

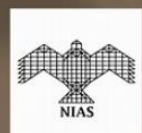


NIAS Area Studies Africa Monitor

Africa Monitor #5, Vol. 1, No.5
August 2024



India, Japan and South Korea Asia in Africa



About NIAS Global Politics

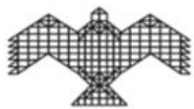
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About NIAS Africa Studies

As a part of the area studies initiatives, the Institute started a focused study on Pakistan in 2020. In 2021, it expanded the area studies to include Europe Studies, China Reader, and Maritime Studies. In 2022, the Science, Technology and International Relations (STIR) programme at the Institute is further expanding its area studies, to include Africa.

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NIAS Africa Studies would include a series of expert lectures, workshops, publications and a monthly exclusively focussed on Africa. The initiative also aims to create a network of young scholars studying Africa and African scholars studying in various Indian institutions.



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About Africa Monitor

Africa Monitor is an academic initiative under the area studies programme of STIR. It is an advanced form of Africa Weekly that used to be published earlier. The monthly publication includes commentaries, short notes and daily developments on a monthly basis.

<https://globalpolitics.in/africa/>

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Image Source: *Chetenet, Hindustan Times, and People's Gazette*

COMMENTS

India in Africa: Critical minerals as an emerging domain

Ayan Datta

Japan in Africa: Strengthening relations amidst evolving global politics

Sayeka Ghosh

South Korea in Africa: Objectives and challenges

Vetriselvi Baskaran

Kenya protests: Fourth Week

Anu Maria Joseph

Protests in Kenya: Into the fifth week

Anu Maria Joseph

AFRICA IN BRIEF

Daily roundups

1-31 July

Algeria
Egypt
Libya
Sudan
Kenya
Ethiopia
Somalia
Uganda
South Africa
Ghana
Gambia
Zambia
Central African Republic
Democratic Republic of Congo
Mauritania
Morocco
Guinea
Sierra Leone
Niger
Nigeria
Mali
Burkina Faso

COMMENTARY

India in Africa: Critical minerals as an emerging domain

Ayan Datta

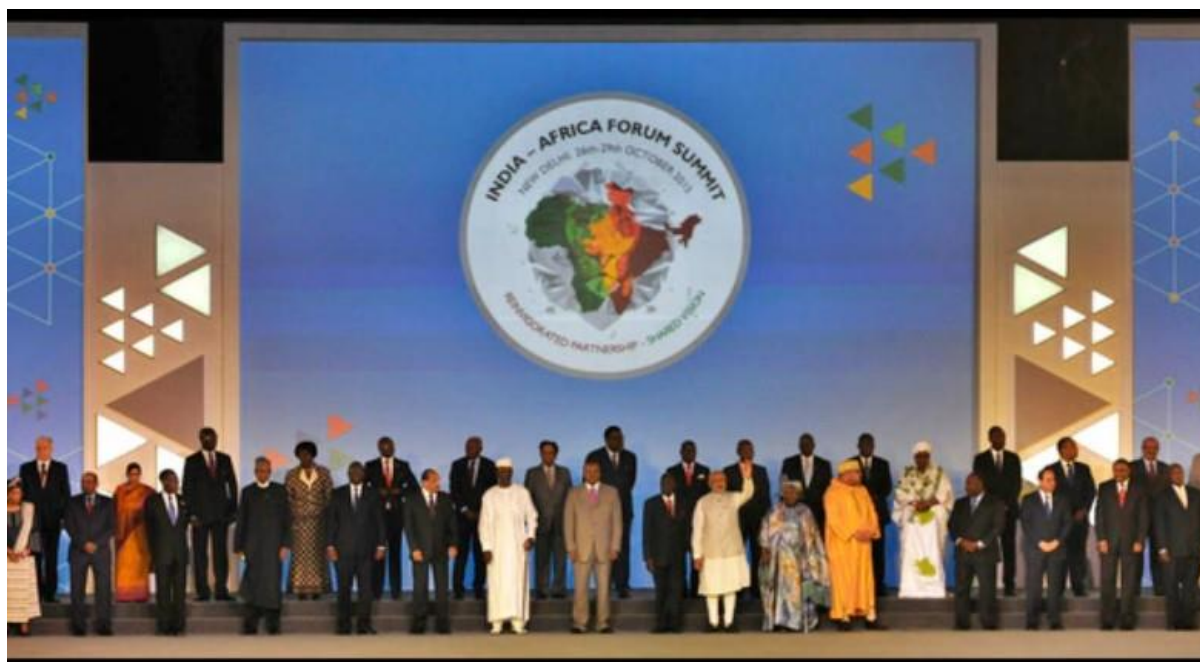


Image source: Hindustan Times

Although India's development assistance and capacity-building initiatives in Africa have long dominated the discourse on their bilateral relations, from 2014 onwards, critical minerals have become an emerging domain of cooperation. Indian investments in Africa and African interest in India have since intensified. The growth in the relationship can be attributed to a second "Scramble for Africa," triggered by the continent's abundant reserves of critical minerals needed for green technologies, including Electric Vehicles (EVs) and wind turbines. While India has participated in the scramble, its relationship with Africa has emphasised mutual benefit and technology transfers with African stakeholders.

India and Africa's interest in critical mineral cooperation

The following are the reasons for India and Africa's interest in critical minerals.

First, India's economy requires a continuous supply of critical minerals to meet its green energy targets. With their rich deposits, African countries are an attractive target for New Delhi. In 2020, India pledged to

achieve "net zero" carbon emissions by 2050. To meet its goals, the government incentivized EV and green energy production, which requires cobalt, copper, lithium, and platinum group elements (PGEs: collections of rare earth elements, including platinum, which occur together in nature and have similar applications). Several African countries, including Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia and Zimbabwe, have rich deposits of these minerals, making them viable partners for India. New Delhi's ties with these countries are mutually beneficial, as they help India generate green energy and provide economic opportunities for Africa.

Second, critical minerals are essential for India's economy and military. India's farming sector requires vast quantities of phosphorus and potassium to make fertilisers and pesticides. Morocco, Tunisia, and South Africa are leading producers of these minerals and, therefore, are attractive targets for Indian investors. Furthermore, PGEs and Rare Earth Elements (REEs) have wide-ranging defence applications,

including in military hardware, aviation and spacecraft, necessitating that India incorporate countries that are rich in these resources, including Mozambique and South Africa, in its supply chains.

Third, India and African countries share the aim of reducing their dependency on China. In 2023, India's Ministry of Mines stated that the country depends heavily on China for its lithium, cobalt, graphite, and nickel. Similarly, China's presence in Africa's natural resource sector has raised fears of Beijing's "debt-trap" diplomacy. Given their shared China issues, India and Africa are committed to diversifying their economic partnerships and avoiding dependence on single suppliers.

Evolution of Indo-African critical mineral cooperation

The India-Africa Summit Forum of 2015 was a milestone in India-Africa critical mineral ties, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, outlining a win-win model for bilateral relations. African countries would provide India access to their mineral deposits in exchange for Indian investments in resource exploration, extraction, export infrastructure, logistics, and technical assistance for African geoscientists. Following government-led discussions at the 2017 India-Africa Business Forum, Indian firms explored lithium mining opportunities in Zimbabwe, stressing New Delhi's move to offset Chinese dependence on the EVs and batteries sector. In 2018 and 2019, India signed MoUs with Zambia and Zimbabwe for joint "exploration, exploration and exploitation of Mineral Resources." Additionally, New Delhi agreed to train African geoscientists in advanced mapping and exploration techniques, reflecting Modi's "win-win" formula.

Since 2020, the Indian government and private players massively expanded their presence in Africa's critical mineral sector. While Indian leaders, including Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar, met their African counterparts, leaders of multiple resource-rich African states, including Rwanda and South Africa, visited India to

discuss cooperation in critical minerals. In 2023, India-based Vedanta Resources enlarged its footprint in Zambia by pledging USD 1.2 billion of investment into KCM to increase the mines' Copper and Cobalt outputs and expand their total production capacity. The conglomerate expressed interest in exploring other critical minerals through its subsidiary, Hindustan Zinc, reflecting the positive effects of MoUs and governmental visits on private-sector initiatives. In June 2023, India's Ministry of Mines released a report titled "Critical Minerals for India," the first systematic outline of the country's critical mineral needs. In December, the Ministry of Mines Secretary, VL Kantha Rao, stated that India was exploring critical mineral cooperation with African countries, marking the continent as a priority in India.

Major issues

Since 2014, Indo-African critical minerals ties have grown strengthened. However, India's relations with the continent are fraught with issues.

First, the competition with China. While Chinese SOEs and state-backed private firms have established production capabilities and invested in multiple African countries with rich mineral deposits, including DRC, Zambia and Zimbabwe, most of India's efforts in Africa are at the MoU or discussion stage and lag behind China's presence.

Second, Africa's infrastructure deficit. While Africa lacks transport and mineral processing infrastructure, India lacks the industrial capacity to meet these deficits, slowing down bilateral ties.

Third, Africa's focus on sustainable mining. While African governments have welcomed India, they have also emphasised resource sustainability, which could create operational difficulties for Indian players.

Trajectory of the relationship

As India grows, New Delhi will intensify critical mineral cooperation with Africa to achieve its green energy goals and reduce

dependency on China. With their young workforces, African governments will increasingly seek Indian investments to generate employment and wealth. In the coming decade, the Indian government and private players will likely capitalize on the MoUs, visits and statements of intent with African countries to mine and process Africa's mineral wealth. Although India's presence will not reach China's levels, it will

be a source of diversification for African countries dependent on Beijing. However, unless India grows its industrial capacity through massive economic reforms and both parties find a middle path between resource extraction and environmental obligations, Africa's infrastructure deficit and sustainability concerns will continue to impede bilateral cooperation.

COMMENTARY

Japan in Africa: Strengthening relations amidst evolving global politics

Sayeka Ghosh



Image Source: Chetenet

The Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 8) was held in Tunisia in August 2022. For the second time, the conference was held on African soil. 48 African countries participated in the conference. The conference highlighted mutual respect and shared interests between Japan and African countries. Japan-Africa relations began during the early 1990s, following the creation of TICAD in 1993. Over the past three decades, TICAD

has evolved from an originally aid-based platform into a framework of economic partnership and political dialogue.

Japan in Africa: Interests and strategies

1. Trade and investment. According to the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRA), in 2021, Africa secured a USD 4.2 billion trade surplus with Japan. It says that Japan-Africa trade reached USD 23.5 billion, a 74

per cent increase compared to USD 16.5 billion in 2020. Africa's exports from Japan were recorded at USD 13.9 billion and imports were estimated at USD 9.6 billion. In 2022, Liberia was the leading export destination for Japan, recording JPY 348 billion worth of exports, followed by South Africa. Transport equipment and general machinery are the popular export goods from Japan for African countries. Japan's footprints in Africa point to its growing commercial, investment, and geopolitical interests. The focus on opportunities for trade and investment in Africa is driven by the rapidly expanding African economies, natural resources and high potential for economic growth. The African markets are considered ideal for many Japanese products and services as its population is expected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050. Japanese companies have taken slow inroads into Africa in the automobile, electronics and construction sectors. Toyota, a leading automobile company in Japan, set up assembly plants in South Africa and Kenya. Japan invested in the expansion of Mtwara port in Tanzania and the construction of Nacala port in Mozambique.

2. Influence in world affairs. Japan has long been a bystander in global politics because of its pacifist constitution and dependence on the US. However, recently, the country has been making efforts to revamp its position in the international arena by increasingly participating in peacekeeping efforts. Japan has deployed personnel to South Sudan as part of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Additionally, the country has been providing training and capacity-building support to African peacekeepers through initiatives including the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP). Beyond the economic relations, it has been gathering political allies in the African continent to secure permanent membership in the UNSC. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), launched by Japan in 1993, is the epitome of Japan's interests in Africa. TICAD provides a platform for Japan and African countries to promote

cooperation at different stages of economic development and address the challenges including climate change and security issues. Through the TICAD, Japan has been trying to renew its position in global leadership while enhancing its soft power.

3. Strategic importance. Africa's rich natural resources, especially the rare earths, oil and gas are imperative to Japan. Cobalt from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Morocco, is vital for producing lithium-ion batteries in electric vehicles and electronic devices. Nickel, imported from Madagascar, South Africa and Botswana, is essential for stainless steel production and battery technologies, including those for electric vehicles. Platinum Group Metals (PGMs) from South Africa are used in catalytic converters to reduce vehicle emissions and various industrial applications. Tantalum from Rwanda and Burundi is critical for electronic components such as capacitors and high-performance alloys. Through Africa, Japan aims to secure critical minerals to expand and thereby dominate the automobile sector. It also aims to diversify its supply chain beyond the traditional outlets. Japan's increasing investments in Africa's port, logistics and security sectors point to its interest in Africa's developing consumer market, critical minerals and secure sea routes.

Africa's Objectives in Japan

1. Quality technology investment. African countries seek Japanese expertise and investment in 5G networks, data centres, and digital infrastructure. NEC Corporation of Japan has been involved in projects to improve internet connectivity in Kenya and South Africa. Technology investments would allow Africa to move away from being an exporter of raw materials to advancements in technologies and manufacturing, particularly in healthcare systems, renewable energy sources, and digital networks across the continent. For instance, Japan's New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organisation (NEDO) has partnered up with Morocco's concentrated solar power projects to address energy poverty and secure cleaner energy.

2. A balanced approach. African countries seek balance in international partnerships to avoid over-dependence on one actor or region. The Japanese approach, characterised by mutual respect, non-interference, and symmetrical partnership, is befitting the interests of African countries. Unlike several other global actors, Japan's aid and investment do not contain political strings, scepticism and security concerns.

3. *Capacity building.* Africa's interaction with Japan extends to learning from its experience in disaster management, urban planning, and environmental sustainability. For instance, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been instrumental in helping African countries like Mozambique build disaster management capacities. Following the Cyclone Idai in 2019, JICA launched projects to enhance Mozambique's disaster resilience. This included training local officials in early warning systems, emergency response coordination, and disaster risk reduction strategies based on Japan's experience with frequent natural disasters. With the challenges of rapid urbanisation, climate change, and sustainable development facing African countries, Japan's experience in these fields is resourceful. Besides, Japan has played a crucial role in modernising agriculture in

Africa, particularly in promoting the New Rice for Africa (NERICA) varieties. In Uganda, Japanese experts have been involved in research and extension services to improve rice production. NERICA varieties, which are high-yield and drought-resistant, are vital for food security and sustainable agriculture in Uganda.

Conclusion

Japan is widely perceived as a trustable partner in the majority of African countries due to its non-interference policies and overlapping interests, being part of the Global South countries. Japan is eager to deepen its involvement in Africa to strengthen its global influence by averting access to critical resources. Meanwhile, Japan will be a reliable partner to Africa for its advanced technology sharing. It also seeks partnerships that meet both immediate short-term needs and long-term development objectives. Japan has also emerged as an Asian alternative to the West, Russia and China, which comes with the baggage of interference, human rights and security threats, and debt traps and scepticism. Japan's high-quality investment, combined with technology transfer and human resource development, are of Africa's interests. Africa's emerging economy and market capacity are in global demand. Hence, Japan-Africa relations are likely to take an upward trajectory.

COMMENTARY

South Korea in Africa: Objectives and challenges

Vetriselvi Baskaran



Image source: People's Gazette

On 3 June, South Korea hosted the two-day Korea-Africa summit for the first time under the theme, "The Future We Make Together: Shared Growth, Sustainability, and Solidarity." Delegations from 48 African countries participated in the summit. It focussed on expanding trade, technology and investment. The summit launched the Critical Minerals Dialogue aimed at stabilising supply chains.

Mauritania's President and the current chair of the AU Mohamed Ould Ghazouani and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol jointly stated: "Recognizing Korea's leadership in advanced industries and Africa's significance as a globally important region for critical mineral reserves, we emphasise the need to expand mutually beneficial cooperation and knowledge sharing, including at the minilateral level, to

promote the development of industries related to critical minerals."

A brief background to South Korea-Africa relations

South Korea-Africa relations began in the 1950s during the Korean War. African countries including Ethiopia, South Africa, Liberia, Egypt and Morocco fought for South Korea with the French units. Diplomatic relations strengthened during the 1980s. In 1982, to host the 1988 Seoul Olympics, South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan visited Kenya, Nigeria, Gabon, and Senegal for the first time and expanded diplomatic relations. In 2005, South Korea gained observer status in the AU, providing a larger space for cooperation between both. Following this, South Korea declared the year 2006 as "the year of friendship with

Africa," and introduced Korea-Africa Economic Cooperation (KOAPEC) and the Korea-Africa Forum (KAAF). Currently, South Korea has embassies in 25 African countries which impels a robust diplomatic presence.

South Korea's footprints in Africa

1. Political relations. Africa-South Korea political relations strengthened with multiple continuous state visits. South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha visited South Africa in 2019. They adopted the "Seoul Declaration," an action plan for 2013-15 in 2012, and the Addis Ababa Declaration in 2016. Since 2012, South Korean Presidents visited Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Egypt, and Sierra Leone for consecutive years until 2022. The South Korea-Africa Foundation was established in 2018, to strengthen political, economic, and aid footprints in Africa. These developments laid the groundwork for contemporary political relations between South Korea and African countries.

2. Economic relations. South Korea is one of the largest trading partners of Africa, in several sectors including automobile, machinery and electronics. In 2024, trade between Africa and South Korea reached nearly 20 billion, predominantly in the sectors of critical minerals, technology, energy, defence, and agriculture. Cultural ties are promoted through the "Hallyu" phenomenon where Korean pop culture, including K-pop music, dramas, and films, has gained popularity across the continent. This concept increased tourism between South Korea and Africa. According to Statista, South Africa is the most popular destination in Africa for Korean tourists. South Korea also provides scholarships for African students to study in South Korea.

3. Military ties. South Korean defence firms began investing in African countries recently. In 2022, Korea Aerospace Industries signed an agreement to manufacture advanced training aircraft in Egypt. Both countries signed a USD 1.7 billion deal for the delivery of K9 self-propelled howitzers manufactured by

Hanwha. South Korea has signed a bilateral military cooperation agreement with Egypt.

South Korea's Africa objectives

1. Securing access to critical minerals. South Korea depends on African countries for critical minerals to produce semiconductors and Electric Vehicles (EVs). The country meets 95 per cent of its mineral needs through imports. Africa has long been a source for South Korea and has been recently increasing its investments in the sector. In 2023, Korean EV battery maker LG Energy Solution signed an agreement with Morocco to produce battery-grade lithium hydroxide. Similarly, mining firms in Madagascar and Tanzania upgraded the graphite supply chain to South Korea. With Tanzania, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed to provide concessional loans worth USD 2.5 billion to invest in the mining sector. However, Chinese dominance in the sector has been hindering South Korea's foothold in Africa. Besides, poor governance of mining resources, conflicts, and environmental concerns such as land degradation, loss of biodiversity, water pollution, and displacement are major challenges for South Korea to expand its footprints in Africa

2. Plans to expand trade and investment. This year, for the first time, South Korea hosted an Africa summit intending to expand its footprints in the continent. As major powers and emerging Asian powers are focusing on Africa's market potential, South Korea also seek to expand its trade and investment to position itself as Africa's one of relevant partners. However, the success of these objectives depends on South Korea's ability to overcome the challenges including Africa's lack of infrastructure, poor economic policies, asymmetric trade balances, and South Korea's less dominance in Africa compared to other Asian powers.

3. South Korea's "Global pivotal state" aim. The concept of a global pivotal state entails positioning South Korea as a significant player in international affairs by moving beyond its traditional focus on the Korean peninsula. South Korea sees Africa as a

crucial partner in the global south as it could garner support for its international positioning by diversifying its markets and strengthening bilateral relations.

Africa's objectives with South Korea

1. Africa's preference towards emerging Asian countries. African countries increasingly seek to collaborate with Asian countries, particularly Japan, India and South Korea. Asia's emerging economies demand African markets and natural resources. Africa welcomes emerging Asian powers with shared global south identity, and mutual respect without colonial burden as an alternative to the traditional Western partners.

2. Emphasis on digital technology and knowledge sharing. Kenya collaborated with South Korea in the Konza Digital Media City Project to advance the digital technology ecosystem in East Africa. The Korea-backed Kenya Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) is under process. South Korean companies including Samsung, LG, Hyundai and KIA are popular in several African countries. African countries desire to access South Korean technology and expertise in sectors including smart infrastructure, digital transformation, and agriculture. African countries including Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Cameroon,

Uganda, Kenya, and Guinea Bissau depend on South Korea for rice production under the 'K-rice belt' initiative. Africa aims to secure assistance from Korean research institutions to develop new breeds of crops. For instance, South Korean state-run research institute KOPIA's technological intervention increased farmers' income in Kenya. In Uganda, Korea-supported water management technology resulted in increased orange production.

Conclusion

South Korea-Africa's growing collaboration is vital in upholding the aims they have put forth. Both share issues including economic expansion and climate change, implying potential for areas of cooperation and mutual growth. The perceived neocolonial nature of the West in Africa and the scepticism towards China and Russia provide opportunities for other Asian countries like China, Japan, and South Korea to offer developmental assistance by negating political influence. Further, the non-intrusive nature of Asian countries in political affairs unlike the Western partners builds trust. The evolving partnerships with Africa and South Korea are promising, with mutual benefits, despite challenges.

COMMENTARY

Kenya protests: Fourth Week

Anu Maria Joseph



Image source: Reuters

On 11 July, Kenyan President William Ruto dissolved the cabinet following the protests which have been ongoing since the end of June. Ruto claimed that the move came after "reflection, listening to Kenyans, and after holistic appraisal of my cabinet."

On 2 July, Kenyan police fired tear gas to disperse the protesters in the capital Nairobi. The new round of protests erupted after President William Ruto promised to withdraw the controversial financial bill on 28 June. The protesters are demanding Ruto's resignation.

On 3 July, the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) reported that at least 270 people were arrested for criminal rampage during the protests. It stated: "The DCI has further deployed scrupulous investigators across the affected regions to pursue suspects captured on CCTV cameras and mobile phone recordings violently

robbing, stealing and destroying properties and businesses of innocent citizens."

The same day, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) reported that 39 people had been killed during the violent protests across the country.

On 1 July, Ruto said that the country will have to further depend on borrowing USD Seven billion to "be able to run our government." He stated: "I have been working very hard to pull Kenya out of a debt trap. It is very easy for us, as a country to say: 'Let us reject the financial bill.' That is fine and I have graciously said we will drop the financial bill. But it will have huge consequences."

On 29 June, one of the protesters commented: "I am not afraid to die, many have died before us. Many more will die but we have to stand up for our generation who are being taken for fools by the politicians."

Continuing crisis in Kenya: Major issues and causes

First, expansion and intensification of protests in Kenya. The protests began in early June against a financial bill to increase taxes to address the debt crisis of USD 80 billion. Although Ruto withdrew the bill, the protests continued. What began as a protest against the tax hike is currently over public grievances, corruption, misgovernance and a demand for Ruto's resignation. What started in the capital (Nairobi) has expanded to 35 of Kenya's 47 counties. They have cut across geographic, social and ethnic landscapes. The protesters have been chanting, "Ruto must go." They are demanding the police be held accountable for their brutality during the previous week's protests, which killed 39 people. Many fear that Ruto could still sign the bill before it expires next week. The anger also amounts to a year-long public discontent against Ruto's series of tax hikes and financial management since he came to power.

Second, new faces of protest. Traditionally, Kenyan protests have been led by elites. They often were on ethnic lines; the minority against the majority over marginalisation. Several protests end up in power-sharing deals between the leadership and a few benefits to the protesters. However, this time, protests are led by the younger generation. Uniquely, they are not supported by any political parties. They were mobilised through social media without any leadership. Hashtags of #OccupyParliament, #RutoMustGo and #RejectBudgetCorruption were trending on social media. On TikTok, many influencers circulated videos highlighting the harm government policies were causing.

Third, President Ruto's response. Ruto's administration has placed its response between repression and accommodation. Police used tear gas and live ammunition after protesters set fire to the parliament house, causing several deaths. They continue to use tear gas to disperse the protesters. KNCHR reported 32 cases of "enforced or involuntary disappearance"

and 627 arrests. Meanwhile, Ruto, on 26 June, promised talks with protesters, stating that "I run a government, but I also lead people, and the people have spoken."

Fourth, the international response. There were swift international responses at the initial stage. The previous week, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concerns over the deaths of the protestors. The AU called on the stakeholders to hold dialogues on the issues. The US, which lately designated Kenya as its non-NATO ally, condemned the violence and urged to restore order.

Trajectory

The protests have expanded in terms of geography and intensity. However, they are not organised but fragmented, implying a likely slow death unless proper leadership takes over. Despite this, Ruto's withdrawal of the bill did too little to contain the protests. The protesters demand accountable governance and Ruto's resignation. Ruto's double stance by violently suppressing the protests while maintaining the rhetoric of "the people have spoken" was received with scepticism. The public has perceived Ruto's latest statement about the debt crisis and money requirement to run the government as more of a threat; a threat to force the public to agree to the bill.

International response to the violence seems limited to the initial week. The second phase of the protest received a silent response.

African countries are known for their extraordinary success of mass mobilisation and protest movements- the Arab Spring in 2011, the Sudanese Revolution in 2019, the #ZumaMustFall protests in South Africa in 2020, and the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria in 2020. They have always been inclusive beyond the class, ethnic, regional and religious divides. They recorded an immediate success. All of them were born and grown through social media. Although the long-term success of African protest movements is debated, the immediate success implies the capacity to mobilise the

masses inclusively. It is yet to see how Kenyan protests will unfold. The potential for divisions and differences is high without

organised leadership, implying a major challenge.

COMMENTARY

Protests in Kenya: Into the fifth week

Anu Maria Joseph



Image source: AP Photo

On 19 July, Kenyan President William Ruto announced plans for a "broad-based government" following the continuing anti-government protests that began on 20 June. He announced 11 appointments to the new cabinet, including four opposition leaders. Six of them, including the interior, defence, environment and lands ministers, were reappointed from the previous cabinet sacked on 11 July. Ruto stated: "The crisis

has presented us with a great opportunity as a nation to craft a broad-based and inclusive citizen coalition for national transformation and progress made up of Kenyans from all walks of life. Consequently, I have started the process of forming a new broad-based cabinet to assist in driving the urgently needed and irreversible transformation of our country."

On the same day, the protesters rejected the new appointments posting "rejected" written over the list. Meanwhile, the opposition Azimo coalition stated: "This is a betrayal of the Kenyan people, particularly the Gen Z and millennials who have paid the ultimate price to rid this country of the disastrous Kenya Kwanza regime."

Into the fifth week: Major issues

First, continuing protests, despite the withdrawal of the controversial financial bill. The protests began on 25 June against the controversial tax hike bill. The protests continued even after Ruto scrapped the financial bill. The protests led by the young generation or the Gen-Zs have continued for five weeks without a lull. The second round of protest was triggered when security forces used live ammunition to disperse the protesters who set fire to the premises of the parliament. The violence killed 39

people. They demanded the police to be held accountable for the deaths. According to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, more than 50 people have been killed and 628 arrested so far in the violent protests. By the third week, the protests became anti-government, demanding Ruto to resign.

Second, the expansion of protests in terms of geography, intensity and actors. The protests began in the capital Nairobi. However, they have spread across the country reaching the outskirts including the southern coastal town of Mombasa. The protesters demand Ruto's resignation. Protests were reported in at least 23 of Kenya's 47 counties. Although fragmented, they have intensified with mass mobilisation, violence, and disruption of daily business. Kenya's young generation began the protests through social media without political backing. Journalists, labour unions, political parties, and the Kenyan law society directly or indirectly support the protests.

Third, the cause, demands and response. Initially, the protests were against the financial bill to increase taxes. It was also an expression of long-standing discontent against Ruto's financial management and frequent tax increases since he came to power. However, the initial cause and demand diverted and expanded after Ruto withdrew the bill. It shifted to anti-government protests over public grievances, brutal police response, corruption, misgovernance and a demand for Ruto's resignation. Meanwhile, Ruto has placed his response in between support and suppression. He promised to talk with the protesters and praised the young generation for raising their voices. However, the police have been using tear

gas, live ammunition, and arbitrary arrests to contain the protests.

Fourth, the spillover effect. The events inspire other democracies in Africa. In Uganda, the younger generation mobilised a march on 23 July through social media, demanding an end to corruption. The protesters wore t-shirts portraying "speaker must resign" and spread the hashtag #StopCorruption.

Trajectory

The protests appear to be intensifying. However, with disoriented demands and fragmented participation, they will likely lose their integrity. Initially, mass protests made an impact, forcing Ruto to withdraw the bill. However, the protests appear to be failing now. The new cabinet and inclusion of opposition figures are less likely to calm down the protests. However, protests could disperse with a lack of leadership and concrete demands.

Kenyan protests successfully impacted African youth and their ability to mobilise the masses. Ugandan youth have followed the Kenyan protests. Several other illiberal democracies in the continent are likely to organise similar protests. The authorities in Kenya and Uganda relied on violent methods to contain the protests, implying a possible continuity of violence alongside protests across the region.

Although the protests gained widespread international media attention, regional and international actors made limited comments except for the initial ones. The absence of a response from the regional and international community implies their reluctance to support the protests and take a stance against the authorities.

AFRICA IN BRIEF

1 July-31 July

By Ayan Datta, Samruddi Pathak and Anu Maria Joseph

ALGERIA

Opposition leader Louisa Hanoune quits presidential race

On 14 July, according to Africanews, Algerian Worker's Party leader Louisa Hanoune quit the presidential race because of "unfair conditions." Hanoune stated that the legal framework prevented President Abdelmajid Tebboune from contesting. (["Algeria: Key opposition figure quits presidential race," Africanews, 14 July 2024](#))

EGYPT

New cabinet sworn in; reshuffles in electricity, foreign affairs, and defence



Image source: Reuters

On 3 July, according to Africanews, a new Cabinet took their oaths in a ceremony in Egypt's presidential palace. The Cabinet saw major reshuffles in defence. Mahmud Esmat became Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy. Former diplomat Badr Abdelatty replaced Sameh Shoukry as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Migration. General Abdel Majeed Sakr replaced General Mohamed Zaki as Minister of Defence. The new cabinet also included four women and multiple technocrats. (["Egypt swears in new Cabinet as mounting economic challenges mount," Africanews, 3 July 2024](#))

Cabinet reshuffled; new foreign, finance, and supplies ministers

On 2 July, Reuters reported that Egypt's cabinet would be reshuffled. The foreign, finance, petroleum, electricity and supply ministers would be changed. Badr Abdelatty, Egypt's Ambassador to the European Union, Badr Abdelatty, would replace Sameh Shoukry as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ahmed Kouchuk, deputy former Minister of Finance Mohammed Maait, would take the latter's position.

Sherif Farouk, former chairman of Egypt Post, would replace Ali Moselhy as Minister of Supplies. The Ministries of Electricity and Petroleum would also have new Ministers but did not announce their replacements. (["Egypt set to change finance, foreign and supply ministers," Reuters, 2 July 2024](#))

LIBYA

Mass grave found in former IS-controlled city

On 17 July, according to Africanews, Libya's National Authority for Searching and Identifying Missing People stated that it found a mass grave with 24 bodies in the city of Sirte, which used to be controlled by the Islamic State (IS). The armed group controlled the city between 2011-2016 before US-backed troops expelled them. Multiple mass graves were discovered across Libya in recent years because of political turmoil and mass migration under dangerous conditions. (["Libyan authorities discover unidentified bodies in a former stronghold of the IS group," Africanews, 17 July 2024](#))

UN to investigate mass graves along Libya-Tunisia border

On 9 July, according to Reuters, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Voltker Turk, stated that his office would follow up on reports on mass graves in the Libya-Tunisia border region. He stated that crimes against migrants in Libya

and Tunisia were being committed “at scale, with impunity” by state and non-state actors. In March, around 65 migrants’ bodies were found at a mass grave in Libya’s al-Jahriya Valley region. ([“UN probing reported mass grave on Libya-Tunisia border,” Reuters, 9 July 2024](#))

SUDAN

Military accuses paramilitary RSF of drone strike



Image source: AFP

On 31 July, Sudan Military’s chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan survived an assassination attempt in a drone strike. The army spokesperson said that the army blames the Rapid Support Forces (RSP) of Sudan for the drone attack. However, the RSF has denied the accusations. The conflict between the military and the paramilitary has been going on for 16 months. The RSF has agreed to US-led mediation talks while General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has ruled out any possibility of it. ([“Sudan’s military leader survives drone strikes - army,” BBC, 31 July 2024](#))

136,000 people displaced in a week

On 4 July, Reuters reported that over 136,000 people fled southeastern Sudan’s Sennar state between 24 June and 4 July because of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) attacks in the region. This was the latest wave of displacement caused by the 15-month-long civil war between the Sudan Army and the RSF. The displaced people waded across the Blue Nile towards neighbouring states. Before the attacks, the state contained 285,000 people, mostly displaced from Sudan’s Khartoum and al-Gezira states. ([“More than 136,000 displaced by spread of war in southeast Sudan, UN says,” Reuters, 4 July 2024](#))

KENYA

Ruto’s Financial Act 2023 was declared unconstitutional

On 31 July, the Kenyan Court of Appeal declared the Government’s Financial Act 2023 as unconstitutional. The three-judge bench said that the Act does not comply with the constitutional dictates. In its defence, the government said that higher taxes are necessary to pay off debt and submitted a new economic plan to the IMF to receive funds. ([“Kenyan court nullifies 2023 finance law in a new blow to President Ruto,” Reuters, 31 July 2024](#))

Police brutality against protesters

On 22 July, BBC verified videos of police using water cannons, tear gas and bullets against the protesters. The protests have been continuing despite Kenyan President William Ruto agreeing to have talks with the protesters. The issues have shifted towards police brutality and the public’s lack of trust in the system from the initial demands. Ruto alleged the Ford Foundation,---- of funding the protests. However, the allegations were not backed by any evidence. The protests have remained depoliticized so far. ([“Batons, tear gas, live fire - Kenyans face Police Brutality,” BBC, 22 July 2024](#))

Anti-Ruto protests resume

On 17 July, according to BBC, anti-government protests resumed in Nairobi and other parts of the country, including Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru and Nyeri. One protestor was shot dead in a clash with security forces. The protests began in June against a finance bill introduced by President William Ruto, but the protesters’ demands grew to demanding Ruto’s resignation. ([“Protester killed as crowds call for Kenya leader to go,” BBC, 17 July 2024](#))

200 police officers sent to Haiti to counter gang violence

On 16 July, according to Africanews, Kenya sent 200 police officers to Haiti as part of a UN-backed mission to combat gang violence. The deployment followed the 400 officers Kenya sent in June. Nairobi planned to send 1000 officers in total. However, the process suffered delays because of legal challenges. ([“200 more Kenyan police](#)

[deployed to tackle Haiti violence,”](#)
Africanews, 16 July 2024)

Eight bodies found near the Nairobi police station



Image source: AFP

On 14 July, according to BBC, Acting Inspector General of Kenya's police Douglas Kanja Kirocho said that eight bodies were found in a garbage dump near Nairobi's Kware police station. He added that the officers at the station were being transferred to ensure "fair and unbiased investigations" into the deaths. Kenya's police watchdog, the Independent Police Oversight Authority, stated that it was investigating the police's role in the deaths because of "widespread allegations of police involvement in unlawful arrests" during the ongoing anti-tax protests. (["Mukuru dump: Kenyan police relocated following body parts discovery,"](#) BBC, 14 July 2024)

Police Chief Koome resigns, Deputy Chief Douglas Kanja to take over

On 11 July, according to BBC, Kenya Police Inspector-General Japhet Koome resigned. The decision followed President Ruto's promise to take action against police officers who fired at civilians during protests. Deputy Inspector-General Douglas Kanja would start running the police force in Koome's place. (["Kenya's police chief resigns after deadly anti-tax protests,"](#) BBC, 11 July 2024)

Ruto dismisses cabinet to form "broad-based government"

On 10 July, according to Reuters, Kenya's President William Ruto dismissed his cabinet except Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Dr Musalia W

Mudavadi. Ruto stated that he would "immediately engage in extensive consultations across different sectors and political formations and other Kenyans, both in public and private, to set up a broad-based government." He added that he would announce measures to tackle corruption. (["Kenyan president sacks cabinet, bowing to pressure from protesters,"](#) Reuters, 10 July 2024)

President Ruto discusses with protesters

On 5 July, according to BBC, Kenya's President William Ruto held a live discussion with protesters on X Spaces. Protesters asked Ruto whether he tried to reach out to the families of those who died or were injured in the protests if he cared about the people who elected him, and complained about the incompetence of Ruto's cabinet secretaries. The X Space had around 163,000 participants. (["Kenya X Space: President William Ruto speaks to the online army,"](#) BBC, 5 July 2024)

Prime Minister Conille calls Kenyan police arrival a "new era" for Haiti

On 3 July, Reuters reported that Haiti's Prime Minister Garry Conille stated before the UN Security Council that the arrival of Kenyan police officers under the UN-backed Multinational Security Support group marked a "new era in Haiti" critical for restoring security against gang violence. While 200 Kenyan police arrived last week, the full force of 2,500 officers would come later. (["Kenyan police arrival in Haiti marks a new era for security, prime minister tells UN,"](#) Reuters, 3 July 2024)

Activists' new strategies after 2 July violence

On 3 July, Reuters reported that activists who participated in Kenya's anti-government protests were rethinking their strategies after violence and looting in their 02 July protest. They feared that such incidents could undermine their objectives of making President William Ruto resign. Activist Ojango Omondo said that the violence was caused by "goons" who used the state "to incite violence, break into

people's property, loot and tarnish our cause." He added it was "time to go back to the drawing board and strategise on how best to overcome this violence and keep our protest focused on their objectives."

(["Kenyan activists rethink strategy after protests turn violent," Reuters, 3 July 2024](#))

Ruto to borrow one trillion shillings after scrapping finance bill

On 1 July, according to BBC, Kenya's President William Ruto stated that the country would have to borrow one trillion shillings (USD 7.6 billion) "to be able to run our government" because of protests against the now-scrapped finance bill. The bill had promised tax increases, which were unpopular and led to massive protests. Ruto said that since the money could not be raised from taxes, the government would have to increase borrowings by 67 per cent. In the finance bill, extra taxes would raise around 350 billion Kenyan shillings, and around 600 billion would be borrowed. However, now the whole amount would have to be borrowed. (["Kenya to borrow more after new taxes withdrawn - president," BBC, 1 July 2024](#))

SOMALIA

Five killed in Al Shabab bomb blast in Mogadishu



Image source: Al Jazeera

On 15 July, according to Reuters, a car bomb exploded near the Presidential Palace in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, killing five and injuring 20 people. The armed group Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack. Despite losing territory to government forces, the group attacked Mogadishu to reassert its presence. (["Car](#)

[bomb kills five, injures 20 outside restaurant in Somalia's capital," Reuters, 15 July 2024](#))

Ugandan peacekeeper killed

On 8 July, according to Reuters, Uganda's military stated that Major Patrick Opio Awany was killed by a roadside bomb while commanding a convoy. He was part of the 5000 Ugandan peacekeepers serving under the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The Ugandan military's spokesperson stated that armed group Al Shabaab was behind the attack. He added, "This attack won't deter us, it will instead stiffen our resolve to continue supporting peace efforts in Somalia." (["Ugandan officer killed by roadside bomb in Somalia," Reuters, 8 July 2024](#))

ETHIOPIA

World Bank approves USD 1.5 billion credit

On 30 July, the World Bank approved a low-interest credit and a grant to Ethiopia worth USD 1.5 billion. Ethiopia has been struggling with a low-running debt economy. USD one billion will be given as a grant and later USD 500 million as a credit at a low interest. On 29 July, the country secured a USD 3.4 billion four-programme from the International Monetary Fund. The development comes after on 29 July, the Ethiopia Central Bank lifted its restrictions on foreign currency. However, Birr, Ethiopia's currency, lost its value from 57.4 to 74.7 against one USD. The Central Bank stated that "banks are henceforth allowed to buy and sell foreign currencies from/to their clients and among themselves at freely negotiated rates" and that it would only make "limited interventions" in the FX markets. (["World Bank approves \\$1.5 billion in financing for Ethiopia," Reuters, 30 July 2024](#))

Open markets for foreign currency

On 29 July, the Ethiopian Central Bank lifted its restrictions on foreign currency to secure funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, Birr, Ethiopia's currency, lost its value from 57.4 to 74.7 against one USD. The Central Bank stated

that “banks are henceforth allowed to buy and sell foreign currencies from/to their clients and among themselves at freely negotiated rates” and that it would only make “limited interventions” in the FX markets. ([“Ethiopia adopts market-based FX system, birr currency slides,” Reuters, 29 July 2024](#))

Twin landslides claim over 100 lives

On 23 July, Al Jazeera reported over 100 deaths from two landslides in the region of Gofa zone. Al Jazeera quoted the Associated Press that 157 bodies have been recovered and the death toll would increase further. In May 2024, there was a mass internal displacement of people affected by floods in Ethiopia. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “floods impacted over 19,000 people in several zones, displacing over a thousand and causing damage to livelihoods and infrastructure” in the region. Climate Change is said to be the driver of extreme weather events in the country. ([“Over 100 people killed in twin Ethiopia landslides,” Al Jazeera, 23 July 2024](#))

100 people kidnapped in a week

On 8 July, according to Reuters, the US Ambassador to Ethiopia Ervin Massinga said that around 100 people were kidnapped last week in the country. Massinga stated, “Recent and frequent kidnappings in Oromia and Amhara regions show how prolonged conflict emboldens criminals and weakens (the) rule of law.” According to the United Nations, in 2023, 1300 people were killed in kidnappings across the country. ([“Over 100 people kidnapped for ransom in Ethiopia last week, US envoy says,” Reuters, 8 July 2024](#))

UGANDA

Capital fortified by the authorities

On 23 July, President Yoweri Museveni’s government fortified the capital Kampala. This development came after the young protesters announced a march towards the parliament. The protests are against corruption and the government’s failure to prosecute corrupt individuals. ([“Heavy](#)

[security patrols in Uganda’s capital ahead of planned protest,” Reuters, 23 July 2024](#))

RWANDA

Kagame set to win presidential elections with over 99 per cent votes

On 15 July, Rwanda’s National Electoral Commission reported the partial results of the presidential elections held the same day. With 78.94 per cent of the votes counted, incumbent President Paul Kagame was set to win the elections, securing 99.15 per cent of the votes. Opposition leaders Frank Habineza of the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda and Independent candidate Phillippe Mpayimana won less than one per cent each. The NEC will announce the final results by 27 July. ([“PARTIAL RESULTS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS,” National Electoral Commission of Rwanda, 15 July 2024](#))

Presidential campaigns end, polls scheduled for 15 July



On 13 July, according to Africanews, campaigning for the presidential elections ended. President and leader of the Patriotic Front, Paul Kagame, held a massive rally in Rwanda’s capital, Kigali. Opposition leaders Frank Habineza of the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda and independent candidate Phillippe Mpayimana also held rallies. The elections will be held on 15 July. ([“Rwanda prepares to vote in poll expected to be swept by Kagame,” Africanews, 13 July 2024](#))

SOUTH AFRICA

Jacob Zuma expelled from the ANC

On 29 July, the African National Congress (ANC) expelled the former President and leader of the party, Jacob Zuma. The

disciplinary committee of the ANC found Zuma guilty of “prejudicing the integrity” of the party by joining the uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) party. Later, he took over the leadership of the MK party and headed the campaigns during the 2024 presidential elections. (“[Ex-SA President Zuma expelled from ANC](#),” *BBC*, 30 July 2024)

Zuma to face ANC disciplinary hearing



Image source: AP

On 17 July, Africanews reported that South Africa’s former President and uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party leader, Jacob Zuma, would face a disciplinary hearing before the African National Congress (ANC) for campaigning against the party. The hearing would be held in the ANC’s Johannesburg headquarters. Although Zuma formed and campaigned for the MK party in the 2024 elections, he did not give up his ANC membership. (“[Former South African President Zuma faces expulsion from ANC after joining a rival party](#),” *Africanews*, 17 July 2024)

Ramaphosa advocates green energy to avoid international carbon taxes

On 15 July, according to Reuters, South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa said that carbon taxes proposed by developed countries would damage developing economies and urged the latter to transition to green energy. Ramaphosa stated: “Instruments like the European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism ... (have) the potential to cause great damage to developing economies.” He added that “For decades our reliance on coal ... allowed us to produce electricity cheaply. But the world has changed and this dependency has

come to pose significant risks.” (“[South Africa's Ramaphosa urges green energy to avoid carbon border tax](#),” *Reuters*, 15 July 2024)

GAMBIA

National Assembly rejects bill to reverse ban on female genital mutilation

On 16 July, according to BBC, members of the Gambia’s National Assembly voted against a bill to overturn the countrywide ban on female genital mutilation (FGM). The Assembly’s Speaker, Fabakary Tombong Jatta, stated that the bill was “rejected and the legislative process exhausted.” The bill was introduced in March with pressure from Muslim clerics. The Gambia has one of the highest rates of FGM, with around 70 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 years undergoing the procedure. (“[Gambia FGM: Parliament rejects bill seeking to end ban](#),” *BBC*, 16 July 2024)

ZAMBIA

World Bank approves USD 208 million drought assistance

On 2 June, Reuters reported that the World Bank approved a US 208 million grant for Zambia to address the social and economic effects of its ongoing drought. Zambia’s Ministry of Finance stated that the grant would help “over 1.6 million households across 84 drought-impacted districts with emergency cash assistance over 12 months” and strengthen social protection programmes. Previously, Zambia had declared a state of disaster because of the drought and sought international assistance. The El Nino effect and greenhouse gas emissions caused the drought. (“[World Bank approves \\$208 million for Zambia's drought response](#),” *Reuters*, 2 July 2024)

GHANA

Vice-President Bawumia chooses Minister of Energy as running mate

On 5 July, Africanews reported that Ghana’s Vice-President Mahamudu Bawumia chose Minister of Energy Matthew Opoku Prempeh as his running mate for the presidential election in December. Prempeh

was a former Minister of Education and lawmaker. The duo will contest against former President John Dramani Mahama. The incumbent President Nana Akufo-Addo would resign from office in January 2025 following the election. ("[Ghana's presidential candidate Bawumia chooses energy minister as running mate](#)," *Africanews*, 5 July 2024)

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC Children worst nutrition deprived in the world, reports UNICEF



Image source: AFP

On 2 July, according to Reuters, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) stated that children in the Central African Republic (CAR) were the worst deprived in the world because of malnourishment, inadequate healthcare access and political instability. UNICEF Representative in the CAR, Meritzell Relano Arana, stated that the country's children "face the highest registered level of overlapping and interconnected crises and deprivation in the world." She added that the conditions of CAR's children were "painfully invisible" to the world because of the focus on the war in Gaza. ("[Central African Republic's children are world's most deprived, UNICEF says](#)," *Reuters*, 2 July 2024)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO Angola mediates truce between Rwanda and DRC



Image source: APA

On 31 July, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo agreed on a ceasefire mediated by Angola. The ceasefire will begin on 4 August. The peace negotiation lasted for two weeks. DRC forces have been fighting M23 rebels in the eastern regions of the country since 2022. Rwanda has been allegedly supporting M23 rebels, a claim denied by the country. The conflict has killed thousands and displaced more than two million. ("[Ceasefire agreed in eastern Congo conflict, mediator Angola says](#)," *Reuters*, 31 July 2024)

Uganda and Rwanda backing M23 group, says the UN

On 10 July, according to BBC, the UN Group of Experts Report on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) stated that Uganda and Rwanda were supporting the M23 armed group in DRC. The report stated that while Uganda sent military intelligence officers to coordinate with M23 leaders and allowed the armed group's leader Sultani Makenga to travel to Uganda, Rwanda supplied around 4,000 troops to fight with M23. The report stated that the crisis was rapidly escalating and "carried the risk of triggering a wider regional conflict." ("[Uganda and Rwanda backing M23 rebels in DR Congo - UN experts](#)," *BBC*, 10 July 2024)

Armed Forces tribunal sentences 25 soldiers to death

On 4 July, according to Reuters, an Armed Forces tribunal in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) sentenced 25 soldiers to death for leaving their positions while

fighting Rwanda-backed armed group M23 and stealing goods from a nearby village. The DRC's Armed Forces set up a tribunal to try the men in North Kivu province's Alimbongo province. The military tribunal sentenced 25 of the soldiers to death, awarded one a 10-years in prison and acquitted another. In May, the Armed Forces lifted its moratorium on the death penalty (instituted in 2000) to tackle rising cases of treason and espionage during the conflict. The army has been fighting the M23 since 2022. ("[DR Congo soldiers sentenced to death for fleeing battle](#)," *Reuters*, 4 July 2024)

US mediates humanitarian truce in eastern DRC

On 4 July, according to The White House, US National Security Council (NSC) Spokesperson Adrienne Watson announced a two-week-long "humanitarian truce" between the DRC's Armed Forces, M23 in eastern DRC, mediated by US Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines. The truce resulted from Haines' visits to Rwanda in November and talks with DRC's President Felix Tshikedi and his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame. The White House stated that the truce would "ease the suffering of vulnerable populations," including over 100,000 displaced people. It added that the US Government would "continue to use its intelligence and diplomatic resources to monitor activities by armed forces and non-state armed groups" during the truce. ("[Statement from NSC Spokesperson Adrienne Watson Welcoming the Humanitarian Truce in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo](#)," *The White House*, 4 July 2024)

MAURITANIA

President Ghazouani re-elected by a comfortable margin

On 1 July, according to BBC, Mauritania's incumbent President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani was re-elected. He won with 56 per cent of the vote in the first round of polling, without the need for run-off elections. Anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid secured second position with 22 per cent, and Hamidi Sidi el-Mokhtar secured

third place with 13 per cent. Abeid refused to accept the results, calling it an "electoral coup." 55 per cent of the electorate turned out to vote. ("[Mauritanian president comfortably wins re-election](#)," *BBC*, 1 June 2024)

MOROCCO

France backs Morocco's claims over the Western Sahara



Image source: AFP

On 30 July, France's President, Emmanuel Macron, wrote a letter to the King of Morocco Mohammed VI, supporting the country's sovereignty over the Western Sahara. Morocco has been fighting the Polisario Front, an Algeria-backed group, over the territorial claims since 1975. France, a former colonial power, has been involved in stabilising the region. ("[France backs Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara](#)," *Reuters*, 30 July 2024)

GUINEA

Bar Association calls strike against military government's undemocratic actions

On 17 July, according to BBC, the Equatorial Guinea Bar Association organised a lawyers' strike against the military government's "arbitrary arrests" and "secret detentions." The Association's spokesperson, Gabriel Kamano, stated that the "courts are not closed, but their activity is rather paralysed." The Association said that the ban would last until 31 July, when the courts would deliver a verdict on former military ruler Dadis Camara, who was charged with crimes against humanity for ordering the shooting of protesters. The strike followed the arrests of government critics Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Bah. ("[Guinea lawyers on strike over military crackdown](#)," *BBC*, 17 July 2024)

SIERRA LEONE

First Lady organises ceremony over bill banning child marriage

On 3 July, according to BBC, Sierra Leone's First Lady Fatima Bio organised a ceremony in the country's capital, Freetown, celebrating a new law banning child marriage. The law prohibited the marriage of girls below the age of 18 and set a punishment of 15 years imprisonment or a USD 4000 fine, or both, for offenders. Under the new law, the groom, the bride's parents and guardians, and wedding attendees were liable to face punishment. Bio said that child marriage was similar to "taking away a child's dream and destroy(ing) them even before they know who they are." President Julius Maada Bio stated that his "motivation and commitment to empowering women and girls is firmly rooted in my personal life journey." (["Sierra Leone child marriage ban welcomed as President Julius Maada Bio signs law," BBC, 3 July 2024](#))

NIGER

US troops leave Air Base 101

On 7 July, according to Reuters, the US military withdrew its troops from Air Base 101 in Niger's capital Niamey. US Air Force Major General Kenneth Ekman said that next, the US would withdraw from Air Base 201, which was a drone base near central Niger's Agadez region, by 15 September. The exit followed the Niger government's April 2024 order to withdraw the 1,000 US soldiers stationed in the country. The same month, Niger's government invited military instructors and troops from Russia. (["US troops pull out of Niger's Air Base 101," Reuters, 7 July 2024](#))

Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso leave ECOWAS to form Alliance of Sahel States (AES)

On 6 July, Reuters reported that Mali's Interim President Assimi Goita, Niger's President General Abdourahmane Tiani and Burkina's Faso's President Captain Ibrahim Traore withdrew from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) Confederation. Tiani stated, "It is up to us today to make the AES

Confederation an alternative to any artificial regional group by building ... a community free from the control of foreign powers." The leaders released a joint communique agreeing to coordinate diplomatically and establish an AES investment bank and projects in mining, energy and agriculture. (["Junta-led Sahel states rule out return to West African economic bloc," Reuters, 6 July 2024](#))

US military to withdraw from Air Base 101

On 5 July, according to Reuters, US Air Force Major General Kenneth Ekman said that the US military would withdraw its troops from Niger's Air Base 101 by 07 July and eventually from its drone base in Niger. Ekman stated: "We will do a joint ceremony on that occasion that marks the departure of the last U.S. C-17 (aircraft). The government of Niger will assume control of former U.S. areas and facilities." Previously, Niger's military government ordered the US to withdraw its around 1,000 troops from the country. (["US to complete withdrawal from Niger's Air Base 101 on Sunday," Reuters, 5 July 2024](#))

NIGERIA

UAE reverses visa ban on Nigerians

On 15 July, Nigeria's Minister of Information and National Orientation stated that the United Arab Emirates would lift its visa ban on Nigerians after "mutually beneficial negotiations." According to the "updated controls and conditions," Nigerian visitors could apply for a visa after showing multiple documents, including identity proof and travel history. The UAE imposed visa restrictions on Nigerians in 2022 because of multiple factors, including improper conduct by Nigerian visitors, attempts by such visitors to circumvent visa rules, and the Nigerian government's decision to reduce UAE-based Emirates Airlines' flights to Nigeria. (["UAE lifts 2022 visa ban on Nigerians," Africanews, 15 July 2024](#))

Seven dead and five injured in school collapse

On 12 July, according to Reuters, a school building collapsed in Nigeria's Plateau state.

Police and soldiers carried out rescue efforts at the scene. While five students were rescued alive, seven dead bodies were recovered. Building collapses were frequent in Nigeria because of loose regulations and substandard materials. ("[At least seven bodies pulled from collapsed school in central Nigeria](#)," *Reuters*, 12 July 2024)

AES confederation will disrupt integration and worsen instability, comments ECOWAS

On 7 July, according to Reuters, ECOWAS stated that Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso's decision to leave ECOWAS and form the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) confederation would "disrupt the freedom of movement and settlement of people" and worsen regional instability. The ECOWAS states' leaders were gathered at a summit in Abuja to discuss the implications of the three countries' exit. ("[West African bloc says it risks disintegration if junta-led states leave](#)," *Reuters*, 7 July 2024)

Female suicide bomber suspected to have killed over 30 people

On 1 July, according to BCC, Nigeria's Vice President stated that over 30 people died in multiple blasts suspected to have been carried out by female suicide bombers. The attacks happened on 30 May and targeted a wedding, a funeral and a hospital. President Bola Tinubu called the blasts "desperate acts of terror." His spokesperson stated that the government would "not to allow the nation to slither into an era of fear, tears, sorrow, and blood." Although no group claimed responsibility for the attack, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) or Boko Haram previously carried out such blasts in the past. ("[Suspected female suicide bombers death toll rises to more than 30 in Nigeria](#)," *BBC*, 1 July 2024)

MALI

Tuareg coalition claims victory in Algerian border

On 28 July, the Tuareg separatist coalition in Mali decisively put the Mali army and Russian mercenaries on the backfoot after three days of intense fighting. Almost 20 Wagner group fighters lost their lives in the

three-day intense fight. The Wagner group has been involved in the conflict since 2021. Colonel Assimi Goita, the military ruler of Mali expelled French forces out of the country in 2022, with the help of Russian mercenary group Wagner. ("[Mali rebels claim major victory over army, Russian mercenaries](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 29 July 2024)

BURKINA FASO

Government accused of conscripting critics

On 2 June, Reuters reported that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch criticised Burkina Faso's military government for abducting and conscripting its critics. So far, 19 such abductions have been confirmed. Victims described the conditions as "arbitrary and punitive." The abductions increased after Captain Ibrahim Traore came to power in 2022 after a coup. ("[Insight: How Burkina Faso's junta is conscripting critics to fight Islamist rebels](#)," *Reuters*, 2 July 2024)

Government bans same-sex unions



Image source: Reuters

On 11 July, according to BBC, Burkina Faso's Minister of Justice Edasso Rodrigue Bayala stated that "the law will punish homosexuality and associated practices." A new law would be passed by parliament and signed by military leader Ibrahim Traore, which would recognise only customary marriages. The ban is part of the government's efforts to change marriage laws. ("[Burkina Faso's military junta to ban homosexual acts](#)," *BBC*, 11 July 2024)

REGIONAL**Land route twice as deadly for African migrants than Mediterranean route, reports the UN**

On 5 July, according to Africanews, a joint report published by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Mixed Migration Centre titled “On this Journey, No One Cares If You Live or Die.” African migrants and refugees taking the land route to Europe through the Sahara are twice as likely to be killed as on sea routes across the

Mediterranean Sea. UNHCR's Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean Situation, Vincent Cochetel, stated: “Many people tell us that they are aware of someone who has died on the way, normally more on the land routes than on the sea routes... risk of kidnapping seems to be a new one. It used to be mentioned by 2% of the respondents four years ago. Now it is mentioned by 18% of the respondents. Almost one out of five claims that the journey involved that risk of kidnapping.” ([“Land routes through Africa are twice as dangerous for migrants and refugees,” Africanews, 5 July 2024](#))

NIAS AFRICA TEAM



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