The matter of attitude of administration of the D. Trump towards Africa and its problems for the long time was on the fringes of interest of world media mainly because of scandals which shook Washington after the inauguration of the new US President because of alleged "Russian trace" in his election. Many events in the world politics were considered from this perspective. However, relations of the USA with the African continent were far from these associations.

The status of the American-African relations as a subject has recently drawn attention of experts only because in the second decade of March, just before the resignation, the now former Secretary of State R. Tillerson visited a number of the African countries.

They have thrown a cloak of mystery and a set of rumors on this trip as on many other US foreign policy plots of recent time. Initially it was unclear what countries will be visited by R. Tillerson. In February many journalists believed that he would visit Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, the Republic of South Africa and Senegal. Confidentially discussed routes of the Secretary of State leaked to media caused the indignation storm in Washington.

However in reality within the period from March 6 to March 13 he has visited absolutely other countries: Nigeria, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, including the African Union Headquarters, where meetings with the leadership of Somalia and Uganda were scheduled. Thus, from the original assumptions only mentioning of Uganda was correct, though the meeting with its leadership took place in Ethiopia. Why this intrigue was necessary for Washington is still unclear, as well as many other grimaces of the current US diplomacy.
The possibility of meeting of R. Tillerson with the Minister S. Lavrov who approximately at the same time made a tour across a number of African countries (from March 5 to March 9 he visited Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Ethiopia) and on March 7-8 has absolutely accidentally (?) appeared to be in Addis Ababa at the same time as R. Tillerson, became another spicy puzzle. And both leaders of Foreign Ministries spent the night literally in one hotel! However the meeting predicted by so many people did not take place. Although, even if it occur, then it would hardly be related to Africa after the well-known speech of the President V.V. Putin in Federal Assembly.

Returning to Washington’s concerns on Africa, it is necessary to note that R. Tillerson's trip stayed well within the logic of actions of the USA towards Africa and added to the meetings both of D. Trump and R. Tillerson with the leadership of the African States in autumn of 2017, when the new administration for the first time designated the priorities on Africa.

The USA has only partially reviewed the priorities in relation to the African continent, in comparison with the previous administrations as D. Trump’s meetings during the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 20 with leaders of Ghana, Guinea (at that time - the Chairman of the African Union), Côte d’Ivoire, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, Ethiopia and the Republic of South Africa have shown. The main component of revision is sharp cutting down of expenses by Washington for the UN peacekeeping operations in Africa.

It was dressed up in the beautiful garb: like, as African Union, just then converted from the Organization of African Unity, has proclaimed in 2002, the Africans themselves should be engaged in peacemaking.

Already at the end of 2017 it became obvious that D. Trump's course in Africa, on the one hand, is closely related to the changes, which he has started within the country; on another hand, it is connected with tough opposition with China. Concentrating efforts on the changes inside the USA, D. Trump's administration significantly cuts down expenses not only on peacemaking, but also on external financial assistance including to the African States. So, financial assistance from 8 bln. US Dollars in 2017 is cut to 5,2 bln. US Dollars in 2018. The USA intends to support only those who follow their 'democratic' standards. They intend to lean on them as well.

Besides, Washington demands from the African partners to reinforce fight against corruption and threatens that without it there will be no investments, and actively insists to cooperate with the American immigration and other authorities in deportation of illegal immigrants. The USA will continue to assist in agriculture, power industry, development of transport infrastructure of the African States. For example, the US Agency for International Development has allocated 575 mln. US Dollars for humanitarian assistance to South Sudan, Nigeria and Somalia.

Let’s turn back to the visit of the now former Secretary of State. Nearly all last foreign tour of R. Tillerson to Africa was concentrated around anti-terror matters and tasks of counteraction to growing influence in the region of the People's Republic of China. The illustrative case was his arrival on March 9 to Djibouti, a small, but strategically important country of the Horn of Africa, where Camp Lemonnier, the only full-scale US military base on the African continent (it is used for transit of special troops; constantly there are 4 thousand US servicemen and 20 UAVs), is located. If to trust official press releases, issues of military and technical cooperation, safety, fight against terrorism and violent extremism were discussed during negotiations with Djibouti leaders. At the press conference R. Tillerson has stated readiness of Washington to continue to provide support to the countries of the region in fight against Al-Shabaab which will be coordinated with AMISOM (the peacekeeping mission of the African Union in Somalia) and has also noted the US desire to keep and reinforce the military presence in the country and in the sub-region in general. Publicly nothing was said on the role of China, but this matter, of course, was discussed, especially taking into account that Beijing builds the naval base in Djibouti and implements large infrastructure projects in this small African country.

Negotiations in Nigeria on March 12 were going on the similar scenario. They have taken only several hours and apparently have brought not much result. The main 'public' outcome is the US decision to provide humanitarian assistance to Nigeria and other countries of the basin of the lake Chad for the amount of 128 mln. US Dollars. Nevertheless the anti-Chinese message was the main in speeches of R. Tillerson. He has read to the Nigerian partners a lesson concerning 'harmfulness' of the Chinese investments and indisposed them to refuse financial and investment cooperation with Beijing.

The visit of the American politician to Chad on March 12 took place under the same slogans. R. Tillerson talked a lot about strengthening of the bilateral relations, however, first of all, in the sphere of fight against terrorist threat. And in Chad there were big expectations from the visit of the American voyager, however on absolutely other issues; first of all they hoped for lifting of restrictions on migration (travel ban), imposed by D. Trump's administration. At the
final press conference Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chad M.Z. Sharif has expressed a regret concerning inclusion of Chad into the list of countries, ‘immigrationally dangerous for the USA’ as Chad is deeply involved “in fight against terrorism”. R. Tillerson has extensively answered that this question will be reviewed anew in April after receipt of the FBI and State Department joint report on the measures taken by the authorities of Chad to reinforce safety. The Head of the Department of State has said that at establishment of effective information exchange on security issues with Chad and after completion of development by security services of Chad of modern system of issuing passports protected according to modern technologies, the travel ban for the country will be lifted in the nearest future.

Within the framework of R. Tillerson's visit, in March, 2018 Washington has also let know that along with Ethiopia, Chad and Nigeria it intends to intensify military assistance programme to Nairobi as well as training of the Kenyan military personnel, and also to reinforce the capacity of the US UAVs bases located in Kenya. The announced purpose is to use Kenya for fight against Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups.

The first impressions of results of the last trip of R. Tillerson to Africa is that so far it is impossible to convince Africans on necessity to review relations with China (and this question was behind all talks on possible assistance). They look at all these attempts with mistrust. And it is in spite of the fact that all ‘airtight’ arguments have been used: commercial relations with China were showed as fraught with long-term negative consequences; Beijing was accused of desire to financially enslave regionals through granting large credits under low interest rates and the conclusion of transactions on ‘unfair’ terms; China allegedly interferes in traditional zones of the US interests, it is engaged in colonial expansion, turns the region into its resource colony, undermines sovereignty of the countries of the continent.

In parallel to this, R. Tillerson has put forward the thesis on readiness of the American companies to enter the African markets more actively, however only with improvement of investment climate there, which is closely connected with reduction of scales of corruption. Washington demands structural reforms and everything that assumes conformity to the requirements of the IMF from the countries of the region.

And if everything is clear with the anti-Chinese fervour of the US Secretary of State, then what does huge attention, which has been paid during the trip to anti-terror, mean?

This is slightly more difficult. It seems that the anti-terrorist rhetoric and particular offers to render assistance to Africans in fight against extremists are at once dictated by several motives.

The first of them is to legitimate military presence in Africa. And in truth it is already rather big. In addition to above-mentioned base in Camp Lemonnier, Washington has established more than 60 outposts on the African continent in 34 or 35 countries (depending on the way of counting). Part of them is used, others are closed or preserved, but may be re-activated at any moment. Formally these posts aren't considered as bases, but as Co-operative Security Locations (CSL).

The USA declares that these ‘locations’ defend crucial communications; they are involved in peacekeeping, conflict prevention in Africa and in fight against threat of terrorism or piracy. The USA declares that they combat against 4 main organizations of terrorist character (ISIS, Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Shabaab) and against 48 more that are affiliated with them.

Until the end of 2018 Washington plans to start the ‘West African logistics system’ providing rear supply of the US contingents in 13 countries of the Western and Central Africa. The network of the ‘collective security centres’, which are military facilities in joint use with armed forces of countries of stay, will be expanded. Niger is considered to become a nodal military hub in this part of the continent. 800 American servicemen that deployed on 4 strongpoints of special troops are already located in Niger; there are also two UAV airfields there. The USA accelerates construction of UAVs military base in Agadez.

Within the framework of ‘The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership’ program, the Pentagon accelerates training of the African armed forces and arms delivery to them. Only in 2017 Chad was provided with 60 IFVs. The Americans plan to increase military and technical cooperation with Nigeria in the Western Africa.

Washington has UAVs bases for ‘fight against terrorists’ not only in Niger, but also in Cameroon. And besides, there are reconnaissance airplanes in Burkina Faso. The Americans conduct operations openly in all Western Africa and secretly in Mali, Niger, Cameroon and Chad.

There is large-scale US military presence in the Horn of Africa. For example, there are 400 American servicemen in Somalia (it is remarkable that Somalia President M. Mohamad has the American citizenship). After the large-scale
terrorist attack in Mogadishu in October, 2017 the USA decided to reinforce military presence there even more and the authorities, naturally, agreed to that. The USA carries out arms deliveries to AMISOM.

The US Ministry of Defence wants to develop diagnostic laboratory ‘for counteraction of the possibility of propagation of infectious diseases’ in the territory of Uganda, and that is already Central Africa. In October, 2017 the USA, after Russia, has successfully tested Ebola vaccine.

Within the framework of Cooperative Biological Engagement Program (CBEP) the USA has completed modernization of medical and veterinary laboratories in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Re-equipment of the biological centres in Ethiopia, Cameroon, Senegal, Gabon, Sierra Leone, and Liberia has begun.

Since 2009 the Americans trained more than 250 thousand African soldiers and officers for peacekeeping operations, and the contingent of high-readiness forces of the African Union, having spent 892 mln. US Dollars for it.

As we see, there is large-scale and more and more diversified military presence of the USA on the African continent, not to mention 12 large military cooperation programs which are implemented together with the African countries.

There are all reasons to believe that these bases, laboratories and programs, except fight against terrorism, which is often used as a bugaboo, have a task to reinforce the military-political presence of the USA on the continent and to prevent penetration of competitors, first of all the China, as well as maintaining its interests concerning the raw material resources of Africa, which are interesting for Washington. The USA critically depends on deliveries of many minerals, including graphite, magnesium and tantalum, platinum group metals from Africa, to sum up, of many minerals which are important for maintaining the military industrial complex and transition of the country to the new technological mode. It is typical that in recent years the Pentagon is more and more actively engaged in protection of national interests of the USA in the region, in defending of strategic resources deposits and transportation of them into the USA.

Along with fight against terror, reinforcement of the military-political presence on the continent, defending of strategic reserves of the mineral resources necessary for the USA, displacement of the People's Republic of China, Washington also has another task, i.e. not to allow undesirable regimes to come to power in certain African States. Having hundreds of thousands of trained soldiers and officers from the countries of the continent as the assets, the USA considers that with them they have sufficient resources to prevent ‘changes’ undesirable for them.

However there is a risk that inability of Washington, despite all the efforts, to stop triumphal advance of the People's Republic of China on the continent, and notably peaceful, economic, trade, investment, will push it to the practice of ‘colour revolutions’ tested in the Middle East. The USA will provoke instability and splitting of the African States as it has already occurred and not without interference of Washington in Libya and Sudan, weakening possibilities of China of a long-term settlement on the continent.

Apparently, planners in Washington are already engaged in preparation of these destructive scenarios and Africans have to understand that.

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