

# Digital Africa

*Democracy, Elections, and Beyond*

By: Firouzeh Afsharnia



Global TechnoPolitics Forum

---

# Digital Africa

Democracy, Elections, and Beyond

*Firouzeh Afsharnia*



[www.TechnoPolitics.org](http://www.TechnoPolitics.org),

November 2022



---

# Global TechnoPolitics Forum

The conclusions and recommendations of any Global TechnoPolitics Forum publication are solely those of its authors and do not reflect the views of the Forum, its management, board of advisors, donors, or scholars.

This report is written and published in accordance with the Global TechnoPolitics Forum Policy on Intellectual Independence.

The Global TechnoPolitics Forum is a (501C) (3) nonprofit educational organization with a mission to shape the public debate and facilitate global coordination at the intersection of technology and geopolitics. It achieves this mission through: convenings, research, and community building.

## Acknowledgements:

**Cover art credit:** *Firouzeh Afsharnia*

**Copyrights:** © 2020 *The Global TechnoPolitics Forum. All rights reserved.* No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Global TechnoPolitics Forum, except in the case of brief quotations in news articles, critical articles, or reviews.

Please direct inquiries to: Global TechnoPolitics Forum: [info@technopolitics.org](mailto:info@technopolitics.org)



---

# Table of Content

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Background &amp; Colonial Legacy</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Demographics</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Ethnicities &amp; Languages</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Climate Crisis</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Natural &amp; Strategic Resources</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Internet, Social Media &amp; Connectivity Landscape</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Elections &amp; Internet</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Social Media</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Governments Fight Back</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Sudan – A Case Study</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>New Challenges, Cyberwarfare, Surveillance &amp; Beyond</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Cambridge Analytica</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Surveillance Technology:</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>China In Africa</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Russia In Africa</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>U.S. in Africa</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Potentials &amp; Great Power Rivalry</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>U.S. War on Terror</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Somalia</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>The Sahel</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Civil Society &amp; Diaspora</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Diaspora</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Additional Sources</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>GLOBAL TECHNOPOLITICS FORUM LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>134</b>

---

# Foreword

**A** continuing preoccupation of the Global TechnoPolitics forum is the implications for democracy of social media and other cyber technologies. A second preoccupation is the gap between rich and poor countries is both citizens' access to the web and governments' capacity for constraining or manipulating that access. It is often asserted that digitalization is the lever for development in Africa, that it and wide access to the internet will enable Africa to leapfrog over not just older technology but also centuries of marginalization and exploitation. *Firouzeh Afsharnia's* insightful paper -- made all the more accessible by her own photographs -- is a broad and deep inquiry into those issues. She sets the context, ranging from ethnicity and the colonial legacy to demographics and connectivity.

The high hopes for Arab spring have now turned to Arab winter, as governments in Africa and beyond have slowed or closed the internet in response to citizen protests, setting off a cat-and-mouse game as protesters seek other ways to communicate. Sudan is a case in point: economic strife led to a mass uprising in December 2018. The government responded with surveillance and a two-month web shut down. The protests continued, but in the end it was the military that stepped in to topple the Bashir government.

The second half of the paper turns to new challenges, ranging from the new -- and frightening -- possibilities of data analysis illustrated by the Cambridge Analytica affair, to new forms of surveillance technology sold by the Israel spyware company NSO, to the role of China, and Russia, and the spill-over from the U.S.-led war on terror, to the role of civil society and the African diaspora. History indicates that



---

democracy does not thrive in poverty. While digital technology will empower finance and commerce, it will also empower more sophisticated tracking and surveillance in a continent where the dominant form of government is rated by Freedom House as either partly or fully authoritarian.

*Gregory Treverton*

*Pari Esfandiari*

*Chairman*

*President*

---

# Introduction

**D**igitalization is often hailed as a critical level of development and key to long-term economic sustainability in Africa. It is argued that fast tracking Africa into the age of technology and broadband will unlock the vast untapped potential of the continent projected to increase up to \$180 billion in Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) by 2025. According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), wide adoption of the internet will create efficiencies across the economic landscape, including in the agriculture sector, education, financial services, healthcare and supply chains.

It is further asserted, that the revolution and broad Internet access will act as the major linchpin in empowering the African continent to leapfrog over centuries of marginalization and exploitation, propelling its citizens toward the realization of 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Towards this end, governments and international organizations, along with telecommunication companies active in the continent, (Airtel, MTN, Vodafone, Orange and others) have focused on building ICT infrastructure, facilitating connections with the marketplace and building entrepreneurial and consumer capacity to connect people to networks from the lowliest village in a remote hinterland to global centers of industry and finance. Over the past decade Google has focused on building ecosystems in Africa with developer advocacy, startup acceleration, training programs, technical mentorships and investments in artificial intelligence technology (AI); tech giants including IBM and Microsoft have



committed to the continent's digital growth, while IFC has looked to work with the private sector to encourage startups and support entrepreneurs on the continent. Meanwhile the African Union (AU) has committed to building a free trade zone across Africa through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), enacted in May 2019.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time more than a dozen African countries are testing or rolling out the next generation, 5G network, predicted by some analysts to add an additional \$2.2 trillion to Africa's economy by 2034, to be used in large-scale farming, smart homes, autonomous cars and other areas.<sup>2</sup>

As networks and connection nodes expand and economic dividends are reaped, so are increased hopes for a more educated, informed and empowered polity who will then demand their rights and insist on accountability from their leaders. These are the most important building blocks of democracy.

In this paper, we will explore the extent of digital penetration, specifically the Internet and digital communication, in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the nature and quality of these connections and its impacts, while we review recent elections in the continent looking for trends and correlations to transformations in the democratic space and good governance. The paper will address traditional and emerging

---

<sup>1</sup> Andy Volk et al., "E-Conomy Africa 2020," International Finance Corporation and Google, Accessed November 7, 2022, [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/e358c23f-afe3-49c5-a509-034257688580/e-Conomy-Africa-2020.pdf?CVID=nmuGYF2&MOD=AJPERES&source=content\\_type%3Areact%7Cfirst\\_level\\_url%3Aarticle%7Csection%3Amain\\_content%7Cbutton%3Abody\\_link](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/e358c23f-afe3-49c5-a509-034257688580/e-Conomy-Africa-2020.pdf?CVID=nmuGYF2&MOD=AJPERES&source=content_type%3Areact%7Cfirst_level_url%3Aarticle%7Csection%3Amain_content%7Cbutton%3Abody_link).

<sup>2</sup> Faustine Ngila, "Africa's 5G Dream Will Take a Long Time to Be Realized," Quartz, May 24, 2022, <https://qz.com/africa/2168658/which-countries-have-rolled-out-5g-in-africa>.





---

challenges to political participation in SSA, and gauge their relative imprints on the continent and trends in citizen engagement.



## Background & Colonial Legacy

**S**tate formation in SSA is a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. In the aftermath of WWII, as the new world order was being forged by the victors of the second world war, modern institutions like the United Nations, IMF and the World Bank, among others, were established to guarantee collective peace and bring prosperity to a world in ruins.

As global leaders looked to the future and to rebuilding their economies, the winds of change and political awakening were beginning to blow across Africa. Revolutionary African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Patrice Lumumba (DR Congo), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Julius Nyerere (Tanganyika, now Tanzania) and others began to agitate for liberation across the continent marking the beginning of the end of an era. Colonial powers, having carved up the continent in the Berlin Conference of 1884, faced with costly challenges of their own after the war, one by one relinquished their colonies establishing nascent nation states, admitted as new members of the international community. To safeguard against new conflicts and prevent potentially violent border disputes, ex-colonies agreed to respect their existing colonial demarcations as a condition of membership to the community of nations at the UN, with the added incentive of gaining access to international aid and lines of credit.

The legacy of colonialism is varied across the continent depending on the colonial power at the helm. However, since European powers were mainly interested in dominance and resource extraction, and not nation building, much of the infrastructure they left behind was devised for access to resources and transportation offshore; and not with a view to extend windfalls to the inhabitants of



---

their colonies. Similarly, since borders were now safely ingrained in international understandings, post-colonial African leaders instead focused on consolidating and maintaining their own power, using national armies to fend off their own people, to thwart challenges to their position, to prevent coups and intrigues.

As a result, modern African nations emerged with a largely rural, multi ethnic and multi lingual polity, disconnected from the centers of power, with inadequate infrastructure, artificial boundaries cutting through established tribes and ethnicities who often had more in common with their kin across the border, than with much of their “countrymen”. With generous lines of funding and support flowing due to Cold War proxy games and through international aid, the newly installed leaders continued to look outward for their legitimacy and longevity with little interest in bringing their population under a unified tent.

---

## Demographics

### *A Young & Growing Population*

**A**frica is home to 1.4 billion people, i.e. 18% of the global population, with 20% of the world's landmass across 54 countries, some among the poorest in the world. In stark contrast to the developed West, China and Japan, which are alarmingly burdened by an aging population, Africa is remarkably young, with 41% of the population under 15 and more than half under 25.

The continent experiences low life expectancy of average 52 coupled with high infant mortality; yet rapid population growth due to lack of family planning and poor access to birth control. Most of Africa has low population density of about 65 people per square mile, yet home to two of the most population urban centers as well, i.e. Lagos in Nigeria and Kinshasa in DR Congo.

Nigeria, the size of Texas, is the most densely populated with over 217 million, with a population density of 235. However, many large states including Namibia, Mali, Chad, Central African Republic (CAR) and Mauritania, among others, are sparsely populated, with fewer than 20 per sq km, largely rural and disconnected from the capital, putting the center of the political power and much of its periphery out of reach of each other's influence and accountability.



Nigeria is projected to reach one billion inhabitants by the end of the century, one of the biggest population booms in world history. Total population in Africa is expected to top 2.4 billion by 2050.<sup>3</sup>

Below is a basic demographic landscape of Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) highlighting the median age across the region to be (20.5), with over half the population of 1.2 billion living in rural areas.

Country	Population (Millions)	Med age	Urban %	Rural %	Country	Population (Millions)	Med age	Urban %	Rural %
Angola	34.5	16.9	68.0	32.0	Madagascar	28.8	19.9	39.8	60.2
Benin	12.6	19.0	49.5	50.5	Malawi	19.91	18.5	18.0	82.0
Botswana	2.4	24.5	72.1	27.9	Mali	21.16	16.6	45.4	54.6
Burkina Faso	21.8	17.8	31.9	68.1	Mauritania	4.8	20.4	56.8	43.2
Burundi	12.4	17.5	14.4	85.6	Mauritius	1.3	38.1	40.9	59.1
Cameroon	27.6	19.0	58.7	41.3	Mozambique	32.6	17.9	38.2	61.8
CAR	5.0	18.0	32.2	67.8	Namibia	2.6	22.1	53.8	46.2
CHAD	17.2	16.8	24.1	75.9	Niger	25.6	15.3	16.9	83.1
Cote D'Ivoire	27.4	19.1	52.7	47.3	Nigeria	214.1	18.2	53.4	46.6

<sup>3</sup> "Africa Population 2022," Demographics, Maps, and Graphs, Accessed November 7, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/continents/africa-population>.

Djibouti	1.0	27.2	78.4	21.6	Rep of Congo	5.7	19.4	68.7	31.3
DR Congo	93.8	17.2	46.8	53.2	Rwanda	13.4	20.4	17.8	82.2
Eq Guinea	1.5	22.3	74.0	26.0	Senegal	17.4	18.8	49.1	50.9
Eritrea	3.6	19.5	42.6	57.4	Sierra Leone	8.2	19.8	43.8	56.2
Eswatini	1.2	21	24.6	75.4	Somalia	16.6	16.9	47.3	52.7
Ethiopia	119.3	19.9	22.7	77.3	South Africa	60.4	28.1	68.3	31.7
Gabon	2.3	22.5	90.7	9.3	South Sudan	11.5	19.3	20.9	79.1
Gambia	2.5	18	63.8	36.2	Sudan	45.45	20.0	36.0	64.0
Ghana	32.1	21.8	58.6	41.4	Tanzania	62.39	18.2	36.6	63.4
Guinea	13.7	18.4	37.7	62.3	Togo	8.6	19.7	43.9	56.1
G Bissau	2.0	19.1	45.0	55.0	Uganda	47.8	17.2	26.1	73.9
Kenya	55.6	20.7	29.0	71.0	Zambia	19.19	17.9	45.8	54.2
Lesotho	2.2	24.4	30.0	70.0	Zimbabwe	15.21	19.0	32.5	67.5
Liberia	5.2	19.8	53.1	46.9	<b>*Total Pop:</b>	<b>1,179.6</b>			

Source: Data Reportal 2022

figure 1

\*For a more representative picture, four smaller Sub Saharan island states with populations less than one million, i.e. Comoros, Seychelles, Cabo Verde and S.T. Principe, have not been included.

## **Ethnicities & Languages**

### *A Diverse Continent*



**D**espite the general temptation to see Africans as one people, the region is in fact among the world's most diverse, with over 3,000 ethnicities, speaking well in excess of 2,000 languages across the continent. The main religions, Christianity and Islam are legacies of colonialism and trade with the Arab world, but there are also a myriad of indigenous practices, often intertwined with established faiths.

In Cameroon, for example, over three hundred languages are spoken among 250 ethnic groups, adherents of Islam, Christianity and local religions. Tanzania's



population includes more than 120 different indigenous groups with distinct languages; and in Nigeria, more than 520 languages are spoken among over 250 groups.<sup>4</sup> Such diversity speaks to the richness of cultures, yet have political, social and economic implications, especially in the light of low literacy rates, least of which include challenges in building cohesive democracies and fostering unified national identities. Travel anywhere in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA), and you will hear immediate references to tribes and ethnic groups as introductions are made.

Of course there are official state languages, mostly left behind by colonial powers, English, Portuguese, or French, but the extent and depth of adoption correlates with the length, quality and schooling of its citizens, as one moves away from urban centers, less present. According to studies, the average literacy rate on the continent is roughly 60% among people aged 15 years and older, as measured by the ability to read, write and understand a simple statement. There are wide variations among countries, with some like Chad as low as 14%, Kenya at 78% and South Africa, an outlier in many aspects, even at 98%.<sup>5</sup>

Gender equality and women's rights have made uneven gains across the continent. Some still practice Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and many still adopt early marriage for their girls, however, some gains in women's rights are also visible. In Rwanda, female representatives make up 61% of the legislature, and Liberia,

---

<sup>4</sup> "Sub-Saharan Africa | People and Society," World 101, Council on Foreign Relations, Accessed November 7, 2022, <https://world101.cfr.org/rotw/africa/people-and-society#countries-cope-with-many-languages>.

<sup>5</sup> "Literacy Rate, Adult Female (% of Females Ages 15 and above)," Data on Sub-Saharan Africa, World Bank, Accessed November 7, 2022, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.FE.ZS?locations=ZG>.





Malawi, Ethiopia and Tanzania are among African countries with female presidents at one time or another.<sup>6</sup>

Colonial powers, as well as African leaders have tackled the challenge of this rich, yet contentious diversity in different ways, at times exploiting one side to dominate the other, as in the case of the Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda and Burundi ultimately leading to the 1994 genocide when 800,000 Tutsis were massacred by the Hutu population; other times outlawing political parties organized on tribal allegiances altogether, as in the case of Ghana by Kwame Nkrumah. Cote d'Ivoire's first president, Felix Houphout-Boigny, sought to co-opt loyalty by distributing high ministerial positions and civil service posts among the different groups, and Julius Nyerere of what was then called Tanganyika (before Zanzibar joined), strived to forge a national identity by mandating Swahili as a uniform language.<sup>7</sup>

The tragedy presently unfolding in Ethiopia between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the central government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is a classic case in point, as the TPLF finds itself at odds with PM Abiy's nation building project in Addis Ababa. In other fronts, the Oromo, the largest ethnic group, with communities in neighboring Somalia and Kenya have agitated for self-rule for decades, at one point even allying their Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) with Eritrea to fight the Addis government. And let us not forget the Somali region, all along the Somali border, home to millions of Somalis from the major clans, peppered with

---

<sup>6</sup> "Sub-Saharan Africa | People and Society," Council on Foreign Relations, World 101, Accessed November 7, 2022, <https://world101.cfr.org/rotw/africa/people-and-society#one-step-forward-two-steps-back-for-gender-equality>.

<sup>7</sup> Francis M. Deng, "Ethnicity: An African Predicament," Brookings, June 1, 1997, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/ethnicity-an-african-predicament/>.



refugee camps, the result of ongoing conflict in neighboring Somalia and the devastating drought and food insecurity.

Another example is Sudan, which has been in the throes of civil war since 1962, almost since independence, with near continuous struggle between the center and the periphery. In 2011, the country finally split in two, only to renewed fighting in the newly formed South Sudan between two main ethnic groups, the Dinka and the Nuer, each vying for power. Ongoing conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile persist, with various rebel groups splintering along ethnic lines (Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa among others), some spilling into Chad allied with their kin, others as far up as Libya engaged in mercenary and exploitative activities due to the vacuum of power created by the removal of Ghaddafi by the West.<sup>8</sup>

To complicate matters, citizenship in many countries is not a consequence of birth, rather of ethnicity and heritage and therefore easily instrumentalized in politics, frequently leading to protracted conflict as in the case of Cote D'Ivoire where years of civil war ensued partly over the question: "who is a real Ivorian?"

---

<sup>8</sup> Reuters Staff, "Factbox: Sudan's Rebel Groups," World News, Reuters, August 31, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/sudan-darfur-factbox/factbox-sudans-rebel-groups-idlNKBN25R2DV>.

## Climate Crisis

**A**s the climate crisis worsens, so will related conflicts and mass migration in SSA. Contributing a mere 2% of the earth's carbon emission, Africa is the recipient of the full brunt of the effects of climate change responsible for dramatic ecologic degradation and environmental collapse leading to humanitarian crisis, mass migration, loss of livelihoods, starvation, and ultimately armed conflict. The World Bank estimates climate refugees to number over 85 million in SSA by 2050 and already various conflicts, often explained as ethnic tensions, have environmental roots or are exacerbated by its effects.

The UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) estimates a drop of 70% in crop yields in some areas of the Sahel, an ecological, semi-arid belt separating the Sahara to the north from the savannas to the south, stretching from Senegal to Sudan. With the rapid advance of the Sahara across the Sahel, conflicts between herders and farmers have become more frequent. As the Sahara moves south, pastures dry up and water holes evaporate, herders will continue to encroach southward on farmlands, and groups will increase competition for survival and food security displacing each other. The study also concluded that the war in Darfur framed simply as the Arab north versus the indigenous south, had significant ecological causes and at the outset largely driven by environmental degradation which contributed to the starvation of over a hundred thousand, driving Arab nomads south in search of fertile lands.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Julian Borger, "Darfur Conflict Heralds Era of Wars Triggered by Climate Change, Un Report Warns," *The Guardian*, June 23, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2007/jun/23/sudan.climatechange>.



The clashes rose to new highs when the Khartoum government took stance with an iron hand on the side of the Arab nomads, funneling weapons to the Janjaweed militia who employed scorched earth tactics to clear settlements, unleashing indiscriminate savagery on the indigenous population. The events triggered increased polarization, feeding historic senses of ethnic marginalization, ultimately rising to the level of war crimes and even genocide. The conflict has led to hundreds of thousands dead and over 2.5 million displaced.<sup>10</sup>

Lake Chad is another case in point. An important freshwater lake located in central Africa, supporting 25 million in four countries; Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger; the lake has shrunk by 90% since 1960's,<sup>11</sup> not only displacing people who depend on it for fisheries and subsistence, but also providing a breeding and recruiting ground for jihadists and rebel groups like Boko Haram as the population continues to lose traditional survival means, jobs, food and their communities. Along with poor governance, endemic corruption and poverty, a prime example of the human cost of ecological disaster.

The World Food Program (WFP) estimates 27 million across the Sahel and especially around lake Chad to be suffering from hunger and malnutrition. In the past four years, WFP reports, the number has quadrupled, prolonging the humanitarian crisis and contributing to civil war.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Jake Hussona, "How Is Climate Change Driving Conflict in Africa?" ReliefWeb, March 10, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/how-climate-change-driving-conflict-africa>.

<sup>11</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa | People and Society," Council on Foreign Relations, World 101, Accessed November 7, 2022, <https://world101.cfr.org/rota/africa/people-and-society#climate-refugees-represent-growing-crisis>.

<sup>12</sup> "Afrique De L'Ouest: La Fao Tire La Sonnette D'alarme Sur Le Risque De Famine," RFI, April 5, 2022, <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20220405-afrique-de-l-ouest-la-fao-tire-la-sonnette-d-alar>



A close look across the region underscores the link between hunger, instability and violence, with environmental factors constituting an important component of conflict. Following a 22-year civil war, which led to the secession of South Sudan from the north, and plans for a Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA), violence erupted again as major drought engulfed South Sudan and the Horn of Africa in 2015.

In December 2021 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported the highest level of food insecurity since the country's independence in 2011, with 7.2 million in crisis phase, of which 2.4 required emergency assistance, in part as a result of ecological collapse.<sup>13</sup>

The Horn of Africa, home to Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya is yet another region hit hard by climate change driven conflict. Drought has impacted over 13 million leading to forced migration, to ethnic tensions, intensifying conflicts between clans and warlords fighting over water and other livelihood resources.<sup>14</sup>

---

me-sur-le-risque-de-famine?fbclid=IwAR3x9UsaX5aPsK8WuwCY2V4TPY63\_7IPCB-n46BmNPzA3aB\_P\_AD8bTAt8A&ref=fb\_i.

<sup>13</sup> "Humanitarian, Environmental Challenges in South Sudan Threatening Sustainability of Peace Process, Senior Officials Tell Security Council," ReliefWeb, December 15, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/humanitarian-environmental-challenges-south-sudan-threatening-sustainability>.

<sup>14</sup> Jake Hussona, "How Is Climate Change Driving Conflict in Africa?" ReliefWeb, March 10, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/how-climate-change-driving-conflict-africa>.



## Natural & Strategic Resources

**W**ith the colonial powers seemingly gone, and cold war proxy-jostling finally coming to an end in the early 90's, a new scramble for Africa took shape across the continent as world powers began to compete for alliances, strategic footholds and resources.

Gone were the 20<sup>th</sup> century markets for Ivory or rubber which once fueled the massacre of almost 10 million in the Belgian Congo. The new world order, globalization and big tech had other needs and the African continent, still reeling from its colonial past and aspiring to prosperity and independence under democratic norms, was a treasure chest of all things coveted by the industrial world.

The African continent is blessed, some say cursed, with abundant reserves of the planet's natural resources. UN Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that 30% of the world's mineral reserves, 8% of natural gas, 12% of oil reserves, 40% of gold and over 90% of its chromium and platinum are in Africa where it is also host to the largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds, platinum and uranium in the world.<sup>15</sup>

Other substantial resources include zinc, copper, and by some estimates 80% of the world's supply of coltan (in DR Congo) -- a crucial mineral for the manufacture of all electronic products including cell phones and computers which has been partly responsible for sustaining a protracted bloody conflict waged by a myriad of armed groups since the 1990's.<sup>16</sup> Anecdotal accounts of blue helmet peacekeepers

---

<sup>15</sup> "Our Work in Africa," UNEP, United Nations, Accessed November 7, 2022, <https://www.unep.org/regions/africa/our-work-africa>.

<sup>16</sup> Kathy Feick, "Coltan," Earth Sciences Museum, University of Waterloo, Accessed November 7, 2022,



stationed in eastern DR Congo involved in trafficking gold, speaks to the corrupting power of precious resources even by those with the best of intentions.

With the push towards renewable energies and de-carbonization of economies by adopting green technologies like electric cars, lithium has become the world's newest hot commodity. Global Witness estimates global lithium demand to grow up to 40-fold by 2040, driven by industrialized countries in the East and the West alike. The continent, most notably in Zimbabwe, DR Congo, Ghana, Namibia and Mali, has considerable deposits of lithium concentrate, which is extracted, exported and processed outside Africa to be used for products using lithium-ion batteries.<sup>17</sup>

Faced with ailing economies and eager for quick windfalls, countries are opening their doors to foreign investment, where China's Huayou Cobalt, for example, recently paid \$422 million to acquire a major mining concession in Zimbabwe's largest lithium mine. China continues to further expand its footprint in Africa as the dominant player in all stages of the global battery supply chain and in the mining sector in general.<sup>18</sup>

Much of SSA is characterized by weak institutions, lax environmental and labor laws, presenting an attractive destination for international speculators and investors, mining companies and stronger, resource hungry states who can easily strike a deal

<https://uwaterloo.ca/earth-sciences-museum/resources/detailed-rocks-and-minerals-articles/coltan>.

<sup>17</sup> Kathryn Goodenough, Eimear Deady, and Richard Shaw, "Lithium Resources, and Their Potential to Support Battery Supply Chains, in Africa," NERC Open Research Archive, British Geological Survey and National Environmental Research Council, July 14, 2021, <http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/id/eprint/530698/>.

<sup>18</sup> "China's Huayou Buys Lithium Mine in Zimbabwe for \$422 Mln," Reuters, December 22, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/business/chinas-huayou-buys-lithium-mine-zimbabwe-422-million-2021-12-22/>.



and co-opt officials to their advantage leaving a neglected and irrelevant population in the margins, leading to classic rentier economies. In this context an elite circle at the top continue to receive, on a regular basis, substantial amounts of “rents” by foreign entities, with no accountability or input by their own citizens, who do not receive any benefits, pay no taxes, therefore wield no influence on the levers of power – a crucial relationship, and the main building block of a healthy, evolving democracy. The result is a bloated circle of privilege where political power is concentrated; a fragile state rife with human rights abuses, environmental degradation, undermining of rule of law and rampant corruption preventing institutions of governance and democracy to thrive.

Primed for exploitation by the elite, foreign interests continue to expand their presence in search of mining concessions and strategic resources, often subverting, co-opting and derailing democratic developments that might compromise their interest, often with the willing participation and collusion of individuals at the highest levels of governments as in the case of DR Congo where election campaigns have been financed with funds secured by mining concessions.

Global Witness reported \$1.5 billion lost by DR Congo, through multiple secretive mining and oil contracts, double the country’s health and education budget. Through such deals, the report added, part of the money was diverted for presidential elections, while the rest disappeared in private hands. The deals were linked to various offshore companies connected to the Israeli billionaire Dan Gertler, a close friend of Joseph Kabila, president at the time, who then managed to “win” the 2011 elections amidst evidence of fraud and vote rigging. Gertler, mentioned over 200 times in the ‘Panama Papers’, secured mining assets for a fraction of their market value, subsequently securing lucrative deals with giant Anglo-Swiss commodities





trader, Glencore, while none of the windfall benefited the impoverished population of DRC.<sup>19</sup>

Kabila embarked on yet more mining deals with Glencore and Gertler to fund his next campaign in 2016 when he attempted to remain in office beyond his constitutional term. DRC is the world's largest supplier of Cobalt, crucial to the manufacture of rechargeable batteries. Along with substantial reserves of copper, coltan and other resources coveted by multinationals, come speculating middlemen and predatory elites, putting good governance at a disadvantage.

According to the Congo Chamber of Mines, Chinese investors now control 70% of Congo's mining sector, and the current government is striving to renegotiate better terms.<sup>20</sup>

Dutch disease, or Dutch syndrome, whereby the asymmetric focus on one sector of the economy marginalizes other industries, and precipitates a decline in other sectors is another phenomenon emblematic of natural resource dependency in the developing world. Since the rise of the oil sector in Nigeria, traditional agricultural practices have been steadily sidelined, Cocoa production, once a major export, was halved, rubber, cotton, groundnuts and other commodities suffered the same fate.

---

<sup>19</sup> "Secretive Mining Deals Risk Financing Congo Elections Again, Global Witness Warns," Global Witness, May 4, 2016, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/secretive-mining-deals-risk-financing-congo-elections-again-global-witness-warns/>.

<sup>20</sup> Aaron Ross and Karin Strohecker, "Exclusive Congo Reviewing \$6 Bln Mining Deal with Chinese Investors -Finmin," Reuters, August 30, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/exclusive-congo-reviewing-6-bln-mining-deal-wit-h-chinese-investors-finmin-2021-08-27/>.



Nigeria is now the largest oil producer in Africa with the tenth largest oil reserves in the world, yet ailing from extreme poverty. In 2019 the oil and gas sector accounted for 95% share in Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and 80% of its budget revenues.<sup>21</sup> Yet, with a national unemployment rate of 23% as reported in 2018, with 87 million Nigerians living on less than \$1.90 a day according to Brookings Institution.<sup>22</sup>

The country is also mired by violence by a variety of factors; Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, militants from different ethnic groups in the Middle Belt of Nigeria fighting over land, water; and Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and other armed groups involved in hundreds of recorded incidents of violence and death.

Oil was discovered in the Niger Delta in the 1950s and by the 1970s dominated the country's economy. By early 1990s tensions grew between the foreign oil companies and the various ethnic groups who felt exploited, and soon morphed into a competition for oil wealth, militarizing the entire region by ethnic militia and even corrupting the police force. Environmental degradation followed. Gas flares polluted the air, creating acid rain; oil spills and land reclamation for extraction destroyed the rich biodiversity of one of the most important ecosystems on the continent and the Delta's mangrove forests, the third largest in the world, and the largest in Africa. According to some estimates, 40 million liters of oil is spilled annually in the Delta exposing the population to high levels of chromium, lead and mercury, cutting life

---

<sup>21</sup> Kasirim Nwuke, "Nigeria's Petroleum Industry Act: Addressing Old Problems, Creating New Ones," Brookings, November 24, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/11/24/nigerias-petroleum-industry-act-addressing-old-problems-creating-new-ones/>.

<sup>22</sup> Obasesam Okoi, "The Paradox of Nigeria's Oil Dependency," Africa Portal, January 21, 2019, <https://www.africaportal.org/features/paradox-nigerias-oil-dependency/>.



expectancy short, and producing health hazards, cancer and premature babies, many of them dying within their first month of birth.<sup>23</sup>

Eventually, the traditional survival mechanisms of the indigenous population; fishing and farming, were decimated. Resentment became endemic and other forms of survival emerged. Armed groups, and various warlords resorted to violence, conducting raids on oil platforms and sabotaging the industry's infrastructure. They took up piracy and kidnappings for ransom, eventually carving alternative livelihoods through "amnesty payments" from the government.<sup>24</sup>

As a small glimmer of hope, in 2021, Shell lost an appeal and was found responsible for widespread pollution in a case brought by a group of farmers and the environmental group "Friends of the Earth",<sup>25</sup> The verdict, however, can be appealed.

Angola, is the second largest oil producer in Africa with the fourth largest diamond mine in the world, yet beset by rampant inequality with almost 50% of its population living on less than \$2 per day.. Its capital city, Luanda, was one of the 10 most expensive cities for expats – on par with Tokyo. Much like Nigeria, the lion's share of the government's revenue – 75% -- depends on oil exports. Studies have

---

<sup>23</sup> Rebecca Ratcliffe, "'This Place Used to Be Green': The Brutal Impact of Oil in the Niger Delta," The Guardian, December 6, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/06/this-place-used-to-be-green-the-brutal-impact-of-oil-in-the-niger-delta>.

<sup>24</sup> John Campbell, "Significant Rise of Insecurity in the Niger Delta through 2019," Council on Foreign Relations, February 26, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/significant-rise-insecurity-niger-delta-through-2019>.

<sup>25</sup> "Shell Nigeria Ordered to Pay Compensation for Oil Spills," BBC News, January 29, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55853024>.



found a strong correlation between economic dependence on natural resources and corruption.<sup>26</sup>

In December 2021, the United States sanctioned the former Chair of the Angolan state-owned company, Sonangol, and two former government officials, for misappropriating millions in public funds for their personal benefit. Isabel dos Santos, the former chair of Sonangol, it was revealed, became Africa's richest woman taking advantage of her powerful position.<sup>27</sup>

Corruption rankings, and human development index (HDI), which is a composite measure of health and life expectancy, literacy and standard of living as determined by per capita income, paint a broad picture of the region. Transparency International ranks most of sub-Saharan Africa among the lowest scoring on the corruption scale.<sup>28</sup> (See figure 2 below)

As a matter of perspective, Denmark ranks the cleanest with a corruption index of 1/180 and a score of 100/100. As for HDI, a 0.56 constitutes the average, with much of the continent, hovering right at the border, or below.

---

<sup>26</sup> Victoria Bassetti, Kelsey Landau, and Joseph Glandorf, "A Master Class in Corruption: The Luanda Leaks across the Natural Resource Value Chain," Brookings, July 23, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/07/23/a-master-class-in-corruption-the-luanda-leaks-across-the-natural-resource-value-chain/>.

<sup>27</sup> "Friends of Angola and Transparency International Welcome US Sanctions Against Former Officials in Angola," Transparency International, December 21, 2021, <https://www.transparency.org/en/press/welcome-us-sanctions-against-former-corrupt-officials-in-angola>.

<sup>28</sup> "2021 Corruption Perceptions Index," Transparency International, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/>.

Note, countries rated democratic by the Freedom house as in Botswana, South Africa, Mauritius, Namibia and Ghana are generally linked to better HDIs, and much lower corruption levels.

Corruption Ranking					Freedom				
Country	Index	Score	Score	HDI	Country	Index	Score	Score	HDI
		29/10		0.57		147/18			
<b>Angola</b>	136/180	0	Not Free	4	<b>Madagascar</b>	0	26/100	Partly Free	0.521
		42/10				110/18			
<b>Benin</b>	78/180	0	Partly Free	0.52	<b>Malawi</b>	0	35/100	Partly Free	0.485
		55/10		0.72		136/18			
<b>Botswana</b>	45/180	0	Free	8	<b>Mali</b>	0	29/100	Not Free	0.427
		42/10		0.45		140/18			
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	78/180	0	Partly Free	2	<b>Mauritania</b>	0	28/100	Partly Free	0.527
		19/10		0.43					
<b>Burundi</b>	169/180	0	Not Free	3	<b>Mauritius</b>	49/180	54/100	Free	0.804
		27/10		0.56		147/18			
<b>Cameroon</b>	144/180	0	Not Free	3	<b>Mozambique</b>	0	26/100	Partly Free	0.446
		24/10		0.38					
<b>CAR</b>	154/180	0	Not Free	1	<b>Namibia</b>	58/100	49/100	Free	0.646
		20/10		0.40		124/18			
<b>CHAD</b>	164/180	0	Not Free	1	<b>Niger</b>	0	31/100	Partly Free	0.394
		36/10		0.51		154/18			
<b>Cote D'Ivoire</b>	105/180	0	Partly Free	6	<b>Nigeria</b>	0	24/100	Partly Free	0.534

		22/10		0.52		162/18			
<b>Djibouti</b>	128/180	0	Not Free	4	<b>Rep. Congo</b>	0	21/100	Not Free	0.608
		19/10		0.45					
<b>DRC</b>	169/180	0	Not Free	9	<b>Rwanda</b>	52/180	53/100	Not Free	0.536
		17/10		0.59					
<b>Eq Guinea</b>	172/180	0	Not Free	2	<b>Senegal</b>	73/180	43/100	Partly Free	0.514
		22/10		0.43		115/18			
<b>Eritrea</b>	161/180	0	Not Free	4	<b>Sierra Leone</b>	0	34/100	Partly Free	0.438
		32/10		0.60		178/18			
<b>Eswatini</b>	122/180	0	Not Free	8	<b>Somalia</b>	0	13/100	Not Free	N/A
		39/10		0.47					
<b>Ethiopia</b>	87/180	0	Not Free	0.47	<b>South Africa</b>	70/180	44/100	<b>Free</b>	0.709
		31/10		0.70		180/18			
<b>Gabon</b>	124/180	0	Not Free	2	<b>South Sudan</b>	0	11/100	Not Free	0.413
		37/10		0.49		164/18			
<b>Gambia</b>	102/180	0	Partly Free	6	<b>Sudan</b>	0	20/100	Not Free	0.507
		43/10		0.59					
<b>Ghana</b>	73/180	0	<b>Free</b>	6	<b>Tanzania</b>	87/180	39/100	Partly Free	0.528
		25/10		0.46		128/18			
<b>Guinea</b>	150/180	0	Not Free	6	<b>Togo</b>	0	30/100	Partly Free	0.513
		21/10		0.46		144/18			
<b>G Bissau</b>	162/180	0	Partly Free	1	<b>Uganda</b>	0	27/100	Not Free	0.544
		30/10		0.57		117/18			
<b>Kenya</b>	128/180	0	Partly Free	9	<b>Zambia</b>	0	33/100	Partly Free	0.581



		38/10		0.51		157/18			
<b>Lesotho</b>	96/180	0	Partly Free	8	<b>Zimbabwe</b>	0	23/100	Not Free	0.563
		29/10		0.46		147/18			
<b>Liberia</b>	136/180	0	Partly Free	5	<b>Madagascar</b>	0	26/100	Partly Free	0.521

Data Reportal 2022

figure 2

**Sources:** Corruption index: Transparency.org

Corruption Ranking Index: out of 180 countries. (Denmark ranks highest = 1/180)

Corruption Ranking Score: 100 = Very Clean

Freedom Score: Freedom House

Human Development Index (HDI) UNDP (2020): Av: 0.56 Under 0.550 considered low human development score.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hdi-by-country>

## Internet, Social Media & Connectivity Landscape



**I**nternet penetration, while expanding in SSA, is still not as widely accessible, or fully leveraged as it is in the rest of the world. Lack of infrastructure, Slow Internet speed and unreliable connections, especially in rural areas, as well as cost of technology all collude to keep the region at a disadvantage.

In addition, much of SSA still lags behind in literacy rates, at only about 60% as measured by the ability to read and write a simple phrase – a far cry from levels required for technological literacy. With the diverse landscape of ethnicities and





---

over 2,000 local languages, the availability of content is also limited, and along with it, access to information and news from the outside world.

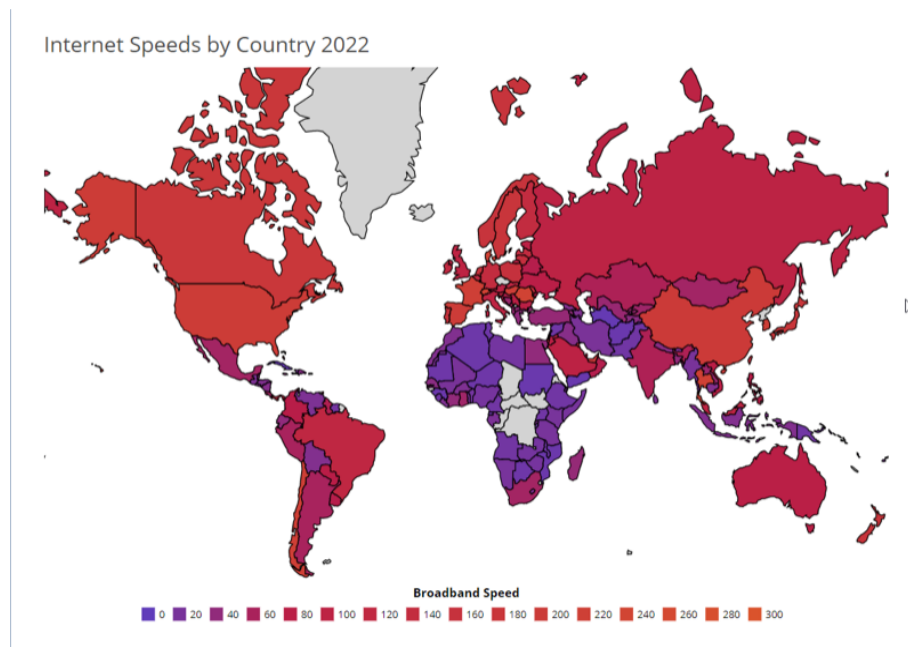
Lack of infrastructure in remote areas to reach a mostly rural population poses yet more barriers due to the logistics of implementation across vast inaccessible terrain.

Even with connectivity, slow Internet speed and high cost of subscriptions are added burdens. So while some in the developed world have internet speeds as high as 200 mbps as in the case of Singapore, South Korea, Chile, and others in the global West, enabling easy and quick access to news, entertainment, shopping and online interaction at a touch of a finger, and at any location; African countries are operating at a fraction of those numbers and at a higher cost.

Consider simply, the global average mobile and fixed broadband speeds: 63.15 mbps / 113.25 mbps respectively in 2021; with the ten fastest mobile countries even exceeding 135 mbps; and ten fastest broadband Internet speeds exceeding 200 mbps. <sup>29</sup>Then, compare the numbers to data for SSA at speeds of 15.2 mbps / 11.1 mbps.

---

<sup>29</sup> "Internet Speeds by Country 2022," World Population Review, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/internet-speeds-by-country>.



The above map (source: World Population Review) is a visual representation of the global disparity of broadband speed, with nearly all of Africa in the low double digits (Gray zones represent regions where data is not fully available, ex: Chad or Central African Republic). If education and information are essential components of an aware and empowered citizenry in a functioning democracy, many in SSA find the tools of empowerment still far out of reach.

Statistics compiled by Data Reportal reflect 42% general internet penetration in West Africa, 26% in Central Africa; 24% in Eastern Africa and 62% in Southern Africa; in contrast to numbers well above 90% adoption in North America and Europe. Data Reportal analytics, drawing on multiple sources, presents a more detailed digital-scape by country, with numbers as of January 2022 showing less than 35% Internet penetration across 1.18 billion population in SSA. Factoring the



quality and low speeds of Internet represented behind the numbers, the coverage and accessibility gap is glaring. (see figure 3)

Country variations among outliers like Botswana, South Africa and Mauritius with over 60% coverage are explained by their historical legacies, in contrast to those still in nascent stages like Niger, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Somalia and South Sudan where conflict and poverty have been the main currencies of their development arc. (Baseline from previous year is a factor when assessing the percentage of increase in Internet adoption.)

Country	Mobile Conx (millions)	Internet Use (millions)	(as % pop)	% Increase Over prior year	Soc Media (millions)	as % of Pop	Conx Speed Mobile/Fixe d mbps
Angola	16.04	12.41	36.0%	3.2	2.750	8.0%	18.1/12.3
Benin	11.58	3.66	29.0%	2.7	1.660	13.2%	/9.7
Botswana	4.05	1.48	61.2%	1.9	1.200	49.6%	23/6.8
Burkina Faso	25.75	5.95	27.3%	10.6	2.200	10.1%	/15.3
Burundi	7.45	1.82	14.6%	14.1	0.764	6.1%	/5
Cameroon	21.69	10.05	36.5%	10.6	4.550	16.5%	13.6/8.2
C.A. Republic	1.64	0.355	7.1%	20.8	0.138	2.8%	N/A
CHAD	8.96	3.26	19.0%	13.6	0.573	3.3%	N/A



<b>Cote D'Ivoire</b>	37.75	9.94	36.3%	2.6	6.4	23.4%	9.4/32.4
<b>Djibouti</b>	0.449	0.595	59.0%	1.4	0.168	16.6%	/4.7
<b>D R Congo</b>	43.95	16.50	17.6%	25.4	4.65	5.0%	9.06
<b>Eq Guinea</b>	0.806	0.387	26.3%	3.3	0.126	8.6%	7.95/
<b>Eritrea</b>	0.826	0.291	8.0%	17.1	0.001	0.03%	N/A
<b>Eswatini</b>	1.23	0.554	46.9%	1.1	0.408	34.5%	/4.4
<b>Ethiopia</b>	58.54	29.83	25.0%	2.5	6.35	5.3%	14/3.3
<b>Gabon</b>	3.12	1.43	61.9%	2.3	0.819	35.4%	/13.4
<b>Gambia</b>	4.22	1.29	51.2%	2.9	0.461	18.3%	/7.2
<b>Ghana</b>	44.9	16.99	53.0%	2.1	8.8	27.4%	8/26.9
<b>Guinea</b>	14.0	3.15	23.0%	2.8	2.4	17.5%	/3.9
<b>G Bissau</b>	1.95	0.571	28.0%	2.4	0.289	14.2%	/15.6
<b>Kenya</b>	63.5	23.35	42.0%	7.4	11.75	21.1%	13.2/8.6
<b>Lesotho</b>	2.56	1.13	52.1%	10.8	0.532	24.5%	/13.6
<b>Liberia</b>	3.67	1.15	21.9%	2.4	0.782	14.3%	/9.4
<b>Madagascar</b>	12.4	6.43	22.3%	9.8	3.15	10.9%	/30.3
<b>Malawi</b>	10.23	4.03	20.2%	17.4	0.820	4.1%	/5.6
<b>Mali</b>	23.6	6.33	29.9%	10.7	2.15	10.2%	/17.8



<b>Mauritania</b>	4.97	1.73	35.7%	10.3	1	20.7%	/4.9
<b>Mauritius</b>	1.96	0.83	63.6%	0.1	1	78.6%	22.4/19.7
<b>Mozambique</b>	17.1	7.5	23.0%	22.9	3.05	9.3%	14.2/6.3
<b>Namibia</b>	2.95	1.3	50.0%	1.8	0.857	32.80%	19.9/9.1
<b>Niger</b>	12.1	3.72	14.5%	10.8	0.641	2.50%	/3.4
<b>Nigeria</b>	176.3	109.2	51.0%	4.6	32.9	15.40%	17.4/10.1
<b>Rep of Congo</b>	6.05	1.45	25.4%	23.4	0.894	15.60%	/13.6
<b>Rwanda</b>	10.6	3.54	26.4%	3.7	0.928	6.9%	/9.5
<b>Senegal</b>	20.2	8	46.0%	2.7	3.8	22.1%	17.9/20.7
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	9.3	2.67	32.6%	12.5	0.928	0.0%	N/A / 6.8
<b>Somalia</b>	7.7	2.27	13.7%	16.4	2.3	13.9%	10.9/5.5
<b>South Africa</b>	108.6	41.19	68.2%	1.2	28	46.4%	30.5/29.7
<b>South Sudan</b>	3.27	1.25	10.9%	17.3	0.515	0.0%	N/A - 3.95
<b>Sudan</b>	35.76	14	30.8%	2.4	N/A	N/A	8.7/ 3.6
<b>Tanzania</b>	53.81	15.6	25.0%	2.9	6.1	9.8%	10.9/9.7
<b>Togo</b>	7.72	2.23	26.0%	13.1	0.957	11.2%	24.2/16.8
<b>Uganda</b>	27.67	14	29.3%		2.8	5.9%	11.9/9.2
<b>Zambia</b>	17.54	5.47	28.5%	5.4	2.9	15.1%	12.0/4.6



Zimbabwe	13.64	4.65	30.6%	6.0	1.55	10.2%	12.6/6.4
<b>Total :</b>	962.1	403.5	34.2%		155.6	13.2%	*15.2/11.1

Source: Data Reportal 2022

data based on GSMA Intelligence, Statistica, Ookla

\*Connection speeds reflect median values.

### figure 3

When it comes to social media use, even fewer Africans are active; only 155 million, i.e. 13.1% of the total population in SSA, mainly using FB messenger and Instagram.

Mobile use, on the other hand, is predominant, with a whopping 962.1 million connections across the region according to Data Reportal. This number, however, has caveats. Cell phone connection numbers are generally inflated in SSA, at times could even surpass the figure for the total population in a country. For example, Burkina Faso with a population of 21.8 million has 25.7 registered connections; and Cote D'Ivoire, with 27.4 million people, has 37.7 million mobile connections. The reason for this is that many have more than one cell phone; one for personal, another for business; but more commonly, multiple sim cards, in order to optimize coverage and signal strength across cell zones with multiple providers.

GSMA Mobile for Development Foundation, on the other hand, pegged the number of "unique" mobile subscribers in SSA at 495 million at the end of 2020, projected to reach 615 million by 2025, equivalent to 50% penetration; 28% of connections on 4G and only 3% on 5G. This number represents \$155 billion of economic value generated by mobile technologies for business solutions, with Fintech and mobile

money platforms like M-PESA, Paystack and Flutterwave mainly driving the growth as more and more of the young generation of Africans own a mobile phone for the first time.<sup>30</sup>

An important factor to keep in mind is the high price of subscription and data compared to the rest of the world, considering the per capita income on the continent. Data in Africa is generally, prepaid, at some of the world's most expensive plans at an average of 8.76% of median income. In Zimbabwe, a gigabyte costs \$72.20, 289 times as much as in India, making it the most expensive country for data; and in Nigeria, the least expensive plan is \$0.28 for 50 megabytes, and valid only for 24 hours.<sup>31</sup>

As a result, most people opt for pay-as-you-go plans, for fixed data/minutes packages, and use them sparingly. It would not be uncommon to ring once, signaling the need for a call back, hoping to shift the charge onto the other party. Text messaging and use of WhatsApp chats therefore are the predominant modes of communication; a far cry from the limitless possibilities of streaming, boundless downloads and uploads of information, and opportunities for free exchange of ideas and content across infinite platforms along what is for the developed world, a digital multi-lane super highway.

Therefore, many are not even consistently connected, and only turn on their device to use WhatsApp, or SMS or USSD, which are the dominant connective tissues in SSA,

---

<sup>30</sup> "The Mobile Economy Sub-Saharan Africa," The Mobile Economy, GSMA, October 25, 2022, <https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/sub-saharan-africa/>.

<sup>31</sup> Elo Umeh, "Three Reasons Why African Mobile Connectivity Is Misleading," The Africa Report, June 27, 2019, <https://www.theafricareport.com/14567/three-reasons-why-african-mobile-connectivity-is-misleading/>.



---

especially in light of the low illiteracy rate on the continent and the fact that it does not require internet.

It is noteworthy to add that even the number of users on social media do not always represent individual users. The number could include duplicate accounts represented by businesses, groups and organizations, interests and causes etc. Moreover, statistics must be qualified due to challenges associated with collecting data across difficult terrain, accessibility of urban versus rural users, as well as difficulties posed by Covid in recent years.

All of this to say, digital penetration is a nuanced affair and the final upside to its effects on elections and democracy remains to be seen.

The good news is that steady and modest gains in adoption of the technology is gaining ground; and as infrastructure, technical, and economic capacity expands so does the digital tent, as shown by the percent increase in coverage over the previous year. Moreover, the median age in much of SSA is very young, around 20 – the precise demographic poised to embrace new technology and social media, and to be able to harness its potential.





# Elections & Internet

---

## Social Media

**W**hen the Arab Spring took place in 2011, credit was given in large part to the equalizing effects of social media and the democratization of the internet which, according to some, had “flattened” the world, at long last wresting power from the elite, to bring large swaths of previously marginalized constituents under its cover.

With newfound powerful communication and information tools enabling citizens to organize, the dawn of global democracy was finally on the horizon. Autocrats and dictators, those who had long held the monopoly of power would have their reckoning, as the people, armed with information, and unprecedented ability for collective action would finally rise up to claim their human, economic and political participation rights.

A decade later, the term Arab Winter is being used to refer to the eventual outcome of the uprisings – from Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia to Yemen, Libya and Syria and beyond. Arguably the only country to have reaped the dividends of the Social Media enabled uprising was Tunis – that is -- up until last year, when President Kais Saied fired his prime minister, suspended Parliament and began consolidating his one-man rule.<sup>32</sup>

Many odes have been sung to the magical powers of the internet, but the truth of the matter is that revolutions against tyrants and systems of oppression have been with

---

<sup>32</sup> Vivian Yee, “As Tunisia's Democratic Experiment Unravels, Economic Collapse Looms,” *The New York Times*, May 7, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/07/world/middleeast/tunisia-democracy-economy.html>.



us for centuries; -- certainly long before Mr. Zuckerberg lent us a hand. What has instead emerged as a counter narrative highlights the corrosive effects of social media, the powerful potentials for subversion, designed for manipulation, dissemination of false and misleading information; and the rise of big tech, surveillance and control systems, which, in the service of power elites, can devise ways to always stay one step ahead of citizen action, without their knowledge – at times even with their willing participation.

To be sure, North Africa and the Middle East are subject to different geopolitical considerations than SSA; effectively with much better internet, more developed economy and more politicized population; yet still in the grips of great power posturing between the East and West and facing uphill battles in gaining participation rights.

While authoritarian opportunism and democratic resilience jostled for dominance in Africa, as one by one winds of freedom blew across the continent after independence, democratic gains have inched forward along with backslidings and setbacks. Colonial masters vacated their place with their positions often taken up by big man rule and consecutive military coups ejecting each other out of power. After each setback, constitutions were written, legal frameworks enacted and elections were held, often with international observers, at times inching forward toward democracy, other times stalling, with leaders using different means to shrink political space. Freedom house reports significant retreat in participation rights, civil liberties and quality of democracy, especially where modest gains had previously been made, mostly by counter-terrorism legislation and by restricting opposition parties. The organization rates people's access to right to vote, to freedom of expression and equality before the law, concluding that out of 49

countries in SSA, only 8 have free democracies (this includes Cabo Verde, S.T. Principe and Seychelles), 41 others all ranked as Not Free, or only Partly Free.<sup>33</sup>



On the other hand, Afro Barometer survey of 34 African countries across the continent in 2018 found 68% of the population aspiring to democracy. Support was strongest among males living in urban areas, those who are employed in middle class occupations, those with higher education who are interested in politics and who follow the news and use the Internet. The numbers also varied between countries; some like Uganda, Zambia and Sierra Leone with over 80% of support for democracy, while others like Mozambique, Madagascar and South Africa, only around 50%. It was further interesting to see pockets of indifference towards military rule (28%) as well as for presidential dictatorships (22%) showing vast

<sup>33</sup> "Countries and Territories," Freedom House, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>.



nuance in perceptions and attitudes across the continent. The interesting conclusion drawn by the survey highlighted Africans' commitment to democracy as "wide but shallow", enabling leaders to implement nominal democracies, hold multiparty elections, enact term limits and constitutional rules; yet continue to harass opposition groups, restrict political rights and limit free speech upholding nominal multiparty systems.<sup>34</sup>

These conclusions are further confirmed by surveys showing lagging participation in the democratic process in African youth aged 18-35, less than half of whom reported attending sporadic community meetings, and 65% reported not to have even bothered voting. The gap increases even further by 9-14 percentage points when it comes to participation of women, who lag behind their male counterparts virtually everywhere on the continent. Survey of 16 countries over time shows youth participation to have declined since 2005/2006, particularly with respect to interest in public affairs and civic activism, highlighting increased youth disempowerment, correlating closely with poverty index and education levels.

As the level of education rises and basic necessities are met, political interest and engagement also increases, as highlighted in the survey. Youth with material security who reported never lacking basic necessities showed greater interest in civic and political activity. News consumption is another factor for political engagement, with the radio still being the major source of news and social media and the Internet as less significant, although extending in connections across the continent.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Robert Mattes, "Democracy in Africa: Demand, Supply, and the 'Dissatisfied Democrat,'" Afrobarometer, February 2019, <https://www.afrobarometer.org/>.

<sup>35</sup> Rorisang Lekalake and E. Gyimah-Boadi, "Does Less Engaged Mean Less Empowered?" Afrobarometer, August 2016,

## Governments Fight Back



**T**he United Nations has, in recent years, deemed open online communication to be an inherent component of freedom of expression; and the Internet, fundamental to a free and democratic society. The African Commission on Human and People's Rights passed a similar resolution in 2016, upholding the right to freedom of information

---

ab\_r6\_policypaperno34\_youth\_political\_engagement\_in\_africa\_youth\_day\_release\_en  
g2.pdf.



online.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately the trends are otherwise. African leaders have employed a variety of strategies to manage the new challenges posed to their entrenched positions by the rise of the Internet and the organizing power of social media.

Network disruptions and Internet shutdowns in response to citizen protests, election outcomes, and to reinforce military's authority are not unique to Africa, but rather worldwide phenomena. Available data in a study covering 2018-2021 confirm high incidences of global shutdowns: 196 incidents in 2018, 213 incidents in 2019, 155 in 2020 and 50 in the first five months of 2021. According to the United Nations, "Shutdowns are lasting longer, becoming harder to detect and targeting particular social media and messaging applications and specific localities and communities."<sup>37</sup>

Governments can inhibit access to the Internet in several ways, throttling, which is slowing down access to selected apps, IP addresses or websites, social media shutdowns where certain platforms are targeted and blocked, or complete shutdowns where the entire internet is taken offline. In SSA, however, it is easy to deflect blame to slow connections and generally poor network infrastructure.

Strategies are easily implemented by authoritarian governments, which either have a monopoly of ownership over Internet Service Providers (ISPs); or directly vested with the power to grant and revoke operations licenses and can therefore simply order ISPs to comply by invoking "national security threats".

---

<sup>36</sup> "362 Resolution on the Right to Freedom of Information and Expression on the Internet in Africa," African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, November 4, 2016, <https://www.achpr.org/sessions/resolutions?id=374>.

<sup>37</sup> Steven Feldstein, "Government Internet Shutdowns Are Changing. How Should Citizens and Democracies Respond?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 31, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/03/31/government-internet-shutdowns-are-changing-how-should-citizens-and-democracies-respond-pub-86687>.



Governments implementing full or partial shutdowns according to studies were either fully authoritarian, or hybrid – i.e. partly free. Shutdowns are executed by security agencies, or executive branches with close ties to authorities and by leaders who have been in power for numerous years. According to Freedom House ranking of SSA countries, only five countries in our chart are fully democratic with free and fair elections; all others are either hybrids, or fully authoritarian. (See figure 2 above)

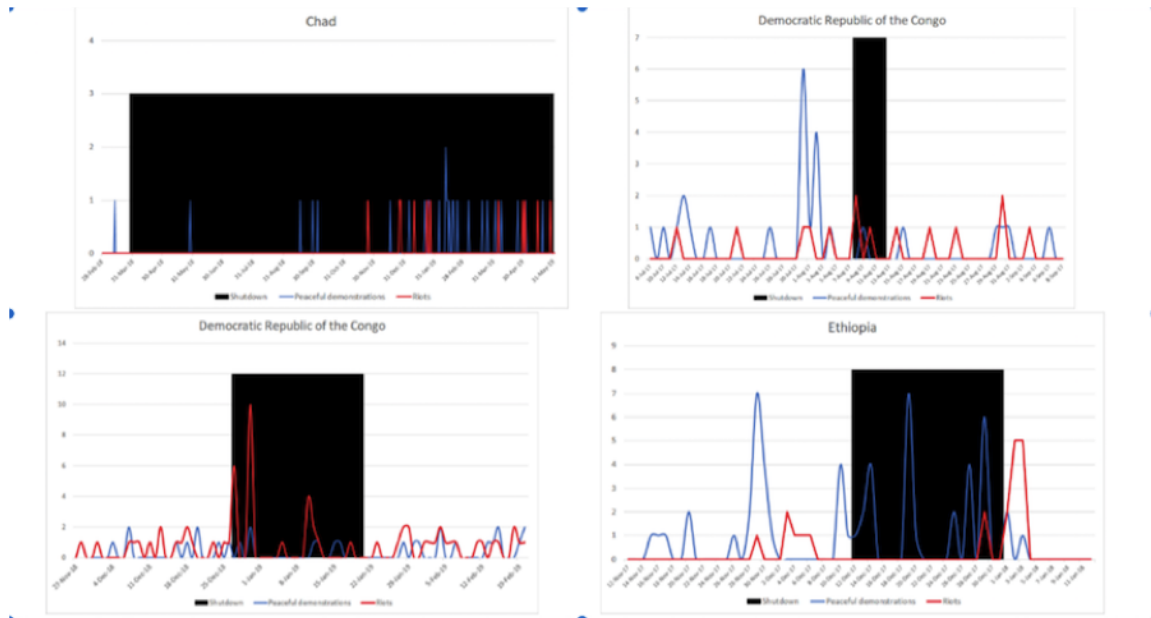
Network shutdowns target mainly mobile users and social media platforms where unrest spreads. Predictably however, shutdowns do not seem to have a direct effect on protests, rather leading to more protests, or a continuation of dissent as before. According to studies conducted on shutdowns between 2017-2019, disruptions and crackdowns on citizen action were sometimes even followed by escalations in the momentum of protests as citizens used other strategies to mobilize.<sup>38</sup>

The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) studied disruptions to Internet, social media and other digital communication services between 2017 and mid-2019 concluding that shutdowns are not an effective means of quelling protests, and may even lead to a spike or more riots. The study also concluded that shutdowns may lead to citizens finding other means; Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to draw international attention to their movement. Ex: #BringBackOurInternet in Cameroon.

---

<sup>38</sup> Jan Rydzak, Moses Karanja, and Nicholas Opiyo, “Dissent Does Not Die in Darkness: Network Shutdowns and Collective Action in African Countries,” *International Journal of Communication* 14 (2020): 4264–87, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/12770/3185>.





Above chart illustrates peaceful demonstrations (blue) and violent riots (red) before, during and after shutdowns in selected countries. DR Congo implemented throttling and shutdowns in 2017 and 2018 in several cities during clashes with government forces when President Kabila refused to relinquish power. The Internet slowed down to the point where images could no longer be shared on social media. Spikes in violence, and continuation of low-intensity demonstrations are visible on the graph. In Ethiopia, social media was disrupted in 2017 in Amhara and Oromia regions amid ethnic tensions, and yet demonstrations continued along the same



pattern. In Chad not only protests continued, but VPN s were used to raise awareness internationally among the Diaspora.<sup>39</sup> (*ACLEd study*)

By 2019, 26 sovereign states in Africa, including Liberia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Chad, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda, -- all in the authoritarian and hybrid categories had implemented shutdowns, or disruptions of social media of one sort or another.

On the positive note, legal action and litigation against shutdowns with the help of regional and international civil society organizations like Access Now, and Internet Sans Frontieres, may at times move the needle. Case in point is Zimbabwe where shutdowns in 2019 were ultimately declared illegal by the country's highest court.

40

---

<sup>39</sup> Jan Rydzak, Moses Karanja, and Nicholas Opiyo, "Dissent Does Not Die in Darkness: Network Shutdowns and Collective Action in African Countries," *International Journal of Communication* 14 (2020): 4264–87, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/12770/3185>.

<sup>40</sup> MacDonald Dzirutwe, "Zimbabwe Court Says Internet Shutdown Illegal as More Civilians Detained," Reuters, January 21, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-zimbabwe-politics/zimbabwe-court-says-internet-shutdown-illegal-as-more-civilians-detained-idUSKCN1PF11M>.

## Sudan – A Case Study

**S**ocial media was given much credit for the uprisings that ousted Sudan’s Omar al-Bashir, who had been in power since 1989. The sustained peaceful demonstrations led by a broad coalition of civilian activists, professional groups, women and youth inspired around the world as we followed their brave resistance against the three-decade dictator who had ruled with an iron hand, committed war crimes against his own people, and defied International Criminal Court (ICC) rulings for years. The timeline of events depicts the myriad of forces at play, each reinforcing the other to challenge democratic transformation.

Economic strife and price hikes on basic goods triggered a mass uprising in December 2018, spread across the country and converged in Khartoum, finally toppling Bashir in April 2019. Taking lessons from the Arab Spring, the Government of Sudan had purchased surveillance equipment and trained a “cyber jihad unit”, mastering crowd control strategies as it perceived the Internet to be a threat to its survival. To counter the momentum for citizen mobilization and collective action, a 68-day social media disruption and Internet shutdown were implemented and ISPs (Zain-SDN, MTN, Sudatel and Kanartel) were directed to disrupt access to social media and implement selective shutdowns.<sup>41</sup>

Undeterred, protests continued, prompting the authorities to respond with violence. Bashir declared a state of emergency, sacked the cabinet and replaced regional

---

<sup>41</sup> Jan Rydzak, Moses Karanja, and Nicholas Opiyo, “Dissent Does Not Die in Darkness: Network Shutdowns and Collective Action in African Countries,” *International Journal of Communication* 14 (2020): 4264–87, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/12770/3185>.



governments with military and intelligence service officers. Many died and many others were imprisoned amidst international outcry as the people continued to demand that he step down. Finally, on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the military stepped in and toppled Bashir in a coup; commencing talks with representatives of the civilian opposition, Forces for Freedom and Change (FCC), on a transition timeline to democracy.

At this juncture, it is important to note, that despite the formidable momentum of the population, it was the military junta that finally stepped in to hold power as the Transitional Military Council (TMC), clearly intent to fill the vacuum. This prompted more demonstrations demanding the TMC to step down and to form a civilian government.

On June 3, barely two months after forcing Bashir from office, Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the paramilitary arm of the military junta, headed by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (“Hemeti”) unleashed a violent campaign, massacring and raping unarmed civilians, dumping many of the dead into the River Nile.

The RSF has a violent history. It is rooted in the notorious Janjaweed militia, which, since the early 2000s, had fought a bloody counterinsurgency in Darfur, Blue Nile and Kordofan regions, committing atrocities and crimes against humanity as documented by Human Rights Watch. In recognition of their brutality and efficacy, Bashir formalized the RSF into a separate paramilitary arm in his security services, to be used as instruments of oppression and to quell insurgencies in the periphery. In retrospect, it is conceivable to conclude that General Dagalo Hemeti, the powerful commander of the forces, took the opportunity amidst citizen uprising, to topple Bashir and seize power.



Following the removal of Bashir, as the military consolidated power, delaying civilian inclusion [inclusion in what?], protests intensified and a total national shut down of the Internet was implemented; yet activists did not relent. They circumvented shutdowns via VPNs, sharing news and pictures of the events on the street. #SudanUprising, #IAmTheSudanRevolution, and #BlueForSudan trended internationally, supported by civil rights groups helping to drive the coverage of events in foreign media.<sup>42</sup> International community and donors pressed for transition, making it clear that funding and economic bailouts would be contingent on charting a democratic path forwards. This led to negotiations between FFC and the TMC.

Eventually, a 39-month transition to civilian democracy was agreed upon under a hybrid civilian-military interim government, the Sovereignty Council of Sudan (SCS), with 6 civilian and 5 military members, including general Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and General Mohamad Hamdan Daglo, the two main powerbrokers, and both accused of committing atrocities in Darfur as commanders of the Janjaweed militia.<sup>43</sup>

In August of that year, Abdalla Hamdok, a long time public administrator and technocrat, was sworn in as the civilian prime minister tasked with revitalizing the economy and working towards a transition to democracy. Under the new power sharing agreement peace talks were held in Juba, South Sudan, to also bring in the various groups of long time insurgents and rebel leaders from Darfur, Blue Nile and

---

<sup>42</sup> Jan Rydzak, Moses Karanja, and Nicholas Opiyo, "Dissent Does Not Die in Darkness: Network Shutdowns and Collective Action in African Countries," *International Journal of Communication* 14 (2020): 4264–87, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/12770/3185>.

<sup>43</sup> Mohamed Amin, "Profile: Members of Sudan's 'Sovereign Council'," Anadolu Agency, August 21, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/profile-members-of-sudans-sovereign-council/1561302>.



---

South Kordofan after decades of conflict, and to discuss wealth sharing, land reform, transitional justice and return of displaced persons.

At this juncture, some of the representatives of the armed groups are included in the power sharing arrangements but they all have divergent interests. To complicate matters further, two of the biggest rebel groups did not join at all. Almost immediately, each group begins jostling for power, requiring their leaders to be integrated into the government and their fighters into the security forces, each aligning with different camps in the hybrid transitional setup, in order to extract maximum political and economic power. After decades of fighting in the bush, it is a challenge to convince the factions to demobilize. Moreover, the RSF refuses to fold into the regular army in order to maintain their position as the powerful paramilitary operatives. Meanwhile, Hamdok plays tug of war within the ranks of the hybrid government, purging the old guard from their entrenched positions in key positions and appointing civilians.

As inflation spirals and IMF presses for austerity, fuel subsidies are scrapped, public discontent spikes into more riots, demanding government resignation.

Meanwhile, in the eastern front, renewed tensions are brewing in the fertile region of Al-Fashaga, along the Ethiopian border, over land disputes going back to the colonial times, due to the arbitrary demarcations in place since independence. This is a contested region, claimed by both countries, with ebb and flow of periodic clashes. The civil war in Ethiopia is also raging across the border, with Tigrayan forces in Ethiopia, now breaching the boundaries of the bordering region of Amhara, and threatening to spill over into eastern Sudan. Thousands of Sudanese troops have been sent to secure the border and stop the Tigrayans from using Sudan as staging ground for supply lines in their fight.



Ongoing tensions over the construction of a major infrastructure project (Renaissance dam) on the Blue Nile in Ethiopia affecting the water security in Sudan and Egypt, two downstream countries from the river, compound the volatile situation, threatening to lead to a dangerous faceoff between the countries.<sup>44</sup>

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, another military coup was mounted by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudan Armed Forces, and chairman of the Sovereignty Council, claiming he was saving the country from civil war. PM Hamdok is arrested while Hemeti unleashes the RSF on the population. Saudi Arabia and the Emirates cheer on and funnel financial support, fearing democratic movements in a majority Moslem country could trigger similar aspirations in their own backyard. Weeks of demonstrations and intensified repression follow until Hamdok is reinstated – a small victory for the people, however, Hamdok is only a figurehead; presiding over a military-approved cabinet and the allied bloc of business interests who backed the coup. Protests continue in major cities. Dozens are killed and hundreds wounded and sexually assaulted by the RSF. Hamdok resigns in January 2022, as the military extends its powers and those critical of the coup are marginalized. The junta continues appointment of loyalists and reviving links to Omar al-Bashir’s party.<sup>45</sup>

Three years into the uprisings and after what was at one time hailed a victory for democracy, a different picture has emerged. As directly quoted by ACLED, the

---

<sup>44</sup> John Mukum Mbaku, “The Controversy over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam,” Brookings, August 5, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2020/08/05/the-controversy-over-the-grand-ethiopian-renaissance-dam/>.

<sup>45</sup> “10 Conflicts to Worry about in 2022: Sudan,” ACLED, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://acleddata.com/10-conflicts-to-worry-about-in-2022/sudan/>.



“dubious narrative that Sudan was ‘transitioning to democracy’ [has become] increasingly difficult to sustain.”<sup>46</sup>

***“The dubious narrative that Sudan was ‘transitioning to democracy’ [has become] increasingly difficult to sustain.”***

As the deputy chairman of the TMC, and the head of RSF, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (“Hemeti”) is the real power in Sudan, but his influence extends well beyond the seat of the government, beginning at least as far back as the 2003 war in Darfur. As the commanding officer of the Janjaweed, the ethnic camel herding militia which spanned across Chad and northern Darfur, he is well known for his bloody counterinsurgency campaigns, the villages he destroyed, the massacres and the rapes.<sup>47</sup>

When Bashir formalized and rebranded Janjaweed as the RSF into a paramilitary force, he promoted Hemeti to brigadier general and incorporated the force in his proxy wars in Chad, as well as counterinsurgency attacks in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

When South Sudan seceded from the north in 2011 after decades of civil war, it took over 75% of the oil reserves with it, much to the chagrin of Khartoum. But the next year gold was discovered in North Darfur, triggering a mad rush from all corners accounting for 40% of Sudan’s exports by 2017. With their background in the region, RSF commanders and Hemeti soon controlled the most lucrative mines and

---

<sup>46</sup> “10 Conflicts to Worry about in 2022: Sudan,” ACLED, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://acleddata.com/10-conflicts-to-worry-about-in-2022/sudan/>.

<sup>47</sup> Ishaan Tharoor, “The Warlord Wrecking Sudan’s Revolution,” The Washington Post, June 18, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/06/18/warlord-wrecking-sudans-revolution/>.





the flow of gold, mainly destined for the UAE where new opportunities opened up. Hemeti made other contacts, sending troops to serve with a Saudi-Emirati coalition to fight in Yemen. His commander on the ground was Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, his longtime partner from the Janjaweed days, presently chair of the ruling Transitional Sovereignty Council, and together, the architect of the coup against Bashir.

As a result of the years of involvement in Darfur and western Sudan, Hemeti also controlled the borders with Chad and Libya. When the EU began funding the Sudanese government to control the migration across the Sahara to Libya in order to stem the influx into Europe, opportunity for influence and self-enrichment multiplied through control of human trafficking, extracting bribes and ransoms to which Hemeti was directly positioned to exploit.

Through gold and mercenary activities in Africa and beyond, Hemeti and his patronage lines and allies control everything from mining and transport to iron, steel and other investments, easily the richest man in Sudan.

Alex de Wall, the foremost expert on Sudan, calls Hemeti, “a military-political entrepreneur, more powerful than any army general or civilian leader in Sudan, whose paramilitary business empire transgresses territorial and legal boundaries, and whose political marketplace is more dynamic than any fragile institutions of civilian government.”<sup>48</sup>

Three years after the street protests and uprisings, the army is still in control, with Burhan and Hemeti at its helm. Members from Bashir’s National Congress Party

---

<sup>48</sup> Alex de Waal, “Sudan Crisis: The Ruthless Mercenaries Who Run the Country for Gold,” BBC News, July 19, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48987901>.



(NCP) have been released from prison and reappointed to key positions in various cadres of the government and intelligence services, and millions in funds have been misappropriated. Meanwhile, the food crisis is threatening 20 million Sudanese according to WFP as a result of the coup, which halted billions of dollars in aid from Western donors, poor annual harvest due to drought and environmental deterioration and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, two countries that supplied Sudan with 35% of its wheat imports.<sup>49 50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Mat Nashed, "Six Months since Coup, Sudan Promises to Keep up Democracy Fight," Al Jazeera, April 25, 2022.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/25/sudan-six-months-into-a-coup-the-fight-for-democracy-is-ongoing>.

<sup>50</sup> "Agriculture and Food Security: Sudan," U.S. Agency for International Development, November 8, 2022, <https://www.usaid.gov/sudan/agriculture-and-food-security>.



---

# New Challenges, Cyberwarfare, Surveillance & Beyond



## Cambridge Analytica

When news broke of Cambridge Analytica (CA), the British based consulting firm and the subsidiary of a private intelligence company, regarding the role it played in the U.S. 2016 elections and Brexit, alarms were raised for the first time about the formidable powers of data analysis, misappropriation of digital information and the potential for mass manipulation, especially in the electoral process. The events shed light on the amount of data aggregated by social platforms like Facebook from which psychological profiles could be built and exploited to change behavior through targeted, curated advertising.

What is a lesser known fact is the company's presence in Africa, first in South Africa, as far back as 1994, subsequently in Kenya and Nigeria.

In the aftermath of the apartheid regime in 1994 and during the rise of Nelson Mandela, two parties, African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party, which represented the Zulu people, competed for prominence, sparking violence and fears of increased election disruption. CA was then hired by one of the parties to mitigate election violence. The hiring party is presumed to be ANC, due to their continuing trend in similar tactics in the aftermath. Martin Plaut, a research fellow at University of London and a Journalist specializing in southern Africa reported that ANC invested millions of dollars propagating "fake" and misleading messaging in social media, as well as on billboards along highways.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Salem Solomon, "Cambridge Analytica Played Roles in Multiple African Elections," Voice of America, March 22, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/cambridge-analytica-played-roles-in-multiple-african-elections/4309792.html>.



CA in fact openly boasts of its role in Kenya’s 2013 elections when Uhuru Kenyatta first retained their services. According to their own website, CA “designed and implemented the largest political research project ever conducted in East Africa” by sampling and interviewing 47,000 respondents to determine voting patterns and to devise “effective campaign strategy based on the electorate’s real needs (jobs) and fears (tribal violence).”<sup>52 53</sup>

In 2017, the incumbent, Uhuru Kenyatta once again ran against Raila Odinga, winning by a wide margin. Amidst allegations of fraud and widespread violence throughout the country where dozens were killed, the Supreme Court nullified the vote. Both sides had spent millions of dollars on their campaigns, including payments to international PR firms that mined data and specialized in targeted advertising, including \$6 million to CA by the incumbent Kenyatta, and considerable sums to Aristotle International, a U.S. based company, also focused on campaign data mining. CA worked with Kenyatta’s ruling Jubilee Party, to exploit divisions to re-elect Uhuru Kenyatta.

***“We have rebranded the entire party twice, written the manifesto, done huge amounts of research, analysis, messaging. Then we’d write all the speeches and stage the whole thing. So, just about every element of his campaign,” Executive Mark Turnball of CA.***

---

<sup>52</sup> “Kenya,” CA Political, April 12, 2018, <https://ca-political.com/casestudykenya2013/>.

<sup>53</sup> Salem Solomon, and Thomas Griesbach, “Did Data Mining Influence Kenya's Annulled Election?” Voice of America, November 17, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/kenya-election-data-mining/4119122.html>.



Strategies included social media videos warning that a victory by opposition leader Raila Odinga would lead to disease and famine, and played to fears of terrorism from the Al-Shabab group.<sup>54</sup>

To be fair, Kenya's elections were not squeaky clean before CA entered the fray. In December 2007 general elections, the incumbent Mwai Kibaki (Kikuyu tribe) won against Raila Odinga (Luo tribe), among widespread vote rigging, leading to violence across the country across ethnic lines. 1,200 people died and more than 500,000 were displaced leading to accusations of genocide and landing the case in the International Criminal Court (ICC).<sup>55</sup>

CA expertise was also showcased in Nigeria, where, the Guardian reported the company paid \$2.8 million by a Nigerian billionaire to find damaging information about candidate Buhari, who was running against the incumbent Goodluck Jonathan. According to the report, CA was provided with a slew of private emails of both candidates by Israeli hackers.<sup>56</sup>

With authoritarian rulers in democratic countries, even in the US, gaining ground through data mining, fake news and disinformation campaigns in recent years, the question arises: In tandem with increasing influence of digitalization in SSA and growth of Social Media and internet connectivity; how will a resource-rich continent

---

<sup>54</sup> Salem Solomon, "Cambridge Analytica Played Roles in Multiple African Elections," Voice of America, March 22, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/cambridge-analytica-played-roles-in-multiple-african-elections/4309792.html>.

<sup>55</sup> "International Criminal Court Investigation in Kenya," Wikipedia, October 28, 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Criminal\\_Court\\_investigation\\_in\\_Kenya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Criminal_Court_investigation_in_Kenya).

<sup>56</sup> Carole Cadwalladr, "Cambridge Analytica Was Offered Politicians' Hacked Emails, Say Witnesses," The Guardian, March 21, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/21/cambridge-analytica-offered-politicians-hacked-emails-witnesses-say>.



---

newly recuperating from colonialism and historically vulnerable to exploitation not only by its own elite but also from imperialism, protect itself from global players, international mining companies, illicit arms dealers and other interested parties, whether in the East or West, jockeying for power and influence?

## Surveillance Technology:

**S**urveillance technology is becoming more ubiquitous, targeted and effective and its corrosive effects on democracy more alarming. It inhibits citizen activism, encourages self-censorships, compromises whistle blowers, tracks and prevents demonstrations before they take place.

In 2021 news broke that the Israeli spyware firm NSO, sold surveillance tools to client states in 40 countries, to be used against journalists, even those in top media firms like FT, NYTimes, Al Jazeera, Reuters and others. Their main product, Pegasus, has the ability to hack all cell phone information and mine data stored in the device, even activating its microphone to record conversations. Among the 60 clients reported, Rwanda stands out as the autocratic African nation, which actively pursues and eliminates dissidents and journalists, even beyond its borders, a subject well researched and reported on in a recent book by Michela Wrong, “Do Not Disturb” – documenting the surveillance, pursuit and ultimate assassination of a high value Rwandan dissident in South Africa.

Pegasus, among other surveillance systems, is increasingly employed by repressive regimes to stifle free speech and neutralize opposition, by effectively transforming any cell phone to a surveillance device, transforming a mobilizing and unifying technology to an instrument of repression.

***“A successful Pegasus infection gives NSO customers access to all data stored on the device. An attack on a journalist could expose a reporter’s confidential sources as well as allowing NSO’s***



*government client to read their chat messages, harvest their address book, listen to their calls, track their precise movements and even record their conversations by activating the device's microphone."<sup>57</sup>*

The West African country of Togo was another client, with over 300 numbers of journalists and dissidents targeted by Pegasus.<sup>58</sup>

The security conglomerate, Mer, has offices in 30 countries, mostly in Latin America and Africa and is managed by Israeli ex-military and intelligence officers.

Joseph Kabila, the multi-term president of DR Congo, where the majority of its people live on less than \$1.90 a day according to the World Bank, and who has amassed great personal wealth through mining concessions and side deals as described earlier, had at his disposal, a sprawling network of spies and intelligence agents in his Agence Nationale de Renseignement (ANR) to keep his people in check. In 2012 during the Francophonie summit of a gathering of many world leaders in his capital he sought to enhance the agency's capabilities to track movement of protestors, and keep opposition leaders from disrupting the summit. This is when he signed a \$26 million contract with MER security services to install surveillance

---

<sup>57</sup> David Pegg et al., "FT Editor among 180 Journalists Identified by Clients of Spyware Firm," The Guardian, July 20, 2021, [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/18/ft-editor-roula-khalaf-among-180-journalists-targeted-nso-spyware?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other&fbclid=IwAR3p6RNISbh8iILGHYSiiSzVtp1vQsIf7zSpVAZ2ICLJ0cU28Bmy5z8dTns](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/18/ft-editor-roula-khalaf-among-180-journalists-targeted-nso-spyware?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other&fbclid=IwAR3p6RNISbh8iILGHYSiiSzVtp1vQsIf7zSpVAZ2ICLJ0cU28Bmy5z8dTns).

<sup>58</sup> "Au Togo, plus De 300 Numéros De Téléphone Ciblés Par Pegasus," RFI, July 24, 2021, [https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210724-au-togo-plus-de-300-num%C3%A9ros-de-t%C3%A9l%C3%A9phone-cibl%C3%A9s-par-pegasus?fbclid=IwAR0cP--ih-XJ\\_F2DroFlfQ8xKR8a\\_eS9DNMnS50PCJNei91gW43uSel7seM&ref=fb\\_i](https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210724-au-togo-plus-de-300-num%C3%A9ros-de-t%C3%A9l%C3%A9phone-cibl%C3%A9s-par-pegasus?fbclid=IwAR0cP--ih-XJ_F2DroFlfQ8xKR8a_eS9DNMnS50PCJNei91gW43uSel7seM&ref=fb_i).



cameras and a command center in Kinshasa in the biggest upgrade to his security apparatus using their proprietary algorithmic tracking software. In 2015, Kabila further expanded his surveillance arsenal through Huawei, enabling interception and monitoring of every mobile phone call within the country. Soon, activists noticed they were being targeted more effectively.<sup>59</sup>

***“In March 2015, after escaping a police raid at a meeting with other anti-Kabila activists, Sylvain Saluseke was spending a cold, damp night at a safe house in Kinshasa when his cell phone rang. The man on the line identified himself as an agent with the ANR, Saluseke said.***

***‘We know where you are,’ The government had detail list of all conversations and text messages between the group.”***

Ahead of 2016 elections, as Kabila blocked and delayed the election process, in an attempt to hold on to power, demonstrations broke out in Kinshasa only to be instantly encountered by security forces and plain clothed mercenaries with machetes and weapons who opened fire, countering the protestors at every turn.

Witnesses noticed security agents were always one step ahead, disrupting protests, hacking communications, beating, shooting and detaining activists. The UN reported at least 54 civilians thrown into flames and burned to death, and over 400 detained or injured.

---

<sup>59</sup> Albert Samaha, “How One Company Made It Easier For An Autocrat To Crack Down, Then Lobbied Trump — And Won,” BuzzFeed News, December 30, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/albertsamaha/joseph-kabila-congo-authoritarian-rule-mer>.



Following intense international pressure and after over two years of delay, elections finally rolled out in December 2018 amidst a flurry of backroom dealings and vote rigging. International observers were disinvited and telecom companies were ordered to block access to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Skype and Youtube.”<sup>60</sup>

Incredibly, despite a 40% lead in the exit polls for the opposition, Martin Fayulu; Kabila’s handpicked candidate, Felix Tshisekedi was declared winner.

As local observers and the international community cried foul play, Mer was again retained on a \$9.5 million contract, this time to lobby the Trump administration to accept the results as free and fair. Mer assembled a team of US consultants along with members of Trump’s advisors and inner circle, not only to subvert democracy in the African nation, but also to influence US foreign policy. Only a month after elections, the Trump administration dropped all objections and instead lauded: “Kabila’s commitment to becoming the first president in DRC history to cede power peacefully through an electoral process.”<sup>61</sup>

In the end, Kabila’s political party walked away with two-thirds majority of the legislature while retaining his allies and point-men in the cabinet. Moreover, his most important wealthy business partner, Dan Gertler, the Israeli billionaire, remained firmly in control of his mining concessions and tracts of land even though he was under FBI investigation. After the elections, Kabila dismantled and

---

<sup>60</sup> Albert Samaha, “How One Company Made It Easier For An Autocrat To Crack Down, Then Lobbied Trump — And Won,” BuzzFeed News, December 30, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/albertsamaha/joseph-kabila-congo-authoritarian-rule-mer>.

<sup>61</sup> Albert Samaha, “How One Company Made It Easier For An Autocrat To Crack Down, Then Lobbied Trump — And Won,” BuzzFeed News, December 30, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/albertsamaha/joseph-kabila-congo-authoritarian-rule-mer>.



transferred all Mer and Huawei intercept equipment to his private residence outside Kinshasa and reinstalled them by “a small team of trusted men”.<sup>62</sup>

Tshisekedi has since slowly proceeded to break Kabila’s hold on the government, embarked on a review of mining contracts and has released some political prisoners, but Kabila remains a powerful figure, controlling a network of 80 companies in every sector of the economy with his family, including Gécamines, the country’s largest mining company and biggest contributor to the state’s budget.<sup>63</sup>

NSO and MER are not the only Israeli security firms selling surveillance products; Haaretz reported many such services sold to repressive regimes and others, with the implicit approval of the Ministry of Defense who lists 40 such applications. Other companies include, Black Cube, Celebrite, Quadream, Candiru, Anyvision Interactive Technologies, WiSpear, Dahua, NICE Systems, Elbit, Verint and Magal Security Systems marketing such services to governments, militaries and agencies, testing and perfecting the capabilities first on the occupied Palestinian territories in Gaza and the West Bank.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Albert Samaha, “How One Company Made It Easier For An Autocrat To Crack Down, Then Lobbied Trump — And Won,” BuzzFeed News, December 30, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/albertsamaha/joseph-kabila-congo-authoritarian-rule-mer>.

<sup>63</sup> Clement Bonnerot, “How DR Congo’s Tshisekedi Loosened Kabila’s Grip on Power,” France 24, February 7, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210207-how-dr-congo-s-tshisekedi-lifted-kabila-s-grip-on-power>.

<sup>64</sup> Amitai Ziv, “How Israeli Spy-Tech Became Dictators’ Weapon of Choice,” Haaretz, July 18, 2021, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/tech-news/2021-07-18/ty-article/.highlight/how-israeli-spy-tech-became-dictators-weapon-of-choice/0000017f-df8a-db22-a17f-ffbbcccc0000>.

---

## China In Africa

**D**igital influence in African elections cannot be discussed without the role of other powerful players with interests.

As China, headed by Xi Jinping, arguably its most consequential leader since Mao Tse Tung, ramps up competition in an increasingly multi-polar world, it continues to expand its influence and reach with aggressive lending, strategic infrastructure development, and territorial dominance both domestically and abroad. Its rapid foray into the African continent represents a vital move to secure primary resources, establish tactical relationships ensuring control of mineral reserves, energy and trade routes. As part of the policy of expansion, China has steadily aimed at displacing the West by offering preferential bilateral loans without placing conditionality on good governance or human rights, secured development and infrastructure projects with preferential terms, and sought to forge closer relationships with African leaders, fast becoming the dominant provider of communication technology to the continent.

In 2015, the Chinese government introduced the Digital Silk Road (DSR) project, as the companion initiative to the BRI with a broad focus on the technology dimensions of development, specifically, the digital sector.<sup>65</sup> The DSR would facilitate China's global influence and participation at all levels by setting digital standards,

---

<sup>65</sup> Motaloni Abegbi, "China's Digital Silk Road and Africa's Technological Future," Council on Foreign Relations, February 1, 2022.

<https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-digital-silk-road-and-africas-technological-future>.



influencing governance discourse and gaining leadership positions in communication and technology sectors.

Naturally, the efforts would begin by improving digital connectivity in countries included in the BRI and subsequently, by gaining primacy and influence in these regions. China's global expansion of telecommunications had already begun in 1999 under its "go out policy",<sup>66</sup> which was designed to facilitate China's internationalization, fast tracking Africa's telecommunication developments which ramped up in 1990's with global giants like Huawei and ZTE, competing easily with the likes of Siemens and Ericsson through low cost and state subsidies, to build complete internet and telecoms infrastructure from A to Z.

The competitive edge has been maintained mainly by Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of China, the China Development Bank (CB) and the China-Africa Development Fund, facilitating Chinese led telecom and infrastructure companies who have penetrated all layers of Africa's telecom industry, including undersea cables, satellites, applications and platforms, each new building block compatible only with the previous layer, entrenching Chinese monopoly at every step.

China now dominates Africa's critical infrastructure markets including its communications and surveillance technology. 40 out of 54 countries in Africa have already signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to the Belt and Road Initiative with China, spanning the mining sector and rare-earth metals, as well, designs on maritime routes and other strategic assets. With ironclad loans from

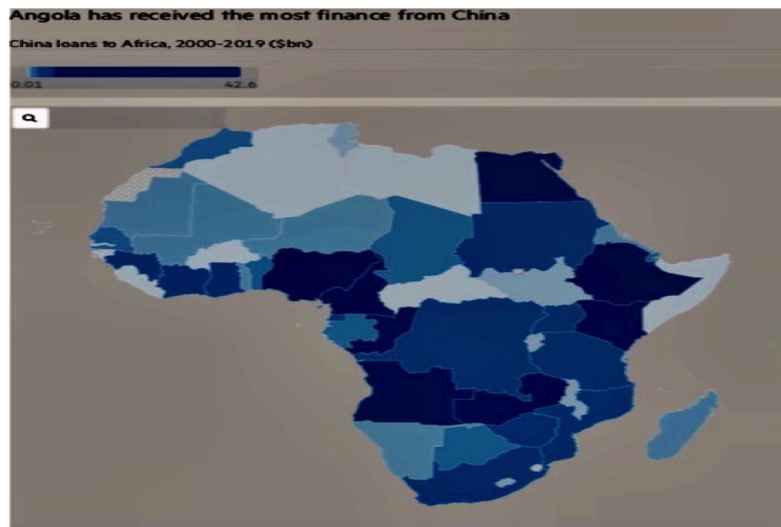
---

<sup>66</sup> Motaloni Abegbi, "China's Digital Silk Road and Africa's Technological Future," Council on Foreign Relations, February 1, 2022.

<https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-digital-silk-road-and-africas-technological-future>.

Chinese banks, Beijing makes up about one-fifth of all lending to Africa, focused on resource rich states like Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya and Zambia, peaking in 2016 and pulled back somewhat in recent years for fears of being overleveraged.

The map below shows the debt landscape in Africa, with Angola, the second oil producing country on the continent, and holder of considerable deposits of diamonds as the largest debtor with \$42.6 billion.<sup>67</sup>



Sources: [China Africa Research Initiative](#); [Johns Hopkins University](#); [Boston University](#)

- note: database does not track disbursement or repayment

<sup>67</sup> Liz Faunce, David Pilling, and Kathrin Hille, "China Applies Brakes to Africa Lending," Financial Times, January 10, 2022.  
<https://www.ft.com/content/64b4bcd5-032e-4be5-aa3b-e902f5b1345e>.

Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) highlighted 266 Chinese technological initiatives across Africa including 5G infrastructure, data centers, smart city projects and skills and training programs, Huawei being the main player with the firm already responsible for 70% of the continent's 4G networks, the chief provider of African Union's communications infrastructure and the most prevalent mobile phone brand.<sup>68</sup>

Huawei's market penetration in Africa is thanks to Chinese state support, allowing the firm to offer preferential packages due to funding access through China Eximbank which, and has financed 45 out of 47 loan-backed Huawei projects in Africa. Huawei has worked on projects in 23 African countries, the largest loans going to Ethiopia, \$834 million; Cameroon, \$337 million; Angola, \$336 million; Guinea, \$273 million, and Zimbabwe \$219 million. Projects range from mobile-network development, surveillance, light rail ICT and more.

In assessing the rapid penetration of Huawei in Africa, consider the following example: In 2009 Nigerian branch of the carrier Airtel bought its equipment from Ericsson, but by 2016 already 50% of the infrastructure was replaced by Huawei, mostly due to competitive pricing Huawei extended as a result of the generous lines of credit and favorable terms from the China Development Bank.<sup>69</sup>

As China expands its reach with tech, training and expertise, offering connectivity at lower prices, it is also exporting its own model of citizen surveillance, state security,

---

<sup>68</sup> Khwezi Nkwanyana, "China's AI Deployment in Africa Poses Risks to Security and Sovereignty," *The Strategist*, May 5, 2021, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/chinas-ai-deployment-in-africa-poses-risks-to-security-and-sovereignty/>.

<sup>69</sup> Jordan Link, "How Huawei Could Survive Trump," *The Washington Post*, June 10, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/06/10/what-do-we-know-about-huawei-is-africa-presence/>.





and vision of Internet control, its technology being employed by African governments to spy on their citizens and ring fence opposition. Ugandan officials, for example, travel to Beijing to learn from the Chinese how to control social media.

The Wall Street Journal reported Huawei helped at least two African countries, Uganda and Zambia, intercept encrypted communications and social media and use cell data to track political opponents.<sup>70</sup>

As Huawei becomes indispensable selling smartphones, software and cell towers, those services are sold in tandem with filtering technologies, advice and training on how to control dissent. Surveillance cameras with advanced facial recognition technology are being widely used in SA, Senegal, Cameroon and Kenya among others.<sup>71</sup>

Wall Street Journal, among others, investigated the effects of the new security systems in Uganda that included over 5,000 surveillance cameras with facial recognition software, and ability to phone tap and hack passwords. The investigation highlighted the impact on the political process, civil society and the opposition. During the January 2021 elections, a 6<sup>th</sup> term was secured for President Yoweri Museveni amidst outright fraud, voter intimidation and violent crackdowns.

---

<sup>70</sup> Joe Parkinson, Nicholas, Bariyo, and Josh Chin, "Huawei Technicians Helped African Governments Spy on Political Opponents," The Wall Street Journal, August 15, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/huawei-technicians-helped-african-governments-spy-on-political-opponents-11565793017>.

<sup>71</sup> Momoko Kidera, "Huawei's Deep Roots Put Africa beyond Reach of US Crackdown," Nikkei Asia, August 15, 2020, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Huawei-crackdown/Huawei-s-deep-roots-put-Africa-beyond-reach-of-US-crackdown>.



The Huawei contract provided surveillance cameras protected by spikes dispersed even in remote slums; thousands of cameras were installed as part of a “safe city” system, and Ugandan police were trained. The system prides itself in using AI to catch “criminals” even before a crime has been committed, an echo of state policies in China. Activists in Uganda maintain that instead of criminals, political opponents and dissidents are targeted. The system can also tap into any phone to monitor and document conversations. When activists realized they were being heard and watched, they tried to use encrypted messaging in WhatsApp, but then Spyware was used to hack communications.<sup>72</sup>

Museveni removed term limits in 2005, and age limits in 2017, running for a 6<sup>th</sup> term against 11 opposition candidates who were repeatedly detained, threatened and blocked, their supporters beaten and harassed with many killed. Bobi Wine, a popular reggae star and main opposition front runner ran on a platform of change, economic justice and democratic transformation, garnering support among many, especially the youth, posing a real challenge to the veteran head of state.

During the campaign, Huawei cyber experts worked hand in hand with the government to hack and monitor activists; an accusation that Huawei denies. Bobi wine said even political rallies planned in secret were discovered and disrupted at every turn. Many were arrested; Bobi Wine made a narrow escape, yet state security forces were able to track him down, subjecting him to beatings. The Ugandan government told WSJ reporters that they work with Huawei to simply

---

<sup>72</sup> Joe Parkinson, Nicholas, Bariyo, and Josh Chin, “Huawei Technicians Helped African Governments Spy on Political Opponents,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 15, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/huawei-technicians-helped-african-governments-spy-on-political-opponents-11565793017>.



“bolster national security”, a terminology often used and easily co-opted in the post 9/11 world.<sup>73</sup>

At the end, Bobi Wine was arrested, international observers were barred from monitoring and voting took place following days of Internet shutdowns. With an estimated \$300 billion in revenues from Uganda’s oil exports set to begin, Museveni is determined to hold on to power.<sup>74</sup>

China’s support comes with strings attached, mainly, political support for Beijing and against pro-democracy protests. Uganda issued a statement against the recent protests in Hong Kong, evidence of Kampala’s growing reliance on China:

***“Hong Kong is part of China, Hong Kong’s affairs are China’s domestic affairs.”<sup>75</sup>***

In tandem, states use legislative means to curtail access to social media and control free speech. In 2018 Museveni passed a new tax on social media, under which users must pay 200 Ugandan shillings (\$0.05) a day to use popular platforms like Twitter, FB and WhatsApp -- another tactic to restrict citizen mobilization and activism. The law further requires that all users of social media obtain a license and agree not to

---

<sup>73</sup> Joe Parkinson, Nicholas Bariyo, and Josh Chin, “Huawei Technicians Helped African Governments Spy on Political Opponents,” The Wall Street Journal, August 15, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/huawei-technicians-helped-african-governments-spy-on-political-opponents-11565793017>.

<sup>74</sup> David McKenzie, Brent Swails, and Angela Dewan, “Ugandan President Museveni Wins Re-Election in Vote His Rival Says Was Rigged,” CNN, January 16, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/16/africa/uganda-presidential-election-yoweri-museveni-bobi-wine-intl/index.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Halima Athumani, “Uganda States Support for Beijing on Hong Kong Protests,” Voice of America, October 8, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/uganda-states-support-beijing-hong-kong-protests>.



engage in “distortion of facts” or publish content “likely to create public insecurity” - what Amnesty International has characterized as criminalizing freedom of expression.<sup>76</sup>

State institutions have been politicized with a slew of legal instruments such as the Public Order Management Act, Communications Act, Preventative Detention Act, and Stage Play and Entertainment Rules, a string of laws designed to arrest opposition leaders, block peaceful protests and detain journalists.

While Uganda has never experienced political freedom during Museveni, the country has been recognized for its relative respect of civil liberties, privileges that have been substantially diminished during the 2021 electoral cycle, moving Uganda further away from the democratic aspirations of many of its citizens, a trend in backsliding witnessed in other countries enabled by digital gains.<sup>77</sup>

China is clearly the stronger partner in infrastructure negotiations, typically requiring deposits as collateral escrowed in Chinese banks. In addition, Chinese run projects do not hire local staff, creating resentment.

Chinese influence and funding is creating some push back in Uganda even as high levels of debt among African countries raise concerns of possible asset takeovers. Massive infrastructure loans for projects like highways and hydropower dams have been greenlit and fast tracked personally by Museveni, or his majority ruling party. Protests broke out in Zambia with a “say no to China”, and Gambia protested pollution and overfishing in a Chinese-backed fishmeal plant.

---

<sup>76</sup> Joseph Seigle and Candace Cook, “Elections in Africa in 2021,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, January 12, 2021, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/2021-elections/>.

<sup>77</sup> Joseph Seigle and Candace Cook, “Elections in Africa in 2021,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, January 12, 2021, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/2021-elections/>.



By 2018 a third of Uganda's national debt, standing at \$10 billion, was to the Chinese. Large loan packages have been approved, often with Museveni's direct intervention in the bidding process, to finance highways and infrastructure especially in areas where oil exploration is happening.

A \$200 million loan to Uganda for the expansion of the Entebbe International Airport gives budgetary oversight to the Chinese bank in the fine print, potentially positioning the bank for financial control of the strategic site and a major hub in the region.<sup>78</sup>

Another high profile project is an \$450 million upgrade financed by Export-Import bank of China, a deal Museveni personally intervened in to announce he had already identified the appropriate investor – the China Railway 17<sup>th</sup> Bureau Group Company.<sup>79</sup>

***“We are fighting to become a colony of China” Ugandan opposition  
lawmaker Ssemujju Ibrahim Nganda.<sup>80</sup>***

---

<sup>78</sup> James T. Areddy and Nicholas Bariyo, “Uganda Finds China's Leverage Is in the Fine Print of Its Lending,” The Wall Street Journal, December 27, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/uganda-finds-chinas-leverage-is-in-the-fine-print-of-its-lending-11640601003>.

<sup>79</sup> Rodney Muhumuza, “As China Builds up Africa, Some in Uganda Warn of Trouble,” Associated Press, October 24, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/uganda-financial-markets-global-trade-international-news-hong-kong-62ab13badad04dd7b38a69b69eac61d1>.

<sup>80</sup> Khwezi Nkwanyana, “China's AI Deployment in Africa Poses Risks to Security and Sovereignty,” The Strategist, May 5, 2021, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/chinas-ai-deployment-in-africa-poses-risks-to-security-and-sovereignty/>.



Chinese investors control around 70% of Congo's mining sector, according to Congo's chamber of mines, much of it taken over from Western companies in recent years.<sup>81</sup>

As China makes inroads into Africa and expands its economic and digital footprint, concerned voices continue to raise alarms. In 2018 Le Monde published an investigation, confirmed by Financial Times and other media, revealing that from 2012 to 2017, servers based inside the African Union's headquarters in Addis Ababa were transferring data between 12 midnight and 2 am, every single night, to unknown servers 8,000 kilometers away in Shanghai. In addition, microphones were detected hidden in desks and walls. This has also been reported on by think tanks and private consultancies from around the world. The key ICT provider inside AUHQ was Huawei.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Aaron Ross and Karin Strohecker, "Exclusive Congo Reviewing \$6 Bln Mining Deal with Chinese Investors -Finmin," Reuters, August 30, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/exclusive-congo-reviewing-6-bln-mining-deal-wit-h-chinese-investors-finmin-2021-08-27/>.

<sup>82</sup> Danielle Cave, "The African Union Headquarters Hack and Australia's 5G Network," The Strategist, July 13, 2018, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-african-union-headquarters-hack-and-australias-5-g-network/>.

## Russia In Africa

**F**ollowing the long parade of colonial powers, civilizing white missionaries, do-gooding international NGO's, neo-colonial terror fighting imperialists and Chinese pragmatic resource-extractionists, enter the Russians; the newest arrivals in SSA in their bid for global dominance.

Russia's designs in Africa are opportunistic and strategic, pursuing its geopolitical goals through low cost, high impact engagements aimed at countering Western influence by asymmetric means to project power in the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal to counter NATO as need be, and to gain footholds in other strategic points including the ports in Somaliland, Eritrea, Djibouti, Sudan and along the Libyan coast.

Considering it's main economic leverage on the continent is through the export of arms and grain, it seeks other channels of influence, jousting with the International, i.e. Western liberal order, by undermining democratic principles and sowing discord with minimal cost and tactical involvements.

Regrettably, resource rich Africa, with its weak institutions, lax environmental and labor laws, and fragile democracies, still grappling with colonial resentments, provides fertile ground for Russia, leaving its 54 votes in the UN vulnerable to Russian influence through a three pronged approach of mercenary interventions, disinformation campaigns and elite diplomacy.

Since 2017, reports of Russian soldiers fighting side by side with Africans have been partly dismissed, partly disavowed by the Kremlin. The Russian paramilitary force,



the Wagner Group (WG) is headed by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a close confidant of Putin who was indicted in the U.S. for 2016 election meddling. The group is loosely affiliated with the Kremlin, just enough to act as auxiliary tentacles of policy, yet providing a semblance of plausible deniability for Mr. Putin. The group is active across the Sahel from Mali to Sudan; as far north as Libya and as far south as Mozambique and Madagascar, targeting fragile states who are facing internal challenges to their rule but endowed with strategic resources and assets. A 2019 summit in Sochi, featured Vladimir Putin hosting 40 heads of African states showcasing Russia as a major global partner, preferable to the West.<sup>83</sup>

Brookings Institute estimates Russia's private security company and its propaganda 'troll farm', known as the Internet Research Agency (IRA) to be a major threat to democracy and rule of law wherever it operates.<sup>84</sup>

WG offers military and counter-insurgency support and training unfettered by human rights considerations, in return for mining concessions and access to strategic assets and locations as Russian propaganda trolls wage disinformation campaigns in fragile states to discredit the West, foment social polarization and undermine support for democracy and the international liberal world order.

---

<sup>83</sup> Michael Schwartz, and Gaelle Borgia, "How Russia Meddles Abroad for Profit: Cash, Trolls and a Cult Leader," The New York Times, November 11, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/11/world/africa/russia-madagascar-election.html>.

<sup>84</sup> Federica Saini Fasanotti, "Russia's Wagner Group in Africa: Influence, Commercial Concessions, Rights Violations, and Counterinsurgency Failure," Brookings, February 8, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/08/russias-wagner-group-in-africa-influence-commercial-concessions-rights-violations-and-counterinsurgency-failure/>.





Russian disinformation campaigns in Africa began during the Madagascar presidential elections in 2018, deploying operatives to pay journalists and demonstrators, planting stories in social media to bolster spoiler candidates and strong-arming challengers to drop out of the race. The prize: major stake in chromium mines.<sup>85</sup>

In Mozambique, forces were deployed in support of the government to respond to the Islamist insurgency in the north. The country is endowed with considerable liquefied natural gas reserves and mineral resources including precious and semi-precious gems.<sup>86</sup>

Russia was a longtime backer of Omar al-Bashir of Sudan. During the uprising, the Wagner Group deployed 500 men in his support, in return for exclusive rights to gold mines; and soon after, control of an important naval base on the Red Sea, in Port Sudan was in the works.<sup>87</sup> More importantly, following the military overthrow of the tenuous civilian-military alliance that emerged after the 2019 pro-democracy movement, even as the West sought sanctions against the coup leaders, Russia aligned itself with the Junta, currently striking a deal to retain previous mining concessions and finalizing the deal for Port Sudan. Disinformation and pro-government information warfare included fake polls and

---

<sup>85</sup> Michael Schwartz, and Gaelle Borgia, "How Russia Meddles Abroad for Profit: Cash, Trolls and a Cult Leader," *The New York Times*, November 11, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/11/world/africa/russia-madagascar-election.html>.

<sup>86</sup> Joseph Siegle, "Chapter 10: Russia and Africa: Expanding Influence and Instability," George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies. Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/marshall-center-books/russias-global-reach-security-and-statecraft-assessment/chapter-10-russia-and-africa-expanding-influence-and>.

<sup>87</sup> "Sudan Remains Open to Naval Base Deal with Russia," *AL-Monitor*, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/03/sudan-remains-open-naval-base-deal-russia>.



counter-demonstration techniques, smearing protestors as anti-Islamic, pro-Israel and pro-LGBT.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), rich in copper, diamond, gold, uranium and other resources, the Wagner Group is lending military support to President Touadéra, whose rule barely extends beyond the capital, Bangui, due to the myriad of rebel groups and Jihadists operating across the region. In return, gold and diamond mining licenses have been granted. The harsh tactics of WG have been widely criticized by the United Nations, European Union and the US for severe human rights violations, harassing peacekeepers, journalists, aid workers and minorities.<sup>88</sup> The Russian mercenaries have been accused of extra-judicial killings of civilians, rape and sexual violence.<sup>89</sup>

The story is similar in Mali, where a variety of Jihadists, al-Qaida and Islamic State affiliates, as well as autonomous and Touareg separatists have been operating. The French Barkhane forces, along with a smaller EU force and UN Peacekeeping Mission (MINUSMA) were deployed running counter terrorism operations and stabilization since 2013, in spite of which, the security situation continued to worsen, ultimately leading to a military coup in 2020. Resentment against the West, in particular, the French, as the ex-colonial masters still wielding influence had long built up, and the

---

<sup>88</sup> Federica Saini Fasanotti, "Russia's Wagner Group in Africa: Influence, Commercial Concessions, Rights Violations, and Counterinsurgency Failure," Brookings, February 8, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/08/russias-wagner-group-in-africa-influence-commercial-concessions-rights-violations-and-counterinsurgency-failure/>.

<sup>89</sup> Carley Petesch and Gerald Imray, "Russian Mercenaries Are Putin's 'Coercive Tool' in Africa," Associated Press, April 23, 2022, [https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-technology-business-mali-d0d2c96e01d299a68e00d3a0828ba895?fbclid=IwAR3usTtYNQXScKE9xB1GaN3kGAf606JsxaGMYoDtRNkbaRnFdN5W\\_vqsjB0](https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-technology-business-mali-d0d2c96e01d299a68e00d3a0828ba895?fbclid=IwAR3usTtYNQXScKE9xB1GaN3kGAf606JsxaGMYoDtRNkbaRnFdN5W_vqsjB0).

French were asked to leave.<sup>90</sup> As the international condemnation against the coup increased and the French pressed for a transition timeline to democratic elections, the Russian alliance was welcomed. The Wagner Group has now taken the lead for security provisions, training Malian forces and protecting the new government with eyes on the gold and diamond mines. In the aftermath of the coup, jubilant supporters of the junta carrying Russian flags and pictures of Vladimir Putin came out into the streets with posters celebrating Malian-Russian cooperation while social media posts emerged blaming the French for the insurgency.<sup>91</sup>

Russia's biggest aluminum producer, Rusal, has expansive bauxite mining interests in Guinea, whose president, Alpha Conde's unconstitutional 3<sup>rd</sup> term was defended by disinformation messaging on national television in 2019.<sup>92</sup>

Russia's growing influence in Africa has spilled over onto the world stage, garnering support by its African protégées at the UN, blocking resolutions to investigate fraudulent elections as in the case of Democratic Republic of Congo; or refusing to condemn the coup in Sudan, effectively co-opting Africans to undermine democratic

---

<sup>90</sup> "Mali's Ruling Junta Asks France to Withdraw Troops 'without Delay'," France 24, February 18, 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220218-mali-asks-france-to-withdraw-troops-without-delay>.

<sup>91</sup> Joseph Siegle, "Chapter 10: Russia and Africa: Expanding Influence and Instability," George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies. Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/marshall-center-books/russias-global-reach-security-and-statecraft-assessment/chapter-10-russia-and-africa-expanding-influence-and>.

<sup>92</sup> Joseph Siegle, "Chapter 10: Russia and Africa: Expanding Influence and Instability," George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies. Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/marshall-center-books/russias-global-reach-security-and-statecraft-assessment/chapter-10-russia-and-africa-expanding-influence-and>.



---

voices on their own continent. Not coincidentally, 17 of the 35 countries that abstained from voting to condemn the invasion of Ukraine were in Africa.

Russia is the leading exporter of arms to Africa, holding 49% of the arms market, with payments often taken in the form of mineral concessions and resources.



## U.S. in Africa

### *Potentials & Great Power Rivalry*

**W**ith a young and fast growing demographic, projected to represent 25% of world's population by 2050, large swaths of untapped arable land, 30% of critical minerals and the largest regional voting block - 54 at the United Nations - Africa has emerged as a strategic geopolitical region for the U.S., even as it finds itself increasingly on the sidelines while the China juggernaut invests in roads, railroads, dams and ports, projecting power in sectors traditionally dominated by US giants like Microsoft, Google, GE and others.

After the retreat of the Trump administration from the region, Biden administration's Africa policy has emerged to reinforce the strategic importance of African countries as critical geostrategic counterparts to foster a stable international system, craft climate change policies, and strike technological and economic co-operations<sup>93</sup>, a key focus being on digital development and ICT infrastructure providing increased opportunities for American tech giants such as Amazon, Meta, Apples and Google in support of Africa's national digital initiatives.

As consumer demand grows commensurate with its demographics, the growing African youth will aspire to democratic systems, open markets and free trade, aligned with western ideals. As its middle class grows, currently at 355 million and

---

<sup>93</sup> Ned Price, "Secretary Blinken's Travel to Cambodia, the Philippines, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda," U.S. Department of State, July 29, 2022,

<https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-travel-to-cambodia-the-philippines-south-africa-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-rwanda/>.



projected to reach 1.1 billion by 2060,<sup>94</sup> so does buying power and economic aspirations with a growing pool of consumers and clients. Regional cooperation pacts and alliances reflect the potentials, with The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), launched in 2019 - the largest of its kind - connecting 1.3 billion people across over 50 countries, with a GDP of \$ 3.4 trillion.<sup>95</sup> The pact facilitates trade and reshapes Africa's regulatory and economic sectors, presenting new opportunities; with global powers, Russia, China others vying for influence.

As rivalries intensify, however, Russia is increasingly acting as the disruptor, expanding its influence by exploiting colonial resentments, destabilizing democratic orders by arms sales, disseminating disinformation and deploying mercenaries in support of oppressive rulers; and China increases its footprint through BRI and DSR initiatives via preferential financing, technology, infrastructure and security co-operations in return securing ports, bases and mining concessions. Each pole, in turn, aiming to pull the region into their sphere of influence; - Russia gaining support for its regional aggressions and war on Ukraine, undermining the West by proxy; and China, taking the long view by exporting its model of citizen surveillance, securing markets and raw materials. Meanwhile, regional powers like Turkey, UAE, Iran and Saudi Arabia, flex muscles in the horn of Africa for ideological and regional relevance.

---

<sup>94</sup> Rama Yade, "Africa Is America's Greatest Geopolitical Opportunity. Does the US Know It?" Atlantic Council, May 25, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/africa-is-americas-greatest-geopolitical-opportunity-does-the-us-know-it/>.

<sup>95</sup> "The African Continental Free Trade Area," World Bank, July 27, 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/the-african-continental-free-trade-area>.



As digital competition between the US and China intensifies, the latter is gaining the upper hand with 45% market share of mobile devices, the main access points to the internet on SSA as previously detailed, with ramifications on the economy, democracy, infrastructure, utilized in everything from money transfers to government services. Of forty-two vendors on the continent, just four are incorporated in the United States with 14% market share.<sup>96</sup>

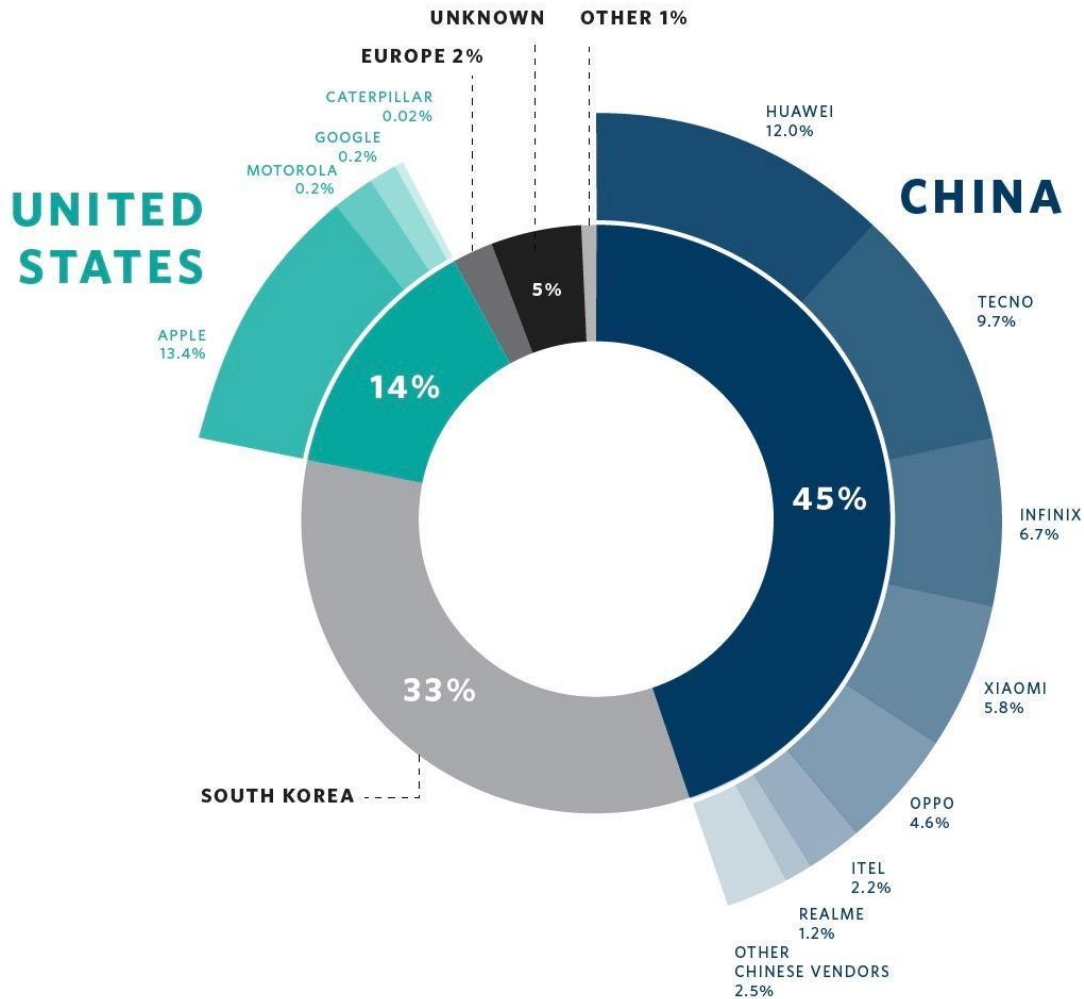
The rivalry has sparked licensing and trade restrictions by the U.S. Department of Commerce on Chinese companies, and limitations on their U.S. counterparts conducting business, for example barring Google from including Gmail, Google Maps, Youtube or the Play Store on Huawei phones.<sup>97</sup>

Competition has led to fragmentation in this sector as providers depend on access to compatible digital infrastructure, with each side striving to help shape the infrastructure market to their advantage, effectively displacing the other, challenging market access and penetration.

---

<sup>96</sup> Jane Munga and Kyla Denwood, "How Will U.s.-China Tech Decoupling Affect Africa's Mobile Phone Market?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 3, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/10/03/how-will-u.s.-china-tech-decoupling-affect-africa-s-mobile-phone-market-pub-88034>.

<sup>97</sup> Jane Munga and Kyla Denwood, "How Will U.s.-China Tech Decoupling Affect Africa's Mobile Phone Market?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 3, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/10/03/how-will-u.s.-china-tech-decoupling-affect-africa-s-mobile-phone-market-pub-88034>.



Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Source: Author calculations of mobile vendor market share data. See Statcounter, "Mobile Vendor Market Share Africa," August 2022, <https://gs.statcounter.com/vendor-market-share/mobile/africa>.







## U.S. War on Terror

**A**s the U.S. pursues its mission to foster a stable international system, it has dramatically expanded its military footprint, engaged in counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations in North and SSA, especially along the Sahel where radical islam, climate change and poverty have given birth to a deadly mix. Sadly, the results have been anything but stabilizing.

The legacy of the cold war with decades of East-West proxy confrontations leading to coup d'états, civil wars, CIA support of ruthless dictators, human rights abuses and subversion of democratic governance is well documented. What has been less the subject of scrutiny is the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and America's War on Terror (WoT), which has continued in the same vein, with similar results.

Much like the cold war, WoT has introduced foreign military interventions focusing on resource rich and strategically located countries and in support of repressive regimes at times pursuing the illusion of security at the expense of democratic governance. Simplistic framings of Islam have fueled U.S. presence and the WoT; disparate groups were lumped together with their associated entities hunted, confusing movements focusing on social and political life with extremist fundamentalism.

Domestic unrest sparked by local grievances have been labeled as terrorism and quelled by support of unpopular leaders funded by U.S. military aid, undermining hopes for transformative change that can bring about long term stability, peace and democracy, prioritizing military security over human security, poverty, famine and governance.



As the cold war provided cover for ruthless dictators to remain in power under the guise of staving off communist threats, the WoT has done the same, painting opposition and would be liberation movements as Islamic Jihadists, all the while receiving western funding and support to rout out “terrorists”.

In short, in lieu of seeking African solutions for African problems, African soldiers have been used to implement American solutions to protect American interests at the expense of indigenous voices and prospects for genuine nation building and democracy. As a result it has exacerbated resentment, creating increased support for violent groups and further feeding proliferation of extremist movements and reign of warlords.

Since 9/11 the US has steadily established an expansive network of 29 military bases and outposts across the continent under Africa Command (AFRICOM), most of them concentrated in the Sahel states, (Djibouti, Uganda, Kenya, Gabon, Ghana, Niger, Chad, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Libya, Somalia), with plans for further expansion ostensibly to fight terrorism and the threat of jihadist insurgencies. Two decades after 9/11, after billions of dollars in security assistance, persistent commando raids and US special operations; violent extremism and insecurity have instead increased. There are now 25 active militant Islamic groups operating in Africa, up from just five in 2010, and 3,471 documented violent events have been linked to these groups in 2019 – a 1,105 percent increase since a decade before, with over 10,000 deaths.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Nick Turse, “Pentagon's Own Map of U.S. Bases in Africa Contradicts Its Claim of ‘Light’ Footprint,” *The Intercept*, February 27, 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/02/27/africa-us-military-bases-africom/>.

***“As the U.S. military footprint and military activities have increased, terrorist violence has grown and terrorist groups have proliferated.”*** William Hartung, the director of the arms and security project at the Center for International Policy (CIP)<sup>99</sup>

As an added stain on its reputation, the US has cooperation agreements with host nation military units as proxies aimed at insurgent groups, using some outposts as black sites for illegal imprisonments and torture. Incidents of enhanced interrogation techniques and killings at some U.S. bases, like Camp Salak in Cameroon, have been reported by Amnesty International to further undermine the legitimacy and reputation of Western presence, angering local communities.<sup>100</sup>

One need only look at the Horn of Africa, Libya and the Sahel to see these principles at work, yet any mention of scaling back of US posture prompts immediate pushback from Congress, evoking fears of further spikes in extremism and expansion of Russia and China’s spheres of influence.

***“Strategic access to Africa, its airspace, and its surrounding waters is vital to U.S. national security.”*** Stephen Townsend, commander of AFRICOM.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Nick Turse, “Pentagon's Own Map of U.S. Bases in Africa Contradicts Its Claim of ‘Light’ Footprint,” The Intercept, February 27, 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/02/27/africa-us-military-bases-africom/>. ]

<sup>100</sup> Robert Trafford and Nick Turse “Cameroonian Troops Tortured and Killed Prisoners at Base Used for U.S. Drone Surveillance,” The Intercept, July 20, 2017, <https://theintercept.com/2017/07/20/cameroonian-troops-tortured-and-killed-prisoner-s-at-base-used-for-u-s-drone-surveillance/>.

<sup>101</sup> Nick Turse, “Pentagon's Own Map of U.S. Bases in Africa Contradicts Its Claim of ‘Light’ Footprint,” The Intercept, February 27, 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/02/27/africa-us-military-bases-africom/>.



## Somalia

**F**ollowing the chaos and lawlessness that ensued after the fall of the Somali dictator, Siad Barre in 1991, a series of Islamic courts began to emerge, to manage crime, provide social services and maintain basic security. They grew organically as an informal movement; their authority backed by local clans, slowly expanding their presence in the early 2000's as they subsumed local militia one by one, uniting Mogadishu for the first time after 16 years. They gained popularity and support among people due to their success in providing security and government services to the point where the areas they controlled were reputed to be safer than those controlled by warlords. Soon, they banded together to form what was called the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), the first significant force in Somalia not controlled by warlords. By then the U.S. was hunting down Al Qaeda members. Fearing Somalia could become a haven, and reading extremism into all things "Islamic", the CIA backed and funded a secular alliance created by Somali warlords and businessmen, originally called the Somali Warlord Alliance, then redubbed more palatably as the "Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism" (ARPCT), funneling up to \$150,000 a month to counter the ICU.<sup>102 103</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> Mark Mazzetti, "Efforts by C.I.A. Fail in Somalia, Officials Charge," The New York Times, June 8, 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/08/world/africa/08intel.html?ei=5088&en=7b3e5a78230b7e10&ex=1307419200&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&pagewanted=all>.

<sup>103</sup> "Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism," Wikipedia, Accessed November 8, 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliance\\_for\\_the\\_Restoration\\_of\\_Peace\\_and\\_Counter-Terrorism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliance_for_the_Restoration_of_Peace_and_Counter-Terrorism).



Clashes between ICU and ARPCT fueled the rise of Al-Shabab, ICU's militant wing, to drive out the warlords from Mogadishu. As the ICU consolidated power, even implementing urban developing projects, and reopening sea and air ports, expanding beyond the capital, it further raised alarms. In 2006, Ethiopian forces and Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in exile, drove out the ICU, backed by the United States, leaving the military wing, Al Shabab, as a breakaway independent militant group.<sup>104</sup>

Al-Shabab was formally designated a terrorist organization by the State Department in 2008.

As operations drew down in Iraq and Afghanistan, private military and security companies (PMSCs) shifted focus to Somalia, reorienting donors to an emerging political marketplace established in and around a "green zone" in Mogadishu with other international groups. Money flowed for security cooperation with "local partners" to the tune of \$400 million a year, with the PMSCs as primary beneficiaries and gatekeepers to the growing number of political consultants, diplomats, business opportunists, humanitarian NGOs, and for-profit development actors in the green zone, effectively an international sovereign bubble disconnected from the rest of Mogadishu, let alone the country; providing access to clan elite, hardly concerned with state building, mainly benefiting their clients and Somali political entrepreneurs.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> "Islamic Courts Union," Center for International Cooperation and Security, Stanford, Accessed November 8, 2022,

<https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-courts-union>.

<sup>105</sup> Jethro Norman, "Private Military and Security Companies and the Political Marketplace in Mogadishu," Conflict Research Programme, The London School of Economics and Political Science, August 13, 2020, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/Conflict-Research-Programme/crp-memos/Norman-private-military-mogadishu-final.pdf>.



Somalia is now the site of America's most intense and longest-running "undeclared" war in Africa, with roughly 500 Special Operations forces deployed. After years of engagement in Somalia and continued US air strikes, the threat posed by al-Shabab and further splinter groups like ISIS-Somalia remains high as they continue to recruit and conduct high value attacks.<sup>106</sup>

Amnesty reported 63 US air strikes in Somalia, in 2019, and 32 in the first three months of 2020 alone, contributing to insecurity and unaccountability, striking targets on the slightest suspicion, writing off civilian casualties as "terrorists", leaving grieving families without recourse.<sup>107</sup>

US Drone strikes and air raids have been routine by the Bush, then Obama administrations and further continued by the Trump administration when the rules of engagement were expanded leading to an all time high of 202 strikes and many more deaths.<sup>108</sup> The Biden administration has maintained the same rules of engagement in place.<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> "Somalia: Zero Accountability as Civilian Deaths Mount from US Air Strikes," Amnesty International, April 1, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/somalia-zero-accountability-as-civilian-deaths-mount-from-us-air-strikes/>.

<sup>107</sup> "Somalia: Zero Accountability as Civilian Deaths Mount from US Air Strikes," Amnesty International, April 1, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/somalia-zero-accountability-as-civilian-deaths-mount-from-us-air-strikes/>.

<sup>108</sup> "The War in Somalia," New America, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/americas-counterterrorism-wars/the-war-in-somalia/>.

<sup>109</sup> Samar Al-Bulushi, "Endless War in Somalia," Africa Is a Country, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://africasacountry.com/2022/05/endless-war-in-somalia>.



Years later, after deployment of the UN, the African Union, and continuing U.S. presence, Al-Shabab is still in operation, inflicting deadly attacks.<sup>110 111</sup>

AFRICOM Commander General Stephen Townsend maintains that al-Shabab is “bigger, stronger, and bolder,” – echoing much of the playbook in Afghanistan, as funds keep flowing to private security companies like Bancroft Global and others.<sup>112</sup>

Far from one person, one vote, Somali president is elected through a process by clan elders and parliamentary members. After a series of delays, ahead of elections in May 2022, gun prices soared as arms made their way to the black market in Mogadishu through an UN arms embargo loophole, which allows provision of arms to Somali National Security Forces for “security sector reform”.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> “Al Shabaab Militants Mount Deadly Attack on African Union Base in Somalia.” France 24, May 4, 2022.

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220503-al-shabaab-militants-storm-african-union-base-in-somalia-killing-several>.

<sup>111</sup> Jeff Seldin, “Somalia Hails Us Airstrike against Al-Shabab,” Voice of America, June 3, 2022,

<https://www.voanews.com/a/somalia-hails-us-airstrike-against-al-shabab-/6602727.html>.

<sup>112</sup> Samar Al-Bulushi, “Endless War in Somalia,” Africa Is a Country, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://africasacountry.com/2022/05/endless-war-in-somalia>.

<sup>113</sup> Samar Al-Bulushi, “Endless War in Somalia,” Africa Is a Country, Accessed November 8, 2022, <https://africasacountry.com/2022/05/endless-war-in-somalia>.



## The Sahel

**F**or decades, the War on Terror (WoT) has shaped the very nature and politics of the Sahel as the focus of the foreign intervention in Africa. The Pan-Sahel Initiative was launched in 2002 by the Department of Defense (DoD), aiming at tracking “suspicious movement of people and goods” across borders.<sup>114</sup>

The narrative of vast, “ungovernable” lands being ripe for lawlessness and bad actors has played neatly into the hands of the U.S. military industry and its foreign allies intent on delivering accountability after the 9/11 attacks and looking to perpetuate their *raison d’être*. It has also been co-opted by African leaders, like Nigerian President Buhari who sees the West as the guarantors of their survival, and have asked the international community to stay engaged in every way on its front against global jihad.<sup>115</sup> At the confluence of interest of the Department of Defense awash with generous endowments and willing African leaders jostling for privilege, American military adventures have succeeded in further creating the very thing they were aiming to rout.

Mali, once the only functioning democracy in West Africa, became the focus of operations and the frontline in the staging ground of WoT, receiving generous security funding and material support, encouraging competition for newly found resources in the patronage networks of power, exacerbating corruption and

---

<sup>114</sup> “Pan Sahel Initiative,” U.S. Department of State, Office of Counter Terrorism, November 2, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/14987.htm>.

<sup>115</sup> Timothy Obiezu, “Nigeria Says Taliban Victory Puts Africa in Terror Spotlight,” Voice of America, August 17, 2021, [https://www.voanews.com/a/africa\\_nigeria-says-taliban-victory-puts-africa-terror-spotlight/6209680.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_nigeria-says-taliban-victory-puts-africa-terror-spotlight/6209680.html).





enabling further repression of marginalized communities in the peripheries, like the Touareg. The engagement also bolstered legitimacy to groups claiming to fight foreign invaders in their lands, creating new fronts in the WoT at every turn, and deepening the crisis in the Sahel, spreading the very Jihadism it aimed to eradicate.

In 2012, the Malian state fell. Jihadist groups, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa, and Ansar al-Dine allied with Touareg rebels, and declared independence in the north (Islamic Republic of Azawad). Chaos ensued and the military staged a coup ostensibly to restore order. French forces and the UN entered the fray to prop up the government, however by then, links and networks between the various rebel groups had been established engaged in trafficking of drugs, humans and weapons, exploiting artisanal gold mines to finance and sustain themselves, giving rise to even stronger jihadist groups.

Twenty years into the WoT and Western “stabilization” efforts, today some of the most powerful jihadist groups operate in the Sahel, drawing on local grievances and abuse of civilians by security forces. The French Barkhane forces, active in the Sahel since 2014 withdrew, and were blamed for the persistence and proliferation of more jihadists, who control parts of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Somalia.<sup>116</sup>

Attacks by violent extremist groups have increased 250 percent across the Sahel since 2018.<sup>117</sup> In response, in the past two years, the Sahel has seen a series of coups

---

<sup>116</sup> Laura Berlingozzi and Eduardo Baldaro, “In the Sahel, 20 Years of War on Terror Has Created More and Stronger Enemies,” Italian Institute for International Studies, September 10, 2021, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/sahel-20-years-war-terror-has-created-more-and-stronger-enemies-31617>.

<sup>117</sup> Nick Turse, “Pentagon's Own Map of U.S. Bases in Africa Contradicts Its Claim of ‘Light’ Footprint,” The Intercept, February 27, 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/02/27/africa-us-military-bases-africom/>.



in Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger and Mali, drawing on grievances due to increased violence, and the inability of the central government to assert control and establish security.<sup>118</sup>

Retired Br. General Don Bolduc, who headed Special Operations Command Africa until 2017 confirmed that between 2013 and 2017, U.S. special forces were engaged in combat and counter terrorism operations in no less than 13 African countries including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, DR Congo, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, South Sudan and Tunisia. Operations were run by Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), the secret organization that controls the Navy Seal and the Delta Force, as well as in partnership with host nations.

Documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, along with other sources obtained by Yahoo news details the US military footprint in Africa, an expanse largely unknown to the American public.<sup>119</sup>

---

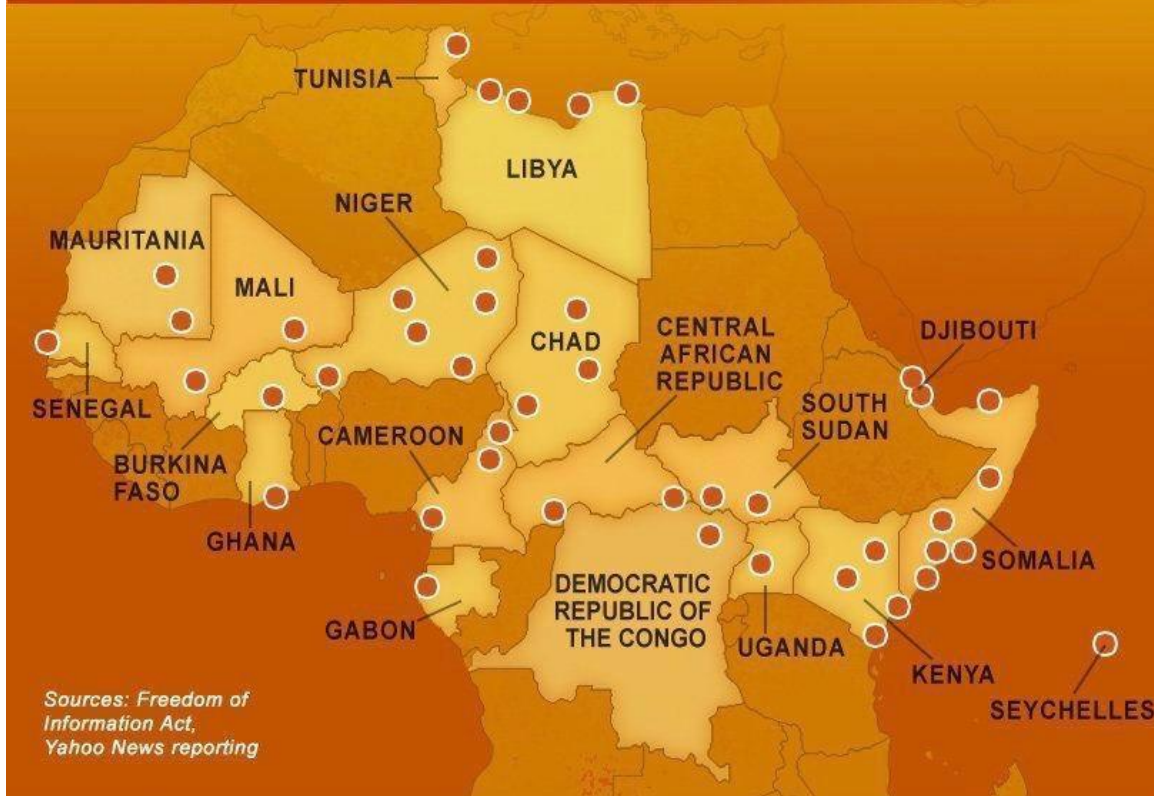
<sup>118</sup> Joseph Sani, "A Sixth Coup in Africa? the West Needs to up Its Game," United States Institute of Peace, February 2, 2022,

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/02/sixth-coup-africa-west-needs-its-game>.

<sup>119</sup> Nick Turse and Sean D. Taylor, "Revealed: The U.S. Military's 36 Code-Named Operations in Africa," Yahoo!, April 17, 2019,

[https://www.yahoo.com/now/revealed-the-us-militarys-36-codenamed-operations-in-africa-090000841.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAHho9-asjMMMb5cFf3kyHk505\\_vEdHbuQag2kuV8m\\_tXM\\_hkYmTEHY2Kg82AKmeHHOKW8EsAjpovdWg1XWBUtCpPifis8RQb867s\\_6xkcJa1lpzsFR8-KN9C541nptFcbBLRG2FOI5iA5sJHY4TQ-Fdb7-u301EF6bpzkrRntRc0L](https://www.yahoo.com/now/revealed-the-us-militarys-36-codenamed-operations-in-africa-090000841.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAHho9-asjMMMb5cFf3kyHk505_vEdHbuQag2kuV8m_tXM_hkYmTEHY2Kg82AKmeHHOKW8EsAjpovdWg1XWBUtCpPifis8RQb867s_6xkcJa1lpzsFR8-KN9C541nptFcbBLRG2FOI5iA5sJHY4TQ-Fdb7-u301EF6bpzkrRntRc0L).

## THE U.S. FOOTPRINT IN AFRICA



---

# Civil Society & Diaspora

**A**ncedotal musings assert Africa's borders are preserved by the UN; banking facilities provided by the IMF and the Chinese; and social services supplied by international NGOs. Despite advances in all three fronts in SSA, in large part with international assistance, the argument still has resonance.

When governments fail to implement policies that benefit the population, citizens take matters into their hands, spontaneously, collectively, or through grass roots organizations for self help, whether it be delivering social and economic benefits, or working toward government accountability, with the latter often putting citizens in the crosshairs of powerful elites.

CSOs and self help civic groups in Africa emerged as associational groups in response to state failure and dysfunction after independence, and as a platform for resistance and protests against state abuse, bad governance and poverty. They were vocal in the push for multiparty systems, constitutional review and civic education, and were unrelenting critics of government excesses and corruption, often taking up active participation exposing electoral fraud. Their existence therefore posed a threat to the post colonial state in terms of authority and the potential to organize outside state structure, while competing for the same resources, both sectors relying on International donor support who, after the cold war, increasingly required evidence of progress in good governance, development and related domains before releasing funds.

There are thousands of civil society groups in Africa, across an array of voluntary and associational groups of labor unions, students, journalists, NGOs, professional associations, other grass roots movements and church groups; however, it is the countless international NGOs with resources, capacity and longer institutional history in civic engagement who are pivotal in providing support, most effective in delivering services and who are focused on common good causes. They have legitimacy as international actors; in itself a double-edged sword, since international legitimacy and colonial resentments are often contending themes in Africa.



The earliest and most dominant civil society groups, as defined by self-organizing, non-state autonomous groups in Africa are church and faith based groups whether Christian, Muslim or other. These groups could be formal or informal, single groups working autonomously, or as part of a network or linkage groups, and are focused in



service delivery to their communities, which requires working in synergy with the state, sometimes even corrupt and authoritarian ones who often seek to ban them from engaging in politics. Africans are deeply religious and spiritual, and faith based groups enjoy a significant amount of social capital and can be easily accepted among the population as social workers, healthcare workers, and as powerful actors in mediation and conflict resolution in many places, ex: DRC, South Sudan and Ethiopia.<sup>120</sup>

The Catholic Church in DR Congo has the largest and most effective faith-based peacebuilding institution on the continent. It coordinates hundreds of mediators under its Justice and Peace Commission across 40 dioceses in the country.<sup>121</sup> They were an integral part of organizing DR Congo's past elections, and constituted the critical voice in denouncing the 2018 process as rigged, documented by the presence of the vast network of observers they deployed in polling centers. Church based groups in DRC work in cooperation with Caritas, a confederation of 162 catholic relief, development and social service organizations in operation worldwide.

The strength, number and effectiveness of CSOs are varied across SSA , more developed and resilient in some countries like South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria, and fragile in others like Chad and South Sudan, almost always in contention with the government. In Ethiopia, prior to 2018, CSOs were summarily banned from engaging

---

<sup>120</sup> Tsegaye Kassa, "The Role of Faith Based Civil Society Organizations in Peace Making in Ethiopia and South Sudan. A Comparative Perspective," AAU Institutional Repository, Addis Ababa University, 2014, <http://etd.aau.edu.et/handle/123456789/398>.

<sup>121</sup> "The Role of Civil Society in Averting Instability in the DRC," Africa Center for Strategic Studies, November 15, 2016, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/role-civil-society-averting-instability-drc/>.



in human rights, governance and advocacy under one of the world's most repressive regimes. The Charities and Societies Proclamation enshrined into law presented a web of bureaucratic hurdles and arbitrary restrictions enabled by intrusive surveillance and draconian criminal penalties effectively paralyzing the sector.<sup>122</sup> After taking office, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed lifted the ban, but considering the ongoing civil war, which has devastated Ethiopia and debilitated civic space, it will take time before CSOs can effectively flourish across the country.

Kenya is an influential player across the Great Lakes region and East Africa, both politically and economically, and has a vibrant civil society. Since 1980s, democracy, governance and human rights have been a focus of CSOs and have influenced the process of democratization, acting as watchdogs on the abuse of power by the elite, taking advocacy actions ranging from demonstrations and sit-ins, to litigations and have been successful in bringing a series of actions against corrupt officials, demanding accountable governance. In 2016, they were even able to force a pay cut for the members of parliament, including president Uhuru Kenyatta, by parading blood-soaked pigs in front of the parliament – referring to MPs as “Mpigs”.<sup>123</sup>

Kenyan CSOs have pushed for public access to information and have worked to strengthen laws already on the books, encouraging equal participation in the political process, including for all constituencies and ethnic groups, and especially

---

<sup>122</sup> “Analysis of Ethiopia's Draft Civil Society Law,” Human Rights Watch, October 13, 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/10/13/analysis-ethiopias-draft-civil-society-law>.

<sup>123</sup> Kingsley Ighobor, “Unleashing the Power of Africa's Civil Society,” Africa Renewal, United Nations, 2016, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/august-2016/unleashing-power-africa%E2%80%99s-civil-society>.



for women. They have been instrumental in expanding civic training to mitigate and resolve ethnic conflicts and devising dispute resolution mechanisms. Most important, they have played an important role during elections, monitoring polling stations, to ensure transparency and fairness and exposing electoral fraud.

Kenya has between 10,000-15,000 registered CSOs, with a strong Bill of Rights codified in the constitution and the CSO Reference Group who drafted a clear framework for organizations working for public benefit. In spite of that, there is a historical pattern of suppressing CSO activities to freedom of assembly, expression and association.

In 2017, following a rigged election, when the incumbent Kenyatta was initially declared the winner, the state run *Kenya NGO Co-ordination Board* canceled the registration of *Kenya Human Rights Commission* and targeted several other CSOs under trumped up charges of money laundering and tax fraud after they called the election results into question.

As Kenyan CSOs enjoy broad public support in resisting government constraints, they appealed to citizens to sign petitions and even to President Obama at the time, to pressure the Kenyan government. The appeal did not quite succeed, yet it boosted the profile of CSOs and energized the continuing vigilance and resilience of citizen action against the government. *The Africa Center for Open Governance* (AfriCOG),<sup>124</sup> an independent organization dedicated to good governance and public ethics, was instrumental in pushing for the eventual annulment of the 2017 presidential elections.

---

<sup>124</sup> David Ndi, "Highway Robbery: Budgeting for State Capture," AfriCOG, October 2020, <https://africog.org/new2021/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Highway-Robbery-Final.pdf>.





Among government tactics to keep CSOs under control, were attempts to restrict funding from foreign donors to 15% of their total budget on the grounds of sovereignty, which would have resulted in greatly reducing their capacity and operations, affecting over 8,000 organizations. Bank account freezes, seizure of documents and de-registration are other common government strategies in attempts to keep CSOs under control.

Nigeria is another state enjoying a dynamic and diverse civil society with more than 500,000 organizations at various levels. Over 93,000 national level CSOs are registered with the *Corporate Affairs Commission* (CAC) and many more unregistered, civic groups play an important role in fostering citizen engagement, democratization, social welfare support and humanitarian assistance.<sup>125</sup> Peace building groups, women's advocacy groups, environmental rights action, development, health, constitutional rights and human rights groups operate with the support of international organizations, even as they struggle with funding needs and the continuous downward pressures on democratic space. CSOs in Nigeria are active in politics, have mobilized large numbers of volunteers to work with the Election Commission for voter education, and deploy national observers during the voting process. Other activities include provision of humanitarian assistance in conflict zones, complimenting the *UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (OCHA) where Boko Haram and jihadi groups have displaced hundreds of thousands of people and millions are in need.

---

<sup>125</sup> "2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index," FHI360, USAID, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Center of Excellence on Democracy Human Rights and Government, December 2020, <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-africa-2019-report.pdf>.



As in elsewhere, the Nigerian government has introduced periodic measures to control opposition and avoid accountability. The *CAMA 2020* act, for example, authorizes the state to arbitrarily revoke CSO certificates and appoint interim managers. In 2020, a public hearing was held on the *Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulation Bill*, also referred to as the “social media bill”, criminalizing online spread of falsehoods that could be damaging to “state security” and “public safety”. The bill is widely seen by CSOs as an attempt to restrict voices critical of the government under the guise of state security. Covid restrictions further restricted CSOs as demonstrations and protests were banned and activists were dispersed by tear gas and live ammunition. Over a thousand were arrested and bank accounts of activist leaders were blocked. *The Committee to Protect Journalists* (CPJ) ,<sup>126</sup> an independent non-profit promoting press freedom reported many colleagues were attacked.<sup>127</sup>

In recent years the Nigerian government has taken up a new tactic – creating and proliferating “fake” CSOs. Carnegie Endowment identified 360 pro-government NGOs in Nigeria, 90% of them created since 2015, functioning as propaganda arms of the government and military leaders. These groups often actively engage in

---

<sup>126</sup> “Nigeria,” Committee to Protect Journalists, Accessed November 9, 2022, <https://cpj.org/africa/nigeria/>.

<sup>127</sup> “2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index,” FHI360, USAID, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Center of Excellence on Democracy Human Rights and Government, December 2020, <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-africa-2019-report.pdf>.



attacking legitimate CSOs, even inciting violence and promoting illiberal causes, including defending human rights abuses.<sup>128</sup>

In West Africa, Senegal is another example of a thriving civil society. Senegal has a tradition of democratic elections, which has given room to a flourishing civil society both in partnership with the government, and with the funding of external donors who provide support to the state as well. There are well over 11,000 formal and informal associations in different sectors and 589 NGOs, as well as many unregistered organizations with guarantees of fundamental freedoms codified in Article 8 of the 2001 constitution.<sup>129</sup> The tradition of associations is cultural and most Senegalese participate in an organization, whether religious, professional or community based. Many are devoted to poverty reduction development projects, women's organizations, democracy, human rights and environmental causes. During the political crisis of March 2021, when clashes ensued following the arrest of the opposition candidate, NGOs and opposition parties established the *Movement for the Defense of Democracy* (M2D), urging broad popular protests to stop government violence and free political prisoners.<sup>130</sup> As in many other countries, civic space

<sup>128</sup> Matthew T. Page, "Fake Civil Society: The Rise of pro-Government Ngos in Nigeria," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 28, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/07/28/fake-civil-society-rise-of-pro-government-ngos-in-nigeria-pub-85041>.

<sup>129</sup> "Senegal," 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability index, USAID, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Center for Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, November 2021, [http://plateforme-ane.sn/IMG/pdf/csosi-senegal-2020\\_eng.pdf](http://plateforme-ane.sn/IMG/pdf/csosi-senegal-2020_eng.pdf).

<sup>130</sup> "Senegal," International Center for Not-For-Profit Law, September 22, 2022, <https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/senegal>.



shrank during the Covid pandemic as CSO leaders, whistleblowers, and human rights defenders were increasingly threatened and prosecuted, often with excessive force.<sup>131</sup>

Activists from movements *Noo Lank* (We Refuse), *Y'en a marre* (Fed Up), *Pan-African Anti-Imperialist Revolution* and others were arrested for demanding transparency in oil and gas contracts or for demonstrations against rising electricity prices. Demonstrations were systematically banned, alleging risk of “public disorder” and “infiltration by ill-intentioned individuals”.<sup>132</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum is the Republic of Chad; mired in conflict, environmental devastation and endemic insecurity. Weak organization capacity, fragmented citizenry and state repression characterize the CSO landscape in Chad, where rare if any collective action is brought on national politics. Demonstrations and protests in response to economic hardships and links to corruption have erupted periodically since 2014, but have not risen to a critical mass, nor have they endured.<sup>133</sup> Recently, USAID spearheaded a project, “Chad Civil Society

---

<sup>131</sup> “Senegal,” 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability index, USAID, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Center for Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, November 2021, [http://plateforme-ane.sn/IMG/pdf/csosi-senegal-2020\\_eng.pdf](http://plateforme-ane.sn/IMG/pdf/csosi-senegal-2020_eng.pdf).

<sup>132</sup> “Senegal,” 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability index, USAID, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Center for Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, November 2021, [http://plateforme-ane.sn/IMG/pdf/csosi-senegal-2020\\_eng.pdf](http://plateforme-ane.sn/IMG/pdf/csosi-senegal-2020_eng.pdf).

<sup>133</sup> “As Chad's Problems Mount, What Role for Civil Society?” International Crisis Group, May 25, 2020,



Strengthening Activity” (CCSSA), in an effort to strengthen citizen participation in governance at local and national levels, working toward fostering better informed and engaged citizenry who understands their civic rights and duties, and to improve civil society collaboration with government for increased government legitimacy.<sup>134</sup>

*Family Health International* (FHI360), a non-profit human development organization based in the United States working in partnership with USAID, rates sustainability of CSOs in SSA and scores the overall CSO performance with regard to their legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure, and public image. Even before the pandemic, in 2019, the report assessed the overall sustainability across 32 countries in SSA to be challenged by insecurity, elections, economic stress, efforts to close civic space, and other general political and economic factors. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has put financial pressure, as donors were forced to scale down or shift focus. In addition, the pandemic affected the legal environment. Civic space shrunk dramatically as governments enacted emergency measures and decrees in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These measures affected freedom of assembly and associations partly to control contagion, yet often used as a pretext to target watchdog organizations and constrain civic freedoms especially during elections, banning demonstrations and opposition activism. Often, these measures were carried out with violence and excessive force, documented by citizens and uploaded to social media. Crackdowns

---

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/chads-problems-mount-what-rol-e-civil-society>.

<sup>134</sup> Chad N'Djamena, “Chad Civil Society Strengthening Activity,” United States Agency for International Development, January 30, 2021, [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00XHTM.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XHTM.pdf).



were documented, among other places, in Angola, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda.<sup>135</sup>

FHI360 determined the biggest factors in CSO sustainability to be financial resources and donor priorities. CSOs in SSA are overwhelmingly dependent on foreign funding, except for South Africa, and therefore having to align missions with donors, focusing advocacy campaigns primarily on gender equity, extractive industries and elections. Locally funded CSOs have modest resources and are unequipped for long term planning, moreover, they are susceptible to brain drain as the best and the brightest seek recruitment by international organizations for better opportunities.

Despite the challenges, government pushback and harassment by the elite and the media, CSOs continue to push for advances in advocacy and the expansion of civic space.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> “2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index.” FHI360. USAID, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Center for Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, November 2021. <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-africa-2020-report.pdf>.

<sup>136</sup> “2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index,” FHI360, USAID, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Center of Excellence on Democracy Human Rights and Government, December 2020, <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-africa-2019-report.pdf>.



In addition to the lack of national financial resources, modest institutional capacity and political pushback; other factors are also at work, presenting obstacles to the effectiveness of CSOs in SSA.

NGOs tend to be focused on urban areas as the terrain of the privileged class, and at times fragmented, reflecting ethnic and cultural cleavages, with internal struggles, which undermine cooperation on furthering specific missions. Groups can at times represent the political space where each group seeks to dominate, privileging one side at the expense of other groups. Reliance on foreign donors create performance agendas, where the mission and narrative of the NGO could be orchestrated to align with what will best garner funding from the West. CSO partnerships with governments on development and governance issues are often criticized for calibrating their messages to attract foreign funding and can devolve into semi commercial, even exploitative relationships.

African organizations often have a deficit of capacity in terms of management, operations and effectiveness as the weaker counterparts of foreign entities, further constrained by funding and state pressure, and vulnerable to defections of the best staff to donor organizations for better pay, privilege and possibilities of advancement thereby contributing to capacity deficit.



Among major international donors to CSOs are the World Bank, the UNDP, Asian Development Bank (ADB), European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships (EuropeAid HQ), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), African Development Bank, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Australia (DFAT), UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), US Agency for International Development (USAID), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), French Development Agency (AFD), European Investment Bank (EIB), World Health, Save the Children, Childfund, World Vision, Organization (WHO), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and many more.





Donors fund CSOs, either directly or through umbrella networks established for capacity building and institutional support through local counterparts for peace building, governance, disarmament, development, health initiatives, women's initiatives and other sectors. Below, a few examples:

*The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI)* - a George Soros Open Society initiative founded in 2005 in partnership with the Ford Foundation, French government and others. The umbrella organization is based in Ghana with the mission to reinforce the operational capacities of CSOs in West Africa in human rights, resource mobilization, grant writing, networking, alliance building and project management, and to expand the civic space in the region. It is active in many countries comprising thousands of CSOs. (Ghana, Cameroon, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Gambia, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Benin, Togo, Liberia, Nigeria, Côte D'Ivoire).<sup>137</sup>

*Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room*, - an umbrella network of 70 CSOs in Nigeria dedicated to improving the electoral process and fostering collective action toward better governance.<sup>138</sup>

*Centre Interdisciplinaire pour le Developpement et les Droits Humains (CIPAD)* - a non partisan independent, humanitarian NGO based in Cameroon engaged in

---

<sup>137</sup> "CD Programme Activities," WACSI, Accessed November 9, 2022, <https://wacsi.org/cd-programme-activities/>.

<sup>138</sup> "What We Do," Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, Accessed November 9, 2022, <https://situationroomng.org/what-we-do/>.



non-violent social transformation through democratic peace-building in partnership with Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.<sup>139</sup>

*East Africa Civil Society Organization Hub (CSO Hub)* - a network of 160 CSOs engage in preventing violent extremism in Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda, facilitated by Global center on cooperative security and initial funding from Netherlands and Norway and ongoing support from the World Bank, the UN and others.<sup>140 141</sup>

*Coalition Nationale de la Société Civile pour la Paix et la Lutte contre la Prolifération des Armes Legeres (CONASCIPAL)* – a coalition of 17 NGOs, including founding families of Bamako, civic, youth, women and artisan groups in Mali, working in partnership with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI),

---

<sup>139</sup> “Sipri Partnerships with African Civil Society Organizations,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Accessed November 9, 2022, <https://www.sipri.org/research/conflicts-and-peace/africa-security-and-governance-project/sipri-partnerships-with-africa>.

<sup>140</sup> “East Africa Civil Society Organizations Hub Summary,” Global Center on Cooperative Security, January 2019, <https://www.globalcenter.org/project-descriptions/east-africa-civil-society-organizations-hub/>.

<sup>141</sup> “National Support Centre for Development and Popular Participation,” CENADEP, Accessed November 9, 2022, <https://www.developmentaid.org/organizations/view/280576/cenadep-centre-national-dappui-au-developpement-et-a-la-participation-populaire>.

focused on social mediation and fight against proliferation of arms and promotion of peace and security.<sup>142</sup>

*Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ)* - network of women's rights groups in Zimbabwe for empowerment of women through lobbying and advocacy and capacity building and enhancing women's participation in the electoral process and inclusive governance. The organization works in partnership with Oxfam, GIZ, European Union, Norwegian People's Aid and others.<sup>143</sup>

International foundations like National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Foundation for Electoral systems (IFES), European Center for Electoral Support (ECES), United State Institute of Peace (USIP), International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) work with other international partners in support of electoral process and on a multitude of peace building programs in partnership with local parliaments, political parties, civil society groups and governments to strengthen democratic development, including achieving free elections and to push governments to broaden civic space.

Objectives include: a) Working toward free and fair elections, guarding against measures that might favor incumbents over opposition, or might unfairly disadvantage minority groups, b) To broaden civic and political space to allow effective engagement a broad spectrum of citizens c) Help protect the integrity of the electoral process by placing transparency mechanisms and accountability, d)

---

<sup>142</sup> "Conascipal," Publié par Peace Direct, September 2016, <https://www.peaceinsight.org/fr/organisations/conascipal/?location=mali&theme>.

<sup>143</sup> "About Us," Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, Accessed November 9, 2022, <https://www.wcoz.org/about-us/>.



---

Strengthening the electoral system and rule of law and building of democratic institutions that enshrine fundamental freedoms, human rights and equal participation with protection of minorities, e) Promoting free press and media engagement, and open access to print and digital information.

## Diaspora

**F**ostering stable democracies in Africa has been a central policy of the West in efforts to stem the threat of violent conflict, support human rights, good governance and the rule of law to integrate the continent into the world economy. Diaspora knowledge of the culture, language and dynamics of their home countries can be of great value to donor organizations engaged in development, peace building and conflict resolution. Thus far, however, African diaspora organizations and groups have a bigger presence in the economic domain than they do in the political realm.

With modern technology and rapid communication, the diaspora at large is more equipped than ever to exert influence on the continent and best positioned to assist the poorer more fragile economies back home by financial means. Brookings Institute conservative estimates of remittances to SSA before the pandemic were at \$48 billion in 2019, with no significant decrease after the pandemic. Diaspora remittances are larger than all foreign direct investment (FDI), and larger than Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) funds; Nigeria being the major recipient at \$23.8.<sup>144</sup> Among other recipients with remittances making significant portions of their GDP are Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Zimbabwe, DRC, Uganda, Mali and South Africa.

<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>144</sup> Dilip Ratha, "Keep Remittances Flowing to Africa," Brookings, March 15, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/03/15/keep-remittances-flowing-to-africa/>.

<sup>145</sup> "Top 10 African Countries Projected to Receive the Highest Remittances in 2021," Business Insider, November 18, 2021,



Remittances are deemed highly effective for delivering social benefits and as they are deployed directly to the recipients, can circumvent corruption or layers of bureaucracy, and are better focused to the needs of an individual family, like providing school fees, and growth of small businesses.

African diaspora are diverse and with varying agendas. Many are focused in building representation in their adopted countries, struggling with their local counterparts against common themes, i.e. questions of discrimination, marginalization, racism and exclusion.

Opposition groups and activists forced into exile, as in Rwandans or South Sudanese whether in neighboring countries, South Africa and Uganda, or abroad in Europe or the US, are primarily entangled in survival issues, and most have little time or resources to organize for broader action.

Others lobby congress and state representatives to raise funds for different activities and work with international organizations who provide grants to viable diaspora groups towards projects like the support of free media, publications or building CSO capacity.

A multitude of US and European organizations, both state and independent, are actively engaged in promoting democracy in SSA, through grants, training, support of various groups, NGOs programs, funding of political groups, trade unions, business groups, and groups in the diaspora. A good example is National

---

<https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/markets/top-10-african-countries-projected-to-receive-the-highest-remittances-in-2021/6f2l5mj>.



Endowment for Democracy (NED),<sup>146</sup> a bipartisan nonprofit initiative, empowered through U.S. government appropriations extending over 2,000 grants to NGOs each year to a variety of projects in support of democracy and to strengthen civil society groups, training the youth and women to engage in activism, peace building, human rights and support of marginalized people. Sudanese diaspora groups supported by NED in the US played a positive role in the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) in the Sudan, and Liberian diaspora in the US have been an effective force in supporting technocrats to serve in positions of power in the reconstruction of their country after the civil war.

Sustaining donor programs however, could be challenging as activities are often resisted by local political actors, and even blocked, on the grounds of breach of sovereignty and foreign meddling.

Diaspora support can be a force for democracy and peace, but can also be a force for disinformation and conflict as donor organizations could inadvertently find themselves supporting partisan websites, radio programs and tools of opposition propaganda and disinformation.

Charles Taylor of Liberia, the warlord responsible for the bloodiest civil war in West Africa was supported by Liberian diaspora, and the situation in Somalia is partly sustained by funding from Somali exiles.

The African diaspora still has a long way to go to build sustainable political capital on their own. Organizations like *Congressional African Staff Association* (CASA) and *Constituency for Africa* (CFA) are active on the Hill, educating Americans of African

---

<sup>146</sup> "Supporting Freedom around the World," National Endowment for Democracy, Accessed November 9, 2022, <https://www.ned.org/>.



---

descent on issues on the continent and lobbying for causes, but the first generation of the diaspora community has not yet built sufficient capacity to fully leverage the potential of activism, especially in light of the fact that they are not a monolith and communities have divergent interests.<sup>147</sup>

---

<sup>147</sup> “The Role of the Diaspora in Shaping U.S. Policies toward Africa,” Wilson Center, September 17, 2012, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/the-role-the-diaspora-shaping-us-policies-toward-africa>.



---

# Conclusion

**A**uthoritarian regimes have historically been the norm in Africa. With democratic pushes challenging colonial legacies, small gains have been made, and as a new generation of leaders inspired political change, they were followed by setbacks brought about by a variety of domestic and external forces.

Being on the beginning rungs of political and economic developments, countries in SSA have unique sets of challenges to democratization and inclusive governance. Beyond the autocratic regimes that continue to subvert nominal constitutions, depose predecessors by coup d'états and crack down on their own people with impunity; there are other factors, even more powerful at work; -- historical legacies, geography, strategic assets and resources coveted by powerful external players and the resulting geopolitical intrigues to which African leaders are themselves subjected and reduced to as bit players.

The question raised in this report is whether the digital revolution can turn the tide, arming citizens with tools to mobilize and expand the civic space. It highlights the possibilities presented by the digital revolution and the nature of its penetration in SSA as it brings a young generation of Africans within communication thresholds of global markets. We further consider disruptors to the fundamentals necessary for the seeds of democracy to germinate and grow, least of which is basic stability and security of an informed population, vested with a sense of citizenship.



If history has shown us anything, it is that democracy does not thrive in the throes of economic crisis and poverty. It requires conducive conditions. As even Western countries can attest, autocratic voices often find fertile ground amidst chaos and economic strife. As citizens begin losing hope; desperation and fear grasp at the first strong hand that reaches down with promise of better days. The rise of Hitler followed a crushing economic downturn in Germany, Bolsonaro harnessed the frustration of Brazilians amidst increasing violence and insecurity, and Americans found trading personal freedoms for security to be a reasonable exchange in the post 9/11 world.

\*\*\*

The empowering effects of digital technology in finance and commerce across various sectors of the economy is promising, projected by IFC to increase GDP in Africa by \$180 billion by 2025 and another \$2 trillion by 2034 if the next generation 5G network successfully extends across the continent. Mobile devices have created connections for the unbanked; developed payment platforms for businesses, provided easy receipt of remittances from the diaspora and enabled access to market information.

In tandem, the digital technology has provided tracking and surveillance tools to states, enabling more sophisticated forms of suppression to leaders on a continent where the predominant form of governance rated by Freedom House is either partly or fully authoritarian. Regimes with more effective state apparatus have been enabled to extend power over larger sectors of the economy, using the levers of power to exercise control over access to information, and have enacted laws to muzzle opposition. Predatory capabilities have also been enhanced at higher levels as stronger powers compete for geopolitical prominence and strategic advantage in



mineral rich regions with tactical assets, encouraging the creation of rentier economies and further entrenching corruption rather than promoting good governance.

To compound challenges, SSA has its own unique set of characteristics creating headwinds to creating the favorable conditions necessary to foster democratic transformations. As its rich diversity is celebrated, a continent with thousands of ethnicities and languages and low literacy rates is prone to developing allegiances that favor tribal over national affiliations, while remaining vulnerable to ethnic polarization by the elite, which can easily translate to violent conflict across artificial colonial borders, or over competition for resources.

Climate change and environmental collapse exacerbate conflicts and create new ones as humanitarian crises force millions to migrate looking for food and basic survival, infringing on new turf and displacing others, leading to militarized response from governments. With the loss of traditional coping mechanisms, the youth and out of work population have provided breeding ground for recruitment into resentful angry groups in search of purpose and life mission, primed for violent revolt. WFP pegs the number of people suffering from hunger, teetering on the brink of humanitarian crisis across the Sahel at 27 million; the precise site of the WoT's twenty year crusade against the ever expanding jihadist groups.

Post 9/11 world has provided despots with vocabulary palatable to the West to pursue and eliminate legitimate opposition under the guise of counter-terrorism with assistance and generous funding from the U.S., UK and others, who continue to opt for nominal "stability", interrupting the organic, yet long and arduous process of democratic transformations to take root.



As once the main creditors of the continent, western powers have been nudged aside by new players jostling for dominance on the world stage, searching for strategic footholds on the continent and access to resources. Generous lines of credit from the West at least nominally predicated on good governance and human rights, have increasingly given way to iron clad Chinese funding not concerned with democracy, instead collateralized by state assets -- at the nexus of this relationship; technology, training and anti-democratic tactics for citizen control and dissent suppression.

Once promise of the connecting power of social media has shown its downside even in countries with sophisticated and established democracies, bringing right wing political entrepreneurs to power, polarizing citizens and threatening even long-served institutions of accountability. Misinformation and disinformation campaigns have subverted journalism to sideline unfavorable news, manipulate the electorates and orchestrate elections.

With the hegemonic aspirations of China, Russia, U.S. and others; proliferation of intelligence software for the willing, and military interventions subverting domestic social and political development, nascent democracies in debt ridden countries are in a continuous loop of asymmetric power imbalance, either in reluctant submission, or willing allies for outside interests in return for security guarantees toward their longevity.

Rapid population growth in SSA has led to a youth bulge with median age hovering well around 20 across countries, presenting a significant demographic force, which, if harnessed, could potentially transform the existing paradigms of power on the continent. However, in spite of trends in adoption of new technology; i.e. Mobile ownership, social media participation and the increasing popularity of financial



applications like M-Pesa, Flutterwave and Paystack, Afro Barometer concludes political activism among youth across SSA has declined as compared to their elders, except in attending rallies and demonstrations, and less engaged in sustained political organizing. Africa venerates age, making it harder for the young generation to pierce through power ceilings and infuse the system with progressive ideas leaving them more disillusioned and disconnected. Moreover, the positive correlation apparent between Human Development Index and political activism places SSA youth at a disadvantage.

On a more hopeful note, the steady adoption of mobile technology projected to reach 50% across the continent by 2025 by an extremely young continent, will engender fintech growth, driving access to social mobility and closing the financial inclusion gap, lifting large segments out of poverty. This will in turn create conditions for a better-educated polity, stronger citizen action groups with better organizing capacity pushing against authoritarian states, and ultimately creating stronger institutions. Moreover, digital technology can then be leveraged to infuse the democratic process with mechanisms of transparency.

Kenya, as one of the most technologically advanced countries in Africa, frequently referred to as “silicon savannah” has been at the forefront of social and governance transformation with a steadily growing middle class and a vibrant civil society where the interplay between political corruption, ethnic cleavages, democracy and citizen action groups is apparent.

In 2007, after a rigged election, the country devolved into a bloody conflict along ethnic lines. Over a thousand people were killed and several hundred thousand Kenyans were displaced, ultimately landing the presidential candidates in the International Criminal Court. Ten years later in 2017, after yet another fraudulent



process where the opposition candidate, Raila Odinga, refused to accept the results, multiple civil society groups came out to denounce the elections as rigged. But then, even as the Kenyan state authorities moved to crack down on protests by threatening to revoke CSO licenses under trumped up charges, the high court judge ultimately intervened to belay the order.

Five years later, in August 2022, Kenyans once again went to the polls in hotly contested elections that could again have spiraled into violence. This time in a clear win for democracy, a peaceful transition took place. Credit goes to an evolving civil society, with the deployment of observers in election sites; a clear adjudication process to air concerns and hear rebuttals, and the impartiality of the supreme court of the land whose ruling was accepted by the parties. Most important, however, was the transparency of the process, where the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) quickly uploaded and posted the tallies from every polling station to a portal on a public website allowing candidates, the media and the public to verify the results. In this case, digital technology was leveraged to show transparency availing poll station workers to compare and tally for themselves.

At times, Africa's reverence for tradition and culture can also be a powerful tool against the perversions of the digital age and the modern surveillance state. During Zambia's August 2021 elections, in spite of social media black outs, opposition crackdown, pro-government bias in state-owned media, disinformation campaigns and even enactment of Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act (CSCCA) enabling digital interception of messages; as the incumbent, Edgar Lungu prepared to hold on to power, the elder statesmen of five neighboring countries stepped in to urge a



concession, even a congratulatory message to the incoming president, Hakaïnde Hichilema.<sup>148</sup>

In the end, despite the realities of the digital march, Africa is still a magical place, where rituals, myths and traditions can yield inexplicably powerful results especially when unleashed by collective action. In July 2003, after ten years of bloody civil war, members of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace forced a peace agreement by organizing sit-ins at the negotiation venue, linking arms and blocking the entrance. They threatened to strip naked if the warlords did not reach a peace agreement. The threat worked! In Liberian and Ghanaian cultures, it is a taboo for men to see a naked woman in public. After months of hopeless negotiations, a peace accord was signed. The United Nations disarmed and reintegrated more than 100,000 combatants and general elections were held.<sup>149</sup>

After all that is said and done, perhaps this is Africa's strength. Despite all the disruptors: the limited digital connectivity, poor infrastructure, formidable geopolitical powers jousting with each other competing for resources, the legacy of authoritarian regimes and the expanding surveillance apparatus at their disposal; perhaps extolling the virtues of the digital revolution and its positive effects on

---

<sup>148</sup> "Zambia Election: Lungu Concedes Defeat after Leaders Mount Pressure," The Africa Report, August 16, 2021, <https://www.theafricareport.com/117691/zambia-election-lungu-concedes-defeat-after-leaders-mount-pressure/>.

<sup>149</sup> Kingsley Ighobor, "Unleashing the Power of Africa's Civil Society," Africa Renewal, United Nations, 2016, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/august-2016/unleashing-power-africa%E2%80%99s-civil-society>.

democracy could be premature. Instead, the rise of citizen action at the intersection of Africa's rich traditions and the continuing financial empowerment enabled by tech could be the catalyst leading the continent to democracy. Time can only tell.





---

# Additional Sources

“Ethiopia's Oromia Conflict: Why a Teacher Was Killed 'Execution-Style',” BBC News, January 16, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55530351>.

Associated Press, “UN Experts: Darfur Rebel Groups Make Money in Libya,” Voice of America, February 5, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-experts-darfur-rebel-groups-make-money-in-libya-/6427828.html>.

“The Mobile Academy: Sub-Saharan Africa,” GSMA Intelligence, 2021, [https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GSMA\\_ME\\_SSA\\_2021\\_English\\_Web\\_Singles.pdf](https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GSMA_ME_SSA_2021_English_Web_Singles.pdf).

David Pilling, “African Payments Company Makes Rare Purchase of US Fintech,” Financial Times, June 6, 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/451c5e77-1c49-47c1-b55e-2e1a81e0597a?fbclid=IwAR1-UUqAgrDrDCioID9aGq3BLqD8xRVbEahmYcmFpbnhTdNg5oZHLspFOzg>.

“2021 Corruption Perceptions Index - Explore Finland's Results,” Transparency.org, Accessed November 9, 2022, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/fin>.

Margot Mallet, “What Price Will Glencore Pay for Its Murky Deals in DR Congo?” Global Witness, June 22, 2018, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/blog/what-price-will-glencore-pay-its-murky-deals-dr-congo/>.

“362 Resolution on the Right to Freedom of Information and Expression on the Internet in Africa,” African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, November 4, 2016, <https://www.achpr.org/sessions/resolutions?id=374>.

“The Rebels Come to Khartoum: How to Implement Sudan's New Peace Agreement,” International Crisis Group, February 23, 2021, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/b168-rebels-come-khartoum-how-i mplement-sudans-new-peace-agreement>.



Oscar Rickett, "Sudan Coup: Where Is Hemeti?" Middle East Eye, October 29, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sudan-coup-where-is-hemeti>.

Nick Turse, "U.S. Military Says It Has a 'Light Footprint' in Africa. These Documents Show a Vast Network of Bases," The Intercept, December 1, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/12/01/u-s-military-says-it-has-a-light-footprint-in-africa-these-documents-show-a-vast-network-of-bases/>.

Debora Malito, "The Endless US War on Terror in Somalia," International Institute for International Political Science, May 12, 2021, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/endless-us-war-terror-somalia-30359>.

Abdi Samatar, "The War on Terror and the Terror of War," CHR Michelin Institute, September 10, 2008, <https://www.cmi.no/events/443-the-war-on-terror-and-the-terror-of-war>.

Laura Berlingozzi and Eduardo Baldaro, "In the Sahel, 20 Years of War on Terror Has Created More and Stronger Enemies," Italian Institute for International Studies, September 10, 2021, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/sahel-20-years-war-terror-has-created-more-and-stronger-enemies-31617>.

Héni Nsaibia and Jules Duhamel, "Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines," ReliefWeb, OCHA, June 17, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines>.

"Instability in Mali," Global Conflict Tracker, Council on Foreign Relations, May 12, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/destabilization-mali>.

Federica Saini Fasanotti, "Russia's Wagner Group in Africa: Influence, Commercial Concessions, Rights Violations, and Counterinsurgency Failure," Brookings, February 8, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/08/russias-wagner-group-in-africa-influence-commercial-concessions-rights-violations-and-counterinsurgency-failure/>.

Raphael Parens, "The Wagner Group's Playbook in Africa: Mali," Foreign Policy Research Institute, March 18, 2022, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/03/the-wagner-groups-playbook-in-africa-mali/>.



“Corruption in the Extractive Value Chain,” Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016,

<https://www.oecd.org/dev/Corruption-in-the-extractive-value-chain.pdf>.

Joseph Siegle and Candace Cook, “Taking Stock of Africa’s 2021 Elections,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, January 12, 2021, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/2021-elections/>.

“Russia’s Strategic Goals in Africa,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, George C. Marshall Center, Accessed November 9, 2022,

<https://africacenter.org/experts/joseph-siegle/russia-strategic-goals-africa/>.

*Niger, the Battle for Uranium, Investigations Et Enquêtes*, YouTube, 2022,

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joZQMeLBP\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joZQMeLBP_A).

Arnaud Jouve, “Niger: Fermeture D’une Des plus Grandes Mines D’uranium,” RFI, March 31, 2021,

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210331-niger-la-fermeture-d-une-des-plus-grandes-mines-d-uranium>.

Chrispin Mwakideu, “Niger: A Daunting Presidency Awaits Mohamed Bazoum,” Deutsche Welle, February 26, 2021,

<https://www.dw.com/en/niger-a-daunting-presidency-awaits-mohamed-bazoum/a-56718455>.

Landry Signé, “US Trade and Investment in Africa,” Brookings, July 28, 2018,

<https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/us-trade-and-investment-in-africa/>.

Dickson Omondi, “Challenges and Opportunities for Electoral Democracy in Africa,” NDI, House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights, March 2, 2021,

<https://www.ndi.org/publications/challenges-and-opportunities-electoral-democracy-africa>.

“The Civil Society Division,” Citizens and Diaspora Organizations Directorate, African Union, Accessed November 9, 2022, <https://au.int/en/civil-society-division>.

“Sipri Partnerships with African Civil Society Organizations,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Accessed November 9, 2022,

<https://www.sipri.org/research/conflicts-and-peace/africa-security-and-governance-project/sipri-partnerships-with-africa>.

Landry Signé, “US Secretary of State Blinken to Visit Africa as Tension with China and Russia Intensifies,” Brookings, August 5, 2022,

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2022/08/05/us-secretary-of-state-blinken-to-visit-africa-as-tension-with-china-and-russia-intensifies/>.

Clarissa Herrmann and Deutsche Welle, “US and Chinese Tech Giants Are Investing in Africa's Digital Infrastructure to Avoid Internet Censorship from Authoritarian Regimes,” Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, May 28, 2019,

<https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/us-and-chinese-tech-giants-are-investing-in-africas-digital-infrastructure-to-avoid-internet-censorship-from-authoritarian-regimes/>.

Helge Ronning, “Civil Society in Africa after Independence,” African Postcolonial Literature in English in the Postcolonial Web, University of Oslo, 1996,

<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/africa/ronning2.html>.

Sylvester Uche Ugwu, *Church and Civil Society in 21st Century Africa: Potentialities and Challenges Regarding Socio-Economic and Political Development with Particular Reference to Nigeria*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2017,

<https://www.peterlang.com/document/1110134>.

E.T. Mallya, Faith-based Organizations, the State and Politics in Tanzania. In: Bompani, B., Frahm-Arp, M, (eds) *Development and Politics from Below, Non-Governmental Public Action*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2010, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230283206\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230283206_7)

Christine Bodewes, “Civil Society in Africa: The Role of a Catholic Parish in a Kenyan Slum,” Cambridge Scholars, 2013,

<https://www.cambridgescholars.com/resources/pdfs/978-1-4438-5234-0-sample.pdf>.

“Funding Agencies,” Developmentaid, Accessed November 9, 2022,

<https://www.developmentaid.org/donors>.

Abdullahi Abdi, “Kenya, Again, Represses Civil Society,” Human Rights Watch, November 7, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/11/07/kenya-again-represses-civil-society>.



Moussa Mbaye, "Study of Civil Society in Senegal," Civil Society Index – Rapid Assessment, CIVICUS, 2014,

<https://www.civicus.org/images/stories/Senegal%20CSI%20RA%20final.pdf>.

*Ole of Civil Society in Kenya, What Is Their Role in Enhancing Democracy? YouTube*, KTN News Kenya, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ngc1Uo\\_i-g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ngc1Uo_i-g).

"Diaspora Plays Vital Role Advancing Democracy in Africa," Democracy Digest, National Endowment for Democracy, September 21, 2017,

<https://www.demdigest.org/diaspora-plays-vital-role-advancing-democracy-africa/>.

Andrew Songa and Lidet Tadesse, "Kenya's Watershed Election: Implications for EU Policy," Carnegie Europe, October 6, 2022,

<https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/10/06/kenya-s-watershed-election-implications-for-eu-policy-pub-88060>.

Augustine Ikelegbe, "The State and Civil Society in Nigeria: Towards a Partnership for Sustainable Development," *Monograph*, 7, 2013,

[https://doi.org/https://www.academia.edu/66645310/The\\_State\\_and\\_Civil\\_Society\\_in\\_Nigeria\\_Towards\\_a\\_Partnership\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Development](https://doi.org/https://www.academia.edu/66645310/The_State_and_Civil_Society_in_Nigeria_Towards_a_Partnership_for_Sustainable_Development).

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Firouzeh Afsharnia



Firouzeh Afsharnia is a fellow at the Global TechnoPolitics Forum. She was born in pre-revolutionary Iran and later emigrated to the U.S. for higher education. She holds a B.A. from Boston University; an M.B.A. from the University of Southern California and a Master of International Service from the American University in Washington D.C. with a focus on Conflict & Development. She has over ten years experience in corporate America with financial systems applications; nine years in film & TV post production; and over fifteen years with international organizations in the UK, Africa and Central Asia. She served at the United Nations first in New York, then as part of the largest UN Peacekeeping Mission in DR Congo; consulted for the World Bank and various NGO's, and served on several election observation missions with The Carter Center in Nepal, DRC and Ivory Coast. She speaks English, Farsi, French and Portuguese and is currently based in Los Angeles.



---

## GLOBAL TECHNOPOLITICS FORUM LEADERSHIP

### Chairman

Gregory F. Treverton

### President

Pari Esfandiari

### Board of Advisors

Philip Chase Bobbitt

David Bray

Thomas A. Campbell

Shelby Coffey

Shanta Devarajan

C. Bryan Gabbard

Nancy K. Hayden

Jim Herriot

Molly Jahn

Spencer Kim

Robert Klitgaard

Ronald Marks

Kevin M O'Connell

Barry A. Sanders

Rod Schoonover

Davide Strusani

Peter Vale

John Walcott

James F. Warren

David K. Young



The Global TechnoPolitics Forum is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit educational organization with a mission to shape the public debate and facilitate global coordination at the intersection of technology and geopolitics. It achieves this mission through: convenings, research, and community building.

© 2020 The Global TechnoPolitics Forum. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Global TechnoPolitics Forum, except in the case of brief quotations in news articles, critical articles, or reviews. Please direct inquiries to Global TechnoPolitics Forum.

[www.TechnoPolitics.org](http://www.TechnoPolitics.org)