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AMADOU GALLO FALL

On the _____
RISE OF BAL

Kenya: Odinga Sets
Sights On AU

Cameroon: Addressing
The Armed Conflict
Constitutionally

Malawi: Mutharika
Braces Up For Rescue
Mission

Zimbabwe's Sanctions
Blues





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Raila Odinga's AU Tango

By Ajong Mbatndah L

As the mandate of Moussa Faki grinds to a laborious end, East Africa is making the case for its turn to provide leadership for the African Union. In prime position to serve as the next African Union Commission Chairman is Kenya's foremost opposition leader and African statesman Raila Odinga.

"If the leadership of Africa desires my services, I am prepared and offer myself to serve this continent. I am ready to pursue the chairmanship of the African Union," Mr. Odinga said at recent press conference to announce his candidature.

"As a Pan-Africanist, I firmly believe that Africa should aspire for more. We deserve better. We must reverse this trend and harness all our resources for the accelerated socio-economic growth of our continent," Mr. Odinga said.

Mr. Odinga's bid has generated unbridled excitement in Kenya and earned some early endorsements. Joining him at his recent press conference was one of the most revered statesman in Africa in the person of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.

"There is much more that is wrong with Africa today. In my part of the continent, West Africa is riddled with governments that were not installed through constitutional means. The area is riddled with insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and you can say a similar thing for this part of Africa," Obasanjo said. Painting a portrait of a candidate who will meet continental wide challenges of the time, Obasanjo said the right person for job would have held the position of head of government either at Prime Minister or Presidential level. For President Obasanjo, a leader of that pedigree would be able to knock at the doors of African leaders without much ado.

With his wealth of wisdom, broad experiences, impeccable knowledge of the continent and insightful perspectives, Obasanjo's position on seminal developments or the direction of the continent are no trifling matter. The AU as it stands today is a body that many Africans are not proud of. From conflict resolution, to democracy, from



Ajong Mbatndah L, Managing Editor

trade to even continental integration, and more, the AU has been found wanting.

Apart from former Malian President Alpha Omar Konare from 2003 to 2008, successive AU Commission Chairs have been former Ministers with feet too small to adequately fit the AU shoes. From Jean Ping of Gabon, to Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma from South Africa, and most recently Moussa Faki from Chad, the AU has failed in providing the leadership needed to move the continent forward.

Leaders changing constitutional term limits to remain in power, a surge in military coups, life presidencies, the AU has failed to shirk the image of a cartel that caters more to whims and caprices of continental leaders and less about the everyday Africans. In Raila Odinga the AU may have a leader who can shake things up.

In terms of political experience, Raila Odinga has held diverse cabinet positions in Kenya. He has fought gallantly from the trenches of the opposition and made compromises when needed to sustain peace in Kenya. From bitter political opponents, what ever working arrangement that Odinga had in the second term of President Uhuru Kenyatta is a template that other African leaders may learn a thing or two from.

Flawed elections he has faced them, stolen victories, Raila and his partisans will have plenty to tell you on their experiences in Kenya. Some of this experiences have brought his country to

the brink, yet Raila has shown admirable qualities in putting the interest of Kenya first before his own.

Raila is no stranger at embracing continental missions. From 2018 to 2023, he served as the AU special envoy for infrastructure development in Africa.

"This role provided me with a unique advantage to gain insights into every African country. I am confident that by collaborating with these nations, we can uplift Africa," Odinga said recently.

The challenges facing Africa remain enormous, yet the continent is equally endowed with immense potential to profoundly transform the continent. Doing this at the continental level requires leadership with mettle. A leader who will not just be a willing pawn at the beck and call of self-serving leaders. The AU deserves leadership that is in sync with the daily trials and tribulations of the people. A leadership that understands the security challenges, the quest for economic transformation, the fight for democracy and more.

It is unfathomable that in the 21st century Africa traveling from one country to another should be a herculean task. When economic giants like Aliko Dangote complain about intra African travel, then what ordinary Africans go through is everyone's guess. For all is agricultural potential, it is mind boggling that war ravaged Ukraine should be providing grain to Africa. It is worrisome that African countries should find it more auspicious dealing with external actors instead of fostering African partnerships. When African leaders shun AU summits but are quick to attend Saudi -African Summits, Italy-Africa Summits, and others, then there is a problem.

By faith or design political leadership may have eluded Raila Odinga, but there is a continental calling at this point for his leadership. From the press conference announcing his interest, to the endorsement from elder statesman Obasanjo to a meeting with President Ruto and Museveni in Uganda, and a stop in Rwanda where he got the endorsement of President Kagame, Mr Odinga is sending strong signals on the seriousness of his ambition.

The leadership conundrum at the AU has not stopped dynamic young Africans from dreaming big and working hard to move the continent forward. We see that with the Amadou Gallo Fall led Basketball African League -BAL which has taken the continent by storm. From its inaugural season in conflict plagued 2021, the Basketball Africa League has continued to exceed expectations by every metric. During the 2022 and 2023 BAL seasons, the games reached fans in some 214 countries and territories across the globe in about 17 languages and generated more than 600 million online engagements.

With season four underway in South Africa, Amadou Gallo Fall and his dynamic team have succeeded to blend BAL into a global package of sports, tourism, and the general socio-economic development of Africa.

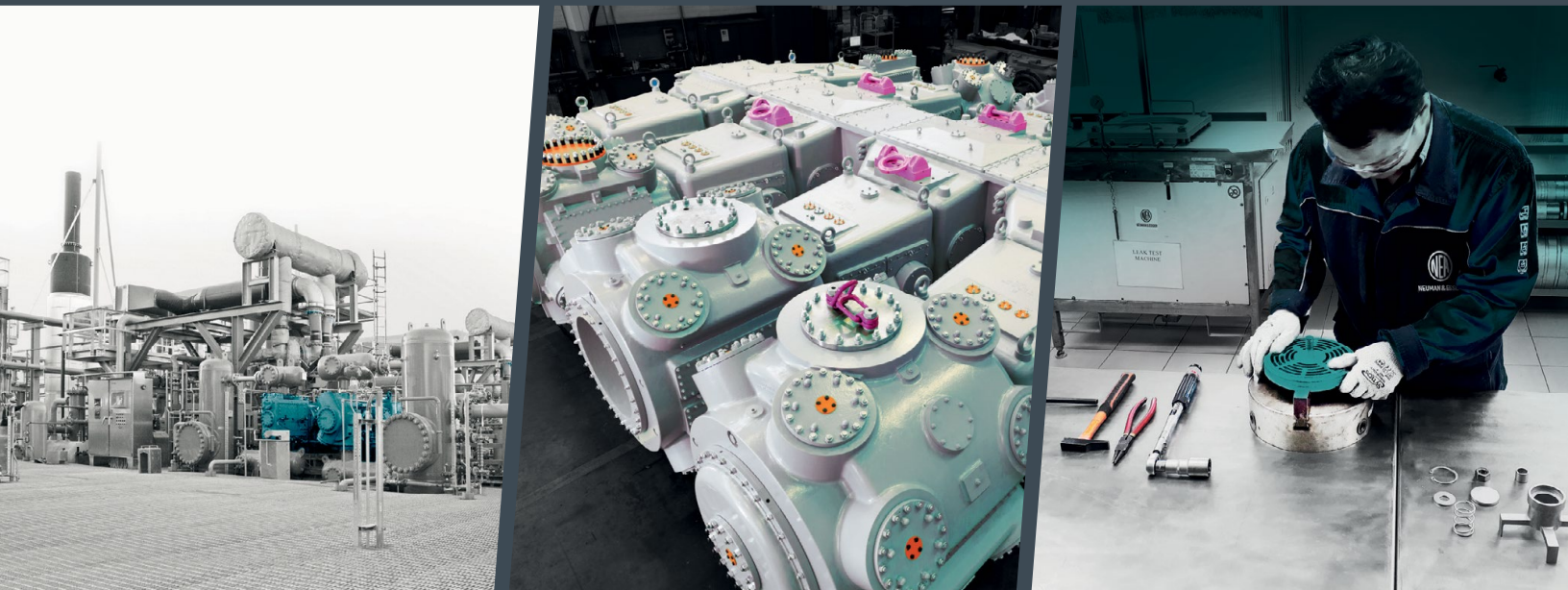
Should Raila Odinga become the next head of the AU, he will be counting on the African Energy Chamber -AEC in helping the continent to meet the critical energy needs of the continent. We have more than 600 million Africans who have no access to reliable and affordable energy which is about half of the population. And we have about 900 million people who have zero access to clean cooking fuel, most of them women and children, AEC Senior Vice-President Verner Ayukegba told the Africa-EU Parliamentary Assembly in Luanda, Angola recently. Access to reliable and affordable power is the only road to development and industrialization in Africa, according to Ayukegba and the AEC.

BAL and the AEC are part of a myriad of actors who work hard to change the fortunes of Africa. There will be no shortage of actors and more than willing dynamic Africans to help a leader of Raila's mettle to hasten and strengthen Africa's ability to better meet the challenges of our time. From sports, to democracy, energy and more, the March issue of PAV paints a mix of serious challenges and exciting perspectives and potential in Africa that Mr. Odinga knows so well and should be bracing for. Happy reading!!



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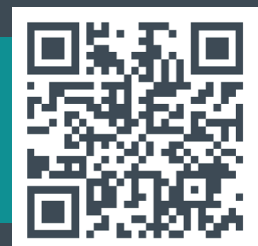


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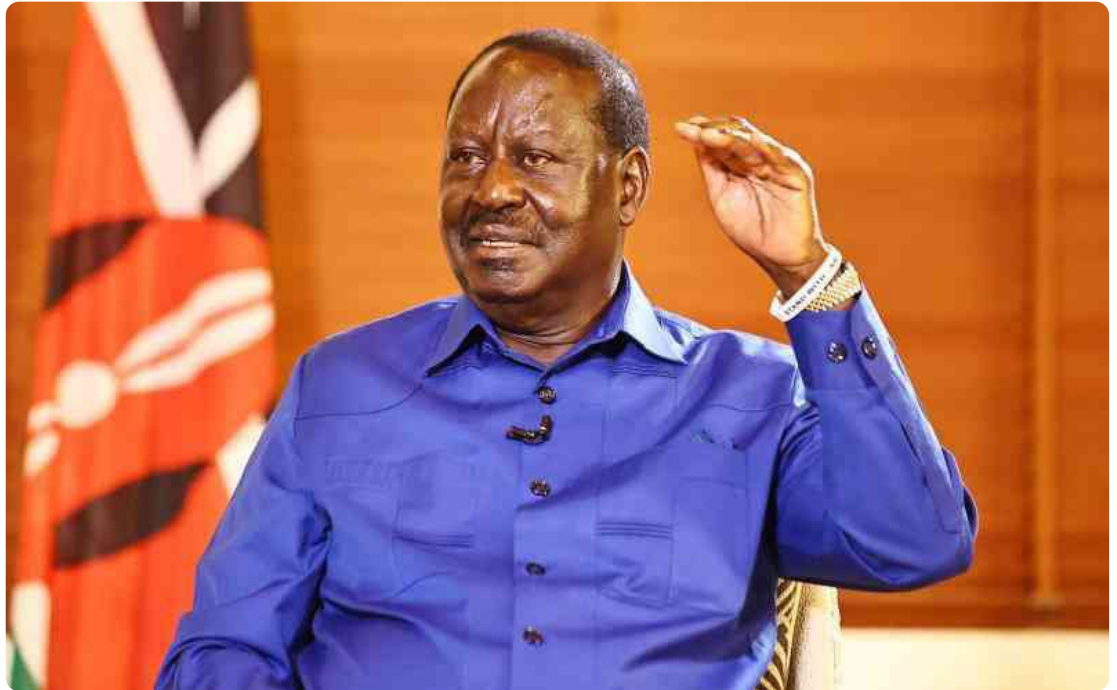
Odinga Sets His Sight on AU Chairmanship

By Prince Kurupati

In a press briefing held on Thursday 15 February, renowned Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga informed the continent that he is throwing his name in the hat to become the next Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AU). Odinga said this at a briefing attended by top names in African politics including former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo who is backing Odinga to take the reigns in 2025.

Announcing his decision, Raila Odinga said “If the leadership of Africa desires my services, I am prepared and offer myself to serve this continent. I am ready to pursue the Chairmanship of the African Union”.

The AU Chairperson post will become vacant next year when Chad's Moussa Faki Mahamat completes his two-term tenure. Odinga said he is the right man for the job and possesses the skills to excel in the role citing his time as the AU Special Envoy for Infrastructure Development in Africa from 2018 to 2023. “This role provided me with a unique advantage to gain insights into every African



The leadership of Africa is worth my services and I am ready and offer myself to be of service to the continent, says Raila Odinga. Photo courtesy.

country. I am confident that by collaborating with these nations, we can uplift Africa,” Odinga said.

If chosen to become the next Chairperson of the AUC, Odinga said he would prioritize to plug the brain

drain hole. He said Africa is losing a lot of its human resource base to other continents and these individuals are helping to shape and develop other

continents while their birth continent remains stagnant. “As a Pan-

Africanist, I firmly believe that Africa should aspire for more. We deserve better... We must reverse this trend and harness all our resources for the accelerated socio-economic growth of our continent,” affirmed Odinga.

Odinga's bid to become the next AU Chairperson is being considered a great decision not just for Odinga himself but Africa as a whole as his expertise in African geo-politics will help integrate African states and hence achieve the African development goal. Kenyan Senator Ledama Olekina while speaking on Citizen TV's Daybreak Show said, “There is no more experienced leader in this continent than Raila Odinga. We want to call on all our African brothers to consider allowing Raila to be able to serve as the Chairperson.”

Odinga will need the support of most African heads of state and government to be picked as the next AUC Chairperson. It's safe to say that on this front, he has started on a positive note. Soon after announcing his decision to run for the Chairperson post, he met with Kenyan President William Ruto and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni signalling that he



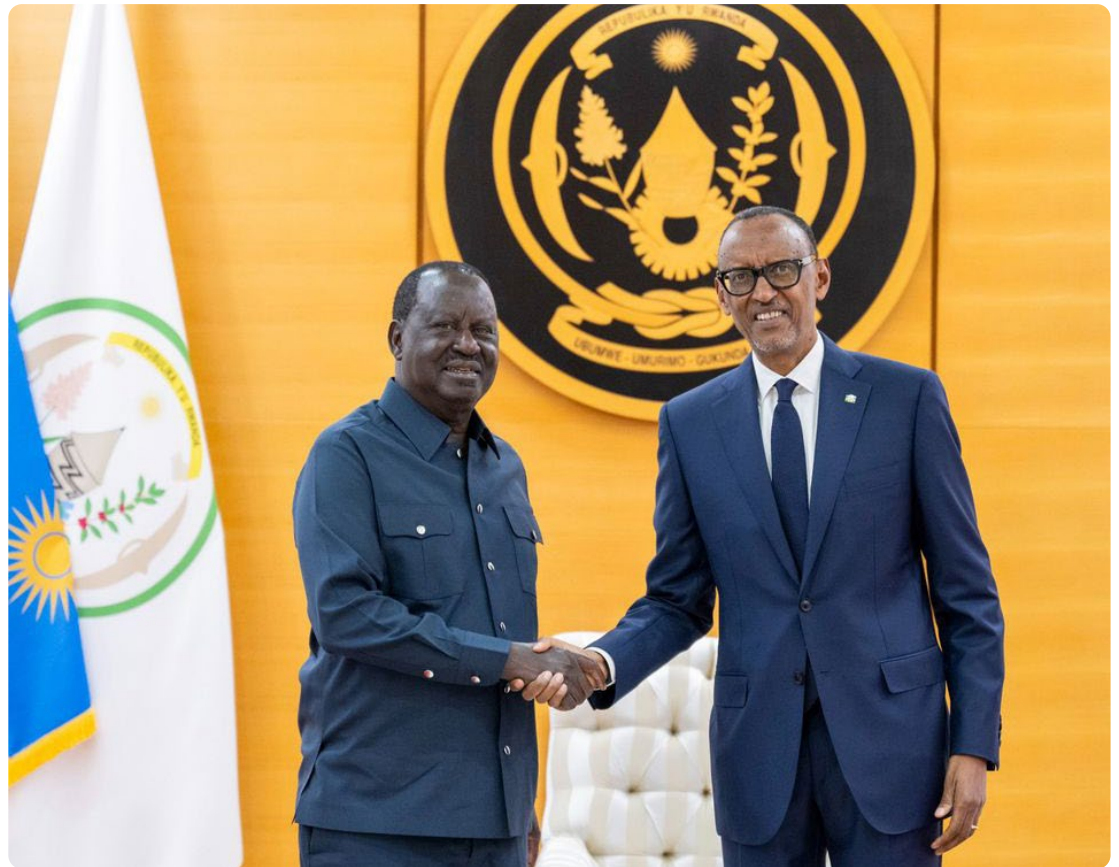
I have no doubt that my friend Raila Odinga is the right person to take over the mantle at the AU , says former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. Photo courtesy.

is ready to bury hatchets of the past and foster friendly relations with people who will help him in his bid to become the next AUC Chairperson.

Perhaps as a sign that the Kenyan President is ready to push Odinga's bid and drum up support, the Kenyan government spokesman Issac Mwaura during his weekly briefing said, "Many Kenyans know that the President is good at campaigning. After they (Ruto and Odinga) met in Uganda, the true government position is that we fully support the candidature of Raila to AU... Raila has held the position of the AU High Representative for Infrastructure and has championed democracy. He is a true pan-Africanist... After meeting President Yoweri Museveni in Uganda last time, I assure you that the East African countries have agreed to rally behind Raila. We stand a better chance as a region to lead AU".

On the local political front, a win for Odinga in his bid to become the AUC Chairperson will not create a leadership vacuum within the Azimio coalition – which Odinga currently leads. This was said by Wiper Party leader Kalonzo Musyoko who said he is ready to take the reigns and contest as the coalition's leader in the 2027 elections. Addressing participants who attended the Homa Bay Investment Conference, Musyoko said "If you are missing Baba, there is Uncle Stevo."

Entrepreneur and political commentator Boniface Mwangi however said the decision by Odinga is selfish and it demonstrates a history



We give him our support and wish him well now and when he is there as the Chair for Africa to succeed, says Rwanda President Paul Kagame. Photo courtesy.

of betrayal on the part of Raila. He said "record has it that at least 75 people allegedly lost their lives in 2023" supporting Odinga's bid to become the Kenyan president but he has forgotten all of them and chose to befriend Ruto for his selfish decision to become the AUC Chairperson.

Furthermore, Mwangi said the person with all the power is William Ruto. By seeking the support of Ruto and he in turn willingly awarding that

support, Ruto essentially checkmated every move that Raila will make. "If and when Raila Odinga wins the AU chairmanship, William Ruto will take the credit for supporting him. If Raila loses, Ruto will say he supported him but he lost. When Raila comes back to fight Ruto in Kenya, Ruto will call him a sour loser," Mwangi said.

As the AU Commission Chairperson, Raila Odinga will serve as the chief executive officer of Africa's

continental grouping as well as the AU's legal representative overseeing administrative and financial matters that promote the AU's objectives. The AUC Chairperson is elected by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union to serve a one-year term. An incumbent can run for re-election just once thus guaranteeing a maximum of two terms.

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Raila Odinga's AU Chair Declaration Sends Waves of Unity Across Kenya

By Samuel Ouma

A newfound sense of unity has swept across Kenya in an unprecedented turn of events, ending the echoes of contention that have persisted since the fiercely contested 2022 elections.

This extraordinary change was triggered by opposition leader Raila Odinga's announcement that he intends to run for the coveted top position in the African Union.

Odinga declared his interest in the African Union Commission chairmanship at a press conference in Karen, Nairobi, on February 15, 2024.

The former prime minister said he is the right candidate to take over from the incumbent Moussa Faki Mahamat, whose tenure will expire at the end of the year, citing his experience as the AU special envoy for infrastructure development in Africa from 2018 to 2023

The Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) leader noted that he consulted widely among his friends before announcing his candidature.

«I want to make it public that I am ready to go for the chairmanship of the Africa Union... I am inclined to accept the challenge. Should the leadership of Africa want my services, I am ready and offer myself to be of service to this continent,» said Odinga.

«The role of the AU special envoy for infrastructure development in Africa provided me with a unique advantage to gain insights into every African country. I am confident that by collaborating with these nations, we can uplift Africa».

Following Odinga's declaration, people from various backgrounds, political affiliations, and critics hailed the decision. Kenyans are putting aside their political differences and embracing a common spirit that cuts across party lines as their country is poised to take the lead on the continent.

This extraordinary show of unity ushers in a new era for the country and represents the first meaningful



President William Ruto is on the same page with opposition leader Raila Odinga on his AU ambitions. Photo courtesy.

strides toward a unified national story following the hotly contested elections of 2022.

Odinga's Azimio La Umoja coalition welcomed the move and praised Odinga for his contributions to Kenya's socioeconomic development, inclusivity, and stability.

The outfit's principals, led by Kalonzo Musyoka, said their party leader has a long history of commitment to Pan-Africanists and is the only suitable candidate to succeed Faki.

«We welcome and congratulate our Party Leader for the bold step of putting his name forward for consideration of this most important role to the African continent and its people. We fully support his decision and we shall back his candidature to our fullest capacity,» said Azimio in a statement shared via its social media platforms.

«We believe that as the AU Chairperson, he will leverage his Pan-Africanism vision of identity and inclusivity to achieve «an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and

representing a dynamic force in the global arena,» read the statement further.

The alliance lauded Odinga's unparalleled track record of leadership in promoting democratic principles, human rights and good governance, calling other countries to rally behind the Kenyan renowned leader.

«We call on all our compatriots to give bipartisan support and ensure that Mr. Odinga's bid is successful. Mr. Odinga's win will be a win for Kenya, the region and the continent,» said Azimio.

Azimio added, «We are confident that Mr. Odinga's candidature for the position of AU Chairperson will garner overwhelming support from all corners of our continent. His broad appeal and international name recognition as a statesman, committed to Africa's progress, makes him the right and best candidate for the job.»

Additionally, President William Ruto's administration has put aside political rifts and united behind the opposition leader. The

government spokesperson, Isaac Mwaura, underlined that Odinga's endorsement is a recognition of his statesmanship rather than a political ploy and highlighted his potential to take Kenya and Africa to new heights.

«If he gets an opportunity to serve us at the AU as the chair, we as Kenyans forget all our differences and rally behind a fellow Kenya. If Mr. Odinga has expressed interest, we would rather have him there because when he is there the interests of Kenya are taken care of. We as government fully support his candidature,» said Isaac Mwaura.

Mwaura described Odinga as an influential figure in African politics, echoed by the ruling United Democratic Alliance (UDA) party.

«Raila Odinga is undoubtable an African luminary of unmatched capability. We join many across the continent in restating that Honorable Odinga deserved the AU chairmanship given his distinguished accolades and contribution to the social political landscape of the East African Region and Africa as a whole,» said UDA Secretary General

Cleopas Malala.

Externally, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has also endorsed Odinga's AU chairmanship bid. Obasanjo expressed confidence that Odinga is the right man for the AU plum job and urged the East Africa Community (EAC) members to support the Kenyan veteran leader.

"I have no doubt that my friend (Odinga) is a viable candidate but subject to views, feelings, positions and presentations of our leaders in the East Africa sub-region," said Obasanjo.

The former Nigerian head of state said it is time for the East Africa region to lead the AU.

"Not too long ago we had Southern Africa, one occupying the seat now is Central Africa. Before that, we had West Africa. If the region can come together and put the candidate forward, then that is how it should be," added Obasanjo.

There is speculation that President Ruto has formed a committee to drum support for Odinga. According to insider sources, the committee's current membership consists solely of government representatives, with intentions to add opposition leaders in the future to make Odinga's dream become a reality.

Some have argued that Ruto's backing of his vocal detractor is a calculated action meant to change the political climate in the nation. Ruto would feel relieved if the head of Azimio, who is renowned for being an outspoken opponent of his government and skilled at holding the government responsible, becomes the chairperson of the AU Commission.

This implies he will not be actively involved in the country's political landscape by 2027. AU commission chair can only participate in an election as a regular voter and is unable to campaign for his preferred candidate or run as a candidate himself.

It further signifies that the Azimio coalition, which includes several parties, will need to find a new leader. Additionally, the ODM party must begin planning for a future in which the former Prime Minister will no longer be actively involved.



Kalonzo Musyoka and Azimio leaders believe that Mr. Odinga's win will be a win for Kenya, the region, and the continent. Photo courtesy.

Other state heads who have rallied behind the former Prime Minister are Samia Suluhu (Tanzania), Cyril Ramaphosa (South Africa), Salva Kiir (South Sudan) and Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Paul Kagame of Rwanda has also pledged to support Odinga's bid, which the Kenyan political elite has termed as timely.

"I had an insightful conversation with President Paul Kagame in Kigali, diving into regional and Pan African ideals. We are committed to African unity and solidarity for shared prosperity and progress," posted Odinga on his social media platforms on March 8, 2024.

If elected, Odinga will serve as the African Union Commission's Chief Executive Officer, Legal Representative, and Accountant.



Raila Odinga accepted an invitation from President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda for a joint meeting with President William Samoei Ruto. Photo courtesy

He will preside over all Commission meetings and discussions, organize agenda items, and implement initiatives to promote and raise the visibility of the African Union's goals.

Odinga will oversee the effectiveness of all African Union organ meetings, decision-making, and reporting processes. In addition, he will consult and coordinate with Member States' governments, other institutions, and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on African Union activities.

He will represent the African Union diplomatically and oversee the Commission's administration and finances, ensuring that the Commission carries out its mandate efficiently and effectively.

Additional responsibilities include ensuring the smooth and

efficient operation of African Union statutory meetings, keeping in close contact with Union organs to provide guidance and support, and monitoring the Union's performance to ensure alignment and coherence with agreed-upon policies and strategies.

Odinga will battle it with Somalia's Fawzia Yusuf H.Adam among other candidates who might announce their bids before the May deadline.

Fawzia is currently a member of the Somali Federal Parliament, having previously served as Somalia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

She is also an enthusiastic supporter of education, believing in the benefits of having a well-educated population. As the founder and Chair of Hargeisa University, a prestigious educational institution, she has helped nurture several talented individuals.

Moreover, she is a strong supporter of women's rights, seeing gender equality as both an essential component of social justice and a critical catalyst for achieving the necessary economic growth and sustainable development in Africa.

Election Process

The African Union Chairperson election process has multiple steps. Usually, candidates—who might be sitting heads of state, government officials, or any other official—are nominated by member states.

The Executive Council of the African Union, which comprises the foreign ministers or other nominated representatives from each member state, reviews these nominations.

After reviewing the nominations, the Executive Council may endorse a candidate by consensus or vote. The endorsed candidate is then presented for election at the African Union Summit, which brings together the heads of state and government from all member states.

During the Summit, the election is conducted through a voting process. The candidate who receives a two-thirds majority of votes is elected Chairperson of the African Union.



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Optimism And Security Challenges As Somalia Joins EAC

By Adonis Byemelwa



Jibril Abdirashid Haji Abdi, the Minister of Commerce and Industry for Somalia, presents the ratified accession treaty to EAC SG Peter Mathuki (right) on March 4, 2023, in Arusha, Tanzania.

In a significant stride towards regional unity, Somalia has officially become the eighth member of the East African Community (EAC), marking the end of a decade-long journey towards integration.

The formal acceptance occurred at a ceremony held at the EAC headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania, where the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Jibril Abdirashid Haji Abdi, presented the instrument of ratification to EAC Secretary-General Peter Mathuki.

This momentous occasion comes just four days after Tanzania's Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, January Makamba, refuted circulating reports suggesting that the EAC had introduced its inaugural currency note named SHEAFRA (SHF). Hon. Makamba dismissed these claims through his social media channels, stating unequivocally, «These reports are not true.»

While Somalia's official entry into the EAC is cause for celebration,

it is essential to acknowledge that the region is still working towards meeting the economic and institutional criteria necessary for the establishment of the East African Community's Monetary Union/Single Currency. According to Hon. Makamba, the current proposals indicate a target date of 2031 for achieving this significant milestone.

The juxtaposition of Somalia's acceptance into the EAC and the denial of reports about the introduction of a common currency underscores the ongoing complexities and challenges associated with regional integration. As Somalia joins the EAC, it embarks on a journey towards closer economic collaboration and cooperation with its East African neighbors, contributing to the shared vision of a more unified and prosperous region.

On a lighter note, this significant development positions Somalia, with its extensive 3,000km coastline, as a key player in the EAC, set to contribute significantly to trade, investment, industrial development, and the free movement of people, labor, and

services. Dr. Mathuki, the head of the EAC Secretariat, emphasized the historical significance, stating that Somalia's ratification sets the stage for active participation in shaping the EAC's future through the implementation of key pillars – Customs Union, Common Market, Monetary Union, and Political Federation.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, a vocal advocate of regional integration, highlighted Somalia's potential to contribute and benefit from its newfound EAC membership. With a strategic location, vast blue economic potential, and a substantial diaspora of two million citizens, Somalia positions itself as an attractive partner for regional economic collaboration. President Mohamud envisions Somalia as a significant player in the region, fostering growth and stability.

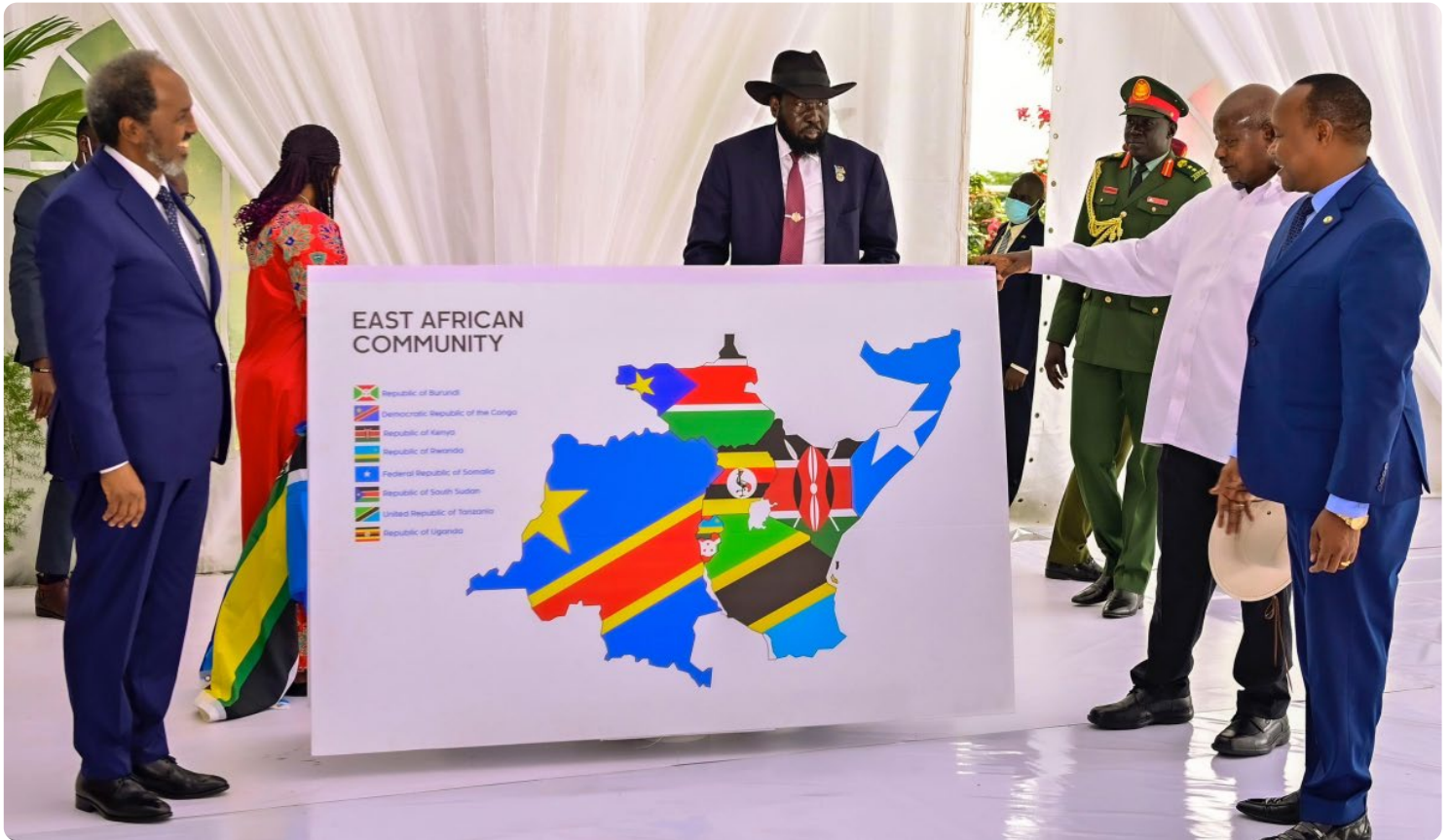
Amidst the celebrations, skepticism arises, particularly regarding Somalia's security challenges. Tanzanian political analyst Luqman Maloto expressed concerns about

potential risks stemming from Somalia's historical conflict.

In a recent analysis, Maloto delved into how Al-Shabaab, despite security challenges, has managed to generate funds, surpassing the Mogadishu government in tax collection in many areas. The group operates through a network of informants at ports, ensuring they are notified of every incoming shipment.

Cargo owners, fearing reprisals, withhold unloading until Al-Shabaab receives its share. In areas under their control, businesses pay taxes directly to the group, bypassing the Mogadishu government. Even in government-held regions, traders face a dual taxation system – contributing to both the government and Al-Shabaab. The group also forcefully collects mandatory tithes from businesses, requiring traders to pay 2.5% of their annual profits.

Somalia's entry into the EAC is not without challenges. Within six months of accession, the country must enact elements of the treaty into law. The Heritage Institute, a think



Somalia's President Hassan Mohamud , EAC President Salva Kiir of South Sudan, Ugandan President Museveni, and EAC SG Peter Mathuki, with a map of the bloc. Photo courtesy.

tank in Mogadishu, raises concerns about governance, human rights, rule of law, and socio-economic factors. A comprehensive risk minimization plan and a prolonged period of treaty implementation are suggested to ensure Somalia becomes an effective member.

The relationship between Somalia and its autonomous region of Somaliland, particularly over the disputed city of Las Anod, presents a diplomatic challenge for the EAC. Additionally, previous strained ties between Somalia and Kenya over a maritime dispute could pose hurdles despite the recent International Court

of Justice ruling in favor of Somalia. Despite internal dissent within Somalia, questioning the timing of integration, President Mohamud remains optimistic. He views Somalia's membership as an opportunity for economic growth, regional collaboration, and stability. The EAC's role in potential future disputes between Somalia and neighboring countries, particularly Kenya, is seen as a platform for resolution.

As Somalia joins the EAC, security becomes a paramount concern. Analysts believe that Somalia's admission could lead to a renewed

focus on eliminating Al-Shabaab, enhancing regional security. The potential deployment of an EAC regional force to Somalia reflects the bloc's commitment to addressing security challenges collectively.

With the AU Transition Mission in Somalia winding down its peacekeeping mandate, Somalia's integration into the EAC is poised to usher in a new era of collaboration in addressing shared regional concerns. As Somalia navigates the complexities of EAC membership, the integration is seen as a milestone not only for the country but also as a strategic move with far-reaching implications for the

stability and prosperity of the entire East African region.

Somalia's formal acceptance into the EAC opens a new chapter in regional cooperation, presenting both opportunities and challenges. The dynamic landscape, from security concerns to diplomatic intricacies, underscores the intricate path Somalia must tread as it aligns itself with the East African community. The coming months will undoubtedly witness a transformative period as Somalia endeavors to harness the benefits of its EAC membership while addressing the multifaceted issues that accompany it.

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South Africa: The Die Is Cast As Election Date Is Set

By Prince Kurupati

May 29, 2024, is the day that South African President Cyril Ramaphosa in consultation with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) set as Election Day. On this day, South Africans will head to the polls to choose provincial and national leaders who will steer the country forward for the next 5 years. The national leaders whom the electorate vote for on Election Day will in turn vote for the country's next president.

In promulgating, May 29 as the election date, President Cyril Ramaphosa said “Beyond the fulfillment of our constitutional obligation, these upcoming elections are also a celebration of our democratic journey and a determination of the future that we all desire”.

With the election date now set, all that's left is for all contesting candidates and competing political parties to put in the hard work that will guarantee them votes on Election Day. On this front, all political parties have since launched their manifestos and are on the campaign trail to woo voters. The three main parties which will go ahead are the ruling party the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Alliance (DA) as well as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). Other smaller parties will be hoping to garner a fair share of the votes hence potentially entering into coalition with any one of the three big parties.

The manifestos of all the three parties showcase that the challenges facing South Africa are more or less the same. It is these challenges that the ANC, the DA, and the EFF are promising to eradicate if given the mandate to form South Africa's seventh administration. Namely, the universal challenges highlighted by all the political parties are rising unemployment levels (currently sitting at 32% according to the World Bank, high levels of crime, electricity shortages, the ever-rising cost of living, the widening gap between the



President Ramaphosa and the ANC would face stiffer than normal competition from emerging parties. Photo courtesy.

haves and have nots as well as the ailing state-owned enterprises.

The ANC which for the past 5 years had the mandate to implement policies that curb and eradicate all the challenges currently bedeviling South Africa said if re-elected into power, it will leverage the power of modern technology to address all challenges and improve service delivery. The party's election manifesto said that modern technology like artificial intelligence (AI) has the power to permeate all facets of life and leave a trail of positive results.

ANC's manifesto says if elected, the party will “increase research and development spending and prioritize areas like industrialization, climate change and technologies like virtual reality, augmented reality, blockchain, artificial intelligence and the internet of things.” Furthermore, the manifesto says, “Over the next five years, the ANC will ensure greater accountability and prevent corruption through rigorous lifestyle audits and improved vetting procedures, real-time audits of critical projects, using AI to improve accountability and transparency, and strengthen discipline management.”

Likewise, the DA and EFF's

manifestos also state that they will use modern technologies to fight the challenges facing South Africa. On the issue of load shedding, the DA said it will move away from overreliance on Eskom. Instead, it will increase the usage of renewable energy sources. Moving over to high crime levels and prevention of crime, the DA said it will “combat crime and improve our (South Africa's) criminal justice system by moving towards evidence-based policing and increase the use of proven technologies to prevent, combat and investigate crime”.

In its trademark radical style, the EFF said South Africa under the leadership of the ANC has 'trivialized science and technology'. The EFF said there is a need to entrench STEM subjects in the populace right from school. Owing to this, if elected into power, the EFF administration will require each university to offer degrees and courses in coding, computer hardware development, AI, robotics, the internet, and biotechnology by 2026. It will also subsidize the production of ICT hardware, ICT software, robots, AI, and biotechnologies while at the same time, developing a regulatory environment for digital health

governance to ensure equality, non-discrimination, participation, transparency, and accountability in design.

With all the main parties picking more or less the same issues as the main challenges affecting South Africa and in the same vein, proposing to leverage the power of modern technologies to curb and eradicate these challenges, the main question that arises is, who will the electorate choose a different route and give the mandate to the alternative.

The answer to the above questions solely lies in the hands of the electorate. However, if pre-election polls are anything to go by, then the ANC is in for a big challenge this time around. Its revolutionary credentials certainly won't count for much in the upcoming election. Rather, its track record (which isn't impressive by any stretch) and the promises contained in its manifesto are the critical factors that will seal its fate. It is against

this background why several opinion surveys show that the ANC has an approval rate of below 50% hence is expected to lose its parliamentary majority. The presence of fissures and frictions within the ANC top

brass as epitomized by former president Jacob Zuma's decision to back another political party in the upcoming election is another obstacle that Ramaphosa and the ANC have to handle with care.

For the opposition, the shortcomings of the ANC are a positive but it's not the only factor that will help them garner enough votes in the upcoming election. Rather, hard work in wooing the

voters with concrete policies that are full of substance is the way to go. On this front, both the DA and EFF are doing pretty well hence their favourable approval ratings.

Mandela's Heirs Lose Power In South Africa

By Alexander Braterskiy*

South African authorities warn that if the opposition wins the parliamentary elections, the country may change course and leave the informal BRICS economic bloc, which includes Russia. The position of the African National Congress party, which has been in power since the collapse of apartheid, is indeed not the best, as shown by the municipal elections held earlier in the country. The opposition accuses the president of corruption and abuse of power, as well as an inability to cope with the country's energy crisis. The ANC crisis occurred on the 30th anniversary of the first free elections in South Africa.

South African Ambassador to Russia Mzuvukile Jeff Maketuka believes that if the opposition wins the parliamentary elections this year, the country may leave the BRICS association. "If the official opposition wins the election, there will be a change in South Africa's foreign policy position. There is a high probability that if this happens, South Africa will be withdrawn from BRICS," the ambassador said in a recent interview with TASS.

Considering that the ambassador does not express his point of view, but expresses the position of the state, these words can be taken quite seriously. The ambassador even cited the example of Argentina, which, after the victory of populist Javier Millay in the elections, refused to join BRICS. However, if Argentina was just about to become a member of an informal but influential organization, then South Africa is a country that can be called one of the "founding fathers" of BRICS.

Elections in South Africa, which will be held at the end of May, could



A daunting task for South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to keep the legacy of Mandela and the ANC. Photo courtesy.

become a turning point for the country due to the possible loss of power of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party. "The African National Congress, of course, played its rightful role during apartheid and secured the political independence of South Africa. Thereafter, it continued to play a huge role after independence in nation building and economic development. But from the days of Jacob Zuma to Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC became deeply corrupt, signing opaque deals with outside players. There are serious doubts about the integrity of the ANC. This is opportunism at its worst, not the human rights they fight for. In essence, the ANC's policy is focused on the global trend - business deals for money," African publicist Kester

Kenn Klomegah tells Finam.ru.

It is symbolic that, simultaneously with the elections, the country will mark 30 years since the collapse of the apartheid system, a rigid authoritarian system of rule by the white minority. The long-standing policy was associated with a system of racial discrimination in which members of the African population were literally considered second-class citizens.

"The Pretoria regime guards the interests of imperialism in Africa" - this phrase from the Soviet magazine "International Affairs" in 1985 is familiar to almost everyone who grew up in the USSR. At the same time, it must be said that in terms of attitude towards apartheid, the USSR was on the right side of history,

unlike many Western countries that sold weapons to this country despite international sanctions. The USSR also actively contributed to the establishment of democracy in South Africa. The former head of TASS, Vitaly Ignatenko, recalls how he handed over a letter from South African President Frederik de Klerk to the head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Eduard Shevardnadze. The country's authorities were looking for opportunities to establish relations with the USSR on the wave of democratization.

The head of the then white minority regime, de Klerk, began "democratization from above" in the country. He released from prison the main enemy of the regime, Nelson Mandela, who had spent more than

26 years in prison. Mandela's release marked the beginning of the end of apartheid: in 1994, the country held its first free elections, in which the ANC won a majority. The former opponents came to reconciliation through a special commission, at which members of the former regime asked for forgiveness from the victims. In 1994, Mandela was elected president of the country, leaving office in 1999.

Breach of contract

However, the euphoria of the first years of democratization and economic growth has passed. As economist Timothy Taylor writes on his Conversable Economist blog, the 1994 changes "created few winners." "In this view, South Africa's democracy was built on the simple assumption that a growing black elite and middle class could compromise with anyone, provided that each generation of black South Africans did better than the last," the author write

All this continued for the first 15 years, and although "inequality remained enormous, the bottom quarter of the population was able to rise through the expansion of the welfare state. However, after the global crisis of 2008, the era of state capture under former President Jacob Zuma and COVID, this "founding treaty" was broken."

According to the IMF, South Africa's economy grew by 0.4% in 2023. The fund's economists also note that one of the country's main problems is the increased level of public debt, one of the highest among developing countries. As IMF experts write, it "limits the government's ability to respond to shocks and meet growing social and development needs. Stabilizing the country's debt and making room in the budget for targeted social spending and public investment will require cuts to the government's wage bill and transfers to state-owned enterprises.»

The situation is also reflected in the purchasing power of South Africans.



South African Ambassador to Russia Mzuvukile Jeff Masetuka believes that if the opposition wins the elections the country may leave BRICS .Photo courtesy.

44% of consumers spent less during the holiday season than the previous year, largely due to lower income, and only 30% spent more than they did in 2022, according to a Citibank survey.

Return to the same problems

The ANC party, which came to power after the fall of apartheid, still has a majority in parliament, but 30 years later its position is not the best. "The 2024 elections in South Africa may become a turning point in its history," note the Institute of African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and remind that according to the results of municipal elections in 2021, the number of votes cast for the party decreased to 45.6%.

According to an October 2023 poll by the Social Research Foundation (SRF), only 45% of voters would vote for the ANC if elections were held tomorrow, down from 52% in March.

The sympathies of many South African voters are on the side of the opposition Democratic Alliance party, which takes liberal positions in contrast to the left-wing ANC. Its leader is white, South African citizen John Steenhuisen, but black politicians also occupy high positions in the party. The party is critical of Russia's Northern Military District in Ukraine. During the upcoming visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin in the summer of 2023, the party appealed to the South African court demanding the execution of

the decision of the International Criminal Court. Earlier, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Putin and the Ombudsman for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova due to the fact that they were allegedly involved in the illegal removal of Ukrainian children. As South African Ambassador to Russia Masetuka noted in an interview with TASS, "the main opposition party is not a friend of Russia."

Citizens of South Africa, 30 years later, are concerned about the same problems as before: inequality, poverty, unemployment, which has grown significantly among young Africans. According to government data cited by the Associated Press, unemployment covers more than 33% of the country's residents. Among young people, the unemployment rate is 61%. Because of the current situation, many of the older generation even yearn for the times of apartheid, when they lived, albeit in fear, but with a roof over their heads.

However, there are still improvements in South Africa, writes Bloomberg, noting a drop in the unemployment rate to the lowest level since 2021. However, economists warn that this effect could fade as electricity supply problems worsen. "Power outages, volatile commodity prices and challenging external conditions have contributed to the country's weak economic growth performance," the IMF report said.

The problem with the shortage of electricity in the country has been around for a long time - many substations have fallen into disrepair, they are more than 50 years old, and the available generating capacity is declining. The national energy company is forced to limit the supply of electricity to avoid a collapse. The country's central bank says power woes cost the economy \$13 billion in 2023 alone. Significant investments are needed to improve the situation.

Hope is pinned on China, which is actively represented in

such sectors of the country's economy as mining, telecommunications, and electronics manufacturing. According to government data, the total level of Chinese investment in the South African economy amounted to 200 billion rand, more than \$10 billion.

The potential of South Africa also promises opportunities for Russian business, but so far there are few large Russian projects in this country. However, South Africa sees opportunities in strengthening cooperation with Russia against the backdrop of weakening ties between Moscow and the "collective West." Moreover, among South Africa's largest trading partners, besides China, are countries such as the USA, Germany, and the UK. A multi-vector policy for developing economic ties with the whole world, and albeit sometimes creakingly, but working democratic institutions, is also a legacy of the victory over apartheid and a reflection of Mandela's words, which, however, were only partially realized. "Throughout my life, I have devoted myself entirely to the struggle for the African population. I fought against both white supremacy and black supremacy. I revered the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all citizens live in harmony and have equal opportunity.»

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Destroying a Legacy 101: Key Lessons from Senegal's Macky Sall

By Jude Ndeh Asah



A legacy tainted by the third term folly for President Macky Sall.

In 2020, Freedom House in its Global Freedom Index ranked Senegal as “one of Africa’s most stable electoral democracies”. With a score of 68/100, Senegal was ranked as a partly free country with only “politically motivated prosecutions of opposition leaders” cited as the major reason why the country hasn’t been classified as ‘free’. From press freedom, rule of law and protections for the rights of women and LGBT+ people, Senegal was considered the emblem of democracy in Africa.

The positive ranking from the Freedom House led Alioune Tine, a member of the Afrikajom think tank to attribute Senegal’s stability and exceptional governance record to the maturity of its army. Tine said Senegal’s military has over the years demonstrated great maturity something which has led the country

to hold the proud record of never experiencing a coup since gaining independence in 1960.

“There is a democratic culture, and there is also a strong commitment to defending this democratic culture. At the same time, we have a well-trained army. If you know the Senegalese army, I have worked with senior officers in Senegal, and frankly, it’s an army of intellectuals. It’s an army that, in my opinion, understands the boundaries and is aware of them,” Tine said.

Fast forward several months after the glowing review from Freedom House and the positive remarks from Tine, Senegal is on the brink of total calamity. Some political and security experts already say the country has joined the specter of coups that have engulfed the West African region. While the military hasn’t

forcefully taken power, the country has undergone a ‘constitutional coup’ following the decision by Macky Sall to postpone elections from February to December this year.

President Macky Sall just a few weeks before the original scheduled date for elections (February 25, 2024) announced that the polls will be postponed until December. President Sall justified his decision saying consensus first has to be reached regarding the list of approved candidates for the presidential election. There was an immediate backlash against the decision as opposition parliamentarians vented their frustration and anger inside the August House during a meeting to legitimize the decision. Protesters also filled the streets venting their frustration at the decision.

The Constitutional Court which is

tasked with hearing and evaluating matters of such magnitude sat and rejected the move. The Court said the President’s decision was unconstitutional and that a new election date was to be promulgated as soon as possible.

With the opposition to his decision coming in all directions, from the media both local and international, the courts, the parliament, and above all the citizens, President Sall quickly realized that his position was now untenable. He sought to reverse the decision albeit absolving himself in some way as he convened a national dialogue. The national dialogue which was convened to foster trust among the candidates and population was attended by civil, political, and religious leaders. However, the key stakeholders that is, most of the candidates on the ballot refused to

grace the occasion. The dialogue proposed that the new election date be set for June 2, 2024. This date however hasn't been agreed to by other parties.

In a move that demonstrated that he had realized the folly of his actions, President Sall during a live television address after participating in the national dialogue said he would step down as required by law by April 2nd. However, he said it is up to the national dialogue participants to decide who will fill the leadership vacuum once he steps down. "On April 2, 2024, my mission ends at the head of Senegal... As far as the (election) date is concerned, we'll see what the dialogue comes up with... The election can be held before or after April 2... The country can't remain without a president. The dialogue will determine what happens next, and I hope that after this dialogue, there will be a consensus," President Sall said.

Not interested in President Sall's newly found exemplary leadership skills is the Aar Sunu Election (Protect Our Election) Collective which comprises mainly 40 civil society groups. The Collective said the national dialogue convened by President Sall is "unacceptable"



The sustained pressure and protests may have saved democracy in Senegal .Photo credit AP.

and an "attempt at diversion". The Collective is calling for the polls to be conducted before April 2.

The Collective's stance is being supported by several opposition leaders. Aspiring presidential candidate Boubacar Camara said, "We oppose all proposals for dialogue and demand that a date be set before April 2". Another presidential hopeful Aliou Mamadou Dia said, "We are

calling for mobilization" albeit not specifying for what reasons they want to mobilize the masses.

Perhaps as a sign of recouping some political capital amongst other political heavyweights before he steps down, President Sall during the national dialogue proposed that the Constitutional Council relook and review the decisions that blocked some presidential aspirants

from getting onto the ballot. Some of these include Karim Wade, the son of former President Abdoulaye Wade who was barred for having dual citizenship, and popular opposition leader Ousmane Sonko who is currently serving a prison sentence. Wade has since revoked his French citizenship while Sonko's charges are largely believed to be politically motivated.

Despite all the maneuvers being made by President Sall to salvage his legacy in these last days, political analyst Momar Dieng believes that the horse has already bolted away for President Sall. He said the president's decision opens the doors for other actors such as the military to take matters into their own hands hence destroying the governance and democratic fabric that has been holding Senegal together for so long.

"In Senegal, authorities need to be extremely cautious in managing political affairs in our country. Today, it is essential that democratic principles, the rule of law, political freedom, and press freedom are vigorously preserved because the mishandling of these elements can potentially inspire certain institutions like the army and gendarmerie," Dieng said.



Protests in Senegal turn deadly as political crisis deepens over election delays. Photo Courtesy



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Addressing The Armed Conflict In Cameroon; Constitutionally Speaking

By Mwalimu George Ngwane*

In 1945, a new constitution called the Richards constitution (named after its author Sir Arthur Richards) was drafted in the Nigerian polity with the following objectives:

- To promote the unity of Nigeria,
- To provide adequately within that unity for the diverse elements which made up the country and
- To serve greater participation by Africans in the discussion of their own affairs

The Richards constitution came into operation in 1946

The major setback of this constitution was that it never consulted with the citizens. Without a buy-in of the population, the Richards constitution came under heavy strictures. This led to the Sir John Macpherson constitution which came into effect in 1951 (five years after the demise of the Richards constitution). Though it was popular because 'it gave ample opportunity to ventilate all shades of opinion in Nigeria in its formulation, it collapsed on 31 March 1953

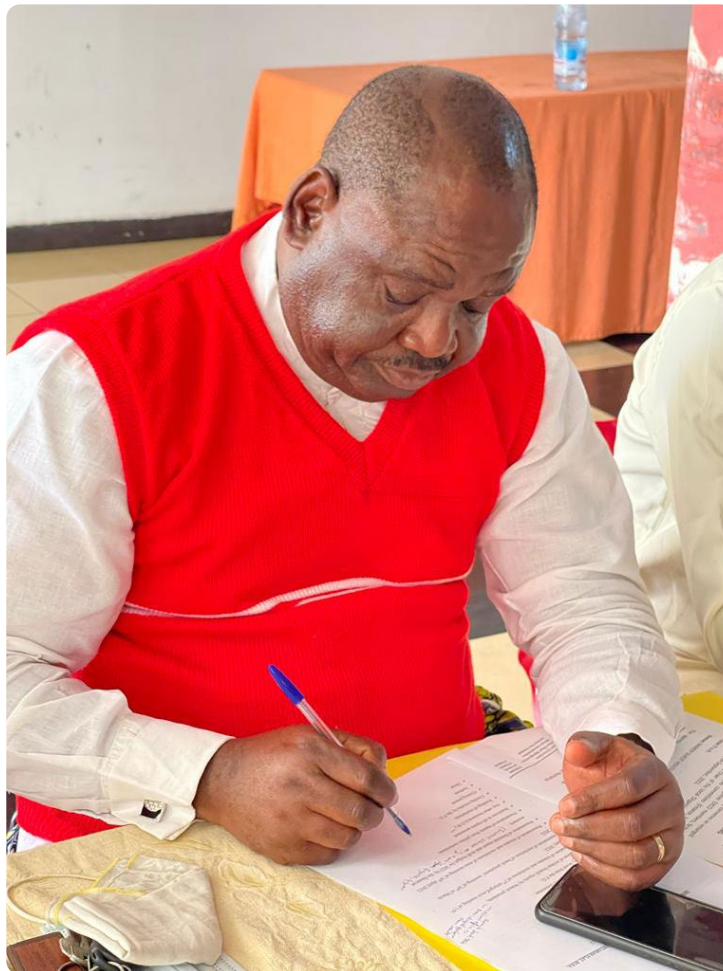
Thereafter a series of constitutional conferences were held in 1953-54, and in 1957-58 culminating in the Independence of Nigeria on 1 October 1960. Another constitutional conference was held in 1963 which approved the Republican constitution. In all, Nigeria went through five constitutional conferences all in search of a legal framework that can provide unity, prosperity and development for Nigeria. These five constitutional conferences and their outcomes were predicated on two questions:

'Do we wish to see a fully centralised system with all legislative and executive power concentrated at the centre?'

Or

'Do we wish to develop a federal system under which each different region of the country would exercise a measure of internal autonomy?'

The underlying concern within these two questions is why one of



There is a merit in exploring a multilateral Constitutional Convention in Cameroon, says Mwalimu Ngwane.

these two types of constitution should be preferred over the other. According to Obafemi Awolowo the main thing which distinguishes a unitary from a federal constitution is, among other things, where the supreme legislative authority in the state resides. In a unitary constitution, the supreme legislative authority in the state is vested in one government whereas in the case of a federal constitution, the supreme legislative authority is shared between the general or central government and the regional, provincial or state governments, all of which are coordinates with and independent of one another in regard to the powers and functions expressly or by necessary implication vested in them by the constitution. The fundamental glue that binds every

country is the recognition of and respect for its diversity. Diversity is a rainbow magnet that pulls together the ethnic, religious, linguistic and national components which later on feed into the nation's holistic tapestry. The process involved in fashioning, making or engineering a constitution can earn a nation with either a people-centred or a politician-decreed supreme law of the land. Most constitutions today owe their relevance and sustainability to the fact that citizens hunger for micro-governance and bottom-up decision making. Another concern Awolowo raises about a unitary and a federal constitution is that a unitary constitution will not work in circumstances which warrant a federal constitution, and conversely

that a federal constitution will fail where the circumstances only favour a unitary constitution. **SUITABILITY** (Emphasis added) is therefore the essence of any constitution.

I have taken the liberty to present a brief overview of the constitutional processes in Nigeria so as to draw parallels and symphony with the Anglophone predicament within the Cameroonian context. For close to 70 years, Cameroon has also walked the journey of Suitability; a journey in search of a constitution suited to the political circumstances, cultural coloration and national aspirations that speak to an enduring policy of unity in diversity; a journey that seeks to involve the conscience of the nation through a physical sitting in the form of a constitutional conference. Though the Richards and Macpherson constitutions had some connection with the fate and future of the then Southern Cameroons, though a series of constitutional conferences with peripheral considerations on the state of Southern Cameroons were held in June 1949 (Mamfe), August 1953 (London Lancaster House Conference), January 1954 (Lagos constitutional conference, May-June 1956 (Bamenda conference), 1957 (London constitutional conference), 1958 (resumed London constitutional conference), it could be argued that all of them focussed basically on which political colouring Southern Cameroons should have within or outside its relationship with Nigeria. As for the future of Southern Cameroons in relationship with the Republic of Cameroon, there has only been one bilateral constitutional conference which is the Fouban conference of 17-21 July 1961. The rest have been unilateral consultations on constitutional reforms on a linguistic pedestal or on a national outreach, and others (that will not be discussed here) have been isolated Talks and meetings indirectly related to constitutional matters

The first unilateral consultation on

constitutional reforms was the Mamfe Plebiscite conference of August 1959. According to Victor Julius Ngoh, this conference had two major preoccupations in the event of holding a Plebiscite that would determine whether Southern Cameroons should join Republic of Cameroon or not. The two preoccupations were:

1) What questions should be put to the voters

2) Who should vote in the Plebiscite

What followed later on was the adoption of a Resolution by the Fourth Trusteeship Committee of the UN General Assembly. Resolution 1352 (XIV) of 16 October 1959 spelt out two questions in the Plebiscite as follows:

Do you wish to achieve Independence by joining the Independent Federation of Nigeria?

Or

Do you wish to achieve Independence by joining the Independent Republic of Cameroon?

The second unilateral consultation was the Bamenda All-Party constitutional conference of 26-28 June 1961. According to Anthony Ndi, John Ngu Foncha wanted in this consultation to 'specifically ensure that they (Southern Cameroon delegates) went to Fouban speaking with one voice which would strengthen their position in the face of the East Cameroon delegation led by Ahmadou Ahidjo'

Some of the constitutional proposals from this consultation included a bicameral Federal legislature; ceremonial not executive head of state; a Governor as head of each state with a Prime Minister, political capital moved to Douala and recognition of different legal systems.

Before I go on with the third unilateral consultation, I would like for the sake of historical coherence and unity, mention the only constitutional conference that has been both bilateral and national within the Cameroonian context. It is the Fouban constitutional conference of 17-21 July 1961. It is so far the only constitutional conference that aimed at finding a common constitutional ground between two



A file photo taken during the opening session of the National Dialogue called by President Biya in 2019

partners (Southern Cameroons led by Premier John Ngu Foncha and Republic of Cameroon led by President Ahmadou Ahidjo) In his opening speech at the conference, Ahmadou Ahidjo declared inter alia:

You know that even before the referendum (plebiscite), and since then during our talks with Mr. Foncha we chose a FEDERAL framework. It was so because LINGUISTIC administrative and economic differences do not permit us to envisage seriously and reasonably a state of the UNITARY and centralised type. A Federal structure, therefore would be the ONLY one which SUITS our particular situation (All Emphasis added).

And John Ngu Foncha responded inter alia:

Our main task is therefore to produce a FEDERAL form of government, taking into consideration the PECULIAR circumstances in which we have found ourselves

And so out of the Fouban constitutional conference was born a FEDERAL constitution.

The third unilateral consultation came as a unilateral announcement from the President of Cameroon,

Ahmadou Ahidjo. Addressing the Parliament on 6 May 1972, Ahidjo gave reasons why the federal structure of 1961 (10 years of its existence) should be abolished for a unitary state. He said:

"The cumbersome Federal structure of the Republic affected the development efforts of the Cameroonian government. The maintenance of resources of three governments and four Assemblies involved considerable expenditure solving which could have been used in the economic, social and cultural problems of the country

Ahidjo declared that the change to a unitary state would have many advantages, to wit, a better definition and rational allocation of responsibilities; a more rapid dispatch of public affairs; an elimination of duplications, bottlenecks and overlapping within administrative channels; and finally the transformation from federal to unitary would result in substantial savings in consequence of the abolition of numerous administrative structures.

To come to the main reason for this address in the Assembly on this

fateful 6 May 1972 Ahidjo concluded:

"In these conditions where the federal structures appear as a handicap to the rapid development of the country...the time has come to go beyond the federal organisations of the state. I have therefore, aware of my responsibilities towards the nation and in front of history decided to CONSULT by REFERENDUM the sovereign people of Cameroon and master of their destiny the immediate institution of a unitary state. (Originally voiced in French but with subtitles in English on the video).

The 20 May 1972 Referendum was therefore a follow up of the address in Parliament which was as noticed not on any constitutional talks but on a change of the form of state (immediate institution of a unitary state). After the vote in favour of the unitary state (with massive endorsement by some key political elites of the then West Cameroon), the government alone drafted a constitution that it tabled at the National Assembly as a bill. On 2 June 1972, President Ahmadou Ahidjo issued Decree 72-270 bringing the new document into law.

The fourth unilateral consultation was the Tripartite Talks held

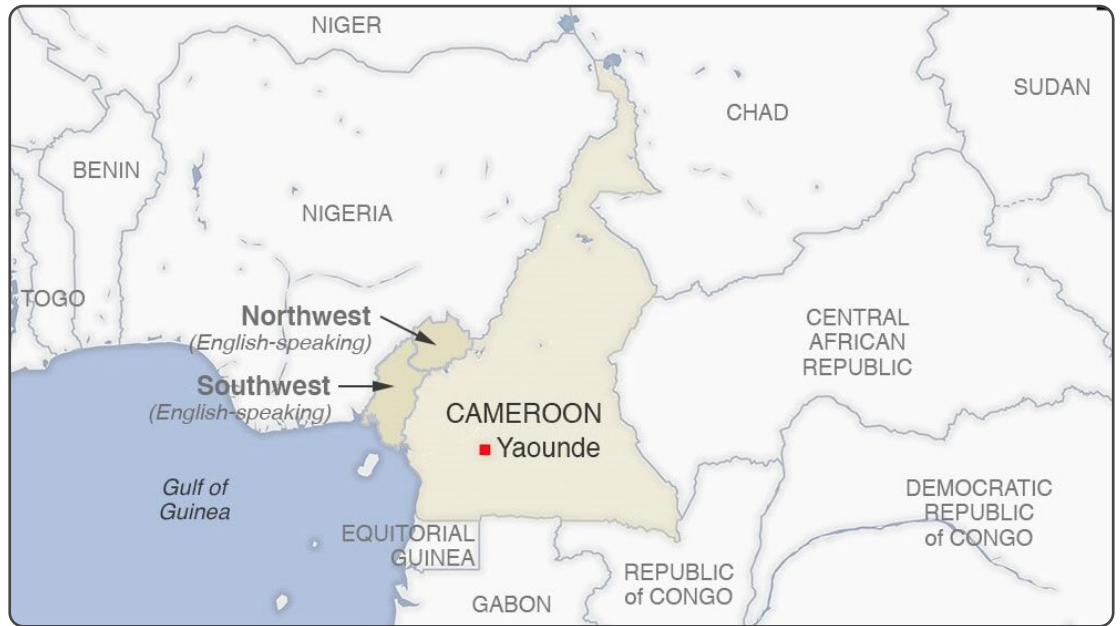
in Yaounde from 30 October to 15 November 1991. Indeed on October 11, 1991, President Paul Biya announced that a tripartite meeting between the government, opposition parties and members of the civil society would take place to discuss the draft electoral code as well as the draft decree on access of political parties to the official media. However during its deliberations, the conference demanded that a new constitution be drafted for Cameroon. The conference then designated an eleven-person Technical committee to draft a new constitution and then adjourned, expecting to be reconvened to receive, debate and adopt the draft constitution prepared by the Technical committee.

Among the eleven-person Technical committee were four Anglophones, Dr Simon Munzu, Prof Carlson Anyangwe, Barrister Simon Ekontang Elad, and former Minister Benjamin Mutanga Itoe.

According to Simon Munzu, the government chose not to reconvene the tripartite conference which would have turned into a constitutional conference but instead resorted to a tele-conference akin to the making of the Macpherson constitution of 1951 under the Nigerian polity. The tele-conference requested citizens to submit their constitutional issues to government by phone or fax. These issues submitted to the Technical conference in the form of a Report were further reviewed in a consultative committee that was created by President Paul Biya. However, three of the Anglophones in the Technical committee boycotted the deliberations of the consultative committee for two main reasons but I would like to state the more relevant case which is:

The seven francophone members of the Technical committee totally rejected all proposals by the Anglophone members that had to do with a return to Federation. In other words the document that was going to be examined by the committee did not reflect what the Anglophone members advocated in the committee.

After boycotting this consultative



deliberation, the three Anglophone members convened a unilateral consultation conference to prepare the Anglophone Cameroon position for any impending constitutional conference. The outcome was to be fed into the proceedings of such a conference.

In effect therefore the fifth unilateral consultation was convened by the three Anglophone members of the Technical committee in Buea from April 2-3 1993 under the umbrella name of the All Anglophone Conference (AAC). The purpose of convening was for Anglophones to arrive at a common set of proposals for asserting and safeguarding Anglophone interests, to be submitted and defended at any impending national constitutional talks announced by the President. The AAC was massively attended, hugely representative and immensely successful and federalism was adopted as the form of the state to be proposed by Anglophones at the announced national constitutional forum. In fact the AAC went as far as to produce a draft FEDERAL constitution as their positional document in the event of any constitutional conference. Unfortunately the positional document was not considered, as the consultative constitutional committee, whose deliberations the three Anglophone members boycotted, came out with

amendments to the 2 June 1972 constitution that was further passed into Law No 96-06 of 18 January 1996 as the Cameroon constitution. Part One, Section 1(2) of this constitution states clearly:

The Republic of Cameroon shall be a **DECENTRALISED UNITARY (Emphasis added) State**. It shall be one and indivisible, secular, democratic and dedicated to social service. It shall recognize and protect traditional values that conform to democratic principles, human rights and the law. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law.

It can therefore be seen that from 1961, Cameroon's constitutional evolution has crossed the trajectory of Federal, Unitary, and decentralised unitary; just as the name of the country has mutated from Federal Republic, United Republic to the Republic of Cameroon.

In recent development, there have been clamors especially by Anglophones for some form of a constitutional dialogue. On May 9, 2015 some 700 Common Law Lawyers met in Bamenda to "discuss the security and future of the common law in Cameroon". At the end of the meeting the lawyers came out with eight proposals for a new direction in the justice sector in Cameroon. One of the proposals read:

We demand that the state should exercise its constitutional duty to

protect the Anglophone minority and by so doing our history, heritage, education and cultural values. Consequently for the better protection of the minority Anglophone Cameroonian and the common law heritage we strongly demand a **FEDERATION**

Since then teachers, clergymen, elite Associations, civil society organisations, party leaders, and leaders of thought have raised their voices on the form of state (unitary, unitary decentralised, federation, confederation etc.) they would like the state to adopt but few have suggested the process this should take. It is generally accepted that discussions on the form of state are embedded and processed in a constitutional conference or a referendum or both. In an article I wrote titled "The Reunification Referendum" I made this conclusion:

So if the future of Southern Cameroons was decided through a Referendum (Plebiscite) on 11th February 1961, and the future of West Cameroon was determined through a Referendum on 20 May 1972, is it not logical that the future of Southern Cameroons, West Cameroon or the Anglophone regions and they only, should be consulted through another Referendum?

In another article which I wrote, I hinted:

This is the time for the leadership



Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute speaking during the national dialogue chaired by him in 2019. Photo courtesy.

in Cameroon to religiously record the twitter feeds of Anglophone advocacy groups, to meticulously take the sound bites of the restive Anglophone community and to judiciously engage the Anglophones in another Fouban, another Referendum and in another Federalism

In an end of year (2016) speech the then National Chairman of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) Ni John Fru Ndi called for an All Party CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE (Emphasis added)

On September 10, 2019, President Paul Biya convened as a response to the escalating Anglophone crisis, a Major National Dialogue which later took place from September 30-October 4, 2019. In his opening speech during this dialogue and specifically on 30 September 2019, Prime Minister Chief Dr Dion Joseph Ngute stated:

The Major National Dialogue convened by the President of the Republic to bring together Cameroonians of good will in the same place and space, offers us the unexpected opportunity for a collective start, aimed at finding concrete and pragmatic solutions, far from petty squabbles, to the problems that have separated us physically and intellectually in recent years.

Taking the floor later, Sultan Mbombo Njoya stated:

The only remedy that could cure this evil is the revision of the CONSTITUTION

Was the Major National Dialogue conceived to accommodate constitutional Talks? No. Was it the right forum to have included the theme on constitutional Talks or to replace the theme with the theme on Committee 4 -Decentralisation and Local development? Perhaps.

In the face of calls for the root causes of the Anglophone problem rather than the Anglophone crisis to be addressed;

Cognisant of the fact that relative calm is being noticed in some areas in the Anglophone regions;

Aware of the fact that an asymmetrical conflict cannot solely be won through weapons of mass destruction;

In the genuine attempt to win the war constructively and conquer the causes permanently;

In agreement with Nouck Protus' statement that a constitution should be a practicable document which seeks to find solutions to past problems, as well as attempts to forestall any structural hitches that may impede national development in any foreseeable future ;

I submit that there is a merit in exploring a multilateral Constitutional Convention in Cameroon.

A constitutional convention is a body that brings people together to draw up a constitution or make changes to existing constitutional arrangements. It is a means of broadening and diversifying democratic involvement on key issues.

Conditions that trigger a constitutional convention range from a society in the throes of conflict, threat to national unity, shrinking space for national development, to the ultimate need for peacebuilding. In most cases the written constitution emanating from the convention is presented to Parliament or/ and approved in a Referendum. Constitution making has become a cornerstone of peacebuilding efforts in conflict and post conflict societies thereby contributing to peace. According to Charlotte Fielder, writing a new constitution reduces the risk of conflict recurrence as long as the root causes of the conflict are frontally addressed. Fielder also argues that post-conflict constitution-making processes that take longer are more beneficial for peace because the trust-building effect of constitution-making only occurs when enough

time enables bargaining and the development of a broad compromise.

Little doubt that constitutional conventions and/or constitutional referendums have been the recipe for social cohesion in some African countries quite recently. The cases of Mali in 2023, Central Africa Republic in 2023, Chad in 2023, and Guinea Conakry to be held in 2024 come to mind.

In a letter written to James Madison from Paris just after the French Revolution had broken out, Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) argued that any constitution expires after 19 years and must be renewed if it is not to become "an act of force and not of right"

In another letter to Samuel Kercheval in 1816, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, & deem them, like the Ark of the Covenant, too sacred to be touched. They ascribe to the men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human, and suppose what they did to be beyond amendment. I knew that age well: I belonged to it, and labored with it. (.....). I am certainly not an advocate for frequent & untried changes in laws and constitutions ... but I know also that laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind.

Yes, there is always a risk in any constitutional convention but countries should be endowed with the national will to take the risk for to quote Clay Jenkinson 'the risk of trying to bandage a current system back together is greater than the risk of a thoughtful reboot.

I am confident that having manifested the national will in unpacking some of the layers of the Anglophone predicament, our government can take what some might consider the risk of making a constitutional convention a political reality.

*Mwalimu George Ngwane is writer and policy Advocate; author of a new book 'Protecting Minority Language Rights' (2023) Spears Books, Denver, CO, U.S.A, www.gngwane.com.

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Rwanda Called Out for Its Destabilising Influence in DRC

By Prince Kurupati

A way from the Israel-Palestine War which has been grabbing all the international headlines, there is a violent conflict that is ravaging the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The conflict according to aid group Mercy Corps has claimed dozens of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands more. Though the conflict hasn't grabbed much of the international headlines, security experts paint a gory picture that if left as is, it possesses the potential to reach the scale of the Israel-Palestine War.

The conflict in eastern DRC is largely being perpetrated by the M23 rebels, an armed militia that wants total control of eastern DRC, one of the resource-rich regions in the country with massive endowments of the new 'gold', cobalt. There is also a whole host of other minerals found in eastern DRC which include tin, tungsten, gold, and diamonds.

The M23 rebel group as reported by Teresa Nogueira Pinto an African Affairs expert was created in 2012 by Congolese Tutsis with the support of Rwanda and Uganda, it officially aims to protect the Tutsi populations in Eastern Congo. It is named after the deal signed on March 23, 2009, between an armed militia (National Congress for the Défense of the People, CNDP) operating in North Kivu and the Congolese government. In 2012, a CNDP faction accused the government of violating the deal and took control of the border city of Goma in a quick offensive. M23 was defeated in 2013 in what was perceived as a diplomatic and military success. It however resurfaced in 2021 and has since gradually expanded its influence in the region claiming some territorial victories on the way.

The DRC government which is fighting the M23 rebels says that its task to destroy the armed militia and disrupt all its operations is being hampered by one powerful country, that is, DRC's neighbour Rwanda. The DRC government believes that it is the Rwandan government that's



President Tshisekedi has grown increasingly vocal in accusing President Kagame and Rwanda of abetting security crisis in the DRC. Photo courtesy.

supplying arms and other necessary resources to the M23 rebels hence perpetuating the war for its own selfish reasons' chief among them, to destabilise DRC hence easily loot the country's precious resources.

For its role in aiding and abetting the M23 rebels, DRC's President Felix Tshisekedi during the last days on his campaign trail in December 2023 warned Rwanda that he was ready to march on Kigali. "I've had enough of invasions and M23 rebels backed by Kigali. If you re-elect me and Rwanda persists... I will request Parliament and Congress to authorize a declaration of war. We will march on Kigali. Tell Kagame those days of playing games with Congolese leaders are over," President Tshisekedi said.

With the M23 rebels showing no signs of retreating and stopping their actions in eastern Congo, security experts believe that the simmering tensions between the DRC and Rwanda may soon ignite into a full-blown war. If the unfortunate ends up turning into reality, the DRC has many sympathizers from the international community who are willing to stand by it. Among these is

SADC which has already sent some troops to help the DRC army combat the threat from the east.

Also standing in DRC's corner is France. In a communique published in February 2024, France urged Rwanda to end "all support" for the M23 rebels in DRC. It went ahead to urge Rwanda to "withdraw from Congolese territory" as "attacks on the territorial integrity of the DRC are inadmissible".

The United States has taken the same stance as that of France. However, the U.S. through the Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Robert Wood has called upon the broader international community to join hands in de-escalating the conflict in eastern DRC. "The international community must take immediate steps to stop the fighting in the eastern DRC and de-escalate tensions between the DRC and Rwanda," Ambassador Wood said.

The U.S. State Department also issued another statement in which it criticized Rwanda for playing a key part in the "worsening violence" in eastern DRC by backing the "U.S. and UN-sanctioned M23 armed group".

The State Department called upon Rwanda to "immediately withdraw all Rwanda Defence Force personnel from the (Congo) and remove its surface-to-air missile systems."

Despite the threats made by DRC President Felix Tshisekedi to march on Kigali and the subsequent reprisals from the international community for its actions in perpetuating the conflict in eastern DRC, Rwanda protests its innocence and remains adamant that it plays no role in the conflict. Instead, in a statement from the Rwanda foreign ministry, the country says it is DRC which is carrying out "dramatic military build-up" bear the DRC-Rwanda border and as such, is only employing measures to keep its citizens safe.

Moreover, the Rwanda foreign ministry said the DRC is harbouring some individuals within its army ranks who want to destroy Kigali. These individuals are real threats as they demonstrated that they can destroy as seen by their involvement as key perpetrators in the 1994 Rwandan genocide which claimed more than 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu lives. Rwanda's foreign ministry

says these individuals are part of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) rebel group which is fully “integrated into” the DRC army. FDLR was founded in the DRC in 2000 by former members of the Rwandan genocidal regime and it aims to defeat the present Rwandan Government. Kigali treats the movement as an existential threat.

With regards to the statement issued by the U.S. State Department which called upon Rwanda to stop supporting the M23 rebels in eastern Congo, Rwanda said it will seek clarification from Washington on whether the statement “represents an abrupt shift in policy, or simply a lack of internal coordination”. At the time of writing, Rwanda has not yet stated if indeed it approached Washington and the response it got.

Among the many demands that the M23 rebel group has repeatedly clamoured for in all peace negotiations is integration into the Congolese army. This however is a difficult thing



The US State Department has stepped up its criticism of Rwanda in recent times. Photo courtesy.

for President Tshisekedi to agree to considering the national sentiment towards the rebel group. Agreeing to this demand will instantly see a sharp decline in Tshisekedi’s approval ratings hence putting him in the

political dustbin. To Teresa Nogueira Pinto, the “most probable scenario” is the ignition of a “full-bore military conflict”. This is largely necessitated by the demands being made by the M23 rebel group, the ineffectiveness

of the peacekeeping troops being sent to the DRC, as well as the upcoming elections in Rwanda which require Paul Kagame to be the “big man” during peace negotiations.

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Amadou Gallo Fall On The Rise Of Basketball Africa League

By Ajong Mbapndah L

Since its launch in 2021, the Basketball Africa League (BAL) has served as a catalyst for economic development across Africa and a means of improving the health and well-being of one of the world's youngest and fastest-growing populations. Throughout the third season of the BAL, the league held three coaches' clinics in its three markets, drawing over 400 coaches who attended in person or virtually. Furthermore, in July 2023, 28 African coaches from 17 different African nations participated in the Africa Coaches Program, which took place during the 2023 NBA2K24 Summer League in Las Vegas.

Six young women from Senegal, Egypt, and Rwanda who participated in the 2023 «BAL4HER» program took part in a sports mentoring initiative. This initiative included visits to South Africa and the United States, where they learned from basketball industry leaders. The league has collaborated with hundreds of local suppliers, including small and medium-sized businesses from a variety of industries, including hospitality, media, technology, entertainment, fashion, security, content creation, and transportation.

The BAL is working with several African NBA legends who serve as



We are pleased with our progress but there is still a lot more to come ,says BAL President Amadou Gallo Fall.Photo courtesy.

BAL Ambassadors and help promote the league in Africa and around the world. Some of the legends are 2011 NBA Champion with the Dallas Mavericks Ian Mahinmi (Benin), two-time NBA All-Star Joakim Noah (Cameroon), South Sudan Basketball Federation President and two-time NBA All-Star Luol Deng, and former NBA player and G League executive Pops Mensah-Bonsu (Ghana).

Some of the league's partners

include Foundational Partners Rwanda Development Board, NIKE, Jordan Brand, and Wilson and Official Partners Afreximbank, Castle Lite, Hennessy, and RwandaAir. The previous season's games in Dakar, Cairo, and Kigali drew over 70,000 fans, generating remarkable excitement in both the arenas and fan zones. BAL games in the last two seasons have reached fans in some 214 countries and territories across

the globe in about 17 languages and generated more than 1 billion online engagements.

With such a glorious balance sheet, it is hard to believe that the maiden operations of BAL were launched in the heart of a COVID-19 laced year. For Amadou Gallo Fall who has led a dynamic team to put Basketball at the service of development in Africa, the best is yet to come from the BAL. In the midst of season four that promises to exceed all previous metrics BAL's President Amadou Gallo Fall took time off his hectic schedule to field questions from PAV.

It's been three years since the operational phase of BAL started, in what shape is it in terms of meeting its objectives or targeted goals?

Amadou Gallo Fall: We're feeling motivated and reassured once again. The league's response to feedback has been positive, as evidenced by increased fan interest and engagement, as well as its expansion into new countries. The formation of new teams is becoming more common, and our broadcast is consistently strong. Games are now broadcast



In terms of ambition, we aim to position the league among the best in the world, says Amadou Gallo Fall

in 214 countries and territories in 17 languages, with commentary provided in local languages, and our talent pool continues to grow while programs are improved. There are numerous causes for optimism. However, I avoid using the term «satisfied» because we are still in the early stages and have lofty goals for the league. While we are pleased with our progress thus far, we recognize that we have only just begun to realize our full potential.

Beyond the glamour of the sport, in what way do you think BAL is making an impact in Africa?

Amadou Gallo Fall: In terms of a really illustrated set of priorities, goals and objectives, we aim to make this league a catalyst for economic growth, significantly boosting the economies of areas where travel and tourism thrive. You see how games fuse music, fashion and art. The diverse crowd consists of young, vibrant, tech-savvy, and urban culture, setting a more significant stage than just basketball and sports. We expect to witness the emergence of new industries and companies in the places where our league operates. The crowd creates an environment where the logistics, event management, marketing, content creation, transportation, security, and hospitality industries grow significantly.

Are you satisfied with the response and support of political leaders and corporate Africa to the advent of BAL, what more could be done to support BAL?

Amadou Gallo Fall: We've continued to progress and have reached significant milestones along the way. We've partnered with top brands, including development and deployment support from global brands such as Nike and Brand Jordan. Furthermore, we've welcomed participation from local businesses that share our brand vision. This year, we welcomed notable names like Afreximbank and Castle Lite. As the season progresses, we anticipate the addition of new



Amadou Gallo Fall with President Paul Kagame. Rwanda is one of the African countries that has fully embraced the vision of BAL.

partners from various categories and industries, broadening the scope of collaborations and support for our initiative. We are receiving substantial public and private support, with a strong emphasis on infrastructure development, particularly arena construction. Two weeks ago, there was a groundbreaking ceremony in Lagos, Nigeria, to mark the start of a project expected to be completed by 2026.

Arena initiatives are underway in several countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. This momentum motivates us to continue looking for the right partners who share our vision. Our dedication to the African continent is evident in our efforts, which include opening a new office in Kenya. The growing interest in the region encourages us to expand even further. Last night's event at the SunBet Arena was packed with exciting entertainment, and we're looking forward to taking the league to Cairo next month and Dakar in May. The decision to add South Africa as another country to host games demonstrates our commitment to expanding the league's global reach.

May we get some insights on talent and development programs like BAL Elevate?

Amadou Gallo Fall: The BAL Elevate program was a perfect means to create and solidify the link between, the work we've been doing for decades, at grassroots level. And we talk about establishing a complete pathway where a young player can start playing the game, developing elite skills, and ultimately playing professionally without having to leave the continent now with the Basketball Africa League here. With the NBA academy, the junior NBA leagues, basketball without Borders- the flagship basketball and community development programs jointly run by the NBA and FIBA. So, the Basketball Africa League is the culmination of all that activity. It's great to see how this BAL Elevate program assigns top players at the NBA Academy Africa to BAL teams, and some of them are doing very well. Last year we saw it with Khaman who made it to the finals with AS Douanes, as well as Ulrich Chomche who made it to the playoffs with Rwanda Energy Group Basketball Club (REG BBC). There were other players with other teams. We're bringing the same program. And this year, well, we have four of these young

players here across the four teams. We will have them in Cairo, in Dakar, and those who will make it to the final. So, that is contributing tremendously to boosting the talent level in the league and at the same time, offering these young players an opportunity to continue to mature and, you know, continue their talent development.

Let's wrap this up by discussing this league's hopes and aspirations, what do you expect for the future?

Amadou Gallo Fall: Well, we have, again, very big ambitions. We want to establish this league as one of the absolute best in the world for years to come. Just continuing to work with our partners and being able to rely on the NBA's best-in-class expertise, to operate and commercialize a professional basketball league. We have great ambassadors for the game that are going to continue to drive interest and continue to partner also off the court to be change agents in communities, inspiring young athletes through programs like our partnerships with Special Olympics to make sure that we are close to the community. We are inclusive and really seek to be contributors to society at large.



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A Success Story For BAL In Facts And Figures



BAL has made giant strides in its three years of operations.

OVERVIEW

The Basketball Africa League (BAL), a partnership between the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) and the NBA, is a professional league featuring the top 12 club teams from 12 African countries that will tip off its fourth season in March 2024.

Headquartered in Dakar, Senegal, the BAL builds on the foundation of club competitions FIBA Africa has organized in Africa and marks the NBA's first collaboration to operate a league outside North America.

Fans can follow the BAL (@theBAL) on Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube and register their interest in receiving more information at BAL.NBA.com.

HISTORY

The NBA and FIBA announced their plan to launch the BAL at NBA All-Star 2019 in Charlotte, North Carolina.

In May 2019, the NBA named Amadou Gallo Fall as President of the BAL.

The inaugural BAL season was held in May 2021 in the middle of the global pandemic and featured 12 teams playing a total of 28 games at BK Arena in Kigali, Rwanda.

On May 30, 2021, Zamalek (Egypt)

defeated US Monastir (Tunisia) 76-63 to win the inaugural BAL Finals.

The expanded 2022 BAL season featured 12 teams playing a total of 38 games in three cities over three months: Dakar, Senegal (March 5-15); Cairo, Egypt (April 9-19); and Kigali, Rwanda (May 21-28).

On May 28, Tunisia's US Monastir defeated Angola's Petro de Luanda 83-72 to win the 2022 BAL Finals in front of a sold-out crowd of 10,000 at BK Arena.

The 2022 BAL season featured players from 23 countries across Africa, Europe and the U.S, reached fans in 214 countries and territories in 14 languages - including all 54 African countries and generated more than 600 million online engagements.

On May 27, 2023, Egypt's Al Ahly defeated Senegal's AS Douanes 80-65 to win the 2023 BAL Finals, which took place at BK Arena and reached fans in 214 countries and

territories in 17 languages.

- During the 2023 season, the BAL welcomed more than 70,000 fans, guests, league and team personnel, and other stakeholders who came from around the world to experience the games and surrounding activities

The league has achieved multiple milestones since its launch in 2021.

- In Senegal, the BAL's direct contribution to the local economy has been estimated at more than five million dollars.

- The league engaged more than 40 local suppliers (small and medium enterprises) across various industries (hospitality, media, technology, entertainment, fashion, security, content creation, and transportation).

- Last season's games in Dakar, Cairo, and Kigali saw more than 70,000 fans attend the event. The enthusiasm in the arenas and fan zones, was incredible.

- During the third season of the BAL, the league held three coaches' clinics in all three markets, which were attended by more than 400 coaches in person and virtually.

- Last July, 28 African coaches representing 17 African countries participated in the 2023 NBA2K24



Last year BAL got a ringing endorsement from Afreximbank with a partnership.

Summer League in Las Vegas as part of the Africa Coaches Program.

- Six young women from Senegal, Egypt and Rwanda who participated in the 2023 edition of the “BAL4HER” program took part in a sports mentorship initiative that saw them visit and learn from basketball industry leaders in South Africa and the U.S.

The BAL is part of NBA Africa’s broader efforts to use sports as an economic growth engine across all of Africa and as a platform to improve the health and wellness of one of the world’s youngest and fastest growing populations.

- We’re committed to establishing the BAL as a world-class professional basketball league that champions inclusion and youth development, promotes health and wellness, provides an entertaining product for fans of all ages, exports our values, and drives economic growth across the continent.
- Sporting events and leagues contribute to economic development by developing infrastructure, generating employment, and attracting corporate partners. We’re fortunate to be working with partners that share our commitment to positively impacting people in Africa and that are helping us broadcast, promote, and grow the league.
- The BAL’s world-class roster of partners includes Foundational Partners Rwanda Development Board, NIKE, Jordan Brand and Wilson; and Official Partners Afreximbank, Hennessy and RwandaAir.

OUR COLLABORATION WITH VISIT RWANDA

In June 2023, we announced a multi-year extension of our existing collaboration with the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) that will see the BAL continue to play games at BK Arena in Kigali, Rwanda each season, including the BAL Playoffs and Finals in 2024, 2026 and 2028.



Season four of BAL in South Africa has seen sold out crowds.

We will also continue to collaborate with RDB on youth development and social impact programming.

The extension will see “Visit Rwanda” - the country’s marketing and tourism initiative - continue as a Foundational and Host Partner of the BAL. Through the agreement, Visit Rwanda will continue to be showcased on the court, on BAL team uniforms and at the BAL Combine. RwandaAir - Rwanda’s national airline - will continue as the Official Airline of the BAL and facilitate travel to and from Kigali for select BAL teams and staff.

RDB, as a Foundational Partner, has been integral to the launch and continued growth and success of the BAL over our first three seasons.

And they share our commitment to positively impact the youth of Africa. Over the course of our first three seasons, the BAL and NBA Africa have held a variety of youth development and social impact programming in Rwanda, including in collaboration with RDB.

Activities to date have included Jr. NBA, Special Olympics and coaches clinics; an environmental day of service; innovation summits that brought together African leaders from business, entertainment, sports, social entrepreneurship and beyond to discuss the enormous growth opportunities on the continent; and a series of workshops for young

women from the local community as part of BAL4HER, the league’s platform for advancing gender equity in the African sports ecosystem and celebrating women in the sports industry who serve as role models to young women across the continent.

BAL AMBASSADORS

We are proud to work with a number of African NBA legends who are serving as BAL Ambassadors and helping promote the league in Africa and around the world:

- 2011 NBA champion with the Dallas Mavericks Ian Mahinmi (Benin)
- Two-time NBA All-Star Joakim Noah (Cameroon)
- Two-time NBA All-Star and South Sudan Basketball Federation President Luol Deng, and
- Former NBA player and G League executive Pops Mensah-Bonsu (Ghana).

Their achievement on-and-off the court are a huge source of inspiration to young people and basketball fans across the continent, and we’re fortunate to have them participate in our games and events.

- Ian was with us at the recent FIBA InterContinental Cup in Singapore, where reigning BAL champion Al Ahly competed against other top club teams from around the world.
- We also recently partnered with Joakim to build our first court in Cameroon where young boys and

girls now come together to learn and play the game.

- Pops is giving back to the youth of Ghana by regularly organizing training camps for young people from across the country.
- And what Luol has done with the South Sudan National Team is truly incredible. Leading them to their first ever World Cup appearance and now qualification for next summer’s Summer Olympics in Paris is a remarkable feat that has inspired Sudanese people at home and around the world.
- We are extremely proud of these ambassadors and the impact they have on our league,

the growth of basketball in Africa, and most importantly on young people across the continent. They have set a great example for the youth of Africa to follow in their footsteps.

2024 SEASON

During the 2024 BAL season, the 12 teams will be divided into three conferences of four teams each.

- Each conference will play a 12-game group phase during which each team will face the other three teams in its conference twice.

The inaugural Kalahari Conference group phase will take from Saturday, March 9 – Sunday, March 17 at the SunBet Arena.

The Nile Conference group phase will take place from Friday, April 19 – Saturday, April 27 at Hassan Mostafa Indoor Sports Complex in Cairo.

The Sahara Conference group phase will take place from Saturday, May 4 – Sunday, May 12 at the Dakar Arena in Dakar.

- The top two teams from each conference and the top two third-place teams from across the three conferences will travel to Kigali for four seeding games followed by an eight-game single-elimination Playoffs and Finals from Friday, May 24 – Saturday, June 1 at BK Arena.

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Adesina Touts Africa As the Second Fastest Growing Region

By Samuel Ouma



Africa will account for 11 out of the 20 fastest-growing economies in the world in 2024, says AfDB President Dr Akinwumi Adesina.

Africa is expected to remain the world's fastest-growing region after Asia, outpacing the global average of 3% in 2023.

Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank Group, stated that Africa is expected to have 11 of the world's 20 fastest-growing economies in 2024.

The progress comes amid numerous challenges the continent is grappling with, including climate change, geopolitical tensions, rising inflation, and food insecurity.

He spoke on Thursday, February 29, at the Bank's annual luncheon for ambassadors, heads of diplomatic missions, and representatives of international organizations headquartered in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.

The Bank held the luncheon after an almost five-year hiatus caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This was also the first diplomatic luncheon since 2019, months before the African Development Bank's shareholders unanimously approved a 150% capital increase, raising it from \$93 billion to \$208 billion. This is the largest capital increase in the Bank's history since its inception in 1964.

Furthermore, Adesina noted that the African Development Fund's 16th replenishment secured an unprecedented \$8.9 billion from donor countries, the Fund's highest replenishment since its inception in 1973.

He further revealed that the Bank's governors approved using the African Development Fund's equity to enter the capital markets for additional financial mobilization.

"This landmark decision, taken by our Governors during the 2023 Annual Meetings held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, will allow the African Development Fund to

raise an additional \$27 billion to scale up support for the economic development of the 37 low-income countries," said Dr. Adesina.

Adesina stated that in 2023, the Bank's Boards of Directors approved 159 operations worth \$10 billion to countries, the second-highest financing level in the Bank's history.

He also revealed that since he was elected President of the Bank in 2015, the institution's investments in Cote d'Ivoire have increased more than fivefold, from \$460 million in 2015 to \$3.1 billion in 2023.

Through the ADF's High5s programme, he said 700 million lives

have been impacted in the last seven years.

The Africa Development Bank Group has provided more than \$44 billion in financing for infrastructure projects, regional integration, connectivity, and intra-regional trade.

For instance, the historic Senegambia Bridge now links Gambia and Senegal.

"The Bank will be supporting with \$500 million the development of the Lobito Corridor that will link Angola, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in close partnership with the United States Development Finance Corporation and the Africa Finance Corporation," said the President of ADF.

The Bank is also funding, in collaboration with Africa50, the construction of a road and rail link between the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Furthermore, two months ago, the Bank provided a partial credit guarantee of \$696 million, unlocking \$3.9 billion for the construction of the Central Corridor standard gauge railway, which will connect Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The diplomats heard that the Bank's Boards of Directors approved \$1.5 billion for an Africa Emergency Food Production Facility, which will





help 20 million farmers produce 38 million metric tons of food worth \$12 billion.

Dr. Adesina stated that the Bank collaborated with Senegal's government and the African Union to organize the Feed Africa Summit, which took place in Dakar in January 2023.

The Summit, which brought together 34 African Heads of State and Government, the President of Ireland, Ministers, and world leaders, outlined specific food and agriculture delivery plans for African countries to achieve food security within five years.

"Thanks to the effectiveness of the global partnerships used by the African Development Bank, the Summit was able to raise \$72 billion towards the implementation of the outcomes. This is unprecedented in Africa," he added.

Still on farming, the Bank's Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) initiative has helped 12 million farmers access climate-resilient agricultural technologies such as wheat, rice, and maize.

It has also provided Ethiopia with heat-tolerant wheat varieties, allowing it to become self-sufficient in wheat in less than four years.

The Bank is leading in increasing renewable energy, with 87% of its financing going to renewables.

"Our biggest flagship is the Desert to Power initiative, a \$20 billion program to develop 10,000 megawatts of solar across eleven countries of the Sahel zone. When completed it will provide access to electricity for 250 million people; and become the largest solar zone in the world," said Dr. Adesina.

To address climate change, African Development Fund donors established a Climate Action Window with \$429 million to help the most vulnerable countries build climate resilience in the face of climate change.

The African Development Bank Group, in collaboration with the Global Center on Adaptation, is raising \$25 billion to implement the African Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAA-P). This initiative is the world's most extensive climate adaptation program.

On security, the African Development Bank is developing a novel Security Indexed Investment Bonds tool. These bonds are intended to address the link between peace, security, and development by focusing on the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure in insecure areas.

The bonds will also assist in rehabilitating social infrastructure and strengthening institutional capabilities to manage factors contributing to insecurity.

"The Security Indexed Investment Bonds initiative was approved for development by the African Union Heads of State and Government, and we are working with the African Union Commission to design and implement this important work," said Adesina.

In addition, the Bank has created 12 million job opportunities for young people, 3 million directly and 9 million indirectly.

The Bank is executing numerous programs to broaden economic prospects and enhance the skills of the youth. These initiatives encompass Technical and Vocational Training, Computer Coding for Employment,

and the Enable Youth program in agriculture.

It also established the Africa Pharmaceutical Technology Foundation last year, based in Kigali.

The Foundation will help build a pharmaceutical research and development ecosystem and pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity and negotiate intellectual property rights regarding access to technologies, innovations, and manufacturing processes.

The Bank is expected to provide \$3 billion to finance health infrastructure over the next ten years.

Adesina informed diplomats about the Bank Group's financial innovations, including introducing the first hybrid capital on the capital market. The Bank is the first multilateral development bank to accomplish this globally.

He also discussed the Bank's collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank to improve the use of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs). This entails redirecting SDRs from countries with surplus SDRs to the African Development Bank.

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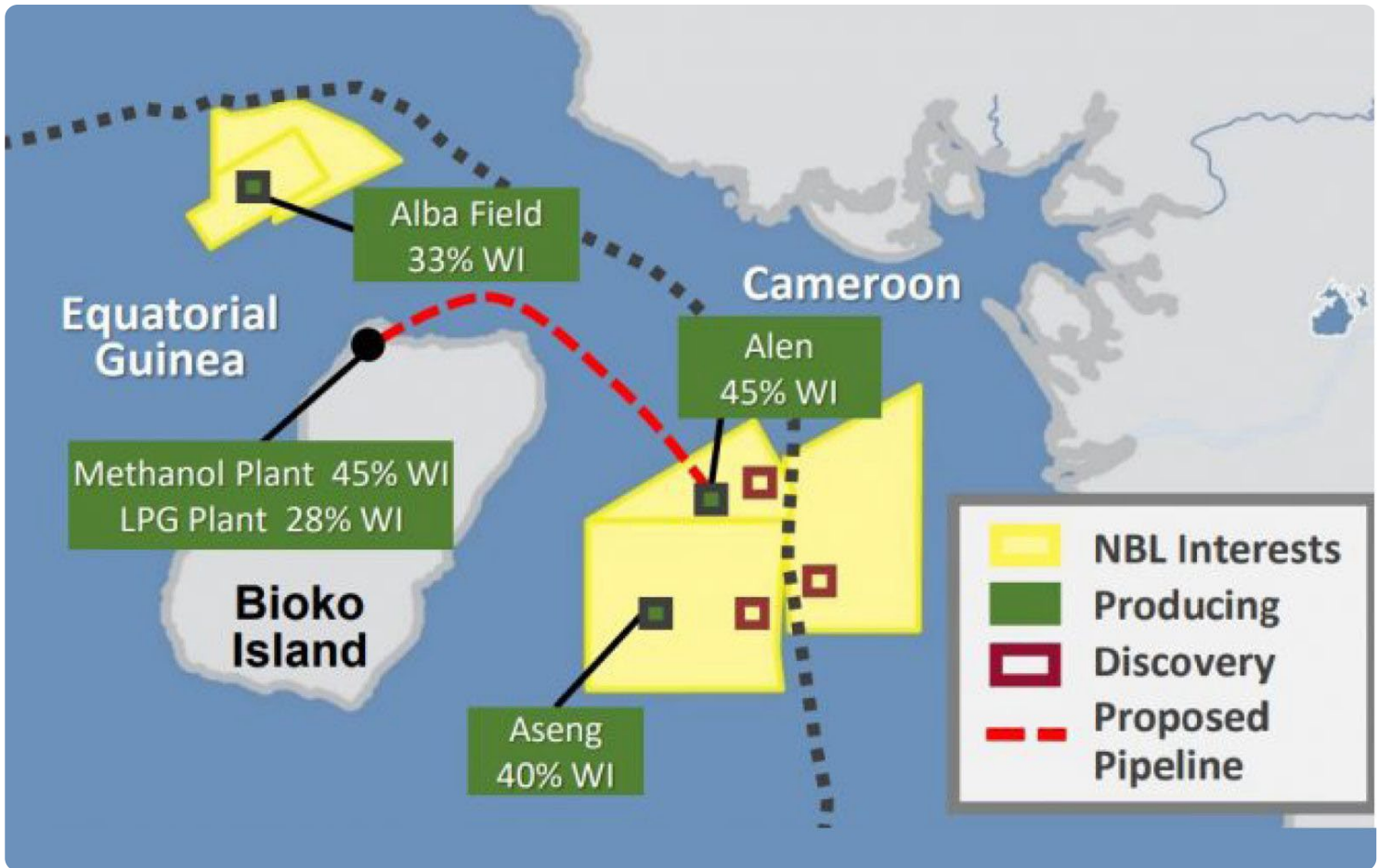


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Who Pressed Pause? How Stalled Negotiations Can Keep Equatorial Guinea from Being a Gas Mega Hub.

By NJ Ayuk*



For Equatorial Guinea, the problem is this: If the country hopes to realize its gas potential, it needs more feedstock for its Gas Mega Hub (GMH) at Punta Europa on Bioko Island.

Will Equatorial Guinea fulfill its promise as a gas “mega hub,” or will stalled negotiations turn what should be a national economic boon into a missed opportunity?

The answer depends largely on how quickly the country can nail down gas supply agreements from Nigeria and Cameroon.

Right now, things don't seem to be moving nearly fast enough.

As the African Energy Chamber's (AEC) report, “The State of African Energy 2024” suggests, oil and gas project delays are nothing new on

the continent, and they have the unfortunate ripple effect of slowing resource monetization and economic growth. Let me be clear, we at the AEC believe in Free markets, limited government, individual liberty, Gas Baby Gas and good old fashion hard work.

For Equatorial Guinea, the problem is this: If the country hopes to realize its gas potential (the country has more than 1.5 trillion cubic feet, or tcf, of proven natural gas reserves), it needs more feedstock for its Gas Mega Hub (GMH) at Punta Europa on Bioko Island. For more than a decade after the liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant there was commissioned in 2007, the facility depended solely on supplies from the Alba field. Product was acquired under a purchase and sales contract now nearing the end of

its 17-year term.

With the Alba in decline, though, operations were in jeopardy. That was until American energy producer Marathon Oil Corp. — the facility's majority stakeholder — began an expansion project that diversified supply. The first step was to tie in the Gulf of Guinea's Alen field, which delivered first gas in 2021. The good news continued in 2023, when Marathon announced through its affiliate, Marathon EG Holding Ltd., that it had signed a heads of agreement (HOA) with Equatorial Guinea and Chevron's Nobel Energy EG Ltd. to continue developing the GMH. (An HOA is a non-binding letter of intent between parties in a potential partnership.) The plan is to continue processing gas from Alba while also bringing gas onshore from

the Aseng field.

During the announcement, Marathon executives said the HOA would increase the company's exposure to global LNG pricing, which would improve both its earnings and cash flow in Equatorial Guinea. For the country, Marathon said, it would further position Punta Europa as a “world-class hub for the monetization of local and regional gas.”

Around the same time, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon committed to jointly develop and monetize oil and gas projects on the border between the two countries, a historic moment in bilateral cooperation. The agreement was ratified by Equatorial Guinea upper and lower chambers recently.

If it feels like it should all be smooth sailing from here, you're right: It

should be. That's not the reality, though. While the reinvestment in GMH is a bright spot, the fact is, those LNG plant expansions are years off, and there's been no other progress in domestic production since 2021. New gas projects need to come in and it might make sense for the government to be pragmatic enough to incentivize new investment so the IOC's can inject the capital needed. As for the deal between Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, it looks great on paper, but there needs to be more movement on both Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. One issue: Cameroon has been focusing on domestic priorities, as has Nigeria, which could supply gas to Equatorial Guinea if it didn't need most of its production itself. Even the gas Nigeria is willing to move to the GMH has been sidetracked by delayed contract negotiations.

The Minister of Mines and Hydrocarbons, Antonio Oburu Ondo has kept the pace going and shown a lot of pragmatism and drive to get a lot moving on gas. I want to urge the oil and gas companies operating in the country to meet him halfway and close these deals that stand to benefit the people of the country. Equatorial Guinea has been good to the oil and gas industry and the energy sector has an opportunity to bring back the old blues again. Work needs to be done by both sides.

In a recent interview with the African Energy Week, when asked about cross border and in country developments, the Minister stated "In addition to drilling works being undertaken to improve and maintain production levels at existing fields, the Ministry is making great strides towards accelerating exploration across the country's offshore acreage. Our recent agreement with Cameroon will see the two countries jointly develop oil and gas projects along our maritime borders, including the Yoyo and Yolanda fields, the Etinde gas field and the Camen and Diega fields.

The country's enabling environment for investment and strong record of successful offshore finds have also seen new E&P players

join the market. Earlier this year we also signed three production sharing contracts with Panoro Energy and Africa Oil Corporation. These contracts are expected to further open up the upstream market. Additionally, we have several global energy majors and independents progressing with exploration and are optimistic about these campaigns. The only way to address production declines is to explore, drilling more wells and unlocking the potential of offshore basins." Well said, we just have to push forward and make it a success.

The Etinde gas field offshore Cameroon best hope for monetisation was with Perenco. However the delays in approvals from Cameroon led them to change strategy with their investments. This could have been a massive opportunity to supply feedstock gas to the EG LNG plant. The regulatory regimes need to address cross border gas deals especially where the geology is complex.

For a while, it seemed like the proposed Golar floating LNG (FLNG) facility would solve many of the GMH's supply problems, as well as overcoming the difficulties (and enormous expense) associated with pipeline transportation of offshore gas to onshore processing plants. A FLNG facility floats above an offshore gas field and is used to produce, liquefy, and store LNG before it is transferred by ship to onshore processing facilities.

Golar has a successful track record of operating innovative FLNG technology in Africa. In 2018, it completed Africa's first FLNG, the Golar Hilli, offshore Cameroon. The facility, which produces about 1.4 million tons per year, was also the world's first FLNG plant created from a converted LNG carrier.

With that background, it was hard to be anything but hopeful when Golar signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Equatorial Guinea to develop a block estimated to hold 2.6 tcf of natural gas. Yet despite the enormous

opportunity for the company and the country — especially considering Europe's continuing quest to replace Russian gas since the conflict in Ukraine began more than a year ago — negotiations are at a standstill. We at the Chamber hope these negotiations can be revitalized or another party is brought into the country to carry on this project.

In this case, being unable to participate in an eager market is just part of the story. This is an economic issue to be sure, but it's one that can be veiled by the politics of climate change. Here's what I mean. When asset development is put off, it comes with a very real risk of the underlying gas being considered "stranded." Climate activists will say the project will never go forward and will push for it to be abandoned. Gas that could be monetized will be lost to the energy transition.

No Shortcuts and Avoid Resource Nationalism

As I alluded to earlier — and as "The State of African Energy 2024 Report" suggests — there's never been a shortcut to getting African hydrocarbon projects off the ground. I'm not saying that these enormous projects won't by necessity take time. But national governments have been — and continue to be — a source of unwarranted delays, whether it's by dragging their feet toward the negotiating table, changing the rules after awarding a project — which makes negotiations go on longer than they should — or making energy companies wait two years or more before sanctioning the exploration projects they propose. When your state revenues rely on oil and gas, why would you actively prevent things from advancing?

Yes, I've heard the arguments for resource nationalism. Yes, I know that this is "our" oil and gas. But thinking about this as an us versus them scenario isn't helping anyone. Having resources isn't enough; you need the financial ability to do something with those resources. This has been "our" oil and gas for centuries, but we

couldn't marshal the technologies and the financing to go out there and drill a \$100 million deepwater well. Yes, of course we should benefit from full-on local content, full-on empowering our people and communities, full-on having the right kinds of profit-sharing, and royalties, and taxes, full-on empowering community, full-on having the right kind of share and full-on having the right kind of taxes. But until we have the ability (and financial wherewithal) to extract our oil and gas like Marathon, Chevron, Golar, and others do, why are we adding roadblocks instead of incentivizing production? Sometimes, I think our governments simply ignore the fact that investors are spending a lot of money to make these projects work and that their successes will be, eventually, our own.

Instead of delays, then, we need to give investors the confidence that we stand with them, and that we're determined to make projects work. In all my work across Africa, I have always told Presidents and Ministers I have been privileged to earn their trust, that Africa needs pragmatic free market policies to attract capital into Gas markets. One of the reasons Equatorial Guinea was for so long the darling of energy investments was that the government was willing to find solutions. Now, in a more competitive environment, where Equatorial Guinea is jockeying for dollars with Gabon, Cameroon, Namibia, Suriname, and Guyana, the government should be doing everything it can to finalize negotiations and fast-track projects, not sitting back on its heels and waiting for — what? Social spending, among other things, depends on us moving energy projects forward.

Right now, there's no way of knowing how long it will be before Equatorial Guinea's GMH fulfills its destiny. But we do know this: Every day without progress means lost revenues.

* NJ Ayuk, Executive Chairman, African Energy Chamber

Reassuring Investor Confidence in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) Region.

CEMAC member countries offer a wealth of natural and mineral resource opportunities for global investors, and addressing regional trade and forex challenges will bolster private sector-led growth.

In a bid to safeguard foreign exchange reserves in the region, the Bank of Central African States (BEAC) imposed stricter rules on currency transfers and payments in January 2022 - a move it has been unwilling to reverse despite opposition by energy stakeholders and leaders. Recent regulation significantly impacts dollar-dominated industries - such as the oil and gas sector -, and reform is imperative to regain foreign investor confidence in West African oil and gas.

The upcoming African Energy Week (AEW): Invest in African Energy conference – scheduled for November 4-8 in Cape Town – will delve into the West African region's vulnerability caused by foreign exchange regulations. Centered around facilitating investment in African oil and gas, the event unites regional energy leaders, financial institutions and foreign investors to discuss strategies for improving business environments; facilitating cross-border deals; and reassuring investor confidence.

AEW: Invest in African Energy is the platform of choice for project operators, financiers, technology providers and government, and has emerged as the official place to sign deals in African energy. Visit www.aecweek.com for more information about this exciting event.

E&P Remains Top of the Agenda

Member countries of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) – namely, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic (CAR), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of Congo – have all implemented targets to increase hydrocarbon exploration



and production through regional collaboration. Gabon aims to produce 220,000 barrel per day (bpd) in the short-term while Congo plans to increase oil production to 500,000 bpd within a year and double gas production within two-three years. Equatorial Guinea also plans to increase regional gas monetization, with agreements with Cameroon to develop the Etinde gas field already in place.

Recent E&P developments are critical for achieving these goals. In Gabon, independent oil and gas company Perenco has spud an appraisal well to assess the quantity of resources at the Hylia South West field. The asset is currently producing 6,000 bpd and the new appraisal well aims to determine its full potential. Independent oil and gas company Vaalco Energy extended the life of the Etame field in Gabon with the replacement of an aging FPSO with an FSO alongside platform upgrades. Now, the project will produce beyond 2030. Energy major TotalEnergies has extended its presence in Gabon by another 25 years, while signing a new contract for the Baudroie-Mérou

Marine G5-143 permit, effective until 2047.

In Cameroon, Perenco has kicked-off a five-well drilling campaign at the Kita Eden field, located in the northern Rio del Rey basin. Discovered 40 years ago, the field has been equipped with a specially-designed shallow water barge. Energy major Chevron is developing the YoYo Block in Cameroon's Douala Basin, with a bilateral treaty signed between Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea in 2023 paving the way for the field's joint development with the neighboring Yolanda field. The fields development aligns with Equatorial Guinea's Gas Mega Hub (GMH) project – aimed at monetizing stranded gas resources across West Africa. Chevron signed a Heads of Agreement in 2023 to progress with the next phase of the GMH.

Meanwhile, Vaalco Energy is nearing FID for the 20 million-barrel Venus development in Equatorial Guinea's Block P. Following the completion of the joint operating agreement, the company expects to progress with the FEED study, aiming for FID in Q3 or Q4 this year.

In Congo, energy major Eni began feeding gas into the Tango LNG facility in December 2023, representing a milestone for the project. Tango LNG is expected to start production in 2024, only 12 months after reaching FID. Perenco also expanded its presence in the country in 2023, acquiring Eni's participating interests in several permits.

Investment Hinges on Policy Reform

All of these developments demonstrate the potential of West African oil and gas. However, to ensure these finds translate into tangible project developments, CEMAC countries need to prioritize an enabling environment and attracting foreign investment through pro-business policies. CEMAC member countries hold some of the lowest positions in the World Bank's latest Ease of Doing Business index (2020). Out of 190 countries, Cameroon is 167; Gabon is 168; Equatorial Guinea is 178; Congo is 180; Chad is 182 and CAR is 184. Ineffective fiscal policies are largely to blame as they make it difficult to invest, featuring high

tax rates, weak Production Sharing Contracts, and delayed project approval timelines. Additionally, BEAC's foreign exchange regulation makes it challenging for foreign currency accounts to be domiciled in the region, further impacting FDI.

"Forex has to be something that we are serious about and that is why the African Energy Chamber (AEC) is convening the Africa Energy Finance Summit at AEW, where we will unite governments from across the region to discuss issues relating to enabling environments. We have got to incentivize growth," stated NJ Ayuk, Executive Chairman of the AEC.

As foreign investment becomes

more competitive than ever with FDI shifting towards fewer, capital-intensive projects, incentivizing investment becomes imperative. The judiciary has a role to play in this area, as it provides comfort and long-term security for operators in the region.

The judiciary, through reviewing how systems approach labor, arbitration, disputes and how companies are treated, will essentially make it easy to invest. Meanwhile, a shift from resource nationalism to independent systems is expected to further reinstate investor confidence in CEMAC oil and gas, with transparency allowing countries to attract a broad investor base and lessen the volatility of

international capital flows. Addressing these challenges, providing fiscal incentives for foreign companies and cutting red tape will not only facilitate cross-border deals but enable member countries to meet their E&P targets.

In addition to foreign exchange policies, local content laws have become restricted with the BEAC regulation, failing to incentivize growth and opportunity for local players. CEMAC countries have the chance to leverage local content to stimulate the development of new fields, attract new investments while making the market increasingly competitive. Policy reform will, therefore, not only attract foreign capital to the region

but enabling the growth of domestic markets,

Conversations around improving the investment environment across the CEMAC region will be a key topic during this year's AEW: Invest in African Energy conference in Cape Town. Under the theme, Energy Growth through an Enabling Environment, the event integrates the entire African energy value chain with the objective to increase investment and make energy poverty history by 2030. Join the conference today and be part of the conversation.

*Source African Energy Chamber

Ayukegba Makes Strong Case for African Energy Priorities at EU-African Forum

By Ajong Mbapndah L

The Senior Vice-President of the African Energy Chamber, Verner Ayukegba, has stated that access to reliable and affordable power is the only road to development and industrialization in Africa.

Addressing the Africa-EU Parliamentary Assembly on Monday, February 19, 2024, in Luanda, Angola, Ayukegba expressed the Africa Energy Chamber's commitment to investing in the energy sector to ensure all Africans have access to power to drive them out of poverty.

He reiterated that Africa's main focus now is access to power, noting that without reliable and affordable access to power, education, agriculture, health, mining and employment are negatively impacted.

Ayukegba revealed worrying statistics about energy access in the continent, indicating the chamber has a significant role in ensuring sufficient energy access.

"We have more than 600 million Africans who have no access to reliable and affordable energy which is about half of the population. And we have about 900 million people who have zero access to clean cooking fuel, most of them women and children," said Mr. Ayukegba.

At the same time, the bold Ayukegba



Since the road to development and industrialization only goes through access to reliable and affordable power, our number one priority in Africa should be power, says AEC Snr VP Verner Ayukegba.

noted that the transition from coal to other energy sources should be fair and realistic to be people-driven and accepted in Africa.

The Vice President maintained the chamber's position that the continent should industrialize rather than be forced by European counterparts to abandon coal, the region's primary resource.

While acknowledging the importance of transition, he advised the drivers of the energy transition to let Africa use its available resources to develop and transition at its own pace.

"Europe was able to take out more than half of their population in a concise space of time, due to the development of coal as a fuel, which led to the Industrial Revolution and was able to ultimately, in a people-centric manner, lead to people being taken out of poverty. Now, Africa wants the same," added Ayukegba.

"We cannot transition in Luanda, Lagos, Douala, the same as in London, Berlin, Paris, and New York."

Mr. Ayukegba stated that solar energy, while widely regarded as the best alternative, lacks a baseload to support industrialization.

He questioned why Africa is being forced to transition away from coal despite having only 3% emissions, arguing that the West should decarbonize while Africa industrializes. Ayukegba also demanded that the countries that contribute the most pollution be fined.

In addition, he found it ironic that European nations forcing Africa to stop using coal were importing the same fuel from South Africa, the continent's leading coal producer.

Ayukegba advocated increased investment in the gas and hydro industries to improve Africa's industrial security. He also suggested collaborative projects between African countries and joint financing with the West.

The Africa-EU Regional Parliamentary Assembly (RPA) is a relatively new institution established under the new Post-Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) states.

Its goal is to improve parliamentary cooperation and dialogue between African parliamentarians and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).



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Q& A With ACCA Southern Africa Head Portia Mkhabela

By Ajong Mbatndah L

Portia Mkhabela -Market Head For Association Of Chartered Certified Accountants Southern Africa sheds light on the work of ACCA and industry perspectives in a Q & A with PAV. Currently led by one of its many female Chief Executives, ACCA has continued to close gender gaps in its leadership, with several functions and country offices now led by women, including South Africa and the wider southern Africa region, Portia Mkhabela says.

Can you Highlight the major milestones of ACCA in advancing financial inclusion in the continent?

ACCA's focus when it comes to inclusion is primarily around creating opportunity and equal access for everyone in the accountancy and finance profession.

As far back as 1909, ACCA began to lay the foundations of inclusion in the global profession by being the first professional accountancy body to admit a female member and the first one to produce a female president, decades later.

In the last 100 years, ACCA has remained committed to driving inclusion, not only in how we engage our stakeholders but also in how the organisation is managed. Currently led by one of its many female Chief Executives, ACCA has continued to close gender gaps in its leadership, with several functions and country offices now led by women, including South Africa and the wider southern Africa region which I am responsible for.

The last Africa members Convention is another testament to this commitment, as we saw female thought leaders and industry experts make up 40% of our speakers line up - a 100% markup on the number of female speakers we worked with in 2017 when we first hosted the convention in Addis Ababa.

What are some of the challenges



Portia Mkhabela -Market Head For Association Of Chartered Certified Accountants Southern Africa.

and opportunities in advancing women entrepreneurs access to finance in Africa?

The African Development Bank estimates a \$42 billion financing gap for African female entrepreneurs as they continue to face unique barriers such as prohibitive interest rates, simply because they are considered riskier to lend to.

We are however seeing great opportunities for entrepreneurs and business owners to access greener and cheaper sources of finance by embedding sustainability across the entire value chain of their businesses.

In a recent study around green finance skills, we recommend that governments and businesses

need to work together in ensuring that the gender perspective is embedded in maximising global climate investments and to increase the number of women and girls educated and trained in STEM and sustainability-related fields. This way, more female entrepreneurs are better equipped to take advantage of the influx of green finance opportunities, especially into Africa.

In your opinion and from policy perspective, what can be done to accelerate a more inclusive C-suite for most corporates?

We recently explored how professionals can better lead inclusively and found that over 50% of

accounting and finance professionals engaged across Africa were unsure about what to do in promoting inclusivity in the profession.

There is a need for increased individual and organisational responsibility through greater awareness and advocacy on the gaps that need to be closed. More so, organisations must move from a place of compliance to where their organisational culture leads the diversity and inclusion agenda.

At ACCA, this has therefore become a key focus area which we drive through our public affairs and policy engagement strategy in Africa, to promote the UN- SDG on Gender Equality (SDG-5). We are working with our ACCA communities and female senior members in Africa to demystify male dominance in the accountancy profession and boardrooms.

Male led startups across the continent continue to attract investors and funding compared to female led ones, why do you think that is the case and how this improved?

While ACCA is not best positioned to give a view on the gender dynamics around access to startup funding, we believe that the accountancy profession has an increasing role to play in leading the journey to social equity, by accounting for value in a way that helps investors make funding decisions based on a broader view of performance, taking into account the risks and opportunities that should really be material and free to bias.

A lot of startups have of late struggled to maintain and accelerate growth with some collapsing after raising huge amounts of funding, why do you think this is the case? What are they not doing right?

Our recent study on integrated thinking finds that for SMEs to survive, the ability to apply integrated thinking in adapting business models

to key internal and external factors, in a way that ensures long term value creation is crucial.

We believe that SMEs must also be supported by the right policies and enabling business environment needed to succeed, having adopted an integrated approach to business decision making and value creation.

What are some of the strategic plans are you putting in place

to realise your vision for the next 5 to 10 years?

We are committed to our strategic focus of being bold and seizing opportunities for the future. One fundamental strategy at the heart of this commitment is an investment in digital transformation.

From optimising internal use of our resources to scaling impact in the marketplace with greater speed, ACCA is poised to boldly deliver on

its vision of being No1 in developing the accountancy profession the world needs, leveraging digital transformation and continuous innovation.

Do you have funding or scholarship opportunities for the young girls/women interested in pursuing careers in finance or accountancy?

Being an equal opportunity driven

organisation, ACCA's scholarship opportunities such as the Africa Student Scholarship Scheme are open to all students who meet the criteria. However, through our members, we continue to support the needs of various groups of students including the Simpson Scholarship awards for distinction students and the ACCA Women's Network Nigeria for exceptional female ACCA students in Nigeria.

Zimbabwe-Mixed Reactions To New US Sanctions.

By Prince Kurupati

On Monday 4 March 2024, U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken issued a statement saying that the Biden Administration has scrapped a 21-year sanctions policy on Zimbabwe "following President Biden's approval of a New Executive Order terminating Zimbabwe sanctions program that had been in effect since 2003". Unsurprisingly, largely thanks to Zimbabwe's polarised nature on the political and socio-economic front, the announcement by Secretary Blinken was met with mixed reactions.

The mere announcement of a new U.S. sanctions policy on Zimbabwe was warmly welcomed by many who are aligned with the ruling party as a testament to the effectiveness of President Mnangagwa's re-engagement drive. The spokesperson of President Mnangagwa's administration Nick Mangwana in a rather ecstatic 'X' post said, "Well, this is massive. A great vindication of President @edmnangagwa's Foreign Policy."

Explaining what the new U.S. sanctions regime on Zimbabwe entails, constitutional lawyer and the former spokesperson of the main opposition party Fadzai Mahere said "All persons sanctioned under the old Zimbabwe sanctions law will be removed today from OFAC's old sanctions list. The said list dates back to 2003. A lot has changed since then."

African techpreneur Kuda Musasiwa said the new sanctions



A great vindication of President Mnangagwa's Foreign Policy, says spokesperson Nick Mangwana. Photo courtesy.

policy is good for the country more so on the economic front. He said owing to the previous sanctions' regime, Zimbabwean entrepreneurs found it difficult to do business online especially when it came to processing financial transactions as most payment gateways such as PayPal were prohibited from accepting and processing transactions from Zimbabwe. However, the new measures will come in handy for the ordinary folks who for the past 21 years felt the heat owing to the sanctions.

"This has much deeper meaning. The USA is now normalizing

relationships with the current administration. They have also clearly lost faith in the democratic lobby that kept the sanction pressure up to push a public revolt through pain and economic hardship. We will slowly see PayPal and others return. Amazon will be launching in SA (South Africa) soon and Zimbabwe is very much on their logistics and strategic plan," Musasiwa said.

Also praising the U.S. stance was Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema who said he is "pleased to see President Biden terminate the Zimbabwe sanctions program. This is further evidence that President

Biden listens to his African partners. We hope this is an indication of a new direction for Zimbabwe and regional engagement".

Not many government supporters were however thrilled with the latest move by the U.S. government. Corporate lawyer and former deputy minister of Justice and Legal Affairs Obert Gutu said, "The elephant in the room is ZIDERA (an Act which placed several Zimbabweans on U.S. sanctions). As long as ZIDERA remains part and parcel of US statutes, there's very, very little to be excited about".

On the same day that Secretary

Blinken issued a statement repealing the previous sanctions policy on Zimbabwe, Adrienne Watson, the National Security Council spokesperson in a letter to Congress announced a “new set of tools in Zimbabwe, including the flagship Global Magnitsky Sanctions Program, to make clear that the egregious behaviour of some of the most powerful people and companies in Zimbabwe matches the actions of the worst human rights abusers and corrupt actors globally.”

Watson's letter and its subsequent approval in Congress demonstrate a perfect sync and synergy that exist between U.S. governmental departments as Secretary Blinken in repealing the previous sanctions regime had said the Biden administration was still concerned “regarding serious cases of corruption and human rights abuse in Zimbabwe. Key individuals, including members of the Government of Zimbabwe, bear responsibility for those actions, including the looting of government coffers that robs Zimbabweans of public resources. Multiple cases of abductions, physical abuse, and unlawful killing have left citizens living in fear”.



We hope this is an indication of a new direction for Zimbabwe and regional engagement, says Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema.

Only a select few individuals were placed on the Global Magnitsky Sanctions Program. Namely, these are President Emmerson Mnangagwa, Vice President Constantino Chiwenga, retired brigadier general Walter Tapfumaneyi, businessman

Kudakwashe Tagwirei, First Lady Auxilia Mnangagwa, Obey Chimuka, Oppah Muchinguri, Godwin Matanga, Stephen Mutamba and Owen Ncube and a few companies/industries.

Commenting on the removal of the previous sanctions regime and

the new Global Magnitsky Sanctions Program implemented by the U.S. government, Secretary Blinken said the new sanctions are “part of a stronger, more targeted sanctions policy towards Zimbabwe”. He went on to say that the new sanctions are appropriately targeted hence their full brunt will be felt by those responsible for causing untold suffering to the masses.

“The United States is committed to ensuring our sanctions are relevant, timely, and targeted against those most closely connected to corruption and human rights abuses. We continue to urge the Government of Zimbabwe to move toward more open and democratic governance, including addressing corruption and protesting human rights, so all Zimbabweans can prosper,” Secretary Blinken said.

Speaking with regards to the enactment of the Global Magnitsky Sanctions Program, the spokesperson for the ruling Zanu PF party Mr Farai Muroiwa Marapira said, “If the president, the first lady, and senior officials remain sanctioned then Zimbabwe remains sanctioned, and burdened by this illegality.”



Secretary Blinken says the new sanctions are part of a stronger, more targeted sanctions policy towards Zimbabwe. Photo courtesy.

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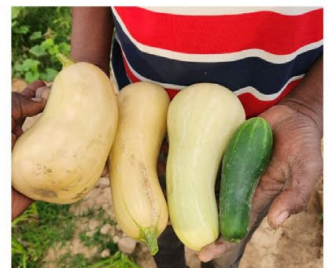
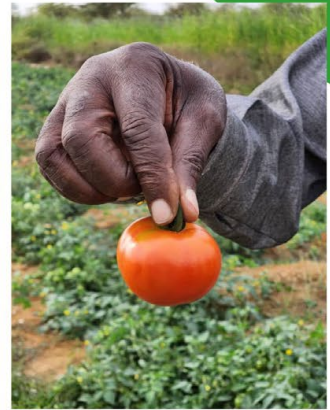
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CEO and President
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Why President Salva Kiir Must Prioritize The DRC Conflict As The EAC Chairperson

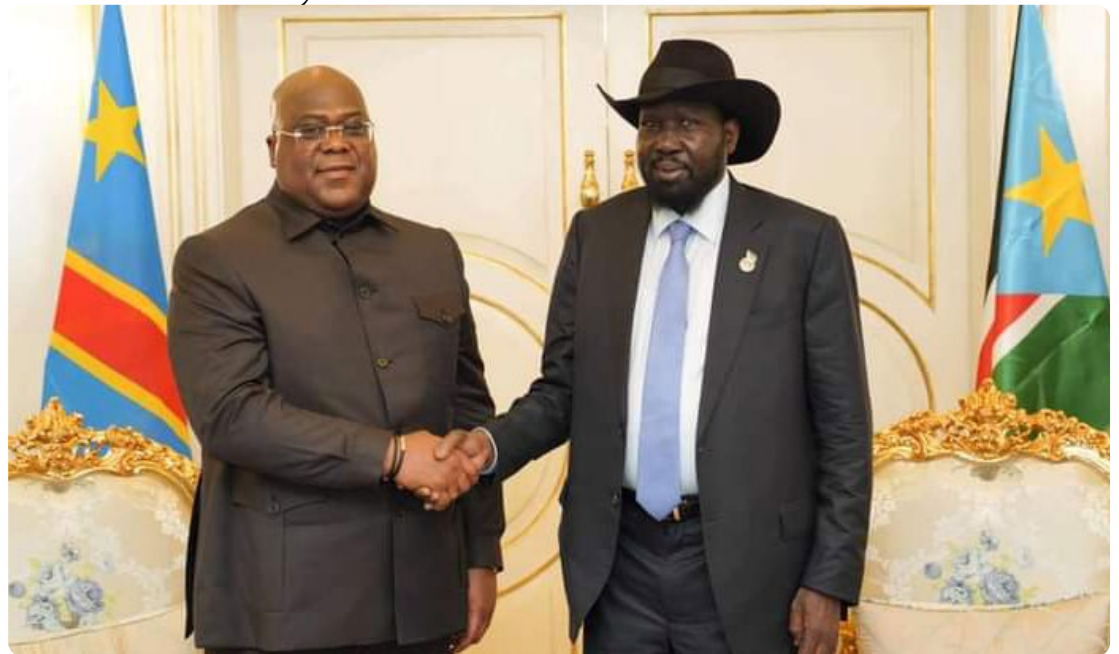
By Akol Dok*

On 23rd November 2023, President Salva Kiir assumed the East African Community's (EAC) leadership, the first time South Sudan assumed the Chairpersonship. President Salva Kiir finalized the integration of Somalia as an eight-member state, inspiring hope and positivity for the future of the EAC. The EAC has plans for a customs union, common markets, and a monetary union. The EAC has excellent economic and political potential, but addressing security and stability is peremptory.

In February 2020, President Salva began implementing a peace agreement that included many armed opposition groups, five Vice Presidents, 35 Ministers, and 550 members of Parliament. The bloated Government is the cost Salva Kiir pays to ensure peace and stability in South Sudan.

President Salva Kiir has a history of negotiating peace agreements. He signed the Machakos Protocol in 2002 on behalf of the SPLM/A. The protocol was part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the SPLM/A and the Government of Sudan. In 2018, President Salva signed another peace agreement on behalf of the Government of South Sudan. He signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCISS) with various armed opposition groups, including the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO) and South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA).

Kiir is uniquely positioned and experienced to push for peace and stability in the region. Kiir must utilize his opportunity as the EAC Chairperson to address peace and security, the prerequisite for economic prosperity. Peace and security have hindered South Sudan's economic prosperity for the past decade. Salva Kiir's first move as the EAC Head



President Kiir understands the political sacrifices necessary for peace and security

was to visit Rwanda and Burundi to discuss solutions to the regional conflict. He must prioritize the DRC conflict, seek a political solution, and prevent violent proliferation.

The March 23rd Movement (M23) has captured Nyanzale town in North Kivu province, about 70 kilometers from Goma, the provincial capital. According to Patrick Muhino, the chief of the administrative area, M23 has captured the villages of Kashalira, Kirima, Ngoroba, and the city of Nyanzale. Kinshasa, the United Nations, and Western countries say Rwanda supports the M23 rebels; Rwanda denies any role.

Former members of the National Congress formed the M23 rebels for the Defense of the People (CNDP), which signed a peace treaty with the DRC Government on March 23rd, 2009. M23 refers to the date of the peace agreement. The group rebelled, citing poor governance and the DRC Government's unwillingness to implement the peace deal.

The M23 military chief, Sultani Makenga, is an ethnic Tusi who fought for the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) during the Rwandan

Civil War. In 2023, he insisted on direct peace talks with the DRC Congo government.

The DRC is a harbinger of regional peace and stability. In the 1990s, the First and Second Congo Wars dragged Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, and Burundi into a regional African war. Burundi and DRC accuse Rwanda of supporting rebels in their countries, and they have threatened to fight back. Burundi closed its border with Rwanda in early 2024. The United Nations said DRC and Rwanda "must walk back from the brink of war." Any escalation can drag the entire region into conflict.

DRC is a member of SAADC and the EAC. The conflict could spill into Rwanda and Uganda, and Rwandan President Paul Kagame allegedly sponsors M23. Therefore, a multilateral approach is imperative. The Chairperson of the EAC, Salva Kiir, and the Chairperson of SAADC, Joao Lourenco, must collectively push for peace in this precarious conflict. Angola and South Sudan are both neighbors of the DRC.

President Kiir understands the political sacrifices necessary for peace

and security. His experience is vital to convince President Flex to make political compromises and the M23 to abandon armed rebellion to spare the lives of millions of Congolese.

*Akol Dok is a successful entrepreneur, writer, and analyst who founded Orus Consulting Limited, a management and investment advisory firm. In 2022, the South Sudan National Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture awarded Orus Consulting the Best Business Consultancy award. Akol is a well-known political analyst and writer who provides insightful analyses of Africa's political economy in the evolving global context.

His expertise has earned him appearances on various media platforms such as CNBC Africa, CGTN Africa, Radio Miraya, RT International, Yahoo News, and The Nation. Akol hosts the South Sudan and The World podcast, which focuses on South Sudanese people making positive contributions around the globe. The podcast is available on popular platforms like Spotify, YouTube, and Apple.

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Malawi - Mutharika's Rescue Mission

By Joseph Dumbula

Former Malawi President Peter Mutharika has for the fifth time running set the tone for the 2025 general polls as the evident challenger for the incumbent Lazarus Chakwera whom he vehemently accuses of ultimate poor governance and a spiral of underdevelopment.

Mutharika, who is also leader for the main opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has made the fresh intent for the ballot in the wake of alleged attacks on members of his party by youths assumed to belong to the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), a party that Chakwera leads.

Until now, Mutharika has been thumping the Chakwera administration following the devaluation of the Malawi Kwacha which has in turn eroded the incomes of most Malawians while at the same time causing a sharp increase in the prices of basic commodities.

“They [MCP] tried to bring criminal charges against me but they failed. They tried to steal the DPP from us through other agents in DPP but they also failed. Now they are trying to bring age capping bill in Parliament to



President Mutharika says he is ready to rescue Malawi from its race to the bottom if given the chance. Photo courtesy.

stop me from contesting in 2025 but they will fail again. I am coming back to rescue Malawi from destruction. I did it before and I will do it again. I will contest in 2025 and I am going to win the presidency because the work

of my hands will testify for me,” he said.

He called on Malawians to «wake up» to the return of the MCP's brutal tactics, vowing «We will never allow the brutal MCP to bring back the

oppressive, abusive and blood-thirsty autocratic rule again in this country. Never!»

But, the MCP has not taken Mutharika's remarks plainly. The oldest party's spokesperson Ezekiel Ching'oma described Mutharika's sentiments as laughable and baseless.

He is quoted as having said: “Mutharika's party is the one party that has a history of underwriting violence, promoting hatred or rabble-rousing conflict in this country. We have noted that the former president is surrounded by fortune seekers and they will lead him into the wrong way. Isn't this the time for him to retire?”

The 83 year old Professor of Law who lost in the 2020 fresh presidential elections after his initial win was annulled by the courts has meanwhile launched a daring call for Malawians to vote for him in the polls due in September next year.

“I am also urging all the well-meaning Malawians to support our efforts that are aimed at reclaiming power and restore Malawi's dignity because Malawi is in current bad shape because of the current clueless government,” he said.



There is now only one DPP under my leadership, says Prof Mutharika.

The Southern African nation has been embroiled in an economic downturn which is heavily as a result of the devaluation of the Malawi Kwacha by 44 percent, which has led to bloated pricing of goods and services which has been detrimental to the economy.

The nation has also been on a failure to create jobs for the youthful population, a situation that has led to a labor export deal involving over a hundred thousand youths to Israel.

Before assuming the office of the President, Chakwera and nine other

leaders of other political parties came to full popularity at the back of a promise to create more jobs for the youths, who form the country's largest population.

In his more recent, State of the Nation Address, Chakwera insisted that his administration has created over nine hundred thousand jobs, which he says is a good target towards the intended one million goal.

But, the figures are being described as unrealistic by human resources related industries.

The Employers Consultative

Association of Malawi through Executive Director George Khaki feels the figures are not the actual presentation.

"The economy is still facing significant challenges. Besides Covid-19, I think we have supply chain disruption and high inflation rate which is depressing demand of supply of goods and services, making companies not to sale more of their goods and services," says Khaki.

Recently, the Pan African Visions also reported a story in which a state agency admitted in a statement

that some people are attempting to backdate their dates of birth so as to earn slots in the police and army departments.

The unemployment rate in Malawi decreased to 5 percent in 2023 from 5.10 percent in 2022.

The figures averaged 5.02 percent from 1991 until 2023, reaching an all-time high of 5.80 percent in 2021 and a record low of 4.60 percent in 1997, according to the International Labor Office.

Zimbabwe: Third Term Rumblings For Mnangagwa

By Prince Kurupati

Zimbabwe is always in a perpetual election mode. All year round every single year, it's political matters that dominate the news. It's just recently – August 2023 – that Zimbabwe held its harmonized elections which saw local authority councilors, members of Parliament, and the country's president voted for. However, since August 2023, the country has had two by-elections where over two dozen councilors and members of Parliament were replaced. As if this isn't enough, before a year hasn't even lapsed since the last presidential election, there are already rumblings that the incumbent is set to run for a third term come 2028.

Presently, the Zimbabwean Constitution in terms of Section 91 restricts a president to two 5-year terms in office. After serving the second term, the incumbent isn't eligible to run for a third term. Taking a cue from the provisions of the supreme law of the country, it means Zimbabwe will ordinarily have a new face as president come 2028. The word 'ordinary' however doesn't have a place in Zimbabwean politics. 44 years after the country attained its independence, Zimbabwe has had just two executive presidents! Robert Mugabe of course is chiefly responsible for this having led the country for 37 successive years. His successor Emmerson Mnangagwa does seem to harbour the same



Rumblings for President Mnangagwa to extend his stay in power are gaining currency with some of his partisans. Photo credit Blackpost.

ambitions – ambitions of (over) staying in power.

Some time back, long before the August 2023 elections which helped him get a second term in office, President Mnangagwa while addressing party supporters said '2023 ndinenge ndichipo' (2023 I will still be here). At the time, many including those from opposition circles just thought the president was referring to his party and that the ruling Zanu (PF) party would still be

in power. It was a matter of the party rather than the individual remaining in power. However, during the National Youth Day celebrations (a holiday in honour of Robert Mugabe who was born on 21 February), held in Masvingo province, speaker after speaker who took to the podium used a slogan that suggested that President Mnangagwa will still be president in 2030 contrary to the provisions of the country's constitution.

The Constitution in Section 91(2)

states that "A person is disqualified for election as president or vice president if he or she has already held office as president under this Constitution for two terms, whether continuous or not, and for this subsection three or more years' service is deemed to be a full term."

Amongst those who used the slogan that seeks to extend the president's stay in power beyond 2028 was Vice President Kembo Mohadi who said he found the slogan to be catchy and

fascinating hence he saw it befitting to also use it. "Your Excellency, before I invite you to take the podium, I was thrilled by the new slogan, and allow me to chant the slogan," Vice President Mohadi said. The endorsement of the slogan by the country's Vice President suggests that the desire to stay in power beyond 2028 is not just wishful thinking by the comrades who took to the podium but something concrete that party bigwigs are willing to back.

Addressing the President before multitudes who thronged Mushagashe Vocational Training Centre for the Youth Day celebrations, Masvingo Provincial Affairs and Devolution minister Ezra Chadzamira said, "We all want you (Mnangagwa) to stay in office beyond your presidential term. You will be there in 2030."

With the Constitution currently limiting incumbents to two terms in office, what then happens when one desires to extend his stay in office beyond the stipulated two terms? Will one just ignore the Constitution and do as he pleases hence throwing the country into a constitutional crisis? Or perhaps there is a way to circumvent this and find a legal loophole to exploit. Writing for the private newspaper Newsday, Mlondoloz Ndlovu said constitutional provisions

may be amended. When it comes to extending the president's stay in power, certain requirements need to be satisfied.

To amend the Constitution, Ndlovu states that a Bill to amend a constitutional provision must be passed by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly and the Senate. Currently, the ruling party Zanu PF is narrowly short of getting a two-thirds majority in both houses but the disintegrated nature of the opposition may be exploited by the ruling party to garner just enough votes for the Bill to pass. This therefore may be easy to manoeuvre around for the ruling party and Mnangagwa but the big catch is that an amendment to a term limit provision does not benefit anyone who held that office before or the incumbent. Section 328(7) of the Constitution reads, "Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, an amendment to a term limit provision, the effect of which is to extend the length of time that a person may hold or occupy any public office, does not apply in relation to any person who held or occupied that office, or an equivalent office, at any time before the amendment." If the Bill passes, Mnangagwa at law still needs to vacate the president's office by 2028 with his successor getting the

privilege of staying in power beyond two terms.

Unlike Section 91(2) which can be amended by a simple two-thirds majority of both houses, Section 328(7) can only be amended via a national referendum. This makes things much more difficult hence it is to be seen how Mnangagwa will manoeuvre if he is to seek a third term legally.

According to the ruling party insiders as revealed by Newsday, the Youth Day chants were just the first steps in a well-calculated move to lay the groundwork for a third term bid. Zanu PF political commissar Mike Bimha announced that the ruling party is set to hold nationwide thank-you rallies for the party's win during the last harmonized elections. The party insiders said these rallies would be used to drum up support for Mnangagwa's third term bid.

An insider who spoke to Newsday said, "While thanking the people will be part of the message, the primary goal is to use these rallies to start laying the groundwork for President Mnangagwa's re-election campaign in 2028. By reconnecting with the people, showcasing his achievements, and gauging their sentiment, the party hopes to build momentum for a potential third term bid."

While speaking at Mushagashe Vocational Training Centre during the National Youth Day celebrations, President Mnangagwa said he doesn't have the "power to say so" with regards to ambitions of a third term "as this matter is in the hands of God."

Pro-Mnangagwa supporters say that extending the president's term limits is not a bad idea. One such supporter Timothy Masenda who is the founder of Youth in Business said, "The Constitution is a living document and can be amended to reflect the will of the people. If the people want Mnangagwa to stay, it is their democratic right. Mnangagwa's leadership has brought stability and economic progress. A third term would allow him to consolidate these gains and ensure continued development."

On the contrary, human rights advocate Aaron Hamauswa said it will be the darkest day in post-independent Zimbabwe if presidential term limits are extended. "Constitutional amendments to benefit the incumbent are a dangerous precedent that undermines democracy and the rule of law. A third term would extend Mnangagwa's already authoritarian rule and further stifle political competition and dissent," Hamauswa said.



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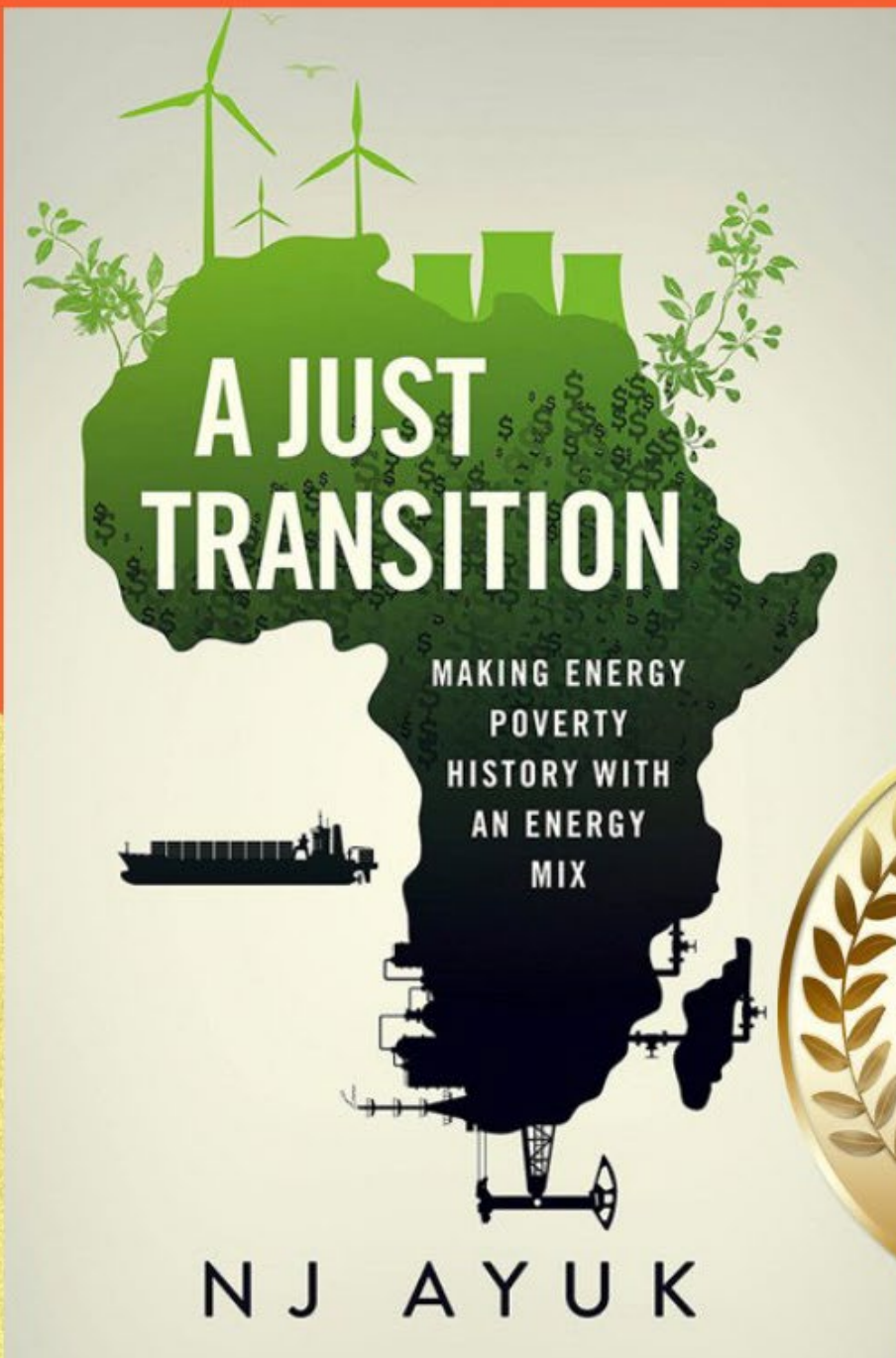
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Russia and Nigeria: Turning A New Page In Their Relationship?

By Kestér Kenn Klomegâh



Foreign Ministers Yusuf Maitama Tuggar and Sergey Lavrov during media conference, March 6, 2024.

On March 6, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, who was in Moscow on an official two-day working visit. The visit, at the invitation of the Russian Foreign Ministry, which has a lot of distinctive implications and strategic interpretations, was a conscious follow up to review and discuss Russian-Nigerian partnership issues that were raised long ago and during the second Russia-Africa summit held last July 2023.

Vice President Kashim Shettima headed the Nigerian delegation to attend that second Russia-Africa summit in St Petersburg. Foreign Minister Yusuf Maitama Tuggar was among the group. Often reiterated that Nigeria is one of Africa's biggest countries and Russia's priority partner in the West African region.

In the opening remarks and with historical precision, Lavrov mentioned the frequency Nigeria delegations visiting Moscow and added: «This meeting reflects the long-term friendship between our nations and good prospects for the development of our relations at this

stage. We consider Nigeria a priority partner on the African continent.»

In practical terms, Russia has maintained 'cordial relationship' with Nigeria these several years after the collapse of the Soviet era. The greatest achievement, of course, is sustaining the political consultations and frequent dialoguing several economic issues which have not been effectively implemented in the country.

At the media conference after their 'behind-the-scene' discussions on March 6, Sergey Lavrov and Yusuf Maitama Tuggar [re]affirmed their commitment to the Russian-Nigerian cooperation in political, trade, economic, humanitarian and other areas. It also included the prospects for expanding business contacts and implementing joint projects in energy, mining and mineral processing, construction and modernising infrastructure and agriculture.

«With this aim in view we have agreed to stimulate the activities of the Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation and to make use of the capabilities of the Russia-Nigeria Business Council. We need to improve our legal framework

for implementing projects of mutual interest. We have an interest in implementing the agreement on military-technical cooperation, which has recently been extended. Our Nigerian friends are interested in this too,» Lavrov emphasized.

Both Ministers Sergey Lavrov and Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, during the joint media conference, inevitably never pointed to a single project implemented, undertaken and successfully completed during these several years. The ministry's website says Lavrov has held his position as foreign minister for two decades, since 2004, and has been dealing with Nigeria and African countries.

More than 15 years ago, Foreign Minister Lavrov held a review meeting with his Nigerian counterpart Minister Chief Ojo Mbila Maduekwe who paid a three-day working visit to Moscow. After that closed-door bilateral talks held in March 2009, both ministers, as always, held a brief media conference and emphatically noted that Moscow was prepared to offer trade preferences to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

They also agreed on a broad range of bilateral economic issues,

many of which have still not been implemented. Until today, Russia has never honoured its promise of extending trade preferences, in practical terms, to Nigeria. Extending trade preferences was interpreted as an integral part of strengthening bilateral economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

For trade relations between Russia and Nigeria and other African states to improve appreciably, Professor Dmitri Bondarenko, deputy director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute for African Studies, suggested «Russia gives some trade preferences to African countries – for example, tax exceptions or reduction among other measures. This can become an effective political step to strengthen economic cooperation with African countries.»

Today, Nigeria is Russia's second largest trade partner, only in theory, among sub-Saharan African countries. Russian business circles show an ever greater interest, with sweet rhetorics, in entering the promising market of that large country. The volume of trade should be in the billions of dollars, even

without military hardware. One of the major hindrances to free trade and a significant increase in trade transactions between Nigeria and Russia is the lack of direct air flights. This makes it more inconvenient and expensive for potential investors to travel easily to both countries. Besides, there are no adequate economic and social information available to potential Russian and Nigerian investors.

Russian and Nigerian ambassadors have come forth and back over the years. In May 2022, the Nigerian Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Professor Abdullahi Shehu, gave an inspiring lecture at the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Most of the points he raised in that lecture included decades of Moscow's economic failures in Nigeria and in many African countries despite the boast of several years of cordial relationship with Africa.

Professor Shehu's lecture script points to the fact that President Vladimir Putin considers Africa a so-called second frontier, after Eastern Europe for encircling Western Europe...these reasons may sound strategic yet they remain largely speculative and conjectural. Understandably, the perceived geopolitical irrelevance of Africa by Russia has changed only a little and new dynamics have beckoned on both sides of subsisting opportunities for increased collaboration between Africa and Russia.

Despite the tidal surge in the new Africa-Russia relations and given the strategic role played by the defunct Soviet Union, now succeeded by Russia, in the attainment of the independence of many African countries, both parties must accept the constraints posed on the former [Russia] by the new economic cum geopolitical realities. The acceptance of these new realities is important in order to properly assist in the management of Africa's expectations from Russia particularly in the short term.

Today, for instance, Nigeria offers Russia the advantage of cheap and

robust labour. Given Russia's recent experience of sanctions by America and its western allies, a new model of doing business with Africa through investment has become, not only sustainable but also imperative. Perhaps, one of the sectors where this model of doing business can be symbiotically harnessed is in the field of agriculture and its value chain as a result of the steep rise in the large African market and the projected certainty of huge returns on investment in this sector, according to Ambassador Shehu.

Part of the major essence of this lecture was to look at the past with a view to charting a course for the future, inhaling the fresh aroma of the beauty of the 'rose' in Africa-Russia relationship, weeding out the thorns of inconvenience on which Africa and Russia have marched and straighten any crooked path along which both have passed so as to arrive faster to the desired destination. While Africa cherishes the important MOUs and agreements Russia has with Africa, there is need to translate such agreements and MOUs into concrete realities. Additionally, balancing of Russia's commercial interests of arms sales to Africa will ensure that the latter enjoys relative stability and peace so vital for its own development.

Without doubts, Russia has had a long chequered history of post-Soviet diplomacy. Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo visited Russia in 2001. That year, Russia and Nigeria signed the fundamental document for interstate cooperation, the Declaration on Principles of Friendly Relations and Partnership. According to President Vladimir Putin, the Russian Federation, like the former Soviet Union, has always attached great significance to promoting its relations with the African continent. Nigeria occupies a special place among African countries. It is one of the largest and most powerful countries in Africa. Its head of state is a recognised leader not only on the continent, but in the whole world.

Discussions ended with the

administrative long list of projects, and on top was joint activities in the sphere of high technology and the launching of several satellites to be used by Nigeria for environmental monitoring and remote sensing of the Earth are being contemplated. That was on March 6, 2001.

Since then, there had been a number of deals and business proposals that have never seen the bright sunlight. As far back in June 2009, Dmitry Medvedev as president visited Nigeria for the first time, held topmost state level talks on possible nuclear energy, oil exploration and military cooperation. There were talks also focusing on the establishment of petrochemical plant in Nigeria. Alongside there was also a declaration on principles of friendly relations and partnership between Nigeria and the Russian Federation.

Russian investors had wanted to revamp the Ajeokuta Iron and Steel Complex that was abandoned after the collapse of the Soviet Union more than three decades ago, and further take up energy, oil and gas projects in Nigeria, as well as facilitate trade between Nigeria and Russia. In addition, Russia has been prospecting for its nuclear-power ambitions down the years. The promise was to build two nuclear plants estimated cost at US\$20 billion – the bulk of it by Russia, is to boost Nigeria's electricity supply.

Russia's second-largest oil company, and privately controlled Lukoil, has gone back and forth these several years with plans to expand its operations in Nigeria, and in a number of West African countries. There has been a long-dead silence after Gazprom, the Russian energy giant, signed an agreement with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation [NNPC] on the exploration and exploitation of gas reserves with a new joint venture company known as NiGaz Energy Company.

Some experts argue that there are many other aspects of the bilateral relations. With high interest, Russian officials are pushing for military-technical cooperation. The supply of

Russian military equipment could play a high value addition to the fight against notorious Boko Haram. In most of the economic deals, the Nigerian political elites are under strong influence of Paris, London and Washington.

South African Institute of International Affairs [SAIIA], a Johannesburg based foreign policy think tank, put out a report titled «Russia's Military Diplomacy in Africa: High Risk, Low Reward and Limited Impact» in part says that «Russia's growing assertiveness in Africa is a driver of instability, its approach to governance encourages pernicious practices, such as kleptocracy and autocracy in Africa.» Worse is that Russia's strengths expressed through military partnerships fall short of what is needed to address the complexities and scale of the problems facing those African countries. Russia encourages the military regimes [Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger] to hold onto political power, instead of returning to constitutional democracy.

Nigeria is an economic powerhouse in West African region. As well known, Nigeria is one of the Africa's fastest growing economies and it boasts the largest population. Russia and Nigeria have some sort of economic relations, but these are not consistent with the long-standing cordial relations between both countries.

In addition, Nigeria is a vast market with huge potentials for prospective foreign investors and so is Russia. Regrettably, investors from both sides appear to know little about these opportunities. This is, usually attributed to the apparent inadequate knowledge of the many investment opportunities in both countries. Despite criticisms, reports show that majority prefer traditional markets - the United States and Europe, and now Asian region. The African political elite and business people choose the United States and Europe for their holidays and as tourism destinations.

Least we forget that Vladimir Putin held discussions with President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Muhammadu Buhari, who went to Sochi to take part in the first Russia-Africa summit in October 2019. Putin reminded during talks that priority to joint search for opportunities to broaden trade, economic and investment cooperation were assigned to the Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation and the Russia – Nigeria and Nigeria – Russia Business councils set up in 2006–2007.

In response, Muhammadu Buhari said in part: «Mr President, there are many similarities between Russia under your leadership and Nigeria's aspirations for the future. We can learn a lot from the experience of Russia's ongoing reforms, of transitioning from oil-dependent economy to a modern, diversified and inclusive economy. Russia has through these reforms successfully privatised a number of

state-owned entities, which have now become global household names. This is especially so in the energy, manufacturing, defence and the metallurgical sectors.»

So it continues, without the least interruption, that Russia and Nigeria share experiences, exchange views on national and international platforms, maintain political dialogues, discuss economic cooperation and humanitarian issues. Russia and Nigeria shares similar position at the United Nations. Russia and Nigeria continue to keep cordial and mutually beneficial relationship in these past years since 1991 after Soviet's collapse.

The term – bilateral relations – seen as a two-way street, Nigeria's presence in the Russian Federation is only the diplomatic representative office. Public outreach diplomacy is generally ineffective, both


ways between Russia and Africa. Compared, for example, to American Growth and Opportunity Act (AGO) and a number of trade preferences granted by Europe, Russians hardly encourage African presence in the Russian Federation. On the other hand, Russia hardly in speeches make reference to the African continental single market (AfCFTA). With an estimated 1.4 billion people, the market is potentially the largest, Africa - is the continent of the future.

As a matter of fact, in order to be part of this geopolitical arena, Russia has to take practical steps to move beyond AK-47 in raising its economic influence in Africa. It has to crack the local socio-cultural barriers and, in particular, the deep-seated bureaucracy too. In a continent beleaguered by the ravages of ethnic and political conflicts, Russian officials have to thoroughly study the










local conditions before imposing the strategic economic initiatives and engaging local African partners and stakeholders.


In summary, the Russian strategic policy interest generally in Africa and specifically in Nigeria, given the strong limitation of its current capability and it's re-emergence in Africa, is an earnest attempt to regain part of Soviet-era influence. But this current relations, within the context of geopolitical changes, must necessarily be conducted with consistency and in a concrete manner, but not with mere rhetorics. It is about time to act, aim at noticeable results. According to various narratives inside the continent, Russia appears only as an advocate of emerging multipolar order and as a reliable virtual investor in Africa.










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Cameroon: CHRDA's Human Rights Report Shows Spike in Rights Abuses

In 2023, at least 300 deaths were recorded; at least 100 days of ghost towns called by separatist fighters; more than 500 people arbitrarily arrested and at least 200 persons kidnapped with at least 150 arson incidents recorded

By Boris Esono Nwenfor



Felix Agbor Nkongho, Founder of the Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa, CHRDA.

BUEA, Cameroon – The Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa, CHRDA has released its 2023 Human Rights Report and shows a spike in rights abuses committed by both defence and security forces (DSFs) and Non-state Armed Groups (NSAGs) in the North West and South West Regions and that of Boko Haram in the Far North Regions.

Following a press conference on Wednesday, February 28, at CHRDA's head office in Buea, South West, statistics show that at least 300 deaths were recorded in the NW.SWRs. Among the victims were civilians, security forces and separatist fighters. 2023 saw at least 100 days of ghost towns called by separatist fighters; more than 500 people were arbitrarily arrested and at least 200 persons kidnapped with at least 150 arson incidents recorded.

Security forces and separatist

fighters faulted for rights abuses

At least six thousand civilians have been killed by both government and non-state armed groups since late 2016 in the North West and South West regions, as separatist fighters seek to create an independent state for the minority Anglophone regions. CHRDA has consistently faulted both Cameroon's defence and security forces and separatist fighters for carrying out human rights abuses with the crisis in its seventh year.

Felix Agbor Nkongho, Founder of the Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa, CHRDA said: «The report of 2023 shows that there is not much reduction in violence. The pendulum is indeed swinging more to the NSAGs committing more atrocities than the state of Cameroon, but it doesn't change the fact that the civilian population is the victims.»

“It is an oblique picture that we should not be proud of these numbers.

People see them as statistics but they are human beings we are talking about. When we talk about three hundred killed; we are not talking about animals that were killed but

three hundred human beings and that is one killing too many. It is high time the conflicting parties try to protect the civilian population and put civilians first. They should have a civilian-centric approach to conflicts.”

The situation in the North West and South West Regions is not getting better but officials of CHRDA said their mission will continue to bring to the limelight what is happening in the Anglophone regions. According to Felix Agbor Nkongho, NSAGs should protect civilians while those sponsoring the crisis must be held accountable.

He added: «The international community needs to put more pressure on the state to ensure that they with the NSAGs find a solution to the crisis. They can also make sure that those who are living abroad and incite violence, use hate speech and perpetrate such violence should be held accountable. It is left on the state to use its diplomatic manoeuvres to ensure that they are brought to justice in their various countries.»

Killings, and kidnappings rife in the Far North

According to CHRDA, the Boko



CHRDA has called on the State Defense and Security Forces and Separatist fighters to exercise restraint and desist from committing human rights violations and abuses.

Haram insurgency group has continued to commit atrocities against civilians. Suicide bombings and indiscriminate attacks against civilians are major tactics used by the Islamist group and have led to an increase in civilian casualties. At least 100 persons were killed in the restive Far North region. At least 8 fishermen in the locality of Darak, Lagone and Chari Division were killed in 2023. 3 civilians were also killed in Lamram

II village, Mokolo Canto de Tourou subdivision, Mayo Tsanaga Division.

A need for restraint in civilian attacks

As a recommendation, CHRDA has called on the State Defense and Security Forces and Separatist fighters to exercise restraint and desist from committing human rights violations and abuses, especially attacks against civilians and their properties.

CHRDA has also urged all parties to the conflict in the North West and South West regions to stop attacks on journalists and human rights defenders as it will permit the civil society to function properly and reverse the issue of shrinking civic space, while also calling on the separatist leadership to stop attacks on school infrastructure, teachers, school children and other academic stakeholders.

To the international community, CHRDA has called for pressure on the state of Cameroon to respect its international human rights as well as humanitarian law commitments. While urging the international community to pressure the state of Cameroon to investigate and prosecute persons suspected of committing crimes against humanity in the context of the Anglophone conflict.

Tanzania Faces Demographic Dilemma: World Bank Urges Bold Reforms for Economic Resilience

By Adonis Byemelwa



Unveiling a stark reality, only 18.6% harness oxen's power, 3.1% embrace tractor efficiency, and 1.5% venture into modernization with threshers on Tanzanian farms.

In a startling revelation, the World Bank's latest annual update on Tanzania unveiled on March 12, 2024, issues a dire warning: the nation's population is hurtling towards a doubling spree every 23 years, projected to reach a staggering 140 million by 2050, fueled by persistently high fertility rates.

While the report underscores the urgent need for strategic policy upheavals to safeguard sustainable

economic growth, social media has erupted with varied reactions. Many argue that the West's interest in Africa's resources drives the push for a lower population, while others view the burgeoning populace as a treasure trove of market potential and human resources.

The gravity of the situation is accentuated by the fact that over 80 percent of Tanzania's impoverished population resides in rural areas,

actively engaged in agriculture. Shockingly, only 33 percent of arable land is cultivated, a stark contrast to countries like Malawi and Rwanda, which surpass the 95 percent mark.

Surprisingly, Tanzanian farmers experience comparatively limited land pressure, maintaining an average plot size of around 2.5 hectares between 2013 and 2018. This stands in stark contrast to Uganda, where demographic pressures have led to

a 40 percent reduction in average landholding.

Amidst the vast expanse of available land in Tanzania, a staggering revelation emerges: approximately 10 percent of the country's fertile farmland lies dormant, held captive by a confluence of technological constraints and a dearth of human and financial capacity.

A comprehensive study conducted by the esteemed Prof. Damian

Gabagambi of Sokoine University of Agriculture in 2008 unveils a disheartening reality – a mere 18.6 percent of farms harnessed the power of oxen, a mere 3.1 percent embraced the efficiency of tractors, and a mere 1.5 percent ventured into the realm of modernization with threshers.

Notably, Tanzania boasts a notable presence of medium to large farms, with about 20 percent of farm households owning more than 5 hectares of land – a stark contrast to India (3 percent) and Uganda (4 percent). As the nation grapples with these challenges, the call for innovative solutions to harness its agricultural potential has never been more urgent.

The implications are profound, with an impending surge in demand for social services and employment opportunities. To counter this demographic challenge, the World Bank proposes a set of crucial policy shifts. These include ensuring girls complete secondary education, promoting family planning services, empowering women economically, and initiating a national dialogue on the demographic agenda.

Nathan Belete, the Country Director of the World Bank, emphasized the necessity of multisectoral coordination, bringing together key ministries, religious and traditional leaders, civil societies, parliamentarians, and policymakers. This collaborative approach is crucial for implementing effective and sustainable solutions to the demographic challenges facing the nation.

Despite a marginal decline in the national poverty rate, which reached 26.5% in 2023, the report highlights persistent challenges in the economic sector. The COVID-19 pandemic and

global crises have driven more people into low-level agricultural production, contributing to an increase in the number of people living in poverty to 15 million in 2022.

The economic growth, primarily driven by the service sector, faces setbacks in agriculture due to floods and droughts. Kitila Mkumbo, the Minister of the Office of the President for Planning and Investment, emphasized the government's focus on education and family planning programs. Given that 76% of the population is under 35, these initiatives are critical to addressing the high fertility rate.

However, a significant concern emerges – the potential increase in unskilled labor due to population growth. In developing countries like Tanzania, an overabundance of unskilled labor can hinder economic progress, leading to higher unemployment rates. This situation may result in a workforce with limited skills, negatively impacting overall productivity and global competitiveness.

In stark contrast to the success stories of nations like Singapore, Tanzania is grappling with the consequences of rapid population growth and insufficient infrastructure. The recent World Bank report serves as a wake-up call for the Tanzanian government to prioritize education and skill development, drawing lessons from Singapore's strategic control of population growth.

Back in 1963, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew foresaw the potential pitfalls of unchecked population growth, leading the nation to implement policies like the «Stop at Two» initiative. Fast forward to 2020, Singapore has become a global leader in the Human Capital Index,

boasting a population of 6 million and attracting major global companies due to its skilled and educated workforce.

On the contrary, Tanzania, which had a population of 6.5 million at independence in 1961, now faces a population of 62 million after 60 years. The country's rapid population growth has outpaced its ability to provide essential services, resulting in overwhelmed infrastructure in health, education, and safety nets.

Tanzania's education sector is particularly affected, with challenges ranging from inadequate school facilities to a significant number of graduates lacking basic skills. The country currently ranks 152nd out of 174 globally in poorly managed human resources, further exacerbating the issue.

Despite these challenges, Tanzania seems to continue a trajectory of high birth rates without addressing the fundamental flaws in its policies. With nearly half of its 60 million population unsure of having enough to eat, the government is urged to take immediate action. The question remains whether Tanzania's struggle is an issue of strategic location or flawed policies, as it grapples with the consequences of its demographic choices.

Tanzania finds itself at a pivotal moment, as the 2022 census projects a staggering population of 150 million by 2050. The nation stands at a crossroads, faced with the critical choice of proactively addressing demographic challenges or risking overwhelming social services, exacerbating poverty, and hindering economic progress.

The World Bank's recommendations serve as a guiding light, offering a roadmap for Tanzania

to break free from flawed policies. The choice is stark: either implement strategic reforms today or gamble with the nation's future. Other countries diligently work to develop their economies, and Tanzania must not succumb to complacency.

The economic landscape reflects a mix of challenges and opportunities. Real GDP growth, impacted by global events like the Russia-Ukraine conflict, requires careful navigation. While inflation and fiscal deficits pose concerns, stable exchange rates and sustainable public debt offer a silver lining. The current account deficit and reduced international reserves signal the need for cautious economic management.

The rise in the poverty rate and increasing inequality are due to the vulnerability of the economy. However, projections for 2023 and 2024 indicate a potential uptick in GDP growth, driven by tourism recovery and stability in supply chains. The fiscal deficit is set to widen due to infrastructure spending, contributing to a continuous increase in national debt.

Tanzania grapples with a persistent unemployment rate of approximately 8.70% in 2024, underscoring the need for a comprehensive strategy aligned with upcoming demographic challenges. The nation's future rests on decisive action, with the transformative potential lying in the implementation of World Bank recommendations and significant investments in education and skill development. By choosing this path, the country can convert demographic hurdles into catalysts for sustainable economic growth, showcasing resilience and adaptability in the face of global and domestic uncertainties.

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Row Of Words As Zimbabwe Detains and Deports USAID Officials

By Prince Kurupati

In the same week that the United States repealed its previous sanctions regime on Zimbabwe in a move that was widely celebrated in Zimbabwe, the two countries find themselves again at loggerheads following the emergence of news that Zimbabwe earlier on detained and forcibly removed U.S. officials who had visited the southern African country.

In a statement released by the U.S. State Department, the United States government said “Last month (February 2024), Zimbabwean officials abruptly detained and deported USAID (US Agency for International Development) officials and contractors, who were conducting an assessment of the development and governance context in Zimbabwe.”

The statement went further alleging that “Members of the assessment team were subject to aggressive handling, prolonged interrogation and intimidation, unsafe and forced night-time transportation, overnight detention and confinement, and forced removal from the country.”

The United States as relayed by the statement made it clear in “the strongest possible terms to the Government of Zimbabwe” that these “actions against a team of development professionals legally admitted to Zimbabwe to support the Government of Zimbabwe's expressed commitment to democratic reform are egregious, unjustified and unacceptable”.

With the government of Zimbabwe currently preaching the gospel of reengagement something demonstrated by its actions to acquire the services of lobby groups to pressure Washington to change its perception of Zimbabwe, the U.S. State Department said the latest development strongly “undermines those claims”. The statement concluded by saying, “We take the safety and security of U.S. citizens seriously and demand accountability from the Government of Zimbabwe”.



Relations remain strained between Zimbabwe of President Mnangagwa and the USA. Photo courtesy.

Corroborating the U.S. State Department's statement, USAID administrator Samantha Power said the actions taken by the Zimbabwean authorities are a “grave development” but need not be taken as an isolated event as U.S. citizens have experienced harassment and improper treatment from the Zimbabwean authorities in recent years.

“The United States is deeply concerned by Zimbabwean authorities' recent attempts to verbally and physically intimidate several U.S. government officials and contractors – subjecting some of them to overnight detention, transportation in unsafe conditions, prolonged interrogation, seizure of and intrusion into personal electronic equipment, and forced deportation... This is a grave development that follows other serious incidents over the past two years in which U.S. government officials and U.S. citizens experienced harassment and improper treatment from the Zimbabwean authorities... USAID supports the people of Zimbabwe as they seek to build a more resilient, inclusive, and democratic society – with accountable political leaders

and government institutions, active citizen participation, and adherence to the rule of law,” Power said.

Following the development, several government sympathizers who took to social media platforms to air their views said the Zimbabwean government was right to question and interrogate the officials as they were CIA agents masquerading as USAID human rights assessors. In an ‘X’ post, journalist Maynard Manyowa said, “They (USAID officials) are lucky. We (Zimbabwe) are soft. In other countries spies get locked up. For decades at a time”.

Providing more details from the Zimbabwean government's perspective was Snowball Tongogara, an ‘X’ account sympathetic to the ruling party Zanu PF which said, “Four United States nationals contracted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reportedly sneaked into the country last month without notifying authorities as per protocol and proceeded to hold unsanctioned and covert meetings, which were to inform Washington's adversarial foreign policy towards Zimbabwe... The quartet – Brenda Lee Pearson, Norma

Kruger, Sarah Logan, and Loretta Bass – work for a US government affiliate, Navanti Group, and their mission was ostensibly to carry out a 'democracy and governance assessment' to help USAID design its local programmes... However, the team was busted and deported on February 17 after it was established that their real agenda was more focused on seeking 'a more effective method to effect regime change in the country'... Curiously, the U.S. national entered the country without prior communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and went on to conduct assessment activities in the country, which is a violation of the Geneva Convention.”

Supporting the above sentiments was the Zimbabwean Ambassador to the United States Tadeous Tafirenyika Chifamba who said, “(USAID staff) were asking people questions like, why did the opposition lose after we've given you so much support? This clearly is an attempt at regime change... If USAID wants to send more people on missions like this without working directly with the government, they will face a similar fate.”



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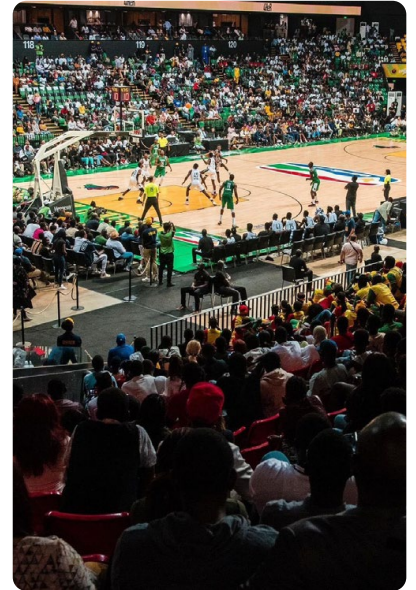


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