming clear that the first colonialization experience was a great tragedy; this new-colonialization is just turning to a comedy if Africans are not being very careful and critical at this point of history. It must be remembered that either European scramble or the Cold War scramble brought welfare and peace to the African continent. Repeating the same mistake and then expecting a different result would not be possible as the great scientist Albert Einstein once said that insanity is doing the same thing, over and over again, but expecting different result. Africa has to be the active player in the history and most importantly a real history-maker. However, selling raw-materials and buying finished products is not the way of constructing a real history-maker.

