Cooperation with Africa: You Can have None, as the West Got it All

Last December, US President Donald Trump’s national security adviser, John Bolton unveiled Washington’s new strategy for Africa. According to this paper, America’s primary goal for the continent lies in undermining China’s and Russia’s growing economic influence there.

It’s clear that economic assistance emerging superpowers are providing to the African states represents a threat to the dodgy practices Western oligarchies have used in their approach to this region of the world. Once Washington failed to undermine the absolute majority of states in the region through advancing the so-called “Arab Spring”, it shifted to spreading lies about Moscow and Beijing. The extremely critical assessment of the role those capitals play in Africa has been voiced by a handful of leading political figures across the US, on top of the above mentioned John Bolton, since, according to these critics, development of economic ties between regional players and the investing powers somehow “hinders the development of African states and undermines their national interests.” Moreover, Bolton would go as far as to accuse China and Russia of engaging in “predatory practices” by investing in African countries.

However, if those steps are deemed “predatory” in the West these days, then how should we describe the continuous attempts that Washington has made to economically strangle China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and Venezuela in a desperate bid to obtain a competitive advantage within international markets at the expense of these states?

It’s curious that the Western media doesn’t even try to make a secret out of the fact foreign involvement in Africa is far from unique to Russia and China. It’s been noted that the scramble for Africa involves more powers than a century ago. This time it’s both about securing critical resources such as oil, gas and rare earth metals and denying these resources to rival powers.
Experts note that no state other than the United States possesses an elaborate network of military bases and political influence across the continent, which is why Washington perceives its investments in the region as a way of exerting influence and swaying political decisions that regional leaders make. As of today, the United States Africa Command has 7,500 American servicemen operating in all but one African country.

It’s also been noted that France too, is keen to protect its control over north and west Africa, partly from encroachment by the US, while seeking to obtain more influence in states that speak English and not French. Britain, likewise, is beefing up its diplomatic and economic presence in Africa, notably in Francophone countries, seeking ways of getting more influence in the post-Brexit layout of the world.

This is especially true in the context of South Africa. Washington has been working overtime to somehow hinder growing cooperation between South Africa and its BRICS partners by delaying the implementation of the land reform envisioned by Cape Town, and deriving super-profits from the ongoing restructuring of state-owned companies.

There’s a perfectly logical reason why Washington would love to keep Cape Town away from all other international players, South Africa leads the charts in the production of such rare metals and minerals as chromium, manganese, platinum, vanadium, and vermiculite. Moreover, South Africa can be safely described as a monopolist over the platinum market, as its reserves account for 96% of all discovered deposits, while it holds second place in the list of palladium producers. Additionally, even in its worst years Cape Town would not fall below the mark of 12% of total gold output in the world, while other years it has been as high as 30%.

At the same time, major Western players are trying to avoid making any major investments in the South African economy, while being particularly generous on promises to make some in the nearest future. Washington can get away with this due to the role that AfriForum plays in local politics, as this entity remains the largest lobbyist group in South Africa. It’s curious that AfriForum leaders Kali Kriel and Ernst Roets visited the United States in 2018, where they met with representatives of conservative think tanks, USAID and John Bolton himself.

However, there’s yet another entity that defends Washington’s interests in this country – a group known as the Suidlanders, but it has adopted a much more radical approach to the way it operates. Two representatives of this entity, Simon Roche and Andre Coetzee embarked on a six-month trip to the US back in 2017. There, according to Lloyd Gedye – a local journalist, they met with one of the ex-leaders of the Ku Klux Klan, David Duke, other white nationalists and other proponents of Nazi ideology.

As for the role these entities play in hijacking the government, some argue they are capable of exercising direct control over the newly elected South African President, Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa through the former finance minister, Trevor Manuel, who remains the most influential figure in the immediate surrounding of the current government. It’s curious that after leaving the government in 2014, Manuel joined the board of directors of Rothschild & Co, by taking the position of deputy chairman of the South African branch of this financial corporation. It’s argued that the former senior South African official developed a taste for the lifestyle of Western oligarchies after marrying Maria Ramos back in 2008. Back then Ramos occupied the position of CEO of Barclays’ ABSA – the largest financial services group in South Africa.

Trevor Manuel started supporting Ramaphosa back in 2017, when Western financial circles realized that his competitor in the election race Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma would adhere to her conservative views of an anti-apartheid fighter that doesn’t sympathize much with Western special interests entrenched in South Africa. It’s clear that Western oligarchies got particularly frustrated with the policies pursued by the former President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma who advocated multi-vector foreign policy that implied Cape Town’s development of bilateral ties with China and Russia, that is why Trevor Manuel was instructed to address this situation by supporting Ramaphosa’s presidential bid.

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