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The Continent



**Nothing is harder than voting
out the liberators**

Photo: Ismael Miquidade



Cover: Power favours the incumbent hand. Just ask Mozambican voters. Each election since the country opened up to multiparty politics in 1994 has been won by a candidate from Frelimo. That's the party that came to power when Mozambique gained independence in 1975 and gave itself a 20-year head start by running a one-party state. Most of these elections have been marked by tell-tale signs that it's not just the head start that is helping Frelimo win. Going by the riotous reactions to the misconduct of the 9 October election, many Mozambicans have had enough. (p9)

Inside:

- **Climate:** We can only adapt to, not stop, catastrophe (p7)
- **Morocco:** Everybody's free to be a ganja planter now (p11)
- **Lebanon:** The African migrant workers navigating war and racism (p13)
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- **Gathara:** Brics and the end of single-power hegemony (p25)

We got scammed.

Running a distributed remote newsroom whose journalism is done almost entirely by freelancers allows us to cover more of this beautiful continent. It is also risky. Two weeks ago, we got a taste of the risk: we published an impersonator. We are sorry (p27)

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Presumptuous: Viktor Orbán hails from Hungary, where he is prime minister. Photo: Attila Kisbenedek/AFP

CHAD

Another country meddles in Africa

Hungary's President Victor Orbán is a darling of the Western right, with his white nationalism and disdain of immigrants, particularly when their skin is dark. Perhaps borrowing a page from Italy's "Africa plan" he has decided to stop immigration at its source. In September, Orbán said: "Migration from Africa to Europe cannot be stopped without the countries of the Sahel region." Despite having no historical ties with Chad, that's where Hungary had put its attention with investment and military support. Because nothing ever goes wrong when outsiders meddle in Africa.

NIGERIA

Money-laundering charges against crypto exec dropped

In February, Nigerian authorities arrested two of the most senior executives at Binance, after accusing the cryptocurrency company of money laundering. One fled the country. The other, US national Tigran Gambaryan, has been in jail since then. After pressure to release him because of poor health, *Reuters* reported on Wednesday that a lawyer for the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission told the court it was dropping charges "to allow him to get medical treatment outside the country". The government said it will continue its case against Binance.

BENIN

Surgeons use bot to operate from afar

The *China Military* news website says using a team of doctors in China operated remotely on a patient on a ship docked in Cotonou, using robots. While the patient was prepped by medical staff in situ, the remote work allowed for their renal cyst to be treated. The website adds that this breakthrough will allow Chinese military doctors to "continue to benefit patients around the world with their superb medical skills and advanced technologies".

GOVERNANCE

Breaking news: Our leaders suck

Even in the best-run countries on the continent, governance is deteriorating, says the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. In its latest report, which it ranks each African country on 96 indicators of good governance, the foundation found “after four years of almost complete stagnation, Africa’s overall governance progress ground to a halt in 2022”. The researchers found deterioration even in the countries they rank as best-governed: Mauritius (2nd), Botswana (5th), Namibia (6th) and Tunisia (9th).

BURKINA FASO

Mining multinational to fight junta’s nationalisation drive

Sarama Resources, a mining company based in Canada and Australia, says it has found a lender who will give it more than \$4-million to sue the government of Burkina Faso for withdrawing a gold exploration permit it had earlier given. The company plans to lodge a complaint with the World Bank’s International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, a tribunal that is often criticised for letting multinational companies muscle over attempts at economic reforms in poorer countries that might threaten capitalism.

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‘Have you seen Biya?’



CAMEROON

Not-dead Biya rolls up his sleeves and shuffles his troops

After 43 days away, during a presidency defined by his being away in Switzerland, Paul Biya touched down in Yaoundé this week. Many had thought him to be dead. The rumour mill had been so intense that AP reports a presenter on state television feeling the need to say: “Finally, this is not a phantom.” Following his proof-of-life appearance, Biya immediately set about shuffling his army. After 42 years of rule, and as *The Continent* reported last week, the inevitable succession battle is going to be messy.

UGANDA

Wine supporters jailed for 'treachery'

In Uganda, caring about politics when you're not part of the Museveni family continues to be a crime. Sixteen Bobi Wine supporters have been sentenced to five

years in prison for "treachery". During the 2019/20 campaign season in which Bobi Wine mounted a strong challenge against Yoweri Museveni who has ruled for four decades, these supporters were accused of having explosives and arraigned before the military court, despite being civilians. They argue it was a stitch up and they have now been coerced into pleading guilty.



Camp pain: A protester shows his support for Bobi Wine in Kampala. Photo: Isaac Kasamani/AFP

SPORT

Record win also means record defeat

In T20 cricket, each team gets to face 120 balls. Getting 200 runs is considered a feat. This week, the Zimbabwean men's team scored 344 runs – the highest total in history. Their opponents, Gambia, replied with 54 runs. Because it's shorter than other forms, T20 attracts more teams – Zimbabwe ranks 12 in the world. Gambia ranks 95 and last.

BRICS

No peace for wicket in hegemony cricket

The Brics bros are scouting for players to join their geopolitical test matches against the West. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates will come off the bench soon; now the bloc has also invited Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Türkiye, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam as "partners".



Arise: Chama Cha Mapinduzi party supporters cheer their candidate in Zanzibar. Photo: Marco Longari/AFP

TANZANIA

Getting ahead of the election maths

Nearly every eligible Tanzanian has registered to vote in the coming local government elections, according to the statistics published after a nine-day voter registration exercise concluded early this week. The roll now has 31,282,331 voters, which is 95% of the country's adult population. So "successful" was the exercise that in four regions, there are significantly more voters than the expected adult population per the 2022 census. Naturally, more than a few haters don't believe the maths makes sense but a Chama Cha Mapinduzi spokesperson told Tanzania news outlet *Chanzo* that the registration zeal shows how eager people are to vote for Africa's second-longest ruling party.

FINANCE

African credit solutions for African debt problems

The government of Benin has promised to put \$2-million into the African Development Fund, *Africa Business* magazine reports. Part of the African Bank, the fund provides grants and low interest loans and needs to be topped up every three years. Six other countries have put in nearly \$9-billion: Algeria, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Morocco and South Africa. Benin has received \$108-million, allowing it to invest in things like agriculture and special economic zones.

WAR CRIMES

Ex-Kony associate sentenced to 40 years for LRA role

The first-ever commander to the Lord's Resistance Army to be tried by a Ugandan court will spend 40 years in prison for his role in the actions of the brutal armed group led by Joseph Kony. Thomas Kwoyelo was sentenced on Friday for 44 war crimes, after a yearslong trial in Gulu, in northern Uganda where the group terrorised residents for more than two decades. He says he was recruited into the group as an abducted child soldier.

Climate

Biblical floods are the Earth's new normal

Researchers confirm that, yet again, a hotter world is leading to more floods and the ruin of communities.

Heavy rain in Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Sudan has killed 2,000 people since July. Many more lives have been smashed. And that rain has been made more intense by a hotter world. That's according to a team of researchers from six countries, including Sudan, Egypt and Kenya. They focused on Sudan in particular, noting that: "The event in Sudan is not rare in today's climate."

Their work was published on Wednesday by the World Weather Attribution Initiative. It works to link disasters to what caused them. Increasingly, the driver is a hotter planet, which is already 1.3°C hotter than before humans kicked off the Industrial Revolution. Most of the pollution driving this heat has been pumped into the atmosphere by rich countries.

In one area of Sudan, the researchers found that once-rare floods have

increased by nearly a fifth since 1981.

They warned: "Given that these events are not rare today, this means they will be common occurrences, and the region needs to prepare for much heavier events than those observed in 2024."

A 2022 study of the neighbouring Lake Chad and River Niger basin came to a similar conclusion. Just two years on, those basins have weathered another bout of historic rains, that have flooded large parts of the region's country and taken or devastated lives.

Despite a global climate agreement being signed by almost every country in the world in 2015, carbon emissions have continued to rise. This year's climate negotiations are being held in Azerbaijan, adding to a line of hosts made wealthy by exploiting fossil fuels.

The researchers offered suggestions: Rehabilitating damaged infrastructure with climate-smart design; limiting construction in flood-prone areas; updating vital infrastructure; and ensuring infrastructure like dams that help control flooding are fit for purpose. African governments also need to expand early warning systems to give people a chance to save themselves.

As *The Continent* reported before, most African countries have no real warning system. Communities therefore cannot properly prepare for disaster. ■

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Mozambique



Photo: Ismael Miquidade

Frelimo and its candidate declared election winners amid high tension

The party that has ruled Mozambique since 1975 remains unbelievably popular.

Luis Nhachote in Maputo

On Thursday afternoon, the National Electoral Commission (CNE) confirmed Daniel Chapo, Frelimo's presidential candidate, as the winner of

the 9 October presidential elections with nearly 71% of the votes cast.

Chapo's incoming presidency means that Frelimo, the country's liberation movement which has led Mozambique since independence in 1975, will continue

its uninterrupted run.

According to the electoral commission's result, Chapo beat the first runners-up Venâncio Mondlane by more than 3.5-million votes and the second runners-up, Ossufo Momade, the candidate of the largest opposition party Renamo, by nearly 4.5-million.

The opposition candidates and their supporters strongly disagree.

Days after the election, Mondlane (or VM7 as he calls himself) livestreamed from Facebook and YouTube to say that his team's parallel count showed he had won the election. He then called for a day of boycott because official preliminary results showed Chapo in the lead.

On Monday 14 October, Maputo was a ghost town, with many staying away either to heed VM7's call or steer clear of the likely chaos. The Confederation of Economic Associations says that in most cities and provinces, business slumped by 50% and estimates that the Mozambican economy lost more than 1.4 billion meticaís (nearly \$22-million).

The tensions escalated into nationwide riots on Thursday and Friday (17 and 18 October), in which at least six people died: two policemen and four civilians.

Then on that Friday night, and on one of Maputo's main avenues, two key figures in the election were shot at close range and killed: Mondlane's deputy and lawyer Elvino Dias and Paulo Guambe, the deputy leader of Podemos, a political party that endorsed Mondlane. "It was very fast and extremely violent," Rafael Anastacio, an eyewitness told *The Continent*.

The killings echoed the 2015 gunning down of Franco-Mozambican constitutionalist Gilles Cistac. He had publicly argued that Renamo should govern the provinces where it had beaten Frelimo in the 2014 elections. He was shot dead outside a café in a chic area of Maputo.

Renamo and Podemos say they will challenge Thursday's result before the Constitutional Council, Mozambique's electoral court. ■



Photo: Ismael Miquidade

Morocco's pot of gold

When the country legalised some types of cannabis, it threw a centuries-old industry into disarray.

Imane Bellamine in Rabat


Hamid Hssisen hails from a long line of Moroccan cannabis growers. But this October's harvest is different – it's the first time his crop is legal.

Hssisen, 32, is from Bab Berred, a small town in the Rif mountains, which run along the Mediterranean coast. It's one of the poorest regions of Morocco. With few economic alternatives, its farmers have grown illicit cannabis for generations.

Morocco is famous for its kif, a finely chopped cannabis that's mixed with tobacco and smoked out of a long pipe or

rolled into a joint. Smoked recreationally, kif is still illegal. But Morocco has legalised cannabis for medicinal, industrial and cosmetic use and established a regulatory agency to oversee its production. Last April, the country even unveiled a logo for approved cannabis products: a green marijuana leaf framed by a red emblem suggestive of the country's flag.

The kingdom wants to undercut drug traffickers and formalise the cannabis industry, which produced about 900 tonnes of resin in 2022. Morocco is one of the world's top producers of cannabis, much of it making its way – discreetly – to



Keep it under your hat:
A farmer walks through his field of cannabis in Azila village, Morocco.
Photo: Fadel Senna/AFP

Europe, by land and sea.

The state's next challenge is to get its army of cannabis growers – including farmers like Hssisen – on board. That isn't easy. Farmers are required to licence their farms and work with the pharmaceutical companies who will put the crops to legal use. That means following new regulations – and paying taxes.

According to the interior ministry's latest figures, some 760,000 Moroccans depend on cannabis production for their livelihoods, or more than 2% of the population. Most are in the underdeveloped Rif region, historically a flashpoint for uprisings fuelled by the area's marginalisation.

Many farmers are suspicious about working with the state. Many worry it will come at their expense.

“What I fear is that the profits will go to the state, the labs, the multinationals, and we'll be left behind,” said Mohammed Amjirir, a farmer in his sixties who grows cannabis in the beachside town of Al Hoceima.

Hssisen is giving it a go. He has partnered with a company in Tangiers that's using cannabis in producing pharmaceutical products. He also heads the Ben Amr Co-operative for Cannabis Legalisation.

“We're cultivating Beldyia, a strain that doesn't require irrigation. Currently, we have nearly 14 hectares planted and are employing 15 small farmers,” said Hssisen. “Farmers were initially afraid that the government would stop cannabis cultivation, so they were hesitant to comply with the new procedures.

However, when they saw the positive results from other co-operatives, they began to feel optimistic and started to work legally,” said Hssisen.

Cannabis is typically planted in April and May as the weather warms, and harvested in September and October.

In 2023, Morocco's first legal harvest yielded 294 tonnes. This year, output is expected to be much higher, with 10 times as much land cultivated with licensed cannabis – roughly 2,700 hectares, according to the regulator.

In comparison, roughly 55,000 hectares were grown illegally in 2019, which is the latest figures available.

Even among farmers who are keen, the legalisation drive still comes with snags. Farmers are required to prove ownership of their land if they want to get licensed, but many of them say their land is inherited and there's simply no documentation.

Some farmers say they can make more money selling the illegal stuff.

One key benefit of legalisation is that it gives farmers legal protection, said Driss Anouar Boutazamat, a cannabis researcher at the Université Sultan Moulay Slimane Béni Mellal.

“They are now legally recognised and no longer forced to operate in the shadows,” he said. “This change is significant, especially with the royal pardon granted to farmers who, for years, lived in fear of arrest and could not trade freely.” ■

Trapped by Kafala and Israeli violence

With nearly 2,500 people killed in recent Israeli strikes on Lebanon, nobody in the country is safe. Already caught in a regressive labour system, migrant African workers are juggling a lot more than other residents are.

Ngozi Monica Cole in Sierra Leone and Amelie David in Lebanon

Ida Yanoko, a domestic worker from Burkina Faso, fights back tears as she speaks of the uncertainty and terror of being caught in a war in a foreign land where she has never felt much of a sense of belonging or safety.

“My employers left the house at 10am. The bombings started an hour later,” Yanoko, who was working under the “kafala” system for a family in southern Lebanon, says. Yanoko frantically called her bosses, begging them to help her escape, but they didn’t return. Not even when a missile landed right outside the home they abandoned her in, she says.

That was on 23 September, when the Israeli army began airstrikes in southern Lebanon. On that day alone, they killed 600 people and left thousands displaced. A month later, the fatalities have risen to at least 2,483 people, according to the Lebanese government. More than 1.2-million people have been displaced since October 2023.

Yanoko was eventually rescued by a fellow Burkinabè worker, Emmanuel. On his bicycle, they fled to a cramped apartment in Beirut’s Burj Hammoud, where other migrant workers had gathered.

In most cases, this kind of mutual aid is all that there is for these workers.

Every evening since early October, Viany Nguemakoue has been distributing food and toiletries to shelters and safe houses in Beirut. The Cameroonian citizen is part of a collective of local volunteers mobilising to support migrant workers who have either been left behind by their employers or lost their jobs since Israeli airstrikes started hitting Southern Lebanon this year. Some are in informal shelters. Many others sleep on the streets.

The need for help exceeds the support trickling in from voluntary donations from other migrant workers and online crowdfunding campaigns. “We still need a lot, but for the moment we are just doing our best to survive,” says Nguemakoue.

The former domestic worker turned seamstress is responding to the need via a



Every little bit helps: Migrant workers share rations at St Joseph's church in Beirut, which has been turned into a shelter.
Photo: Fadel Itani/NurPhoto via Getty Images

WhatsApp group that now has nearly 200 migrant workers asking for help.

Elsewhere, in a cramped shelter in Doura, a suburb northeast of Beirut, 33 women are sharing a cramped shelter. Some have severe injuries from their escape from employers' homes before and during the Israeli strikes. They have little more than that.

"We don't have enough food or water," says Aishatu John-Kamara in a video note shared with *The Continent*.

In the Burj Hammoud shelter, where Yanoko and her friend found refuge, mattresses lining the walls speak to a much larger household than can be fed by the meagre mound of food that sits on a small table in the room.

The war-related displacement is compounded by problems caused by the controversial kafala labour system under which these workers are in Lebanon.

It allows employers total control over migrant labourers and their legal status. To assert their control, employers often confiscate the workers' passports – and then treat them extremely poorly,

knowing they can't leave. Many leave anyway, but then can't leave the country – even when the bombs fall from the sky. Instead, they shelter with each other in cramped quarters like the ones in Doura and Burj Hammoud.

Standing tall

This history of mistreatment has nurtured mutual aid traditions that the workers are now turning to under the fire of a new threat. "Since the 1980s Civil War, these communities have grown stronger and respond to emergencies by helping each other," says Nofal Kareem of the Anti-Racism Movement in Lebanon.

Delphine, a migrant worker from Côte d'Ivoire who has been in Lebanon since 1992, now spends her days helping displaced families, including migrant workers, at Saint Joseph's Church in Beirut. "Last week, we prepared meals for over a hundred people," she says.

Many migrant workers, previously seen as passive victims of the exploitative kafala system, are now rising to fight for their rights. Mariam Sesay from Sierra

Leone is one of these voices.

“I once thought about ending my life. But now, I’m standing up to fight,” she tells *The Continent* with determination during a phone interview in August, before the conflict escalated. She came to Lebanon a decade ago, and endured years of abuse under the kafala system before running away from her employers, preferring to take her chances on the streets.

With help from the migrant community, she turned her life around, and today, she is a social worker and advocate, pushing for the abolition of the kafala system. “We are victims, but we can also fight for our rights,” Sesay says.

Sesay loves to cook and uses it both as a form of therapy and a way to share her culture.

In the weeks before the Israeli war escalation, she was teaching cooking classes at The Great Oven, a community-based organisation in Beirut’s Geitawi neighbourhood.

The war has paused the classes but not the cooking. The Great Oven is now helping make food for displaced people.

‘I just want to get out’

Many terrified migrants want to return home. At the shelter in Doura, Sierra Leonean Mariatu Kargbo says: “If I had a way to get out of this right now, I would. This is not easy for some of us with medical conditions.”

The 24-year-old says she suffers from a heart condition. She arrived in Lebanon in May, escaped her employers’ house after two months of what she describes as strenuous work conditions, and found



Eye of the storm: A mother and her children find a brief respite at the St Joseph's shelter in Beirut. Photo: Fadel Itani/NurPhoto via Getty Images

other work as a cleaner at a bank.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Lebanon says it has received more than 700 new repatriation requests since the beginning of October. But attempts to leave are often complicated by the chaos of war and the legacy of the kafala system.

“A significant challenge is the limited operational capacity at Beirut’s airport due to the constrained availability of flights and the lack of dedicated funding to provide this support,” Joe Lowry, an IOM spokesperson tells *The Continent*.

If the IOM were to wrangle the logistics, many migrants would not be able to immediately leave Lebanon.

“It’s been a very challenging situation because some do not have travel documentation and are unregistered,” says Chernor Bah, the minister of information for Sierra Leone.

He says the Sierra Leonean government has issued 100 temporary travel documents for its citizens in Lebanon who needed evacuation. ■

PHOTO ESSAY

There's no place called home

The winners of East Africa's most prestigious photo award deliver studies in loss and desolation.

The East African Photography Award, now in its seventh year, celebrates documentary and artistic work that captures the contemporary existence of East Africans.

Hassan Kamil won this year's top prize for his captivating story *An Unexpected Tale From A No Longer*

Forgotten City. His images document his family's attempts at "new life" in places far away from their home in Khartoum, which they fled when civil war broke. The pictures portray "the perpetual state of wandering and helplessness that I, my family, and millions of displaced Sudanese



Hanging Soul: 'I lost my soul after I lost my father.'

Photo: Awab Elmisabh Ali Abdelrahim (Sudan)



Happening now: Abdalkareem, Zainab, Samah, Hashim, members of the photographer's displaced family, watch a live report of an airstrike in Khartoum. Berber, July 2023. Photo: Hassan Kamil

individuals endure while awaiting the end of the war,” says Kamil.

Nearly a quarter of Sudan’s population has been displaced internally or to other countries.

Similarly poignant is *Hanging Soul*, a story by Awab Elmisabih Ali Abdelrahim, about a young Sudanese man who lost his father in a terrible accident and cannot get out of the state of loss and forgetfulness.

A spare yet emotive image from the collection won the Single Image category. The photographer himself

is nursing a grief of his own: the loss of home, whose decimation he documented before fleeing West Omdurman.

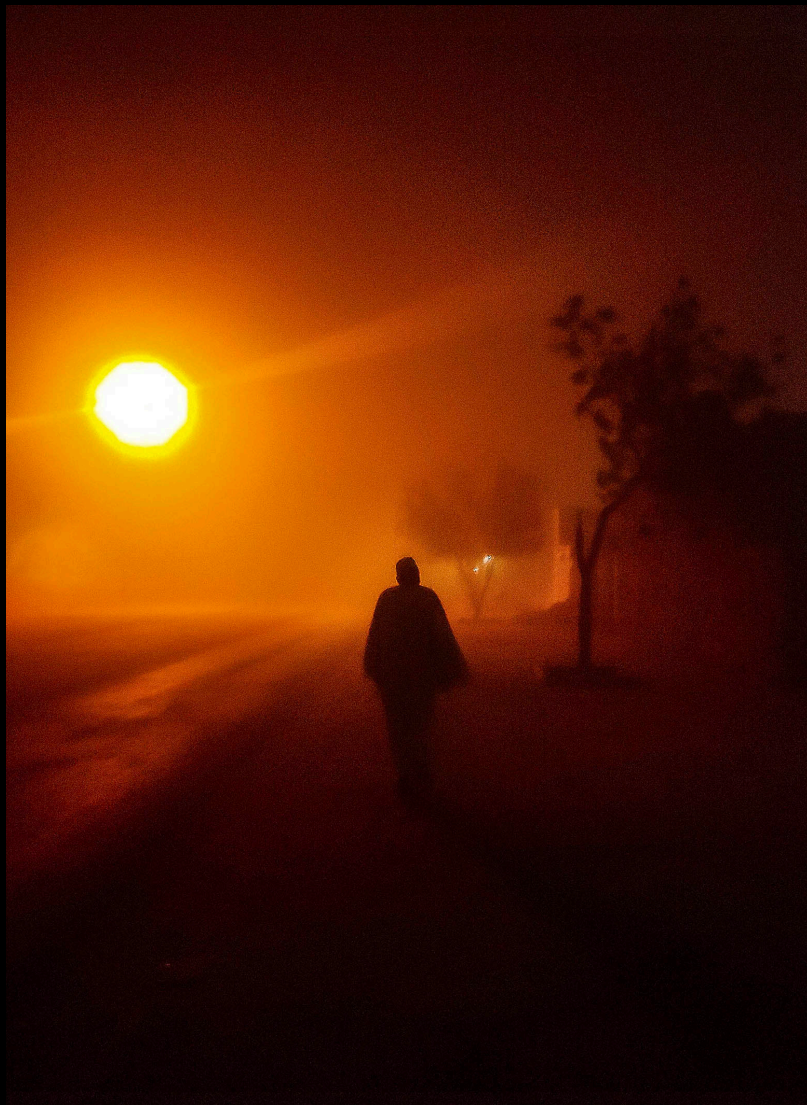
The award has a distinct chapter for Uganda, where the top prize this year went to Hajarah Nalwadda’s documentation of the aftermath of a June 2023 violent attack on Lhubiriha Senior Secondary School in Nyabugando in Kasese, western Uganda. Militants of the Allied Democratic Forces rebels killed 38 students and five area residents. ■



Peace lost: A bunk bed left behind in the Ugandan school dormitory attacked by militants. Kasese, June 2023



Life lost: Mourners bury the body of one of the victims of a June 2023 militant attack on a Ugandan school. Kasese, June 2023. Photos: Hajarah Nalwadda



Into the dust: A heavy nighttime sandstorm in the hometown of the photographer's mother, to which his family fled following the outbreak of war in Khartoum. Berber, August 2023. Photo: Hassan Kamil

Climate control: Ask people, not robots

As AI starts to help predict climate collapse, we need to listen to communities. And not just buy Western solutions.

Charles Ebikeme

Africa is projected to be the continent hardest-hit by the impacts of climate change. Many, many lives could be saved by accurately predicting where and how these impacts will occur.

Some African research organisations, under the umbrella of the Responsible Artificial Intelligence Network for Climate Action in Africa, are highlighting the potential of using AI to predict climate impacts as “an untapped gold mine”.

For example: by modelling the spread of infectious diseases using AI tools, public health officials could take faster and more accurate preventative measures.

The theory has merit, but so far the necessary software is not really being built for Africa. An analysis of the current landscape of software tools available for

modelling the spread of climate-sensitive infectious diseases found that North American and European institutions are disproportionately represented among the creators of such tools. There is a pressing need for greater engagement with the Global South, where many of these tools are intended to be used.

As AI becomes the latest frontier in the Global North-South divide, one long-forgotten aspect of knowledge is that of local communities themselves.

According to Dr. Olasunkanmi Habeeb Okunola, a visiting scientist at United Nations University, indigenous people “often have long-standing, place-based knowledge and practices for observing, predicting, and responding to environmental changes”.

“Many indigenous communities have developed traditional indicators and practices for anticipating extreme weather and environmental shifts, such as observing changes in local flora and fauna, lunar cycles, water colour, animal behaviour, cloud patterns, and wind directions.”

Okunola cited the example of coastal communities, who have “traditionally relied on observing changes in marine species and weather patterns to forecast approaching storms and floods.”

The challenge lies in getting two different approaches – the high-tech and the low-tech – to sit alongside one another. Often the participatory and community-driven nature of using indigenous knowledge – together with



**Risk of flooding, you say?
We don't always need
Artificial Intelligence
to tell us what we can
learn by checking in on
our neighbours. Photo:
Olympia De Maismont/AFP**

the community itself – leads to greater local ownership. But this often sits in opposition to top-down Western knowledge practices.

Governments and policymakers are starting to take note. In the Gambella region of Ethiopia, indigenous communities saw that it was unsustainable to keep only large ruminants, like cattle and donkeys, due to frequent droughts. They started raising goats instead – an approach that was later adopted as policy by the government of Ethiopia.

Such examples are few. Research from the African Centre for Disaster Studies noted that indigenous knowledge is rarely applied when formulating policies on disaster risk management and climate change. This emerged from interviews with experts and indigenous communities. Some 98.4% of respondents

strongly agreed that their knowledge systems of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation were not reflected in national policies.

But even within local communities, traditional knowledge systems do not always get the respect they deserve. “Some community members believe in the value and efficacy of traditional practices, while others are sceptical or dismissive of them,” said Okunola.

The predominance of Western-centric know-how shifts the balance further against the indigenous worldview which is not just a shame, but a limitation.

Okunola concluded: “By embracing the authentic integration of scientific and indigenous knowledge, we can pave the way for more comprehensive, context-specific and sustainable approaches to combating climate shocks.” ■

Where to even start...

You become boss of everything. What do you fix first?

If you were in charge of tackling your country's problems, where would you start? When resources are limited (always) and challenges are not, how do you set the agenda?

One starting point might be the people's priorities. When Afrobarometer asked 53,444 adults in 39 African countries what they consider their country's three most important problems requiring government action, economic issues topped the list: unemployment (cited by 33% of respondents), management of the economy (29%) and poverty (12%). Overall, 84% of respondents mention at least one economic concern as a top priority.

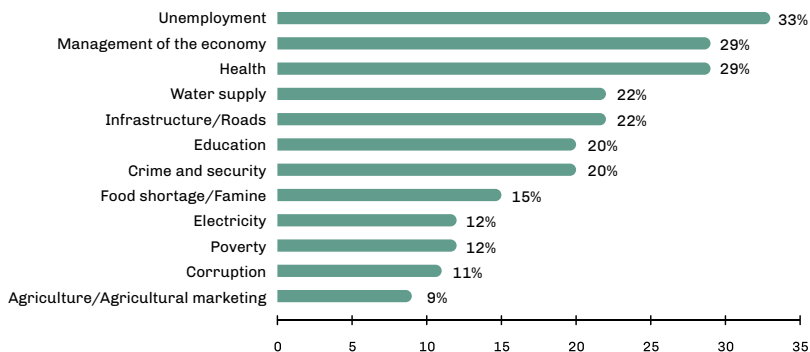
Infrastructure is also a leading concern: water supply (22%), infrastructure/roads (22%) and electricity (12%).

Social service delivery ranks high, focusing mainly on health (29%) and education (20%).

And governance issues matter, including crime and security (20%) and corruption (11%).

Of course, priorities vary by country and by demographic group. They tend not to change dramatically over time, but two concerns increased significantly over the past decade: economic management (+14 percentage points) and crime/security (+7 points).

Most important problems | 39 African countries | 2021/2023



Source: Afrobarometer is a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.



Meet your in-laws

They can't be that bad, surely. What could possibly go wrong?

Wilfred Okiche

Nikya (Uzoamaka Aniunoh) has found the love of her life. Orphaned as a child, she longs for a family to belong to, and is excited when her fiancé Luke (Bucci Franklin) receives an invitation to spend the weekend at his parents' country home. Despite his protests, Nikya insists on making the trip. Upon arrival it doesn't take long to realise Luke had good reason to be reluctant.

The concept of meeting the in-laws reliably lends itself to high dramatic stakes

with the anxieties, tensions and judgments that tend to erupt during such gatherings. This makes for fertile cinematic ground, perfect for laughs (*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*) or horror (*Get Out*).

The Weekend directed by Nigerian filmmaker Daniel Oriahi (*Sylvia*, *Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo*) threads the line between genres carefully. What starts off as a romantic getaway for a young couple soon gives way to some claustrophobic situational comic scenes before erupting into a grisly final act that does not shy away from gore.

The storytelling is at once familiar yet unpredictable. Oriahi sparks interest from the opening scenes and sustains it by building tension with precision, modulating it carefully with timed reveals before the final descent into madness.

Oriahi builds out the world carefully, walking a fine balance to ensure that while the film isn't necessarily specific about the setting – characters speak English as well as a fictional language – it is never lacking for cultural context.

The conflicts are relatable (until they aren't) and the screenplay contends with themes of family, duty and the responsibilities of belonging to a community. There is also interesting commentary about processing trauma and the lengths one would go to to avoid passing it down to the next generation.

After its debut at the Tribeca Festival in June, *The Weekend* was released for home audiences in August and has continued to run on the film festival circuit. ■

THE QUIZ

0-3

"I think I need to start reading more newspapers."

4-7

"I can't wait to explore more of this continent."

8-10

"They better not change the Atlas Mountains to the Google Maps Mountains!"



1_ Ghoubbet al-Kharab, or Lake Ghoubbet (pictured) is a cove in which Horn of Africa country?

2_ The French Territory of the Afars and the Issas (1967-1977) is which present-day country?

3_ What are Uganda's two official languages?

4_ German is one of Namibia's official languages. True or false?

5_ Denis Sassou Nguesso is which country's president?

6_ The metical is which country's currency?

7_ In which region of Africa are the Atlas mountains found?

8_ True or false: Jomo Kenyatta's presidency was succeeded by Uhuru Kenyatta.

9_ Whose presidential term lasted longer: Jomo or Uhuru?

10_ Which region of Africa does the political and economic bloc Ecowas represent?

HOW DID I DO? WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to [+27 73 805 6068](tel:+27738056068) and we'll send the answers to you!

Give me a bric-a-bracs Brics bloc over white hegemony

Brics is a welcome fragmentation of global power, showing that today no one country can or should be all-dominant like the United States has been for decades.

Patrick Gathara

As the Western-led world order self-immolates in the killing fields of Gaza and Lebanon, another is being constructed in a city in the land of one of its most bitter adversaries.

Thirty-five years ago, it all seemed so different. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 seemed to inaugurate a new era of Western domination with some, like United States historian Francis Fukushima, talking about the “end of history” and the victory of capitalism and liberal democracy.

Thereafter, the West went around the world proselytising the values of human rights, political freedoms and market openness.

At the time, the US stood unchallenged as the world’s sole superpower. It had full-spectrum dominance: no rivals or peers economically, militarily or even culturally. The US saw itself as leading the world, as Joe Biden put it during his inauguration, “not merely by the example of our power but by the power of our example”.

Over the past year, the open display of that example has not won the US many admirers. And this week, two dozen leaders of the forces of darkness gathered in Kazan in southwestern Russia for a three-day Brics summit to, as Chinese President Xi Jinping put it, chart the path to “a multipolar world ... fostering an inclusive economic globalisation”.

Together, Brics member states account for 45% of the world population, 30% of its oil output and 37% of the global GDP (compared to the US' 15% and EU's 14%).

Some of the world’s biggest countries and economies are represented – the original five; China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Russia itself, as well as newcomers Egypt, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia.

Saudi Arabia was invited to join but as yet has not. Argentina has flatly declined, choosing instead to throw its lot in with what Kenya’s former president, Uhuru



Kenyatta, once described as “declining imperial powers”.

Together, Brics member states account for 45% of the world population, 30% of its oil output and 37% of the global GDP (compared to the US’s 15% and European Union’s 14%). What brings them together is their rejection of the West’s abuse of its power and position in the world it built.

The institutions it created for global governance, from international courts to the global financial system, have turned out to be little more than tools to reinforce Western dominance and to control the rest. It is no coincidence that the racial hierarchy of the international order mirrors the racial hierarchy of colonialism – whitest on top; darkest at the bottom.

The Brics countries are not just challenging the dominance of the US dollar as the currency of global trade and

beginning to build a new architecture for financial transactions, they are also providing an alternative home for those the West shuts out of its systems. To do this, they must pool their political power, which means no one country can exercise US-style dominance (though that’s not to say none will try).

For many in the darker corners of the world, having experienced what it means to be serfs in the West’s feudal architecture, the measure of freedom this fragmentation of power promises is probably a more attractive option in the long run.

For them, Brics is not about erecting a new Berlin Wall, but rather paving the way to a more equitable future. ■

Patrick Gathara is a journalist, cartoonist and author

A retraction and an apology

On 12 October, on page 28 of Issue 177, *The Continent* published an analysis entitled “Kenya’s divided house”. The article described the fracturing of Kenya’s political landscape in the wake of the rift between the country’s president and vice-president, and its contents were thoroughly edited and fact-checked by our team of editors.

The writer claimed to be “Dan Gatsinzi”, and described himself as “a Rwandan political analyst and writer focusing on governance and social movements”. Basic background checks appeared to confirm that person’s existence.

Then we received the invoice.

Over the past few months, *The Continent’s* invoicing system has been under sustained attack by one or more apparently relentless fraudsters. On high alert, our finance team noticed that some of the details in the invoice from “Dan Gatsinzi” correlated with details provided in previous fraudulent invoices.

Upon conducting further background checks, we concluded that the article was part of an attempt to defraud *The Continent*. Whoever wrote it had convincingly impersonated Dan Gatsinzi, a real Rwandan journalist, and we had fallen for it. After we reached out to him, the real Dan Gatsinzi confirmed that he has never written anything for us.

In this instance, we got lucky. The

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Analysis

Kenya’s divided house

The impeachment of the vice-president has fractured the country’s political landscape.

Dan Gatsinzi

As lies of President William Ruto vended to Wundanyi to impeach Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua following a deterioration in their relationship.

With ZVI MPs backing the motion, it passed, having garnered support from two-thirds of the National Assembly. This reflects widespread concern over Gachagua’s role in corruption, both before and during his tenure as deputy president. However, it has also spilt divisions within Kenya’s youth-led social movement, which has prided itself on being ethnically neutral.

Gachagua played a pivotal role in Ruto’s election victory in 2022, particularly in mobilising the Kikuyu community of Central Province. But as the youth-led anti-government protests unfolded this year, he appeared to distance himself from Ruto. In response, Ruto brokered a deal with opposition leaders, including Raila Odinga, aiming to form a “broad-based” government. While this was framed as a unifying effort after political violence, it also reduced Ruto’s dependence on Gachagua for legislative control as the gears up for re-election in 2027.

Ruto’s decision to press the “ject” button may resonate with the public,

as it suggests the ousting of a widely respected figure of corruption. However, the dynamics are complex. Despite Ruto’s declining popularity amid mass protests against the Finance Bill, Gachagua’s image improved among certain protesters who viewed him as sympathetic to their grievances. This complex interplay was evident last week at a public participation forum at Bomas of Kenya in Nairobi, where tensions flared between Gachagua’s supporters and his detractors.

Ruto’s decision to press the ‘ject’ button may resonate with the public. However, the dynamics are complex.

Opponents argue that the impeachment punishes a deep-rooted culture of corruption in Kenyan politics. “We need to send a message that corruption will not be tolerated,” asserted an activist at the forum. “Impeachment is a necessary step toward accountability and restoring public trust in our leaders.”

These divisions are not just political; they also reflect regional and ethnic lines, as highlighted by a Tifa Research survey showing that while 38% of Kenyans oppose Gachagua’s impeachment, this



Gachagua has been impeached at Ruto. Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP

the repercussions of Gachagua’s impeachment could be profound for the government and the unity of the Kikuyu social movement. His removal is likely to lead to a significant reshaping of ruling coalitions and could jeopardise support among Kikuyu voters, invariable, youth activists’ reactions will further fracture their movement.

© DJI John Mwangi, a political scientist at the University of Nairobi, observed: “It could signal a shift in the political narrative. But it could also deepen the divisions within the electorate.”



Dan Gatsinzi is a Rwandan political analyst and writer focusing on governance and social movements. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa

article itself did not include any falsehoods or fake news. Nor did its relatively uncontroversial contents endanger the person being impersonated.

Nonetheless, the fact that it was published at all is a failure of our editorial vetting system for which we take full responsibility. We retract the original published article in full, and we apologise unreservedly to the real Dan Gatsinzi. We also apologise to our readers for this serious lapse.

We will now be embarking on complete overhaul of our vetting process for new contributors to ensure that it does not ever happen again. ■

THE BIG PICTURE

Instadram: A man leads his camels along the shores of a seasonal lake in the Sahara desert. It was formed after torrential rains in southeastern Morocco, one of the most water-stressed regions in the world.

Photo: AFP



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