

The Continent

with Mail & Guardian

**The unintended
consequences
of intervention
in the DRC**

Photo: Odd Andersen/AFP



Cover: Kenyan soldiers are already on the ground in the Democratic Republic of Congo. With peace talks stalling and a tentative ceasefire already broken, a military intervention looks increasingly likely. So far, President William Ruto has made the mission sound all too easy. But *The Continent* spoke to Zimbabwean veterans who have been there and done this all before, in a very similar intervention in the late 1990s (the cover photo shows former presidents Laurent Kabila and Robert Mugabe in Victoria Falls, cementing their alliance). They offer a few stark warnings about how difficult it is to operate in the Congo – and explain how their intervention ended up changing Zimbabwe perhaps even more than it changed the DRC itself. (p15)

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It's nearly the end of the year. Which means it is time for *The Continent's* annual [end-of-year fundraiser](#)! Please consider donating something to help us keep going. No money? No problem. You can also help us out by filling in our [end-of-year survey](#), and getting your friends and family to subscribe. More details on p3.



COMOROS

Former president sentenced to life in prison for 'treason'

A court in Comoros has sentenced ex-president Ahmed Abdallah Sambi to life in prison over what prosecutors called "high treason", while his defence characterised it as a political witch hunt. The trial centred around a 2008 law enacted by Sambi for Bidoon, a group of people who reside in but are not allowed citizenship in several Arab countries (especially Kuwait), to buy Comorian citizenship and passports. Prosecutors claimed that Sambi embezzled \$1.8-billion from the scheme but his defence said that no evidence of embezzlement was presented.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Ready, Teddy, go! Obiang still bestest at winning bigly

Equatorial Guinea's ruler of 43 years, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, is set to be president for a sixth term. On Saturday, he was announced as the winner of the country's presidential elections, with a margin that suits any incumbent worth their salt – nearly 95% of the 413,000 votes cast. The turnout was just as impressive – 98%. To add to an already overflowing cup, his party won every single seat in the national assembly. Since Equatorial Guinea's independence from Spain in 1968, the country has been ruled by two men, Obiang and his uncle.



NIGERIA

Top cop bags three months in prison for contempt of court

Nigeria's police chief has been sentenced to three months in prison for contempt of court, because the police flouted a 2011 court order to reinstate an officer who was dismissed in 1993. Usman Alkali Baba became inspector general of police in 2021, a decade after the ruling. A court in Abuja nonetheless said he must reinstate Patrick Okoli, who was a senior officer before his forced retirement 30 years ago. The court said if he didn't, he would go to jail, and if at the end of the three months he still does not enforce the order, "he shall be committed for another period and until he purges his contempt".

CHINA

Xi's zero-Covid conundrum

Three years into the pandemic, China's leader Xi Jinping was still clinging to the harsh measures he normalised for the rest of the world: total lockdowns, frequent mandatory testing, quarantine for those who test positive and their contacts and closed malls, in what he calls the zero-Covid strategy. It has not brought covid cases anywhere near zero – China is reporting up to 30,000 new cases a day. But it has triggered protests that are now forcing him to relax the measures just as new infections reach record highs.

BRITAIN

Royal servant and godmother resigns over her own racism

Susan Hussey, one of the highest ranked servants of the British king, sullied a royal soirée by repeatedly asking a black guest where she was "really" from. Born in the United Kingdom, where she heads a charity, Fulani Ngozi later tweeted a rough transcript of the racist, passive-aggressive interrogation she received in which her answers that she was British were repeatedly dismissed. Hussey, who is also the godmother of the king's first son William, has since apologised and left the palace.



Photo: ECOCV

CABO VERDE

Humans pounce on coral reef that was minding its business

In what the Cabo Verdean Ecotourism Association calls “one of the most remarkable discoveries this year”, researchers found a coral reef of about a thousand square metres off Moia-Moia bay on Santiago, a Cabo Verdean island. Coral reefs are underwater ecosystems. Home to about a quarter of all known marine life, they are sometimes described as the rainforests of the sea. Being discovered by human beings can prompt efforts that conserve them but could also expose them to unregulated tourism, which degrades them.

MPOX

Africa to get first batch of mpox vax

In 2022, African countries where mpox is endemic have reported over a thousand cases of the disease. More than 200 of these people died. This week, the Africa Centre for Disease Control announced that these countries will get their first ever vaccines, a batch of 50,000 doses donated by South Korea, which has recorded only a handful of cases. Ghana and Nigeria are some of the most affected countries and will be prioritised in the distribution of the vaccines, said Africa CDC director Ahmed Ogwel.

SENEGAL

MP (a man) slaps ‘discourteous’ woman lawmaker

Senegalese legislator Massata Samb slapped his peer Amy Ndiaye Gnihy on the floor of parliament, after he alleged that she had been “discourteous” in criticising a religious leader – and she responded that she didn’t care. After the slap, Gnihy picked up a chair and threw it at her attacker, but it flew over Samb’s head and he proceeded to kick her to the ground. The proceedings were being televised, and the violent scene was shown live to the nation. Last week, legislators in Sierra Leone threw punches and chairs at each other.

LIBERIA-CÔTE D'IVOIRE**Monrovia plugs into regional power**

The *Liberian Observer* reports that the country's power utility has plugged into the Côte d'Ivoire-Liberia-Sierra Leone-Guinea line, which will "ensure stable power supply for millions of Liberians". The 1,357km-long line, partially funded by the African Development Bank, was built to bridge the power gap between the four countries. Nearly 70% of Ivorians have access to electricity compared to 45% of Guineans and 25% of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans.

BELGIUM**Shamed auctioneers abandon skull sale**

Vanderkindere Auction House in Belgium tried to sell three human skulls taken from Congo by 19th century colonisers. The auctioneers abandoned the sale, from which they had hoped to get about €1,000, after it sparked outrage, condemnations and protests. One of the skulls was taken from a tree in Bombia (in what is now central DRC) in 1894, by Belgian doctor Louis Laurent, who then recorded the theft for posterity by writing and signing on the skull.

**KENYA****Ruto's 'hustler fund' a hit with the hustled**

On its first day, over a million Kenyans reportedly signed up for a credit scheme launched by "hustler-in-chief" President

William Ruto. The scheme is intended to "create opportunities for millions of people at the bottom of the economic pyramid." It will offer loans of up to \$408 at a rate of 8% but also compel borrowers to put 5% of what they borrow into a "savings account" putting them in the odd position of paying interest on savings.

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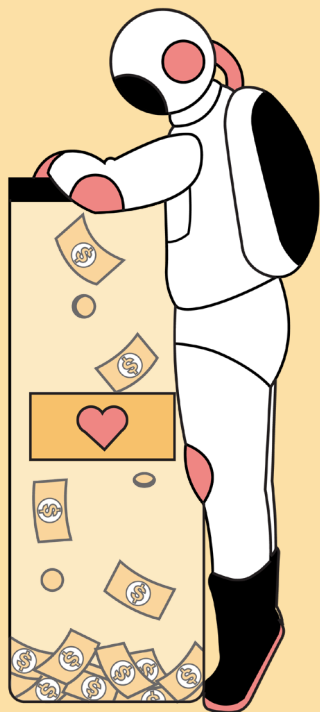
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The Continent with Mail Guardian

South Africa

Corruption in the couch

Cyril Ramaphosa is still the president of South Africa. But only just.

Until Thursday, Cyril Ramaphosa was looking like a safe bet to be re-elected as president of the ruling African National Congress in December, and president of the republic in 2024.

Everything changed with the release of a report into the “Phala Phala” or farmgate scandal, by an independent inquiry led by former chief justice Sandile Ngcobo, which found he may be guilty of “serious misconduct” and “has a case to answer”.

The scandal came to light in June, when it was reported that millions of dollars in cash had been stolen from the president’s Phala Phala farm in 2020. The thieves had allegedly been apprehended by security forces – and then, instead of being arrested, were paid to stay silent.

Ramaphosa admitted the theft took place, but said it was only \$580,000 – payment from the sale of buffalo. But he did not say why this forex payment had not been declared to tax authorities. Nor did he explain why it had been hidden in couches.

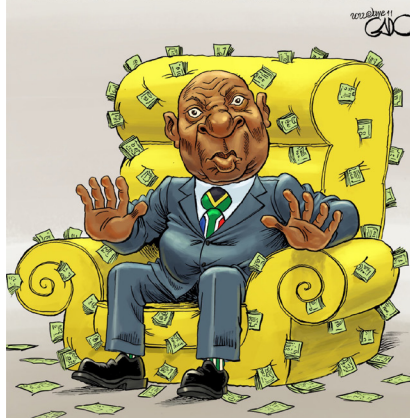
The report has left Ramaphosa fighting for his political life. Opposition parties want him impeached, as do his rivals in the ANC. Local media reports have suggested that the president had initially decided to resign on Thursday, before being talked out of the decision by his allies in the party, who are concerned about the lack of a credible successor.

With the ANC elective conference in just two weeks time, Ramaphosa’s future – and that of South Africa – hangs in the balance. ■

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**The couch that could
unseat a president**

Russia-Ukraine

Killed Zambian student was recruited from prison by Wagner

Mercenary boss says Lemekhani Nathan Nyirenda, who died on the front line of Russia's war on Ukraine in August, wanted to 'repay Africa's debts' to Russia

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the Russian mercenary outfit Wagner Group, confirmed that Lemekhani Nathan Nyirenda was recruited from prison to fight in Russia's war in Ukraine.

Nyirenda died on the front lines in August, but the circumstances of his death – and how he came to be in Ukraine – were not conveyed to his family, which only learnt of his death earlier this month.

"I remember this guy well," said Prigozhin in a statement. "I spoke with him in the Tver region [outside Moscow] and asked him, 'Why do you want this war?' ... And his response was just what I expected. He said, 'You Russians have been helping us Africans become independent for many years. When we were having trouble, you extended a hand, and you're still doing so now. PMC Wagner has saved thousands of Africans, and if I go with you to war, that's probably the very least I can do to repay our debts.'"

Nyirenda's family were not available

for comment. Zambia's ministry of foreign affairs told *The Continent* that it not yet received official confirmation from the Russian government about what happened to Nyirenda, or details on the eventual repatriation of his remains.

Nyirenda was a gifted student on a government scholarship to a university in Moscow. He was arrested in 2020 while delivering packages for a motorcycle delivery company, when one of the packages was found to contain drugs. He was found guilty of drug possession and sentenced to nine years in prison. It is not clear whether he received adequate legal representation, and his family believe him to be innocent.

This is the first official confirmation that Wagner Group is recruiting foreign prisoners to join Russia's war effort, apparently in exchange for reduced sentences. The group has previously been implicated in human rights abuses in Mali and the Central African Republic. ■

Cameroon

Survivor of Yaoundé landslide recounts his ordeal

On Saturday a mother, her son and his best friend shared a sumptuous meal of fufu, okra and smoked fish. On Sunday, a 20m wall of earth collapsed and killed two of the three.

Beng Emmanuel Kum in Yaoundé

Recalling the horrific and sudden deaths of his mother, his brother and his friend, Claude Michel Fotso looks devastated and, still, terrified. “My mother was everything to me,” he says.

Dayo Marthe Brigett died on Sunday in a landslide, a stone’s throw from the family home in Rond Point Damas – a neighbourhood in Yaoundé, Cameroon – along with Fotso’s brother and his best friend, whose names he did not share.

On the eve of the disaster, Fotso and his friend were at his mother’s small wooden

house. She had made his favourite meal: corn fufu, okra and smoked fish. Little did Fotso know that this would be the last time he would eat from his mother’s pot.

On Sunday, the three of them joined his brother and hundreds of others for a funeral ceremony held on a local soccer pitch, at the base of a 20m embankment.

“I arrived at 3.30pm and the ceremony started at about 4pm. About an hour later, I heard a strange noise. Then I saw a wall of ground collapsing towards me,” Fotso says. The embankment had collapsed.

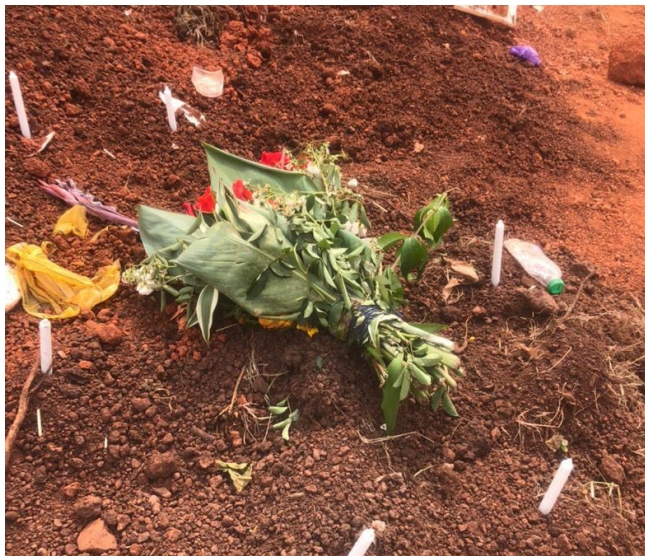
“I tried to escape but I was caught,” he says. It buried part of my body.”

His mother, his brother, his friend and a neighbour had been buried completely.

Well into the dark of Sunday night, workers of the Cameroon Red Cross and officers of the army’s rescue unit and ordinary people were digging into the rubble to rescue victims. Many of the bodies that were unearthed had been disfigured. According to the governor of the Centre region, Naseri Paul Bea, 14 people died in the tragedy and more than 10 were injured.

While visiting the site of the tragedy, the governor of the central region said the area was a dangerous zone to live in. Places like Damas, which are designated as risk zones for being prone to landslides and flooding, are not hard to find in Yaoundé or other parts of the country.

People who continue to live and build



Memorial: A wreath left at the scene of the tragedy

Photo: Ministry of Territorial Administration

in these areas, despite government calls to the contrary, say they have nowhere else to go. Some of them have lived in such places for decades.

The Yaoundé landslide is therefore not the first to claim lives.

According to the governor of the Centre region, Naseri Paul Bea, 14 people died in the tragedy and more than 10 were injured.

In 2019, at least 42 people were reported to have died in a landslide in Bamougoum near Bafoussam, in the western region of the country.

The year before, five people were killed in a landslide in Limbé, in the southwestern region, following a heavy downpour.

Three days after this week's tragedy in Yaoundé, Cameroon's minister for territorial administration, Paul Atanga Nji, issued a communiqué saying that President Paul Biya had ordered an investigation into the cause of the landslide that had killed Fotso's friend and his family.

Fotso, who has been struggling to walk since he was trapped in the landslide, is starting to recover physically. He missed his best friend's funeral because he was too weak to go but is now preparing to bury his family members.

"Life without them will be hard," he says. "My mother was the most important woman in my life."

Living so close to the site constantly triggers flashes of the incident in his head. "It is difficult to overcome it since we haven't even laid my family to rest." ■

Somalia



Photo: Yunis Dekow

Al-Shabaab shocks Mogadishu – again

The militant group is supposed to be on the back foot. But it retains the capacity to execute deadly raids in the capital city

Yunis Dekow in Mogadishu

Al-Shabaab gunmen on Sunday stormed a hotel next to Villa Somalia, the official residence of Somalia's president. Several government ministries, and both houses of Parliament, are nearby.

This is, in theory, one of the best-secured neighbourhoods in the entire city.

The perimeter of the Villa Rays Hotel was breached by five armed men after a suicide bomber detonated an explosive-laden vehicle. They held the hotel for 20 hours, battling with state security into Monday morning.

Eight civilians were killed in the fighting. At least four Cabinet ministers were caught in the siege, along with at

least 60 other people. Parliament did not meet as scheduled on Monday due to the gunfire that could still be heard inside the hotel.

The siege ended when security forces killed the five gunmen. For the government, led by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the inquest is just beginning.

Best back foot forward

Al-Shabaab was officially driven out of Mogadishu in 2011 by African Union peacekeepers. The militant group still controls parts of Somalia's countryside, and regularly carried out fatal attacks on the capital. However, as *The Continent* reported in October, the group is currently battling a "groundswell of rebellion" from ethnic militias in central Somalia, who receive support from the Somali National Army.

Since September, Al-Shabaab has lost dozens of towns it once controlled. It appeared to be on the back foot. But the daring attack on the Villa Ray Hotel has shaken Somalia's elite, and brought this narrative into question.

Adam Hirsi, one of the ministers rescued from the hotel, said on Twitter that the attack is "by no means a manifestation of an emboldened terrorists" but a "desperate move" that "shows that the terror kingpins running for dear life are throwing their last kicks." He vowed, "we will not let up the war." President Mohamud, who took office in May, has also pledged "all-out war" against Al-Shabaab.

But an irate Dahir Amiin Jesoow, a



Blast from the past: Al-Shabaab is still a threat in the region. Photo: Yunis Dekow

parliamentarian who chairs the security committee, told *The Continent* that the attack reveals the holes in Somalia security apparatus. "This is not acceptable for militants to attack a place so close to the presidency. Our security services must commence immediate investigation and action taken against culprits who facilitated the Al-Shabaab attack."

The perception that Al-Shabaab's attacks are facilitated from inside the state security agencies is widely held. Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame, the leader of the Wadajir political party, said that rampant corruption within the police force has helped Al-Shabaab conduct complex attacks in Mogadishu and other parts of the country. "People who are well known to have squandered the security sector are still in charge. Others are very corrupt and have amassed wealth that is the proceeds of corruption," said Abdishakur. ■

Zimbabwe

Christmas in the dark

The perpetual power crisis just got a lot worse

Jeffrey Moyo in Harare

Zimbabwe has endured rolling blackouts for years, but last week the situation deteriorated dramatically. The Zambezi River Authority, which administers Lake Kariba, last week told the government to stop generating power at its hydropower plant at the lake, at least until January.

Lake Kariba, which straddles the Zambia-Zimbabwe border, supplies half of Zimbabwe's energy needs, and much of Zambia's too. The suspension is in part due to low water levels in the dam – it is at only 4.6% capacity – which means that it can produce much less power than usual. It is also because Zimbabwe has already used up this year's entire allocation of water from the dam.

This leaves the country reliant on Hwange Thermal Power Station, which is old and notoriously unreliable; and a few other, smaller coal plants that are struggling with coal shortages.

Zimbabwe also receives some power from Eskom, South Africa's state-run



Troubled water: Lake Kariba, seen here in 2020, is the largest artificial lake in the world. Photo: Guillem Sartorio/AFP

power company, but this too is under threat because of South Africa's own ongoing energy crisis. There is no chance that Eskom can increase supply to Zimbabwe to compensate for the Kariba suspension, said South African energy analyst Tshepo Kgadima. "They just have to stay in the dark."

In contrast, Zambia is not expected to experience any power shortages. Zesco, the state-run power company, said that even if Kariba fails completely, it has installed enough other sources of power.

The construction of a new hydroelectric plant, the Kafue Gorge Lower Power Station, is expected to be complete by the end of the year. It has already begun producing electricity for Zambia's grid. ■

In the DRC, an ugly history risks repeating itself

East African leaders are mobilising their armies to intervene in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Decades ago, Zimbabwean soldiers came to Kinshasa's aid – and learnt a few harsh lessons. Will this be different?

Photo: Phil Moore/AFP



Dingani Masuku

It was 1998, and President Laurent-Désiré Kabila was getting desperate. He had only been in power for a year, after overthrowing Zaire's longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko with the help of Rwanda and Uganda.

But his East African allies had turned against him, and were supporting rebel militias that were closing in on the capital Kinshasa. He needed help – fast.

So he looked south, appealing to the southern African regional bloc for assistance. Troops from Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe answered the call, and by August 1998 the Second Congo War had begun. Sometimes called the Great African War or the African World War, the conflict would last for a decade and drew in nine African countries and 25 armed groups. By its end, in 2003, an estimated 350,000 people had been killed in the fighting, and more than 5-million had died in resulting humanitarian crises.

Nearly two decades later, the country – which Kabila renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo – is on the brink of another such war. The Kinshasa government is at an impasse with a rebel group, the March 23 Movement (M23), which seized territories in the east and advanced towards the regional capital Goma.

The group is allegedly receiving financial and military support from Rwanda, which is also accused of profiting from the region's vast reserves of rare metals such as cobalt and coltan.

Rwanda denies providing any such

support, or dealing in any conflict minerals.

Congolese troops have been powerless to halt the rebel advances. A longstanding United Nations peacekeeping mission, Monusco, is active in the area, but has no mandate to go on the offensive. It includes soldiers and policemen from more than 20 countries, including large contingents from South Africa, Morocco, Tanzania and Malawi.

Now it is President Félix Tshisekedi's turn to get desperate. He is looking east, to the East African Community, who have promised to intervene militarily if no peaceful solution can be found. Already, troops from Kenya have begun arriving in the country, with more promised from Burundi and Tanzania.

Currently, peace talks are under way in Nairobi, with the presidents of Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda in attendance virtually. M23, which appears to be respecting a ceasefire called for by these leaders, but refusing their call to withdraw from held territories, is largely absent from the talks. If these talks don't work out, Kenya's new President William Ruto has promised to send nearly 1,000 Kenyan soldiers into action to "enforce peace".

This will not be as easy as he makes it sound.

Invisible targets

Clever Gunyani* was a Zimbabwean soldier who was deployed in the DRC as part of the intervention force in the late 1990s. "Kenya has chosen a difficult war," he told *The Continent*. "The eastern



Rearwards advance: Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's president at the time, inspects troops during a parade to mark their withdrawal from the DRC in 2002. Photo: AFP

front is a jungle and it rains almost every day. It is damp and wet. Imagine trying to drive an armoured vehicle in the mud – you just can't! The equipment is useless. Aerial bombardment is impossible even with infrared [which allows you to see in the dark]."

Gunyani said that the harsh conditions mean that the battle is as mental as it is physical, and unprepared soldiers are at risk of a breakdown. "We ended up keeping to our lines and declaring a ceasefire. It is useless to waste bullets on invisible targets. I was happy to come back home."

Davestone Nyoni*, also a Zimbabwean soldier, spent three years in the eastern DRC. He said that he would go back if he had to. "God forbid, but if Zimbabwe is attacked today, we will need support from other nations, alliances have always

existed. Of course, other interests are at play, like economics, for example. We went to war so that Zimbabweans could trade with the Congolese and vice versa."

Nyoni warned: "If the force lacks discipline, the soldiers will end up being merchants and couriers of ill-gotten wealth."

In Zimbabwe's case, the enormous cost of the military intervention nearly bankrupted the country. To fund the fighting, which cost an estimated \$1-million per day, the government began to print money that it did not have – a major contributing factor to the hyperinflation which destroyed the economy in 2008.

Spoils of war

But some Zimbabweans were profiting – or profiteering – from the war in Congo.

As an incentive to intervene, President Kabila had dangled various mining concessions and profit-sharing deals to Zimbabwe's politically-connected elite.

"It provided all sorts of off-budget income-generation for elements of the ruling party, and also the commercial interests of the military," said Piers Pigou, International Crisis Group's senior consultant for Southern Africa. This allowed the ruling party, Zanu-PF, to shore up its own power, even amid economic devastation; and contributed to an increasing militarisation of the state.

The country's current president Emmerson Mnangagwa played a key role in overseeing these deals: as minister of justice, he visited the DRC's Kasai region to check in on Zimbabwe's business interests, according to a United Nations report into how the Second Congo War was financed.

If anything, the stakes are even higher this time around. As well as vast reserves of gold and copper, the earth under the DRC contains more than half of the world's cobalt and coltan – minerals that are vital to almost all renewable energy technologies like electric cars and batteries. Together these untapped reserves are worth an estimated \$24-trillion.

Kenya has made no secret of its economic interests in the country. Nelson Koech, the chair of the Kenyan Parliament's foreign relations committee, put it bluntly in an interview with *The East African*: "Through this deployment, Kenya will also secure its vital interests including Kenyan businesses like banks



Marriage of convenience: Kenyan President William Ruto pledges his support to Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi on a visit to Kinshasa.
Photo: PCS

operating in the DRC, numerous Kenyan business people in the country, bilateral trade with the DRC, and utilisation of the Mombasa port by the DRC among others," said.

But the economic calculus of war is never quite so simple, and Kenya may not have anticipated all the costs. "War is a very expensive affair. It has ramifications on the economy of any nation which decides or is brave enough to intervene," said Dr Prolific Mataruse, a political science lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe. He warned Kenya that military interventions can have unintended consequences, and that these are "hard to budget for".

Zimbabwe, after all, is still paying the price. ■

**This is a politically sensitive subject in Zimbabwe. Names have been changed to protect the identity of sources.*

THE QUIZ

0-3

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

4-7

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

8-10

"If there's a Louvre of the desert, then I'm the Mona Lisa of the bushveld."



1_ "*Zamina mina (Zangaléwa)*" was sampled in 2010's chart-topping *Waka Waka*. Which country does *Zangaléwa* originate from?

2_ Name the site, located in Botswana (pictured), that has one of the highest concentrations of rock art in the world. (Hint: Some call it "the Louvre of the desert".)

3_ What are people from Botswana called?

4_ Niamey is which country's capital?

5_ Which country is the Rosetta Stone from?

6_ Papa Bouba Diop scored which country's first goal in the 2002 men's World Cup?

7_ "Marruecos" is the Spanish name for which country?

8_ What is South Africa's currency called?

9_ Name the four present-day African countries that were once part of Italy's colonial empire.

10_ Lake Kariba is owned by which two countries?

HOW DID I DO?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!



Things thicker than water: blood and this show's plot

A fun rollercoaster need not always be believable

Wilfred Okiche

How far can you stretch a Netflix-commissioned soapy drama spun out of real-life events that fascinated an entire nation as it played out for almost two decades? For at least three seasons it would seem. And perhaps a fourth, going

by the cliffhanging gimmick of the latest season finale.

Blood & Water, created by the South Africa-based Gambit Films, is loosely inspired by the curious case of baby Zephany who was taken from her hospital cot just days after her birth. Seventeen years later, Zephany's younger sister identifies her when a strange coincidence has them both studying in the same school. *Blood & Water* borrows this premise and spins an over-the-top yarn that works if one commits to suspending one's disbelief.

The series advances to its third season with Ama Qamata's Puleng – still suffering from a chronic case of main character syndrome – leading the ensemble cast as she finds new ways of getting into trouble at school and at home.

The first season was a modest charmer featuring adult actors pretending to be privileged teenagers behaving badly in cute uniforms and swanky bedrooms overlooking stunning views of Cape Town.

The second season was a bit of a slump with clumsy writing stretching out a leaden plot. But for the six-episode third season, the show has been rebooted to fire from multiple engines.

While the new season doesn't always make sense and the thirst for genre (over)plotting overpowers any real character development, it is at least fun once again. Even if this means that the dark thriller playing out now bears little resemblance to the mood of the first season. ■

Actual progress toward gender fairness in politics?

Here's some good news as we wrap up 2022: A growing number of Africans say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to political office.

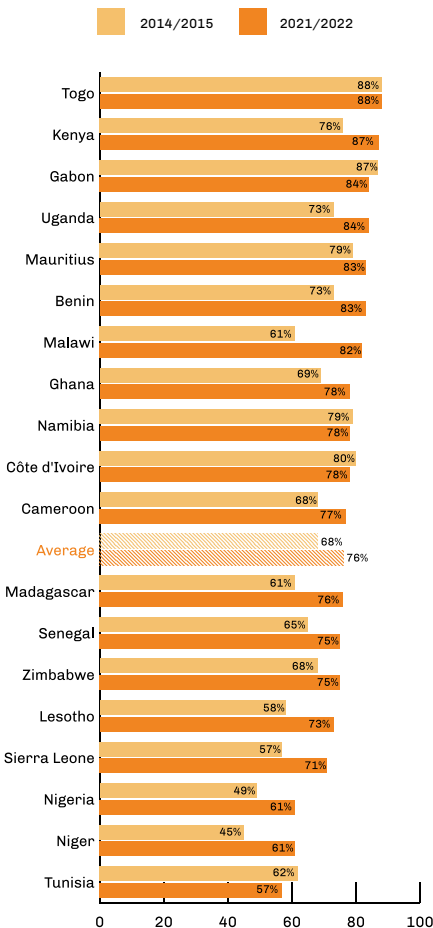
On average across 19 African countries that Afrobarometer has tracked on this question since 2014/2015, the share of adults who endorse gender fairness in politics has climbed by eight percentage points, from 68% to 76%. It's the majority view in all these countries, nearly nine in 10 in Togo (88%) and Kenya (87%).

Ten countries recorded double-digit increases in support for gender fairness over the past seven years, led by Malawi (up 20 points), Niger (16 points), and Lesotho, Madagascar, and Sierra Leone (15 points each). Tunisia is the only country where support declined significantly (5 points, from 62% to 57%).

There's still plenty of work ahead: One in five adults (21%) – including more than one-third of Nigerians (37%) and Nigeriens (39%) – believe that “men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women”.

And only 28 countries worldwide actually have women as heads of state or government.

Women should have the same chance of being elected as men | 19 African countries | 2014-2022



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



Hustle: Loukou
Oka of Abidjan
Basket Club.
Photos: FIBA

Next year's Basketball Africa League takes shape

The BAL is the NBA's big play for the African market, and draws in teams from all over the continent. After hardfought qualifiers, the 2023 line up has finally been confirmed.

Refiloe Seiboko

The qualifying tournament of the Basketball Africa League, called the Road to BAL, wrapped up in Johannesburg, South Africa last weekend, teeing up the third edition of the continental men's league for 2023. The upcoming season will feature 12 teams from across Africa: six that qualified

through performances in the previous season and six that had to come up through the qualifying phase.

These group round games took place in October and November in Yaoundé, Niamey, Antananarivo, Abidjan and Johannesburg, and featured 20 teams.

The successful six clubs from this year's Road to BAL are Cape Town Tigers (South Africa), Ferroviário da Beira

(Mozambique), City Oilers (Uganda), Abidjan Basket Club (Côte d'Ivoire), SLAC (Guinea) and Stade Malien (Mali) – three of which will be participating in the league for the first time.

They will join established heavyweights Petro de Luanda from Angola, Egypt's Al Ahly, Nigeria's Kwara Falcons, Senegal's AS Douanes, Tunisia's US Monastir and Rwanda's Rwanda Energy Group.

Surprise absentees for 2023 are Morocco's AS Salé, who were quarter finalists this year, and Cameroon's FAP

who finished in third place. Both failed to qualify.

Although not competing in the BAL, the NBA Academy Africa boy's group, a team with an average age of 17, notched two noteworthy wins out of three games against Burundi's Urunani and Kenya's Ports Authority.

Dates for the 2023 BAL season are expected to be announced later this year. Last year's edition was won by US Monastir, while Zamalek from Egypt took home the inaugural trophy. ■



**Layup: Mali's
Stade Malien**



**Elevate: NBA
Academy
Africa**



**Fighters: Ivorian
representatives
Abidjan Basket
Club**

Losing on penalties



Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

Dear reader, you find us in a daze. A World Cup haze. These past few football days have passed by in a blur of games and complex formulas of who must beat whom to progress to the next stage – and exactly how many players teams like France and England would have left if the racists had their way and anyone blessed with a modicum of melanin was made to “go back to where they came from”.

We’re gutted – grievously! – that Ghana are gone, but they and our other African teams have done us proud – and given us much to smile about. As has the sighting of Senegalese coach Aliou Cissé in grey jogging bottoms (if you know you know!).

The only problem with this is that our favourite African leaders can’t stand it when they’re not the centre of our attention, so they’ve had to ensure there is plenty of additional drama off the pitch.

In Equatorial Guinea, for instance, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo is coming back on to the pitch for a 6th term, despite his frankly impressive accumulation of cards both yellow and red.

He secured a whopping 94.9% of

the vote, a number the US Government said it has “serious doubts” over, adding that there were allegations of repeat voting, pre-filling of ruling party ballots, alongside “irregular counting practices that favour the party in power”.

Regardless, he is set to extend his 43 years as captain of the national side, and who among us could deny his prowess on the field has earned him his spot. Why, his dribbling skills alone must be the envy of every other octogenarian in the game.

Own goals

It amuses us to suppose that when African Union leaders meet up – perhaps between their group therapy sessions and happy hour at the local watering hole – they like to settle their difference on the field.

But who plays in what position, we wonder?

South Africa’s Cyril Ramaphosa might seem the best pick for goalkeeper, no? A safe pair of hands. Maybe not so safe as we thought, though. Earlier this year his country’s former spy chief said \$4-million in cash had been stolen from Ramaphosa’s farm in 2020.

Questions were asked about the money’s provenance. Had it been declared? Why was the theft covered up? When Cyril finally answered, he said it was actually just \$580,000 and it was payment for buffalo that he had sold.

A panel of experts was chosen to

look into the matter, and this week they released a report saying that the president may have violated parts of the Constitution. He “has a case to answer”.

While we can hear the cackling from a certain Jacob Zuma, this is no laughing matter for Ramaphosa, who was said to be on the verge of resigning, though at the time of going to ~~the pub~~ press he was still in the job. What next for Cyril? What next for the ANC? What next for South Africa? And why when you clearly have a lucrative career selling buffalo would you want to be president?! Ref says play on.

Offside ruling

Meanwhile, Malawi has dropped its vice-president, Saulos Chilima. Earlier this year President Lazarus Chakwera benched Chilima after he was named among 83 individuals accused of engaging in corrupt deals with businessman British businessman Zuneth Sattar.

Last week, Chilima was formally arrested and charged over allegations that he accepted a share of \$280,000 and “other items” as a “reward” for assisting in awarding government contracts to companies linked to Sattar.

He has since been released on bail and is now presumably looking for another career. Maybe he could intern with the referee who awarded Portugal *that* penalty in the game against Ghana.

Being a footballer requires one to have a certain level of fitness, and we think Isabel dos Santos, the daughter of Angola’s former president José Eduardo dos Santos, may soon qualify as she seems to be doing quite a lot of running. From



Teed off: Malawi's recently unveeped Saulos Chilima will have plenty of time to work on his swing. Photo: supplied

Angolan authorities, anyway.

Local media in Angola quoted attorney-general Hélder Pitta Grós as saying that the country was going through Interpol to try to get hold of Dos Santos, adding that their multiple requests for questioning have been left on read.

“Africa’s Richest Woman” as she’s often been described, is accused of embezzling hundreds of thousands of dollars in public funds alongside fraud and money laundering. In a TV interview she said that she is facing “political persecution”. Sad times. Truly.

And here we end another Drift with a quick message of luck to all African teams who are through to the last 16 in the World Cup. (Senegal! Cameroon? The suspense!)

You serve as a reminder of just how much talent this continent has to offer. We’re rooting for you. ■

Before they leave, migrant workers are failed at home

Uganda gets \$1.4-billion in remittances a year. Working overseas is crucial for people to get an income. But the system to support them fails at every point.

Donnah S. Atwagala

The Fifa men's World Cup has focused global attention on the treatment of migrant workers in the Middle East. One country that has sent an increasing number of migrants to the region over the past decade is Uganda. This is due to a combination of "push" and "pull" factors. About 70% of the Ugandan population are youth, with only 27% in meaningful employment, while the Middle East has high demand for unskilled labour. But who does this really benefit?

Records from The Bank of Uganda show that labour externalisation is one of Uganda's highest foreign exchange earners, with remittances valued at \$1.4-billion a year. But concerns are mounting about the companies concerned and what happens to migrants when they return. My research reveals that most migrant workers have only primary or secondary education and so many struggle to get rewarding jobs, with some even ending up as sex workers.

There have been many media reports about Ugandan girls working as maids being mistreated, sexually harassed,

beaten, receiving less than agreed pay and suffering from starvation. Men are reported to suffer less compared to women, who tend to do domestic work, in part because they are more likely to do jobs out of the house. Yet for both it can be very difficult to return home from abroad.

My interviews reveal that one of the sources of these problems is the labour externalisation process, as migrants are not prepared for the tasks they will be asked to perform. Another is that labour policies, laws and frameworks in Uganda and destination countries are limited, fragmented and not gender responsive.

Labour externalisation will not to go away, so it is vital to develop better training and stronger structures, and resolving these challenges will require much greater regional and international collaboration and coordination than we are seeing at present. ■

Donnah S Atwagala is a Ugandan researcher in areas of conflict analysis, peace-building, gender and migration-related issues. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa.



THE AGENDA

◆ In Yaoundé, the **Festi Photo 237** highlights the work of eight Cameroonian photographers. Hosted by the Institut Français du Cameroun, the new exhibit opens on 6 December and runs until the 23rd.

◆ Eighty competitors from around the world are on their way to Johannesburg for the **Red Bull Dance Your Style World Final** on 10 December. This event is the culmination of 130 feeder events in more than 30 countries, and the winner will be crowned the best street dancer in the world. It will be streamed live on TikTok.

◆ The deadline for applications to the **Global Short Docs Forum** is 13 December. Organised by One World Media, the forum supports 16 filmmakers who are making documentaries of not more than 30 minutes.

◆ **A Different Now is Close Enough to Exhale on You**, curated by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung is on at Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg and Cape Town, until 21 January.

◆ The 15th **United Nations Biodiversity Conference** begins in Montreal on 7 December. The African continent is home to a quarter of all the world's biodiversity, and key to these discussions will be how we protect this while continuing to develop economically, culturally and socially.

◆ Balaclava, Mauritius will host the **2022 African Economic Conference**. Supported by the African Development Bank and the United Nations, the conference is examining how to make economic development compatible with climate resilience.

◆ A **three-day prayerthon** started this Saturday morning at JJ McCarthy Centre (Assumption Sisters of Nairobi) on Riverside Drive. "The time has come for you to mount your walls" and "restore the lost art of prophetic intercession," by waging "good warfare by the Spirit," organisers say.

◆ **Agra Innovate Lagos**, which bills itself as West Africa's premier agriculture trade fair, is taking place on 6 and 7 December at the Landmark Centre in Lagos.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Please tell us if you or your organisation has something cool coming up (an event, a report, a product launch) that our audience should know about on agenda@thecontinent.org

The Big Picture

Photo: Khaled Desouki/AFP

Ghana get some: Black Stars fans light up the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group H football match against South Korea in Al-Rayyan on 28 November. Except for the gentleman on the right whose side-eyeing game is fire. Respect. Ghana have been Africa Cup of Nations champions four times (1963, 1965, 1978 and 1982) and qualified for the World Cup four times (2006, 2010, 2014 and 2022).



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