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Chad's Audacious Youth Card

By Ajong Mbapndah L

As Africa ushered in another challenging but promising year, the Central African country of Chad grabbed headlines with the appointment of Dr Succes Masra as the new Prime Minister. A very intriguing move, considering that a year ago Succes Masra was the number one enemy of the regime of General Mahamat Deby. The filial succession of April 2021 that brought him to power in defiance of constitutional provisions was something that many Chadians contested.

Leading the charge in opposition to the new regime was Succes Masra. In a demonstration on 20 October 2022 against a two-year extension of the transition government over fifty people were killed by security forces. Estimates from the National Human Rights Commission in Chad (CNDH) put the death toll at about 128 people. Hundreds more were arrested and tried under circumstances decried by human right groups.

Following the violent crackdown on dissenting voices by the military, Masra fled from his life. In exile, he refused to stay quiet as the plight of Chadians dominated literally every word he spoke and any action he took. At one point the Chadian authorities had an international arrest warrant out for him.

Talk of politics making strange bed fellows and the Mahamat Deby, Succes Masra alliance in Chad is latest the example. Masra aged 40 is Prime Minister today, under the Transitional Government led by General Mahamat Deby aged 39. In a strange twist of fate, the two represent one of the youngest ruling tandems across the continent today.

"Africa has changed. The African youth, which represents 70% of the African population is increasingly and legitimately requiring servant and accountable leadership," Masra said in a December 2021 op-ed. In a continent known to have some of the oldest and longest serving leaderships in the world, the Chadian experiment of sorts will be worth watching on how it plays out. While his military prowess suffers very little contest, the political leadership



Ajong Mbapndah L, Managing Editor

skills of General Mahamat Deby remain to be seen. With his legitimacy still in question, that he is willing to work with Masra is a deft move with huge stakes for all the parties, and Chad as a country.

In a referendum on the new constitution that took place recently, while some opposition figures were for a "No" vote, Succes Masra and Mahamat Idris Deby were united in calls for Chadians to vote yes. Chadians eventually voted for the new constitution which amongst other things does not bar the current leader of the Transitional Government from running for Office if he decides to. This means that the prospects of Masra and Deby contesting in the presidential elections later in the year are very real.

Like in most other countries in the Central African sub region, elections in Chad have more often than not been fraught with tensions and contentions. The opposition has always cried foul and the reports from international election observers of repute have hardly been glossy. On his return to Chad, Succes Masra clearly took off from where he ended. His rallies pulled crowds that no other politician in Chad was able to pull. Without doubt, he was one of the potent candidates for office assuming that the elections were to be free and fair.

Will the elections be free and fair? If Mahamat Deby is defeated, will he accept the results? If Masra is defeated, will he accept the results especially if the conduct of the elections is questionable? What impact will his new role as Prime Minister have on his political activities or clout? How much power will he wield

in his current role to effect reforms in Chad? Could the appointment not have been a trap to slow down his political momentum?

The questions are many and the mixed reactions that greeted his appointment are understandable. Dr Succes Masra, economist of international repute with stints at the African Development Bank has brilliant ideas and a strong vision on how to turn things around in Chad.

"Chad always ranks at the bottom of the global human development, competitiveness, and human capital index despite the young and productive population with enormous natural resources including oil, gold, livestock, and arable lands. Our struggle and political commitment are for the dignity of our people who deserve after 60 years of independence the right to their self-determination through democratic and fair elections to choose their leaders," he says.

Serving in government for the first time and as Prime Minister could be a way of sending a message that he is not all about talk but is capable of actions. This could be an opportunity for him to further convince Chadians and the international community of his leadership abilities. The hope remains that the elections will eventually be free and fair enough for the best candidate to emerge victorious. It will be a vindication for all the blood that has been shed in yet another checkered political process in Chad. While the circumstances of this youth card maybe a little unorthodox, rooting for its failure is not something as it will could have reverberations across the continent.

Instrumental in facilitating talks and discussions that ultimately led to the return of Succes Masra to Chad from exile was Felix Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Off a challenging first term in Office, Tshisekedi fenced off stiff opposition from heavy weight political rivals and won a second term of office. As usual, not everyone was satisfied with the conduct or the outcome of the elections. His opponents said the elections were fraught with irregularities, but institutions in the country saw it

differently and said the these were not sufficient to impact the final outcome of the elections.

That the elections took place is a sign of progress for the DR. Congo and Tshisekedi already deserves credit for that. Congolese increasingly getting accustomed to using the ballot and not the bullet to navigate political equations is a net plus for a country that has gone through and is still going through some complicated moments in its history. Abundantly blessed and endowed with incredible resources, the D.R Congo remains one of the most enigmatic paradoxes in the continent, if not the world. Like Chinua Achebe said in Arrow of God that when two brothers fight a stranger reaps the harvest, if the political class in the DR Congo and the rest of conflict prone countries in Africa have not learned this at this point in history, then the problems maybe of a different sphere.

Based off his first term experiences, President Tshisekedi is in prime position to do greater things in his second and last term. The political pressure should be less, it should be about leaving a legacy in doing more to improve the lives of Congolese and transforming the country.

Beyond the challenging realities of the continent, there is a reason to start the year with hope. Hope that President Tinubu will step things up and use Nigeria to provide the leadership that Africa needs. Hope that in Cameroon, President Biya will use the wisdom that comes with his age to show the genuine political will and sincerity in addressing the crisis in the English-speaking regions of the country at the sunset of his long political career. Hope that more African leaders will put the people first and see dialogue and consensus as solutions to problems instead of instrumentalizing the military.

The maiden 2024 issue of PAV dwells on political developments in Chad, the triumph of President Tshisekedi in the DR Congo, insights on Tinubu's Nigeria, a year of promises from the US-African Leaders Summit, Zuma's new foray into South African politics and more...Happy Reading and Happy New Year!!!! _____

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Charting Africa's Economic Course in 2024

By James Woods*



Africa's economic outlook for 2024 is one fuelled with optimism and complexities. Photo courtesy.

Africa's economic outlook for 2024 is one fuelled with optimism and complexities, with the continent positioned as a key player in the global economic landscape yet grappling with its own unique set of challenges ranging from governance, health, trade, high debt, conflict to name a few.

Africa's economic optimism in 2024 is underpinned by several factors. Notably, the continent is experiencing a demographic dividend, with a youthful population that can be a tremendous asset if properly harnessed through education and job creation. Moreover, Africa is increasingly urbanising, creating opportunities for industrialisation and consumer growth. However, these promising developments coexist with a range of challenges. Governance issues persist in various regions, hindering effective resource allocation and infrastructure development. Health concerns, exemplified by the ongoing battle against diseases such as malaria and the need for accessible healthcare, remain on the agenda. Conflicts and coups have been on the rise since 2020 causing instability. Trade barriers and tariff disputes can slow down the continent's integration into the global economy, making it crucial to address these issues

collectively.

According to a World Bank report, Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to be a bright spot in the global economy with a forecasted growth rate of 3.8% in 2024 and rising to 4.1% in 2025. This is significant considering the global economic context, where the World Bank also reports that the global economy is set for its weakest half-decade performance in 30 years. The overall global growth is projected to slow from 2.6% in the last year to 2.4% in 2024. This global slowdown juxtaposed with Africa's growth trajectory highlights the continent's resilience and potential in a challenging global economic environment.

Sub-Saharan Africa's growth prospects in 2024 are encouraging, driven by various factors: Investments in infrastructure, including roads and energy projects, are helping to reduce transportation costs and spur economic activity. Additionally, increasing regional cooperation and trade agreements are creating new opportunities for businesses and boosting intra-African trade. However, it's important to note that these growth rates are not uniform across all African nations. While some countries are experiencing growth and expansion, others are facing

economic challenges. The diversity in growth performance highlights the complexity of the African continent and the need for tailored strategies to address each nation's unique circumstances not a one fit all system implementation.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) predicts that Africa will be the world's second-fastest-growing major region in 2024, with East African states leading the charge. However, not all African countries are expected to enjoy this upward trend, as some, like Sudan and Equatorial Guinea, are projected to see their economies contract. Whilst Niger, Senegal, Rwanda, Libya, and Ivory Coast are forecasted to be among the fastest-growing economies. Niger, for example, is projected to have a staggering 11.1% GDP growth, driven by factors such as oil production and agricultural sector strength.

The factors behind these diverse growth trajectories are many. The construction industry, transportation, tourism, mining, and tech sectors are expected to play a significant role in driving the growth of the African economy. The continent's growth is also getting a boost from strategic economic diversification and efforts to attract foreign direct investments. For instance, countries

like Kenya and Ethiopia are investing heavily in infrastructure, including the construction of new railways and highways, which is expected to facilitate trade and stimulate economic growth.

African nations are increasingly recognising the importance of economic diversification to reduce reliance on a single sector, such as commodities. Investments in technology and innovation are driving productivity gains and fostering entrepreneurship. Furthermore, initiatives to improve the ease of doing business and enhance the investment climate are attracting foreign investors seeking opportunities in Africa's emerging markets.

However, the continent faces challenges, including dealing with the aftermath of the pandemic, which has strained public finances and led to heavy debt obligations in some countries. This economic strain has already triggered defaults in nations like Ethiopia, Zambia, and Ghana. Moody's Investors Service has expressed a negative outlook on African economies' credits due to high debt-financing risks and the impact of China's growth slowdown on demand for Africa's commodity exports. African governments are actively seeking solutions, such

as debt restructuring and seeking partnerships for economic recovery.

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been substantial, with many African countries grappling with reduced revenues, increased healthcare costs, and disrupted supply chains. The pandemic has underscored the importance of building resilient healthcare systems and diversifying revenue sources. International cooperation and assistance have played a critical role in supporting African nations' efforts to combat the virus and mitigate its economic fallout.

In the political sphere, 2024 is a significant year for Africa, with numerous countries such as Namibia, Mozambique, Senegal and powerhouses like Algeria, Ghana, and South Africa, set to hold elections. These political events are expected to increase the level of political risk in the region, potentially affecting economic stability and policy consistency. The outcomes of these elections will be closely monitored by investors and international observers for their impact on the investment climate in these nations.

Elections in African countries have historically been pivotal moments that can shape the trajectory of governance, policy, and economic development. A peaceful and



Africa's youthful population can be a tremendous asset if properly harnessed through education and job creation. Photo courtesy.

transparent electoral process is crucial for maintaining investor confidence and ensuring continuity in policy direction. However, the electoral landscape in Africa can be complex, with varying levels of political stability and electoral transparency across countries. Ensuring free and fair elections is a priority for many African nations to strengthen their democratic institutions and create an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth.

In essence, Africa's path to becoming a dynamic economic powerhouse is marked by both

its unique economic dynamism and complicated socio-political environments. The continent's journey is one of managing growth in the face of diverse challenges while harnessing its untapped potential. The years ahead for Africa are pivotal, demanding strategic planning and innovative solutions to maximize opportunities and navigate the complexities of its economic and political landscape. Africa's ability to address its challenges and leverage its strengths will determine its role in the global economy and the well-being of its people.

Amidst the myriad of issues facing Africa's economic outlook for 2024, there are also stories of resilience and progress. Cape Verde's achievement in becoming malaria-free after 50 years is not just a health milestone but showcases what collective commitment, drive and determination can achieve. While Africa grapples with various economic and socio-political issues, this success story from Cape Verde serves as a reminder that progress is possible through focused efforts and strengthening systems. The continent has the potential not only to overcome its challenges but also to lead the way in addressing pressing global issues, illustrating that Africa is not only a continent of challenges but also a continent of solutions and achievements.

*James Woods, is a versatile professional with expertise in sports management, business, politics, and strategic communications. As an entrepreneur and former senior diplomat, he has represented Malawi in various European nations, including Belgium, Andorra, France, Monaco, the Netherlands, Italy, Luxembourg, and the European Union institution. Currently pursuing an MBA at the University of Oxford, he is affiliated with Kellogg College. James is also an Archbishop Desmond Tutu Fellow and was awarded the prestigious African Achiever of 2015.



Outgoing Liberian President George Weah with his successor Joseph Boakai. Africans are hoping to see more of peaceful transitions.



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Chad - The Succes Masra Equation

By Ajong Mbapndah L

About a year ago, Dr Succes Masra was a marked man in Chad. The young opposition leader had fled the country, fearful for his life after a rally to challenge filial succession in his country in defiance of constitutional provisions had resulted in the death of over 50 people from the military. About a year later, Succes Masra is back in Chad appointed by the same military leadership that had a bounty on his head to serve as Prime Minister of the interim government.

Reactions within Chad have been mixed. For some, Succes Masra has just proven himself to be just another politician, motivated by greed and self-interest. For others, whatever template that Masra has used to change his political fortunes so soon should be replicated by other young Africans. In a sub region with some of the oldest leaders in the world, Chad has through twists and turns of sorts emerged with an interim President Mahamat Idriss Déby aged 39 and a Prime Minister aged 40 in Succes Masra.

For Succes Masra, a new dawn for Chad is what matters most. To leave a plum job at the African Development Bank and wade full scale into the



As Prime Minister, Succes Masra will get the practical experience and realities of governance. Photo courtesy.

complicated minefield of politics in Chad was gutsy. The Transformers political movement that he leads was launched in April 2018 following the late President Idriss Deby Itno's changes to the Constitution to remain President of Chad for life. It quickly gained traction and morphed into a leading political opposition force in the country.

"The party's vision is to transform the republic by establishing servant leadership at all levels to create

the conditions of national unity and a land of justice, equality, and opportunity for all. This servant leadership must be established in a transparent republic, a state that gives a fair chance to all its children regardless of ethnicity, region, and beliefs," Succes Masra told PAV in a January 2023 interview.

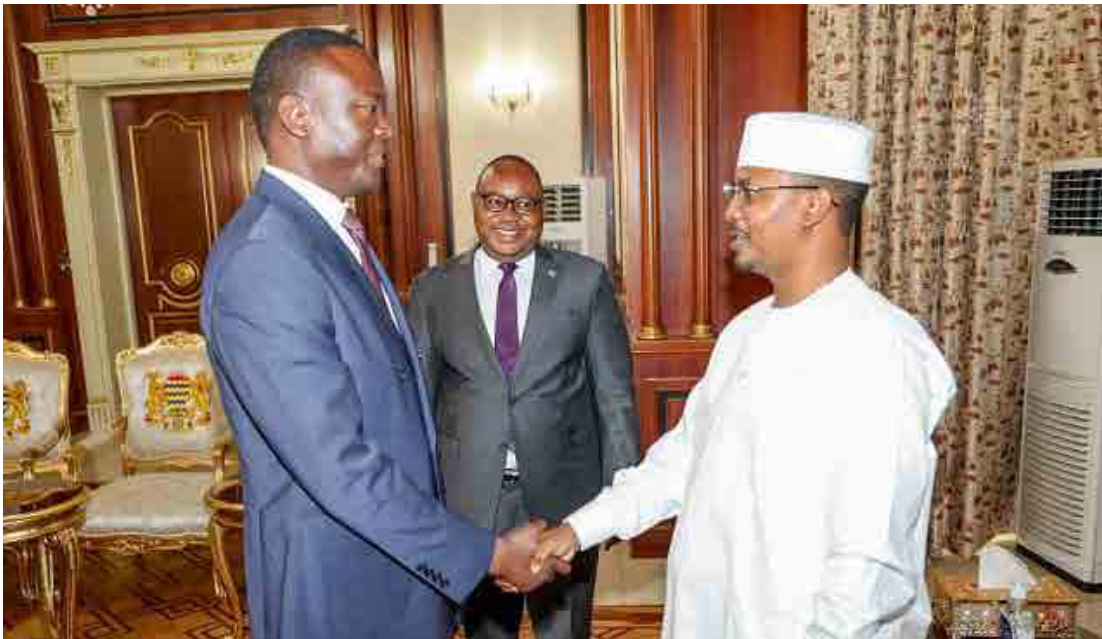
Fearful for his live after the October 2023 massacre, Succes Masra went into hiding and finally escaped to the United States. His arrival in the

USA coincided with the holding of the USA-African Leaders Summit. While other military leaders across the continent were shunned, Chadian interim leader Mahamat Deby invited, something which did not sit well with Succes Masra.

"How can the United States help Africa "Deliver Democratic and Security Dividends" if it continues to provide military, financial assistance, and diplomatic prestige to the illegitimate and military junta in Chad and several most autocratic and rights-abusing regimes in Africa? Has the United States been influenced by the ambiguous position of France on this specific case of Chad," Masra questioned in an op-ed.

Amongst the more visible changes that have since taken place in Chad are the recent constitutional referendum that is paving the way for a return to civilian rule through elections. The passage of the constitutional referendum also makes it possible for the current military ruler of the transitional government to run for elections. Still, few had imagined a rapprochement between Mahamat Deby and Succes Masra.

In October when he expressed readiness and interest to return to Chad, an arrest warrant issued in June 2023 but not made public surfaced.



Transitional President Mahamat Idriss Deby and Prime Minister Succes Masra may faceoff in the presidential elections later in the year. Photo courtesy.



The popularity, dynamism and vision of Dr Succès Masra makes him a force to reckon with in the future of Chadian politics.

The warrant cited attempted attack on constitutional order, incitement to hatred, and insurrectional uprising, in the list of crimes attributed to Masra.

His return to Chad was in part facilitated by a reconciliation agreement signed in Kinshasa Congo on November 3. Abderaman Koulamallah, the Chadian minister of reconciliation, signed an agreement with Masra's political party that paved the way for him and other opposition figures to return, according to a statement from Congolese presidential spokeswoman Tina Salama.

"In addition, the (regional bloc) ECAC's facilitation mission, led by Félix Tshisekedi, President of the DRC, reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Chadian people in easing the political climate with a view to the organization of democratic, free, transparent, and peaceful elections," Salama said.

On his return to Chad, Succès Masra participated in the constitutional

referendum and took positions that contrasted with those of some other opposition leaders. While some opposition leaders urged Chadians to vote No in the referendum, Masra went all out in calling on his followers and Chadians to vote yes. For him the adoption of the constitution was going to accelerate the end of the transition.

In announcing the new government, Mahamat Ahmat Alhabo, secretary-general of the presidency of said the new government was named after consultation with Succès Masra and was meant to ease the transition of Chad back to civilian rule.

Masra who has held massively attended rallies since his return to Chad, says the appointment will in no way impede his principled fight for reforms in Chad. He proposes to have a national dialogue with teachers who have been on strike since October over poor working conditions to return to class. Masra also wants to work towards improving the living conditions of Chadians and ease fuel

shortages in the country. The new Prime Minister has also pledged to work closely with Deby to make sure the general amnesty granted to all civilians and military arrested during the protests of last October is fully enforced.

"Our party's vision is to transform the republic by establishing servant leadership at all levels, to create the conditions of national unity, and a land of justice, equality, and opportunity for all. This servant leadership must be established in a transparent republic, a state that gives a fair chance to all its children regardless of ethnicity, region, and beliefs," Dr Succès Masra told PAV last January.

Chad always ranks at the bottom of the global human development, competitiveness, and human capital index despite the young and productive population with enormous natural resources including oil, gold, livestock, and arable lands. Our struggle and political commitment are for the dignity of our people

who deserve after 60 years of independence the right to their self-determination through democratic and fair elections to choose their leaders, he said.

Failing this transition in Chad could result in a more divided country like the situation in Sudan and South Sudan, Masra said back then. With him as Prime Minister and part of the transition, it remains to be seen what impact his presence will make. Cleared by the constitution to run for Presidential elections if he opts to, there is nothing at this point to indicate that Transitional President Mahamat Idriss Deby will not be in the race. Will Succès Masra maintain the huge following that throngs to his rallies? Will the following transform to votes for him? Will the elections be free and fair? Will the fragments showing within the opposition work in favour of Mahamat Deby to continue with the Deby dynasty? These are more are some of the questions whose answers prime 2024 as a defining year for Chad.

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Zuma's New Party Threatens to Derail Ramaphosa's Re-Election Bid

By Prince Kurupati

South Africa is set to hold parliamentary elections anytime from May to August 2024. The party of Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress (ANC) which has enjoyed parliamentary majority since South Africa attained its independence in 1994 faces its sternest challenge as yet. Ironically, the biggest challenge that the ANC is facing ahead of the elections isn't posed by external actors but rather, it's down to internal fissures.

South Africa's incumbent President Cyril Ramaphosa who succeeded Jacob Zuma in 2018 is seeking a second term in office. All past South African presidents who got the mandate from the party to seek a second term ended up winning. However, things aren't as clear as that for Ramaphosa. This is largely necessitated by the internal fissures within the ANC which has seen former President Jacob Zuma publicly announcing that he will not vote for the ANC of Ramaphosa.

"After much reflection, it truly saddens me that the ANC of today is not the once great movement that we loved and were prepared to lay down our lives for... I have decided that I cannot and will not campaign for the ANC of Ramaphosa in 2024. My conscience will not allow me to lie to the people of South Africa," Zuma said.

Citing reasons for this, the former South African president said Ramaphosa during his first term has worked more to destabilize and cripple the ANC rather than unify it. Justifying this, Zuma said Ramaphosa spent the greater part of his first term undertaking witch hunts which saw several top party leaders being accused of engaging in high-level corruption. Some ended up being suspended while others were expelled from the party. Perhaps the first name which quickly comes to mind on this front is that of former ANC Secretary General Ace Magashule who was ousted from the party and now leads



Political differences have strained the laughter between former President Jacob Zuma and his successor President Cyril Ramaphosa. Photo twitter.

his own political party, the African Congress for Transformation.

To Zuma, Ramaphosa's preoccupation with finding faults in members of the ANC's ruling caucus crippled the party. Instead, Ramaphosa was supposed to focus mainly on the national issues that the country faces. On this front, Zuma cited the unending power cuts and the freefalling economy as some of the most important issues that Ramaphosa should have paid attention to.

Zuma gave an ominous prediction saying an ANC electoral victory hence a second term in office for Ramaphosa would make the life of ordinary citizens difficult if not impossible. This is necessitated by the fact that a Ramaphosa victory will "lead our people to more misery, poverty, racism, unemployment, deepening load shedding and a government led by sell-outs and apartheid collaborators."

With regards to the 'apartheid collaborators' tag he pinned on Ramaphosa, Zuma said President

Ramaphosa is an appendage of white monopoly capital. He said Ramaphosa had been advancing the interests of the whites' population in South Africa while leaving the black majority to languish in poverty and misery. Owing to this, he said it would be "a betrayal to vote for the ANC".

Having confessed that his vote wouldn't go to the ANC, President Zuma said he would still exercise his civic duty to vote, and his vote would go to the newly formed uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) party. MK is a new political outfit that is named after ANC's former military wing. Announcing the new party, Zuma said MK wants to "rescue" the organization (ANC) and start a "new people's war" through the ballot.

The 81-year-old former president Jacob Zuma however insisted that he remains a member of the ANC. This therefore means he will likely become active again in ANC politics once Ramaphosa leaves the presidency.

The emergence of the MK party and Zuma's stance ahead of the upcoming South African parliamentary elections

heightens the ballot competition and adds an extra layer of complexity to Ramaphosa's re-election bid. Not only does he attempt to win votes from the opposition circles, but Ramaphosa now also has to consolidate his position in the party with just a few months remaining until Election Day. The mere fact that his key opponent within the ANC is former president Jacob Zuma makes things more difficult as Zuma has a huge following, especially in his home province of KwaZulu Natal.

Responding to the pronouncements by Zuma, President Ramaphosa said, "Everyone in our country is free to express themselves in relation to who they will vote for and why they will vote for them, and we have noted what former President Jacob Zuma has announced".

While Zuma poses as a savior who wants to pressure the ANC into ushering in some changes, some people view Zuma's newest stance as nothing but a personal vendetta against Ramaphosa and his desire to evade the numerous criminal

charges that he faces – most of which ironically are corruption charges.

Under the Ramaphosa presidency, Zuma in 2021 was sentenced to 15 months in jail for refusing to testify before a panel investigating financial corruption and cronyism during his tenure. Moreover, the charges of corruption stemming from the arms procurement scandals in Zuma's vice president days in the 1990s also surfaced when Ramaphosa was elected president.

With many judging the whole situation as just a personal feud between Zuma and Ramaphosa, it's the latter who stands to lose more if the situation isn't curtailed. Before the emergence of MK, President Ramaphosa was already facing a hard time as polls suggested that the ANC would garner less than 50% of the votes, which would be a first in South Africa's post-independence history. With the emergence of the MK which



President Ramaphosa and the ANC will have to battle hard for votes in the upcoming elections. Photo courtesy.

has Zuma's backing, things now look bleaker and ominous for Ramaphosa's re-election bid. With much to lose, everything is now in the hands of Ramaphosa to see which card he will play to win votes before Election Day.

DR Congo: Five More Years For Felix Tshisekedi

By Badyon Kawanda Bakiman

In a historic moment, 60-year-old and candidate to his own succession, Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo was officially proclaimed re-elected as President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on Sunday, December 31, 2023, for a second five-year presidential term with 73.34% of the votes ahead of his main challenger Moïse Katumbi who won 18%.

Dénis Kadima, President of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), delivered these figures in front of all the candidates and a large audience, while explaining all the meanders that surrounded these elections organized within the constitutional deadline.

Kadima reported that, with 13,215,366 million votes cast out of 18,018,916 million voters, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi came out on top in 19 of the country's 26 provinces: Kongo-Central, Kinshasa, Kwango, Mai-Ndombe, Équateur, Tshuapa, Mongala, Sud-Ubangi, Nord-Ubangi, Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, Ituri, Tshopo, Sankuru, Nord-Kivu, Sud-Kivu,



President Tshisekedi in a message of gratitude and a call for unity to move the DR Congo forward.

Kasaï, Kasaï Oriental, Kasaï Central and Lomami. The turnout was 43%.

With this landslide victory, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi becomes the first Congolese President to be re-elected with over 70% of votes validly cast, since the first democratic elections

were held in 2006; he is also the third Head of State to serve more than one term as President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, after Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, and Joseph Kabila.

It is also the first time that DRC elections have been held abroad since

the country gained independence on June 30, 1960. In five countries chosen by the CENI, namely France, the USA, Canada, Belgium and South Africa, Congolese were able to participate in the elections.

«This victory is a victory to take up

our challenges of national interest, notably the challenge of security, the challenge of employment, the challenge of interconnecting our country, the challenge of modernizing our country, in short the challenge of accelerating our country's march towards achieving and maximizing its highest potential (...) Every Congolese will have the opportunity to prosper with the help of a clear vision,» declared President Tshisekedi shortly after the results were announced.

According to him, December 20, 2023, consecrated the patriotism of the Congolese people in a great step forward. «You mobilized as one man for these elections. The aim is to consolidate our young democracy», he added, urging the population to beware of «the enemies of democracy and progress».

Oppositions Calls for Nullification and Democratic Actions

In a statement read out on Sunday December 31, 2023, opposition figures including Martin Fayulu, Moïse Katumbi and Denis Mukwege called for the cancellation of the general elections organized by the current CENI. These opponents called for new elections to be organized with other CENI players.

In addition, they rejected all the published results because, they explained, this institution supporting democracy had set up a system of fraud to favor incumbent President Félix Tshisekedi.

To this end, they promised not to appeal to the Constitutional Court to contest the results, but instead to organize a series of actions to obtain the annulment of the election.

«Mr Kadima and the CENI have just committed the greatest sham. Everyone knows that Mr. Tshisekedi Tshilombo can in no way win elections organized in the DRC on a regular basis. That's why we reject all the results. We need new elections with a new CENI», insisted Martin Fayulu, one of the opposition signatories of the declaration.

Moïse Katumbi Chapwe calls



Every Congolese will have the opportunity to prosper with the help of a clear vision, said President Tshisekedi after his victory. Photo credit AFP.

for peaceful and democratic actions.

In a statement made public on January 3, 2024, Moïse Katumbi Chapwe, the runner up in the December 20, 2023, elections called on the Congolese people to take peaceful and democratic action.

“Congolese people let us hold steadfast! Let us stay mobilized! The time for action has come. Through peaceful and democratic actions, we will resist and reclaim our most legitimate right, that of defeating fraud and taking back control of our destiny with the leaders of our choice’, He says.

“Our Constitution urges us to oppose any group of individuals who want to seize power and to keep it despite the Congolese people’s expressed will. For our dignity and the future of our children, we must use all means that it puts at our disposal to refuse fraud and the installation of the dictatorship’, He added.

According to him, no one should be an accomplice to this electoral fraud.

Logistical Hurdles and Reactions.

A total of 75,400 polling stations were set up throughout the country, but in three territories, two in North Kivu (east of the country) and one in Maï-Ndombé (South-West), it was not possible to vote due to insecurity. Electoral commission teams were unable to register voters.

Scheduled for Wednesday December 20, 2023, these elections continued until Sunday 24 following several problems encountered. Delays in the deployment of materials in several polling stations; voting machines that the Electoral Commission called «Electronic Voting Device» (DEV) broke down or did not work at the start of operations; late start-up of voting; illiteracy among many voters, etc.

In Masimanimba, one of the territories of Kwilu province, more than 300 kilometers from the capital Kinshasa, a vehicle belonging to a national deputy candidate of the Union sacrée de la nation was seized on Wednesday December 20, 2023. The vehicle contained several voting machines and empty ballot papers. In anger, the population burned the ballot papers and voting machines

found in the vehicle.

Constitutional Court Confirms Tshisekedi's Victory

24 hours after taking under advisement the petitions requesting the annulment of the last presidential election, the Constitutional Court handed down its ruling on Tuesday January 9, confirming the results of the Independent National Electoral Commission proclaiming Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi President of the Republic.

Félix Tshisekedi, the independent candidate in the presidential election, is now credited with 73.47% of the votes cast (13,058,962 votes), declared the Constitutional Court, which in turn annulled all the votes cast in the constituencies of Yakoma (Nord Ubangi) and Masimanimba (Kwilu) as announced by the Election Commission for the legislative elections.

Earlier, the Court declared the petition of Théodore Ngoy, a presidential candidate, admissible but unfounded. Mr. Ehetshe Mpala David's petition was in turn declared inadmissible for lack of standing.

These two cases seeking the annulment of the elections were taken under advisement at the end of the hearing on Monday January 8, 2024, in the Marcel Lihau room of the Court of Cassation.

International Reactions

In a press release issued after the Constitutional Court's ruling on Tuesday January 9, 2024, Hadja Lahbib, Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs, encouraged Félix Tshisekedi to pursue his efforts in the areas of good governance, security sector reform and improving the business climate.

«President Tshisekedi faces many challenges in his second term. Belgium wishes to encourage the President to initiate and pursue efforts in the field of good governance and human rights, whether in terms of gender equality, the fight against corruption, reform of the security and justice sectors, meeting social and environmental challenges, or improving the business climate», the press release said.

“The United States congratulates Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo on his re-election to a second term as President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). We also congratulate the Congolese people for their commitment to making their voices heard throughout the electoral process. “Now the important task of building national cohesion calls for leadership, accountability, and inclusivity at all levels,” read a statement from Mathew Miller US State Department Spokesperson.

“Regrettably, as noted by domestic and international observation missions, insecurity, logistical issues, and preparatory shortcomings created significant delays and barriers to voting on election day. For many, incidents of fraud and corruption raised doubts about the integrity of the results. We encourage the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) to ensure



Security, employment, interconnecting and modernizing the country are some of the top second term priorities for President Tshisekedi. Photo credit UDPS.

greater transparency regarding the tabulation of remaining results. The United States also strongly urges Congolese authorities to launch a comprehensive review of the electoral process, investigate and hold accountable those who attempted to undermine the will of the people, and, in consultation with stakeholders, act on recommendations to improve future elections,” the statement went further. Despite the observations, the statement from the State Department affirmed that the United States looks forward to expanding its partnership with the DRC government and

working with Congolese people across the nation to advance mutual interests.

“Japan considers that the election was held with the strong will of the people of the DRC towards the consolidation of democracy in the midst of various difficulties and commends the country which conducted the elections with firm determination. On this basis, Japan hopes that, under the strong leadership of President Tshisekedi, further efforts will be made to consolidate and strengthen social cohesion and democratic processes in

the DRC through dialogues,” said a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

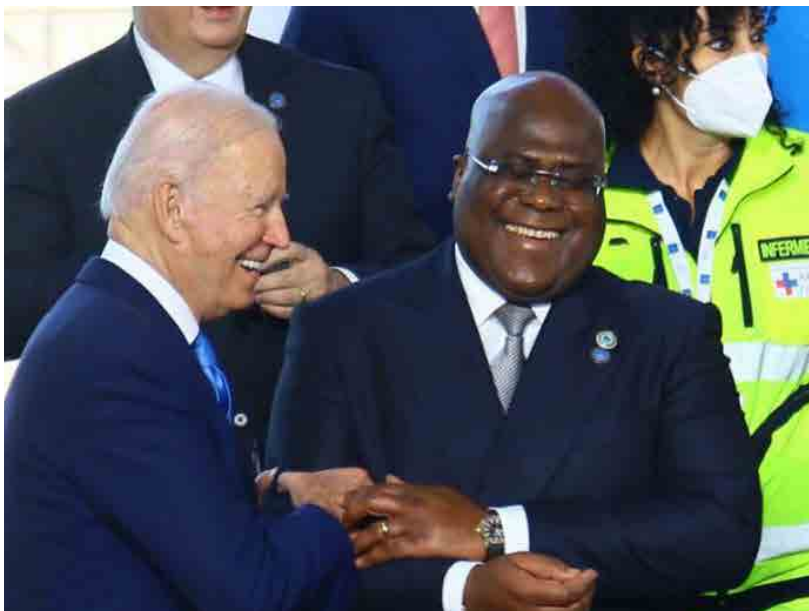
Japan looks forward to further strengthening its friendly and cooperative relations with the DRC, based on the good relationship of trust that have been nurtured through cooperation in various fields, including the support for the consolidation of peace in the Eastern region of the country, infrastructure development and strengthening social infrastructure, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement concluded.

The Chairman of the African Union (AU) and President of the Comoros, as well as several African Heads of State and other high-profile personalities spontaneously welcomed the re-election of President Félix Tshisekedi. These included the Presidents of Burundi, Tanzania, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda, Congo, Togo, Egypt, Senegal, and Kenya.

“It is welcoming that the last elections in DR Congo were well-concluded. Democracy is sustainable on the continent. I congratulate President Tshisekedi on his victory. The President has demonstrated statesmanship in his handling of regional and continental matters. Africa will overcome any challenge with governance by popular consent, and democracy will thrive,” said President Ahmed Bola Tinubu of Nigeria.

On its part, while warmly congratulating the re-elected president, the AfDB pledged its continued support and partnership. «You can count on AfDB Group's support for the accelerated development of the Democratic Republic of Congo,» declared its President Dr Akinwumi Adesina.

As Félix Tshisekedi embarks on his second term, the nation anticipates concerted efforts to address multifaceted challenges and consolidate the democratic process.



The Biden Administration looks forward to expanding its partnership with the DRC government and working with Congolese people to advance mutual interests. Photo credit. Photo AFP



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A Trust In President Tshisekedi's Vision From Election Results-Tina Salama

By Ajong Mbapndah L

The victory of President Felix Tshisekedi in the recent elections reflects a ringing endorsement of his vision from the Congolese people, says his administration spokesperson Tina Salama. By opting to re-elect President Tshisekedi for a second mandate, the Congolese people have opted to strengthen his first term achievements and can expect more reforms that will significantly improve their lives, says Tina Salama in an interview with PAV.

The imperfections observed by the opposition represent a small percentage compared to the overall results proclaimed from the elections and the vast majority of Congolese see the results as a true reflection of their vote, Salama says.

What is your take on the elections that just took place?

Tina Salama: For the sake of



Congolese followed the elections with interest and saw the results as a true reflection of their vote, says Tina Salama.



President Tshisekedi sees this victory as a reflection of the Congolese people's support for his political vision, says Tina Salama.

objectivity, we embrace the different viewpoints of independent observers who have deemed the elections to have been well-organized and peaceful.

What does this victory mean for President Tshisekedi and what should Congolese expect from him in second term?

Tina Salama: President Tshisekedi sees this victory as a reflection of the Congolese people's support for his political vision. The people have chosen to strengthen the achievements of Tshisekedi's governance. As a result, the people can expect the continuation of reforms that will significantly improve their daily lives.

What is the reaction to allegations of fraud from some of the contenders like Moise Katimbi?

Tina Salama: In response to allegations of fraud made by some opposition figures, we believe it

is legitimate for the opposition to express their opinions on the election situation freely. Importantly, the imperfections observed represent a very small percentage compared to the overall declared results.

What is the general mood like in the country after the elections and the announcement of President Tshisekedi's reelection?

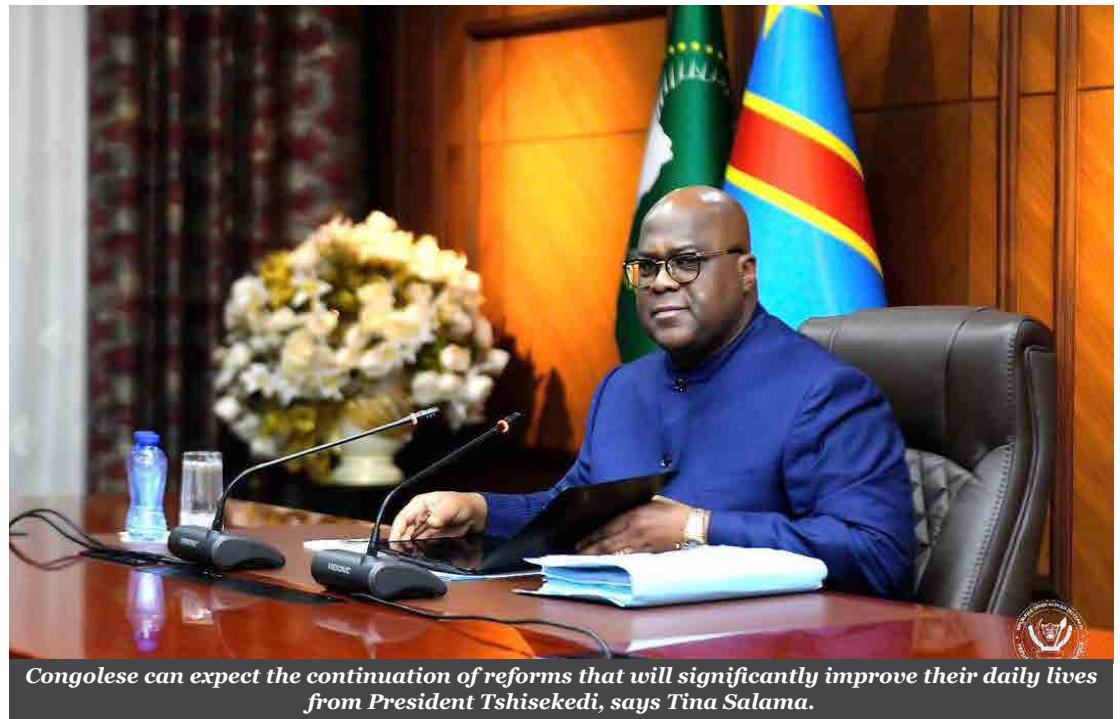
Tina Salama: Post-election, there is a sense of calm in public opinion. The people followed these elections with interest and saw the results as a true reflection of their vote.

How does President Tshisekedi intend to conduct business with neighboring countries and Rwanda in particular during his second term?

Tina Salama: Regarding relations with neighboring countries, it is important to note that the Congolese people have suffered greatly from insecurity in the eastern part of the country. Like any Head of State, President Tshisekedi has the sacred duty to do everything possible to restore peace to this region, allowing Congolese citizens to not only return to their respective homes but also live in peace in order to work towards the development of the country.

Looking part at his first term, what are some of the major achievements of his administration?

Tina Salama: It is very difficult to summarize the achievements of the President in a few lines. Nonetheless, noteworthy examples include: increasing the national budget from 4 billion to 16 billion dollars, providing free basic education, strengthening



Congolese can expect the continuation of reforms that will significantly improve their daily lives from President Tshisekedi, says Tina Salama.

the armed forces, revitalizing diplomacy, launching the program for free childbirth, constructing and rehabilitating healthcare, education, and energy infrastructure, and implementing reforms in public administration and the judiciary, resulting in the regularization of the administrative and financial situations of hundreds of thousands of civil servants and teachers. Additionally, the recruitment of 5,000 magistrates, with 2,500 appointed in 2023, and the PDL 145 territories have been accomplished.

What kind of engagement should we expect to see with international partners like France, Belgium, and the USA?

Tina Salama: The DRC expects its international partners to work towards adhering strictly to the commitments made in favor of peace. Furthermore, the practice of double

standards should be abolished. Only through these means can justice triumph in the world.

Is the departure of the United Nations mission something that his administration will continue to push for in the second term?

Tina Salama: Regarding the departure of the United Nations mission, it is the responsibility of each state to work towards ensuring its sovereignty. Thus, it is entirely logical for the DRC to strive for the FARDC (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo) to take full control of all security matters in the country.

This is about the 4th time or so to see elections in the DRC, what do you make of the democratic experience in your country and any improvements you think are needed?

Tina Salama: The Congolese democratic experience has had its ups and downs. Aside from the 1960 elections, the country had general elections in 2006, followed by an armed confrontation in Kinshasa. In 2011, after the elections, there were significant restrictions on the rights and freedoms of opposition members. The 2018 elections were organized under strong pressure from political and social forces in the DRC, two years after the constitutional deadline. The latest elections were held within the constitutional timeframe, without any infringement on the rights and freedoms of citizens (such as internet shutdowns and curfews imposed in cities, etc.). As a proposed amendment, it would be desirable for elections to be scheduled during the dry season, which would avoid the additional hardships caused by heavy rainfall typically experienced in December.

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Nigeria: Dawn Over a Divided Nation

-Tinubu's New Year's Speech Sparks Hope and Doubts

By Aminu Adamu

The sun, hesitant and unsure, crept over the Nigerian horizon on January 1st, 2024. Casting its faint light over a nation grappling with the weight of its own uncertainties, it awaited the words of its new leader, President Bola Tinubu. In his first New Year's Day address, Tinubu stood before a nation split between echoes of hardship and glimmers of hope.

He acknowledged the groans that reverberated from boardrooms and bustling markets alike, whispering of rising costs, crippling inflation, and the gnawing fear of unemployment. «From Broad Street to Bayelsa,» he declared, his voice resonating with empathy, «I hear the anxieties of Nigerians who work tirelessly to build a life for themselves and their families.»

But Tinubu, refusing to wallow in the mire of despair, offered a hand not of consolation, but of action. He spoke of captives freed from the clutches of darkness, a testament to the ongoing fight against the shadows of insecurity. He unveiled a blueprint for a brighter tomorrow, where the Siemens Energy project promised to banish the darkness of unreliable electricity. Refineries, long slumbering giants, would rise again, their revival heralding the dawn of energy independence.

Food security, the lifeblood of a nation, found its place in his vision. Vast swathes of land, 500,000 hectares in all, would be awakened from fallow slumber, yielding golden harvests that promised to satiate hungry mouths. He reached out to the engine of the economy, the private sector, declaring, «Nigeria is open for business,» his voice a siren call to investors, a promise to remove the cobwebs of bureaucratic red tape that stifled progress.

Yet, his vision transcended mere numbers and projects. He spoke of a Nigeria where the sun's warmth



I hear the anxieties of Nigerians who work tirelessly to build a life for themselves and their families, says President Tinubu.

touched every face, where the shadows of poverty and neglect wouldn't steal the light from «the poor, the vulnerable, the working people.» He announced a new national living wage, a tangible symbol of his commitment to social justice, a bridge across the widening chasm of inequality.

Unity, not division, would be the mortar that held this vision together. He extended an olive branch to his political opponents, urging them to move beyond the echoes of the election. «It's time for all of us to work together for the sake of our country,» he declared, reminding them that their destinies were intertwined, threads woven into the fabric of a shared commonwealth.

His concluding words, soaring above the anxieties of the moment, were a clarion call to action. «Let us,» he implored, his voice rising in crescendo, «let us shine bright and brighter to illuminate our path to a glorious dawn.» In those words, hope found its purest form, not a distant mirage shimmering on the horizon, but a torch placed in the hands of every Nigerian, a flicker that, united, could become a bonfire of

progress, pushing back the shadows and illuminating the path towards a brighter, more prosperous tomorrow.

The Echoes of Doubt:

But the president's address resonated differently across the nation. While some praised his optimism and concrete plans, others remained skeptical, their anxieties echoing on social media platforms. Wale S. Akerele (@akerel_s) congratulated the president but challenged him to tackle the crippling tariff rates and fuel prices that burdened ordinary Nigerians. Ben Samuel (@flourish007) questioned the efficacy of «Renewed Hope» in the face of rising inflation and drew comparisons to the UK's swift economic recovery, highlighting the perceived lack of urgency from Aso Rock.

Michael Oyewole (@MichaelOyewole_) expressed raw frustration, his tweet a desperate plea for the president and his party to resign, citing the worsening socio-economic conditions. Oluseye Richard (@roluseye) acknowledged the glimmer of hope but criticized the speech for lacking empathy towards

the victims of the Plateau killings and urged the president to speak from the heart and back his words with action.

A Divided Path Forward:

President Tinubu's New Year's Day address laid bare the stark reality of a nation teetering between hope and despair. While his ambitious plans and optimistic outlook resonated with some, others remained unconvinced, demanding concrete solutions and immediate action on pressing issues. The reactions, nuanced and diverse, painted a picture of a nation still searching for its footing, a path forward that cannot be paved with mere promises but needs to be built on trust, transparency, and the collective effort of a people united in their desire for a brighter future.

The year 2024 stretches before Nigeria, a blank canvas yet to be painted. Whether it will be filled with the vibrant hues of the president's promises or the muted tones of continued hardship remains to be seen. The actions taken, the challenges tackled, and the voices heard will ultimately determine the color palette of this year, and the shape of the future it holds for all.

Nigeria Remains A Country In Crisis That Needs To Heal -Chido Onumah

By Ajong Mbapndah L

Nigeria remains a country in crisis and in need of healing, says veteran journalist, author and Coordinator of the African Centre for Media & Information Literacy (AFRICMIL). Sharing his thoughts on Nigeria under President Ahmed Bola Tinubu, Chido Onumah says there has been no concrete change or marked departure from the previous administration.

“Beyond the constitutional requirement that gives every part of country a presence in the cabinet, there hasn’t been a conscious effort to open up the government. It is still as clannish as previous governments,” says Chido Onumah. According to Onumah, there is a tendency to feel that President Tinubu seems to be carrying on as one who is afraid of the consequences of doing the right thing.

“Nigeria is a country of great potentials, but it stops at that. The country faces an existential crisis. The fundamental challenge of Nigeria is that of nationhood and not many people understand this and among those who understand it, even fewer are interested in interrogating it. Perhaps, it is not convenient, perhaps it is not politically correct. Whatever the reason, we need to theorize the problems of Nigeria. I don’t think we have imagined enough what Nigeria should be,” says Onumah in the interview which also takes a look at the political future of major Tinubu challengers like Atiku Abubarkar and Peter Obi.

How has Nigeria fared since President Tinubu took over power?

Chido Onumah: I think the country is in its death throes, literally. Things haven’t been the same in Nigeria since the current government came to power. The first sign of how bad the situation will be emerged on May 29, 2023, when President Tinubu in his inaugural address announced the removal of so-called subsidy on fuel,



Nigeria is still a country in crisis that needs healing, says veteran journalist Chido Onumah.

thereby raising the cost of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) or petrol as it is called in Nigeria, and associated products.

Petrol is perhaps the most essential commodity in Nigeria. It powers vehicles, in a country that has no functional alternative means of mass transportation other than personal vehicles; a country that has one of the worst power-generating, transmitting, and distributing capacities in the world. It means citizens, offices and businesses have to rely on generators. Cost of transportation and staple food items have tripled. Cost of local production has gone up. The cost of services has skyrocketed. Nigeria is an oil producing country with four non-functional refineries which are a drain on public fund. There are no signs that these refineries will be fixed any time soon. It means the country will continue to import refined petroleum

products.

Insecurity is rife. Over the Christmas holidays, according to reports, more than 150 people were killed in series of attacks on 17 villages in central Nigeria. I don’t need to remind us that the country is not at war. It may well be. Banditry, kidnapping for ransom, cult violence, insurgency and terrorism continue unabated. Even those who supported President Tinubu are groaning. Nigeria is a bad place. It would require more than the current order to fix the country or even restore hope.

His election was hotly contested by candidates of the PDP and the Labour party, did the decision of the Supreme Court strengthen or hurt democracy in Nigeria?

Chido Onumah: It did, and I am not sure how soon the country will recover from what some people

have described as an electoral heist with the imprimatur of the country’s judiciary. Truth is that electoral democracy in Nigeria, right from independence, has been a sham and the judiciary has always come to the rescue of the “winning” team. People are disillusioned. It is unfortunate that the judiciary in Nigeria both at the national and sub-national levels, is seen as a tool for the truncation of the tenets of democracy. It was no surprise that at a symposium organized to mark the 61st birthday of the president of the senate, a former president of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) described the current supreme court as the worst in his 45 years of practice.

May we know what measures or actions President Tinubu has taken to heal the nation from the fractures of the 2023 elections?



Nigerians are still to see any concrete changes from to Buhari to Tinubu transition, says Chido Onumah. Photo courtesy.

Chido Onumah: I don't think the government has done anything concrete. For someone who prides himself on being one of the frontline foot soldiers in the anti-military struggle that brought about the return to civilian rule in 1999, there is a lot he can do. Perhaps, he is thinking of it. Maybe, he needs time to "settle" his political associates, but I won't say I imagined that President Tinubu would prove to be a marked departure from his predecessor considering the forces and manner he came to power. But once you are in power there are certain things you can do to remedy the situation even if you didn't create the crisis.

We are a country in crisis, and I am not talking about the economy, poverty, unemployment, deplorable infrastructure or insecurity. The country needs to heal. I am not sure President Tinubu has the ability or even awareness to tackle this challenge. Beyond the constitutional requirement that gives every part of country a presence in the cabinet, there hasn't been a conscious effort to open up the government. It is still as clannish as previous governments. He has been accused, and rightly so, of toeing the same line as former

President Muhammadu Buhari on the issue of national integration. There is a tendency to feel that he seems to be carrying on as one who is afraid of the consequences of doing the right thing.

Considering the coup prone history of Nigeria and the recent resurgence of coups in West Africa, does President Tinubu have additional pressure to deliver economically and sustain democracy?

Chido Onumah: Of course, he does, fear of a coup or not. He should be worried more about citizens. Nigerians are not smiling, to paraphrase a popular expression here. The economy is in tatters, especially with the removal of petrol subsidy and the devaluation of the naira. I am more concerned about a people's revolt. During the Christmas holidays when President Tinubu drove through the streets of Lagos, instead of cheers from the people he was greeted with intermittent chants of We are hungry, we are hungry...

What is happening across West Africa in terms of coups can certainly have an influence here even though I am not sure Nigerians are disposed to a military intervention particularly

when you realize that there isn't much difference between Nigeria's political and military class. Both are united in their predatory disposition to governance.

What is your take on how Nigeria under Tinubu and ECOWAS handled the coup in Niger?

Chido Onumah: I think there was unnecessary hastiness in the way the issue was handled. You are talking about sovereignty of a people. There should have been room for proper dialogue and negotiation. Except in the size of its population, Nigeria has not shown that it is the "Giant of West Africa," much less Africa. Our foreign policy is as fuzzy as they come. For a country that has very little respect within the continent and sub-region, partly because it has failed to live up to expectations, it was going to be difficult for President Tinubu and ECOWAS to determine the shape and form the resolution of the Niger crisis was going to take.

What was perhaps missing while deciding what is best for Niger, was the question of the country's stability, the choice between the stability of Niger and imposing a "democracy"

which the people did not accept. This was visible in the number of people who flooded the streets and highways to celebrate the coup.

Ultimately, the intervention of ECOWAS must and should always stem from a place of thorough SWOT or situational analysis of the crisis in each country.

The transformation of Lagos under then Governor Tinubu was billed by his supporters as a template to transform Nigeria, are there any glimpses we have seen so far on this happening?

Chido Onumah: It depends on what you mean by the transformation of Lagos. Maybe in terms of internal revenue generation. But the question will be, where is the money? Lagos remains one of the dirtiest if not the dirtiest city in the world. Basic infrastructure like roads, schools, and hospitals are still not up to continental much less international standards. Lagos is perhaps the only city in the world that has a population of more than 10 million people without an alternative means of mass transportation. There is a new project rail project. How well that will serve the transport needs of Lagosians

remains to be seen. Democracy is still in stranglehold. Politics in the state remains essentially patrimonial. Mr. Tinubu, even as President of Nigeria, still controls who gets what and when in Lagos. It's an obsession that has engaged his time since he left office as governor in 2007. Maybe for the political or business elite and nouveau riche, Lagos, like the rest of the country, offers no hope for inhabitants.

As we enter 2024, what are some of the critical issues that the Tinubu administration will have to grapple with?

Chido Onumah: Insecurity (terrorism, banditry, kidnapping) and the economy are top on the list. I have spoken a bit about the economy and there is a correlation between the two. There are many things fueling insecurity in Nigeria and top on the list is poverty. Next is the overcentralized nature of the country's security architecture and then the ever-present problem of corruption. The security structure of the country remains mired in corruption so there is really no incentive to end insecurity.

In terms of the economy, not much will happen because we are still an import-dependent economy. There is very little you can point to that is produced in Nigeria. Things as inconsequential as toothpicks are imported. The few foreign companies left in the country are closing shop or relocating while local companies are shutting down and laying off staff because of high production cost due to the cost of petrol and diesel and the continuous depreciation of the Nigerian Naira. The cost of doing business in the country remains prohibitive and the process even more debilitating.

We are an oil producing country, yet we import refined petroleum products. When our leaders are sick, they fly to Germany, France, the UK, Dubai, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, etc., for treatment. Their children school in these places. This puts a lot of pressure on the dollar. There are fears that the country's currency, the Naira, will go



President Tinubu is carrying on as one who is afraid of the consequences of doing the right thing, says Chido Onumah.

the way of the Zimbabwean dollar up until the redenomination and abandonment of the dollar in 2009.

For Peter Obi and the Labour party, what future do you see for them?

Chido Onumah: I am not sure if Peter Obi and the Labour Party can maintain the momentum. Even if Peter Obi does, there are certain principles that undergird political power in Nigeria which will remain obstacles. Political power is supposed to oscillate between the "North" and "South". After eight years of a "northern president," Mr. Tinubu from the "South" took over. He is expected to do two terms, eight years, when power predictably will return to the "North". This will be the cardinal issue in any attempt to understand the Obi factor. Obi certainly provides hope for a section of Nigerians, particularly young people, who are fed up with the status quo and hope for change. What they don't understand, however, is that the Nigerian crisis is beyond hope. It will take a huge political upheaval to upend this status quo. I don't know if we are ready for it.

After losing yet another election, is former Vice President Atiku Abubakar now history politically speaking?

Chido Onumah: I am not sure

how positive one can be of an Atiku presidency for a number of reasons. But this is Nigeria! Will he try to run for president again? Certainly, he could, if his health permits. He has the resources and can still muster some support across the country with these resources. But, again, we go back to the question of power equation in Nigeria. Apart from his age, he will be 81 in 2027 when the next presidential election will take place, and 85 when power is supposed to return to the "North" in 2031 (after eight years in the "South"), there are young Northern politicians who are positioning themselves to run for president after President Tinubu who would be happy to scuttle any plan by Atiku to be president.

A new President, and Chido Onumah like most Nigerians, is still as critical as ever, what is the ideal profile of the President that you think the country needs?

Chido Onumah: It is really not about me. I am an eternal optimist when it comes to Nigeria. All my adult life, I have spent much of my time trying to understand and write about the country. I have travelled, schooled, and lived in different countries around the world, but Nigeria remains home. There are millions of fellow compatriots who love Nigeria, but who are equally disillusioned

because Nigeria has disappointed and keeps disappointing us. My friend, New York-based journalist, author, and satirist, Rudolf Okonkwo, put it succinctly when he noted that, "The ideals of Nigeria have not been tried and found wanting; instead, they have been found difficult, and as such, left untried."

Nigeria is a country of great potentials, but it stops at that. The country faces an existential crisis. The fundamental challenge of Nigeria is that of nationhood and not many people understand this and among those who understand it, even fewer are interested in interrogating it. Perhaps, it is not convenient, perhaps it is not politically correct. Whatever the reason, we need to theorize the problems of Nigeria. I don't think we have imagined enough what Nigeria should be. This is something academics and public intellectuals should focus on.

The truth is that until we fix this fundamental challenge, we will continue to have problems, no matter who rules the country, Tinubu, Peter Obi or Atiku. This foundational problem has been there and unaddressed since independence. I don't know what will happen for the needed reset to take place, but clearly, we can't look up to the current political class, perhaps the most indolent in the world, for salvation.



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A Look at Africa's 2024 Elections

By Prince Kurupati

2024 is set to be a momentous and pivotal year for Africa on the political front. With a third of the African nations all set to hold their elections in 2024, 2024 may prove to be a key year in either progressing or regressing democratic gains. 2023 proved to be a thorn as necessitated by a high number of coups recorded mostly in West and Central Africa as well as a refusal (citing various reasons) by junta-led governments to hold democratic elections.

Below is a rundown of the countries that will hold elections in 2024 as well as the key factors and possible wild cards which may play a significant role in determining the likely winner.

Senegal (Presidential)

Senegalese President Macky Sall has been in charge since 2012 when he was inaugurated. In that time, he has recorded some massive successes, especially on the economic front. President Sall relaxed the rather stringent investment policies in his country hence improving the ease of doing business. However, towards the end of his second term in office, he nearly tarnished his image by proposing to run for a third term. This was vehemently opposed by many including some in his own party at which point, he conceded. Now he has put his backing behind Prime Minister Amadou Ba whose main opponent will be Ousmane Sonko, a man who spent some time in jail and up until recently, was barred from contesting. Sonko commands a huge following, especially among the youth but it's to be seen on 25 February if his support will take him over and above the current Prime Minister Amadou Ba. In all, 79 candidates are vying for the Senegalese presidency.

Mali (Presidential)

Mali is currently being led by a junta government. The military overthrew the civilian government via a coup back in 2020 and since then, has promised to hold elections which will



President Macky Sall of Senegal will be bowing out in respect of constitutional term limits. Photo credit AP, Lewis Joly.

return the country to civilian rule. The latest election dates were slated for 4 and 18 February 2024 but towards the end of 2023, the junta government said it would "slightly delay" the elections for "technical reasons". This therefore leaves the elections in a balance as no one really knows when or rather if these elections will be held at all. At the moment, it's just a wait-and-see game but a sad one as it regresses Africa's democratic gains.

South Africa (Parliamentary)

One of Africa's biggest economies South Africa will go to the polls

in May 2024. Since South Africa attained its independence in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) once led by Nelson Mandela has always had a firm grip on power. That power has however faded and for the first time going into an election, there is a high possibility that the ANC may lose. While the opposition parties in the country have upped their game and put more pressure on the ANC, it is the ANC's failures and internal issues which threaten to derail its stranglehold on power. The ANC has failed to deal with the immigration crisis, it has failed to curb the ever-

increasing unemployment rates, has failed to tackle high-level corruption and is failing to deal with the country's power crisis. Internally, there are fissures which have now fully blown out inside the ANC as demonstrated by former President Jacob Zuma's refusal to back the incumbent Cyril Ramaphosa to win a second term. This in essence makes the 2024 South Africa election a high-stakes game. It's important to note that South Africa uses a parliamentary system of government hence the winning party (which wins the most parliamentary seat) elects the president.

Rwanda (Presidential and Parliamentary)

Rwandan President Paul Kagame has been in office for three decades now. He came into office after the 1994 Rwandan genocide and in that time, has managed to transform Rwanda into an economic giant on the African continent. However, on the political front, Paul Kagame is described as a benevolent dictator. While the country has consistently held elections, Kagame always wins by a landslide as he faces significantly weak contenders – with all the perceived fearsome opponents condemned either to jail or exile. Kagame for the 2024 election is predicted to extend his three decades of rule as he faces a rather weak opposition in Frank Habineza of the Green Party.



In Rwanda ,President Paul Kagame will be seeking another term of office.Photo credit AP.

Chad (Presidential)

For 33 years, Chad was under the rule of Idriss Deby who took power via a coup. During that time, any resemblance of an election in Chad was just a farce as Deby was in charge of every electoral institution. Deby passed away in 2021 and was succeeded by his son Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno. Itno upon ascending to the highest office in Chad promised to hold elections in 18 months but that was later postponed. The postponement necessitated the

holding of a referendum in December 2023 which led to the promulgation of a new Constitution (amid heavy protests from the opposition citing massive influence of the military). The new Constitution calls for presidential elections to be held by October 2023 and allows Itno to run. The country as such is set to hold

elections for the first time in a very long time later in 2024.

Ghana (Presidential)

Ghana will hold its presidential election later on, on 7 December 2023. The incumbent Nana Akufo-Addo who was once a darling of most Ghanaians but has seen his

influence and support wane in recent times owing to the poor-performing economy will step down after serving two terms in office. Campaigning in his place for the ruling New Patriotic Party will be Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia. Bawumia will be looking to extend the New Patriotic Party's stay in power to three terms. However, he will have it tough as he is going head-to-head with John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress. Mahama is Ghana's former president who also contested but lost both the 2016 and 2020 elections. other strong candidates who will also be in the running include former agriculture minister Owusu Afriyie Akoto and former MP Francis Addai-Nimoh.



Current VP Dr Mahamudu Bawumia of the NPP and Former President John Mahama of the NDC will headline presidential elections in Ghana.

Other Notable Presidential Elections for 2024

- Tunisia
- Algeria
- Comoros
- Mauritania
- Mozambique
- South Sudan
- Burkina Faso
- Guinea Bissau

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Africa Must Embrace New Dawn -Chief Charles Taku

By Ajong Mbatndah L

Africans should free the continent from the impunity of criminality, corruption, dictatorship, economic despoliation and embark on genuine inter-Africa economic cooperation, says foremost human rights crusader and former President of the International Criminal Court Bar Association-ICCBA, Chief Charles Taku.

“This new year 2024 must be a year of best efforts towards a recommitment towards the fulfillment of the founding objectives of the African Union –OAU. It must be a year for a genuine enthronement of peace, justice, and development. It should be a year of making the African first commitment to the continent, the people of Africa and of people of African origin world-wide, says Chief Taku in an interview to discuss seminal issues across Africa.

Out with a new book titled book “In search of the Elusive Soul of Justice,” Chief Charles Taku says the situation of human rights in Africa has deteriorated. Many African countries have not ratified the protocol to the African Court on Human and People’s Rights granting access to their citizens to the court, while Rwanda, Benin Republic, and Tanzania withdrew from the protocol after judgments in the court went against them in favour of their citizens, says Chief Taku

Fielding questions on the crisis in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, Chief Charles Taku says the way forward in resolving the conflict lies in internationally mandated mediation to address the root causes of the conflict.

Chief Charles Taku is the out with a new book “In search of the Elusive Soul of Justice,” could you shed some light on it?

Chief Charles Taku: Readers may characterize this book as an account of my worldwide struggle for justice for the poor, the weak and the vulnerable in society. The soul of humanity is held in bondage by a predatory power elite which is superintended by a



The situation of human rights in Africa is deteriorating, says Chief Charles Taku

corrupt vampire power architecture. The vampire power architecture is nurtured and sustained on the blood of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable in the human society. This book comes from the trenches of the war against impunity and international lawlessness. Through the accounts recorded in this book, I have provided humanity with a platform from which to launch the struggle to free itself from vampires of impunity and the organizational architecture sustaining them. This book highlights the efforts I have deployed over several years and the journey I embarked on, in the search for the elusive soul of justice; from the humble but determined resistance to guinea-pig experimental neocolonial criminal proclivities in Cameroon, to the corridors of international justice, the boardrooms of international organizations and diplomatic missions; the battlefields of the world bearing the hallmarks of impunity, genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Human rights have been a big crusade of yours for decades,

how did Africa fare on that in 2023?

Chief Charles Taku: The situation of human rights in Africa has deteriorated. Many African countries have not ratified the protocol to the African Court on Human and People’s Rights granting access to their citizens to the court. Rwanda, Benin Republic and Tanzania withdrew from the protocol after judgments in the court went against them in favour of their citizens. The Malabo protocol given the African court criminal jurisdiction requires 28 signatory states to be functional. So far only 15 countries have ratified it. The continent lacks an effective human rights tradition and human rights treaty compliance mechanisms. The culture of unconstitutional change of governments through military takeovers, remaining in power through constitution manipulation, fraudulent elections, the militarization of justice and impunity increased throughout the year 2003.

May we know the importance of the ICC in the present-day African context, how has the

continent benefitted for its existence?

Chief Charles Taku: The Rome Statute which established the ICC is one of the multilateral treaties which a majority of African countries participated in at as subjects of international law. The international legal order which created the United Nations and its elaborate international human rights regime, was not for Africa and Africans. Indeed, colonialism and other atrocity crimes against Africa and people of African origin continued on its watch. Therefore, being on the table when the Rome Statute was created, was greeted with satisfaction in Africa. Unfortunately, the exclusive focus on Africa by the ICC in its two decades of existence portrayed the court as a Trojan horse for the recolonization of Africa. The situation has changed with the appointment of Karim Khan KC as the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC. A cornerstone of his prosecutorial policy is complementarity which makes the court to intervene only when the judiciary of a state party refuses to effectively investigate and prosecute. Currently most of the resources

of the ICC have been directed at the investigations in Ukraine and Palestine. The new Prosecutor Karim Khan, KC, through the principle of complementarity entered agreements with some members of the EU for a robust investigation of crimes against African trans-Sahara migrants. The relationship of Africa and the new Prosecutor has improved. It is hard to state whether Africa has gained from the ICC because despite the intervention of the ICC, impunity and atrocity crimes in the continent have not ended.

What is your assessment on the conflict resolution efforts of the AU?

Chief Charles Taku: The AU conflict resolution system is ineffective. The AU conflict resolution system has failed to intervene in the seven years genocidal war in the Southern Cameroons. Its campaign of ‘silencing the guns’ by 2020’ became a mere slogan.

Apart from occasional declarations, it has failed to carry out robust interventions in African conflict situations. Where it has made a mark is in its peace keeping missions in Somalia and Central Africa Republic. But those missions are funded largely by the European Union.

What is your reading of the current state of the crisis in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon?

Chief Charles Taku: The Southern Cameroons Restoration Fighters have risen from the use of rustic weapons to hold down a conventional army of the Republic of Cameroon for seven years and continuing. They have forced the Cameroon military to rely on militias and armed civilian allied forces in combat. Cameroon government civilian and military commanders have publicly recruited proxy forces and militias and distributed combat arsenal to them to carry out military operations against Southern Cameroons Restoration fighters. This is not a demonstration of strength for which Cameroon may claim victory. It is a crime against humanity and war crimes. Many



Chief Charles Taku maintains that only an internationally mandated mediation to address root causes can resolve the crisis in the English speaking regions of Cameroon.

end of the year international human rights reports have stated that the intensity of the war has increased and that alleged crimes are committed by both sides to the conflict.

As things stand now, what do you see as a way out or way forward in resolving the conflict?

Chief Charles Taku: The way forward in resolving the conflict lies in internationally mandated mediation to address the root causes of the conflict. The international community was unanimous in making this recommendation. The recommendation is founded in international law, particularly articles 33 and 52 of the UN Charter.

The Republic of Cameroon first saw merit in the recommendation by engaging Switzerland to facilitate the mediation process before pulling out of it after three years of foot-dragging. During the period and continuing, the situation got worse. The protracted nature of the war and the impunity of atrocity crimes, has made a future together elusive. Indeed, a military solution to the conflict is not possible. Even if active hostilities abate, it will be deferring the war to another day and to another generation. The policy

of delay in resolving the conflict by the government of Cameroon cannot be in its best interest and that of international legality.

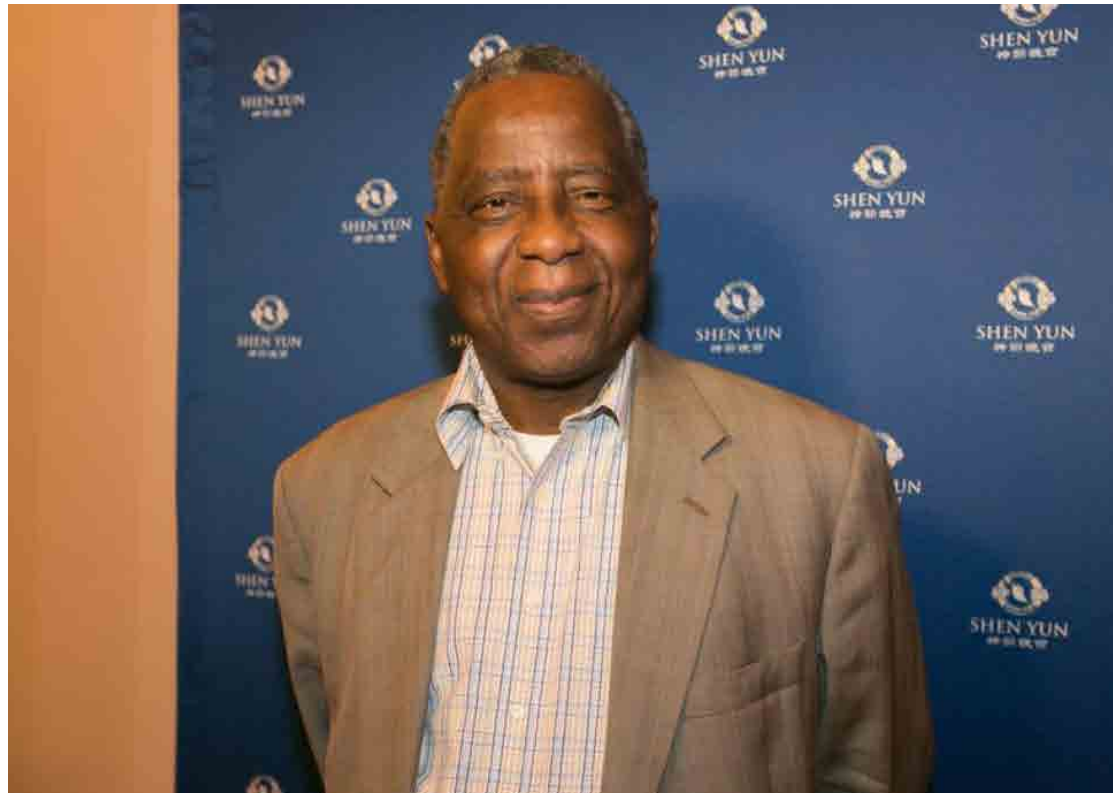
So far, the Southern Cameroons has obtained a clear advantage which President Paul Biya himself articulated in answer to a question by Mo Mohamed in Paris. He answered that he initially hoped to completely integrate the Southern Cameroons in the Republic of Cameroon, but the war has proved the failure of his policy in that regard. That answer by President Biya goes to the root cause of the conflict and this may be demonstrated by the evolution of Cameroons constitutional arrangements.

The constitutional roadmap towards a complete evisceration of the distinctive identity of the Southern Cameroons began with Ahidjo’s policy of national unity which Paul Biya although in the shadows was a key ideologue. Pursuant to that policy, the Southern Cameroons was partitioned and renamed with mere geographic expressions, South-West, North-West, without a specific relevance to a congruent territory to which the geographic expressions related. The progression towards the total evisceration of the Southern

Cameroons international identity and international character acquired on October 1, 1961, saw Paul Biya revert to the name of the Republic of Cameroon at independence pursuant to the policy of national integration which aimed at pulling the feet of clay under the geographic expressions through creating new administrative units with an amalgamation of regions in a manner which the Southern Cameroons would cease to exist. This was the rationale for Articles 61(2) of the Constitution amendment of 18 February 1996 which states:” 61 (2) The President of the Republic may, as and when necessary: (a) change the names and modify the geographical boundaries of the Regions listed in paragraph (1) above; (b) create other Regions. In this case, he shall give them names and fix their geographical boundaries”. In this proposed arrangement, ‘special status’ envisaged in Article 62(2) was to be stopgap towards complete annexation. “Section 62 (2) states, “ Without prejudice to the provisions of this Part, the law may take into consideration the specificities of certain Regions with regard to their organization and functioning.”

This is the intended political arrangement which President Biya

told Mo Mohamed, had crashed with the resistance, the war and the proclamation of the independence of the Southern Cameroons-Ambazonia. It was therefore a matter of surprise that supposed educated and informed persons celebrated the so-called special status as if it was a new venture. Paul Biya did not need a Grand National Dialogue in order to activate a constitutional provision which was in abeyance for over two decades. The Major National Dialogue had one purpose only. It was intended to provide an opportunity for Biya to walk away from the internationally endorsed Swiss process by falsely demonstrating to the international community that an internal alternative had provided a solution to the conflict. Special Status was not a creation of that conference. The international community was not persuaded and continues to call for an internationally mandated mediation to address the root causes. On this, there is little controversy.



African governments must respect people-oriented constitutional governance, free and fair elections, and put people at the centre of policies to avert coups, says Chief Taku.

Why has there been this seeming apathy from the international community in making stronger efforts to help resolve the conflict?

Chief Charles Taku: The reasons for the seeming apathy from the international community is due to several factors. I will name one. A key factor is that the conduct of the international community is consistent with its policy of prejudice towards African conflicts. The case of the conflicts in Rwanda, Eretria, Sudan. South Africa under apartheid, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Central Africa Republic illustrate this point. These were a mixture of protracted intense warfare, effusion of blood, diplomacy and geopolitical interests which pushed the hand of the international community to intervene. The Southern Cameroons case is a case which is simple to resolve by diplomatic means, although there will still be accountability for the atrocity crimes which have been committed. Like Eretria, an internationally organized referendum

will meet the erga omnes obligations of the international community and comply with the right to external self-determination under Article 76 of the UN Charter.

Across Africa last year, we saw a resurgence of military coups, with some strongly embraced by Africans, are you worried about the trend and what should African leaders do to stem the tide?

Chief Charles Taku: The resurgence of military coups in Africa arises from the use to which supposed African governments use the military to sustain and even attempt to eternalize political power. The military take overs are therefore implosions within the dictatorial power architecture of the countries where they have occurred. That is the reason for the jubilation by a sizeable number of people. A careful examination of the popular declarations of the military in those countries leads to this conclusion. The only way of stemming the tide is for African governments to respect people-

oriented constitutional governance, to organize free and fair elections, and to place their people and them alone at the centre of their political actions and policies.

Based on your experiences in handling cases on the Rwandan genocide, what are some lessons that Africa may have missed

Chief Charles Taku: Africa has learnt nothing from the human calamity which befell Rwanda. Had Africa learnt any lessons, the government of Cameroon will not be pursuing the military option in attempting to impose a solution on the Southern Cameroons conflict. If Africa had learnt anything, the ongoing carnage in Darfur would not be going on.

African civilian and military commanders would have known that apart from the ICC, many countries world-wide, including the United States of America now has universal jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute international atrocity crimes and that the impunity of international criminality will come

to haunt them no matter when. Universal jurisdiction has come forcefully in time to cover some of the limitations and inadequacies of the ICC and the UN system.

Any special wish for the continent as we start 2024?

Chief Charles Taku: Africans should free the continent from the impunity of criminality, corruption, dictatorship, economic despoliation and embark on genuine inter-Africa economic cooperation. African Union has the highest number of multilateral treaties which are in abeyance. The underdevelopment of Africa is not for the lack of enabling laws and treaties. It is the lack of the political will by African leaders. This new year 2024 must be a year of best efforts towards a recommitment towards the fulfillment of the founding objectives of the African Union –OAU. It must be a year for a genuine enthronement of peace, justice and development. It should be a year of making the African first commitment to the continent, the people of Africa and of people of African origin world-wide. _____

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Africa's Natural Gas Sector is Building Momentum in 2024

Africa's natural gas sector stands poised to prepare the entire continent for eventual decarbonization, as do many of the companies operating here.

By NJ Ayuk*

The recently signed liquefied natural gas (LNG) development project in South Africa's Mpumalanga province is a promising step on the long road to Africa's just energy transition.

The project, being jointly developed by Kinetic Energy of Australia and the Industrial Corporation of South Africa (IDC), a national development finance institution, will capitalize on Kinetic Energy's recent 3.1 billion cubic feet natural gas discovery in Amersfoort, Mpumalanga. The project is expected to produce 50 megawatts (MW) of equivalent energy and eventually expand to 500 MW.

The project, which Kinetic Energy describes as South Africa's largest onshore LNG project, exemplifies natural gas' potential to grow the country's economy and meet domestic energy needs.

This all comes about as South Africa works to expand its oil and gas operations in order to curb its reliance on coal and help pave the way to eventual decarbonization.

South Africa is not alone, either. As the African Energy Chamber (AEC) covers in our recently released "The State of African Energy 2024 Outlook Report," natural gas production is on the rise both globally and in Africa. Even more promising, our report notes that "upstream operators are now revising their strategies and aligning their future investments more in line with energy transition, and natural gas is being looked at as transition fuel."

The African Energy Chamber will make support the Invest in African Energy Conference in Paris this year organised by Energy Capital and Power. African Energy Week will definitely be the home of Natural Gas investment in Africa.

Gas: A Logical Transition Fuel

I find it heartening that, despite calls by environmental organizations and



NJ Ayuk is Executive Chairman of the African Energy Chamber.

wealthy countries to cease investment in African oil and gas projects, many of the companies actually operating in Africa appear to recognize natural gas' value as a transition fuel. Too long has the solution to the climate crisis been oversimplified: Decarbonization is not a goal that can be reached overnight nor without first building up the infrastructure required to support development of renewables.

Such a task is relatively simple for Western countries, which have spent centuries building their economies and infrastructure off the backs of fossil fuels. The same cannot be said for African states, which have long lacked these same development opportunities and must now play catch-up at an accelerated pace.

Even worse, we are told to play this game of catch-up with our hands tied: to leave our natural resources in the ground while the developed nations of the world continue to exploit their natural non-renewable wealth. We are expected to jump straight to building wind farms, solar farms, and hydroelectric dams while hundreds

of millions of Africans are still living without access to electricity.

Where will the capital for such a miraculous development come from?

Who will build the foundational infrastructure needed to support it?

Developed nations are quick to promise, "We will!" but reticent to follow through on their promises. What's more, their foreign "aid" has frequently focused more on alleviating the symptoms of Africa's economic and energy poverty rather than resolving the source.

With all this in mind, it is clear to me who must provide the lion's share of capital and build the infrastructure: Africans ourselves. And we cannot do that without tapping our own natural resources, natural gas being the most vital among them. Its properties that burn cleaner than oil and coal, its abundance, its ease of storage and transport, and its applications in manufacturing and synthesis make natural gas the best option for Africans to establish energy security and achieve decarbonization.

Companies Leading the Way

So, again, it is encouraging to see that the AEC is not alone in our stance that natural gas production makes sense for Africa — and for energy companies. More and more energy companies describe policies that call for pursuing energy transition measures for tomorrow while providing the natural gas to power the world today.

Look at French major TotalEnergies, which is responsible for much of the upstream activity in our continent. Following the discovery of two huge gas fields in South Africa in 2019 and 2020, TotalEnergies is continuing its exploration and production efforts there, despite environmentalists' efforts to block further activity. TotalEnergies also is driving the Mozambique LNG project, considered one of Africa's most important hydrocarbon developments.

Then there's German independent, Wintershall Dea, which is increasing its participation in the Reggane Nord natural gas project in Algeria by 4.5%.

The company is acquiring interest from Italian utility company Edison in the project. Wintershall Dea, which has a strong presence in North Africa, also announced first gas with its partners (Cheiron Energy, INA, and the Egyptian Gas Holding Company) at the East Damanhur block in the onshore Nile Delta earlier this fall.

I love what Wintershall Dea's CEO and Chief Operating Officer Dawn Summers wrote about natural gas in a November opinion piece, released just before the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28).

"At first glance, it would seem that the gas and oil industry is merely part of the climate problem — but it will also be part of the solution," Summers wrote. "If gas were used instead of coal, CO2 emissions would immediately go down — by almost

half. Already today, we are decreasing the environmental impact of our activities worldwide by drastically reducing our methane emissions. In addition, with technologies such as CO2 storage and H2 production, we are helping other sectors to decarbonise, and we aim to harness our expertise to ensure that the future energy system is more sustainable. In short, the oil and gas industry can, must and will be part of the solution to the climate problem."

Well said! Africa's gas industry is part of the solution as well. And, as our report notes, the forecast for continued natural gas projects in our continent is looking good.

Africa's Tremendous Natural Gas Potential

Our report finds that Africa

continues to hold immense natural gas potential and is positioned to not only increase its outputs but also capitalize on the underserved LNG market and meet Europe's ongoing demand. Our estimates show an increase from Africa's 2023 natural gas output of about 265 billion cubic meters (bcm) to over 280 bcm by 2025.

North Africa currently drives the majority of the continent's output, although its production is expected to remain flat throughout the rest of the 2020s. Production ramp-up is expected through the second half of this decade as Mozambique increases its LNG output. As new-gas start-ups across the rest of the continent come online, this trend in increased output will become further pronounced.

Nigeria and Algeria, meanwhile,

are expected to drive an increased focus on LNG exports, with additional flows coming from Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, and waters off Senegal- Mauritania.

Africa's natural gas sector stands poised to prepare the entire continent for eventual decarbonization, as do many of the companies operating here.

The goal of a continent fueled by renewable power cannot be achieved, however, unless the developed world also recognizes this and allows African states to transition on their own schedule, not one imposed on it by others.

* NJ Ayuk is Executive Chairman of the African Energy Chamber

Germany Commits to Fast-tracking Africa's Energy Transition

By Prince Kurupati

Africa like all the other continents is determined to reduce its heavy reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation. Instead, Africa is preoccupied with advancing its energy transition drive to ensure that in the near future, the majority of the continent's energy needs will come from green and clean energy sources. On this front, at the end of 2023 during the G20 Compact with Africa Summit which was held in Berlin, Africa received a huge financial boost as Germany pledged 4 billion euros (\$4.37 billion) in green energy projects in Africa.

Germany Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced Germany's pledge while addressing members of the media on the sidelines of the summit. Announcing the news, the Germany Chancellor said it was time that Africa benefits from its wealth of raw materials. As reported by AP News, Chancellor Scholz said the 4 billion euros will be used to ensure that the materials used in green energy should be processed in the African nations they come from.

"Hydrogen production requires considerable investment at the start,



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz chairs a session of the conference on the G20 Compact with Africa in Berlin. Photo Liesa Johannssen,AFP.

so clear signals for long-term and durable cooperation are needed... The Compact with Africa conference aims to send the signal: You can count on Germany as a partner," Chancellor Scholz said.

Chancellor Scholz said Africa has

always been a partner of Germany and the wider European community but going into the future, Europe wants to see Africa take more ownership and control of its natural resources. Through the 4 billion euros pledge, Chancellor Scholz said the investment

will create "jobs and prosperity" in Africa while Europe will get a long-term and reliable partner for all its energy needs.

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki warmly received the pledge from

Germany among other deals entered into and proposed by various European actors with African countries. He said Africa is receptive to everyone and the presence of other actor's chief among them China should not be viewed as picking sides. "The African continent is open to different partnerships... Our wish is for you to place your trust in us, to impose less conditions and to create the conditions together."

Echoing the same sentiments was the Comoros President and the current African Union Chair Azali Assoumani who said, "There is no monopoly anywhere... Everyone has a place." Assoumani rather encouraged the "positive competition" between Europe and China with regards to developmental projects on the African continent. At the same time, Assoumani called upon African countries to invest heavily in their own countries saying internal investment is very much needed as investments from foreign actors are yet to reach the pre-pandemic levels. This is largely necessitated by the fact

that other countries are yet to fully recover from the pandemic.

While Africa has been receptive to the Compact with Africa initiative and embraced all the pledges and commitments made by European nations and other business entities, some economists remain sceptical as to whether the initiative will bear any fruits. German economist Robert Kappel whose work largely covers African economies said the initiative marks "a new beginning of stronger Africa relations... Now we just have to see if more investment flows from G20 countries and Germany, and if the promises will be realised... But I still have doubts as to whether this will really happen so quickly and whether there will really be a breakthrough."

Alex Vines who is the Africa Program director at Chatham House weighed in saying since the launch of the initiative six years ago, it's still unclear if any of the participating countries have experienced more growth. "The results (of the initiative) are hotly debated," Vines said. Despite several countries in Africa

including Ghana, Rwanda and Senegal taking massive strides in improving the ease of doing business, European nations and businesses continue to lackadaisically commit to their monetary pledges.

Germany itself has recorded some poor investment figures when it comes to Africa in the past 10 years. Vines states that the 9.7 billion euros which flowed from Germany to Africa in direct foreign investment from 2016 to 2020 is just a tiny fraction of the figures recorded by France and the UK. In 2022, German companies invested 163.7 billion euros in foreign countries but only 1% went to Africa! Kappel added that Germany's investment in Africa over the last 10 years has led to the creation of 30,000 jobs meaning 3,000 jobs per year for the whole continent. Looking at these figures, there is enough room for scepticism to engulf economists and Africans in general. However, the hope is that going into the future, this will change and the Compact with Africa Initiative will be the catalyst for that change.

Germany established the Compact with Africa initiative in 2017 when it chaired the G20 Summit. The initiative aims to improve the economic conditions in the participating countries to make them more attractive for foreign private investment. The participating African countries include Egypt, Ethiopia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, South Africa and Tunisia. Angola, Zambia, Nigeria and Kenya were in attendance as guests. Also, part of the Compact with Africa Initiative are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank.

In attendance at the 2023 Summit were various African leaders, the Germany Chancellor, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron as well as many other government delegations from various European countries as well as representatives from around 800 companies.

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COP28: Achievements, Shortcomings, And Its Impact On African Countries

By James Woods*

In the contemporary era, climate change looms as an unprecedented and paramount challenge, imperiling humanity's existence on our fragile planet. Its pervasive effects manifest in various forms, from extreme weather events to flash floods, rising sea levels, persistent droughts, and a spectrum of natural catastrophes. To confront this monumental global issue, the international community converged at COP28, where I had the privilege of attending among delegates from nearly 200 nations. Held from November 30 to December 12 in the United Arab Emirates, COP28 stands as the largest and most pivotal climate gathering to date. In this op-ed, I will delve into COP28's accomplishments and shortcomings while also scrutinising its implications for African nations.

COP28 has yielded significant progress that promises to have a positive impact on the global climate agenda. Notably, a landmark agreement was reached in Dubai, signaling a decisive shift away from fossil fuels as a means to combat climate change. This historic pact, known as the 'UAE Consensus,' stands out for being the first climate agreement to directly address fossil fuels, breaking a three-decade-long trend of avoiding the subject due to the opposition of major oil-producing nations. It's worth emphasising the significance of this breakthrough, particularly because the UAE, a leading global oil producer, hosted COP28. The inclusion of fossil fuels in the agreement formally acknowledges their detrimental environmental impact and their role as a primary driver of climate change. This groundbreaking deal emerged after intensive two-week negotiations involving diverse stakeholders.

Another commendable outcome of COP28 is the initiation of the operational phase of the loss and damage fund. This vital step was



James Woods is a former diplomat with a commendable record of service for Malawi in various European nations

endorsed on the very first day of the conference, demonstrating a collective commitment to assisting vulnerable developing nations in coping with climate-related disasters. Although the initial pledges to the fund total approximately \$800 million, falling short of the actual requirements, the fund's operationalisation stands as a significant milestone in the ongoing climate justice movement. This achievement holds particular importance for African nations that have long advocated for increased financial support to address climate-related challenges. Furthermore, the conference served as a global forum, bringing together delegates from nearly 200 countries, including

civil society organisations, climate activists, government officials, and various stakeholders. This diverse assembly fostered a robust global dialogue on the impacts of climate change and potential solutions to confront them.

Although COP28 has resulted in some positive outcomes, but like previous conferences, it has failed to meet the expectations of climate activists and the demands of the most vulnerable countries affected by climate change. The main agenda at COP28 was to carry out a Global Stocktake (GST), a comprehensive assessment of where the world was in its fight against climate change and what more needed to be done to meet

the climate objectives. The GST is mandated by the Paris Agreement to be a periodic exercise, the first one in 2023 and every five years thereafter. COP28 was being held at a time when global warming was breaking new records. The year 2023 is already confirmed to emerge as the hottest year ever with more than 80 days happened to be at least 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than pre-industrial times. At the same time, every assessment showed that the world was not doing enough and that the 1.5-degree target was rapidly slipping out of hand. COP28, therefore, was expected to use the GST to stimulate more ambitious climate actions, particularly between now and 2030.

However, it failed to deliver on this front and there is little in the final agreement to accelerate climate action in the short term.

Moreover, the issue of fossil fuel was the center of discussion at the conference and for the first time, it has been officially recognised as the major cause of climate change, and the final agreement called upon countries to contribute towards «transitioning away» from fossil fuels, to achieve net zero by 2050. But there are no time schedules and no targets due to which the production and consumption of fossil fuels are unlikely to be curbed significantly in the near term. On top of it, the double standards of developed countries make matters worse. They have consistently failed to meet their commitments on emissions reduction or financial support. They continue to invest in new fossil fuel infrastructure and emit more than their fair share. For instance, the US presently is the largest producer of oil and gas, producing nearly a quarter of global natural gas and 15 percent of the world's crude oil. Similarly, the share of China is also significant. However, both these countries along with other developed countries have failed to act in compliance with their commitments and have not met their collective finance obligations of providing 100 billion dollars to developing countries.

The apathy of developed countries disproportionately affects developing economies particularly, the African countries, that are most vulnerable to climate change. A report by Carbon Brief indicates that around 15,700 lives have been lost in Africa due to extreme weather disasters in 2023 such as flash floods in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda's unyielding drought in the Sahel and the floods in Libya. In light of the prevailing circumstances, COP28 had been long anticipated by African nations, yet it yielded outcomes that were mixed in nature for the continent.



James Woods with famed philanthropist Tony Elumelu in discussions on a shared vision for Africa.

On one hand, during the conference's inaugural day, the participating nations reached consensus on the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund, hosted by the World Bank. This fund signifies a critical financial mechanism designed to address the irreversible ramifications of climate change, offering essential resources to those adversely affected by climate-related disasters. The significance of this fund is particularly pronounced for African countries that have directly experienced the devastating impacts of such disasters. For instance, Malawi, situated in southeastern Africa, has endured unprecedented climate-related catastrophes resulting in the loss of vital infrastructure and countless lives. In the current year alone, Tropical Cyclone Freddy displaced over half a million residents

and claimed the lives of more than 1400 individuals across the nation. In these challenging circumstances, the approval of the loss and damage fund at COP28 serves as a tool of hope for Malawi. It presents an opportunity to rebuild homes, rehabilitate forests and agricultural lands, and mitigate the adverse effects of climate-induced disasters, further underscoring the critical role of such financial mechanisms in the region.

Whereas, the inclusion of fossil fuel in the final agreement has been a source of concern for African countries, who have been advocating for a «Just Energy Transition» and demand a flexible approach to balance economic development and industrialisation objectives. African countries have advocated that they should be entitled to exploit their oil and gas resources to ensure economic

development. Even if the African countries decide to completely cease the use of fossil fuel, they need funding from developed countries to adopt green technology, which has not been complied with by the developed countries.

In summary, COP28 convened representatives from across the globe with the aim of forging a consensus on future climate change frameworks. Notably, delegates collectively acknowledged the pivotal step of explicitly addressing fossil fuels as the primary driver of climate change. However, the conference fell short in establishing concrete indicators to gauge progress toward the crucial goal of limiting global temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Furthermore, the current adaptation agreement lacks essential financial provisions, necessitating ongoing collaborative efforts to fortify it in the years ahead.

Regarding the pledged funds at the conference, they appear to be but a drop in the vast ocean of financial needs. This shortfall in funding poses an increasingly formidable challenge, particularly for developing economies, including African nations. It is imperative that developed countries uphold their commitments and provide robust support to developing nations in their pursuit of effective climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. The time for decisive action and solidarity is now.

*James Woods is a former diplomat with a commendable record of service for Malawi in various European nations, including Belgium, Andorra, France, the Principality of Monaco, the Netherlands, Italy, Luxembourg, and the European Union. Complementing his practical experience, James is an MBA candidate at the University of Oxford, associated with Kellogg College, where he is deepening his knowledge in business leadership and management. He is also an Archbishop Desmond Tutu Fellow.

UN Security Council to Finance African-Led Peace Missions

By Prince Kurupati



Officials of the African Union Peace keeping Mission in Somali and partners pose for cameras. Photo courtesy.

Africa starts the new year on a positive note following great news that came from the last sitting of 2023 of the UN Security Council. The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2719 (2023) which allows it to consider on a case-by-case basis requests from the African Peace and Security Council seeking authorisation to access UN-assessed contributions for African-led peace support operations.

Essentially, what the resolution means is that the underfunded African Peace and Security Council will see some if not all of its peace missions on the continent financed by the UN. This in essence significantly increases the probability of the peace missions achieving their intended objectives. This is necessitated by the fact that the success of peace missions largely hinges on the availability of resources both material and financial.

In a statement released on the official UN website, the support that will be extended to the African Union-led peace support operations “will include costs and reimbursement of all categories of support as negotiated between the troop police-contributing country, the African Union and the United Nations”. Through the support, the Security Council aims at deploying peace enforcement quickly “with a mandate limited in time and exit strategy defined from the outset.”

To ensure that all the support

including financial transactions is above board and within the mandated stipulations of the UN and other financial regulators, the Security Council “determined that support provided to African Union-led peace support operations will be delivered per the UN’s Human Rights Due Diligence Policy for non-United Nations security forces and within the regulatory and administrative framework established by the General Assembly”.

Resolution 2719 (2023) was adopted after 9 votes were cast in favour of the decision with zero voting against it. There were however 6 abstentions – Russian Federation, Mozambique, France, China, Ghana and Gabon.

Speaking before the adoption of resolution 2719 (2023), Harold Adlai Agyeman from Ghana (also speaking on behalf of Gabon and Mozambique) said “We believe that the United Nations support for enforcement operations led by the African Union brings enormous benefits to all of us and serves the interest of global peace and security”. He said the adoption of the resolution is an opportunity to address the question of adequate, predictable and sustainable financing that has been at the bane of African Union peace support operations, away from the ad hoc arrangements that have existed so far.

Commenting on Resolution

2719 (2023), U.S. Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs Ambassador Robert Wood said the “United States is pleased to support this framework resolution, which outlines the conditions under which the UN Security Council would consider authorising AU-led Peace Support Operations with access to UN assessed contributions”. He went on to say that the adoption of the resolution “underscored the primacy of politics and the need for a coherent political strategy to guide any operation”.

Ambassador Robert Wood did however lament the vagueness of the resolution with regards to how the financial support would be structured saying “The draft resolution, in its original form, lacked an explicit delineation of the financial burden sharing.” He thus proposed an amendment to the resolution so that “all stakeholders are on the same page about what the resolution means”.

The worry expressed by Ambassador Wood concerning the vagueness of the resolution on financial burden-sharing was also echoed by France’s representative at the Security Council meeting Nathalie Broadhurst Estival. Estival “emphasized the importance of reaching a unanimous agreement on the cost-sharing terms to avoid future sensitive discussions and concentrate on effective multilateral responses to restore peace”.

While acknowledging the good foundation ushered in by the resolution, China’s Dai Bing called upon traditional donors to continue with their good work hence not reducing their contributions. He did however call for the “streamlining and optimisation of some peacekeeping operations to avoid duplication and wasted resources”.

The representative from the Russian Federation Anna M. Evstigneeva said Russia supports the resolution based on “African solutions for African problems”. Evstigneeva said Africa should come up with its own solutions to its own problems. If the continent is to receive any support, it should be supported to operationalise the implementation of its solutions rather than to implement solutions proposed by foreign actors.

The adoption of resolution 2719 (2023) couldn’t have come at a much better time. African in the past few years has encountered some obstacles in its democratisation drive. This was largely necessitated by the numerous coups which took place in West and Central Africa as well as contentious elections all over the continent. The Under Secretary for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo said the implementation of resolution 2719 (2023) will help in the timely restoration of constitutional order in Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea as well as the restoration

of stability in Sudan. DiCarlo said while the “African Union-led peace support operations have demonstrated significant political will and commitment, they face funding shortfalls, the absence of requisite operational and logistical capabilities and a lack of force enablers and

multipliers”. All these shortfalls will be compensated for by the implementation of resolution 2719 (2023).

Representatives from Malta and the United Arab Emirates said the resolution is just the first step for many positive things to come.

The UAE representative Ameirah Obaid Mohamed Obaid Alhefeiti emphasized that “there is no one size fits all solution to responding to conflict, the same logic should apply to the funding that supports it. the African Union’s knowledge of the local environment and the

dynamics therein is unmatched... Underlining the resultant need for joint assessment and planning when a crisis emerges, she added, ‘Peace is a shared endeavour, and this responsibility should come with the necessary resources.’

A Year Of The US-African Leaders Summit

By Prince Kurupati



US President Joe Biden and African leaders in a family photo during the 2023 Summit. Photo credit Reuters, Ken Cedano.

In December 2022, U.S. President Joe Biden and many African leaders gathered in the U.S. Capital for the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit. At the end of the Summit, the Biden-Harris Administration committed to invest \$55 billion in Africa for the next three years. The White House also committed to stand with Africa on the global stage and ensure the continent’s voice is heard and respected.

With 2023 having come and gone hence meaning the first year in the three years in which the U.S. promised to invest \$55 billion passed, is the U.S. on the path to meet its commitment? Well, the answer to this is a resounding YES. In 2023, Africa welcomed some major developments, projects and investments all coming from the U.S. This in essence means the U.S. is staying true to its word. To get a close-up, and better appreciation

of this, let’s jump into the finer details.

On the diplomatic front, 2023 was a big year for Africa. In all, 17 Cabinet and leaders of U.S. Government Departments visited 26 African nations. The U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris also visited three countries namely Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia. The visits by top American statesmen and business leaders allowed the continent to engage in high-level discussions. The U.S. Vice President’s visit led to the “mobilisation of more than \$8 billion in public and private sector investments in climate and food security, women’s empowerment, and digital inclusion across Africa”.

Moving over to the business, investment and trade sector, the White House states that “the United States has supported and helped close 547 new deals for a total estimated

value of \$14.2 billion in new two-way trade and investment between the United States and Africa”. Contrasting this with 2022, 2023 recorded a 60 per cent increase in the number and value of closed deals between the U.S. and Africa.

The White House stated that the increase in the trade and investment figures between the U.S. and Africa isn’t just a matter of semantics and numbers but rather, it’s something tangible which has positively impacted the lives of millions. Just to put this into perspective, in March 2023, Prosper Africa mobilised \$247 million in long-term financing for West Africa’s rapidly growing housing sector. This in essence created new homeowners in West Africa. The target for this project is to create 6000 home owners something which is quite achievable considering the pace the project is moving at. Notably,

other top trade and investment deals which have benefited the ordinary people in Africa include the “International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) \$2 billion commitment in supporting strategic infrastructure, small business growth and agricultural productivity and the U.S. Department of Commerce’s \$3.6 billion commitment to fostering long term commercial partnerships with a focus on priority sectors such as digitisation, clean tech, creative industries and climate-smart agriculture”.

In a move believed by many to be a counter strategy to China’s Belt and Road Initiative, the Biden Administration in 2023 chose Africa for its first and flagship economic corridor, the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI). The PGI is a \$600 billion initiative which is meant to address

the global infrastructure gap. As the first port of call in Africa, the Biden Administration committed to funding \$1.5 billion in the Lobito Corridor for transportation, digital access, agricultural and clean energy infrastructure projects.

Initially, the Lobito Corridor project entailed upgrading the existing Benguela rail line which links Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Namibia and the Atlantic Ocean. It was later agreed however to “mobilise an additional \$1 billion (coming from the U.S., the European Union, African Development Bank and Africa Finance Corporation) to launch feasibility studies and commercially develop a greenfield rail line to expand the corridor from eastern Angola through northwest Zambia, enhancing trade between all three countries – Angola, DRC and

Zambia – and connecting them to global markets”.

2023 also saw the United States government expanding the scope and financial commitment of the Digital Transformation with Africa (DTA) initiative. The objective is to “enhance efforts to expand digital access in Africa and increase commercial engagement between U.S. and African companies in the digital sector, support increased digital literacy and strengthen digital enabling environments across Africa”. When the U.S. Vice President visited Africa in April 2023, she launched a “Call to Action” to the private sector for investment in African digital inclusion in line with the aims of DTA.

On the food security front, the White House said since the Biden-Harris Administration came into power, over \$17.2 billion in food security assistance has been channelled out

with more than half going to Africa in 2023. This in essence demonstrates the U.S. desire to tackle food insecurity on the continent, build stronger food systems and expand African countries’ access to agricultural markets.

The White House also said that in 2023, “as part of the Feed the Future Initiative to help end hunger, the United States launched the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS), in partnership with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the African Union. VACS seek to boost agricultural productivity and nutrition by developing diverse, climate-adapted crops and increasing soil health.

On the politics and security front, the United States “reaffirmed its commitment to engage with and support complex political transitions in Africa and work

to assist governments and civil society at critical moments in the democratic transition through the African Democratic and Political Transitions (ADAPT) Initiative. The ADAPT Initiative comes in handy considering that several African countries especially those in West and Central Africa witnessed slumps in democratic gains.

In 2023, the U.S. government also continued and “leveraged its status as the world’s largest donor for global health to achieve shared goals for continued improvements in global health and global health security”. Both USAID and the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) forwarded considerable material and financial resources to help achieve health security on the continent.

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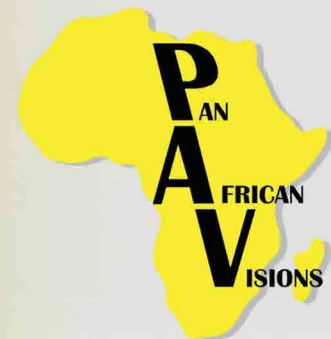


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Book Review: Our Future Must Be Convivial - Francis Nyamnjoh On The Fallacy Of Individual Completeness

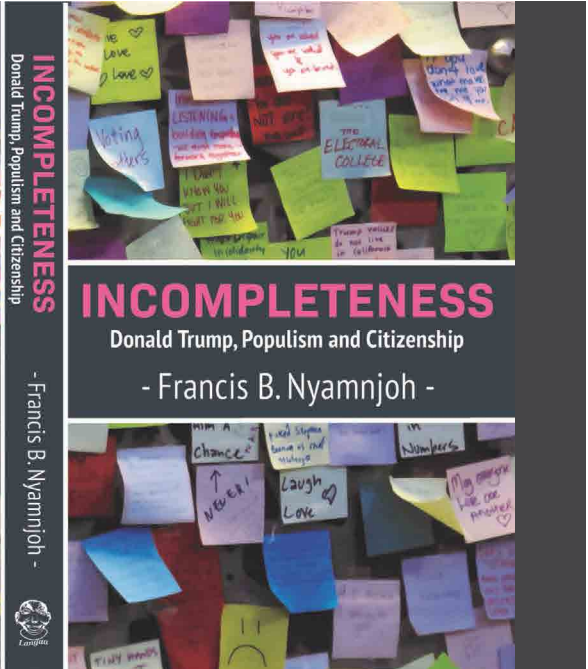
* Francis B. Nyamnjoh's *Incompleteness: Donald Trump, Populism and Citizenship* is published by Langaa RPCIG (Bamenda, Cameroon), 2022. 395 pp., including bibliography, £39.60 (paperback), £39.60 (eBook), ISBN 978-9956552870

Reviewed by
Pierre Englebret
Professor of International Relations
Pomona College
Claremont, USA

I do not think I know of a more penetrating, original, irreverent (and yet fundamentally kind) contemporary thinker and political theorist as Francis Nyamnjoh. Whether fiction or essays, the books of his that I have read have had a profound impact on my thinking and opened my eyes to new ideas and analyses. I think, for example, of *Married But Available*, which brought up positionality in social sciences before it was a thing, and in the most hilarious way. I think also of *#RhodesMustFall: Nibbling at Resilient Colonialism* in South Africa, which addressed not only race but also the limitations of postcolonial sovereignty. Yet, hard to believe as it might be, Nyamnjoh has outdone himself with his latest book: *Incompleteness: Donald Trump, Populism and Citizenship*.

It is easy and common to write about Donald Trump with the many tropes of populism, the decline of liberal values, the changing economic fortunes of former majorities, etc. Nyamnjoh reviews these arguments and builds on them but takes us somewhere else altogether, eventually using Trump as a vector to make a broad and more momentous claim about citizenship, in his typical way of making surprising fundamental claims in the most unassuming way. For, while populism appears to be the topic of Nyamnjoh's investigation, it is, in the end, an invitation to reflect on the important, neglected if not abused, notion of citizenship.

The way we typically think of citizenship is as a finite and exclusionary marker of identity. In the United States, particularly, we like to think of it in competitive terms—we like to



be “# 1” and we make it increasingly difficult for others to join us. This view, Nyamnjoh points out, idolizes a sense of “completeness,” a belief that our society can be perfect and absolute and that it lies upon a foundation of dominance (Nyamnjoh makes it clear that the argument is not limited to the US but I restrict myself to what I know best in my discussion of it).

As we project this absolutist view of superiority across the world, so we practice it with each other at home. We fetishize inequality, the “encounter [of] others in unequal ways, conquering them and imposing one’s superiority.” This is in some ways the competitive environment of daily life in the US, with professional sports its omnipresent metaphor. Nyamnjoh sees this way of being, germane to “ambitions of conquest, domination or suppression,” as founded on a belief that “completeness” is possible, individually and collectively.

Nyamnjoh’s completeness is akin to a pure view of autonomy. One does not need others. Success is self-made. It is but a small step, if any step at all, from there to the arrogance that can come, he writes from “not recognizing one’s debts and indebtedness to others” (I was reminded of Obama’s 2012 remark “you didn’t build that” as I read Nyamnjoh’s words). As Obama did then, Nyamnjoh reminds us—and builds his argument

on the notion—that incompleteness is always with us “even in one’s supposed superiority and autonomy.”

Nyamnjoh does not see this incompleteness as lacking in any way. It is not a status of inferiority. It is the often-obfuscated reality of life in society. We need each other, we cannot do it all alone. We are incomplete. And from this incompleteness come our societal bonds. From this incompleteness, Nyamnjoh rejoices, comes the possibility of conviviality. And so Nyamnjoh “embraces and celebrates” our incompleteness for it brings us together.

The humility that incompleteness calls for stands in contrast to the prevailing political mood in the US and to the foundations of populism. Hence, the danger that populism imposes, by its absolutism, upon the very fabric of life in society. This is where Nyamnjoh’s detour through citizenship is so important. Populism too is incomplete—it could not be understood without the convivial help of citizenship and incompleteness.

Nativism, autochthony, exclusionary claims to the benefits of the law seek to deny the realities or histories of others. They paint their claimants as complete, the others as unworthy, and they articulate along absolutist notions of citizenship that renege on our shared humanity. Nothing good comes out of them, including for those who claim

them in the foolhardiness of their own perceived completeness.

In the end, Nyamnjoh’s core claim is that “being, becoming, belonging and citizenship” are “a permanent work in progress in an interconnected world of incompleteness.” Embracing our incompleteness paradoxically frees us by bonding us to others. And so, humility and conviviality is how we transcend exclusionary frameworks.

Armed with this wisdom, Nyamnjoh returns to Trumpism, “a testimony of crude exploitation of the fear of social change and the crisis of identity experienced by many whites” and, frankly, many non-whites too. Rather than a return to pure liberalism, which also hinges on forms of autonomy and completeness, Nyamnjoh suggests that the antidote lies in “a stronger sense of one’s dependence on others, a form of humble community.”

Not only does Nyamnjoh take us on a liberating intellectual journey, but he does so himself in the humblest of tones, in caring and good-natured ways, and with his perennial mischievous humor. Who else, after all, writes politico-philosophical essays that quote Tom and Jerry, Downtown Abbey and Amos Tutuola’s Palm-Wine Drinkard? A pure gem.



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Taku's War Against Injustice, Impunity



BOOK REVIEW:

Title: 'In Search of the Elusive Soul of Justice'

Author: Chief Charles Achaleke Taku

Reviewer: Charlie Ndi Chia

Publisher: Buma Kor Publishers Ltd.

No of Pages: 400

In Search of the Elusive Soul of Justice is “a critical record of the contributions the author has made towards the fight against impunity and for individual and collective rights to security of persons, peace, justice and happiness...” The book explores many topics; it treats these topics clinically and candidly, ostensibly to contribute to a just, non-discriminatory and egalitarian world.

Taku's book is a pot-pourri of issues and solutions thereof. It is an incisive treatment of the mishmash of problems almost suffocating global fair practice. It is, to say the very least, many voices, expressed in one song!

Who is Charles Achaleke Taku?

He is a man of many parts. He is a lawyer, social critic, public affairs analyst, prolific writer, human rights crusader, staunch Christian of the Catholic Church and philanthropist. These attributes and more, come alive in his latest publication.

Taku has cut a niche within legal circles in his over three decades of legal practice, citable of which are, Member of the Cameroon Bar Association, Lead Defence Counsel at the International Criminal Court for Rwanda in Arusha-Tanzania and President of the International Criminal Court Bar Association. As a prolific writer and Public Affairs commentator, he has authored other previous books including “In Search of the Cameroonian Revolution” and “For Dame Lynder Chalker” as well as granted countless radio, television and newspaper interviews in major media outlets in Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya, Europe and America. Some of these works are published in the book under review.

Taku is a very restless man. It would even be pretty safe to state that every step he takes makes news. Well noted for his relentless litigations “as a friend of the court,” Taku is always one to ensure that the due process of the law is made available to anyone seeking redress.

Taku is newsworthiness personified. On any given day, he is the delight of every Editor worth their salt, within and outside of Cameroon. Whenever he writes or grants an interview, he, at once, thrives to be bold and frank, incontrovertible and meticulous. A student of history in his own right, Taku often gives phenomenal legal interpretation to historical facts, a practice that more often than not, puts to question the scholarship and character of “convenient Professors” of history and political science.

“In Search of the Elusive Soul of Justice” brings out an inherent knack for, and crusading spirit of good governance, peace and justice

and the abhorrence of criminality and impunity in the erudite lawyer. It is a random collection of critical commentaries and analyses he has made and published, especially in print media across Africa, Europe, America and the world, in space and time. It consists also of landmark interviews granted by the author in prominent Nigerian and Cameroonian newspapers, as well as tributes to the memory of hapless victims of programmed massacres, other gruesome crimes and state condoned impunity. A chapter of the book is devoted to the memory of legal, literary and religious trail-blazers (living and dead) within and outside of Cameroonian shores. Some of the speeches he delivered at world forums during his tenure as President of the International Criminal Court Bar Association are reproduced in the publication. So too are keynote statements delivered at the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute found herein.

When it comes to the very touchy Anglophone problem, Taku's stand as an avid crusader for crystal justice and unchaining Southern Cameroons from the shackles of neo-colonialism is laid bare and very passionately defended with cast iron facts, evidence and moral suasion.

Whether it is about Kenyan or Tanzanian politics, selective or blind justice at the International Criminal Court, ICC, where at a point he was Lead Counsel and President of the Bar Association in that order, Taku's focus

has hardly shifted from the pursuit of the good society and the primacy of socio-economic reconstruction and egalitarianism.

Chief Taku's latest work naturally brings out the lawyer's obsession with the ideal society which, he argues, should respect due process of law. Be it in conference papers, newspaper articles or interviews, he conjures the ideal society; that society which guarantees individual freedom of thought, speech and action as well as protects the society as a whole from

threats to the security of persons, family and property. And he often does so with a certain clarity of vision which he stubbornly defends to the logical end.

In Search of the Elusive Soul of Justice without any doubts would come in as a handbook for world leaders, Cameroonian political authorities, legal practitioners, world policy designers and scholars across the board.

However, Taku's war against injustice would be a heavy cross on

compromised shoulders, a nightmare if you will, for socio-political predators and the crass perpetrators of crimes against humanity that litter the landscape.

In Search of the Elusive Soul of Justice is a hovering terror more or less, an uncontrollable flock of butterflies in the stomachs of "Vagabonds In Power" (VIP) as it were.

Unveiling Shortcomings of Bilingual Education in Africa.

By John Nkemnji, Ph.D.*

Introduction

This article explores the challenges within Africa's bilingual education system and advocates for a comprehensive transformation to address these challenges. A condensed version of this article was published in the January 2023 issue of Cameroon Panorama (No. 754, pages 8 and 9). Due to reader demand, rather than a simple reprint, I have chosen to expand on the ideas, address readers' questions, and share them through PanAfricanVisions, which reaches a broader African audience in both print and digital formats.

The Essence of Education

Education's core purpose is to transmit culture and equip individuals to face life's challenges. Ideally, education is most effective in the learners' indigenous language, fostering survival skills and continuous development. However, the reality in Africa often involves frustrated students receiving unintelligible lectures from pseudo-bilingual educators proficient in one dominant language. The linguistic barrier hinders meaningful education. Some students have recorded amusing and unintelligible utterances from lecturers.

In Africa, the imperative of



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transmitting culture and improving the people's way of life makes teaching and learning in the first language essential for development. Unfortunately, what some African

countries call bilingual education lacks the essence of their indigenous language and culture. Instead, foreign languages like French, English, German, or Spanish are employed,

furthering the interests of foreign nations. This trend is now being extended to languages like Russian and Chinese.

Bilingualism vs. Bilingual Education

Bilingualism and bilingual education are distinct concepts. While Cameroon, like Canada, professes to be bilingual, most African countries undertake Bilingual Education in schools without officially declaring bilingualism. The lack of clarity leads to internal conflicts, as seen in Cameroon's ongoing crisis, where the bilingual system is not balanced. The indiscriminate importation of a euro-centric curriculum during colonialism disrupted Africa's autonomous and self-sufficient trajectory, hindering socioeconomic and academic pursuits.

The African Writers Series (AWS)

The AWS, created post-independence, comprises renowned African authors, male and female, young and old (within and outside the continent), who use foreign-acquired languages like English, French, and Arabic to educate, entertain, and address

colonial injustices. Most African secondary school students are compelled to use foreign languages, neglecting indigenous languages like Swahili, Zulu, Yoruba, or Hausa. It is common to hear students who cannot express themselves in an indigenous language speak one or more foreign languages and sometimes a Creole language, which acts as a lingua franca. Most Bilingual education programs do not incorporate a local language alongside the official foreign language. The fear is that some of the local languages may become extinct.

Colonial Education Agenda

The root cause of Africa's educational crisis lies in indiscriminately adopting a Eurocentric curriculum during colonial times. This article contends that Europe's historical exploitation continues through a systematic educational agenda. Meaningful change is impeded by deep-rooted imperialist power dynamics, even with well-intentioned multinational organizations like the UNO, WHO, UNESCO, ECW, NGOs, and churches not being able to bring about needed change.

Contemporary Miseducation in

Africa

Current educational systems perpetuate a cycle of failure, dependency, and desperation. Leaders must shift their mindset and embrace curricular research to create relevant materials. This article argues that the ineptitude of both traditional and political leaders contributes to the educational, political, and socioeconomic turmoil.

One would argue that African nations attained independence years ago and should not still blame Europe for their political, socioeconomic, and educational problems. The fact is that independence came with strings attached. African nations are still subjugated to various forms of colonialism and oppression. Most leaders in the colonies continue to maintain the status quo for greedy and myopic reasons. They clamor to remain top elites, even in their old age, and the young students remain subservient, confused, lack critical thought, and continue dancing to the ruling class's dictates—the actions of a few impact the lives of so many in disastrous ways.

Leadership and African Mindset

Leadership inadequacy is partly responsible for the educational

turmoil, as the current system focuses on memorization rather than critical thinking. To drive meaningful change, a shift in mentality is crucial. Technology is transforming the world, and Africa must keep pace. The indigenous educational system was destabilized by colonial agents, perpetuated by African leaders for personal gain. Several young Africans have developed impressive devices across diverse fields like medicine, transportation, technology, science, and the arts. These accomplishments were realized by individuals who left formal education, defying conventional college curricula and showcasing abilities that few within the formal educational system can replicate.

Way Forward – Solutions

To address these challenges, educators must decolonize and reform the curriculum, aligning it with the continent's development needs. Collaboration in curricular research is crucial, emphasizing the creation of relevant didactic materials. Africans should hold their leaders accountable and seek solutions that prioritize the continent's interests.

In advocating for comprehensive transformation and reform in

bilingual education, it is essential to recognize the value of linguistic diversity. Embracing the study of multiple languages can contribute to a more inclusive and enriching educational experience, fostering a deeper understanding of different cultures and global connectivity.

Conclusion

In its current state, bilingual education in Africa contributes to underdevelopment and encourages a brain drain. Africa must take charge of its educational narrative to create a new humanity and a just world, focusing on collaboration, accountability, and a curriculum that reflects its unique needs. Well-meaning partners from Europe and beyond are essential, but the initiative must come from within.

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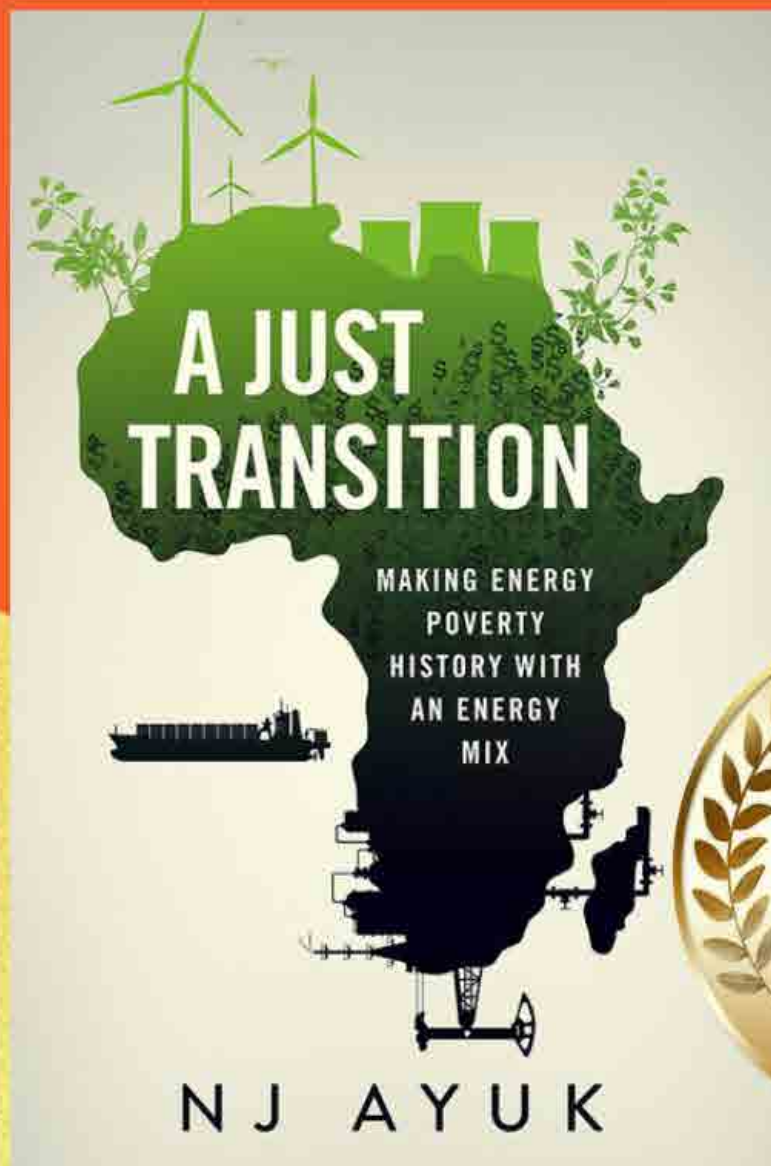
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The Shadow Masters: Cabals and the Whispered Governance of Nigeria

By Aminu Adamu*

Nigeria, a vibrant tapestry of cultures and resources, stands tragically entangled in a web of invisible puppeteers – the enigmatic cabals. This clandestine force, known as «cabals,» has transcended eras, leaving an indelible mark on the nation's governance.

Nigeria finds itself ensnared in the unseen machinations of these enigmatic puppeteers.

From the dawn of independence in 1960, the cabals have discreetly navigated the corridors of power, intertwining with the elected officials like threads in a complex fabric. Their influence, though not a recent phenomenon, has evolved, adapting to the changing political landscape. As the nation emerged from colonial rule, the nascent democracy faced the subtle maneuvers of these shadowy figures, laying the foundation for a pervasive influence that continues to haunt Nigeria to this day.

The tendrils of the cabal reached into the heart of the Goodluck Jonathan administration, where a select group, dubbed the «kitchen cabinet,» held sway over decision-making. Figures like Diezani Alison-Madueke, the oil minister embroiled in corruption scandals, and Ama Pepple, the president's confidante, became synonymous with opaque governance. Jonathan, ostensibly the president, appeared as a mere marionette, dancing to the silent tunes of his unelected masters.

Even in the era of Olusegun Obasanjo, hailed for relative stability, the cabal's influence persisted. Atiku Abubakar, the vice president, emerged as a key player in a group that wielded considerable sway over policy and appointments. The infamous «IBB boys» during Babangida's rule dictated the nation's political rhythm, showcasing the enduring grip of these unseen forces.

President Buhari, despite his promises to dismantle the cabal's



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hold, found himself ensnared in its intricate web. Whispers of a «northern cabal» pulling strings from Katsina dominated headlines. Names like Mamman Daura, the president's nephew, and Abba Kyari, the powerful chief of staff, became synonymous with backroom deal-making and unchecked influence.

The modus operandi of these cabals is rooted in their invisibility. They eschew brute force, opting for subtle manipulation, leveraging fear, loyalty, and crucially, access. Promises of wealth and influence entice politicians, lucrative contracts seduce business magnates, and the cloak of security lures retired generals. In return, unwavering loyalty, a blind eye to malfeasance, and unquestioning obedience to their agenda are extracted.

The consequences of this shadow governance are as insidious as they are far-reaching. Decision-making is skewed, not for the common good, but to enrich the privileged few. Development programs falter,

resources vanish into the abyss of corruption, and the aspirations of ordinary Nigerians are sacrificed at the altar of cabalistic greed.

Breaking free from this invisible chokehold demands a radical shift. Shining a piercing light on the shadows is imperative. Investigative journalism, led by figures like Fisayo Soyinka and Kiki Mordi, becomes a weapon of truth, exposing hidden deals, corrupt practices, and the identities of these shadowy puppeteers.

Citizen activism, exemplified by groups like BudgIT and Enough is Enough Nigeria, mobilizes the populace. Through social media campaigns, public protests, and grassroots initiatives, they raise awareness, amplify voices, and demand accountability. The #EndSARS movement, born from outrage against police brutality, inadvertently exposed links between police leadership and powerful political figures, showcasing the potential of citizen action to crack

open the cabal's facade.

Whistleblowers, such as Abdulmuminu Jibrin, who risk everything to expose corruption, become beacons of courage. Their defiance of threats and intimidation is crucial in bringing the cabal's machinations to light.

Strengthening institutions is another vital front in this battle. A robust and independent judiciary is essential for holding everyone accountable, including the cabal. Judicial reform, promoting independence, and ensuring fair trials for offenders are crucial steps in dismantling the culture of impunity.

Electoral reforms are imperative to prevent the cabal from manipulating the democratic process. Independent electoral commissions, fair elections, and a crackdown on voter fraud are critical to ensuring that the Nigerian people, not shadowy figures, choose their leaders.

Media independence acts as a vital watchdog, scrutinizing every corner of governance. Protecting journalists

from intimidation, promoting ownership diversity, and fostering critical thinking within the media landscape are essential to ensuring that the truth finds its voice.

Empowering the people is a cornerstone of the resistance. Civic education, providing Nigerians with knowledge of their rights, government workings, and the cabal's influence mechanisms, is crucial in fostering a critical mass of resistance.

Economic diversification is a strategic move to weaken the cabal's grip on vital resources. Overreliance on oil revenue creates

a breeding ground for corruption. Diversifying the economy, promoting entrepreneurship, and investing in sectors like agriculture and technology can loosen the cabal's hold on the nation's purse strings.

Youth engagement becomes a potent force for change. Involving the youth in the political process, providing platforms for their voices, and harnessing their idealism and energy are crucial in ensuring that the fight against the cabal endures for generations.

The road ahead is undoubtedly long and arduous. The cabal will fight

back, wielding vast resources and influence to discredit, intimidate, and silence those who challenge their dominion. In the face of despair, Nigerians must remember the power of collective action, the resilience of the human spirit, and the unwavering hope for a brighter future.

This is not just a fight for democracy or against corruption; it is a fight for the very soul of Nigeria. It is a fight to reclaim the narrative, redefine the meaning of power, and ensure that the dreams of ordinary Nigerians, whispered for too long in the shadows, finally have the chance

to bloom in the light of a new dawn. So, let the whispers of resistance become a deafening roar. Let the scattered sparks of defiance ignite a nationwide inferno. Let the fight against the cabal become a defining chapter in Nigeria's story, a testament to the enduring power of a people united in their yearning for a just and equitable future. The shadows may loom large, but the light of hope burns brighter still. And in that light, Nigeria will rise.

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A Political And Economic Analysis Of Sudan And South Sudan's Bilateral Relations

By Akol Dok*

On April 15th, 2023, conflict broke out in Khartoum between forces loyal to the Sudan Armed Forces led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces led by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo. The conflict proliferated, forcing millions of people to flee Sudan to neighboring countries like Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Chad, and South Sudan.

Following Omar al-Bashir's 30-year rule in 2019, the Republic of Sudan was progressing toward democracy. On 5 July 2019, The Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) agreed to a 38-month transition process. They established an 11-member Sovereignty Council with five military members, five civilians chosen by each side (TMC and FFC), and a civilian mutually agreed upon.

The FFC nominated Dr. Abdalla Hamdok as the Prime Minister, but the Sudanese military overthrew him on 25 October 2021. Dr. Abdalla Hamdok was reappointed but later resigned on 2 January 2022 amid protest, and the military reassumed power and abrogated the transition to democracy.

The Republic of South Sudan succeeded from Sudan on 9th July 2011 after decades of conflict with



South Sudan President Salva Kiir and the Chairman of the Sovereign Council of Sudan, Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan discussing at a meeting in Juba. Photo credit Sudan Tribune.

the Khartoum Government led by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), the ruling political party in South Sudan.

On 9 January 2005, the SPLM and NCP signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ending the Second Sudanese Civil War and set a timetable for the Southern Sudanese independence referendum.

In January 2011, the people of South Sudan voted over 98% for independence.

The Sudan conflict has drawn

attention to the relationship between Sudan and South Sudan. South Sudan has received hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants fleeing conflict in Sudan. South Sudan and Sudan have an interdependent relationship, and the author will analyze this relationship politically and economically.

POLITICALLY

South Sudan and Sudan had an acrimonious relationship following South Sudan's independence. The

neighbors disagreed on border issues and pipeline transit fees. In January 2012, South Sudan shut down its oil production to protest Sudan's high fees for transporting it through its northern pipeline. South Sudan exports its crude oil through a pipeline to Port Sudan, Sudan's Red Sea port.

Sudan was charging South Sudan \$36 per barrel, far above the industry standard –closer to \$1 per barrel. South Sudan was producing 350k barrels per day (bpd); this was all

the revenue lost for Sudan following South Sudan's independence.

In April 2012, South Sudanese forces attacked the disputed Panthou (Heglig) oil-rich area on the Sudan-South Sudan border. The Panthou land dispute is an extension of the Abyei dispute. Abyei is a disputed area between South Sudan and Sudan.

Under the 2004 Protocol on the Resolution of Abyei Conflict (Abyei Protocol) in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the Abyei Area is considered on an interim basis to be simultaneously part of both the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan.

Both countries have accused each other of supporting rebel and armed opposition groups. In December 2013, the relationship was exacerbated when conflict broke out in South Sudan. The South Sudan Government accused the Sudanese Government of training and arming South Sudan rebels fighting the Government.

Sudan with Uganda and Ethiopia, through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), meditated the end of the South Sudan conflict. In 2018, The Government of South Sudan signed The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCISS) with various opposition groups (SPLM-IO, SSOA, OPP) to end the conflict and form a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity. The signing ceremony was in Sudan's capital, Khartoum.

In April 2019, Omar Bashir's 30-year rule collapsed. The fall of Bashir and the NCP changed South Sudan-Sudan's relationship dynamics. The Transitional Sovereign Council (TSC) had a better relationship with the Government of South Sudan, led by President Salva Kiir Mayardit, than the NCP.

President Salva Kiir was crucial in mediating between the TSC and various Sudanese rebel groups. Kiir's efforts culminated in the Juba Peace Agreement, an agreement between the TSC and various opposition movements, i.e., Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Sudan People's



As Chair of the EAC, President Salva Kiir of South Sudan is playing a leading role in peace efforts.

Liberation Movement-North, Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, and Sudan Liberation Forces Alliance (SLFA).

On 3rd October 2020, The Juba Peace Agreement was signed in Juba, South Sudan's capital. Egypt, Qatar, the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union, and the Arab League witnessed the Agreement.

South Sudan and Sudan's political relationship began as a rancorous relationship and evolved into both countries supporting each other's peace and stability. The Sudan conflict will indeed challenge South Sudan and Sudan's relationship. During Hemi's recent diplomatic tour, which included Kampala, Addis Ababa, Pretoria, Kigali, and Nairobi, he did not visit Juba. South Sudan seeks to mediate between the RSF and SAF and avoid accusations of supporting a particular side. President Salva Kiir insists that South Sudan and the region can resolve the Sudan conflict.

ECONOMIC

South Sudan and Sudan's dynamic economic relationship revolves around oil, transportation, and agriculture. South Sudan exports all its crude oil through a pipeline to Port Sudan, and South Sudan relies on Port Sudan to import oilfield supplies

and equipment. South Sudanese farmers on Sudan's borders smuggle their produce (sesame, sorghum, Gum Arabic) to Sudan. South Sudan is landlocked and relies on Port Sudan and the Port of Mombasa for imports and exports.

South Sudan has over 3.5 billion crude oil reserves, Sub-Sahara Africa's third largest, behind Nigeria and Angola. The South Sudan oil and gas industry is crucial in the young nation's political and economic environment. Oil revenue accounts for 90% of Government revenue and 60% of gross domestic product (GDP).

The Khartoum Government developed the oil industry South Sudan inherited during the late 1990s, developing oilfields, pipelines, refineries, and port facilities. South Sudan's Petrodar pipeline is 1368km from Upper Nile State oilfields, and the Greater Nile Oil Pipeline is 1600km from Ruweng and Unity State oilfields leading to Sudan's Red Sea port, Port Sudan.

The Port Sudan on the Red Sea is a strategic port for South Sudan. South Sudan imports oilfield equipment and supplies through Port Sudan. Towns and States on the border use Port Sudan to import goods and products over the Port of Mombasa.

South Sudanese farmers in the agricultural-rich Renk County in

Upper Nile State rely on Sudanese traders to export essential agricultural products (sesame, sorghum, and millet). Sudan smuggles Gum Arabic from cultivators in Renk to international markets. In 2021, Sudan exported \$111M in Gum Arabic, making it the world's second-largest exporter of Gum Arabic. Most of Sudan's Gum Arabic originates from South Sudan.

Sudan and South Sudan's political and economic relationship has changed since the independence of South Sudan in 2011. The fall of Omar Bashir, the South Sudan civil war, and the recent Sudan war have pressured the two nations. South Sudan has a vested interest in the peace and stability of Sudan and vice versa. Both countries must work collectively to enhance their relationship; they are neighbors, share a history, and have a strategic interest in each other's stability.

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For 2024: Should Africa De-Link From The West To Settle The Past Injustices?

By Minga Mbweck Kongo*

On July 26 2023, thousands of Nigerien marched through the streets of Niamey, the capital, to celebrate its 'independence' from France. A day after the military coup, the second Russia-Africa Summit was held in St. Petersburg from July 27 to 28. Representatives from forty-nine African countries, including seventeen heads of state, were present. The Summit represented a critical reflection point in the growing multi-polarisation process as the Global South tried to de-link from Western US-centered hegemonic control. Speaking in French, the Burkinabé president Captain Ibrahim Traoré denounced Western neo-colonialism and criticised his fellow African leaders and neocolonialism, using direct outpouring words, "The problem is seeing African heads of state who bring nothing to its people who are struggling but who sing the same thing as the imperialists, calling us "militia," and therefore referring to us as men who do not respect human rights". Traoré closed his speech with the moving slogans "la patrie ou la mort, nous vaincrons,»

Genesis

The West African region has a long history of military coup d'état. The Niger coup d'état should be contextualised within that long tradition. The two years of Covid-19 were marked by the national and global shock of the deaths, the national psychic grief of Thomas Sankara's eventual, painful assassination and the absence of Lumumba, who consistently reminded Africans to see the wealth of their resources. Captain Traore spoke in the troublesome Africa Russia summit decades after 'African independence', which brought all the festering deep intergenerational wounds to the surface (which long-standing African leaders, France and its allies could not deal with the



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raw truth). Even Giorgia Meloni, current Italian prime minister, in her frustrations, expressed dismay in France when she publically warned that the accumulation of wealth at the expense of a growing poor African was, in fact under a threat if there was not more acknowledgement of colonial benefits and generous giving to create a more balanced society.

France Afrique

Within this context of deep material contestation in Africa, the West African population is becoming more disillusioned with the lack of monetary sovereignty and poverty. A tangible example of wealth inequality is that France's historical usage of its single currency Franc CFA, perhaps provides the most cogently microscopic view of this ongoing economic dilemma in Francophone Africa. The begging questions are: what were the ultimate sacrifices made by African freedom fighters such as Thomas Sankara, Kwame Nkrumah, Amílcar Cabral, Patrice Lumumba, and Nelson Mandela, for assassination or lengthy incarceration?

The overwhelming current African

generation sense that France and the West do not care about the people of Africa – much reflected in the speech of Giorgia Meloni on the African economy and migration. Meloni argued that the economic impact of France's CFA still deeply entrenched in the French favour. In response to ECOWAS military action in Niger, Meloni questions France meddling in African affairs and raised concern about the associated hidden truths around the human rights atrocities committed by France and how they relate to the ongoing plundering of African mineral resources style.

The intensification of coup d'état in West Africa occurred at an unprecedented time of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine that coincided with these contingent events and revelations about African challenges. The circumstances around France Afrique contestation, unsettled ghosts of past injustices in France Afrique and their continuities, along with the issue of the contentious historical injustice of Africa provide.

Consequence

Dekinking is a word coined by Smir Amin to readdress the imbalance

of colonial legacy and bridge the inequality gap between global North and global South. However, it all degenerated into blame games and sanctions. As a result, we have a state that responds to any threats with a heavy hand ready to crush any dissent. What accounts for the differentiation in attitude to reversing the political trajectory in these countries? Perhaps the more critical challenge is that unless the current African generation is positioned in a manner that makes it responsive to these social challenges.

Amin (1974) describes the unequal asymmetric relations which have relegated African countries (post-independence) to be primarily exporters, with a substantial part of the income derived from exports. Among the challenges associated with monopoly capital through land grabs, Africa remains mainly export-oriented in raw materials and dependent, unlike China, which exports manufactured goods.

The international isolation enables Russia to expand cooperation globally. Thus, practically everywhere in Francophone Africa, there is contempt toward France, denouncement of

France's hegemony on the African continent, and an announcement of a shift toward a new partner. There is an instant overwhelming support for the military coup and demonstrations against France. Ubiquitous placards highlighted 'Macron dégage, France est notre malheur', inequality, and related matters of people's rights and

supporting dictatorship in Africa. In Africa, Russia and China remains an economic favourite and their uncontested area is armaments and infrastructure. Energy is also a key sector for Russia, which is finding ways out for its gas exports. Russia provides security, via Wagner, in exchange for strategic resources.

However, some argue that this partnership is not a win-win.

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Strengthening Nigeria's Position - Five Expectations for the Incoming Ambassador to Washington

By Gbenga Ogunjimi*



The Embassy of Nigeria in Washington, DC.

Washington, DC — The absence of a Nigerian ambassador in Washington, D.C., is an urgent matter, considering Nigeria's role as an important partner for American interests on the African continent. The individual appointed to this position will face several pertinent and immediate tasks, primarily centered around improving Nigeria's standing in the United States.

This piece serves as a call to fill the void with effective representation and to prepare the incoming ambassador for strategic interventions necessary to continue building America's relationship with the emerging cultural superpower.

The Nigerian American community is recognized as the largest black immigrant community in the United States. Nigeria plays a crucial role as an important partner for

American interests in Africa. The lack of representation for a country like Nigeria in Washington has far-reaching implications.

As expectations for this vacancy rise, so do the challenges. The primary challenges the new Nigerian ambassador will face can be broadly categorized into two main areas: elevating the country's standing in Washington and regaining the confidence of the Nigerian diaspora

community. Melvin Foote, a U.S.-Africa Policy Strategist and President of Constituency for Africa, emphasizes that «Nigeria, with some of the most intelligent people globally, has gained notoriety for sending representatives to Washington who may not effectively represent the country's best.»

This article delves into the expectations for the incoming ambassador to Washington and

outlines key strategies aimed at fortifying Nigeria's standing in America.

1. Present a Clear Strategy for U.S.-Nigeria Relations

A crucial task for the incoming ambassador is to articulate a clear strategy for US-Nigeria relations. Historically, Nigeria has often found itself on the receiving end of global strategy, rather than being an architect or contributor. In contrast, the U.S. has a publicly available document called the U.S. Africa Strategy Toward the Sub-Saharan Africa, which serves as the blueprint for the United States's engagement with the African continent. The new ambassador has an opportunity to lead more powerfully and share a Nigerian strategy with the world. This anticipated strategy should encompass economic, political, and cultural dimensions, outlining Nigeria's priorities and aspirations on the international stage. This strategic approach ensures that Nigeria's interests are effectively communicated and aligned with the broader goals of the United States.

2. Engage Advocacy Groups on Foreign Policy

As it stands, there are only two congressional legislations on Nigeria on the Hill championed by Nigerian American advocacy groups:

- TPS for Nigeria, led by the

Nigerian Center in Washington D.C., focuses on immigration protections for undocumented Nigerians, and

H. Res. 82, led by the International Committee on Nigeria (ICON), which aims to designate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern.

To elevate Nigeria as a foreign policy priority for the U.S. the ambassador should proactively engage these diaspora groups on these policy advocacy matters. Additional key organizations the ambassador should consider engaging with include the Nigerian American Public Affairs Committee (NAPAC), Congressional Black Caucus, and Constituency for Africa. The ambassador must also work very closely the Congressional Nigerian Caucus, previously co-chaired by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee, with an aim to make the interests of the caucus bipartisan on Capitol Hill.

3. Embrace and Elevate Cultural Diplomacy

The new ambassador has an opportunity to tell a new Nigerian story to Washington. On May 29, Nigeria welcomed a new president, Bola Tinubu, who made a profound statement during his inauguration. He declared, «Nigeria is the best hope for the black race,» and this offers a new language to transform the Nigerian narrative in America.» This language should inform the ambassador's engagement with

Washington. Telling this new story also presents an opportunity to deepen Nigeria's ties with Black America. The Nigerian perspective, with this approach, often positioned negatively, becomes irrelevant.

4. Overhaul and Improve Consular Services

Recognizing the need for change, the Nigerian Center embarked on a citizen diplomacy action. In the previous month, the center spearheaded a coalition of 20 Nigerian American organizations to petition the Tinubu administration, urging improvements in consular services. Streamlining passport applications, facilitating National Identity Number (NIN) applications, and enhancing biometric services are critical steps to ease the bureaucratic processes faced by Nigerian Americans. Efficient consular services not only directly benefit the community but also contribute to a positive image of Nigeria.

5. Build Community Partnerships with the Nigerian Diaspora

The ambassador must actively build partnerships with the Nigerian diaspora community. Similarly to the U.S. President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement. Recognizing the Nigerian diaspora's potential as a valuable resource, the ambassador should establish an

advisory council comprised of Nigerian American thought, business, civic and community leaders to provide policy recommendations. This council will support the ambassador's efforts in fostering foreign direct investments, educational partnerships, and promoting cultural exchange opportunities. By tapping into the expertise within the community, the ambassador can amplify Nigeria's influence and position in Washington.

In conclusion, the expectations for the incoming ambassador to Washington are multifaceted and demand a new approach. A clear diplomatic strategy, emphasis on cultural diplomacy, consular service improvements, and building partnerships with the diaspora community are necessary components. By addressing these aspects, the ambassador can play a pivotal role in fortifying Nigeria's position in America and foster a more powerful engagement between Washington and Abuja.

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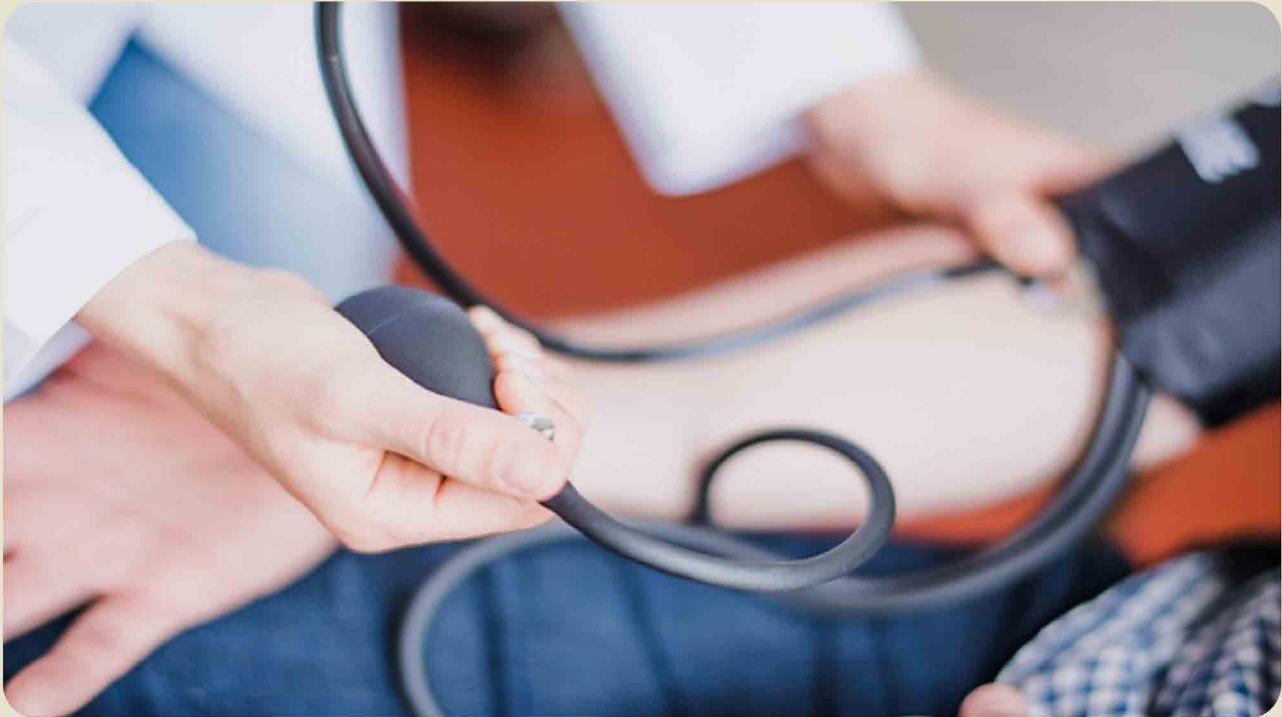
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Tanzania: A Testing Time For Journalists

By Adonis Byemelwa



Controversial remarks from Maru Regional Commissioner Said Mtanda have created raucous within Tanzanian media circles.

The recent avowals by the Maru Regional Commissioner, Said Mtanda that he is used to paying journalists handsomely has raised eyebrows about the state of journalism in Tanzania, sparking speculation when writers snub making the regional boss' remarks a scoop of the day.

His flamboyant mode of presenting thrilling information has gone viral on social media, expounding that, if a District Commissioner pays a journalist Sh50,000 (about \$19.83) he (RC) should double the perks to outshine the former in a manner of exuding his financial prowess.

"In case I am with journalists for some hours in a day I pay them Sh60,000 (about \$23.79) but if I engage them the whole day, I pay them over Sh120,000 (about \$49.90) depending on the event. I can't pay

reporters less than that. The RC should always should always show the value of his office against odds," said Mr. Mtanda amid applause.

If journalists are set to hunt for brown envelopes from political leaders, the citizenry can hardly expect any investigative reporting about embezzlements and all forms of maleficence committed by public officials.

Jenerali Ulimwengu, Tanzania's dissident and renowned journalist was recently quoted as saying: "We have now gone full circle to that period. The government has neutered the media to such an extent that most of the newspapers, radio, and television stations have redesigned themselves to serve as choruses to sing the praises of the President, VP, and Prime Minister, and whichever

top dog happens to be around in a local situation. It is nauseating to listen to these empty praises. To an ear trained to discern when people are licking boots, it should prompt someone to say shut up!"

Whatever, the RC meant by 'pay reporters handsomely', it is worth commenting that, the state of Tanzania's media forces professionalism to hang in the balance.

The country's media freedom has been in testing times since, with each President at the helm charting their mode of censoring free speech. The monolithic tendency under a single-party system is to blame for the <neutered> kind of media.

Mostly, readers had, in the recent past, weighted more trust in international news outlets than the

local ones, saying that most African countries are still making slow headways toward a true democracy.

The proliferation of fake news and misinformation poses a significant threat to journalistic integrity. Journalists must navigate the delicate equilibrium between speed and accuracy, ensuring that their reporting remains trustworthy in an era of information overload.

Ethical journalism has also become more crucial than ever, as journalists strive to maintain credibility amidst the noise of sensationalism and clickbait.

But most Tanzanian journalists are accused of not being patriotic, airing only <shameful> news before the international community, while reporting very little about the rosy

side of the picture of their country. Critics have, however, been questioning the kind of patriotism a journalist should exude, in case, for example, the forceful eviction of the Maasai from their ancestral land, which went alongside bloodshed, could remain unreported, just to shelve the country's shame.

Imagine letting the scoop news unreported about hundreds of public officials making a long fleet of public officials' motorcades to witness the recent mudslide disaster that claimed over 80 lives in Handan District, Manyara Region, enjoying Perdiem while the victims languishing in pain.

In the face of these challenges, journalism in Tanzania continues to evolve and adapt, driven by the unwavering dedication of journalists across the continent. It is through their tireless efforts that stories of hope, resilience, and human triumph emerge from the depths of despair.

From investigative reporting that uncovers corruption to feature stories that celebrate the richness of Tanzanian culture, journalists have the power to inspire change. But can all these aforementioned strides bear fruits if media freedom is questionable?

A famous journalist, who was tortured by wicked thugs in a manner of suppressing press freedom, Absalom Kibanda said that most Tanzanians have lost trust in the media over the government's clump down of investigative journalists, noting that nowadays most news outlets write common stories, which hardly attract avid readers to keep buying papers.

Tanzania's draconian laws like the 2016 Media Service Act that restricts journalists from exercising

true freedom by banning all means of accessing statistics pending NBC approval have never painted a good picture of the kind of freedom we want.

The recent restrictions put in place by the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA), against the usage of VPN, which had also debilitated the Clubhouse, is a damning indictment of the kind of media freedom Tanzania is now enduring.

If history is anything to go by, during the 2020 General Elections, where malfeasance was at stake to ban the opposition from exercising their democratic rights, the media faced an internet shutdown, some newspapers like Mawio and Tanzania Daima faced the wrath of an undemocratic government, thanks to the sixth Phase government under Samia Suluhu Hassan for bringing back the lost glory.

In recent days, after the demise of JPM at least news outlets that were shut or arbitrarily had their licenses revoked have now made a comeback albeit, in dire straits, that see workers remaining unpaid for months.

Statistics from the Media Council of Tanzania show that over 40%-60% of news adverts come from government sources.

The darkest side of relying on government adverts to operate newsrooms is that papers that criticize the system are likely to be denied the deals, but the editorials whose think pieces show loyalty to the system will be poised to enjoy adverts and perks at the expense of professionalism.

This is how tough it is to jiggle the mingled dice, but the only solution would be regulating the existing media laws, alongside prodding the

government to regard the media as the fourth estate.

The current rulership is now praised for having at least allowed its entities to advertise with private media outlets, unlike during those dark days under Magufuli, when the private print papers were not given leeway to get any adverts from the public organizations.

Even though we are lucky to have some kind of media freedom under this new rulership, the hangovers of the Fifth Phase government haunt some media outlets. Reporters still do not trust the kind of new freedom they had been given, as many of them are accused of dancing to the praise song music of reporting to soothe the political figures.

When information communication Minister Nape Nnauye, passed a regulation that would see a bad reporter dealt with as an individual without punishing the entire media company, journalists had now opted to invest in cowardice at the expense of professionalism.

One of the seasoned journalists, James Kamala, was recently quoted as saying, «There is never good news worth a reporter's life.»

This is why we nowadays hear some vices committed by government officials being either unreported or relegated to only independent international media companies.

For example, the way the media did its rightful duties during the 4th and 3rd governments which at least had spaces to report corruption scandals marks a stark difference from the current 'neutered' kind of reporting.

The juxtaposition between the way our media reported the Escrow account saga in 2014 and the mode in which the DP World Pact between

Tanzania and Dubai was put into the limelight, paints a gloomy picture of how the current media is almost paralyzed.

One would shudder to speak openly that, Investigative journalism in Tanzania has been kept almost at bay due to government censorship.

A renowned media consultant, Ndimara Tegambwage, was quoted as saying, that Tanzania should not allow the press freedom to tumble down as it was during the Magufuli's rulership.

He said the country tumbled down the World Press Freedom Index from 71 in 2016 to 124 in 2021 out of 180 countries.

He explained that things have now turned a bit rosy after those dark periods, illustrating that at least this time the Ministry of Information is re-engaging with journalists though reporters still routinely face difficulties and excessive scrutiny.

The draconian media laws have been crafted in a way that makes an information minister act like a lawyer, a judge, the police, and a media censor in which the big boss examines, cajoles, and puts to task whoever treks awkwardly in government officials' smooth ways.

Look, a sigh of relief is being felt, maybe, after the government had appointed a media guru, Matinyi Mobhare as its spokesperson.

The media anticipates much on the table from this Presidential appointee, whose think pieces, have been very captivating, but now the question is; can Mobhare be strong enough to change tacks against the wishes of his bosses, will he be ready to lose the sandwich! Posterity can tell.

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Africa At Odds With Pope Francis

By Prince Kurupati



Big odds between Pope Francis and African Bishops over ambiguous gay marriage stance. Photo courtesy

Within religious circles, often, the voice of the leader is the supreme voice of all. It dictates the direction the congregation should go. Going against the church leader often invites rebuke and possible banishment from the church. In what may be a first, African priests recently rejected the decision by the Pope to bless same-sex marriages. While there hasn't been any response from the Vatican pertaining to the African priests' position, the polarising nature of the Pope's recent pronouncements will most likely cause some serious friction in one of the world's most respected and biggest churches.

On 18 December 2023, The Vatican released a declaration that permitted nonliturgical blessings of same-sex couples. The news was instantly

welcomed by LGBTQ activists from all over the world including those in Africa. The Declaration was instantly regarded as one of the major turn points in the quest for global recognition of same-sex relationships and marriages. However, there was also instant condemnation of the Declaration by many Catholics especially those in Africa which is home to 265 million Catholics.

Schoenstatt Fr. Ugochukwu Ugwoke a Nigerian Priest said the church's position is and will always remain that marriage is a sacramental union between a man and a woman. Father Ugwoke said the latest Declaration from the Vatican though shrouded in ambiguity is a witty way of introducing same-sex marriages in the Catholic. He said by allowing priests to bless same-sex marriages

while outlawing liturgical ceremonies or rites for such unions, the Vatican is just testing the waters before giving these unions the same privileges as those reserved for unions between a man and a woman.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria issued a statement saying there is "no possibility in the teaching of the Church of blessing same-sex unions and activities. That would go against God's law, the teachings of the Church, the laws of our nation, and the cultural sensibilities of our people."

South African Jesuit Fr. Nobert Munekani who practices in one of the few countries on the African continent that has legalised same-sex marriages said the Vatican Declaration is ambiguous and as such, "it comes with a lot of confusion

and misrepresentations to many people". He said in South Africa, the Declaration has been received with mixed feelings with some embracing it while others wholeheartedly against it. "If you listen to people who are pro-same-sex marriages, they actually have elevated this declaration to the level of the church having now accepted homosexual marriages. But that's clearly not what it is, and this still brings about confusions and anxieties among the faithful and the people of God".

To Father Munekani, the Declaration "should not be read or understood as an endorsement to same-sex unions, but as rather a response to numerous questions about the possibility of imparting a blessing on same-sex couples". Father Ugwoke clarified this stating,

“The Declaration has not distorted this understanding of God’s position against homosexuality... When you bless anyone, you are not blessing what they are doing or the irregular situation they have entangled themselves in. The blessing is not sacramental, which approves or endorses their union. The blessing you’re giving is simply an act of piety”.

Roundly, The Catholic Bishops of Africa and Madagascar collectively rejected the Declaration saying such blessings, “would cause confusion and would be in direct contradiction to the cultural ethos of African communities”. A statement by the Catholic Bishops of Southern Africa said “Marriage remains exclusive between a man and a woman”.

The few Catholics who have embraced the Vatican Declaration include Ricus Dullaert who is the founder of an LGBTQ support group at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Johannesburg. Dullaert said the Declaration presents a radical shift from the previous policies of the church and as such, commended Pope Francis for his progressive stance and reform-minded papacy. “We are happy about that... This will give more progressive forces in the



Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo, president of SECAM, says the African Churches will continue to reflect on ‘Fiducia supplicans,’ while reaffirming their “unwavering communion with Pope Francis” and highlighting the freedom of each Bishop in their own Diocese. (CNS photo/Baz Ratner, Reuters)

church an opening to do something in that field of blessing gay relations which is quite a revolution”.

Dullaert did however lament the unequal blessings afforded to same-

sex marriages and unions between men and women. He said the Declaration only affords the LGBTQ community with “a marginalized blessing”. “The document has some

strings attached because it goes to great lengths to explain that this blessing of ‘irregular relationships’ should not be equalled to marriage and especially with gay people. They kept emphasizing that aspect and also saying that it shouldn’t take place in a liturgical setting that looks like a marriage”.

Another LGBTQ activist Henry Ugwu from Nigeria said the Declaration is just the first step in a long road. He said in years to come, LGBTQ people will be recognized and afforded the same rights as other individuals in communities and the church. “There is no reason why gay individuals should be excluded from the Catholic Church. They are part of the society... Fifty years from now, there’s a greater chance that the Church will fully accept gay people and gay marriage. There were generations when women had no rights to vote. We look at that generation now as barbaric. Maybe 100 years from now, the generation at the time will look at the Catholic Church as barbaric for not allowing married adults into the church”. —



Pope Francis with young Africans during a visit. The continent has one of the biggest Catholic followings in the world. Photo courtesy.



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Kenya Scores High On Startups Funding In Africa - Report

By Jean Pierre Afadhali

Kenya has become Africa's largest startup funding destination after overtaking traditional giants Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt, despite 25 percent year on year decline in 2023.

The East Africa country's startups raised \$800m in 2023 making Kenya, the most popular hub for startups funding in Africa at 28 percent of the total, according to 'Africa: The Big Deal', a platform that curates financial deals from across the continent.

"Its share of Eastern Africa's funding grew from 86 percent in 2022 to 91 percent in 2023. 93 startups raised \$100k or more during the period (19% of Africa's total)," noted Africa: The Big Deal in its latest report released earlier this week.

Maryanne Ochola, managing director at Endeavor Kenya, a global community of entrepreneurs explained in an interview with Pan African Visions that the drops in other regions [Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa] have been more significant leading to Kenya's number one position.

The Nairobi number one position was also boosted by two mega deals from two energy firms, namely Sun King and M-KOPA. "It helps if your startups are not just accessing early stage deals which tend to be smaller," Ochola further explained, adding that scaling up and attracting much larger later rounds and mega deals that are more than \$100mn is important in startups investments and the country's funding attraction status.

According to Africa: Big Deals, in Egypt, there were 48 ventures that raised \$100k+ in 2023, the lowest number out of the Big Four.

"But thanks to a YoY decline (-20%) more moderate than Kenya and most importantly Nigeria, it was enough for the country to claim the second spot," added Africa: The Big deal.

The 2023 funding report reveals, Egypt's share of North African funding grew substantially from 72 percent in 2022 to 95 percent in 2023



Africa: The Big Deal
 By Max Cuvellier Giacomelli & Maxime Bayen
 Free newsletter: thebigdeal.substack.com
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(by far the strongest progression), due both to the magnitude of MNT-Halan's fundraising, and Algeria and Tunisia's inability to repeat their strong 2022 performance.

Meanwhile, South Africa's share of regional funding remains the highest at 97 percent. The 70 start-ups who raised \$100k or more in the country cumulated \$600m in funding i.e. 21 percent of the continent's total.

South Africa was the only one of the Big Four not to see its total funding shrink between 2022 and 2023 (+8% YoY), noted the startup funding report.

However, Nigeria is the country where the most dramatic change happened in 2023. "While the country still claimed the highest

number of start-ups to raise \$100k or more (146, 29% of the continent), the amount they raised was divided by 3 YoY (-67%) to reach \$410m, compared to \$1.2b in 2022, and \$1.7b in 2021."

As a result, its share of Western African funding continued to drop to reach 68 percent, down from 85 percent in 2021, and 77 percent in 2022, revealed the 2023 report.

"This is the lowest regional share of any Big Four market since we started collecting the data in 2019," stated the deals curators.

Even though it represents only 13 percent of the funding, there is a wealth of activity beyond the Big Four, stated the continent's startup investment platform. "Encouragingly,

29 percent of the start-ups who raised \$100k or more in 2023 were located outside the Big Four."

Despite Kenya's funding attraction and number one position in 2023, a number of startups gone out of business last year amid concerns over the country's ecosystem.

Ochola stated that in terms of startups failures in Kenya, "its embedded in the VC model that majority of ventures do not succeed and VC firms are making bets with the understanding that a few companies will make the return for the fund."

The Africa entrepreneurship expert added it is normal for startups to close down but "it appears a lot more conspicuous for us [Kenya] because we are a young ecosystem."

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