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More Questions Than
Answers

NIGER: No Retreat No
Surrender In Junta v
Bazoum

CAMEROON: Major
National Dialogue At Four

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Bongo's "Make Some Noise" Legacy

By Ajong Mbatndah L

From its fertile breeding ground in West Africa, the slow but steady surge in military coups set shore in Central Africa with the end or so of the 56-year reign of the Bongo family in Gabon. Ali Bongo, who succeeded his father Omar Bongo in 2009. Using the ruse of flawed elections, Ali had perpetuated the family grip on power until the recent coup orchestrated by his cousin General Brice Clothaire Oligui Nguema.

Despite his frail health, Ali Bongo was on the verge of working his way to victory in elections strongly believed to have actually been won by opposition challenger Ondo Ossa when the military struck in a coup that had more questions than answers. Curiously, it is in the coup that Ali Bongo found his legacy statement-Make Some Noise.

As news of the coup filtered and people were trying to make sense of what was going on in Gabon, out came Ali Bongo in a statement calling on the world to make some noise about his plight. Martin Luther King is still remembered amongst others for the I have a dream speech. Ali Bongo will be remembered for the Make Some Noise Speech.... Within hours of making the speech, it had gone viral. The phrase became excellent fodder for comedians. People used it for all hilarious but creative jokes, for music. For a man who dabbled without success in music before settling into politics, who would have known that global fame would come to Bongo through a phrase—make some noise!!

Beyond the jokes, the challenging but exciting times that Africa is going through call for some noise. While Ali Bongo may have been hoping for noise to join in protesting against another coup, many were celebrating good riddance to bad rubbish to a filial succession that should never have been. In a trend that started in Togo, and moved to Gabon and most recently Chad, it was the ignoble tale of sons succeeding fathers in countries that were not monarchies. The peculiarity was that these countries were former

French colonies. The more troubling fact is that the trend shows no signs of abating with people rightly or wrongly imputing similar designs in Paul Biya's Cameroon, and Sassou Nguesso's Congo.

The noise is actually been made, perhaps not loud enough for Ali Bongo to hear. Africans want free and fair elections and just like in previous elections, there is none he won free, fair, and square in Gabon. People are making noise in telling France to change its policy and approach to Africa. People are making noise in telling the World Bank and IMF that some of their policies have done more harm than good to Africa.

Africans are making noise by not shedding a tear for Ali Bongo whose health clearly could not permit him handle with any efficacy the complex equations that go with presidential leadership.

If Ali Bongo was vigilant, he would not only have noticed with concern the surge of coups in West Africa, but the enthusiasm that greeted some of these coups. The ousted Gabonese leader would have noticed the growing demands from Africans for a greater say on national and international decisions affecting their future. He may have noticed the growing efforts from Africans to be masters of their own destiny.

It is from the noise or the fear of the noise that African leaders thronged to the BRICS Summit in South Africa in record numbers. The noise may even have contributed in the decision to make the African Union a permanent member of the G20. Challenging but exciting times Africa is living. Talking of the BRICS summit, in Egypt and Ethiopia, two more of Africa's most populous countries are now part of a bloc with growing clout on the international scene. By joining the



Ajong Mbatndah L, Managing Editor

everyday Africans to see hope in military leaderships. A false choice which carries serious risks when one knows that the military should not be trusted with power. Africans want change, they want things different, but should not be carried away with lofty promises or populist rhetoric from the military leaders. The sustained pressure or the high expectations from civilian leaderships should be the same exerted on military leaders.

With Africans yearning for a new dawn, it is easy for leaders be it military or civilian to use the anti-French sentiments or wave to foster selfish sinister agendas of their own. It will be naïve to think that the new military

G20, many see it as justice for a continent of over a billion people kept out of the room where key decisions affecting its destiny are made. Guess the next push will be for a seat at the UN Security Council.

For all these positive developments, on the continent there are still more and growing odds between the leaderships and the people. When the AU is given a seat at the G20, who is going to occupy it on behalf of the continent? Is it the one-year rotational President who will sit at the table for Africa? Is it the often-hapless Chairpersons who will articulate the continents' needs and interests at the table?

Recent events highlight the challenges of the continent getting its act together or speaking in one voice. How can the continental body flex muscles on the coup in Niger and give Chad a pass? How can the continental body talk so tough on Mali and fail to make some noise for Ali Bongo? How can the continental body claim to be against unconstitutional military takeovers yet is full of leaders with doubtful legitimacies?

It is such incongruities that make

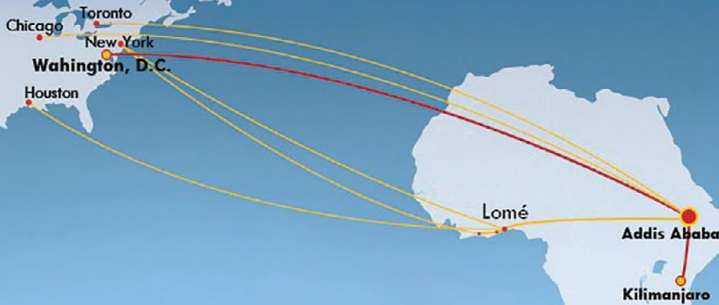
leaders coming in have a magic wand to automatically address the myriad of problems facing the continent. The problems are more complex, the world is more complex. If in civilian leaderships, we make noise on corruption, on bad governance, on flawed elections, on father to son successions, tribalism, human rights, infrastructure, and others, the same noise should be made under military juntas. People should be free to hold leaderships accountable.

Holding leaderships accountable is something that Dr Christopher Fomunyoh, Senior Associate for Africa and Regional Director at the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, NDI has done for over close decades. PAV caught up with him to make sense of the rapid moving pieces.

From the latest coup and the rise of General Brice Clothaire Oligui Nguema in Gabon to the stoicism of the military leadership in Niger, four years of the Major National Dialogue in Cameroon, the re-election of President Mnangagwa in Zimbabwe, the BRICS Summit in South Africa, and more, the choices are many to pick from in this issue of PAV. Happy reading!!!

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Gabon: Will General Nguema Transmute To Civilian President Or Keep His Word?

By Yerima Kini Nsom

He might have hit a direct score into the hearts and minds of the Gabonese people. By promising to release all political prisoners, ensure the sovereignty of Gabon, organize free, fair, transparent and credible elections, institute scholarship and implement other virtuous reforms for the wellbeing of the Gabonese People, General Brice Clothaire Oligui Nguema, the new Gabon's strong man is seemingly seeking to divorce with the past of his predecessor.

This is somewhat an indication that he intends to give his country a new lease of socio-economic and political life. The frontline pronouncements that populated his inaugural speech during his swearing-in at the Constitutional Court, fully placed him on the saddle as the Gabons' transitional President on September 4.

The Void

General Nguema who put paid to the Bongo dynasty in a bloodless Military Coup last August 30, exuded a calm self-confidence when

he addressed the nation. He was collected as he piously appealed to God to help him steer the ship of the nation. He drew inspiration from the aphorism-laced statements of some

leaders like Jerry Rawlings of Ghana to justify the military coup. But there was a big void in his remarks. He did not say for how long the transitional period will last. He rather made a

blanket statement to the effect that the transitional period will be short. Observers are asking how long or how short will be the short transitional period.

They equally wonder on whose standards and judgment the shortness of transitional period being predicated. The information vacuum about the duration of the transitional period is being filled with all sorts of speculations. Thus, what is welling up in the minds of political watchers is the fear and doubt as to whether the General is sincere about handing over power to civilian rule soon.

They are right, for, only God knows what is playing in the inner casements of General Nguema's mind about the length of the transitional period. There are concerns that he may be having his eyes further afield of political ambition by secretly planning to transmute to a civilian President. The question that keeps lurking is whether General Nguema will emerge as messiah and consistent patriotic



General Brice Oligui Nguema at his swearing in as Gabon's leader following a coup that still has more questions than answers. Photo courtesy.



As the dust settles on the coup, there is growing scrutiny on the close family ties between former President Ali Bongo and the new military leader Gen Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema. Photo courtesy.

leader who marches his with action or fall into the temptation of signing a love pact with power. It is only his actions in the coming days that will determine whether the military takeover portends good or ill for the Gabonese people.

Silver Lining

Even in the dark cloud of unpredictability, the silver lining is that General Nguema is in the books as the front man of a military coup that ended the arch nemesis of the Gabonese people, the 56-year old Bongo dynasty. Under this dynasty, the Gabonese people were dispossessed and subjugated by dictatorship. This kind of emasculation triggered a general political apathy and distrust of the electoral system. By promising to organize free and fair elections, General Nguema is inviting the Gabonese people to take their destiny into their hands through the ballot box. It would be a sigh of relieve for people who have suffered close to six decades of hardship as a result of injustice and oppression.

That is why the military takeover was greeted with full approval by the Gabonese and other suffering citizens of the CEMAC region. Given the dictatorship of circumstances, the coup is fully wrapped in dicey and ambivalent robes. Apart from certain countries that are ruled by long-reigning dictators, the condemnation of the military coup was very subtle and mild. Many observers fell short of qualifying the coup as a good and benevolent one. Unlike its acerbic tone in the military coup in Niger, France's reaction to the military takeover in Gabon was very soft and caressing.

This has opened the pathway for allegations that the former colonial master might have pulled the strings of the coup from the darkroom agenda. This school of thought seems to hold sway, given that President Ali Bongo was no longer playing ball in favour of France. There is talk that Ali Bongo burnt his fingers and precipitated his power demise by trying to end France's neocolonial



Opposition leader Ondo Albert Ossa thinks the coup was fomented by the Bongo clan to torpedo his victory in the elections. Photo courtesy.

paramour with Gabon. According to Gabonese opposition leader, Jean Ping, Ali Bongo started turning away from the French when he rejected France's demand to establish a military base in Gabon.

Besides, he is reported have seized some juicy contracts from French companies and given them to Chinese firms. He also expelled French media channels like RFI and France 24 from Gabon and prohibited them from covering the August 26 elections in that country. Added to the list Ali Bongo's sins against the French, is the fact that Gabon joined the Commonwealth in a show of his romance with the Anglo-saxon world. When spoke in English in a video in which he called on people to "make noise" for him, it was addressing the Anglo-saxon world

Another governing factor of Ali's Bongo's overthrow is the allegation that he was discreetly preparing his son take over the saddle since he knows that he is in poor health. The Gabonese people were wallowing in abject poverty while the ruling family and their allies were swimming in affluence. Media reports say since August 30 when Bongo was overthrown, over FCFA 500 billion have been seized from members of his family and their close aides.

Ondo Ossa As Main Loser

As the undercurrents of the military takeover keep playing out, the opposition leader, Albert Ondo Ossa, is turning out to be the main loser of

the situation since he is reported to be the real owner of the election. The opposition leader sees the military takeover as an electoral coup against him and the Gabonese masses who voted for him. He said if the military wanted genuine change, they would insisted that votes be counted a second time the moment they discovered that the polls were rigged in favour Ali Bongo. To him, General Nguema remains the signpost of the continuation of the Bongo dynasty. But General Nguema says he will ensure the full independence and the sovereignty of Gabon.

Cataclysmic Crash

The crash of what was gradually emerging as the Bongo dynasty in Gabon for 56 years, was swift and cataclysmic. Minutes after Gabon's electoral commission declared that the incumbent President Ali Bongo had won a third term on Wednesday August 30, senior military officers announced a coup and annulled the August 26 election.

The interval between the declaration of Ali Bongo's victory that was highly contested by the main opposition leader, Albert Ondo Ossa, and the announcement of the military coup, was thirty minutes. Small wonder that observers are saying mockingly that President Ali Bongo's third term lasted only thirty minutes.

General Brice Clothaire Oligui Nguema, the Commander-In-Chief of the Gabonese Republican Guard and Bongo's cousin, emerged from

the shadows as the new shepherd of the Gabonese people. The ousted President who was put under house arrest with some members of his family and some of his close aides, was released on September 6. The military spokesman said he was free to travel abroad for treatment. The ordinary citizens greeted the coup with a near all-out jubilation in the streets of Libreville and other areas of the country.

Political watchers say the overthrow of Ali Bongo who succeeded his father, Omar Bongo in 2009, is not strictly a Gabonese affair. To them, its bearings lurk ominously over the entire Central African Economic and Monetary Community, CEMAC that has been the treasure trove and citadel of president-for-life exuberance, the personalization of power and the violation of the people's sovereignty and aspirations. According to a renowned Cameroonian political scientist, Dr. Aristide Mono, the coup in Gabon, is a tacit warning to the political Methuselahs who have continued to reign in self-perpetration at the helm of some CEMAC countries. To him, the fact that the Gabonese Military has put paid to the reign of the Bongo family that grabbed power in 1967, is setting a jurisprudential stepping stone that could trigger events in other CEMAC states. But cast aspersions as to whether the soldiers were inspired the zeal and zest for the general good or were manipulated by hidden neocolonial hands

Bad News To CEMAC sit-tight Dictators

The gravamen of contention and grouse of the Gabonese people against the Bongo family, consists of governance pathologies that stalk the breadth and length of the sub region. For one thing, Gabon is a small country in the Central African sub region with enormous natural resources such as oil, manganese, timber as well as cash crops like cocoa. Going by the 2021 official statistics, Gabon has a population of 2.241 million people. It

is a wealthy country that enjoys a per capita income four times than most of the countries in sub-Saharan African nations.

Due to high inequalities, a large proportion of the population of Gabon remains extremely poor. The wealth of the nation that is endowed with huge oil reserves, in the hands of the ruling class while the majority of the population wallows in want and deprivation. It is reported that the average Gabonese lives on half a dollar a day. Economic analysts hold that, like most countries in the CEMAC region, Gabon cuts a clean image of what is often referred to as the "paradox of poverty". For, it remains enigmatic to many an observer that a very rich country is home and haven to some of the poorest people in the world. World Bank statistics indicate that Gabon is the fifth largest oil-producing nation in Africa, which has helped drive its strong growth in the later 20th century. The oil sector in that country now accounts for 50 percent of the Gross Domestic Product, GDP and 80 percent of exports.

While a large part of the population has been barely existing in penury that is compounded by the acute lack of social amenities in the country, the Bongo family and the rest of the ruling class have been living in opulence from the public purse. A glance at the fast-food reportage of events, shows that the same chaotic situation holds sway in almost all the six countries of the CEMAC region. The political history of this sub region is that of opportunism, sit-tight dictatorship, corruption and a callous negation of democratic values and the aspirations of the masses. It is a region accursed with strong leaders that toy over weak institutions. This explains the absence of free, fair and transparent elections as well as the separation of powers that would have ushered in checks and balances for the peoples' sovereign will to triumph in every situation.

Going by the recent reports of Transparency International, the region has never ceased to be a cesspool of corruption, characterized



In Presidents Obiang Nguema, Paul Biya, and Sassou Nguesso, the CEMAC Region has some of the longest serving leaders in the continent. Photo courtesy.

by the embezzlement of public funds. The population of these countries are seething with anger and frustrations due to the electoral swindles that bar them from choosing leaders that are accountable to them. To them, they need pro-people leaders that would hearken to the visionary clarity of embracing democracy, the rule of law, respect of human rights, the sovereignty of civil polity, public accountability and developments as many parts the same coin of general wellbeing.

Experts hold that the absence of these governance virtues has left the population of the six CEMAC countries boiling with rage. And this represents a potentially explosive situation that needs only a spark. Political pundits are urging the leaders of other CEMAC countries, namely, Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Congo Brazzaville and Equatorial Guinea to heed their peoples' entreaties for the general good or face the music sooner or later. The gravamen of their admonishment is that the governance malaise in the region is so commonplace that what has happened in Gabon and some Francophone West African countries, like Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, is likely to happen anywhere in the

CEMAC region. In other words, the entire sub region is so intricately linked that these common ills provide an enabling environment for military coups.

The most fundamental of these ills is the tacit message that democracy, the rule of law, free, fair and transparent elections are plants that are too frail to survive in the dictatorial soil of the CEMAC sub region. For, CEMAC bears the unenviable blight of a sub region that providence blessed with enormous natural resources, but it paradoxically remains home for some the poorest people in the globe. Governance experts posit that such a paradox is not unconnected to the fact that this region harbors some of the world's reigning nonagenarians and sit-tight Methuselahs who have been in power for close to half a century at the expense of their countries' development. They have virtually emerged as traditional rulers at the helm of their various states.

The former US Under-Secretary in charge of African Affairs, Tibor Nagy, is one of those who reacted promptly to the development in Gabon in a tweet by warning other sit-tight leaders in CEMAC. Hear him: "The military takeover in Gabon will be hard to criticize given the series of

votes-can't call them democratic elections- which kept Bongo family in power for 56 years. I am sure that the Biyas and the Obiangs are paying close attention". The Eguarto Guinean President, Teodora Obiang Nguema Mbassago is the dean of sit-tight leaders in the CEMAC region with 44 years of monarchical reign. He leads a ruling class that lives high and big on mineral resources like gold, uranium, diamond, tantalite, gas and oil that that the country is blessed with. Living standards in that are low as compared to the resources.

Obiang Ngema is trailed in that logic by President Paul of Cameroon who has been in power since 1982. Despite the enormous resources of the country, life is hard and brutal for the ordinary citizen. A huge chunk of the country's resources goes into the private pockets of officials through acts of corruption. Idriss Derby reigned supreme in Chad for several decades and was succeeded by his son a few years ago. Congo and the Central African Republic are in similar situation. Added to this conditions that fuel discontent, one of the main governing factors of military coups is neocolonial manipulation.



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AU Suspends Niger: Coup Leaders Remain Defiant

By Prince Kurupati

The African Union (AU) recently took the drastic decision of suspending Niger from the continental grouping. The decision was reached following the coup d'état which took place in Niger on 26 July 2023.

Following the 26 July Niger coup, the African Union together with other regional and international actors-initiated steps to mediate with the coup leaders in an attempt to institute an immediate return to civilian constitutional rule. Unfortunately, no significant inroads were made as the coup leaders' resolve to remain in power reigned supreme.

Spearheading the mediation and negotiation efforts among the regional actors was the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Largely driven by the need to prevent a possible influx of Islamist groups in the West African region owing to the coup, ECOWAS instituted talks with Niger's junta.

ECOWAS appointed Abdulsalami Abubakar as the chief mediator and he managed to visit Niger where he engaged in discussions with the junta. Following the discussions, Abdulsalami Abubakar said that the talks were "very fruitful" as "nobody wants to go to war". During the talks,



The new military leadership has stepped up public outreach to bolster support. Photo credit Balima Boreima, Getty Images.

Abubakar said that the junta had made their "own points" and there was hope that a consensus could be reached.

Despite there being much optimism that a consensus could be reached albeit with everything just being in words at the moment, the African Union took the drastic

decision of suspending Niger from the continental grouping pending the outcome of further mediation talks.

Furthermore, the AU Peace and Security Council in a communique said that it acknowledges ECOWAS' decision to activate a Standby Force and requests that the AU Commission assess the economic, social and

security implications of deploying the Standby Force. The AU Peace and Security Council also called upon the AU Commission to compile a list of all members of the junta at the forefront of the coup as well as their supporters as its planning to slap them with "individual punitive measures".

If the AU Peace and Security Council proceeds to slap the coup leaders with sanctions, it will be the second time that the junta has been slapped with punitive measures in the aftermath of the coup. Earlier on, ECOWAS suspended all commercial transactions with Niger, its state assets in the regional central bank, frozen assets of the state and state enterprises in commercial banks, and suspended all financial assistance with regional development banks.

ECOWAS' sanctions as reported by Reuters also meant that Nigeria cut power supply to the country on the 80-megawatt Birnin-Kebbi line and that Ivory Coast suspended exports and imports of Nigerian goods.

Other punitive measures against the Niger junta came from the



Tough talk from Nigerian President Tinubu and ECOWAS leaders have left the new military leadership unfazed. Photo credit Sundiata Post.



Rally in Niamey on August 6 in support of Niger's coup leaders and against foreign intervention.

European Union which suspended its financial support and security cooperation with Niger, France which suspended development aid and budget support with immediate effect, the Netherlands which temporarily suspended its direct cooperation with the Niger government, the United States which paused its humanitarian and security aid to Niger, Canada which suspended direct development assistance to Niger and the World Bank which suspended disbursements to Niger until further notice albeit with the exception of support towards the private sector.

Niger's junta despite all the punitive measures levied against them still remains unfazed. The junta requested that it be granted a 3-year timeline to organise elections. ECOWAS has since rejected that proposing a much shorter timeframe.

Emboldening Niger junta's resolve is the fact that they have received support from some quarters. The Wagner Group praised the actions taken by the junta and publicly

stated that it would help if its help was required at any time. Russia and China have said that Africans should solve their own problems hence subtly warning against any foreign intervention in Niger. According to Corinne Dufka, a respected independent consultant and author working in the Sahel, another thing that makes the Niger coup unique and different from other regional coups that ECOWAS has dealt with is the fact that it's spearheaded by top-level officers with loads of military experience rather than junior officers.

"Unlike other coups, these are high-level officers, men in their 60s, with lots of experience and including some who are really well trained. They don't hold all the cards, but certainly hold a lot of them... Everyone I speak to (in Niger) says the train has left the station and Bazoum (deposed president) is not coming back," Dufka said.

In the coming days, it's to be seen if the Niger junta's resolve will remain unshaken or not. However,

several analysts taking a cue from the grouping's influence in other West African nations that experienced coups is that the junta might in the end give in to ECOWAS' demands. In Mali, ECOWAS forced the hand of coup leaders to agree to a 2024 deadline for a return to civilian rule. The same happened with the Burkina Faso coup leaders while in Guinea, the regional group shortened the transition timeline to 24 months. Analysts further state that ECOWAS will be forced to work extra hard in trying to find a quick resolution as its reputation is at stake following the numerous coups and attempted coups that have taken place in the West African region in recent times.

Some however believe that this time around, ECOWAS might not have its way. Nigerian representative at the ECOWAS Parliament Ali Ndume said the ECOWAS Parliament is against sending troops to Niger as that would complicate things further and endanger the many lives of innocent civilians. The only way is

to persist with the mediation efforts until a resolution is found. "Our stand is informed by the grave implications of a military intervention in Niger. (There is) no alternative to a diplomatic solution," Ndume said.

The need to pursue a diplomatic path rather than take the military route was reinforced by White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan who said Niger's innocent civilians are "the ones with a very significant stake in this" hence the need to preserve their lives and livelihoods. Some analysts argue that the U.S. decision to prioritise the diplomatic path in addressing the Niger crisis is more inspired by the need to protect its interests in the country. The U.S. is one of the key trading partners with Niger largely when it comes to uranium. Niger is the world's seventh biggest producer of uranium, the radioactive metal widely used for nuclear energy and treating cancer.

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SADC Gives a Damning Report on Zimbabwe Elections

By Ambassador Omar Arouna, MBA*

"We encourage all stakeholders to ensure that these elections are conducted in a peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible manner. We look forward to an electoral process that adheres to democratic values and principles envisioned in the SADC Treaty, the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation, and the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections".

H.E. Dr. Nevers Mumba
Head of SADC Electoral Observation Mission

Zimbabwe Elections 2023

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SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM)

As is the norm with any election – at least in recent times – local and international observers are invited and accredited to oversee how things pan out during the exercise. In following this tradition, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) on the eve of the 23 August 2023 Harmonised Elections accredited several local and international observer missions. One of these was the SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) led by former Zambia Vice President Nevers Mumba.

Soon after election day, SEOM presented its preliminary report in which it lambasted ZEC for poorly conducting the elections. SEOM said the elections organised by ZEC failed to meet the requirements of the country's Constitution as well as the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections.

Presenting the SEOM's preliminary findings, the head of mission Nevers Mumba said "There were stakeholder concerns about the right of freedom of assembly for election campaign

purposes, whereupon the CCC (main opposition party) reported that their rallies were being subjected to unreasonable cancellation by the Zimbabwe Republic Police."

Head of Mission Nevers Mumba also touched on the delays in voting especially in opposition strongholds which saw voting start towards dusk and in some places, late at night. He said due to this, "some voters left without casting their votes, while others opted to remain in lengthy queues throughout the day and night".

Furthermore, SEOM cited countrywide incidents of intimidation largely perpetrated by the Forever Associates of Zimbabwe (FAZ) agents. "Our observers confirmed the existence of this group as its officials or agents were easily identifiable at some polling stations as they were dressed in regalia emblazoned with FAZ name and were accredited local observers... These and other unidentified persons who were not polling officials were also observed taking down the names of voters. In

some areas, voters were intimidated by the actions of these individuals," Mumba said.

In his concluding remarks, Mumba said, "The Mission observed that the pre-election and voting phases, on 23-24 August 2023 harmonised elections were peaceful and calm. However, for reasons outlined above, the Mission noted that some aspects of the harmonised elections fell short of the requirements of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the Electoral Act, and SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections (2021)."

Immediately after the SEOM presentation, a barrage of attacks mainly from the ruling party ZANU PF officials was levied upon SEOM in general and Mumba specifically. Zanu Pf spokesperson Christopher Mutsvangwa said Zambia through Mumba was bent on advancing the Western agenda and interests in the region.

In a televised interview, the Zanu PF spokesperson said, "Well, look Mr. Hichilema has got his friends and he

came to power through his friends and he decided to appoint a man who decided to make controversy in Zimbabwe rather than observe elections and once became part of the charade of the Western countries, which always want to see Zimbabwean elections as a transition away from Zanu PF rule to some puppetry in the West... This is not going to happen in Zimbabwe... The reason why there has been persistent contestation is that the West would like to see the back of a national liberation movement in power in Zimbabwe and they expect the same thing eventually in South Africa, they will expect the same thing in Namibia, we know the game plan".

This is the first time that a SADC election observer mission has broken rank and publicly castigated the Zimbabwean electoral body for poorly conducting the elections. Even during the bloodiest election in Zimbabwe in 2008 in which hundreds lost their lives and thousands of others were displaced, the SADC election observer mission legitimised the election.

In showing solidarity with its

election observer mission, SADC released a statement on 26 August in which it expressed “concern on statements made about its Electoral Observation Mission in Zimbabwe and the personal attacks to its Head of SEOM following the release of its Preliminary Statement on Zimbabwe”. SADC followed by dispatching a Panel of Elders (PoE) on a fact-finding mission into the disputed 2023 harmonised elections in Zimbabwe.

Commenting on the whole fiasco, academic and a former government official in Robert Mugabe’s administration Professor Jonathan Moyo said that SEOM was “out of order” as its preliminary report was “intentionally and scandalously wrote... on the basis of what it (SEOM) heard, and not what it observed”. Professor Moyo went further to state that SEOM failed to sustain the main theme of its report relating to some aspects of the election falling “short of the requirements of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the Electoral Act, and the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections,” as the report is devoid of any “actual observations made by the Mission” henceforth everything based “on



Zanu Pf spokesperson Christopher Mutsvangwa said Zambia through Mumba was bent on advancing the Western agenda and interests in the region.

hearsay”.

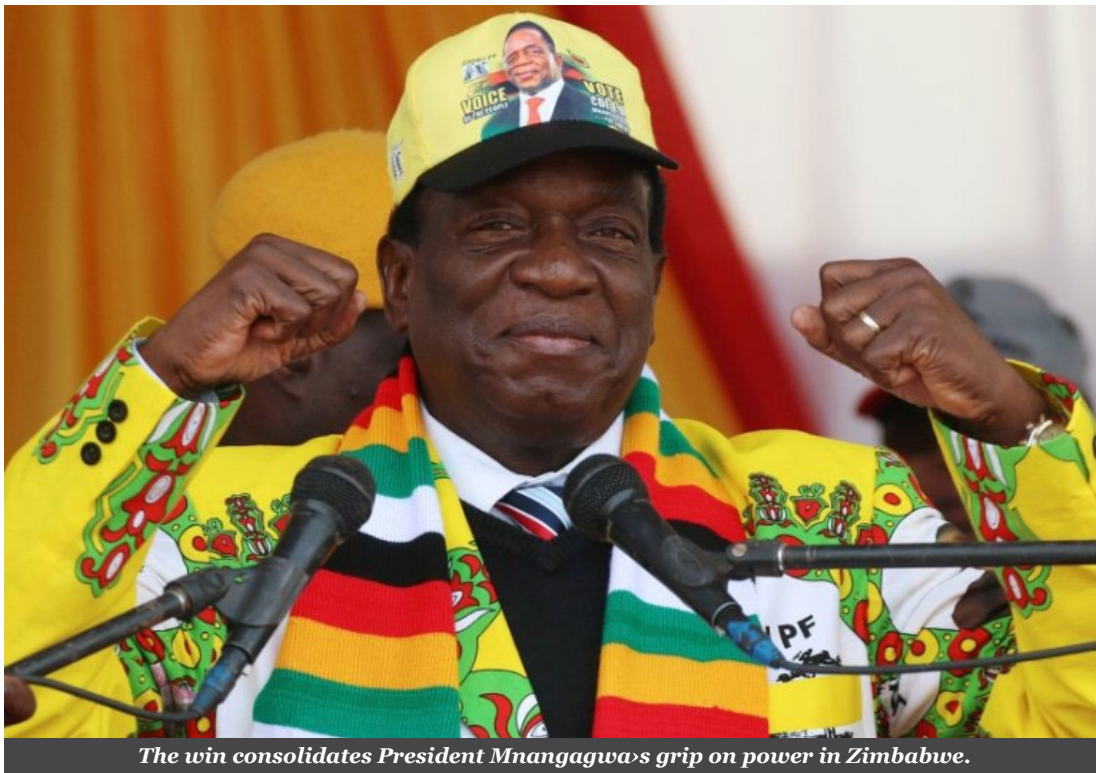
Echoing the same sentiments was the Zimbabwean government spokesperson Nick Mangwana who in an ‘X’ post said, “All Hearsay, ‘We were informed’, ‘Stakeholders claimed that’, ‘CCC reported that’, ‘The Mission received concerns’, ‘There were allegations that’, ‘There

were concerns from the opposition that,” in describing how the SEOM preliminary report was largely based on third party information rather than actual observations made by the Mission. Mangwana went further in stating that, “The objective people are still waiting for a Report that says, ‘We observed that’.”

The country compatriot of SEOM Head of Mission Nevers Mumba, Dr Fred M’membe who is the President of the Socialist Party of Zambia rubbished the SEOM report saying its head of mission and the Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema who appointed the mission’s members worked in cahoots to discredit the Zimbabwean election even before the votes were cast.

Dr M’membe in an ‘X’ post said, “We note with great concern and embarrassment the activities of Mr Nevers Mumba who was appointed as the Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to Zimbabwe by Mr Hichilema... The malice is evident in the SADC Electoral Observation Mission & EU Election Observer Mission’s preliminary statements on Zimbabwe’s elections which can be best described as a poorly executed desk job, some passages of the statements have similarities in language & phraseology.”

While SADC as a bloc still believes in the SEOM preliminary report, individual governments of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa have since sent congratulatory messages to Emmerson Mnangagwa in a move that political analysts say shows deep frictions within the SADC region. —



The win consolidates President Mnangagwa’s grip on power in Zimbabwe.

Cameroon : Fours Years After 'Dialogue', Cameroon's Ambazonia War Still Begs Fresh Tackling

By Andrew Nsoseka



PM Dion Ngute Addressing Delegates at the Yaounde MND meeting.

In September of 2019, Cameroon organised a 'Major National Dialogue' which to its convener, President Paul Biya, and Chairman, PM Dion Ngute was "aimed at finding solutions to the aspirations of the people of the North-West and South-West Regions" of Cameroon. Four years after it's much more advertised than implemented resolutions, the crisis still rages on. The resolutions which at the time were touted around by Biya regime songbirds as the best practical solution to the grievances of the Anglophones, have not only fallen short but also failed in even reducing the magnitude of the problem.

So far, the Cameroon government's luck has only been the fractionalisation in separatist ranks as leaders seem to care more about creating new groups where they can promote themselves, and individual ambitions, than their acclaimed goals of creating a new state.

When delegates who participated in the Major National Dialogue in Yaoundé rose from the meeting, apologists of the system were in self-deceptive high spirits that the so-called dialogue to address the grievances of the Anglophone

segment of Cameroon, had birthed a Special Status for the two regions. This was so, as many were still to know the content of the so-called special status. Understandably so, most, especially retired ruling CPDM party militants were happy that another body would be created for them to keep enjoying the spoils of the system. When they heard about Regional Assemblies and Offices of Independent Public Conciliators, they knew the crisis had buttered their bread. As such, they celebrated and told the Biya system that Anglophones are happy. Four years down the line, they are living in far-off towns with offices lodged in safe zones, because the crisis still rages on, and the people they promised were happy, are after them and the regime they blame for their lack of development, freedom, and horrible living standards.

How the Major National Dialogue Was Programmed to Fail from Onset

Before the Dialogue happened, cracks already surfaced on the wall. There was much relief when President Biya announced that the crisis would be resolved through dialogue, but

when the agenda was laid out, and delegates unveiled, doubts about the sincerity of the exercise surfaced.

The first aspect that programmed the outcome of the dialogue for failure was the fact that it skillfully left out separatist fighters and their leadership. Though dishing out invitations to many leaders through social media, the government still did not rescind the warrants of arrest it had issued for them. Separatists had expressed the willingness to have the dialogue elsewhere apart from Cameroon where they can feel free to express their aspirations and not worry about being arrested. If the process was a serious one, the main separatist leader, Seseku Ayuk Tabe, who commanded most of the separatists before his arrest alongside his other subordinates in Nigeria, should have been taken out of jail to participate.

However, since the dialogue was programmed to play to the gallery than address the aspirations of Anglophones in Cameroon as stated by President Biya and PM Dion Ngute, they cared less about dialoguing with the real persons concerned or those fomenting the problem.

Delegates selected to represent the Anglophones were Biya's CPDM party members and a few persons from opposition parties. This programmed the whole exercise for failure. In the end, regional governors appointed by the Biya regime, led the ruling CPDM politicians and a few opposition leaders to dialogue with themselves to resolve a problem they have largely been blamed for, in the absence of the real and crucial stakeholder with the powers to make demands and resolve the issue.

How Dialogue has failed to arrest the crisis

In the end, the so-called delegates agreed with their own stance and pulled out a clause from the Cameroon constitution about a Special Status. This meant that the two Anglophone regions were to have Regional Assemblies, while the other eight francophone regions had Regional Councils. This itself watered down the purpose of it, as instead of former West Cameroon, now called Anglophone regions talking as a partner with former East Cameroon, (francophone regions), it was made to appear as if each of the 10 regions



Ruling CPDM militants and other government officials at National Dialogue

had a problem like the collective one of Anglophone regions. The Dialogue also produced what it referred to as the Presidential Plan for Reconstruction and Development of the two regions, alongside the Northern regions of Cameroon devastated by Boko Haram attacks.

At the end of it, Anglophones have realised that the so-called Special Status is just an overhyped empty vessel. What was touted as the best solution that would bring autonomy to the regions that were gunning for independence merely ended up as a glorified institution with no powers to make life-changing decisions for its people, or cause any economic changes or impact. The so-called regional assemblies operate with budgets smaller than that of some local councils. Most of its councillors are only contented with their sitting allowances and various benefits that swell most of their operating budgets. The so-called Regional Assemblies in Anglophone regions now fight for space to donate school books or single computers like local neighbourhood NGOs. None has carried out any meaningful project, and their activities are supervised and must be okayed by appointed regional governors, largely seen by the people as an extension of the overbearing Yaoundé regime. Locals even refer to them as colonial masters. The idea of an appointed civil servant bossing

over supposedly elected Regional Councillors defeats it all. None of their deliberations can go on without being okayed by the governor.

In the domain of the plan for reconstruction of the two regions, there is little to write home about. The planned reconstruction has largely taken place in campaigns. Supposed construction is done mostly in regional headquarters where almost nothing has been destroyed by the war, because the fighting has not impacted those areas. Entire communities that were burnt down by soldiers, or destroyed by fighting are

now in ruins. Most schools that were burnt by separatist fighters, and some by government forces who torched them because separatists were using them as camps, are overgrown, and reconstruction has not been done there. The reality is that fighting is still ongoing, though less physical than before, Guerrilla tactics by separatists have greatly made places less safe, and contractors knowing the reality on the field, cannot get involved in such risky endeavours. Worse still there is active destruction as the trumpeted Presidential Plan for Reconstruction is preached. In most

of their operations, soldiers still burn down the houses of locals.

So far, the reconstruction has only succeeded in aspects like training a few displaced persons on how to make detergents and sell them for survival in their host communities. This impacted a few thousand. The Plan also provided material assistance to about 3,000 displaced persons, according to its recent communication. It also boasts of causing about 550 ex-fighters in the two regions to surrender. However, most of those who resign or surrender point to the cracks and bad leadership from their leaders abroad, and not really heeding Biya's call.

It also gives itself a thumbs up for erecting multimedia centres in the two regions to train youths on ICTs. One of the much-trumpeted achievements of the plan is also that it carries out sensitisation campaigns.

However, these all seem a little irrelevant, given that the efforts, which seem to be very half-hearted have failed to arrest the crisis, as the fighting still goes on. The Cameroon government only has circumstances to thank for the dispersed ranks in which various separatist leaders operate. If many were to come together, the National Dialogue of 2019, and its cosmetic solutions would be far away from even being



Leading opposition figures and civil society actors answered present at the MND



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The wide gulf between expectations and realities from the MND call for a new approach in seeking lasting solutions to the crisis

considered an event, when it comes to actually making efforts to put an end to the fighting. For one thing, the war is metamorphosing. Instead of street fights, separatists are employing the use of locally made explosives, which is depleting the vehicle pool of Cameroon's defence forces. Guerilla tactics reign now, and at any point in time, military convoys are brought to a halt by heavy mines and explosives attacks. Most military vehicles are towed out of the regions for repairs all the time, while some are damaged beyond repairs. This is happening years after the supposed dialogue that was supposed to end all fighting was staged.



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Patrice Talon: A Constitutional Putschist Calling Out The Putsch In Niger

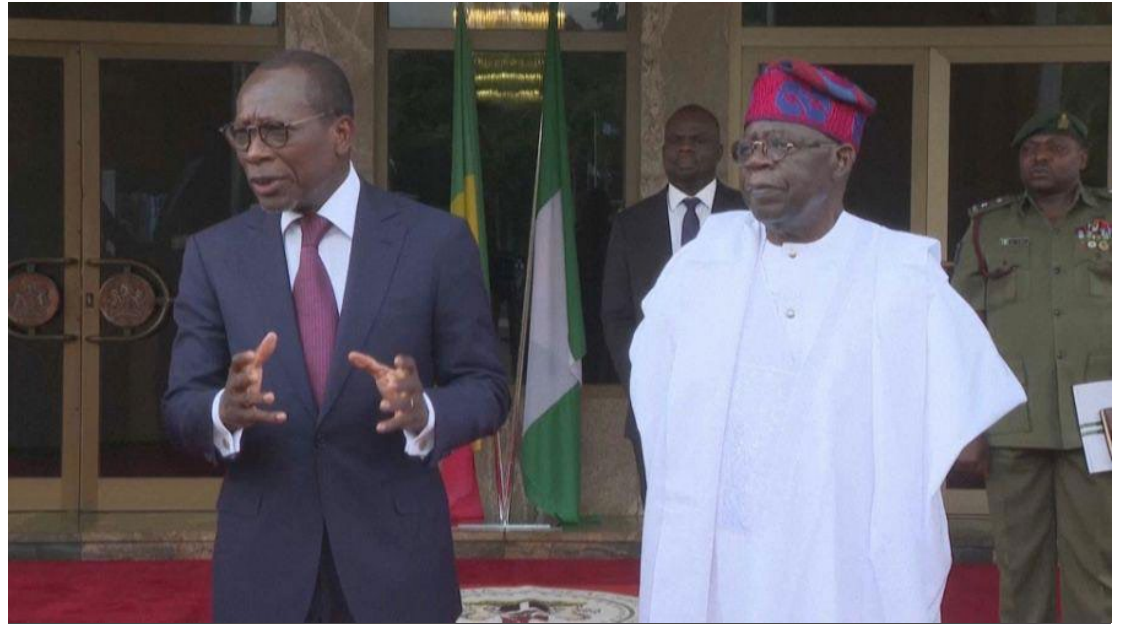
By Ambassador Omar Arouna, MBA*

Amidst the backdrop of African nations striving for democratic governance through transparent elections, the landscape was jarred on July 26, 2023. President Mohamed Bazoum of Niger found himself arrested, marking the inception of the nation's fifth military coup since its 1960 independence from France. This event, an affront to the spirit of democracy, received global condemnation, with international pillars such as the US, France, and ECOWAS, among others, raising their voices against this assault, thus heightening the 2023 Nigerien crisis.

However, the waters of international politics were muddled further when President Patrice Talon of Benin raised his voice against the coup in Niger, advocating urgently for the restoration of Niger's constitutional order and the reinstating of President Mohamed Bazoum to Power "by any means necessarily including military intervention by the ECOWAS Army". To those aware of the West African political milieu, Talon's stance bore a tinge of irony — akin to the proverbial «kettle calling the pot black».

Okay

Scrutinizing Talon's governance since 2016 unveils maneuvers deemed antithetical to democratic tenets. John Campbell, representing



Benin's President Talon with current ECOWAS President Ahmed Tinubu of Nigeria. The democratic gains in Benin have seen a meteoric erosion under Talon.

the Council of Foreign Relations, highlighted in April 2021 how Talon has, over his tenure, systematically chipped away at Benin's democratic framework. He stands accused of suppressing opposition, commandeering the judiciary, and restricting media freedoms. Furthermore, Tyson Roberts' Washington Post analysis showcases Talon's establishment of restrictive electoral codes and overt suppression of political opponents. Such actions culminated in Talon's resounding

victory in the 2021 elections, where he secured a staggering 86% of the vote.

Labelled as «constitutional coups», these tactics cleverly dilute democracy under the guise of legality. Disturbingly, these are not isolated strategies. Several African leaders, including Talon, have adopted this approach to covertly consolidate power, whilst ensuring the flow of international aid remains unhindered.

While military coups, like the one in Niger, are overt and palpable, the subtler «constitutional coups» like in Benin are insidiously corrosive. Addressing only the overt manifestations without understanding the root cause is not the solution. Hence, as figures like Talon condemn military coups, it becomes imperative for the global community to critically assess their own records.

Indeed, the complexity of the situation is illustrated by events in Benin prior to the Niger incident. In March 2021, leading political figures such as Reckya Madougou

and Joël Aïvo were arrested without clear justification. The arrest of the former Minister of Justice, Reckya Madougou, and that of professor and constitutionalist Joel Aivo, are particularly perplexing, given the distinctions awarded to the former, notably the «Woman of Courage Award» by the US State Department, and the merits of the latter. What's more, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has declared Madougou's arrest arbitrary and has been calling for her release for ten months. Such events, juxtaposed with Benin's legislative elections in January 2023 and Talon's presumed aspirations for a third term, paint a bleak picture of Benin's political future.

The narrative is clear — whether a coup is draped in military fatigues or wrapped in the cloak of legality, it remains a scar on the face of democracy. It's time for the global community to go beyond superficial condemnations and delve into the deeper intricacies shaping the future of democratic governance in Africa



Constitutional coups like the one in Benin must be called out, says Ambassador Omar Arouna.



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Coups Are A Wake Up Call For African Leaders To Do Better-Dr Chris Fomunyoh

By Ajong Mbapndah L

The resurgence of coups should be a wake-up call that democratically elected leaders need to perform better and find concrete ways to address grievances and aspirations of fellow citizens, says Dr Christopher Fomunyoh. The Senior Associate and Regional Director for Africa at the Washington, DC based National Democratic Institute. Says every time the military steps into the political arena, it is a step backwards for the country in question and the continent.

"The African Union and the subregional organizations have a critical role to play in making sure that their own norms, standards, and constitutive acts are respected. These organizations must hold leaders accountable whether they have come to power in a coup or through elections. It is also incumbent on these regional bodies to ensure that elections are credible and meaningful, and that leaders do not drain democracy of its value and substance," says Dr Fomunyoh in an interview with PAV.

The hope is that these recent military coups will serve as a rude awakening to these organizations so they can become more effective and assertive in ensuring that citizens' voices are being heard and their aspirations met, Dr Fomunyoh says.

Hailing the professionalism of the overwhelming majority of African militaries who remain apolitical and focused on their primary constitutional roles and responsibilities, Fomunyoh urged African leaders to create avenues to listen to their fellow citizens.

"We must diminish the growing gap between political elites and the vast majority of citizens who increasingly feel disconnected by governance and disaffected by decisions made by their governments. Additionally, it is critical to create opportunities for the African youth to feel included and to



The resurgence of coups should be a wake-up call that democratically elected leaders need to perform better, says Dr Chris Fomunyoh.

have a voice and a seat at the table of decision making," Dr Fomunyoh opined.

Thanks for agreeing to grant this interview. Why is there currently a resurgence of military coups in Africa?

Dr Fomunyoh: In this day and age, every time the military steps into the political arena is a step backwards for the country and a stain on the image of the continent. Every democratic society provides a specific constitutional role for its military, which consists of guaranteeing the safety of citizens and the security of institutions and national borders. So, a priori, coups must be condemned because they breed instability and violence, and further aggravate the socio-economic situation of countries in which they are staged.

In recent times, some militaries have used arguments such as poor governance, including tinkering with constitutions and elections by civilian led governments, and failure to

curb violent extremism in the Sahel. Whether perceived or real, these arguments are a wakeup call that democratically elected leaders need to perform

better and find concrete ways to address the grievances and aspirations of their fellow citizens.

Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger, and most recently Gabon: what accounts for the fact that all these military coups are being staged in Francophone African countries?

Dr Fomunyoh: There is no denying that over the years anti-French sentiments have been on the rise in francophone Africa for reasons that have to do with French economic and monetary policy, issues pertaining to the FCFA currency, and also ambiguities in French responses to African crises such as French President Emmanuel Macron attending the inaugural for a president in Chad who came to power through unconstitutional means,

while condemning coups in other French speaking countries. These grievances also coincide with strong demands by African youth for change, and more transparent and equitable relationships between Francophone African countries and France. Some of the militaries have taken advantage of those sentiments to position themselves as change agents, even though their track record in that regard is thin and abysmal.

Unlike the other coups, the recent coup in Niger generated forceful and coordinated opposition from the regional organization ECOWAS, France and the USA; why were such coordinated efforts missing during earlier coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea?

Dr Fomunyoh: All of the other coups were also condemned, but the heightened focus on Niger can be understood because President Mohamed Bazoum and his government has been in power for

only two years, they have projected a lot of promise and the strongest democratic credentials in the Sahel, demonstrated encouraging economic performance too in infrastructure development and its fight against corruption, and recorded tangible results on security and countering violent extremism that outmatched other countries in the area. Under those circumstances, how can anyone rationalize a coup, except for the selfish interest of the coup makers who, incidentally, have been an integral part of the system they now claim to be against?

In the past, most Africans condemned coups; so, how concerned are you that recent coups seem to have been openly embraced by citizens who enthusiastically endorse the new military leaders?

Dr Fomunyoh: As I've stated in several of my media outings, what we see in the streets after military coups needs to be well dissected and understood in the proper context. In my opinion, citizens take to the streets more as an expression of their frustrations with the previous government and less in a holistic embrace of military rule. Highly reputable institutions such as Afrobarometer continue to highlight in their surveys that close to 70% of Africans aspire to live in democratic societies. Ultimately, the short-term excitement with coup makers dissipates over time as citizens realize that the military doesn't bring along the long term sustainable democratic governance to which they aspire. One only has to look at how the military is destroying Sudan in a useless war, or the fact that in Mali civic leaders, some of whom initially supported the coup, are being arrested for expressing their views on the ongoing transition; or that in Burkina Faso, people who criticize the junta are being forcefully conscripted and sent to the war front. Terrible deprivation of rights and freedoms and a broader sense of insecurity are happening under these regimes and will lead to citizen disaffection as these misdeeds



Dr Fomunyoh says deposed President Bazoum of Niger was full of democratic promise and it is hard to rationalize the coup that took him out.

are exposed.

How effective can the African Union and regional bodies such as ECOWAS and ECCAS be in stemming the tide, considering legitimacy issues affecting many civilian leaders of the countries represented by those organizations?

Dr Fomunyoh: The African Union and the subregional organizations have a critical role to play in making sure that their own norms and standards and constitutive acts are respected. These organizations must hold leaders accountable whether they have come to power in a coup or through elections. It is

also incumbent on these regional bodies to ensure that elections are credible and meaningful, and that leaders do not drain democracy of its value and substance. My hope is that these recent military coups will serve as a rude awakening to these organizations so they can become more effective and assertive in ensuring that citizens' voices are being heard and their aspirations met.

In the particular case of Gabon, what is your reading of the opposition leader Ondo Ossas' claim that the coup was a power play by some members of the Bongo family to hijack his

electoral victory?

Dr Fomunyoh: Without an assessment mission to Gabon, it would be difficult to determine the motivation behind the coup or the accuracy of claims by political actors. However, one must note that an election is not only what transpires on election day, it is an entire process which in the case of Gabon was already lacking in many respects. It would be imperative that the elections to be conducted by the transitional government are inclusive, transparent and credible, such that whatever results are announced can be seen as a true reflection of the wishes of the Gabonese people.

Should citizens in the Central Africa region be fearful of copycat coups after Gabon?

Dr Fomunyoh: There is considerable regime fragility in many of the Central African countries, either because of the age of leaders or their longevity in office, or even the manner in which these leaders got to power through coups of their own or flawed elections. My hope is that citizens will be able to organize themselves to bring about the change they deserve without inserting the military or violence into the equation.

What do you make of the role that some analysts attribute to Russia and / or the mercenary group Wagner in some of these coups; and do you see a risk of returning to the cold war era, with Africa at the center of competition and conflict between the West and Russia?

Dr Fomunyoh: There is no doubt that in countries such as the Central African Republic, Mali and increasingly Burkina Faso, Russia has made inroads by providing security assistance and subsequently influencing political and governance processes. Even then, my feeling is that as disruptive as these interventions by Russia and Wagner may be, Africans will be able to decipher for themselves where their best interests lie. I am often reminded that of the 55 African countries,



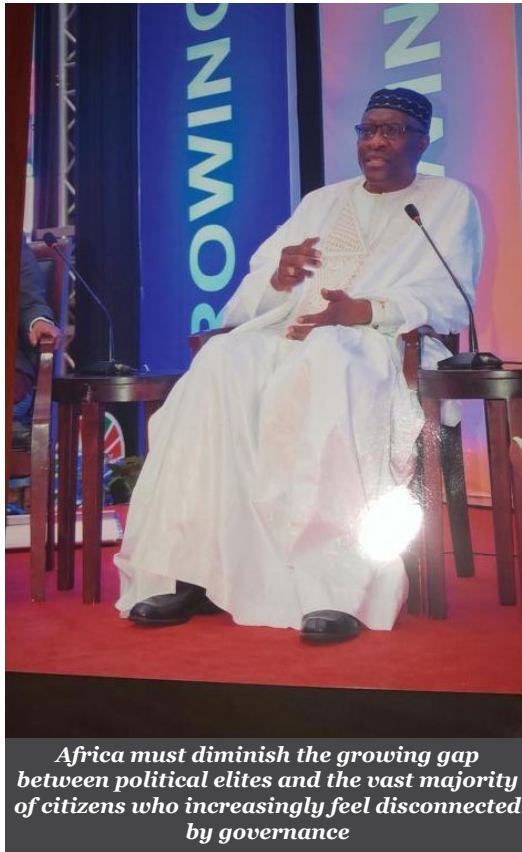
Dr Fomunyoh here with an NDI delegation and former President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria remains bullish on advancing democracy .

none has demonstrated tangible economic or political progress because of its implementation of the Russian model of governance. I should add that today's world is a global village, and the superpower rivalries and competition that you refer to are being felt not just in Africa, but also in Asia, Eurasia, Latin America and other parts of the world.

Given your expertise and years of experience with democratization efforts across Africa, what measures should be taken by African countries to reverse the trend of military coups?

Dr Fomunyoh: First and foremost, I salute the professionalism of the overwhelming majority of African militaries who remain apolitical and focused on their primary constitutional roles and responsibilities. We must acknowledge them, even as we must call on African leaders to create avenues to listen to their fellow citizens. We must diminish the growing gap between political elites and the vast majority of citizens who increasingly feel disconnected by governance and disaffected by decisions made by their governments. Additionally, it is critical to create opportunities for the African youth to feel included and to have a voice and a seat at the table of decision making. If proper avenues are created for substantive citizen engagement, mutual respect and healthy communication, that the talent, creativity, energy and knowhow that young Africans possess would be properly channeled to improve the wellbeing of all citizens. That ought to be the vision of every one of our leaders on the continent.

In Cameroon, it's been four years since the major national dialogue that was supposed



Africa must diminish the growing gap between political elites and the vast majority of citizens who increasingly feel disconnected by governance

to bring an end to the ongoing armed conflict in the North West and South West regions of the country. Have you seen tangible progress in resolving the crisis in the English-speaking regions as a result of that forum?

Dr Fomunyoh: Judging from the level of violence and economic disruption this first half of September, I feel, and many Cameroonians would say that the conflict is still burning, which means that whatever that took place in Yaoundé four years ago hasn't had the anticipated impact. As I've said since 2017, the 'Anglophone conflict' in Cameroon will only be resolved by genuine third party mediated dialogue that addresses not just the horrible deaths and destruction of the past seven years, but also the root causes of the grievances of the Anglophone population. That explains why there was a burst of hope and optimism when Canada announced in 2022, its willingness to host talks that could have helped bring an end to the conflict. To have sustainable peace for the duration and curb further alienation of the population in these

regions, these grievances that are well known would have to be comprehensively addressed.

In the current Cameroon context, what options would you propose as a permanent way out of this 'Anglophone crisis or conflict?'

Dr Fomunyoh: To provide proper context, grievances over Anglophone marginalization existed prior to 2017; and then came the armed conflict that has led to thousands of deaths, approximately a million internally displaced, tens of thousands of refugees, tremendous destruction of property, dislocation of lives and cultures, and a significant population disaffection with the state. It therefore means that a

to the way in which Cameroon is governed. That would entail, at a minimum, significant constitutional changes and a dramatic shift from the way in which the state engages with citizens, so that citizens can feel empowered, and their dignity restored.

Presidential elections are due in Cameroon in 2025, how would you describe the ideal profile of the next President of Cameroon?

Dr Fomunyoh: Well, keep in mind that in Cameroon as in any other country, elections are not just a one-day event but a process that entails creating the right environment for healthy political and citizen engagement, having a legal framework that guarantees transparent and inclusive elections, and creating a level playing field for candidates and political parties to interface with citizens who can then make informed decisions about those they elect. From the background we just discussed, it invariably goes without saying that the next leader

holistic approach to the resolution of the crisis will require, at a minimum, fundamental, structural changes



Grain for Africa Ambassador Chris Fomunyoh was recently in Mombasa, Kenya as part of a high-profile team that received a ship carrying 30,000 metric tons from Ukraine.

of Cameroon has to be someone capable of reconciling citizens among themselves, and then mending their relationship with the state. Someone who can speak to the grievances of Anglophones and the millions of other Cameroonians that have been burned and so aggrieved by the 41 years of the Biya regime; and who has the wherewithal to galvanize a renewed sense of belonging and pride in the country, both domestically and on the international scene. Two years is a lifetime in politics, and a lot can

still happen between now and 2025.

Back on the international scene, not much has been heard of the #GrainFromUkraine initiative for which you are a Goodwill ambassador alongside former President Joyce Banda of Malawi, former Minister Oby Ezekwesili of Nigeria, and former Foreign Minister Mohammed of Somalia: is it still ongoing, and has it had the intended impact?

Dr Fomunyoh: The #GrainFromUkraine initiative functioned extremely well during the first half of 2023, as countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen were beneficiaries of shipments which helped alleviate their vulnerability to food insecurity. You may be aware that the United Nations has declared food security a priority of the times, and the UK will be hosting a high-profile conference on that this November. Of course, the #GFU initiative has slowed down since

Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea agreement at the end of July, and the bombing of Odessa port and hundreds of thousands of tonnes of stocked grain. As we speak, there are efforts underway to find alternative 'solidarity' routes that can still allow vulnerable countries in the Global South to benefit from this initiative. It is my understanding that Nigeria and Sudan may soon be beneficiaries of shipments from Ukraine, and for which, as an African, I am thankful.

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From South Africa With Gains For BRICS

By Prince Kurupati

South Africa successfully hosted the BRICS Summit towards the end of August 2023. All heads of state of the bloc's founding members except for Russia were in attendance. These include Chinese President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Cyril Ramaphosa, the president of the host country and the first country to join BRICS after its formation was also in attendance. Standing in for the Russian president was the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Russian President Vladimir Putin decided not to attend so as not to put South Africa in a diplomatic dilemma. This follows the issuing of an international warrant of arrest which meant South Africa was bound to arrest him if he attended the Summit.

On the agenda at the start of the Summit was the issue of de-dollarization. The bloc's founding members all attended the Summit looking to find consensus on how they can promote between and among themselves using their local currencies for transactions. Muted as the best way forward by some analysts in the lead-up to the Summit was the creation of a 'joint currency' for trade purposes.

In his virtual address, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized his desire to ditch the dollar saying that the de-dollarization process is "irreversible" and "gaining pace". President Putin is spearheading the de-dollarization process as he believes that using local currencies will boost trade between the BRICS nations while at the same time keeping the U.S. at arms' length when it comes to overseeing international transactions.

Putin's desire to ditch the U.S. dollar as the currency of choice for international trade and transactions has been solidified more by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war according to Shirley Ze Yu, a senior visiting fellow at the London School of



Stronger relations with other countries, manifested through investment and trade relations can grow our economy, create more opportunities, says President Ramaphosa. Photo SA Presidency.

Economics. She said that Moscow is still pained by the West's decision to freeze nearly half of Russia's foreign currency reserves in early 2022 and as such, it is looking for measures to circumvent such actions in future.

"As the U.S. weaponizes the dollar in the Russian and Iran sanctions, there is increasing desire by other developing countries to seek alternative currencies for trade, investment, and reserves as well as developing alternative multilateral clearance systems outside of SWIFT," Shirley Ze Yu said.

The adoption of local currencies for trade would be beneficial immensely for countries like South Africa and other African nations that are set to join the BRICS bloc according to Shirley Ze Yu. This is largely necessitated by the fact that the use of such currencies would drastically reduce exorbitant interests. She said that the use of the U.S. dollar as the reserve currency for trade has severely crippled nations as they end up "paying higher interests on their dollar debt and battling the exchange rate impact from a strong dollar".

The Brazilian president also added

his voice to the de-dollarization discussion saying that the over-reliance on the U.S. has the potential to cripple trade in the Global South. He said that the U.S. dollar can be utilised for political purposes and as such, those who use it will have no power to override such actions. A great alternative to this and possibly a long-lasting solution will be to use local currencies for trade.

At the Summit, the bloc's founding members also had to review applications from 26 countries that expressed interest in joining the bloc. Of the 26, only six applications were successful, and these are from Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The six countries were invited to join as full members from 1 January 2024.

Pleased with the expansion of the group was South African President Cyril Ramaphosa who said that this opens new and more avenues of trade and investments. "Through stronger relations with other countries, manifested through investment and trade relations, we can grow our economy, create more opportunities

for new businesses and create jobs," President Ramaphosa said.

Though not admitted to the main bloc, Algeria expressed an interest in becoming a shareholder member of the BRICS New Development Bank. Following massive pressure from the West to stop buying arms from Moscow, Algeria is hoping that by joining the BRICS New Development Bank, it will secure sovereign trade interests with Beijing and Moscow.

The BRICS New Development Bank has already proved its worth on the African continent as it funded infrastructure projects in South Africa to the value of 100 billion rand. Egypt which joined the New Development Bank in February this year managed to ease its shortage of the greenback by getting concessions to pay for imports from India, China and Russia in their local currencies instead of the U.S. dollar according to Egyptian Supply Minister Ali Moselhy. The BRICS New Development Bank has given itself a target of reaching 30 per cent of lending in local currencies by 2026.

As joining the BRICS New Development Bank is not tied with

being a member of the BRICS bloc, many African nations are expected to join the Bank in the near future hence they too, can benefit from the concessions to trade in local currency when trading with BRICS members.

At the closing of the Summit, BRICS member states agreed to work in unison as a bloc in calling for more global recognition. The Institute for Security Studies states that BRICS countries account for over 40% of the world's population but have less than 15% of the voting rights in the two main international financial institutions – the IMF and World Bank. Working in unison as a bloc, BRICS countries can therefore lobby and push to get more power and voting rights not just in the international financial institutions but in other groupings such as the UN Security Council where Africa has for long lobbied to get a permanent seat or two.



The absence of Russian President Putin did not dampen the popular fervor and show of bravado at the BRICS Summit. Photo courtesy.



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How The BRICS Alliance Challenges The Old Order- Lawrence Freeman

By Zekarias Woldemariam*

For almost three decades, Laurence Freeman, an American Political Economic analyst for Africa has been voicing critically against the west's approach towards its economic relation with the developing world especially Africa. After creating his website entitled www.laurencefreemanfricaandtheworld.com, he has been lobbying for economic interventions that liberate Africa from poverty and has been suggesting ways that African policy makers should adopt in order to sustainably address the economic problems of Africa. During his latest interview with The Ethiopian Herald in connection with the BRICS summit in South Africa, he said that he is happy to see one of his dreams, for which he fought for about a generation, has come true. Enjoy reading the detail!

How do you see the course that BRICS has passed through so far?

The BRICS now has already emerged and is now accelerating its institution as an alternative to the western view of the world, and the Western political economic system that gives now called a new rules based international order. And that unipolar Western domination is now ending. And the BRICS is a very strong, emerging alternative. And as you know, an additional six countries have been invited to join the BRICS beginning 1st of January 2024. And of those six countries, Ethiopia is one of those countries, and Egypt is another. And therefore, out of the 11 nations, that will be BRICS members three of them will now be from Africa. So, this is very good news for Ethiopia, for Africa, and for the World Development.

Two more African countries are now invited to join BRICS. How do you see the representation



The addition of Ethiopia with over 115 million people, and Egypt with over 105 million people strengthens Africa's hand in BRICS, says Lawrence Freeman. Photo credit Twitter.

of Africa in the bloc?

What is clear now is the addition of Ethiopia, which is over 115 million people, and Egypt, which is over 105 million people. You've now two very important countries added to the bloc, the second and third most populous countries of the African nations, and together with the existing member of South Africa.

So this is a very powerful representation, because these countries represent very significant pillars of the African continent.

Now, Ethiopia has been a leading nation in terms of driving economic development, not only in the country of Ethiopia, but really implicitly for the whole continent. Because of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which is going to produce 5,150 megawatts within two years. This dam will also lead to a great development in the Horn of Africa,

East Africa, and Nile Basin nations.

Egypt has also been expanding its economy. It's building nuclear power plants. It has built industrial complexes along the Nile River. And so these two additions, plus South Africa, which is the most industrialized nation on the continent, these three represent a very significant force for change and economic development in Africa. And the BRICS now has made it clear that they're going to build the New Development Bank (NDB), which was set up after the BRICS; the NDB is going to be increasing its lending and 30% of its new lending will be in local currencies. So what we're seeing is the domination of the dollar and the domination of the rules based order are now being said really weakened.

And we're already in or approaching to the post unipolar

Western dominated world. And BRICS is going to be one of the most central institutions in making those kinds of dynamic changes for world economic development. And of course, for Africa, with the level of poverty that exists on the continent, this could be a game changer.

Do you think there will be a confrontation with other contending blocs now that BRICS is expanding by more than double?

There is the danger of the West, taking measures against the BRICS, they have been organizing against the BRICS consistently. In fact, I found it very revealing that even days before the BRICS summit, which was the 22nd 23rd, and today to 24th, the whole western establishment in Western media was talking about how unimportant the BRICS summit

was, and how it was much to do about nothing. And of course, they were just expressing their fear. Because if you ask China and other countries, they will tell you that they need oil. But they're not just taking oil, they are building infrastructure and expanding the markets.

And the West has basically lost a level of its thinking capability, because rather than adjusting itself to these new developments; they're trying to maintain the old developments. If, these BRICS countries, that are now growing to 11 increase the trade among themselves, if they're increasing the investment among themselves, if they are building important infrastructure, manufacturing capabilities, and expand their markets, that each one of them can be selling to the other then it is given that the thing is going to be more and more dominated outside of the dollar, it's going to be conducted in local currencies. So, if the West, my United States, was more intelligent, we would be oriented toward also being part of the changes but the geopolitical mindset have always been on top and is in control, and the hegemony is preventing the west from thinking clearly.

The BRICS is a reality; just like the Belt and Road Initiative is a reality. It's not going to be put back in the bottle, as we say. And it's a potential for real growth, and energy for infrastructure and energy for manufacturing development projects.

It would be beneficial to all the countries involved, and the sooner the West, and the Secretary of State Blinken and President Biden and others wake up to this new reality, the better the world would be. We are facing a dangerous situation in Niger, West Africa, which I know well, is a sign of the same dynamic that you're having. West African countries are rejecting colonialism; the French control over their economy, and are also rejecting military intervention. The coups are driven by the fact that the country is poor. One has to know the fact that there is only 3% of the Niger population accessing



Development is the most important aspect of Africa's relationships with the BRICS, says Lawrence Freeman..Photo courtesy.

electricity. Less than 50% of the African continent has electricity access. Development is the most important aspect of the relationships with the BRICS. And the West does not or refuses to understand this vivid fact.

How should African countries work in collaboration with BRICS as an alternative source of finance, market?

One good thing is, they're now going to be capable of having access to loans from the BRICS New Development Bank, and the NDB set up in 2015. So now this NDB is going to increase its loan portfolio. And it means that these countries may have an opportunity to get these loans. Now, these loans do not contain the conditionality that the IMF and World Bank attaches with. And the mindset of the BRICS, Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, is the global south has to be developed.

The BRICS has already represented about a third of the GDP worldwide, about 40% of the global population. So, both those figures are going to increase. So, the reality is that the African nations are joining a new dynamic in a world that is going to offer them with the new opportunities. Don't forget, Africa is suffering; people are dying every day, because of a lack of electricity, and a lack of manufacturing capability. Those two things had been denied to the nation's economies of Africa, this now gives an opportunity to change. But the West has never wanted to see

this kind of economic development, in manufacturing, in particular, and electricity. Those two things are addressed along with a plan for high speed integrated rail, which I've also written about it on my website, those things will change or transform the African continent, and this is the way to eliminate poverty.

And if you eliminate poverty, you can eliminate instability. The reason is a lack of security in many countries, especially on the Sahel is because there's no development, because people live like beasts, forced to live that way without the basic qualities of life. And so if you transform that, you can transform the entire political economic security situation. So, Egypt is all the way up in the north of the continent. It has an effect on the whole Sahel region. Ethiopia is right there in the center of East Africa, is the largest economy in East Africa. This could obviously affect a number of countries, Kenya, Djibouti and Sudan. And then you have South Africa in the very tip in the south. And if we expand the relationships, if we build the high speed railroads, if we expand the electricity, if we build manufacturing centers, we can see a whole different Africa.

Now, the BRICS, can't do that overnight. But as they expand their lending capability, and also complementary is the Belt and Road Initiative, over a period of time, we can see a significant change in the lives of Africans and that their material standard of living. So now,

three of the 11 nations of the BRICS are African nations, because that's already a very sizable bloc within the BRICS itself. So I'm very optimistic about the potential and I'm very happy and excited for Ethiopia, because Ethiopia, if it gets this kind of new economic relations with the BRICS, then more of the desire and potential of Ethiopian economy can be realized, which is what I've been advocating for over 10 years.

What kind of challenge do you expect for the newly invited countries in the course of joining BRICS?

They will become official members of BRICS in about four months. And what we need to do for Ethiopia, especially all the countries involved in Africa, is long term low interest. What I mean is 2% to 3% long term interest rates on 15 year loans, government backed loans, or government supported loans for infrastructure. We need to be building an additional 1000 gigawatts of power on the continent. We need to have a high speed rail system that connects every port, every major city, every major industrial center, and every major agricultural center, connects the continent so that we can do the merger of Africa. Failing to have this infrastructure and have this manufacturing capability is the biggest weakness which is observable now. And only 13% to 15% of trade from African countries is among African countries, they're exporting 85%. The African countries are importing 40 billion and plus dollars' worth food commodities. The fact is that there is no reason for Africa to become self-sufficient in food. But Africa also needs the infrastructure, and it needs manufacturing.

So there's a lot of potential, how aggressively would the BRICS proceed, I don't know. But if they're going to proceed as aggressively as possible, in effect, Africa can become a different place. All in all, the changes that are going on in West

Africa are really part of the same process. The rules based order is no longer, hegemonic. The world is not unipolar. And therefore, that gives us potential for transformational change in Africa.

How do you think developing countries including Africa maintain their ties with the west in the middle of the possible rift that could happen between BRICS and the other blocs?

I suggest African countries have to understand this. There is no reason and there's no benefit to attacking the West, head on. What these countries will be doing is that they will maintain their relations with the West. But they will not be forced to submit to the conditionalities of the West. And they want to drive out the last vestiges of colonialism. So, you have the French controlling 14 countries' economies in Francophone Africa to a new form of colonialism. We have 1500 French troops in Niger, we have 1200 American troops. We have six bases in just Niger alone, that we've helped build. We've spent billions and billions of dollars on the so called counterterrorism.

What we now have to do is we have to spend billions and billions of dollars on development. So the African countries will say, we are open to working with everybody.

We will work with the West, we will work with the Global South. But we're going to only work in ways that build our nations.

You had a very interesting statement from Naledi Pandor, who is the equivalent of foreign minister of South Africa last month when she met with her counterpart from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, [Christophe Lutundula]. And she said do not accept any investment that does not include manufacturing in your own country, and I agree with her 110%, then there should not be. The African nations now also have to expand their energy. And that means they should burn and use their natural resources. That means



Laurence Freeman backs calls by South African International Relations and Cooperation Minister Naledi Pandor for African countries to prioritize investment that also boosts local production.

coal; that means oil; that means gas; that means hydro. And it means expanding nuclear energy, with the help of Russia, China and India will help in this regard. And they have to be and they're not going to accept the dictates of the bank, the Western banking system that says, No, we're not going to lend you money, unless you stop burning fossil fuels. And the African countries have said clearly, we are going to go ahead and burn our fossil fuel because we need energy to keep our people have a fulfilling life. So I don't think the Asian countries in general are not going to be confrontational, but they no longer have to submit to the dictates of the rules based order.

What do you think the countries of the west should do to maintain their relations with BRICS and developing countries?

This is a very interesting question I've been writing and speaking about this. The problem that the West has, take the United States, for example, is that it is dominated by a geo political ideology. And this ideology says that the world is fixed, doesn't grow. And therefore, the only way for superpowers to exist, they have to

be on top, they have to be in control, called the zero sum game, everything has to add up to zero. So if I'm on top, you're going to be on the bottom. If I am on the bottom, then you're going to be on top. And this mentality is completely destructive. Now that mentality, that ideology, which is perverse, in my view, is under attack, because the reality of the universe we live in, has changed as you and I have been discussing.

So now, the world as a result of this BRICS summit and the changes in the BRICS configuration is a new factor in reality. It cannot be changed back in the west now, either they have to become aware of that and reflect on your policies and change their policies to pro development policies for these emerging markets, or the West will be left out of it or gets to military confrontation. So , can the West adjust? Can the West, think? Can people like the Secretary of State Blinken and Biden, think and reflect that the policy they've been advocating has failed? I don't know if they're going to do that. But that's what they have to do. If they want to remain relevant in the world, and not push the world to military confrontations or impossible nuclear wars we're seeing with Ukraine and

Russia, whether they will actually have the ability to rethink and understand the errors of the ways is a very interesting question are going to see over the next several months, but the reality has changed, and that fact, can no longer be denied as much as the media would like to.

Now the 11 nations in the BRICS are representing larger and larger portions of the world economy in the world's population, a large percentage of those almost 30% now of African nations, this represents a new reality. This represents a new dynamic. As we speak, the world has already changed. So now we have a new potential. And it is up to leaders of these African nations, and leaders of the BRICS, and leaders of other global south nations, to make these new realities, new potentials come about to realize that and to organize them around a new paradigm of economic order for development. And that is something very exciting. Something I've been fighting for 30 years, and I'm very happy to see the progress we're making. And the reality has now changed as of today.

Thank you very much for your time!
You're most welcome!

*Courtesy Of The Ethiopian Herald



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The Hunger Crisis: Over 4 Million Malawians At Hunger Risk experts blame situation on poor political and administration plans

By Joseph Dumbula, Blantyre Malawi.

For Peterson Bande, who heads a household of five, it is a sad Tuesday morning as there is just no maize in state-owned trading spaces where the grain has become so scarce to find in Malawi's commercial capital Blantyre.

As he narrates, he must instead fetch the product as offered by commercial vendors most of whom are selling the maize at relatively high prices perhaps in reaction to the market forces in play.

"If we go for the vendors, it means we must have to cough out more than what we would have if Admarc was operational. But, my family is waiting for me as our farm was washed away by floods after Cyclone Freddy. We just want the government to open the Admarc depots because we are facing hunger here," he says.

Bande insists that two of his children are already complaining of 'missing nsima' which is the staple food in Malawi made out of a thick porridge from maize flour taken along with fish, beans, or meat.

There are already over four million people earmarked to face hunger given the climatic changes and a rise in the cost of living.

It has emerged that over four million Malawians which represents 21 percent of the entire population will face hunger this year, a situation that commentators align to poorly implemented policies and subsidy programs.

This follows a report by the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) annual food security assessment which shows that the current projection represents a 15 percent increase compared to the previous consumption period last year when 3.9 million people faced hunger.

The situation coincides with a rise in the cost of living and a messy Affordable Input Program that targets rural farmers. As if that is not enough, grain trader Admarc has not hard



Malawi farmer. Credit. Orant Charities Africa.

just enough as more farmers had not harvested enough given the Cyclone Freddy.

"There is a 15 percent increase of those requiring food as compared to a similar number in 2022, which was at 3.9 million. Out of the 2023-24 food insecure people, 470,000 are from the four cities, and 3.9 million are in rural areas across the country. The number of [the] affected population in rural areas has increased by 23 percent from 3.1 million in the 2022-23 consumption year while urban areas have registered a decline by 25 percent from 627,571 people," the statement reads.

In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture's final Crop Production Estimates Survey indicates that

maize production only decreased by 5.6 percent in the 2022-23 farming season, from 3.7mt to 3.5 million mt.

Ostensibly although the report lobbies for strict measures to deal with the situation, there has been what is being described as dismal interest by parliament.

In the 2023/24 national budget, Parliament had allocated 12 Billion Malawi Kwacha (11 Million US Dollars) for maize purchases and 4 Billion Malawi Kwacha (3 Million US Dollars) for recapitalization.

But, social commentator Wonderful Mkhutche believes it remains questionable that the country continues to have as many programs as possible when hunger continues to hit the nation.



Admarc has not been operating as expected.

"The country's public projects management system is approached through the political lens. The idea is not to maximize political visibility and win the next election. This has derailed governments and years come and go without a real sense of direction and gains for the country despite huge investments in public projects," he tells Pan African Visions from Lilongwe.

He adds: "The irony is unfortunate and striking. The households that are benefiting from subsidies are the ones facing hunger. Subsidies have for a long time been used for political ends. Farm inputs are now expensive and this is used by politicians to woo votes through the provision of these subsidies. However, what exactly do we plan to benefit when we are targeting people who cannot produce enough for this country for the subsidies?"

So far, the matters have led to concerns among buyers as John Kapito, Executive Director of the Consumers Association of Malawi, an influential consumer rights body government now needs to review and intervene on current prices which will continue to hurt consumers before the lean period where prices will be uncontrollable.

However, Malawi government spokesperson Moses Kunkuyu insists the government will continue to provide affordable farm inputs to poor households that have land and capacity to cultivate.

"The government will also remain with other social cash transfer and public works programs to ensure that poor households are assisted," Kunkuyu said.

But, Mkhutche casts doubt in the faith that most of the efforts have been too political in recent years.

"The issue of hunger is being downplayed for political reasons. But the truth is that most Malawians do not have enough food, and food is becoming expensive. Parliament



We cannot let our people die, says Moses Kunkuyu.

should not only be discussing this situation but also suggest new ways of achieving food security. Unfortunately, this did not have prominence when Parliament was meeting and it simply tells one thing; lack of political priorities,' he said.

As it stands, the writing appears on the wall that, what is needed now for Bande and over four million others remain just the food and nothing else.

Mkhutche however argues

now Malawians must demand from their leaders because most of the resources are tax payer's money which implies particular outrage if not well administered.'

"We have platforms that we can use to change our country. Let us pressure our leaders to act responsibly and decisively. If they choose not to, let us protest or vote them out. We need to know that our leaders reflect on ourselves. They cannot afford to do less when we are demanding more," said Mkhutche.

Nairobi Declaration on climate elicits mixed reactions.

By Jean Pierre Afadhali

The long-awaited Nairobi Declaration adopted by African leaders at the inaugural Africa Climate Summit has elicited mixed reactions among the climate action community, with some calling it an historic attempt to give the continent a common voice in global climate talks and others calling it a missed opportunity.

Ahead of Cop 28, the United Nations Conference on Climate that will take place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) African heads of state, environment ministers, Civil Society organisations, climate justice activists, and business people gathered in Nairobi, Kenya from 4-6 September. The first Africa Climate summit discussed climate action finance, green growth and adopted the declaration that will guide Africa in Cop 28 and other climate talks.

The Nairobi declaration unanimously adopted by dozens of heads of state outlines the continent's asks and proposals for the climate crisis. The declaration calls to action on several global climate issues that include emissions reduction and proposes solutions. It also reminds the global community to honor pledges made in the past such as the \$ 100 billion annual climate finance



President William Ruto, accompanied by heads of state and chairperson of African Union Moussa Faki, announces the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration at Kenyatta International Conference Centre.

promised 14 years ago and a swift operationalization of the loss and damage facility agreed at COP 27.

"We call on the global community to act with urgency in reducing emissions, fulfilling its obligations, keeping past promises and supporting in addressing climate change," read part of the Nairobi declaration seen by Pan African Visions.

Furthermore, African leaders have proposed a global carbon taxation regime that includes a carbon tax on fossil fuels trade, maritime transport, and aviation.

Kenya's President William Ruto, the Chairman of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), said the Nairobi Declaration "firmly renews

our commitment to global climate action and sustainable development, infusing it with a distinctive African character."

While the declaration gives Africa a more unified position in climate change matters, it has received mixed reactions. Stakeholders have lauded the first African climate summit saying it was historic and

an opportunity to deal with climate change's impact on the continent and the world.

"Let us go into COP 28 knowing what we have to get out," said Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention, the UN body that organizes the annual Conference of parties.

A section of grassroots climate activists held a parallel summit called "Africa's People Climate Assembly" to highlight "the disregard of the interests and voices of the African people and to provide an alternative space to share experiences and provide solutions for real climate action."

The coalition of 500 Civil Society Organisations (CSO) said in a statement that the Declaration insists that Africa has a chance to be part of the solution with its renewable energy potential yet African Civil Society has known this and has been demanding a 100% renewable future for Africa.

The CSO added Africa has been and is currently still being used as an extraction hub for gas and other fossils to close energy gaps in the Global North. "The Declaration also mentions biodiversity hotspots, but these areas are not being spared in the quest for more oil and gas by the fossil fuel industry."

Africa's commitments

The declaration points out Africa's position on climate change's climate financing, solutions to climate change, and how Africa plans to tackle climate issues as guided by the themes of the Africa Climate Summit, stated Africa Climate Summit on its X page shortly after the Declaration was adopted.

According to the declaration Africa has committed to developing and implementing policies, regulations, and incentives aimed at attracting, regional, and global investment in green growth and inclusive economies.

Additionally, the continent's



Delegates on the last day of Africa the Climate Summit at Kenyatta International Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. Photo Courtesy.

leaders have committed among others to propelling Africa's economic growth and job creation in manners that not only limit "our own emissions but also aid global decarbonisation efforts, by leapfrogging traditional

industrial development and fostering green production and supply chains on a global scale."

According to data released by statistica.com, a global data and intelligence platform in June 2023

Africa accounted 3.9 percent of the world's emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil fuels and industry in 2021. The continent is said to be the least emitter of global greenhouse gas emissions but the most vulnerable continent to the impact of extreme weather events.

Fossil fuels industry's controversy

Heads of state call on the global community in the declaration to uphold commitments to a "fair and accelerated process of phasing down coal, and abolishment of all fossil fuel subsidies."

Fossil fuels are some of the most common

pollutants responsible for increased global heat and divide opinions on steps to end them amid the call for renewable energy use. Climate activists have called for a complete phase-out of fossil energy and said they have been disappointed by the Nairobi Declaration.

CSOs further stated in a press release: "Suggestions of solutions mean little without any mention of phasing out ALL fossil fuels, not just coal. Any solution that allows business as usual from the fossil fuel industry and that emphasizes clean-up instead of closing sources of dirty energy is bound to fail and cause even more havoc on the environment and communities."

Fossil fuels are one of the contentious issues in climate justice amid the increasing exploration of oil and gas on the continent. Audrey Lenga, a young Cameroon activist said on X "My message to African leaders during Africa Climate Summit is simple: just transition is no longer an adoption, we cannot keep the same climate unfriendly policies in Africa. Saving the environment is a must, it's time to ban fossil fuel."

Despite the participation of some of Africa's global partners in finance and climate change, critics have said a "few" numbers of heads of state attended the summit and adopted the Nairobi declaration that is now the continent's voice. Seventeen heads of state attended the Summit.

At Africa Climate Summit various groups submitted their proposals to African leaders to tackle climate change. They include children, women, youth, religious groups, indigenous groups, civil society organizations and parliamentarians.

However, on the sideline of the summit, CSO groups held a march for climate justice saying it was a response to the summit agenda that did not represent the people's interest, and launched what they called "People's Declaration" to counter the official Declaration of the summit.

The Africa Climate Summit will be held in an African Union member state after every two years.



Climate Justice activists march on the sidelines of the Africa Climate Summit. Photo Courtesy.



African Energy
Week 2023

Speaker



Prof. Benedict Oramah

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African Energy Chamber

Liberia: A Focus On Improving Democracy For The Amos Sawyer Foundation

By Prince Kurupati

With crucial elections drawing closer in Liberia, the Amos Sawyer Foundation is hard at work with strategies, plans and programs that will enhance and strengthen democracy in the West African Nation. The nascent Foundation, created and named in honor of the seminal legacy of late President Amos Sawyer is working on a series of events and activities in Liberia and in Washington, DC, to beam the spotlight on democracy at work. In a Q & A with PAV, Frantz Sawyer Founder and Executive Director of the Foundation sheds light on its vision, the legacy of President Amos Sawyer, events coming up, perspectives on the upcoming elections in Liberia, developments across West Africa, and more.

May we start with an introduction of the Sawyer Foundation?

Frantz Sawyer: The AMOS CLAUDIUS SAWYER FOUNDATION is an independent and non-partisan Foundation incorporated in honor of my father Professor. Amos Claudius Sawyer, the former president of the Republic of Liberia. The foundation honors the legacy of Dr. Amos Claudius Sawyer by addressing the multiple issues of Democratic Governance, Rule of Law, and Peace building; the issues he spent his life promoting in Liberia and the West African sub region of Africa.

How long has the Foundation been in existence and any significant projects it has worked on or events?

Frantz Sawyer: The Foundation was registered in Liberia on July 2022 and in Chevy Chase, MD, on Jan 2023. Since its inception the Amos Claudius Sawyer Foundation has embarked on two low hanging fruits projects: Civic Education



The Foundation will be sponsoring the Presidential and Vice-Presidential debates in Liberia, says Founder and CEO Frantz Sawyer.

as it relates to voting and voting registration. We have partnered up with a few local NGO and first-time voters' groups to carry on educating citizens in the top populace counties, Lofa, Montserrado, Nimba, Bassa and Margibi on the voting and voting registration process and also to educate the citizens on what to look for in candidates that are seeking political offices.

Lastly the foundation will be sponsoring the Presidential and Vice-Presidential debates in Liberia.

How do you situate the vision and work of the foundation

in the context of present-day Liberia?

Frantz Sawyer: The Foundation will host an in-house think tank. The think tank will be established to conduct research to generate primary data and knowledge on critical governance issues in its immediate constituency (being Liberia) at a first instance, West Africa and Africa. This will be aimed at addressing the massive knowledge gap in policy making in Liberia (and the continent as a whole) as well as ensuring that all of the Foundation's priorities, programmes, projects and engagements are informed by evidence regarding

the instance of pertinence. We will analyze governance and public policy issues with aspirations of policy relevance and academic excellence. To this end, the Foundation will partner with leading organizations and institutions (universities, research institutions, other think tanks, development agencies, etc.) The Foundation's research will be informed by questions on the analytical and normative issues that practitioners in governance and public policy face. Building bridges between academia, political leaders, business, and civil society requires effective communication.

Working separately or in collaboration with governmental, non-governmental, bilateral, multilateral, political, non-political and other entities, the Foundation will vigorously pursue avenues for the establishment of strategic partnerships and the strengthening of existing ones to develop practical operating frameworks for successfully carrying out the multiple programmes, projects and other activities aimed at promoting the principles of Good Governance, Local/National/Regional/Continental Peace, and Security across all landscapes;

The Sawyer Foundation will offer policy advisories to the Liberian government, other actors in the public governance space of Liberia (governmental, non-governmental, private, etc.) This will be informed by its research as well as knowledge generated through its partnership with other stakeholders. These advisories will be in form of policy briefs, media engagement and dissemination activities.

For those who do not know President Amos Sawyer, do want to talk a little about the man and his legacy in Liberia?

Frantz Sawyer: Professor Amos C. Sawyer my father was a Liberian

citizen who worked tirelessly for peace and the establishment of democratic governance in his home country Liberia as well as for the establishment and strengthening of institutions and processes of democratic governance and development in Africa. He has a distinguished record of public service in Liberia and Africa and an impressive record of academic achievements.

After the military takeover in Liberia in 1980, he was called upon to head the National Constitution Commission to draft a new constitution for Liberia, as a major part of the transition to civilian rule. In 1990, when Liberia was engulfed in civil war, he was called upon to serve as President of the Interim Government of National Unity and tasked with the responsibility of leading the search for peace among Liberians. Since Liberia's return to constitutional rule, following the holding of democratic elections in 2005, Professor Sawyer was active in the efforts to ensure that Liberia's institutions and processes of governance are more accountable, participatory, efficient and effective, meeting standards of good governance. At the request of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, he took up the position of Chairman of the Governance Reform Commission of Liberia (now Governance Commission of Liberia), the body charged with the responsibility of crafting reform policies and implementation strategies for sustaining peace advancing reconciliation and attaining good governance in post-conflict Liberia. He also served as Lead Convener of the Zero Hunger Initiative designed to advance Liberia's achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on eliminating hunger.

It was under my father's leadership at the Governance Commission that the Commission played the lead role in crafting Code of Conduct for public and civil servants, establishing the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Policy on Decentralization



Prof Amos C. Sawyer worked tirelessly for peace and the establishment of democratic governance in his home country Liberia, and Africa.

and Local Government, the Land Reform Commission, the National Vision Exercise and the roadmap for managing the 2017 post-elections political transition, among other deliverables.

On the African continent, Professor Sawyer is well known for his work in promotion of democratic governance and socio-economic development through regional integration. He has led numerous missions on peacebuilding and elections observation and has been deeply involved in the strengthening of civil society and the building of African capacity to sustain institutions and processes of democratic governance. He served as Chairman of the Panel of Eminent Persons of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), an affiliate of NEPAD, after serving as a Member of the Panel for two years. Members of the Panel have the responsibility of leading technical missions to review the performance of APRM member-countries in critical areas of political, economic and social governance. He also served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS).

Considering the contributions of President Amos Sawyer in getting Liberia out of a complicated moment in its history, may we know the

recognition if any that he received from successive Liberian administrations?

Frantz Sawyer: Since retiring from the Governance Commission in January 2018, Professor Sawyer has been engaged in the area of citizenship education in Liberia, maintaining that the nurturing of citizens who are informed and efficacious is indispensable to sustaining peace and democratic governance. A set of citizenship education textbooks for use in Liberian schools is being completed under his aegis. He has also been participating in high-level discourses on deepening democratic governance in Botswana, The Gambia, Nigeria and Liberia.

Professor Sawyer has been thrice decorated by his country. In 2011 he was accorded Liberia's highest distinction, the Grand Cordon of the Knighthood of the Most Venerable Order of the Pioneers. He is the recipient of the 2011 Gusi Peace Prize. In 2015, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters (Honoris Causa) by the University of Liberia, and in 2017 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters (Honoris Causa) by Indiana University.

Elections are due in the next couple of months, are there any contributions the Sawyer Foundation is making towards

the success of the process?

Frantz Sawyer: Beside the civic education/voting education project, Presidential and Vice-Presidential pending debate projects the foundation will be hosting a series of Fireside chat with Presidential Candidates in the Washington DC area in collaboration with Hudson Institute and USC Election Cyber Security Initiative on the upcoming elections. The foundation will also in collaboration with MOE be training election monitors and observers.

From the last election cycles that we have seen, where have you seen progress and what areas need improvement?

Frantz Sawyer: There's always need for capacity building training for the various CSO, NEC (National Election Commission) in terms of voting and monitoring/observing the electoral process. There's dire need for funding the second-round election that's on the horizon.

All in all, there's excitement in the air of a peaceful election thanks to the international partners and the current administration. More work needs to be done.

The ECOWAS sub region that Liberia is part of has experience about seven coups in the last couple of years, what do you make of this and how concerned should other countries be including Liberia?

Frantz Sawyer: It is very troubling to see seven military coup in the Ecowas region predominantly French speaking countries. Coup or Military intervention is never the answer for change, rather Democratic procedure is always the solution. It is vital to strengthen our integrity institution so that good governance can prevail, which at all the time solves most of our problems.

What do you make of the way ECOWAS and the broader international community have

responded to the crisis in Niger?

Frantz Sawyer: I am NEVER a proponent of military intervention in a sovereign nation. Never. Diplomacy is always the best approach. I hope the ECOWAS community would reconsider and go back to the drawing board and come out with another plan of action.

Looking at Liberia today, what gives you hope for its future and what are your fears?

Frantz Sawyer: I feel very optimistic



of our democracy in Liberia. Clearly sure the multi-party system that my father fought for exists. We now have 20 or more candidates seeking the highest office in the land. We still need to focus more on the dire issues facing our citizens and less discussion on personalities.

Lastly it is very important to strengthen our integrity institutions in Liberia, more transparency in government and more engagements with the citizens.

Kenya's Population Growth Decreases as More Women Embrace Modern Family Planning

By Wilson Odhiambo*

According to a family planning brief, more than 370 million women in middle- and low-income countries were finally embracing modern contraception to help curb unintended pregnancies.

This statistic suggests that one in every three women from middle- and low-income countries use contraceptives today.

Africa, which had the lowest number of family planning users in 2012, had registered a 66 percent increase, from 40 million to 66 million girls and women by 2022. Eastern and Southern Africa recorded the highest increase in family planning users at 70 percent.

Kenya was ranked among the sub-Saharan nations that had effectively managed to tame the population growth rate by educating and empowering women and young girls through family planning initiatives.

According to Kenya's Ministry of Health, by September 2022, at least 54 percent of women in the country had access to contraceptives, and the use of modern methods of family planning had increased from 18 percent in 1989 to 57 percent in 2022. This went a long way in helping it meet its FP2030 commitment plan.

The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey in 2022 reported that there was a decrease in the fertility rate in women from 3.9 children



Inner-city district of Pipeline-Embakasi in Nairobi, Kenya .Photo Credit Baraka Mwau.

per woman in 2014 to 3.4 children per woman in 2022. This decrease resulted in a slowed population growth rate from 3.4 percent in 2014 to 2.2 percent in 2022.

The report stated that amongst married couples, 47 percent of women wanted to have more children, while the case was 57 percent for men. Another 30 percent of women and 37 percent of men wanted to wait a while longer before having children. This showed that more women preferred to wait and decide when and how many children they wanted to have through family planning.

From the report, more women in rural areas were also opting to limit

the number of children they were having as opposed to the past, where the decision was not easy for them to make due to factors like lack of education, traditions, and limited access to health facilities.

Among the educated group, 84 percent of married women with primary school education and 94 percent of married women with secondary school education did not want more children. This showed how big a role the level of education played in the use of contraceptives.

A look at the counties showed that urbanized areas, where more people had access to education, had a low fertility rate in comparison to the

marginalized counties with limited access to proper education.

For instance, the counties with the lowest fertility rates included Nairobi, Nyamira, Machakos, Kirinyaga, Mombasa, and Kiambu, which recorded 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.8, 2.9, and 2.9 children per woman. The opposite was true for the marginalized counties like Mandera, West Pokot, Wajir, and Marsabit, which recorded high fertility rates of 7.7, 6.9, 6.8, and 6.3 children per woman.

Some of the common family planning methods being used today include sterilization, condom use, implants, injectable drugs, and pills. The use of these modern

contraceptives, however, varies by region.

Christine Atieno, a pharmacist technician at a local clinic, agrees that there has been a significant rise in the number of contraceptive users amongst married people over the years.

"Married women, mostly aged between 25 years and above, form the majority of our patients at Medway Healthcare," Atieno told IPS.

"We receive at least five patients, on a daily basis, who come to seek professional assistance on what sort of contraceptives to use. Many of them prefer taking the oral pills, which we restock two to three times a week," she said. We offer all forms of modern family planning services at our facility apart from sterilization.

Research work published in the National Library of Medicine agrees that community pharmacies and clinics have also played a big role in ensuring the delivery and easy access to family planning services in both rural and urban areas.

According to the findings, the public health system accounts for 60 percent of patients, while the private sector, made up of pharmacies and clinics, takes up 34 percent.

These private facilities have been authorized to conduct family planning services such as providing oral contraceptives, male and female condoms, injectable intramuscular and subcutaneous depot medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA), and emergency contraceptives.

"Being a developing country, Kenya still lags behind in terms of adequate facilities in its public health system, which makes pharmacies and clinics very important in providing medical assistance, especially to young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years," says Wilson Opudo, a public health specialist.

"While it is true that there is an increase in usage of contraceptives amongst women, there is still the matter of teenage girls between the ages of 14 and 18 years who are increasingly becoming sexually active but cannot afford or are unwilling to



visit public health facilities for various reasons," Opudo explained to IPS.

According to Opudo, these teenage girls usually avoid going to public health facilities, most of whom will expect them to be accompanied by their parents or guardians because of their young age. Due to this, they prefer community pharmacies and clinics where they can get help on their own.

"Being young, these girls are usually embarrassed by their parents finding out that they are sexually active, and most will therefore avoid visiting hospitals," Opudo said. For this reason, it is important to also have professional counselors in these community clinics and pharmacies.

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kenya recorded one of the highest cases of teenage pregnancies, which experts linked to the fact that many children were left unattended at home with little to occupy their free time. Easy access to uncontrolled and uncensored social media has also been a contributing factor to the increased sexual activity among teenagers.

"Teenage girls mostly visit our facility during the weekends, and they usually come looking for emergency contraceptive (plan B) pills, unlike the case for the older married women," said Atieno. "My colleagues and I are also qualified counselors, and we

always insist on offering advice to these teenagers before letting them make any big decisions on their own."

The DHS data also showed that, while still low, more men were also taking part in the family planning process as the number of married men getting sterilized had doubled in comparison to the previous years.

Initially, women mostly did family planning, most of whom preferred hiding it from their spouses to avoid conflict or backlash from society, as having many children was considered a blessing in many African households.

Today, however, many men understand the importance of family planning, especially on women's health, and are even accompanying their spouses for the services.

The DHS data indicated an increase in the number of men getting a vasectomy from 248 in 2021 to 557 in 2022.

Dr. Alex Owino, Medical Superintendent, Katulani Sub-County Hospital, Kitui, advises that while family planning has become accessible to many, it is also necessary to understand the importance of having a medical specialist to help you decide on the best type of contraceptives.

"I have seen cases of women reacting negatively to injections and implants, which makes it necessary

for one to be able to know what works for them. Some have complained of side effects such as headaches and uneven menstrual flow, which makes it hard for them to go about their daily business," Owino told IPS.

"Pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and those using ARVs, for example, have different needs in terms of the kind of contraceptives that is best for them," he added.

From the data gathered in the FP2030 report, the following were some of the key findings:

1. Injectables were the most favored method of contraception in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by oral pills and implants, respectively.
2. Pills and male condoms were predominantly used in Europe and Northern America.
3. Female sterilization and male condoms remain the most used family planning methods worldwide.
4. Most family planning users across the globe also prefer short-term methods as opposed to long-term.

In summary, the increased use of contraceptives had helped avert 141 million unintended pregnancies, 150,000 maternal deaths, and 30 million unsafe abortions worldwide.

*IPS UN Bureau . Published in partnership with Globetrotter



A JUST TRANSITION

MAKING ENERGY
POVERTY
HISTORY WITH
AN ENERGY
MIX

N J A Y U K

African Oil and Gas Exploration is Going Strong

By NJ Ayuk*



NJ Ayuk is Executive Chairman of the African Energy Chamber.

2023 has been another banner year for African exploration, with half a billion barrels of oil equivalent (bboe) in recoverable oil and gas reserves found around the continent to date.

Despite the call heard around the world commanding the global business community to divest from fossil fuels and shrink their carbon footprints in the name of net zero, international oil companies (IOCs) still recognize Africa as their next frontier.

As detailed in the African Energy Chamber's recently released report, «The State of African Energy Q2 2023 Outlook,» oil and natural gas exploration in Africa remains strong.

Following the massive Namibian discoveries in 2022, 2023 has been another banner year for African exploration, with half a billion barrels of oil equivalent (bboe) in recoverable oil and gas reserves found around the continent to date.

Namibia's Orange Basin continues to hold center stage with Shell's July announcement that drilling for the

Lesedi-1X, the company's fourth exploration well in the region, had reached completion and indicated the presence of hydrocarbons.

Through a partnership with QatarEnergy and NAMCOR — Namibia's national oil company — Shell plans to drill two more exploratory wells in Namibia before the year is out and has also received permission from the government to drill ten more exploration and appraisal wells in the future.

Estimates set Shell's other recent discoveries at the nearby Graff, La Rona, and Jonker-1X wells in Namibia's Petroleum Exploration License (PEL) 39 at a total of 1.7 bboe.

These findings come in addition to discoveries made by France's TotalEnergies at its Venus well in PEL 56 that holds a total of 3 bboe, according to Barclays estimates.

A Continent Brimming with Discovery

While the sizeable discovery at the Jonker site alone — with estimates placing its recoverable reserves

at roughly 285 million barrels — accounts for 57% of overall volumes discovered in 2023 so far, it is one of many, as well as the only offshore discovery. The numerous other African discoveries were all found onshore.

Sonatrach of Algeria brought 20% of the overall volume to the table with its six smaller-sized discoveries that the state-owned energy company announced in the first quarter of this year. With two wells each between Amguid, Berkine, and Ohanet in the East-Central, South, and Southwest regions of the country respectively, Algeria is seeing new production of oil, gas, and condensates, strengthening its role as an alternative energy supplier for Europe.

In May 2023, the Australian upstream oil and gas company, Invictus Energy, announced that a mud gas analysis of its maiden Mukuyu-1 well in the Cabora Bassa Basin in Zimbabwe confirmed the presence of light oil, gas condensate, and helium. As a result of these findings, Invictus will follow through

in the third quarter of this year on drilling operations for its Mukuyu-2 appraisal well located 6.8 kilometers to the northeast of Mukuyu-1 with a planned depth of 3,700 meters.

Mukuyu-1 is a wildcat — a well drilled in a previously unexplored area or where the petroleum potential is an unknown. Across Africa, of the 16 exploration wells IOCs drilled in 2023, ten are wildcats.

Three drilling operations are underway at the time of this writing, and while plans are in place for as many as 66 more, operations will likely commence for roughly 17 over the next 18 months.

As we have documented in our Q2 report, new discoveries from oil and gas exploration practically encircle the continent. From the small finds like Sasol's Bonito-1 well in the PT5-C concession area of the Mozambique basin to Wintershall's ED-2X in Egypt and Tatneft's F1 discovery in Libya, Africa is proving itself as an emerging contender for the top supplier spot on the global petroleum market with a total discovered volume of oil and gas totaling nearly 500 MMboe in 2023 alone.

An Opportunity to Balance Disparity

While it is encouraging to witness this revival of oil and gas exploration in Africa — and to have our assertions confirmed that this continent represents the next frontier for the international energy majors — the AEC sees these developments as merely the start of what will have to amount to a massive upgrade for our own domestic petroleum industry.

As seismic and geological studies continuously corroborate our claims that Africa has enormous potential as a global energy supplier, local inefficiencies and a lack of infrastructure hinder this progress and stand in the way of international oil company (IOC) engagement.

To extract real prosperity from our fossil fuel resources, we must

encourage the governments of every hydrocarbon-bearing African nation to create and maintain enabling business environments that attract foreign investment.

We must also implore the leaders of these countries to act quickly upon discovery of new oil fields and warn them against letting a proven find languish under a heap of unnecessary red tape.

There is no nuance about it — the oil industry represents income for Africans and advancement for Africa.

An increase in exploration equates to new African jobs and business opportunities, and successful exploratory ventures attract further

investment, leading to a rise in employment across many industries and accelerated economic growth for each host country.

And the benefits are not only financial or limited to only those with skin in the game. By extracting and refining our resources on a grander scale, we'll finally reach the kind of production levels that extend meaningful benefits to the African population.

Considering that more than 600 million Africans live without access to electricity, and 900 million make do without access to clean cooking fuel, expansion of our oil industry will inevitably slash our rates of energy

poverty and lead to a widespread increase in quality of life.

The global transition to carbon-free energy, spurred on by human ingenuity, is inevitable. We acknowledge that one day humanity will have no need to engage with fossil fuels or tolerate their negative impacts. We believe that the planet will eventually get to such a state, but we also feel that we're more realistic than some regarding how long that evolution will take to set in fully.

This transition will also require massive funding from every country undertaking it. The AEC's stance is that if we can secure foreign investment in our oil industry today,

Africa will develop the funding to back its own transition tomorrow, rather than waiting patiently for subsidies and handouts once the rest of the world deems them feasible.

As we wait for zero-emission and renewable energy technology to mature to its full potential, the developed world must afford the chance for Africa to reach its own.

Increased exploration, wise investments, welcoming dispositions, and attractive economic policies are but the first few steps of that journey.

* NJ Ayuk is Executive Chairman Of The African Energy Chamber

Imperative For US To Up African Energy Sector Investments-Saqara Energy's Ann Norman

By Ajong Mbapndah L

Africa has the potential to solve the current geo-political problems the world is facing right now caused by the conflict in Ukraine, says Ann Norman CEO of Saqara Energy. With its vast gas resources, minerals, and agricultural capacity, Africa is in a good position to provide the world with what it needs at this point.

For this to happen, Africa needs to showcase to the world that they are stable and that they take rule of law seriously, says Ann Norman in an interview with PAV.

"Governments need to get out of the way and let capitalism rule. Let the private sector companies do what they do best, let the markets do what they do best, and let investors invest in the gas, the assets, let them use the money wisely to develop the fields, and everyone will win. Africa will see the resources develop, energy will come, power will be produced, investors will see returns, and governments too will win," Ms. Norman says.

While U.S companies may still be leery about committing fully to Africa, Ann Norman thinks that the dynamics of sheer need and the potential available call for stronger US presence and investments in the



Africa is the investment world's Wild West, says Ann Norman of Saqara Energy.

African energy sector. Norman who serves on the Board of Advisers of the African Energy Chamber thinks that a more robust US presence could make a difference in helping Africa

meet some of its most acute energy challenges.

Describing Africa as the investment world's Wild West, Ann Norman says she anticipates that the participation

from the US at the upcoming African Energy Week in Cape Town will be even more exceptional. While AEW 2022 was fantastic, interest and engagement with Africa is at an all-time high, and there is every reason to predict an even more robust participation at this years edition of the continent's premier energy event from the USA, Ann Norman says.

You have been an actor on the African energy scene for over a decade now, what is your reading of its current state, what is working, where have you seen progress, and what is not working?

Ann Norman: Thank you for giving me this platform today, you are an important platform and voice in Africa. In the past decade, I have witnessed a lot in the African energy scene, some good, some great, some bad, some mediocre. What's working? Gas development is booming – and rightly so. Not just Africa needs more gas, but now with the conflict in Ukraine, Europe is looking for more supplies. One thing we all shouted loudly in Europe and to Europe, and I'm going to take this opportunity to say, "I told you so," about a decade

ago, was that it was critical for them to look south for reliable gas partners.

May we get insights on the presence of U.S companies in the energy sector, what contributions are U.S firms making to help Africa change its energy fortunes?

Ann Norman: I'd love to see more US companies on the scene in Africa. In my opinion, they are still leery of the continent, and one can understand why with political instability and security issues in so many places.

US technology companies are playing an important role in this space, I've watched new technologies from US companies enter the scene from small scale gas capture equipment providers to new, large scale gas plant technologies. I've also watched the evolution of US modular refineries which have been a game changer, and I love watching that market flourish because it has a direct, positive impact on the local economies.

Mobile fractionation units that create LPG at the point of a gas flare site are however my favorite projects out there. This has a direct impact on so many things – the environment from both a CO2 elimination from the flare capture to LPG creation for domestic markets thus helping stop deforestation.

How do you make the case for more US firms to engage with Africa on the energy sector and to Africa, how do you make the case for the continent to prioritize partnership with US firms?

Ann Norman: US development banks and institutions have been quite bullish on supporting US investments into cleaner energy and distribution efforts into Africa. Loan guarantees from DFC and US Exim bank for instance can secure private sector money and de-risk project finance allowing US companies to make that leap without the risk. The World Bank and IFC have similar programs as well as the African development banks too. This is how we can use private sector money to de-risk this otherwise risky market

place.

I'm a firm believer that the only way to sustainably create peace and stability in any country, not just Africa, is through capitalism – job creation. When people have jobs, when an economy is solid, security and peace quickly follow and remain.

From your experience what policy recommendations do you think are needed for Africa to attract more investors in the energy sector?

Ann Norman: Yesterday I read President Tinubu is calling for investors to come to Nigeria to grow their critical gas sector. Indeed, he is correct in calling for this, but, in order for investors to flock to the continent, countries have to enact fiscal policies that will protect investments. And, they must finish what they started. Sticking to the Nigerian example, it's no secret that Nigeria messed up the National Gas Flare Commercialization Plan (NGFCP). They took that well-constructed program clear through the RFP stage, and then never finished it, left investors hanging, AFTER they had sunk money into it, with no way to capture any return whatsoever. This is going to make it very hard for anyone to come back to Nigeria for a while and trust their investment money there with anything related to investments that are not strictly private sector.

Governments need to get out of the way and let capitalism rule. Let the private sector companies do what they do best, let the markets do what they do best, and let investors invest in the gas, the assets, let them use the money wisely to develop the fields, and everyone will win. Africa will see the resources develop, energy will come, power will be produced, investors will see returns, and, yes, governments too will win – they will realize tax revenues, if only they could get out of the way. I don't say this critically either, I say this with all due respect to all the government leaders out there who may hear this or read this, I plead with you, please, stand back and let the private sector do what we know how to do best. Cut

the red tape for us, and you'll see we can make magic happen!

Based on your knowledge and experiences across the continent, may we know some of the countries where you see the kind of potential and opportunities you can easily pitch to US firms?

Ann Norman: It's no secret I love gas flare down projects, so I'm going to stick mainly to those projects. What I like about them is they are fairly low risk, they don't involve exploration, drilling and capital-intensive risks like that. The countries I find interesting as a US investor myself and therefore opportunities I could easily pitch are currently in Egypt, Gabon, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire's sector isn't huge but lately there are a few things I am quite interested in pursuing there and yes, Nigeria. Nigeria has so much potential, and I am quite bullish now we have new leadership there. We should all run, not just walk to Naija with our cash, there is much to do there not just for Nigeria, but for the continent and the rest of the world.

What is your position on the fossil fuels debate, and do you think those calling for Africa to completely ditch fossils are oblivious to African challenges and realities?

Ann Norman: Look, it is an absolute naïve position to think we can abandon fossil fuels in the blink of an eye and keep the world going and have any quality of life anywhere. Do we need to come up with a plan to clean things up over the decades and alleviate climate change, absolutely. Can we do it tomorrow and just stop fossil fuel development and use, absolutely not. Hence the brilliance of these two words – “Energy Transition,” and, this transition is going to take decades. Not a decade, but decades.

Permit me a mea culpa, and allow me to call out my compatriots. We Americans do much good in the world, but we also can be naïve. Regarding Africa, it is an absolute must to develop our gas assets there.

The continent is so deficient in power that people are literally dying. For instance, let me throw some real statistics out here: According to the WHO South Sudan, Chad and Nigeria all have extremely high maternal mortality rates with 1223 deaths in South Sudan, followed by Chad with 1063 deaths and Nigeria with 1047 deaths per 100 000 live births in 2020. Hospitals run on electricity. Vaccines need refrigeration. How does one get power to support those things if not from natural gas? Solar is great while the sun shines, but the world does not yet have the battery capacity to sustain the time the sun isn't shining, nor the lengthy rainy seasons much of Africa experiences. A baseload power fuel like natural gas is currently required to supplement the efforts of solar until new technologies are found, or battery minerals are supplied to meet the demand the world needs.

You are a member of the Board of Advisors at The Africa Energy Chamber, and the African Energy Week is coming up, what kind of participation are you expecting or anticipating from U.S?

Ann Norman: I expect that the participation from the US will be even more exceptional than it was last year, and last year was fantastic. We are now even further out from the end of the pandemic; travel restrictions are a thing of the past. I believe we will see a fantastic attendance. Interest and engagement in Africa is at an all-time high, and I for one intend to keep it that way. I have said it before, and I'll keep saying it, Africa is the investment world's Wild West. What I mean by that... I'm from Utah, a cowgirl, born and raised on a farm and ranch, a product of pioneers that heeded the clarion call in the 19th century to “go west young man!” and I will add women. Those brave people that did come to the then wild, wild west to eek out a living on virgin land, ranch, toil and labor, put in the hard work, invest not just their sweat and soul, but their hard-earned cash, it paid off. And, it has

paid off for the generations of their family that came after them, like me. I'm really grateful to those ancestors of mine for doing that. Well, this is where we are with Africa. It's the only place left in the world where we still have this opportunity. It might be tough, it requires your hard work, sweat and your heart and soul, but it's worth it. Not just for you, but for the generations that follow you. It's for the people now. Millions of deserving people on this amazing continent deserve power, they deserve better, they deserve what I enjoy in the US. They deserve jobs that pay them well so they can provide what you and I can provide for our families, the same kinds of opportunities. How many Albert Einstein type of minds has humanity missed out on because we never allowed them an education because we as collective humanity have not cared that much? That must change, and whether you like it or not, energy is at the heart of that change.

Could you shed light on Saqara Energy that you have led for some two years now?

Ann Norman: Saqara Energy is focused on all the things I have mentioned just now. The development of energy on the continent of Africa. Over the past two years, our main focus has been flare down projects. Putting associated gas, wasted flares in stranded locations into

useful production to produce power, LPG for domestic cooking fuels, condensates. And, in so doing, it cleans up the environment, it creates additional revenue for an oil producer on a wasted resource. It also often eliminates a fine for them as well, also therefore increasing revenue. For governments, it increases tax revenues on new products that come into markets. Those are wins across the board. These are difficult projects to execute. It might sound simple, often times people think it is. If I had a dollar for every group I had initial meetings with who then tried to do these projects on their own, only to return to me a couple of years later, hat in hand asking for help, I'd be quite wealthy! These are complicated projects, technologically speaking, and financially speaking. Financing is difficult and complicated and add to that the fact that most are in risky banking markets. Saqara Energy has had success in this challenging space, and we would love to help any producer out there, NOC, IOC or private indigenous field owners. Give us a call.

Looking at global trends, geo-political dynamics, the potential that Africa has and its challenges, what gives you hope for its energy sector and what are your fears?

Ann Norman: Africa has the

potential to solve the current geo-political problems the world is facing right now caused by the conflict in Ukraine. There is enough gas, minerals, and agricultural capacity to provide the world what we need. Europe is not far away. Many of us were screeching years ago telling everyone Nordstream 2 wasn't the way to go, build out the pipeline capacity from Africa north. Nobody really listened. Well, we are all now shaking our heads saying we told you so, and it's not very gratifying, is it? However, that is what gives me hope. The world is indeed looking at Africa now, and they do realize now in a real way Africa can provide what is necessary, however, this is also what worries me. Geo-politics everywhere. Europe's geo-politics need no explanation of why they are worrisome. Africa needs to showcase to the world that they are stable, that they take rule of law seriously. With the recent wave of coup d'etats that have erupted, it seems like a trend that might continue. The situation in Niger is particularly personal and heart breaking for me. I am an ardent supporter of President Bazoum. This year I began working on a project there. I have spent a good amount of time there, and I fell in love with that country. I have had the most incredible experience working with my colleagues at Sonidep, leadership at the Ministry of Petroleum, and

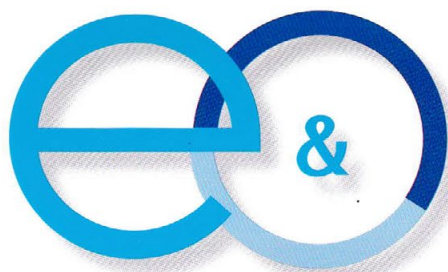
the Presidency itself. It has been the country I have experienced the least amount of red tape, the most transparency, the most efficient and effective leadership, thorough and professional processes, even down to getting visas for travel. Now, nothing but chaos ensues. How can these people who make such chaos erupt believe that any investment will come to their country when they do things like this? They are not instilling confidence at all. Stability and transparency, rule of law, that is what instills confidence the leads to foreign direct investment. When a coup d'etat occurs, that confidence takes a hit that is not easily recovered often times for decades. This is my fear for Africa. But, let me not end on that note. Stronger than fear is hope. And the good people of Africa, the millions of people that work hard, believe, do good, are kind, ethical, moral, who love their families just like me, those are the people I keep in my mind all of the time. To these people I say thank you, there are too many to name. They have been so kind to me, they are my friends, they are better people than I, and they prove that to me daily. So that is what drives me, if I can be half the person that all these good souls are, perhaps I will have accomplished something in my life. That is what the hope of Africa is – it's people.

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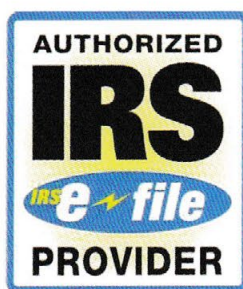
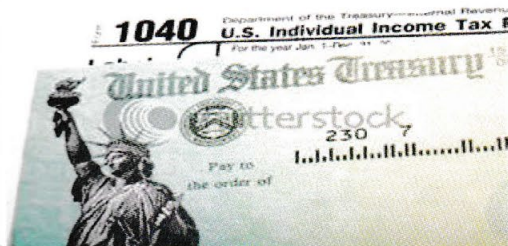
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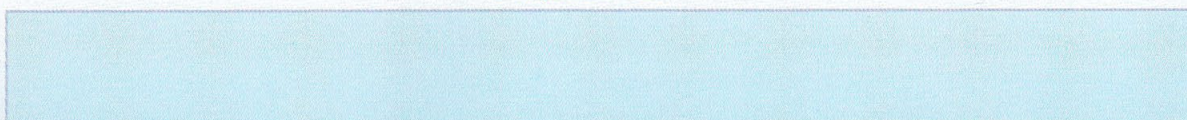
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The Military And African Politics

By Mwalimu George Ngwane*



File Picture. Former President Rawlings with Mali's military leaders after a meeting in Accra. On his right is Mali's interim head of state, Colonel Assimi Goïta. Photo Jerry John Rawlings.

The reasons for military interventions (militocracy) in Africa are as varied as they are complex. They range from personal grievances of civilian regimes to the political and economic kleptocracy of civilian regimes.

In a struggle to cope with this predicament between the devil of tyranny (as in one-party system) and the deep blue sea of anarchy (as in multiparty systems) military rule has often been invoked. The balance sheet has largely been negative, with very few being benign, that is serving the interests of the people whether in a short or long political life span.

Soldiers As Power Mongers

The 1960 civilian leadership in Africa was basically pan-African to the extent that some failed to cover enough ground in their own national territories. This gave leeway to soldiers as power-mongers.

Among the prominent military take-overs in the 1960s were those in Congo (Kinshasa) in November 1965 by Colonial Joseph Desire Mobutu, and in the same year in Algeria by Colonel Houari Boumedienne; in Nigeria in January 1966, by Major Nzeogwu followed later by a counter-

coup by Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi; a month later in Ghana, by Colonel Akwasi Amankwaah Afrifa; in Togo in January 1967, by Lieutenant Colonel Etienne Gnassingbe Eyadema; in Mali in 1968, by Lieutenant Moussa Traore; and in Libya in September 1969, by Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi.

The symbol of benign militocracy in this epoch is Muammar Ghaddafi. He, with a small group of unknown young officers, overthrew the monarchy of King Idris I to establish a participatory democracy based on people's congresses and committees.

Still in the leader of Libya today, Ghaddafi has succeeded in wresting power from the former colonialists by exploiting Libyan wealth and putting it at the disposal of the citizens. The results are for anyone (not wearing neo-colonial blinkers) to see.

Soldiers As Power Brokers

The 1970-1980 civilian leadership in Africa was basically nationalist to the extent that it wanted to have a tyrannical grip on every facet of national life. Torn between the exigencies of «under the tree» rule and the pressure of Cold War politics, the leadership opened avenues for

soldiers to step in as power brokers.

Prominent among the military coups in the 1970s were the experiences in Uganda in 1971 by Idi Amin Dada; in Ethiopia in 1974 by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, in Nigeria in July 1975 by General Muhammad Murtala; and in Ghana in 1979 by Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings.

The most benign of these take-overs was that of Muhammad Murtala. General Murtala's eight-month government gained a reputation for integrity and commitment to radical change and was welcomed by most Nigerians.

In the 1980s, there were take-overs in Liberia in April 1980 by Master-Sergeant K. Doe; in Ghana in 1981 once again by Rawlings; in Nigeria in 1983 by Major-General Buhari; and in 1986 by General Ibrahim Babaginda; in Burkina Faso in 1983 by Captain Thomas Sankara; in Guinea in 1984 by Colonel Lansana Conte; and in 1986 in Uganda by Yoweri Museveni.

The most spectacular of military rules in the 1980s was that of Captain Thomas Sankara. He instituted a nation in which all citizens participated in its development and brought the masses into political and economic decision-making. He lasted

in power only four years.

Soldiers As Power Sharers

In spite of some of the positive records of some military rule, it has been observed that the military should stick to their legitimate places in the barracks. They should return to their roles as protectors of state security, not as custodians of political power.

The people of Africa saw the one-party tyranny as a front for militocracy, and the only way the military could be excluded was through the national constitutional reforms. The 1990s were therefore years of national debate. That debate was to provide Africa with a democratic system, which will enable it to aspire to a stable political and economic future.

Unfortunately most African leaders refused to budge and where they did, it was for political convenience not conviction, and so the military rode on. The 1990-2000 civilian leadership in Africa is basically globalist to the extent that it has yielded its power to international donors.

The masses have watched how their independent gains have been pillaged by the «axis of economic evil» (the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organisation);

they have watched with pain their republican institutions turned into burdens of monarchy; they have watched in distress how their humble leaders have transformed themselves into demi-gods.

The social democracy that the masses were advocating has become so neo-liberal that the only (dis) credit one can give multipartyism is having expanded both the economic and political space for a simpering elite (across the political divide).

This simpering elite thrives on election manipulation, social exclusion and brazen corruption. If the masses were helpless, the soldiers thought they still could make contribution to national life.

Soldiers As Statesmen

Africa has tried both the single party (where there was discipline without democracy) and multiparty system (where there is liberalization without discipline) but the military seldom remained in the barracks. National debates were deferred until the late 1990s.

In 1999, Ghaddafi -who thought the gains African countries had made during independence had all been lost back to the colonialists - called for a continental debate in Sirte. One of the main things to come out of Sirte debate was the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union.

Among the 33 articles that were adopted in the African Union Treaty was Article 30: «Government which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union.» Was the word «unconstitutional» to mean just coming to power by the bullet?

In spite of this resolution, the wave



President Macron was actively present in Chad during the state funeral of President Deby and the swearing in of his son General Mahamat Idriss Deby . Photo credit AP.

of military coups continues even in twenty-first century Africa. The early years of the new century saw coups from Robert Guei followed by Guillaume Soro in Cote d'Ivoire, from Francois Bozize in Central African Republic, from

Sekou Damateh Conneh in Liberia (although the transition was manned by a civilian businessman, Gyude Bryant), and General Verissimo Conneia Seabra in Guinea Bissau, with a transition that was also manned by a civilian businessman and from Ould Ahmed Taya of Mauritania.

From the utterances of these coup leaders, there seems to be a return to benign military. The coup leaders all established a short-term transition during which there was a national debate, national catharsis and national reconciliation.

Strangely, most of the coup leaders enjoyed maximum co-operation not only from their citizens but

recognition and support as well from regional bodies in the continent. The Central African organ, CEMAC, gave Bozize a red-carpet treatment after he ousted elected leader Ange Patasse, who sought political asylum first in Cameroon and then in Togo.

The West African organ, ECOWAS, yielded to rebel pressure and presided over the departure of democratically elected Charles Taylor from Liberia. ECOWAS also negotiated the smooth resignation from power by Kumba Yaya in Guinea-Bissau to make way for a rebel-led agenda.

In the 1960s, coups were quickly and decisively condemned, but what is happening today that young Turks are given more prominence than opposition leaders? Is the African Union holding the tenets of the African Peer Review Mechanism more to its chest than Article 30 of its treaty?

Should we not now agree with

Antonio de Figueredo, Basil Davidson, Claude Ake, Thandika Mkadawire, Adebayo Olukoshi, Samir Amin, Kwesi Prah, Micere Mugo and other African revisionist scholars that Africa's real political and development problem lies in copying the wrong borrowed Western models?

Finally, militocracy, whether benign or malign, has no legal binding, it is not the people's best choice, but as long as truncated elections and constitutional panel beating gag democratic avenues and as long as civilian leadership in Africa thrives by grotesque routine instead of by grandiose reform, the military will remain the people's hidden choice.

*This story was originally published on October 9 2006 at gngwane.com

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Private Military Companies Continue To Expand in Africa

The recent coup in Niger threatens to unleash more private military and security companies on a continent where they have become steadily more powerful in recent decades.

By John P. Ruehl*

In the wake of the July 26 coup in Niger, the world's spotlight has once again turned to the expansion of private military and security companies (PMSCs) across Africa. Following the removal of the relatively pro-Western government, Niger's new military rulers asked Russian PMSC Wagner to help defend against a possible military intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken warning of the PMSC seeking to exploit the instability.

In a continent marked by decades of post-colonial turmoil, PMSCs have steadily gained influence, evolving from their historical role as mercenaries into powerful, corporate-driven forces. As the Sahel region continues to grapple with instability and conflict, the strengthening of PMSCs, both domestic and foreign, will continue to reshape Africa's security in profound and unpredictable ways.

Africa's experience with PMSCs dates back to the decolonization period after World War II. Though mercenaries had been steadily sidelined in conflicts for centuries, rag-tag groups of privateers emerged as shadowy accomplices to colonial powers, aiding in suppressing rebellions and fomenting unrest while providing a degree of ambiguity. Britain's "Mad Mike" Hoare and France's Bob Denard came to exemplify this era through their active involvement in military operations that undermined the sovereignty of African states.

The end of the Cold War ushered in a new chapter for PMSCs. With millions of demobilized soldiers seeking employment and civil conflicts on the rise in the early 1990s, these entities evolved into more corporate forms. The South African PMSC Executive



Soldiers from the Wagner Group hold sway in Central Africa. Photo credit Nacer Talel, Anadolu Agency

Outcomes (EO), founded in 1989 by Eeben Barlow, gained notoriety by accepting contracts to protect energy infrastructure in Angola and to fight Sierra Leone's civil war.

Pressure from South Africa's post-apartheid government led to the disbandment of EO in 1998. But other PMSCs had emerged, including Sandline International, also financed by EO backer Anthony Buckingham and Canadian businessman Rakesh Saxena, that helped gain control over mineral rights in Sierra Leone. And after Washington began to lean heavily on PMSCs during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the taboo of using them was broken.

Existing in a legal gray zone, PMSCs have leveraged their strategic capabilities worldwide—no more so than in Africa. Fragile government institutions, powerful criminal and militant groups, international power struggles, and competition over Africa's natural resources have

nurtured an environment supportive of a growing network of PMSCs. Across the continent, they are used to secure energy facilities, government buildings, and private infrastructure, protect local actors and foreign personnel, and provide police and military training, intelligence, and active fire support to governments and corporate clients.

Through entities like the colossal PMSC Wagner, Russia has found an unconventional and effective way to assert influence in Africa's security landscape. In the Sahel region, Russian PMSCs have filled a void left by departing French military forces and capitalizing on local anti-French sentiment in recent years.

Amid shifting allegiances, Wagner underscores how Russia's indirect power projection allows the Kremlin to wield substantial influence without deploying conventional military forces. Wagner's activities are believed to span across Mali, Sudan,

Zimbabwe, Angola, Madagascar, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Central African Republic (CAR), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Other Russian PMSCs, such as RSB Group, Moran Security Group, and Patriot, also operate across Africa.

At the center of Russia's PMSC network in Africa stands Yevgeny Prigozhin, Wagner's financier. The Russian tycoon celebrated the success of the coup in Niger and declared Wagner capable of handling the situation, though the Russian government declined to support it. Despite Prigozhin's longstanding quarrels with the Russian military, which culminated in his insurrectionist march toward Moscow in June, Prigozhin was recently seen meeting with African dignitaries on the side of the Russia-Africa summit in St Petersburg.

As the Nigerien government

grapples with its situation, Wagner could again act as a Kremlin surrogate, safeguarding Russia's interests by filling the security vacuum left by the ousted French military. Already, there are fears that Niger may halt uranium exports, vital to both French and EU supplies, and forcing the West's attention to the country. Russian media has criticized Prigozhin since his rebellion and officials have downplayed state connections to Wagner's activities in Africa. But Prigozhin's ongoing role in Africa suggests the Kremlin is relying on smoke and mirrors to obscure its true motivations.

Beyond Russia, numerous Western PMSCs have embedded themselves within Africa's security. Unlike Russia's PMSCs, most do not operate on the frontlines of conflict and primarily operate in security and training roles, though do coordinate with official military deployments. French PMSC Secopex made headlines in 2011 when its founder was killed in Libya during the country's revolution, and it remains unclear as to what the PMSC's role was.

Secopex had also been involved in the CAR and Somalia, while Corpguard (also created by the co-founder of Secopex, David Hornus) has been involved in training the Cote D'Ivoire's military.

Other French PMSCs, such as Agemira, are active in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Though French-owned, Agemira is registered in Bulgaria to take advantage of the country's lack of regulation and transparency. The UK's Aegis Defence Services is believed to have worked in 18 African countries, while G4S, Erinys, and Olive Group are also active in Africa.

U.S. PMSCs have been active across the continent since the 2000s, with MPRI, CACI International, and Academi (previously the notorious Blackwater) among the most notable. Others, such as DynCorp, have

provided training and logistical support to Liberia, Sudan, and Somalia, while Triple Canopy has been active in Niger. AdvanFort Co in turn offers anti-piracy maritime protection in East and West Africa. Germany's Xeless and Asgaard are also active in Africa, with the latter having operations in Sudan, Libya, Mauritania, and Egypt.

PMSCs have increasingly begun to operate in the same conflict zones. Somalia, which lacked a functional state for more than two decades, provided fertile ground for PMSC expansion. PMSCs from the U.S., UK, China, UAE, and even Norway have helped Somalia train its official government forces and provide maritime protection from piracy and terrorism and ensure stability. But in Libya, PMSCs from or backed by Russia, France, the UK, the U.S., Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and more have all been sent to the country since 2011 to exploit the chaos and advance their interests.

Active in Libya, Turkey's SADAT group has also signed deals to train African troops while pitching itself as a Muslim alternative PMSC for Islamic-majority countries. The UAE-based Black Shield Security Company was accused in 2020 of promising Sudanese citizens security contractor jobs but instead sent them to conflict zones in Libya. Other UAE PMSCs have been active in East Africa, including in Somalia, while China has developed a multitude of PMSCs to secure its Belt and Road projects in Africa. Israeli PMSCs have their own African operations.

In 2014, the Nigerian government began hiring PMSCs to help defeat the Boko Haram insurgency. One of them, Specialized Task, Training, Equipment, and Protection (STTEP), was also set by EO's Barlow and saw significant success that helped grant it additional contracts. Other modern South African PMSCs include Osprey, Blackhawk, and Dyck Advisory Group, the latter of which

was hired by Mozambique to combat Al-Shabaab militants but was accused of killing civilians indiscriminately by the UN in 2020.

The use of PMSCs in Africa is likely to expand. They often offer African governments a quick, relatively inexpensive, and tailored way to manage crises instead of relying on ineffective state forces. PMSCs also enable international companies to protect themselves without relying on the fanfare of official military deployments by working with another corporate entity.

Nonetheless, this raises questions about sovereignty, a recurring issue in a continent where it has consistently been violated since African countries won their independence. The monopoly on the use of violent force by their police and military institutions has been steadily eroded by criminals, militants, foreign countries, and increasingly, PMSCs.

The dangers of commodifying security are evident. Foreign companies and powerful local actors can afford security, while the core issues of instability in countries or regions are not addressed. Furthermore, instability is often used by outside forces to their advantage. Many Africans also end up working for PMSCs outside the continent because they are cheaper than recruits from other parts of the world.

Furthermore, PMSCs, and the governments and companies that employ them, remain largely uncommitted to stronger regulation. The Montreux Document aimed to enforce greater rules for PMSCs, but has been criticized for its limited scope and lack of binding nature. Other countries, including the five members of the UN Security Council, have refused to ratify the UN International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries.

Criticism of PMSCs in Africa is growing. In February 2023, the African Union (AU) commissioner for

political affairs, peace, and security, Bankole Adeoye, called for the «complete exclusion of mercenaries from the African continent.» But U.S. PMSC Bancroft Global had already been hired by the AU to assess the risk of Somali forces trained by Blackwater founder Erik Prince to continue operating in the country.

These entities epitomize globalization. Aegis Defence Services was acquired by Canadian company GardaWorld in 2015, while DynCorp was bought by Amentum in 2020. Academi and Triple Canopy merged in 2014 to form Constellis Group, while Triple Canopy has outsourced work to Peru-based PMSC Defion International. Erik Prince, through the Hong Kong-based Frontier Services Group, has helped China train its own PMSCs for use in Africa and elsewhere. G4S was meanwhile bought by Allied Universal in 2021 and is now North America's third-largest private employer. Allied Universal itself is owned by institutional investor Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec and private equity firm Warburg Pincus.

Many PMSCs provide legitimate and needed security for civilians and government officials. But considering the wide-ranging motivations, means, and methods of so many PMSCs on the continent—and increasingly in the same spaces—it is critical for Africa's governments, leaders, and populations to consider how comfortable they are in allowing this rapidly developing global PMSC network to continue expanding in their own backyards.

*In partnership with Globetrotter. John P. Ruehl is an Australian-American journalist living in Washington, D.C. He is a contributing editor to Strategic Policy and a contributor to several other foreign affairs publications. His book, *Budget Superpower: How Russia Challenges the West With an Economy Smaller Than Texas*, was published in December 2022.

Cameroon On The Scanner In Julius Wamey's Vulture Family Convention.

By Ajong Mbapndah L

He may have been out of sight for a while, but Cameroon has not been out of mind and his recent book shows just how informed and connected veteran Journalist Julius Wamey is. Known for his frank talk, the trials, tribulations, of Cameroon are laid bare in the Vulture Family Convention which is his latest book. Fielding questions from PAV on the new book, the state owned CRTV he worked for, to the legacies of President Paul Biya, late opposition leader Fru Ndi, perspectives on the Anglophone crisis and more, Julius Wamey goes unfiltered with the same verve that endeared him to millions of Cameroons in his heyday at CRTV.

You are out with a new book “The Vulture Family Convention,” what is the book all about?

Julius Wamey: It is a story of Cameroon; where it was, where it is, and where it is likely to go if it continues on its current path. It is a story of the causes underlying the country's dire circumstances. It's a tale of boundless greed and deep, endemic corruption, which has been so woven into the fabric of our society that it has become a fact of daily life and ordinary people no longer recognize it for the evil that it is.

Above all, it is the story of the ordinary citizens caught in the crossfire of the different crises afflicting the country; between the military and insurgent forces, between separatist forces competing for supremacy, and between the government war entrepreneurs who are profiting mightily from conflict on various fronts.

In the country's culture of corruption and greed, the ruling elites are resented by the opposition, not for their corrupt ways, but for not giving their opponents the chance to feed at the national trough. It's a culture in

which the ruling classes do not know the meaning of the word 'enough' and do not care if the victims of their theft, the citizens, notice that they are being robbed of all their resources by their leaders.

The story is told from the perspective of a powerful Anglophone minister, with the Frenchified name of Marcel Pierre Epane, who dies of a mysterious illness, and his henchman and nephew, Colonel Protus Wi-Ekeli, who has to dispose of his master's remains and the massive ill-gotten wealth the minister accumulated and has left behind.

What prompted you to come out with the book at this time?

Julius Wamey: Evidently, the current situation in Cameroon led me to write the book. It's a fictional account of the many crises the country is suffering under at the moment. It is also a voice for those who have been deprived of the ability to state their opinion in the conflict between government forces and the insurgent separatist fighters, that is, the ordinary citizens who are suffering the brunt of the fighting. What prompted me to write the book was an incident that occurred during my last visit to Cameroon in 2021 for a friend's funeral.



The current state of Cameroon always dampens my optimism, says veteran Journalist Julius Wamey.

What is your take on the present state of Cameroon?

Julius Wamey: I'm an optimist by nature, but the current state of Cameroon always dampens my optimism. It looks like nothing changes in the country unless it changes for the worse. I go back almost 30 years after I emigrated from there and I still recognize old streets and houses in the neighborhoods I used to live in Yaounde. I had the opportunity to live and work in Abidjan as a consultant with the AfDB from 2018 to 2021 and I saw more infrastructure changes in that city in two years than I had seen take place anywhere

in Cameroon in a 20-year stretch. Our developmental stagnation is simply incomprehensible.

Political life in Cameroon has stalled as well. This is not surprising in a country now run by people who seem like patients from the geriatric ward of a nursing home, and the despair of the young and ambitious is evident. The root cause of this stagnation is the insatiable greed and lust for power of the ruling elite, leading to endemic corruption.

I'm also amazed by the success achieved by the entrepreneurs of hate in Cameroon society, who fan the flames of division and communal violence, especially among the young. In a country with more than 250 ethnic groups, this is very dangerous, and the results are becoming evident in the rising rate of murder or other extrajudicial killings.

You made your mark with the state-owned CRTV, do you still follow developments there and any changes you see now compared to your stint there in the 90s?

Julius Wamey: The country's entire media landscape has changed completely, although not always for the better. Remember that back then

I had intended to stay in the country for a week after the funeral before returning to Abidjan where I was then working as a consultant at the African Development Bank. I finally stayed for almost a month because I didn't understand that I had to pay a bribe to get the COVID result that would allow me to board my flight back to the Ivory Coast. I was not simply being naive. I had believed that COVID was so dangerous that the government would not allow for any corruption within the testing protocols, which in the other African countries I had traveled to during my stay at the AfDB, were fast, clean, and efficient. For example, before traveling to Cameroon, I had visited Rwanda on a short vacation, and the COVID results in Kigali were sent to my phone less than six hours after the test. In Yaounde, it took three days to get results that were sometimes negative, positive or no results at all.

What audience is the book destined for?

Julius Wamey: It is a general interest story for anyone interested in Cameroon. But Cameroonians in particular will recognize themselves in the many characters and subplots in the book.

CRTV was the only game in town, although I'm proud to remember that we worked as hard as if we had competition from other channels. I have the technology to watch all live TV shows from Cameroon and I usually find myself watching more of the independent ones, such as Equinox, than CRTV, which hues more and more to the government line of reporting even though that is not really necessary at a time when the independent media are showing that reporters can get away with honest reporting.

A word on the passing of John Fru, the mythical opposition leader of the early 90s?

Julius Wamey: Ni John, as I knew him from our first meeting in the 80s when I was a cub reporter at Radio Bamenda, deserved his reputation as a mythical figure. I consider him the patron saint of democracy in Cameroon, despite claims to the contrary by his detractors. He was the one person who stood up and challenged the stultifying political one-party status quo and went on to lead the revolution that irrevocably changed the country's political landscape in the face of violent reaction from the government. Those who try to rewrite this political history

and diminish or downplay the role Ni John played should be ashamed of themselves. The change he brought about is more important than what he failed to accomplish, no matter what his critics say, and fortunately, enough of his actions have been documented so that our children and grandchildren will learn about his accomplishments.

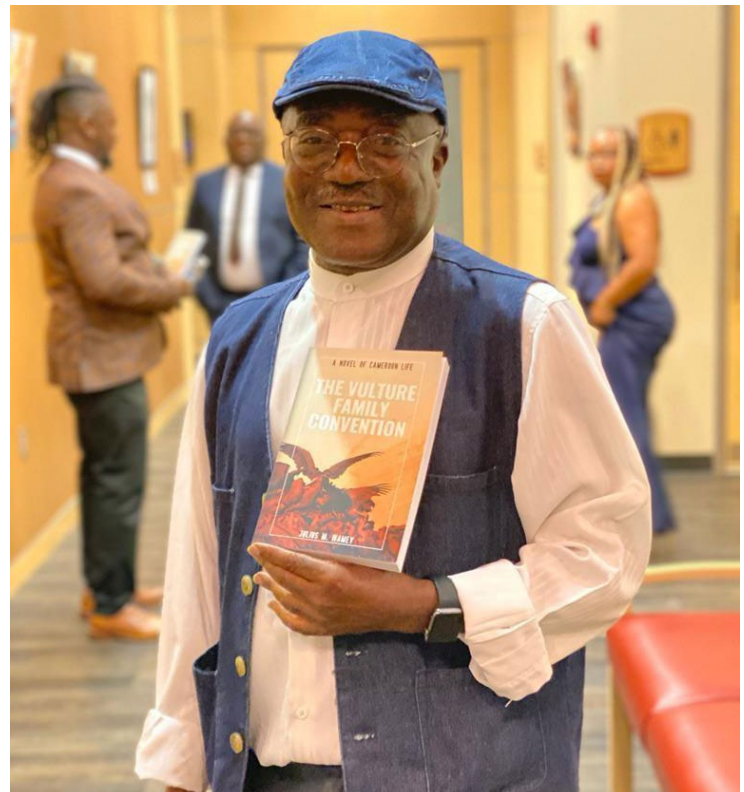
In power for 40-plus years and counting, what do you think the defining legacy of President Biya will be when he eventually leaves power?

Julius Wamey: In the 1990s, President Biya made the patently false assertion to a French TV audience that he would be remembered for bringing democracy to Cameroon. While this falsehood went unchallenged by the French interviewer, most who heard it knew the truth; that Mr. Biya had been forced, kicking and screaming, to accept whatever measure of democracy then existing in the country, thanks solely to the unflinching courage of John Fru Ndi and his opposition followers in challenging the status quo ante, sacrificing some lives in the process.

When he finally leaves the stage, Mr. Biya shall be remembered for the deeply entrenched corruption that has helped to bog down the



In power for over forty years, Julius Wamey describes the legacy of President Biya as very porous.



Cameroonians will easily identify themselves in the the Vulture Family Convention, says Julius Wamey

country's development efforts and for which Cameroon has achieved global renown, claiming first place in the global corruption perception index on several occasions.

On the infrastructure front, President Biya shall be remembered more for what he failed to do than for what he did. Roads built by his predecessor (Douala-Yaounde, Yaounde - Bamenda, Douala - Bafoussam, etc.,) have crumbled and have not been replaced or improved. When Mr. Biya came to power, people traveled by taxi and city buses; now they travel by motorbike. Our airports are an international embarrassment compared to those in other African countries; our national airline, with its single Chinese-made plane, is a disgrace. The examples are too numerous to cite here.

On the Anglophone crisis, what do you see as a way out as things stand now?

Julius Wamey: I'm deeply pessimistic about the future of our two Anglophone territories. To start with, the introduction and widespread availability of firearms in the area

ensures that it shall be unstable and insecure for decades to come. Secondly, there is no unified leadership structure among our people, which also is a recipe for internal conflict as has been witnessed within the different separatist groups now operating in the area. Some seem to be pinning their hopes on the departure of the Biya regime, either through the president's departure by retirement or in a coffin, but all I see as a consequence is an escalation of the infighting among the fractious factions of the 'liberation struggle' more bent on acquiring power than liberating anyone. All I can foresee is the continuous suffering of the ordinary citizens who are victims of the war entrepreneurs in the military and the separatists.

Back to the book where can readers at home and abroad procure copies and how affordable is the book?

Julius Wamey: The book is available online and in print on Amazon.com. We shall be updating readers when the print version becomes available in local bookshops in Cameroon in the not-too-distant future.



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South Sudan in Focus With Ambassador Philip Jada Natana

By Ajong Mbapndah L

The notion that South Sudan is a basket case is nothing compared to palpable realities on the ground, says Ambassador Philip Jada Natana. In Washington since 2018 as South Sudan's Ambassador to the USA, Philip Jada Natana says the formidable economic potential of Africa's youngest nation makes it an attractive investment destination in East Africa.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with PAV in Washington, DC, Ambassador Natana says while the country was slowly but steadily making progress in navigating early post-independence challenges. For Ambassador Natana, the leadership in Juba is committed to peace through the revitalized peace agreement. Those who shun South Sudan and ignore the investment opportunities available are leaving a vacuum that other willing investors will fill Ambassador Natana said.

While many are quick to see oil as the only investment sector, Ambassador Natana points to agriculture, health, infrastructure, mining, and tourism as other sectors with strong investment potential that could boost the country's economy, create jobs, and eradicate poverty.

From politics, to the economy, the peace process, investment opportunities, relations with the USA, and more, Ambassador Philip Jada Natana fields questions on South Sudan, acknowledging challenges, highlighting its progress and sounding optimistic about its future.

May we start with a synopsis of how South Sudan is doing economically, politically and socially?

Ambassador Jada Natana: South Sudan at this moment like any other country in the world has its challenges. It is the youngest country in the world. Economically, we are starting from scratch in terms of the infrastructure, and services to the people among others. Our priority as we became an independent country



The formidable economic potential of Africa's youngest nation makes it an attractive investment destination in East Africa, says Ambassador Philip Jada Natana. Photo PAV.

was addressing the challenges that we had, and that alone took a lot out of the economy. When we became independent, oil became our biggest source of revenue. Most of the proceeds we had from oil had to go to address the situation that we had in terms of developing the country. The potential is there and great but two years after independence we had this agreement on the leadership of the country which resulted in a coup that put the country back to war. That took the focus of the country back from the focus on investing in services and infrastructure for the population. Most of what we had, had to be redirected to trying to defend the country and the fighting and that was an unfortunate part.

We are coming out of that. In 2015 we signed an agreement which created the government of National Unity and things didn't go well the next year as there was an outbreak of conflict in Juba. In 2018 we signed a peace agreement on September 10. Since that time the peace has been holding, and most of the opposition groups joined the government. We have a government of national unity that has been formed, we have a cabinet and legislature that has been formed. As part of the agreement, it was agreed that we were going to have a unified army; a joint training exercise started for all of the forces that were not part

of the government and we formed the Joint Unified Force. The first batch has already graduated and at this moment we are working on forming the command, most of that has been done.

Without peace, any of these projects whether they are infrastructure or service delivery won't be possible. We are optimistic that the peace process will move forward. The end of the initial period ended this year but had to be extended to 2025; we will have elections in December 2024 and in February 2025 we hope to have a new government in place. So, politically, we are on the right track and once we achieve most of these points that I have outlined then we can also progress well on the other things we are talking about economically; service delivery, building of the infrastructure that will open ways for us to trade within the continent but also outside the continent.

When people hear about South Sudan, the image that comes to mind is that of war and suffering. How much of this in today's context is fiction and how much is reality?

Ambassador Jada Natana: If you follow the media, it is not only South Sudan but most of the news on the continent is about sufferings and conflicts. These are stories that are

put out by humanitarian agencies; humanitarian agencies are big businesses around the world. Yes, there is suffering in South Sudan because of the conflicts I had outlined; there was war but now there is none. The unfortunate reality that you have in the West is that people are so focused on looking at the continent as a whole through what I call the rearview mirror – that has to change. Unfortunately, on the continent, we are not good at that because most journalists who visit the country do so in times of crisis because that is what sells and that is what the Western media mostly picks.

There is so much focus on humanitarian assistance, of course, we are grateful for the generosity of the West in providing all this humanitarian assistance, but continuous humanitarian assistance creates dependence and that is not what the continent needs – the continent needs a strong population that can feed itself and also contribute in terms of tax to make the country strong. Our priority is to see that we have peace, and we can exploit all the resources that we have on the continent. Strangely, when people hear about South Sudan, especially from the West, they hear about conflict and famine but if you go to the continent or South Sudan, you will be shocked to find out that despite all

these negative profiles, investors are coming to South Sudan. In the regions, maybe we are the country that has the biggest number of foreigners. Ethiopians, Kenyans, and Ugandans are there in their thousands.

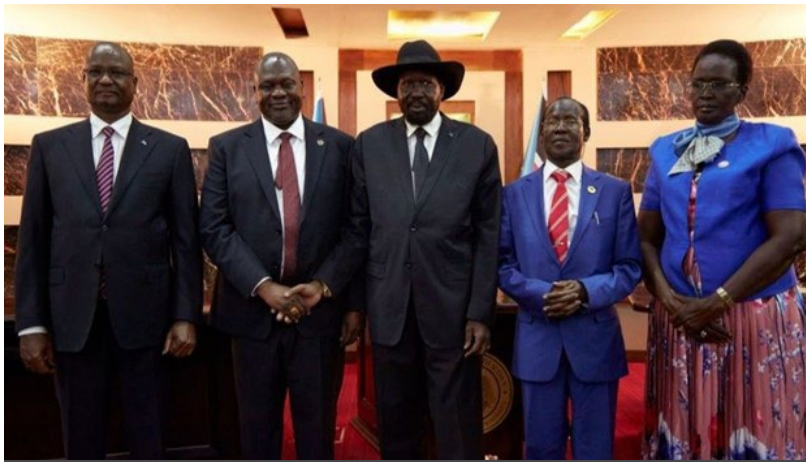
While people look at South Sudan as a place that may be dangerous and so on, most of our neighbours look at it as a land where they can find opportunities. This has been positive for us because it is helping the local population of South Sudan to realize this potential that has always been there; before they

didn't know. Yes, we have our share of challenges, but the focus is so much on looking at things in the rearview mirror which does not give you the actual situation on the ground. Now, some countries have more problems in terms of fighting and instability; we are now taking in refugees in South Sudan. When you get refugees coming into your country, that is already an indication that they find it safer.

Some international partners think that the revitalized peace agreement is not moving as fast as it should. When you look at South Sudan today, what are some of the palpable differences that one can see from the revitalized peace agreement?

Ambassador Jada Natana: The revitalized peace agreement when it was signed had benchmarks that we had to respect and adhere to. Some of them like having a unified force, graduating them in time so that they can secure the country and so on. That was the plan but when it came to the implementation, we had the challenges that I already talked about, we had COVID which everybody lost for almost a year, and we had the flooding. We have been in discussions with some of our allies in the West and partners; when they express their concerns, we tell them that yes, we acknowledge that we are behind, but these are the realities. There is a lot of impatience on what is happening in South Sudan, but we are on the right track.

We South Sudanese are the



There is a lot of impatience on what is happening in South Sudan, but we are on the right track, says Ambassador Jada Natana on the Revitalized Peace Agreement.

ones who are feeling the brunt of whatever is happening in terms of the implementation of the peace agreement. We think we are on the right track; we will try to fast-track some of these. When we signed the revitalized peace agreement in September 2018, many countries especially in the West never believed that this agreement was going to hold. Here we are now, from 2018 next month it will be five years and the revitalized peace agreement is holding. That is more than a term for the U.S. President and if that can hold it is more to tell you that people are serious despite all the challenges that are there. Yes, we are slow in the implementation, but we are sure that we are going to achieve total peace in South Sudan.

Peace is also about trust; building trust after a time of conflict also takes time. We are progressing on the implementation of the security measures, we are also progressing on the constitutional process, and the political process is apt. Soon, there will be registration of these political parties and we go for elections so that the people of South Sudan choose the government that they will want to run the country.

What is the state of relations between South Sudan and the U.S.A. now?

Ambassador Jada Natana: The U.S. is one of those countries that helped us during our struggle for independence, though they came in a little bit late for that. Sometimes I think we in

Africa are a little bit naïve because of our culture. The U.S. is deeply involved in providing humanitarian assistance to South Sudan, but they are getting fatigued now in giving this humanitarian assistance. That is why we keep calling for support to the peace agreement side so that we don't depend on the outside, especially for food. We also have this feeling that sometimes the U.S. feels that we are not doing what they tell us to do. They might be right, but our reality is that with countries that come from a revolutionary background, we also have our agenda. We normally don't do what others tell us to do but, we do what is good for us.

Our relationship with the U.S. has not been as good as it was before because they have this doubt and frustration from the conflict, but I have this strong belief that we will continue engaging with them as we implement our peace agreement. In the future when we now depend on ourselves and we have all these things and bring something to the table in the community of nations, people will look at us with more respect which I don't think is happening now. It is all about taking charge of our affairs and looking for allies. The U.S. has its interest and we as South Sudanese have our interest. The international stage is not the business of charity, when they give you something they expect you to do that.

With the humanitarian assistance that is being provided, every time we have meetings with our friends in Western countries, we are always

reminded about the figures that are given to us in terms of humanitarian assistance. We feel grateful for the generosity but maybe it does not sit so well with us in the African context. But we will come out of that and that is the reality we need to wake up from.

What is your reaction to the recent State Department advisory cautioning U.S. businesses against doing business in South Sudan?

Ambassador Jada Natana: Unfortunately, the U.S. issued

that business advisory at this time because what they have made is to create a vacuum for Western businesses in South Sudan. It is a natural law of nature that when there is a vacuum it is going to be filled. We already have people on the continent who are investing in South Sudan and have gone there for business. In so many of our meetings as Ambassadors from Africa with authorities from the U.S., there has always been this complaint that we are allowing the Chinese and giving them the opportunities to come and do sub-standard work in Africa. Our response has always been that if you don't invest in Africa or South Sudan, someone else will come and do that.

At the moment when we are expecting an economic conference to happen in South Sudan; we are trying to extend invitations to businesses here in the U.S. to go to South Sudan and look at the opportunities. While the U.S. says they do not direct businesses to go to South Sudan, now they have stated this, do you think businesses from the U.S. will go to South Sudan? Directly they are telling them not to go while at the same time, they will tell us to come and convince businesses to go to South Sudan. That is already a hindrance and leaves a vacuum that unfortunately is going to be occupied by anyone.

The reality for us Africans is that we are very forgiving. After a lot of brutality from the colonial masters, Africans forgave the countries and traded with them. We are looking forward to working with the

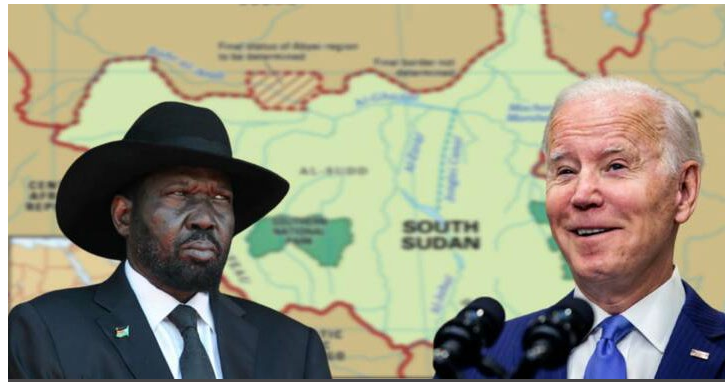
Americans in terms of trade, it is going to be a win-win situation. If they invest in South Sudan, especially in the agricultural, mining and oil sectors, there is so much that they will find from there. While we are opening up business opportunities in South Sudan for everyone, we will continue to engage directly with American business people, and I am sure that one day some of them will go and find out that what they are being told is not the situation on the ground. They will come; it will be late but as they say, it is better late than never.

What is the investment climate like in South Sudan and for interested companies, what are some of the areas they may want to look out for when they come to your country?

Ambassador Jada Natana: The business climate is conducive in South Sudan. South Sudan is the only country on the continent if not the world that has got a very fast return on investment, especially in terms of real estate. There are other sectors that you look at such as supplies and infrastructure. If there was so much risk, nobody would want to invest. So many foreigners are investing in South Sudan in different fields; it is only that their capacities are a little bit smaller.

We would like to see more foreign direct investment coming from the West in terms of developing more power facilities because that is what we need; we need in agribusiness and farming. That is not happening at this moment but what we are doing now in South Sudan is cultivating trust so that when people come in, they can trust that they can do business and within this time this is how much we can make in terms of profit. These are the people who will be our ambassadors because when they go back, they will be able to say this is what I have as an investment. The atmosphere is conducive for businesses in South Sudan.

What is the role of indigenous South Sudanese companies like the Trinity Group in advancing the development goals of the



The recent business advisory from the State Department creates a vacuum for western businesses, says Ambassador Jada Natana. Photo courtesy.

country?

Ambassador Jada Natana: When you have indigenous businesses investing in South Sudan, they create employment and sometimes fill the gap. Trinity has been doing a tremendous job, especially when there is a shortage of fuel. We export oil from South Sudan, but we don't do refined products, so we have to import. Most of these businesses are dominated by foreign companies; the Somalis are leading in terms of importing fuel into the country. Sometimes when they have their situation and it doesn't become a priority, fuel prices go up and they don't make a lot of profits and the supply goes down. Trinity comes in to try to help to fill in the gap plus all the other businesses. Indigenous companies are doing so much in terms of helping to stabilize things in South Sudan.

What is the nature of your relations with the other Ambassadors from African countries and how do you balance your role advocating for South Sudan and working with them to advance

continental-wide objectives?

Ambassador Jada Natana: I came to Washington in September 2018, and we always have to pay the courtesies and one of the stops is to see the dean of the diplomatic corps and then the dean of the African diplomatic corps. We have a group, the African Diplomatic Corps, ADC, a group that has all the Ambassadors on the continent and we have things that we share in common. For example, when there was the U.S.-Africa Summit, we met several times to see the issues we wanted. We had an African common position which we shared with all our capitals. We have continued lobbying for the African extension of the AGOA; some countries are eligible to and unfortunately, South Sudan is not now because of the conflict. When we negotiate about AGOA, we negotiate as Africa.

Besides having the ADC, we have our regional groupings. I have two groups: the East African Community Group and IGAD. We do our bilateral engagement as countries, but we also have this common ground as Ambassadors on the level of the African diplomatic corps and the East African Group. This sometimes



Ambassador Natana says for the opportunities and business climate, investors should take a second look at South Sudan. Photo credit PAV.

makes it easier for us to be able to put our position as a continent.

Any other reassuring message you would like to send to those who remain skeptical and think that South Sudan is a basket case? Why should they have hope and faith in their country?

Ambassador Jada Natana: South Sudan is not a basket case, and it is good that we make the case here through media that represent the continent like Pan African Visions. Saying the continent is a basket case is all by design so that you take all the resources and keep the countries poor and for them to continue to supply you, it is a capitalist mentality. If we start making our chocolate in West Africa and sell it, what do you think the impact will be in the West? If we start to make our refined products like gas and also start mining and refining our gold and keep it as our reserves, what do you think will happen to the currencies of other countries that are dominating us today? Africa as a whole, not just South Sudan needs to wake up.

What is happening today in West Africa is not out of the blue; it is the frustration the young population are experiencing. We are now in the age of the internet where anybody can be able to find out what is happening. The West should not live in this delusion that they will continue to win over our leaders because we have a young population and if they get frustrated, they will say enough is enough.

What has happened in Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso should not be seen in isolation. Things are changing and I am sure if you talked to people on the continent, they had always blamed their leaders but now they are realizing that maybe there is some kind of remote control somewhere. Once they detach, the continent will change in a different direction. We will continue in our African friendliness to reach out to our partners and friends that we want to do business with and work together because there are things that are shared.

An Overview Of The Mauritius Variable Capital Company (VCC)

By Michael Adjei*

When looking to invest their hard-earned money, investors have various options to choose from, including investment funds and variable capital companies (VCC's). These investment vehicles both offer advantages and disadvantages, and it is essential to consider these before deciding which one to invest in. In this article, we will give an overview of the Mauritian VCC and explore its features.

Both investment funds and VCCs offer investors advantages when it comes to investing their money. However, a VCC offers greater flexibility, efficiency and ring fencing of Assets and Liabilities.

The Variable Capital Company (VCC) is a corporate entity structure under which several collective investment schemes (whether open-end or closed end) may be gathered under the umbrella of a single corporate entity and yet remain ring-fenced from each other. It's a new structure which provides investment managers with a flexible and efficient vehicle that streamlines management and operations as it permits the set-up of Sub-Funds ("SFs") and Special Purpose Vehicles ("SPVs") within the same entity.

The VCC can accommodate both a CIS and a CEF under one structure, therefore providing fund managers an additional structuring option with economies of scale and cost efficiencies. Its flexibility offers investors a diverse investment opportunity as the scheme also offers cost advantages by allowing funds to be established with reduced administrative and operational expenses. This cost efficiency is an attraction to investment managers as it also allows for different types of investment scenarios, such as open or close-ended investment funds, private equity structures, hedge funds, and venture capital funds. The corporate entity structure gives funds an alternative to unit trusts, limited partnerships, limited liability partnerships and companies.



Michael Adjei is International Business Development Executive at Órama.

Funds and sub-funds of VCCs may be authorised schemes or restricted schemes.

Mauritius has been at the forefront of providing innovative products and solutions to investors. The Variable Capital Companies Act 2022 came into existence in May 2022, introducing the fund vehicle known as the variable capital company (VCC), with objective to provide a flexible fund vehicle to cross-border investors while diversifying its product base and enhancing its competitiveness as a fund management hub. A VCC is incorporated under the Companies Act 2001 and carries out its activities through sub-funds and SPVs. A VCC needs to be authorised by the FSC (as a "VCC Fund", pursuant to the Variable Capital Companies Act 2022.) A VCC can operate as a standalone investment fund or structured as an umbrella fund through its sub-funds and / or its SPVs.

The Mauritian VCC enhances the

jurisdictions position as a highly respected International Financial Centre, availing a wider range of investment opportunities for international investors. It is set to revolutionize the investment landscape in Mauritius. With its flexibility, cost & fiscal efficiencies, and emphasis on governance, the VCC Scheme attracts investment funds, strengthens the financial services industry, and promotes cross-border investments. While the VCC Scheme is gaining momentum, Mauritius establishes itself as a preferred destination for fund managers and investors seeking a dynamic and supportive ecosystem for their investment ventures. This influx of funds enhances capital inflows, boosts economic growth, and diversifies the financial sector.

The Mauritian VCC has considerable flexibility for different types of investment scenarios. The assets and liabilities of one sub-fund

or SPV are segregated from those of another and, as such, the liabilities of a sub-fund under an umbrella VCC can only be discharged from its assets and not out of the assets of the other sub-funds or SPVs. Unlike a PCC, one sub-fund of a VCC Fund can be structured as a CIS, while another sub-fund of the same VCC Fund can be structured as a CEF. Therefore, a VCC Fund can accommodate both open-ended and closed-ended structures under one "umbrella" structure. In addition, the sub-fund or SPV of a VCC Fund may have separate legal personality from that of the VCC Fund (i.e., separate name and legal entity), in which case it must be incorporated as a company under the Companies Act 2001. A sub-fund of a VCC Fund can also act as a feeder fund or a master fund. On the other hand, SPVs can only operate as a vehicle ancillary to the VCC or a sub-fund of the VCC, and not as a fund on their own.

Mauritius is also a competitive



AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAURITIUS VARIABLE CAPITAL COMPANY (VCC)



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tax jurisdiction with good corporate governance policies in place, enhancing the competitiveness of Mauritius as a fund domicile, attracting both local and international investors. The foundation and constitution of a VCC are typically shared with investors and the terms are agreed upon, prior to investment. This makes a VCC more considerate and accommodating of investor operations compared to entities governed solely under the Mauritius Companies Act 2001. Moreover, a VCC includes an important feature that prohibits the voluntary winding up of any sub-fund or SPV, unless the VCC presents a plan to the FSC. This provision ensures better protection and satisfaction of investors' interests in the respective sub-fund or SPV.

Summary of Key Features of the Mauritius VCC

The remarkable feature of the Mauritius VCC structure rests in the flexibility for the SFs or SPVs to elect separate legal personalities or not. Where a SF or SPV elects to have a separate legal personality from the VCC, the requirement to prepare separate financial statements for such SF or SPV will apply. Each SF and SPV will also be required to file

separate tax return with the revenue authorities. Hence, the tax obligations under the ITA will be applicable to each SF and SPV individually when such election is made. Here are some additional features:

A Global Business Company (GBC) incorporated in Mauritius may be converted into a VCC. A company incorporated in other jurisdictions may be redomiciled in Mauritius as a VCC. A VCC enables a Fund Promoter to carry out business through one or more sub-funds and SPVs within one structure providing for economies of scale; each sub fund or SPV may opt to have a legal personality distinct from the VCC.

A sub-fund or SPV shall have the same promoter as the VCC Fund. A sub-fund of a VCC Fund can also act as a feeder fund or a master fund. It is noteworthy that there is no restriction on the number of sub-entities that can be created under the VCC structure. The sub-funds can be set-up as a stand-alone (single) fund, or an umbrella structure with multiple sub-funds that can be incorporated as CIS and CEF all within one structure. Each sub fund or SPV shall incur liability on its own and shall be segregated ensuring ring-fencing of

the assets and liabilities of each sub fund in case of insolvency.

A VCC may issue shares of varying amounts. The variable capital basis allows for issuance, redemption or repurchase of shares at NAV except for shares issued during initial offers and shares of closed-end funds listed on a securities exchange. Investors shall be entitled to refund in accordance with the number of shares they own in the sub-funds or SPVs, where shares are redeemed or brought back. Cross sub-fund investments and cross SPV investments are permitted within the same VCC. The board of the VCC shall determine solvency prior to distribution of dividend. Investors may apply to the Registrar of Companies to reduce the share capital of the sub-fund or special purpose vehicle in which they hold shares subject to the requisite corporate resolution. A VCC Fund which meets the criteria provided under Section 71 of the Financial Services Act 2007, will be required to hold a Global Business License (GBL).

A GBL company is tax resident in Mauritius and is eligible to benefit from the network of Double Taxation Agreements that Mauritius has entered into with other countries. A

single GBL will be required by the VCC Fund irrespective of whether its sub-funds or SPVs have separate legal personality. The FSC expects a VCC Fund to appoint the same Company Secretary (Management Company in case it holds a GBL) for all of its incorporated sub-funds/SPVs. Economies of scale exist for umbrella structures with multiple sub-funds.

In a nutshell, a Variable Capital Company can offer significant benefits and advantages for investors and fund managers alike. Its flexibility, tax efficiency, protection for investors, and transparency make it an attractive investment vehicle for a wide range of fund types. As such, VCCs are becoming an increasingly popular option for investors looking for a more effective way to invest their capital.

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Africa's Continental Dilemma—Geopolitics at a Time of Upheaval

By Otobong Inieke*

Aside from the relatively positive developments in terms of economic cooperation through China-Africa relations, much of the continent is under multidimensional pressure, diplomatically, militarily, and socio-politically. While South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa led a peace delegation to Ukraine and Russia seeking a path to peace, the move has mostly been criticized as a face-saving move or an ineffective attempt to deal with issues outside the control of Africans. With both countries rejecting the proposal, the South African leader also saw his Polish protection detail prevent smooth passage in that country, an incident that can be considered as a diplomatic cold shoulder to the delegation.

At the same time, the argument of misplaced priorities has a place because when one considers the situation in Sudan and the insecurity across the Sahel, it can be said that Africa's diplomatic heft and talent would be better spent bolstering the African Union's ability to mediate and assist in conflict resolution. Moreover, the unbalanced system of global trade means that African countries are dangerously dependent on foreign regions for what has become critical food sources like wheat, while local agricultural systems are chronically underdeveloped. Research by Development Reimagined showed not only that the European Union was responsible for one-quarter of Africa's total agricultural imports as of 2021, but also that African countries spent roughly \$67.6 billion with the majority of that expenditure coming from Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, and Ethiopia. The report further suggests that while Africa can feed itself, problems with infrastructure, underdeveloped agricultural sectors, and unbalanced trade patterns means that achieving self-sustenance and development goals will remain challenging.

While South Africa is confronting



U.S. President Joe Biden poses for a group photo with African leaders at the 2022 USA-African Leaders Summit. Photo credit Ken Cedeno, Reuters.

diplomatic challenges head-on, Algeria has stepped up overt activities signaling a willingness to strengthen cooperation with Russia. Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune paid a three-day visit to Moscow during his meeting with Russian President Putin, both leaders signed a declaration on a so-called deep strategic partnership. The Algerian leader was quoted as saying that "foreign countries may put pressure on us today but this will never affect our ties." The Russian leader also highlighted Algeria as a key partner in Africa and expressed the hope to increase energy and military cooperation. These diplomatic developments will not be without geopolitical repercussions, in the form of a reaction from Morocco which is a key ally to the United States and Western Europe which are in deep geopolitical rivalry with Russia and China, it must be noted that these are ripe conditions for proxy confrontations as was the order of the day during the Cold War that never really thawed. Another tension point is the issue of the Algerian support for the Polisario Front of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR); Morocco claims territorial sovereignty over Western Sahara with

Euro-Atlantic support, while Algeria supports the independence struggle of the SADR. These are among the developments to be closely observed, how will an unfolding of these tensions affect matters in the region?

West Africa in recent times has witnessed a rise in anti-French sentiment, both as a reaction against the legacies of colonialism as well as fatigue with the European country's military interventions that have not yielded favorable results in the many years that Operation Barkhane has been active. The main societies reacting in this regard are Mali and Burkina Faso who have evicted diplomats and called for the termination of military cooperation deals to be followed by the withdrawal of French forces as soon as possible. As one imagines, Paris leaves the situation highly disappointed but fails to acknowledge the parallels its military operations have with the United States and its failed missions of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan, of which the United States' Afghan mission lasted 19 years ending in May 2021. On the other hand, the problem of violent attacks by non-state actors continued, an issue the military operations were intended to solve. The situation was further incensed

after Malian leadership in Prime Minister Choguel Kokalla Maiga spoke to Al-Jazeera saying France has been providing training to terrorist groups in Kidal town of which the government has no access.

Aside from the changes Mali has made in its relations with France, internally the country has organized a referendum on a new constitution, and the population has largely mobilized to vote on the decision to build a new constitution. This is an important signal of good faith that the military leadership is sending not only to the wider population but to the international community as well.

Toward the horn of Africa, tensions have not reduced; after another failed ceasefire agreement, reports suggested that the governor of West Darfur region had been killed apparently after making critical comments against the paramilitary Rapid Security Forces (RSF). Conflict resolution attempts have also not fared properly, with the latest move being rejected by Sudan, on the ground that Kenya's chairmanship of the Intergovernmental Authority and Development (IGAD) mediation effort is unacceptable because Kenya is not neutral in the Sudan crisis. And in evidence of spillover from

the conflict, health care centers in neighboring Chad are becoming overwhelmed as a result of hundreds of wounded arriving from Sudan, this is according to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

The chaos that has sprung from competing power centers has already put the region in a dire state of uncertainty and it is yet to be seen the response from regional governing bodies like the IGAD, East African Community, or the African Union. In a shift in regional geopolitics also, Eritrea has rejoined the IGAD and

resumed its activities after 16 years since it suspended its membership in 2007. This was a move that was made in protest of Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia, and in complaint that the organization was being manipulated by external interests. Conversely, Tigray and Amhara leaders in Ethiopia have met and agreed on a path to peace through dialogue, a much sought-after silver lining in continental developments, the two sides that were involved in a brutal war that erupted in 2020 shared their commitment to reopen road transport

between the two regions and also work toward resolving differences for lasting stability.

The many developments around Africa and their impact on global trade, security, and politics show that scholars, analysts, policymakers, and the peoples of the continent must adjust to a more active position in terms of expressing unity in purpose and development. A geopolitically fractured Africa does not serve the interests or growth potential of Africans, but as a matter of fact, keeps the various countries in a vulnerable

position where international relations do not serve as channels for development. The turn toward global multipolarity is an opportunity that must not be squandered.

*Courtesy Globetrotter. Otobong Inieke is an independent researcher with a strong focus on Pan-Africanism, geopolitics, and media literacy. He is based in Nigeria, and his writings have been published with Cosmonaut magazine, Black Agenda Report, and Orinoco Tribune. _____

Q & A With Makmid Kamara On Public Interest Media In Africa

By Ajong Mbapndah L

Appointed recently as the Regional Director for Africa and the Middle East for the International Fund for Public Interest Media-IFPIM, Makmid Kamara has embraced his new role with gusto. With a mission to provide fresh, ambitious, coordinated, and well-resourced strategic international response to the crisis facing independent media around the world, Makmid Kamara takes on the assignment at a very challenging time for the media in Africa. In a Q & A with PAV, Kamara sheds light on the vision of the IFPIM and how it intends to make a difference in Africa and the Middle East.

Could you start with an introduction of the International Fund for Public Interest Media IFPIM?

Makmid Kamara: IFPIM is a bold new multi-stakeholder initiative designed to effectively diagnose and address the challenges facing public interest media in low- and middle-income countries and help to identify pathways toward long-term sustainability. The International Fund seeks to provide a fresh, ambitious, coordinated, and well-resourced strategic international response to the crisis facing independent media around the world. The Fund aims to radically increase the amount of funding available to support ethical, non-partisan, fact-based journalism, and to enable the media



Kamara will guide the IFPIM's strategy and grant-making across Africa and the Middle East.

to work for democracy. The Fund will support media through this period of existential threat and aims to develop lasting solutions to the current media market failure. The Fund will complement existing efforts in the media development sector and will catalyze new money as a globally coordinated, but fully independent, vehicle that can act quickly to provide critical funding and support to hundreds – if not thousands – of

and enable the media to work for democracy. This fund will support media through this time of existential threat and aims to develop lasting solutions to the current media market failure. The Fund will complement existing efforts in the sector and will catalyze new money as a globally coordinated but fully independent vehicle that can act quickly to provide critical funding and support to hundreds – if not thousands – of public interest media organizations worldwide.

The Fund has been designed to minimize interference in the internal affairs of the countries it supports. Its governance arrangements and international nature ensure funds are allocated efficiently and in ways that command maximum legitimacy in the eyes of media institutions and other democratic stakeholders in beneficiary countries.

The Fund is co-chaired by Maria Ressa, journalist, CEO of Rappler and 2021 Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Mark Thompson, former CEO of New York Times and Director General of the BBC.

public interest media organizations worldwide.

Per the IFPIM, what is the definition of public interest media, in the African context, what will constitute public interest media?

Makmid Kamara : IFPIM aims to radically increase the amount of funding available to support ethical, non-partisan, fact-based journalism,

You were recently appointed by the International Fund for Public Interest Media as its inaugural regional director for Africa and the Middle East, can you shed light on this new role and what you will be doing?

Makmid Kamara : As the inaugural



Makmid Kamara takes on the assignment at a very challenging time for the media in Africa.

Regional Director for the region, I will work with colleagues to guide the International Fund's strategy and grant-making process across Africa and the Middle East. I will collaborate with colleagues and other partners to provide strategic leadership and oversee the implementation of IFPIM's strategy for the region, including the strategy for individual countries within the region. The Fund will develop context-specific country strategies, rooted in a clear political economy analysis of the countries concerned. In addition, together with my colleagues, we will develop partnerships between CSOs, media development organisations, media and government (where appropriate) to improve strategies focused on improving public access to information in the region.

What are some of the challenges that public interest media face and how would the IFPIM be able to make a difference?

Makmid Kamara: Around the world, public interest media faces fundamentally challenging conditions, from deteriorating business models as a result of declining revenue to the worrying rise of government crackdowns on journalists. In particular, the advent of digital advertising has severely hampered traditional funding models for journalism. These existential challenges have been accelerated by

the COVID-19 pandemic which, for many communities, will be a "media extinction event."

Public interest media is particularly endangered in low- and middle-income countries, where media infrastructure is most fragile and audience engagement has decoupled from advertising revenue. As news outlets struggle to stay afloat, media ecosystems begin to collapse — an outcome linked to increased corruption, conflict, violent extremism, and human-caused disasters like famines and epidemics. Now more than ever, public interest media is a key pillar of democracy, good governance, and sustainable development.

A feasibility study conducted by BBC Media Action showed that an International Fund for Public Interest Media would be an effective vehicle for bolstering public interest media, especially in low- and middle-income regions in the next decade or two, until new business models can be developed to address challenges faced by both individual news outlets and entire media ecosystems.

For the programs or partnership programs that you have, what will it take for interested media to benefit from them?

Makmid Kamara : The Fund will undertake a combination of approaches. Firstly, media institutions will have an opportunity to express

interest in partnering with IFPIM. Secondly, the Fund will reach out directly to media organisations in the selected countries of focus, to initiate a partnership process. A more detailed and clearer process will be communicated via IFPIM's website in due course.

Following significant early resource mobilization and the urgent need expressed by media organizations in focus regions, we announced the inaugural open call for grant proposals at World Press Freedom Day in May 2022. That call resulted in more than 200 funding applications, from which our first cohort of 13 grantees was selected.

These initial grantees are located across nine countries, comprise a broad diversity of organizations in terms of geography, language, editorial content, content distribution platforms, business models, and organizational maturity. The cohort is roughly evenly split across commercial, non-commercial, and hybrid business models. A majority are digital natives, publishing content primarily via their website and/or social media channels, and a little under one-third are primarily broadcast or print media.

On the website we discovered that there are only ten countries where media organizations are eligible for grants, is this not unfair or prejudicial to a continent with 54 countries

facing some of the most serious media challenges across the globe?

Makmid Kamara : This is a pilot phase for the International Fund. With more resources and strategic need, perhaps we could expand. But the countries selected so far were carefully chosen to help pilot the interventions and to respond to the urgency identified. There are also huge potentials for impact in all these countries. The successes and learning from these countries might probably help attract additional funding resources for IFPIM, which will in turn also probably accelerate expansion.

However, it must be noted that the International Fund cannot necessarily operate in all 54+ countries in the region. The interventions have to be strategic and carefully managed.

How do you think your background as a human rights leader, democracy advocate and development communications practitioner is going to be helpful in this new role?

Makmid Kamara : I believe this is a perfect fit. My background in all these fields and as a journalist means that I can relate with colleagues in the newsroom and I understand the imminence of this intervention. I intend to utilise the various experiences I have accumulated over the years, to advance the goals of IFPIM in the region and beyond.

My interactions in these sectors will also probably make it easier for me and my colleagues to draw on the various resources and support available for the advancement of public interest media in the region and globally.

With the energy and zest that you are bringing to the job, what changes should we expect to see when we come back for a follow up interview in a years' time?

Makmid Kamara : Hopefully next time we meet, IFPIM would have achieved its fundraising goal and more countries would have been added to the list of eligible countries. I also hope that in a few years from now, there will be less

The Rot Within: Corruption and Kenya's Immigration Department

By Samuel Ouma

The Kenya's Immigration Department is the latest government agency facing graft allegations besides Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (Kemsu) and the Kenya Power.

Mandated to issue passports and other travel documents, regulate entry and exit from the country, manage foreign nationals, and register Kenyan citizens, corruption has been detected in the department.

In June 2023, the Commission on Administrative Justice (CAJ) locally known as the Ombudsman, issued a devastating report revealing malpractices in passport issuing. According to the report presented by CAJ Chairperson Florence Kajuku, Kenyans are overcharged for passports.

It also revealed instances of documents being misplaced, documents being sent with less pages than requested, and bribery.

The CAJ launched investigations into the matter following complaints from a section of Kenyans on social media. Some passport applicants claimed that they were compelled to pay Kshh6,050 (\$42) for a 'B' series passport (50 pages) while applying online, only to be issued with 'A'



Kithure Kindiki, Interior Cabinet Secretary.

series passports (34 pages), which cost Ksh4550 (\$32).

However, when the complainants raise concerns, they are met with opposition from the officers working within the department. As a result, they are not refunded the extra amount they paid.

The commission linked the lack of

payment of the excess money to the complainants to a lack of internal policy or a procedure guiding and regulating issues that may arise during passport processing, such as cancellation of applications, giving immigration officials a chance to deal with such problems indiscriminately.

«Investigations revealed that the

Department of Immigration does not have a mechanism in place to automatically refund excess payment caused by the issuance of passports with fewer pages than requested. Refunds for complainants are likely to be delayed because the Department of Immigration relies on funds released by the National Treasury to process such refunds,» said CAJ vice chair Washington Sati.

According to CAJ chair Florence Kajuku, the manual refund method was found to be bureaucratic and time-consuming because the platform cannot combine several payments made by an applicant at various periods into a single invoice.

Furthermore, applicants whose documents went missing suffer the wrath of the employees, even if the fault is not theirs. For example, one applicant stated that he was obliged to reapply for her lost passport after the department's workers misplaced his documentation. Surprisingly, she was given the passport she had requested, but with only a few pages.

Some Kenyans revealed on Twitter



Kenyans line up to apply for a passport at the Immigration Department

that they had to pay immigration officers for their passports to be processed fast. They said the immigration officers claimed their equipment was broken. Still, if you spend a little sum in bribes, the equipment starts working again.

“Unless you Bribe for services the Printers won’t be functional,” said Kelvin Kangethe.

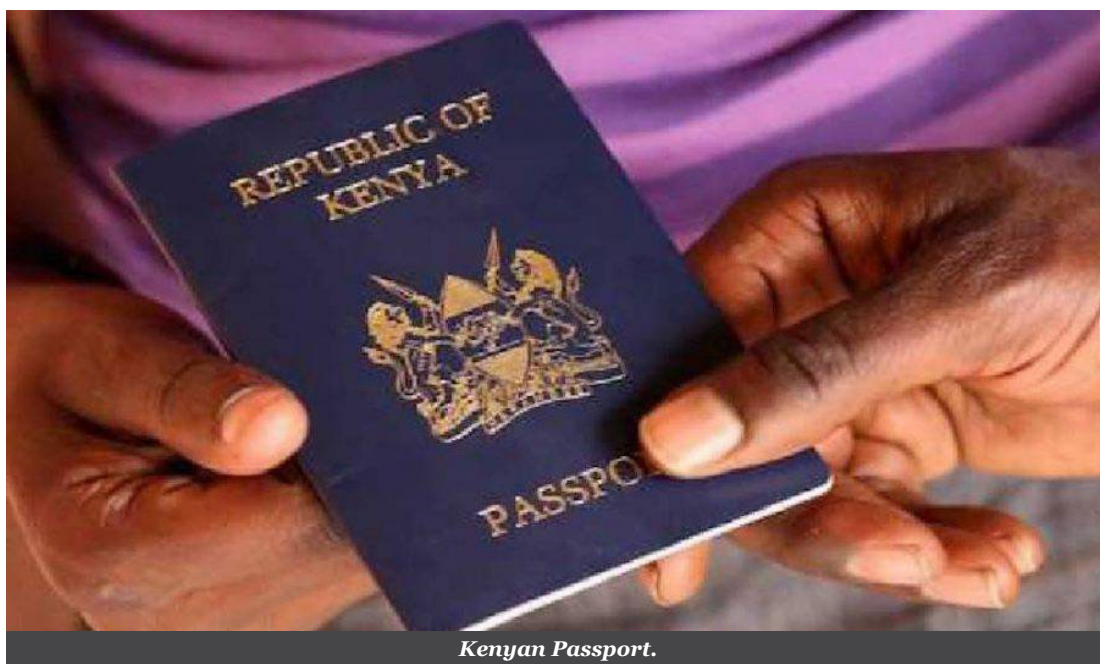
In other instances, bribes were paid, but the promised passports were not delivered, forcing the applicants to wait longer. Some people allegedly said they had been waiting for over a year.

“I lost my passport in 2019 and paid Ksh12000 (\$84) to replace it, but I have yet to get it. I was told the last time I enquired that the government had ceased the issuance of passports,” said a complaint who identified himself as PS of Promise.

Many Kenyans who cannot afford to pay bribes for the services that are supposed to be provided for free have been unable to obtain passports due to the department’s flagrant corruption, missing out on chances overseas.

«The issue of Passports is very serious. We even have people who have not been able to get their passports for now 3 years. The Media needs to just walk to the department and interview some of the applicants on the lines. Many have missed life-changing opportunities cause of it,» said Bravin Yuri.

«A close friend of mine applied for her passport three months ago, and later she got a job offer in Dubai, so I tried using a contact inside the department who charged me Ksh10 (\$70) and promised to have the passport ready in two weeks, but it’s now three weeks and phone calls go unanswered,» Steve Tajiri continued.



Kenyan Passport.

Interior Cabinet Secretary Kithure Kindiki attributed delays in processing passports to the massive corruption. As of August 24, 2023, the backlog stood at 58,000, with the department blaming a faulty printer. However, the department’s corrupt employees should be held liable.

«There are good officers serving the country patriotically, but there are others collecting bribes and harassing Kenyans to obtain services that they should be receiving for free,» said CS Kithure Kindiki.

Kindiki had declared the department based at Nyayo House in Nairobi Central Business District a crime scene, vowing to crack a whip on corrupt individuals.

«We will seal off Nyayo house & name it a scene of crime. How do Kenyans cue from 6AM? It won’t be business as usual,» reiterated Kindiki.

He went on to say that corruption at Nyayo House is to blame for some of Kenya’s current challenges, like insecurity and terrorism.

Kindiki said the government will lease high-capacity passport production machines from private investors to reduce the backlog.

He justified the action, claiming that the department’s machines are outdated and need replacing them.

Kindiki said that the government couldn’t afford the machines when asked by the parliamentarians why it chose to lease the printing equipment, prompting outrage from the public.

«The leasing will create an opportunity for tenderpreneurs to fleece the coffers. I thought the Finance Act 2023 which has taken effect and the current budget had factored in the buying of modern printing machines,» said Axel Yoh.

«This delay was stage-managed. Who was the prior printers’ supplier? Can’t they provide cutting-edge printers for the twenty-first century? Grace Mumbi inquired.

Mogere Julius added, “So private investors now have the ability to print passports? How? I dont get it at all!!

what is the investor doing with the printer for passports, a role that only government can do?? We know the private investor himself.”

Other measures established to expedite passport issues include longer working hours with double shifts both day and night, the establishment of special emergency desks, and the repair of broken-down machinery.

“The machines are now operational 24/7 after repairs allowing for daily processing. In addition, specific counters have been designated for emergency cases for individuals seeking to travel urgently,» said the Director-General of Immigration Evelyn Cheluget.

On the other hand, Kenyans want the department’s employees replaced and the culprits prosecuted with corruption in a court of law. This demand will not be met because corruption is celebrated in the East African country.

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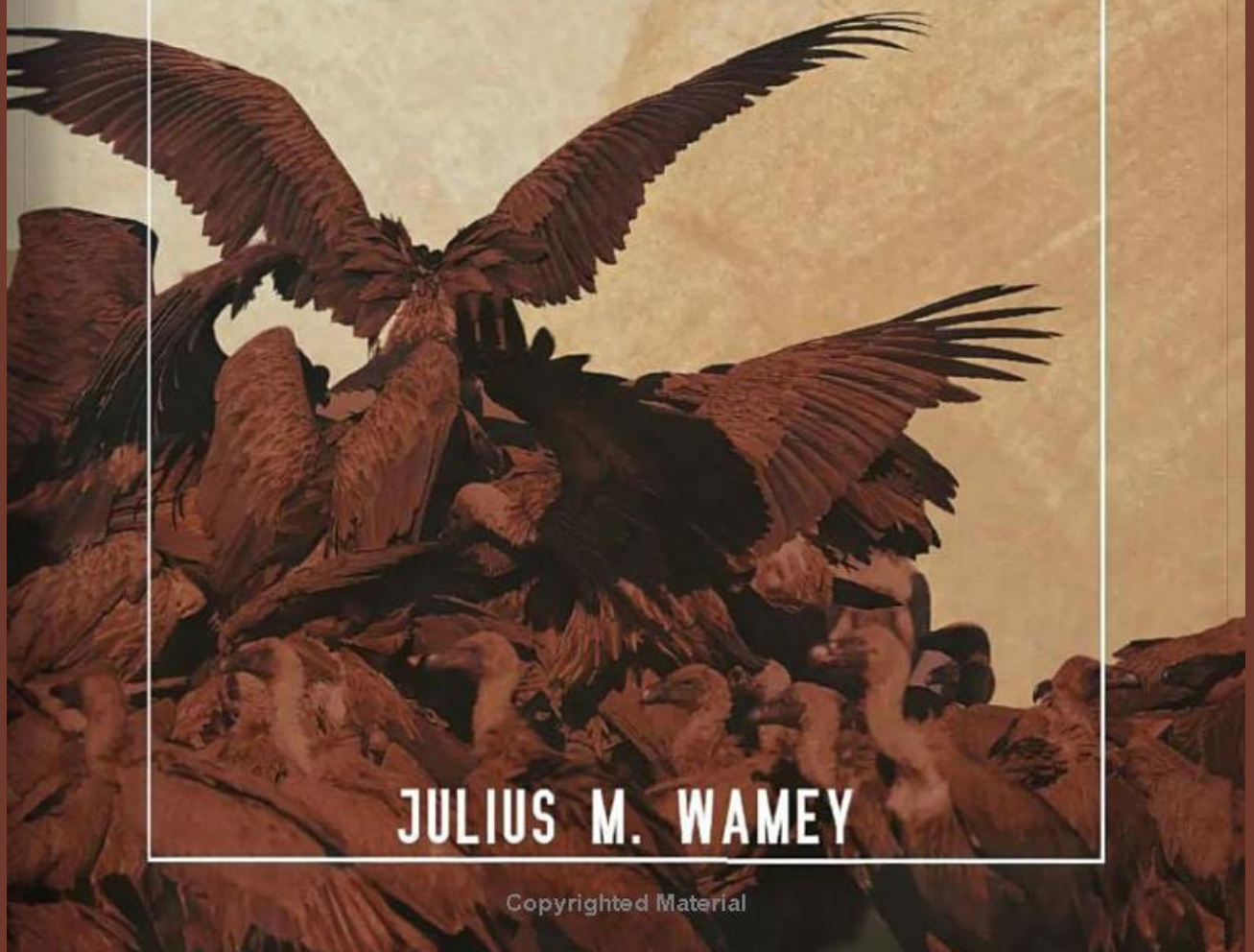
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South Africa: End Of An Era As Mama Kaap Dies

Thandisizwe Mgudlwa

Tributes continue to pour in following the death of internationally acclaimed musician, broadcaster, and actor Sylvia Mdunyelwa from the Langa township, in Cape Town.

Sylvia Nonceba Mdunyelwa was your classic modern day African Diva.

The world renowned artist started her illustrious singing career in the 1970s when she joined Victor Ntoni's sextet.

Mdunyelwa has been blessed to have worked alongside other leading Cape Town Jazz musicians amongst who were the Ngucakana brothers, Ezra and Duke Ngucakana, Winston Mankunku, Nick Carter and Merton Barrow.

Sylvia Ncediwe Mdunyelwa was born in the township of Langa in Cape Town for than 50 years ago.

With a career spanning over five decades, Mama Mdunyelwa is affectionately known as "Sis Nce" or "Mam Nce" to her Langa community or "Mama Kaap" to the broader Cape Town fan base.

«Mam Nce» relayed out her interpretation of jazz standards and traditional Xhosa songs.

Mam Nce became involved in developing the talent of young and aspiring musicians.

For example, in 1990 Mam Nce took a group of young musicians to the International Children's Jazz Festival in Canada.

And on her return, Mam Nce was awarded a scholarship by the Educational Opportunities Council.

Subsequently, she went to study at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA).

Mam Nce used this opportunity to polish her skills in music and theater. Upon her return, Mam Nce was invited to tour Germany where she performed at the Berlin Festival in 1994.

In a May 2020 interview, Mam Nce divulged; "I was listening to the



Sylvia Nonceba Mdunyelwa was your classic modern day African Diva. Photo courtesy.

legendary Ella Fitzgerald from the age of seven years, sweetheart," she says. "I grew up with jazz music around me. It was all about Ella, Carmen McCrae and Sarah Vaughan.

"It's what I do, it's what I love sweetheart," she said when asked about her long career.

Mam Nce also shared: "I was singing [Ella's signature tune] Mack The Knife, even though I did not know the English words. I was just a child and I sang just what I wanted to sing."

Mam Nce was later part of a cultural exchange programme where she went to Bogota, Colombia in South America to perform in 1997.

The following year, 1998, Mam Nce released her album African Diva, Live in Africa which focused on her performances at the Standard Bank Jazz Festival in Grahamstown.

In 1999, Mam Nce got a contract with Blue Note.

And in 2000 Mam Nce recorded her first studio album Ingoma (Song) which was produced by Victor Ntoni.

Mam Nce continued to speak glowingly of the a capella groups that flourished in the townships.

Some of them include groups like the Modern Chirpers, the Harmony Jigs, the Semitones who came under the guidance of Victor Ntoni and Aspro Sipoyo.

Mam Nce was awarded the 'Golden Guachupe' award in recognition for her community work in Cape Town, bestowed by the government of Colombia.

She became part of the BBC production of the life of Bishop Desmond Tutu.

Mam Nce presented Voice of Jazz, a programme on P4 Radio, Heart 104.9FM, which is a Cape Town radio station.

She was also a member of the board of Fine Music Radio, a classical jazz station in Cape Town.

Mam Nce also hosted her show on one of the biggest SABC Radio Stations in South Africa, Umhlobo Wenene FM, a Xhosa station.

Although Mam Nce never had formal singing lessons, she made sure that would never be an impediment in her career.

"I got it from my family and from

those around me in Langa. Langa was a place of good music in those days," reflects the legend.

Western Cape MEC of Cultural Affairs and Sport, Anroux Marais, said: "Sylvia will be remembered for her powerful voice and charismatic stage presence. Her legacy will live on not only through her music, but also through the impact she made on the South African music industry and the lives of many artists such as Fancy Galata, Lungiswa Plaatjies and many more from Langa and beyond. She remained involved in her community of Langa, advocating for the optimal utilization of local spaces such as Guga S'thebe by local artists and community. She was a true icon who paved the way for others and who continued to give back to her community.

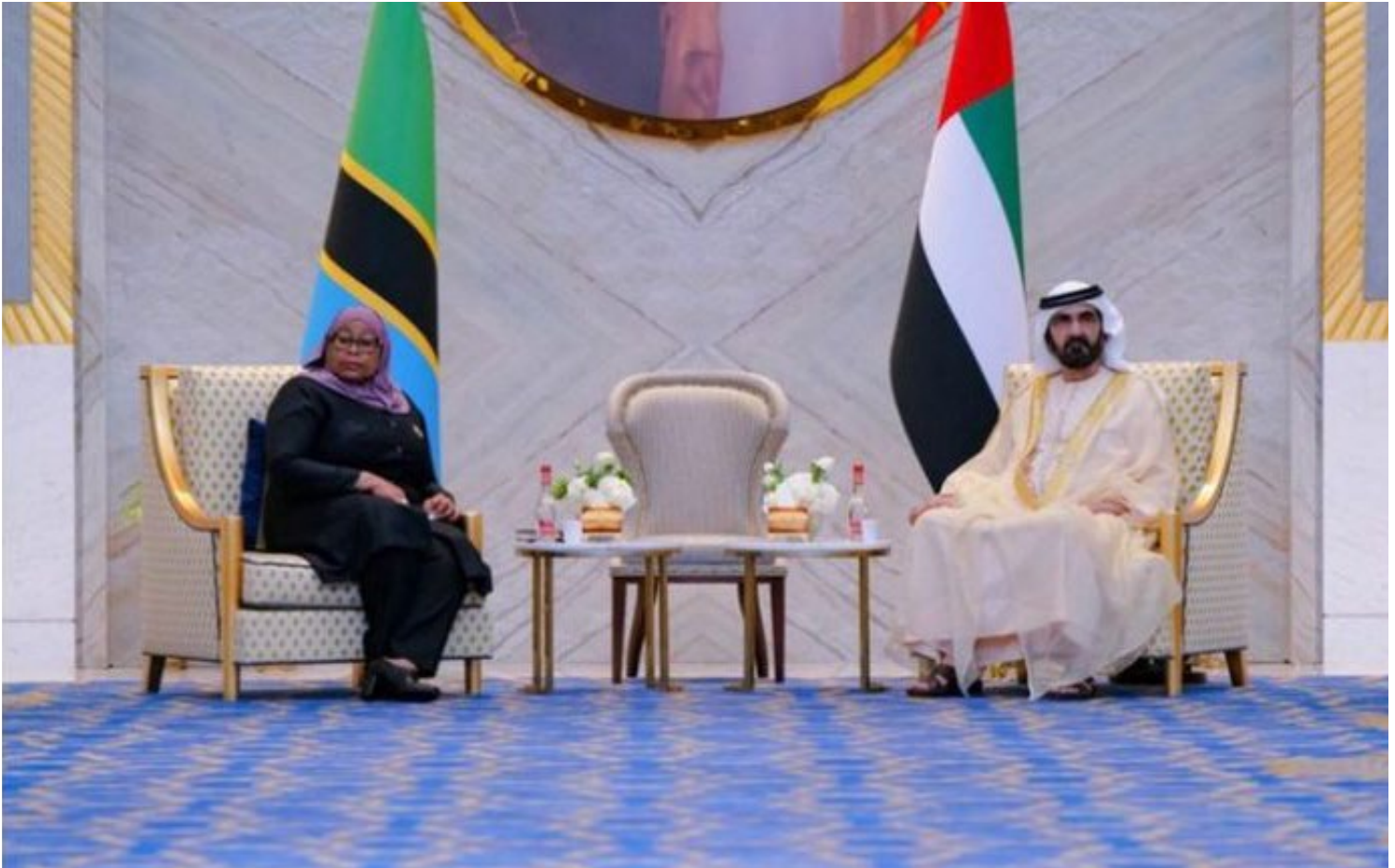
"Our condolences go out to Sylvia's family, friends and all those whose lives were touched by her music."

«Mama Kaap» passed on last week on Friday due to a short illness.

She will be buried on Saturday, September 2 in Langa.

Tanzania: Nonstop Criticisms Of Dubai Port Pact Sets Nation In Disarray

By Adonis Byemelwa



President Samia Suluhu Hassan with Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. Photo credit State House.

The Tanzania-Dubai-based multinational logistics company DP World pact that allows the latter to take over some operations at the Dar es Salaam Port, has stirred harsh criticism from several actors who think it will benefit the company more than Tanzania and its people.

Approved by the parliament on June 10, 2023, the agreement has put the government in a tight spot, forced to defend a deal that some have equated to an attempt to sell off the country to foreigners, a charge that those in power have vigorously rejected.

The dubious pact has put the government in the spotlight due to the suppression of dissidents by accusing them of treason, in which the staged peaceful demonstration by

the Tanzania diaspora in the United States Embassy on August 18 had ignited pressure on the release of a retired diplomat, Dr. Wilibrod Slaa, and two others, who were accused of subversion.

The diaspora was up in arms against the government's intolerance of the dissents, with diverse chants from demonstrators pressing for the step down of Inspector General of Police Camillus Wambura.

"We have no weapons to harm anyone but have concerns to be registered. Tulia Ackson must go, DP World must go, Camillus Wambura must go. We cry for freedom of speech. We push for the release of DP world critics unconditionally," said one of the demonstrators.

The diaspora had insisted on the importance of maintaining the

country's sovereignty, calling on the government to push for the new constitution which would see all unfair legislations kept at bay.

The diaspora's hullabaloo is believed to have forced The Tanzania Police Force to release retired diplomat, Dr. Wilibrod Slaa, advocate Boniface Mwambukusi, and Maluka Nyagali, after holding them for several days, in what the law enforcers say the trio was accused of incitement.

The diaspora's demonstration came a day after the thirty-seven Catholic Bishops in Tanzania's joint statement Friday 18th August over the controversial Tanzania-Dubai intergovernmental agreement, calling on the government to listen to people's demands to cancel the deal, saying, "The voice of the people is the voice of God."

The deal, which would allow an Emirati logistics company DP World to take over some operations at the Dar es Salaam port, continues to face criticisms from various sections of the public, with authorities appearing determined to proceed with it regardless.

In their joint statement Friday, the clerics said they do not endorse the deal, calling on the government to create the necessary environment to allow Tanzanians to run and manage their resources for their benefit and those of future generations.

Apparently, the international community and human rights groups have overstretched the government to refrain from a clamp down on dissidents, with the Amnesty International releasing a statement on August 16 to condemn the arbitrary

arrests of the DP World Critics.

In a new twist, Minister for Information Communication and Technology Nape Nnauye August 17th said in a statement that no one had been arrested for criticizing the deal approved by the Parliament on June 10, 2023. Instead, those arrested have violated the country's laws.

"The police arrested the three individuals in question for making specific public threats of serious criminal nature, which include calling for the violent overthrow of the government of the day," Mr. Nnauye who doubles as Mtama MP (Chama Cha Mapinduzi-CCM) said.

The minister's statement came hot on the heels of a public speech made by Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner Albert Chalamila.

Speaking at a gathering of traders at the Ferry Market, Mr. Chalamila said the government would deal with any individual who provoke violence in the city.

All those who mislead the public are already in detention. I have told them to do whatever they want to do, but I will deal with each of them," he warned adding: "Dar es Salaam is not a place for violence."

Mr. Nnauye's clarification on the arrests by the government followed a decision by local and international human rights organizations to condemn them, demanding authorities to "immediately and unconditionally" release all the detainees.

The Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), Tanganyika Law Society (TLS), Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC), and Jukwaa la Katiba Tanzania (JUKATA) gave a joint statement in Dar es Salaam, condemning the "arbitrary arrests" of the deal's critics.

In June, Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa, Attorney General Eliezer Feleshi, Works and Transport Minister Makame Mbarawa, and Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) director general Plasduce Mbossa

are among government officials who have issued detailed clarifications on a number of issues in the document.

The list of those who have come out in support of the IGA includes business magnate Rostam Aziz, Tanzania Private Sector Foundation (TPSF) chairperson Angelina Ngalula and politician-cum-academician Kitila Mkumbo.

There are also those who have openly voiced their concerns about some provisions in the agreement, including, former Cabinet minister Anna Tibaijuka and law and development expert Issa Shivji.

Although there could be relevant points to take home from either side, it is apparently the number of people and companies that get their daily bread through port operations that prolongs the debate as each one wants to be sure of what will happen next.

Political analysts and lawyers-cum-activists had criticized the signed contract, with many accusing the Parliament of being a toothless dog—for its failure to show a stance against the pact.

The Tanganyika Law Society (TLS) considers that the provision, which calls for the enhancement of Tanzania's investment legal infrastructure, may have a positive impact on Tanzania.

TLS, however, is concerned about the phrasing of the article and requires the project to be stabilized in a way that is comparable and satisfactory to the parties alongside the Project Company.

"It is also widely known that the existing legal environment across all sectors does not favor private or Public-Private Sector Partnership (PPP) investments, including the PPP law," reads a part of the TLS' statement availed to the media a few days ago. TLS recommended that the government undertake comprehensive legislative and regulatory reforms sector-wise, taking cues from the Business Environment

Strengthening for Tanzania Program.

Nevertheless, Attorney General Eliezer Feleshi said the ongoing misleading on the DP World and negative perception towards the company, was unhealthy for the development of the country.

He said the matter could be perceived as Tanzania discriminating against investors from some countries.

"Discriminatory language uttered by a section of people towards investors from some countries can tarnish the country's image as the best destination for tourists in the content," warned Dr. Feleshi.

"So, do you want us to create an environment that will worry investors in the sense that our country doesn't want investors?"

Yes, not bad, the list of stakeholders that depend on the port for their survival and who think their interests need to be safeguarded include shippers, shipping companies, inland container depots (ICDs), clearing and forwarding agents, and lorry owners.

Official TPA statistics show that as of 2022, there were 15 registered ICDs in the country. The ICDs handle about 80 percent of the 800,000 containers passing through Dar es Salaam Port every year, with the rest being delivered directly from the port to customers.

While the government believes an increase in the amount of cargo would mean more business for every player, including ICD operators, some players say it will all depend on how the government negotiates the local content aspect in the HGA and/or lease/concession agreement stages.

"What I can assure all players is that a focus on efficiency will open the door for more business for all players," Mr Mbossa told reporters recently.

TPA expects that with improvement in efficiency, cargo to be handled by Dar es Salaam Port will more than double from 20.43 million tonnes in the 2021/22 financial year to

approximately 56.34 million tonnes in 2032/33.

Shipping more cargo through the port could mean more shippers (importers and exporters), which implies more business opportunities for clearing and forwarding agents. TRA's 2022 data shows that there were 1,023 registered clearing and forwarding agents in Tanzania. They get business from importers or exporters of cargo by facilitating clearance from ports in Tanzania.

Meanwhile, Tanzania Shipping Agencies Corporation (Tasac) 2022 data puts the number of registered shipping agents in the country at 29. They get business from ship owners or chartered vessels by facilitating cargo loading and discharge at a port of call.

The 2013 World Bank report on the Dar port found that Dar's inefficiency is due to corruption and the benefits that powerful individuals get from the port's inefficiency. The report estimated that the cost to Tanzania was equivalent to eight percent of its GDP annually, or about 15 trillion shillings today.

The report recommended increasing consumer awareness of the cost of inefficiency, reducing corruption, motivating changes, improving coordination, and engaging private operators. The first four recommendations don't need a foreign investor and don't necessarily lead to the need for a private operator. I contend that we don't require a foreign operator for this port. Tanzania needs political will to push the deal. We should not drive the nation into an uncalled-for crisis because the government is unwilling to govern. DP World is not a solution. It is, at finest, a negligence of duty.

Adonis Byemelwa is a Master in International Relations Graduate, teacher, author, and columnist and was formerly a sub-editor with Tanzania's English Newspaper, The Citizen. Hyperlink, adonisbyeme@yahoo.com. +2555884436



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African Teams Achieve Historic Performances at FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia/New Zealand

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

It is a cliché to say women's soccer has come a long way in the 32 years since the first Women's World Cup was played in 1991. This year, the African teams at the FIFA Women's World Cup were no longer content to "just to be there."

Three of the continent's four squads – Nigeria, South Africa, and Morocco – stormed their way into the elimination round, in the process toppling teams long considered better than them, and upsetting the game's established hierarchies.

The 2023 FIFA World Cup in Australia and New Zealand was also the first that has seen three African Nations qualify for the Round of 16. The Super Falcons advanced from Group B by finishing second with five points. It was the first time that Nigeria did not lose a group-stage game.

Morocco, a debutant also qualified from their group, which had Colombia, Korea, and Germany. They finished second in Group H by defeating Colombia in their final game.



The Super Falcons advanced from Group B by finishing second with five points.

South Africa qualified for the second round for the first time as they finished second in Group G. They were the least-ranked country in the group, but they held their own and finished with four points. No South African team, men's or women's,

had ever qualified for the knockout stage of a World Cup. But Banyana Banyana did exactly that.

"Football is everything in South Africa, and these women have made us proud," said Gladys Malubana, a waitress at a restaurant in Soweto,

the Johannesburg township that is the pulsing heart of South African football.

Even Zambia ended on a high as their dreams were already over when they played Costa Rica in their final game, but they went home with a first-ever World Cup win following a 3-1 success and a steely resolve to be back in four years. It was the first time in Zambia's history that the national team – men or women – had qualified for the football World Cup final stages, and a live wire of excitement cracked through the country.

The future of Women's Football is Bright

The victories of Nigeria, Morocco, and South Africa came amidst some surprising upsets in the group stage, as heavyweights Germany and Brazil were eliminated early on.

"CAF and the 54 African nations that are members of CAF congratulate the Women's Teams of Nigeria, Morocco, and South Africa for their historic and well-deserved qualification to the Round of 16 of the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023," CAF President Patrice Motsepe said on the



No South African team, men's or women's, had ever qualified for the knockout stage of a World Cup. But Banyana Banyana did exactly that.

historic qualification.

"The Super Falcons, the Atlas Lionesses, and Banyana Banyana have made the people of Nigeria, Morocco, and South Africa, as well as the people of the rest of the African continent, very proud with their outstanding performances and hard-earned victories at the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023."

CAF President Patrice Motsepe added: "The future of Women's football on the African Continent is bright. The victories and successes of the Nigerian, Moroccan, and South African women's teams will contribute significantly to the development and growth of women's football in Africa."

Funding woes

Nigeria's Coach, Randy Waldrum, sees Africa's progression in the competition as a sign that given the right funding, the continent would produce teams to rival the world's best.

Speaking on his team's success,



Morocco qualified from Group H by defeating Colombia in their final game

Waldrum told abc.net.au that it is a sign of the self-belief that has permeated the whole squad. He said: "To think we've come here and got two results out of two top teams in the world says a lot not only about our ability, but also our heart and competitive desire that the team has."

"I told them after the match: keep believing in yourself. Because great things can happen for teams when you fight for each other. It's not always the

best talent that wins, sometimes it's the best team."

Waldrum added: "The gap is bridging, and the poorer countries are getting better as well. Obviously, for us, we're a third-world country and we have to do quite a lot, too: we've missed so many FIFA windows, we've missed all sorts."

"It just takes a lot for the experienced players to drag everyone through and just give the belief, and I

think that's what it was today. It was about belief."

When asked about the lack of funding and support for his team coming into the tournament, Waldrum once again used the podium of his success to bring these issues that his and many other teams are facing into the public domain, reminding us all that these teams have always been able to compete with the best — so long as they're allowed to do so.

"There's a lot of countries — not only in Africa but also in CONCACAF and other parts of the world — that need more funding. The work is not done. It's getting better, but the work is not done. I just think the sky's the limit," Waldrum said.

The progress of African teams at the just-ended FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023 will undoubtedly inspire a new generation of female athletes across the African continent, as the success of African teams shines as a beacon of empowerment and motivation. _____

How Cameroon Legend Thomas Nkono Enthused Italy's Legend Buffon

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

To speak about Thomas Nkono is to speak about a footballing legend, one that transcends not just Cameroon and African football but the world at large. For almost 20 years, Nkono played for Cameroon's national team and he won the Africa Cup of Nations, as well as starring for the Indomitable Lions along with legend Roger Milla at the 1982 and 1990 World Cups, one of their most memorable periods.

The 1982 African footballer of the year and the only goalkeeper to win the African Player of the Year Award twice is a reference point for many goalkeepers, not more so than Italy legend Gianluigi "Gigi" Buffon who in August announced his retirement from football at the age of 45.

"These moments are always bittersweet. One of the greats retires. Thanks for your great contribution to the history of football. You're the very



Thomas Nkono and Gianluigi Buffon

definition of talent, hard work and dedication," the 1984 AFCON winner wrote to Gigi Buffon following his retirement.

"Furthermore, there is no doubt that you are as good a person as you are a player. I'm thankful to call you, my friend. My family and I love you

very much and wish you the best in this new chapter of your life."

Cameroon's 1990 World Cup team were true heroes - Buffon

Gianluigi Buffon, a World Cup winner enjoyed a successful 28-year career and played his last two seasons at boyhood club Parma in Serie B. Buffon recorded 176 Italy caps (the most of any player) and an unsurpassed Serie A appearance total of 657 league games. Things could have been so different, though, had Buffon not watched Cameroon when Italy hosted the 1990 FIFA World Cup, BBC Sports reported

"I must say that Cameroon's 1990 World Cup team will always have a special place in my heart," Buffon told BBC Sport Africa. «I remember all the 22 players because, for me, they were true heroes.»

One man who captivated the eyes

of the then 12-year-old Buffon was Thomas N'kono. While Buffon started as a striker, his encounter with N'Kono changed his future as he decided to take up goalkeeping, something which he would not regret one bit.

Regarded as one of the best goalkeepers of all time, Buffon spent two decades at Juventus, either side of 12 months at PSG in 2018-19. He made his professional debut for Parma aged 17 in 1995 and four years later won the Coppa Italia, UEFA Cup and Italian Supercoppa at the club. He moved to Juventus in 2001 in a €52 million (\$57m) transfer, a then-world-record fee for a goalkeeper.

Buffon terminated his contract with Parma, which was set to run until June 2024, before confirming his retirement. At Juve, he won 10 Serie A titles in 19 seasons, as well as the Serie B championship in 2006-07 when the club played in the second tier after they were relegated as a result of the Calciopoli match-fixing scandal.

Gigi Buffon also won the Coppa Italia five times and the Italian Supercoppa on six occasions. Buffon reached three Champions League finals with Juve but failed to win the famous trophy.



The 1982 World Cup in Spain was Cameroon's first-ever World Cup participation.

«I was blown away,» Buffon recalls. «Watching Nkono in goal triggered something and motivated me to become a goalkeeper because I loved to death the way he interpreted the goalkeeping role.

«I loved his personality so much and the way he would come out of goal to punch the ball away. He also had exceptional reflexes. I loved scoring, which would give me so much satisfaction. But then that thing [seeing N'Kono] happened and I'm happy things went that way. That was an important sliding door moment in my life.»

A Torrid Football Journey

Born on July 20, 1956, in Dizangue, Littoral Region, N'Kono's journey up the football ladder was not an easy one. He began his youth career with Éclair Douala before moving to Canon of Yaounde where he spent one year and then migrated to Tonnere and then back to Canon in 1976.

«I started by playing football on the street,» N'Kono recalled. «There was no youth football there, only holiday tournaments. I would play as a goalkeeper or a striker and I would change between the positions. After having one very good game against another town, my brother told me

that I should always play as a goalkeeper.»

«Back then, I had to walk 25 kilometres on foot from Dizangue to play football in Edea. I didn't have the means to pay for transport, so either you had a bicycle, or you had <the bicycle of your feet>. There was a taxi driver who liked football a lot and he would sometimes take me. As there were some family members there, I stayed with them for a week to be able to train, N'Kono, a two-time CAF Champions League winner with Canon Yaounde recalled.

N'Kono rose to prominence with Canon Yaounde where he won five national titles as well as two CAF Champions Leagues (in 1978 and 1980). There, he also won his two African Player of the Year awards (in 1979 and 1982), a pioneering feat as he remains to date the only goalkeeper to have won African Player of the Year. His exploits ensured that Cameroon qualified for the 1982 World Cup in Spain.

This was Cameroon's first ever appearance at a World Cup and they were one goal away from knocking out eventual champions Italy in the group stages. Across Cameroon's three matches, N'Kono played brilliantly and conceded just one goal.

An intuitive and creative goalkeeper, N'Kono did things many goalkeepers would not dare back then and which is now normality for goalkeepers across the world. He was noted for playing as a sweeper and passing the ball out as far as the opposition area, earning his various assists. He'd even come out for aerial balls with just one hand, and was a player ahead of his time, even standing out for his attire, wearing trousers instead of shorts.

«When I started, I didn't have boots or gloves. It wasn't until Douala that I had my first boots. I spent eight or nine years playing with shorts, but you can imagine how much I scratched my legs when playing on gravel pitches. Eventually, I was able to wear trousers and then I never stopped,» Thomas N'Kono said.



Gianluigi Buffon enjoyed an impressive 28-year career in professional football.



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