

AFRICA

— YEAR IN REVIEW 2023

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Africa: Year in Review 2023

A Letter from the Africa Program

Welcome to *Africa: Year in Review 2023* (AYIR). In line with the Wilson Center Africa Program’s annual tradition, we have partnered with policymakers, practitioners, scholars, and African experts to publish a series of essays on the most impactful developments across the African continent, in US-Africa relations, and on Africa’s role and future in the global arena over the past year. This year, we had tremendous interest amounting to over 40 contributions that span everything from democracy and elections, trade, regional conflicts and coups, climate change, gender rights, and many other issues and developments in the governance, security, development, and social spheres on the continent.

First, AYIR 2023 includes seven essays on US-Africa relations, emphasizing Africa’s cementing importance on the global stage and in the future of US foreign policy. Developments in US-Africa relations this year followed the noteworthy [United States–Africa Leaders Summit](#) at the end of 2022 and the Biden Administration’s continued efforts to highlight Africa in its foreign policy priorities, such as through progress on implementing the [Global Fragility Act in West Africa](#). However, relations between the United States and Africa were also tested throughout 2023 by the myriad of coups and authoritarian gains across the continent.

In this light, AYIR 2023 features an essay on the changes in US foreign policy needed to improve US-Africa relations in coup-afflicted countries and counter the rise of authoritarianism. Another essay analyzes the breakdown in the bilateral relationship between the United States and South Africa. These authors consider US concerns over Africa's foreign allies, such as Russia, while other authors in this publication consider how US foreign policy may move beyond some of these traditional geo-political concerns as they focus on how US investments and aid are necessary to change the paradigm of US priorities in Africa.

Finally, with the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)—the cornerstone of US economic engagement with Africa—set to expire after next year, trade and commerce are essential areas of focus for US-Africa relations in 2023 and beyond. We have multiple essays across the publication that focus on AGOA's impact and renewal, as well as changing trade dynamics in Africa and globally, including the expansion of BRICS and the continued implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and what these mean for the future of Africa and US-Africa partnership.

Tumultuous elections in Africa have marked 2023. Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Gabon, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Madagascar, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) all held elections this year, most of which have been contested by opposition leaders and parties and challenged by election observers, civil society, and citizens. Gabon's unpopular elections immediately created the conditions for a successful military seizure of power, which followed Niger's coup this July. This was the eighth successful coup on the continent over the past three years. Discontent has also been widespread across the Sahel, the epicenter of the consolidation of authoritarianism this year.

In the seven essays in our governance and leadership section, we analyze elections in both Nigeria and Liberia, in which authors present mixed outlooks for democracy. We have several authors who focus on the coups across Africa and the Sahel region and one essay that specifically focuses on the coup in Niger. Another essay focuses on how the absence of good governance was compounded by the impacts of climate change in Libya, leading to disastrous consequences for Libyans. Finally, we have an essay that considers Ethiopia's leadership and its aspirations for a port in the Red Sea while analyzing the potential implications for the region.

Serious global conflicts have also marked this year. While much of the world has been focused on the war between Israel and Hamas and Russia and Ukraine, insufficient international attention has been paid to conflict and humanitarian needs in Africa, particularly the war in Sudan. Engulfed in conflict since this April, Sudan has devolved into intractable war and a dire humanitarian crisis. Three of our six AYIR essays





that focus on conflict prevention, security, and peacebuilding implications consider the conflict in Sudan. One essay focuses on the regional implications of the conflict and how geopolitical interests have stalled peacebuilding efforts, resulting in a divided Sudan and no longer a functional state. Another essay presents the need for greater dialogue and coordination in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region to help solve conflicts like those in Sudan and those similar to Ethiopia's Tigray region.

This year also saw the first Africa Climate Summit, which produced the [Nairobi Declaration](#), “a basis for Africa’s common position” at COP 28 and into the future of climate negotiations. Many parts of Africa are already seeing harsh impacts from climate change, and even while Africa is not proportionally responsible for global emissions, investment in a sustainable and climate-resilient future is crucial for the continent. This year, we have six essays focused on sustainability and development in Africa and the investment potential to make a sustainable future possible. Some essays analyze Africa’s perspective on the climate crisis, the Africa Climate Summit, and the Nairobi Declaration. In contrast, others talk about the difficulties of sustainable economic development in Nigeria and Ghana. Two more essays focus on engendering a sustainable future, one emphasizing investments in Africa’s private sector, while the other notes the importance of digital trade and AfCFTA in the sustainable integration of the African continent.

As the world order changes, so does Africa’s role in the global arena. As noted by four essays about Africa on the global stage, Africa’s institutions and interests are gaining primacy in ways that affect international politics and US foreign policy. In particular, the African Union (AU) has featured prominently in the discussion over the past year. In our publication, one author focuses on the potential shift in US-Africa collaboration in light of the AU’s recent admission to the G20, while another author discusses the AU’s Agenda 2063 and its role in food security. Other essays consider US-Africa relations as BRICS adds members from the African continent. Finally, we have a piece that considers the international players and interests in the Sudan conflict considering the US and Saudi Arabia’s-brokered Jeddah talks.

New to this year’s publication, we have included an exciting new section that gets to the heart of African issues and the future of Africa: essays that feature our cross-cutting focus on women, youth, and technology, as well as some other social issues on the continent. While some gains have been made for African women this year—such as featured in the essay on Sierra Leone’s gender-equality law—some authors indicate mixed results and much progress still needed for women across the continent. Related to gender issues, we have an essay this year that focuses on developments for queer rights (or lack thereof) across Africa. In terms of technology, one essay focuses on the emerging role of AI and what this means for US-Africa relations, while another analyzes the potential and controversy of platform-enabled gig work on the continent.

Finally, multiple essays emphasize the importance of African youth, not only as the future of Africa but as the future of the global workforce. Our authors note struggles faced by Africa's youth, particularly considering recent adverse developments in educational gains across the continent. Strengthening the potential of and expanding opportunities for African women and youth is intensely necessary for Africa's future and will remain a principal discussion in African issues moving forward.

Africa: Year in Review continues to be the Wilson Center Africa Program's most-read publication. On behalf of the Africa Program, I extend my gratitude to all our contributors for sharing their extensive insight in this publication. I would also like to thank the Africa Program staff, including Kyra Chambers (Program Coordinator), Niat Afeworki (Director's Office Program Assistant), and Africa Program interns, namely Torianna Eckles and Juliet Lancey, for their hard work, research, and communications support. I offer immense gratitude to Tobias Glucksman (US Department of State Senior Diplomatic Fellow), who provided insightful editorial assistance for the publication. Lastly, I thank Cheri Ayers (Communications Coordinator) for her continued work as AYIR's project manager, including coordinating with authors and editors and producing AYIR 2023.

As 2024 commences, the Wilson Center Africa Program asks you to join us in our continued discussion on challenges and opportunities facing the African continent that will inform the future of Africa and the world as we look to the year ahead.



Ms. Oge Onubogu

Director, Africa Program

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

We appreciate the richness of the contributions on significant developments in political, economic, and social affairs for our eighth edition of the Africa: Year in Review series. The statements made and views expressed are solely those of the individual authors and do not represent the views or official positions of the Wilson Center.





US-Africa Relations

Strategic Corridors Changing the Paradigm for US-Africa Partnership

Ambassador (ret.) J. Peter Pham

It would be easy to dismiss President Joseph Biden's [assertion](#) at the 2022 US-Africa Leaders Summit that "the United States is all in for Africa's future" as just a rhetorical flourish except for the specificity of arguments that he mustered in its support, including "trade runs on reliable infrastructure to support and secure resilient supply chains," to wit "improving Africa's infrastructure is essential." To this end, the last year has witnessed an unprecedented push by the United States to build out the "Lobito Corridor" connecting Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Zambia.

Shepherded through the US interagency by Amos Hochstein, Deputy Assistant to the President, what began as the refurbishment and expansion of a railway from the Atlantic port of Lobito into a multi-user transportation infrastructure connecting Angola to its mineral-rich neighbors—with a \$1 billion price tag—the biggest American investment ever in an African railway has been [flushed out](#) in the year since the Summit as a full suite of "critical infrastructure that will better integrate DRC, Zambia, and Angola into regional and global markets; develop green energy supply chains; and, spur investment in agriculture, telecoms, and additional sectors." An [agreement](#) has even been reached with the European Union to collaborate in the effort, which is, effectively, not just the West's targeted response to China's "Belt and Road" global infrastructure buildout but also a [vehicle to secure access](#) to the critical minerals needed for the energy transition and future technology.

Moreover, the US contribution to the corridor [includes](#) some \$900 million in Export-Import (EXIM) Bank financing for energy projects, the construction of which will enable the processing of raw materials envisioned in the [memorandum of understanding](#) between the United States, the DRC, and Zambia to develop an electric vehicle battery value chain. Supporting African countries' ambitions to process and capture more of the upstream mineral value chain, in turn, supports Africa's economic development and de-risks for America and other countries' critical minerals supply chains that, up to now, have been dominated by China—a veritable "win-win."

During his Oval Office meeting with President Biden at the end of November 2023, Angolan President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço [described](#) US support for the Lobito Corridor as "a new page that has been turned in US-Africa relations." Given the importance of Africa's resources for the energy transition as well as future technology and the potential to enable African countries to capture more of the value chain for these critical materials, if properly implemented, the creation of Lobito and other strategic corridors in Africa (a second one is being advanced) will be geopolitical and geo-economic game-changers of global significance.

Ambassador (ret.) J. Peter Pham is a Distinguished Fellow at the Atlantic Council. He previously served as US Special Envoy for the Sahel (2020-2021) and Great Lakes (2018-2020) Regions of Africa.

The statements made and views expressed are solely those of the author and do not represent the views or official positions of the Wilson Center.

Climate Change in Africa and US Relations with the Continent

Ms. Fikayo Akeredolu

In 2023, Africa witnessed [more than 15,000 fatalities](#) from a series of severe weather events, including Libya's "medicane" floods which claimed 11,300 lives. Other events included flash floods in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, with over 3,000 casualties, and floods and mudslides during Tropical Cyclone Freddy in February, resulting in at least 860 deaths across multiple African countries. Additionally, persistent drought affected over 29 million people in Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Mauritania, Niger, and Madagascar, while southern Africa experienced an extended heatwave resembling summer conditions throughout the year.

Although Africa has made a [minimal contribution to global emissions](#) responsible for driving climate change, it is expected to bear the harshest repercussions. The continent's already vulnerable infrastructure and healthcare facilities are at increased risk of devastation.

For African leaders and their people, there is an increasing need for long-term sustainable mitigation and adaptation funding and projects. Africa Climate Week (ACW) and Africa Climate Summit (ACS) were hosted in Kenya in 2023. The events saw 20 African Heads of State and Government highlight their countries' commitment to spearhead initiatives in renewable energy, sustainable land use, and innovative climate technologies. The United States has [expressed its intention](#) to collaborate with Africa to address climate change challenges. During ACS, John Kerry, the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, [announced](#) a commitment of \$4 million for the International Organization for Migration to assist with climate-related events, including migrants, refugees, and the local host communities.

The trajectory of US-Africa relations will depend on its willingness and ability to back Africa's climate adaptation and mitigation endeavors. Besides financial support, Africa requires scientific and technical expertise. Scientifically grounded climate data is the bedrock for ensuring climate resilience and driving prevention efforts. Unfortunately, Africa possesses limited capacity in this area. The continent has the fewest weather stations per land area, making it difficult to understand the occurrence and climate change-related shifts in extreme weather events. Whatever the United States can do to bridge these financial and technical gaps will define US-Africa relations in the future.

AGOA Needs a Push

Mr. Tom Sheehy

The [African Growth and Opportunity Act \(AGOA\)](#), the centerpiece of US-Africa trade, is set to expire next year. Many assume that AGOA, signed into law in 2000, will be reauthorized, as it was in 2015. Yet its supporters should not take AGOA renewal for granted.

Though AGOA has not met all expectations, it has substantially benefitted economic development in several countries. Its apparel sector benefit alone supports jobs for hundreds of thousands of Africans, mainly women. However, AGOA hasn't spurred more significant US-Africa trade or investment partly because some African countries have poor investment climates, so this is not a failure of the AGOA preferences.

Africans are certainly aware of AGOA's benefits. The recent [AGOA Forum](#) held in Pretoria was attended by 30 African trade ministers, an impressive turnout. In advocating for its extension, African Union Trade Commissioner Albert Muchanga called AGOA "[critical to the investment community](#)." Host South Africa, [AGOA's biggest beneficiary country](#), backed its extension.

AGOA is more than trade policy; it represents a political partnership, too. The United States is geopolitically competing with China. Failure to extend AGOA would be a significant diplomatic setback in Africa, much like the Trump administration's 2017 jettisoning of the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) was perceived as US regional disengagement, to Beijing's advantage.

US Trade Representative Katherine Tai has [said](#), "We see that there is an opportunity to shape a stronger, new, forward-looking vision for US-Africa trade." Yet the Biden administration's vision is unclear. Congress will have to help lead AGOA reauthorization, including any updates.

AGOA's preferential market access is not in fashion. The Trump administration preferred a free trade agreement approach to Africa. The Biden administration favors managed trade, as seen by its [Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership](#) with Kenya. Congressional Republicans are reversing their traditional support for lowering tariffs, joining Democrats.

Unpredictability is ever more the norm in Congress, with its topsy-turvy politics. Few thought that the widely celebrated President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), routinely reauthorized, would technically [expire](#) through congressional inaction. Indeed, dedicated advocacy for AGOA is deserved and demanded on Capitol Hill, where passing legislation is always challenging.

Senegal's Upcoming Presidential Elections and Its Implications for US-Senegal Relations

Mr. James J. Fisher

An important event in West Africa during 2023 was Senegalese President Macky Sall's July declaration that he would not run for an (unconstitutional) third term in Senegal's upcoming 2024 presidential election. The announcement followed [persistent protests](#) by activists in Dakar, Ziguinchor, and other cities, resulting in several police crackdowns, arrests, and deaths.

Sall's announcement is significant as it will mark the first time a presidential election has been held in Senegal without the incumbent president running for office. It is also a welcome surprise to many of those involved in protests against Sall's government, which has become increasingly unpopular after [opposition leader Ousmane Sonko was arrested](#) in 2021. Activists, [including musicians](#) who participated in the Y'en a Marre movement in 2012, expected and were preparing for Sall to run again. With Sonko almost certainly barred from running in 2024, as the government will jail him for two years on charges of "[corruption of the youth](#)," Sall's announcement raises the possibility of a victory for his party, the Alliance for the Republic (APR), as the opposition struggles to find a new [candidate](#).

The broad implications for Africa are that a [significant actor in regional politics](#) has decided to uphold its tradition of peaceful—albeit not consistently democratic—transitions of power since independence. This is especially important when considered in the context of recent coup-driven transitions in West Africa.

The upcoming elections are unlikely to radically shift US-Senegalese relations, barring unforeseen developments such as [Sall retracting his announcement](#), or an election marred by discrepancies. The US and Senegal have had a relatively [close relationship since Senegal's independence](#), with the US never straying far despite occasional undemocratic behavior by former presidents. The implications for US-Senegalese relations center on two key aspects: continued [bilateral security cooperation](#), particularly regular training for the Senegalese military and police, and growing bilateral [trade relations](#), which have [increased](#) steadily over the past decade. The Senegalese military receives vital support, training, and equipment from the United States. Likewise, Senegalese trade with the United States has risen over [2,000%](#) since Sall was elected in 2012. With Sall's planned departure, these bilateral trade and security relationships have room for further growth for regional stability and development—a situation that should continue to be prioritized given Senegal's key role in the region and their historical relationship with the United States.

African Coups and US Policy: What's the Play?

Ambassador (ret.) Robert E. Gribbin

Coup d'états in Niger and Gabon saw France diminish, Russia surge, and the United States falter. Why? France finally wore out its welcome in its former colonies. Russia took advantage of anti-French sentiment. (However, it remains to be seen if Russia will have staying power). Unfortunately, the United States was sidelined by its policy of automatically cutting off assistance to nations that overturn democracy. Although noble in intent, designed ostensibly to discourage non-democratic transitions, the policy leaves America with little leverage after the fact.

It is doubtful that coup makers attach much weight to international consequences when planning or executing their grasp for power. Domestic power is their objective. To give them the best-case motivation, let's say the takeover is designed to curb corruption, respond to people's will, etc. Those motivations might be salient, but it is usually just a new group or individual who wants their turn at the trough.

The policy of cut-off hampers America's ability to engage with new leadership, to leverage, lead, cajole, or guide them into behaviors consistent with objectives of respect for human rights, regional security, and the maintenance of a bilateral relationship that is the foundation for the promotion of American goals in Africa—peace, prosperity, even democracy. If we don't have an oar in the water, it is hard to row.

Is there a way out of this conundrum? It is probably unrealistic to believe Congress would repeal the law. Still, it ought to be persuaded to modify it enough so that the executive might have sufficient latitude to continue selected assistance to coup-afflicted nations for more flexible policy approaches to sustain American vital interests. In Niger, for example, American anti-terrorism goals in the Sahara remain prominent even after the change of government in Niamey. After-the-fact leverage could also be usefully applied to other goals, including incentives to nudge coup makers back towards democratic norms.

Without modifications to the cut-off policy, the United States is hampered in efforts to be a player in coup-afflicted states, to our detriment and certainly to the detriment of the citizens of those nations.

The US-African Strategic Partnership for Food Security in Africa: What Should We Prioritize?

Dr. Moses Kansanga

Food insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has worsened in the past few years under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing geopolitical crisis, and a deepening climate emergency. These developments have laid bare the fragility of the broader global food system and the need to rethink food policy and resultant strategies for addressing hunger in disproportionately impacted areas like SSA.

2023 has seen an increase in financial aid and emergency assistance to countries on the continent aimed at improving the food situation, including funding from the flagship [US-Africa Partnership to Promote Food Security and Resilient Food Systems in Africa](#). At the US-Africa Summit in December 2022, President Biden [announced](#) 2.5 billion in additional financial support for the initiative. While this aid is timely, the materialization of its intended food security impacts across the continent will depend considerably on how African leaders and international development partners rethink agricultural development. This brief reflection highlights a few of the most critical gaps that must be addressed.

For the past few decades, the food policy space in SSA has been dominated by a productionist approach to ending hunger that emphasizes increased production. While increasing production is not problematic, this persistent productionist gaze has foreclosed investment in other viable complementary opportunities for addressing hunger, including properly managing what the sub-region already produces. According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#), on average, about 20 percent of cereals, 30 percent of dairy and fish, and 40 percent of fruit and vegetables are lost postharvest.

Africa needs a postharvest management infrastructure to save and re-channel more food into the system without further environmental cost. Developing this infrastructure will require investment in locally led research to generate contextually relevant solutions. Capacity building on food loss prevention, particularly for smallholder farmers and policy actors in the agricultural sector, is crucial for closing knowledge gaps on postharvest loss reduction.

Africa, however, cannot address food loss with just technological improvements, especially given the underlying role the contemporary political economy of free trade plays in shaping the demand for locally produced goods. US-Africa relations around food security will benefit from rethinking the international flow of food to African markets in a way that does not compromise local competitiveness.

South Africa: A Public Breakdown in the Bilateral Relationship

Mr. Michael Walsh

In May 2023, US Ambassador Reuben Brigety [leveled](#) public [allegations](#) that caused a [breakdown](#) in the bilateral relationship between South Africa and the United States. Arguably, the most serious was that the South African government had engaged in a series of activities that materially deviated from the principles of non-alignment in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This included the [covert uploading](#) of weapons and ammunition onto a US-sanctioned Russian vessel docked at Simon's Town Naval Base. The ambassador suggested that these breaches undermined US national security and foreign policy interests in violation of the [eligibility criteria](#) for preferential trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). These allegations had an immediate impact on the lives of ordinary South Africans. The national currency [plummeted](#) toward a record low.

The incident had fallout on both sides of the Atlantic. South African political leaders called for the ambassador to be expelled or recalled. US officials [expressed](#) concern about the "actions and the nature of his assertions." President Cyril Ramaphosa ordered an independent panel to investigate. Reportedly, the inquiry [found](#) "no evidence to substantiate claims that weapons were loaded onto the Lady R." However, the final report was [withheld](#) from public disclosure on national security grounds. These developments added fuel to the fire. To some, the negative findings confirmed the ambassador had gone "[rogue](#)." To others, the lack of transparency suggested that there was substance to his allegations. Behind the scenes, the two governments [sought](#) to "move past the incident" through diplomatic channels. This was [complicated](#) by the assassination of a South African police officer investigating a South African National Defense Force (SANDF) unit linked to the incident.

Next year, it will be difficult to repair these damaged relations fully. The African National Congress is [polling](#) at historically low levels. With a [national election](#) looming, it is fighting to preserve its one-party dominance over the state. Meanwhile, the [response](#) of the South African government to the Hamas attack on Israel and Israeli incursion into Gaza has raised fresh questions about its misalignment with US foreign policy. With [AGOA renewal](#) on the table, those concerns will [unlikely](#) go away anytime soon.

A Coup with Potential?

Mr. Niikwao Akuetteh

Niger's July 2023 putsch is a worrisome African problem. However, a careful, timely US engagement could transform the current crisis into a mutually beneficial boon.

Postcolonial Africa knows coups in [numbers](#). We coup-weary Africans have learned valuable lessons. I have been caught up in the traumatizing maelstroms of seven different coups in Accra, Kumasi, and Abidjan. What we have learned is this: coups are no panacea but toxic fake medicine. Instead of healing, they worsen the severe diseases that allegedly prompted them. Admittedly, those deadly real diseases are caused by weaknesses, gashes, and rots across the gorgeous kente that is democracy. And we have learned that the best prevention and cure for those democratic damages and deficiencies is better democracy.

That is where the United States, an imperfect but democratic superpower, emerges. The insight "never let a good crisis go to waste" should be heeded here. Yes, General Tchiani's power grab remains a migraine for Africa. But it is also an opportunity for the United States, which could be a catalyst for assisting us West Africans as we steadily erase our democratic deficits. This will not be easy, but it is not impossible either. While challenging, it will require commitment, humility, and more from all involved and supporting parties.

Gratifyingly, Team Biden has started prioritizing early action, such as implementing the Global Fragility Act in Coastal West Africa, followed in December 2022 with African Democratic and Political Transitions (ADAPT) and other [initiatives](#). Regarding Niger, Biden himself [demanded](#) Bazoum's release while the US Department of State's Victoria Nuland [flew](#) into Niamey and confronted the junta. Still, on October 24, 2023, a concerned Senate Committee [called for](#) additional action.

Unquestionably, Biden and subsequent administrations should heed this Senate body's demand, which could be paraphrased as, "Embrace the daunting challenge of assisting the Sahel and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to boost democracy, thereby pre-empting coups." Polls consistently show Africans desire democracy, which constitutes a powerful reason for doing what the Senate is advising. Another reason? Democratic dividends—the transformative benefits that democracy would bring—though neither easily nor overnight, given current geopolitics.

For Sahel-ECOWAS, the benefits would include stronger, more responsive democracy, greater stability and security, more prosperity, and more exuberant cultural flowering. The United States would gain much as well due to stronger US-Africa ties, while the many authoritarians coveting African resources would lose ground because they lack what we Africans must have: democracy. Both the United States and Africa should regard these democratic dividends as a good return on investment, especially if extracted from General Tchiani's July 26 anti-democratic display in Niamey.

Mr. Niikwao Akuetteh, whose activist career has included leading five NGOs and teaching at Georgetown University and George Washington University, wrote this while lecturing at UPSA (the University of Professional Studies, Accra) in Ghana.

Managing Post-Election Disputes in Nigeria: Expectations for the United States

Dr. Hyginus Banko Okibe

Since its political independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed several elections and many post-election disputes. It has yet to pass the litmus test of conducting free, fair, credible, and transparent elections without a post-election dispute. While [elections](#) are a trademark of democracy, the judiciary is also instrumental as it adjudicates the mismanagement of electoral processes. However, in Nigeria, the judiciary has not effectively played this role.

There is a narrative that Nigeria [revels in corruption](#) and claims that the [judiciary](#) is not an exception when adjudicating election disputes. On January 14, 2020, the Supreme Court declared that [Hope Uzodinma](#) of All Progressive Congress (APC) was the validly elected governor in the March 2019 Imo state governorship election against the sitting Governor Emeka Ihedioha of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). This was even though the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced APC as the fourth position in the election. On October 26, 2023, the Supreme Court also declared that Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu (APC) was the duly elected President of Nigeria despite the [opposition candidates](#) contesting his [eligibility](#) to participate in the elections in February.

The [breach of legal provisions](#) in the electoral system provides easy ways to circumvent the rules. The candidates vying for elective positions are desperate to win [the party tickets](#) and the main elections by [any means possible](#), including in the courts, as evident in the [cases](#) involving David Umahi, Godswill Akpabio and Ahmed Lawan. The judiciary faces challenges contending with the consequent disputes and any [perceived miscarriage of justice](#) makes Nigerians lose hope in the judiciary. They rather call for intervention by the international community, especially the United States, to fortify the country's justice system. Though the United States [allocated \\$50 million to Nigeria](#) for the 2023 elections, it is evident that Nigerians now desire more than free, fair, credible, and transparent elections—they also want to [right the wrongs of the judiciary](#).

The United States emphasizes the need to seek redress over any election irregularities through the [approved legal means](#), but it does not go beyond such advocacy, financial support, and election monitoring to prevail on the country's judiciary to uphold justice in post-election disputes. The Nigerian judicial system is [not independent](#), and its judgments appear to [favor the ruling party](#) mainly and the highest bidder against impartiality rules. This has made the judgments of courts on post-election disputes result in [mixed reactions](#) that appear hypocritical to onlookers. It is either that the judiciary is described as a bastion of democracy and the last hope of the common man by the party that won post-election disputes in courts, or that the party which lost [denigrates judiciary](#).

Nigerians will desire the United States to assist in the country's hitch-free trial of election disputes and not delay evidence in its custody, which may influence the course of justice in post-election disputes. An example was a [US Court](#) that delayed judgment in the case of certificate forgery at the Chicago State University against Bola Ahmed Tinubu. It was [speculated](#) that it adversely affected the presidential post-election dispute trial at the Nigerian Supreme Court and was not a good example to the Nigerian judicial system. US-Nigeria relations will gain a new aura when the United States helps to ensure unfettered adjudication of post-election disputes in the country. This will confer legitimacy on the electioneering process and build public confidence in the outcome of the post-election litigations.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands working on a document. The document features a grid of small, circular icons, each containing a small graphic and some text. The person's hands are visible at the top and bottom of the frame, with one hand pointing to a specific icon. The background is a warm, orange-toned image of a desk with a pen and a smartphone. A white text box with a thin black border is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "Governance and Leadership".

Governance and Leadership

2023: A Wholly Different Season of Putsch in Africa

Ms. Tiseke Kasambala and Mr. Igor Ngima

2023 marked a turning point in the return of coups on the African continent, with Niger and Gabon being the eighth and ninth successful military overthrows of African governments since 2020. At this [rate](#), there will be more coups in this decade than in any decade since 1960. While coups in Africa are not new—[220](#) successful or attempted coups since 1950 and each unique in context and character—their popular support appears on the rise. According to [Afrobarometer](#), citizens' opposition to military rule has declined by 10% over the past ten years.

The rise in coups and citizen support for strongmen signifies a shift in the perception and exercise of democracy. The failure of elected governments to provide security and economic stability to citizens has precipitated public reconsideration of liberal democracy tenets such as multi-party systems of government, elected leadership, and respect for human rights. Human rights and security considerations are framed as antithetic, as exemplified by coups in [Mali](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Niger](#), [Chad](#), or [Gabon, where junta leaders have curtailed freedoms as they promised to restore security](#).

To restore public faith in the dividends of democracy and bolster its application, the US government and other bilateral partners cannot solely focus on elections and civil liberties to deliver democracy. Nor can they merely rely on the application of sanctions to restore it. They must work in partnership with African governments and regional mechanisms. The United States must intensify its dialogue with states' leaders, their civil societies, and regional bodies. This will entail going beyond the military counter-terrorism route—in the Sahel region, for example—with a greater focus on political and economic development and, more broadly, recognizing the shortcomings of a one-size-fits-all approach to the continent.

With young populations and fast-growing economies, African countries are vying for more equal, innovative, and adaptive partnerships. Regular interactions with senior officials, more visits to grassroots organizations, and an understanding of local activists can lead to a common understanding of how to address the issues of insecurity, unemployment, and economic instability and end the power abuse by elected officials.

Has Democracy Failed Africa, or Have Africans Failed Democracy? The Significance of Nigeria's 2023 Elections in Retrospect

Dr. Jude Cocodia

As 2023 ends, Nigerians mark 24 years of uninterrupted Western-style democracy. But contrary to expectations, rather than democracy driving political stability and improved living standards in Nigeria, the reverse seems the case. The reason for this is two-pronged. Firstly, a deficit exists in fulfilling the prerequisites on which thriving democracies are built. Secondly, Africa's weak institutions create a "might is right" concept that compels most citizens to take laws into their own hands rather than referring problems to the government to solve. This distrust of governmental institutions makes Africans ill-disposed to democratic tenets and smothers democracy.

There is a general notion that democracy fosters stability; hence, countries coming out of conflict are compelled to adopt democracy. Unfortunately, democracy does not bring countries out of poverty or affect socio-economic stability. Instead, it preserves the wealth of a nation through established institutions that thrive on a literate, broad, and active middle class. Lacking these, any democracy will fail even before it starts. So, the continued absence of these democratic prerequisites saw democracy in Nigeria, and most African countries flounder while insurgencies and military coups increased in 2023.

As Nigeria's 2023 elections approached, politicians publicly encouraged supporters to intimidate voters and snatch ballot boxes, thereby showing utter disregard for the electoral institution. Officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) were [compromised](#) at all levels. However, many also distinguished themselves as being the fair umpires they were meant to be. Citizen coercion was caught on camera, and in some locations, citizens [queued](#) to sell their votes for [incentives](#) offered by party agents. In the end, a winner was announced when it was clear that legal interpretation was needed to clarify the rules in the absence of an outright winner.

In Nigeria, the belief that "elections are won by the party that rigs best" is rife. Hence, whoever comes to power has no obligation to the people since they won through fraud and sometimes brute force. With this configuration, political recklessness in Nigeria is worse than ever, and 24 years of Western-style democracy has seen the country's fortunes plunge.

The absence of the conditions for democracy's success made it fail in Nigeria as it has with much of Africa. With these conditions still in deficit, democratic consolidation remains unlikely. The challenge going forward is to create government systems that can foster economic and social growth amid the peculiarities of Africa's societies.

Military Juntas Accelerating Destabilization in the Sahel

Dr. Daniel Eizenga

In 2023, Niamey joined Bamako and Ouagadougou among the African capital cities under junta rule. With their respective putschists intent on holding power at all costs, the governments of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso may be on the brink of collapse.

Decisions made by the military leaders have been disastrous. The rapidly expanding militant Islamist insurgency broke records, with the [number of its associated fatalities](#) jumping from 4,125 in 2020 to roughly 12,000 this year.

Militant Islamist groups have also [laid siege to dozens of localities](#), displacing millions and cutting off significant populations from access to humanitarian aid. It is possible that more than one million people in the region could be facing [emergency levels of food insecurity](#), potentially leading to extreme malnutrition, starvation, and death.

Perplexingly, all three juntas have discarded earlier security partnerships intended to bolster their capabilities to confront the growing insurgency and humanitarian crises. Burkina Faso and [Niger followed Mali by withdrawing from the Sahel G5](#) regional security initiative, leading Chad and Mauritania to dissolve the organization. Burkina Faso and Niger similarly dissolved security partnerships with France and other European partners.

In Mali, junta leader Colonel Assimi Goïta has continued to cozy up to Russian leader Vladimir Putin, shelling out [millions of dollars a month](#) to the Wagner Group for regime security. After a [United Nations investigation](#) found Malian troops and foreign military personnel killed over 500 civilians, Goïta's foreign minister, Abdoulaye Diop, in June, demanded the closure and withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) by the end of 2023 presumably to avoid future scrutiny.

MINUSMA's withdrawal precipitated half a million new IDPs massing at Gao, where militant Islamist groups periodically cut the population off from Mali's main transit corridors. The extremists have used similar tactics around the ancient city of Tombouctou, forcing residents to hunker down through the year's second half.

Meanwhile, internal dissent in these military-led regimes is not tolerated. Critics have been [harassed, detained, kidnapped](#), and forcibly conscripted to fight on the front lines. [Press freedom has evaporated](#). Foreign journalists are banned and deported. Reporting seen as too critical by local journalists risks arrest and heavy fines, or worse.

Under pressure from ECOWAS to disband and allow elections to restore civilian rule, the military leaders implemented another strategy. They banded together under the Alliance of Sahelian States, or perhaps more accurately, the alliance of Sahelian juntas. This new bloc further entrenches the junta leaders in their joint defiance of ECOWAS, making returning to civilian rule less likely in the coming year. It seems clear that this junta alliance is more about power and politics than peace and stability.

Insecurity, Instability, and Climate Change: Libya's Recipe for Disaster

Ms. Addison Emig

In September 2023, the storm Daniel swept through the Mediterranean Sea, hitting the coastal city of Derna, Libya. The tempest carried the markings of [climate change](#) with its heavy winds and rain. It destroyed two dams in Derna, causing catastrophic flooding that carried roughly 25% of the city out to sea. Estimates for the destruction include 4,000–5,000 people dead, 10,000 missing, and over 34,000 displaced. Libya's divided governance and instability exacerbated the disaster. The dams that broke were [built in the 1970s](#), and experts [repeatedly warned](#) of their poor condition. These warnings, however, were lost in the country's political chaos. Additionally, the east-west divide within Libya made [providing Derna](#) with adequate aid difficult.

The scope of the disaster revealed the dangerous consequences that can occur when you combine climate change, weak governance, and insecurity. Divisive, militarized rule and insecurity have left Libya ill-equipped to prepare for and react to the impacts of climate change.

Libya's inability to mitigate climate-related disasters will likely be a prominent factor in its future relations with the United States, whereas in the past, US-Libya relations mainly centered on [counterterrorism efforts](#) and [promoting peace and democracy](#). Libya is a priority country in President Biden's [US Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability](#), which was announced in March 2023 in line with the [Global Fragility Act](#). This initiative aims to end instability, address the causes of extremism, and promote peace.

The crisis created by the storm Daniel should herald a new focus for the United States. The catastrophic flooding in Derna demonstrates that addressing the roots of violence and extremism in Libya necessitates support for disaster readiness and climate change preparation at the same time as support for national unification and security-sector reform. Failure to include climate change-related issues in policy towards Libya will likely exacerbate violence and instability in the long run as disasters like Derna's flooding further weaken the country and create openings for corruption and conflict.

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The statements made and views expressed are solely those of the author and do not represent the views or official positions of the Wilson Center.

Niger—Over a Decade of Democratic Progress Undone

Dr. Sophia Moestrup

Since Niger's 1993 transition from military to civilian rule, the country's political trajectory has been turbulent. The July 2023 coup was the fourth since that transition, abruptly ending 12 years of uninterrupted democratic rule in a Sahel region characterized by significant democratic decline. The reversal has been disheartening.

President Mohamed Bazoum's historic swearing-in in April 2021 marked Niger's first transition from one democratically elected leader to another. Two years later, in contrast to neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali, the government was successfully containing the Jihadist spread; by mid-2023, extremist violence incidents had decreased by nearly [40% and attacks on civilians by nearly 50%](#) compared to the previous six months. Poverty fell by over 6% in 2021-2022 and was projected to drop further, [while GDP growth estimated at nearly 7% in 2023 was expected to almost double in 2024.](#)

Many Niger watchers believe the coup was motivated by personal interest. Its leader, General Tiani, was seemingly about to lose his position as head of the presidential guard; another coup leader, General Modi, had already been removed as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. Unlike in Burkina Faso and Mali, this was a "Generals" putsch. It is remarkable that, unlike other civilian leaders who capitulated during military takeovers, President Bazoum refused to resign as Head of State. He remains under military detention to this day.

The July coup was a significant setback for US security interests in the Sahel. Niger has rescinded security collaboration with [France](#) and the [European Union](#). The United States still had [approximately 650 troops](#) stationed in Niger in early December when the junta signed agreements with Russia to strengthen military cooperation between the two countries.

The path forward for Niger is uncertain. Economic sanctions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are negatively impacting the economy and well-being of citizens. Niger has defaulted on its debt, and the security situation is deteriorating. As it resumes its partnership with Niger, the United States must maintain consistent pressure for a rapid return to civilian, democratic rule to avoid jeopardizing over a decade of economic and democratic progress.

Ethiopia's Red Sea Aspiration and Its Consequences in the Horn

Mr. Woldemneh Pawlose

The city of Assab, where Eritrea once provided the country with a seaport of entry, and since the 1993 referendum that led to Eritrea's independence, Ethiopia lost its direct access to the Red Sea and has moved goods through the port of Djibouti. Recent speculations about Red Sea access through Eritrea began when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed resumed relations with Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki in 2018.

In July 2023, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed [raised](#) the question of access to the Red Sea for Africa's second most populous country. The Prime Minister has also noted that Ethiopia possesses historical claims to the Red Sea, which he said he wished to gain through peaceful or other [means](#). Abiy later walked back his statement and ruled out the use of force to assert Ethiopia's historical claim to the Red Sea.

Abiy's initial statement has two major implications in the region. First, Ethiopia has yet to recover from the costly war in Tigray, and the [Amhara region](#) has seen a recent escalation of violence between the Fano militia and federal forces in and around the cities of Gonder, Bahir Dar, and Lalibela. If peaceful means do not work to settle this conflict and Ethiopian and Eritrean forces clash, Northern Ethiopia will yet again find itself in conflict. Other conflicts in the Amhara and Oromia regions would also escalate, with a stretched federal force resorting to using more drones and air attacks, which would see a steep rise in casualties.

Second, if a conflict erupted over the Red Sea, the ever-fragile Horn region would suffer as conflicts in the region tend to spread across borders. To the west, the civil war in Sudan has led to a massive humanitarian emergency that has spilled to the border with Ethiopia, endangering both sides of the border. To the north, Eritrean forces supporting Abiy's side during the war in Tigray have kept their presence in and around the border region. Another conflict would see further militarization on the border, putting the Horn in a catastrophic state of violence.

The US government should work with all parties to avoid such an escalation. The war in Tigray has shown the fragile nature of negotiations as well as difficulties in monitoring human rights abuses. A further conflict would deplete much-needed humanitarian and diplomatic resources in the region.

How Liberia Showed Africa and the World that Democracy is Alive and Still Kicking

Ms. K. Riva Levinson

It was a challenging year for the progression of democracy in Africa as the Biden Administration, along with its Western allies, stayed distracted by Russia's war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas conflict. That void on the continent was filled by Russian mercenaries and entrenched political leaders who manipulated electoral processes to stave off legitimate widespread opposition.

2023 saw the Sahel region, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, fall to military rule, and concern grew that the instability would bleed into the Coastal States of West Africa. It was not a surprise when Afrobarometer reported its first-ever decline in satisfaction with democracy in Africa in its 25-year history of polling.

Then there was Liberia.

In mid-October, after a surprisingly competitive first-round presidential contest that saw no candidate achieve a 50 +1 threshold, the country moved to a [run-off](#) between incumbent President George Weah and Joseph Boakai, who served two terms as Vice President under Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia's first democratically elected female president.

There was a heightened sense of anxiety going into the second round, a fear that violence would break out and undermine the electoral process. Africa watchers were waiting for the next constitutional democracy to fall.


The first reports the National Electoral Commission announced showed Boakai ahead with a razor-thin margin. And then, when the Delta separating the two sides proved unrecoverable for the sitting president, Weah [conceded to his rival](#).

Credit goes to the Liberian people, who, with this election, marked 20 years of sustained peace and their second democratic transfer of presidential power. They demonstrated a level of political maturity unmatched by their sister states in the subregion.

However, the Biden Administration and members of [Congress](#) also deserve honorable mentions. They were proactive. They played offense, from quiet personal diplomacy to Cabinet-level interventions to a pre-emptive [threat of US visa sections](#) on election saboteurs. These officials threatened a worsening of relations with the United States. And the Liberians, with a historical affinity to the United States, knew they meant it.

Is Liberia an inflection point away from recent backsliding and back to a hopeful democratic future for Africa? I hope so. But beware. When America leaves a void—when its words do not match its muscle—that space is quickly filled by democracy's disrupters.

Ukraine and Israel are not the only fronts in the battle to save democracy.



**Conflict, Prevention,
Security, and Peacebuilding**

A Trying Year: What Comes Next for Peace Operations in Africa?

Mr. Stefan Bakumenko

As United Nations (UN) peacekeeping [turns 75](#), its presence in Africa has been thoroughly tested, especially given the number of impactful events surrounding Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) this year. In June 2023, the Malian junta [unceremoniously ejected](#) MINUSMA while violence against civilians [spiked](#). In August, security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) [killed](#) 56 civilians at an anti-UN protest in Goma. The UN's stabilization mission there, MONUSCO, spent years planning a [transition](#) amid [unpopularity](#), [controversy](#), and [rising violence](#). However, the government pushed the withdrawal forward by a year to December 2023.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), the government pursued military solutions while the Wagner Group continued [undermining](#) MINUSCA through [access denials](#), [hate speech](#), and [violence against civilians](#). In South Sudan, [shrinking](#) civic space and parties' [lack of commitment](#) to the peace process in the run-up to the 2024 elections [threaten](#) both peace and UNMISS' viability. Finally, in November, the Sudanese junta [ejected](#) UNITAMS, the political successor to the UN-African Union (AU) hybrid operation (UNAMID), capping [years](#) of disengagement from Sudan despite a [catastrophic](#) war and the [specter](#) of genocide in Darfur.

The [mixed legacies](#), sudden exits, and slow burns of what were once the “[Big Five](#)” have implications for Africa, the UN, and the United States. Host to [almost half](#) of all PKOs since 1948, Africa has shaped the UN and global peacemaking as much as they have shaped Africa. Failures in the 1990s in Somalia, Rwanda, and the Second Congo War were essential in introducing concepts like the protection of civilians, [partner peacekeeping](#), and [multidimensional mandates](#). Today, the UN [shifts](#) to lighter-touch special envoys and special political missions (SPMs) while the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) deploy more assertive [Peace Support Operations](#) (PSOs).

But the question is whether “[pragmatic peacekeeping](#)” and “[regionalization](#)” tangibly benefit African civilians or represent pure geopolitics. PSOs in the [DRC](#) and [Mozambique](#) largely added to the ecology of [violence](#) and [militarization](#) in long-disenfranchised communities. If the United States wants to maximize its long-running investment in [peacekeeping](#) and [African security](#), today's operations must avoid yesterday's mistakes. The United States should maintain a civilian-centered, context-sensitive [approach](#) when negotiating mandates and funding, equipping, and training operations in Africa and beyond.

Divided Sudan In No One's Interest

Ambassador (ret.) Donald Booth

The outbreak of fighting on April 15, 2023, between Sudan's two armed forces, the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has riven Sudan. An African country of 40 million is no longer a functional state.

Sudan was an economically viable African state at independence. It had relatively well-developed civil institutions (political parties, unions, professional associations) but failed to accommodate its ethnic diversity. The result was a civil war and secession of southern Sudan. The thirty-year Bashir era of military/ Islamist rule further sowed the seeds of state destruction by creating the multiple armed forces that have, during the past seven months of fighting, destroyed the capital Khartoum, displaced at least [5 million](#) Sudanese, [committed](#) crimes against humanity, and created a de facto division of the country.

Sudan's brief opportunity to rebuild as a nation following the establishment of a civilian-led transitional government in mid-2019 was dealt a serious blow when the army and RSF worked together to topple that government in an October 2021 [coup](#). Efforts to establish a new transitional government with civilian support were ostensibly scuttled by a disagreement between the leaders of the army and RSF over the timing and process of integrating RSF forces into the army. But behind the army-RSF clash is a sectarian struggle for dominance of the country's governance and control of its economic resources. The RSF appealed to many pastoralists from Sudan's periphery who long felt excluded from political power and economic opportunity by the army and its political supporters.

The United States and Saudi Arabia led [initial efforts](#) to secure a ceasefire. Subsequently, mediation efforts were [launched](#) by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Egypt. All have failed to stop the fighting or alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people. A truly unified peace effort has not emerged because the vital participants are pursuing their own economic and geopolitical interests in Sudan. Despite recent RSF territorial gains, a military stalemate remains likely and would create a long-term division of the country. Most Sudanese just want the fighting to stop. Perhaps their wish can be achieved when those facilitating the conflict realize that their interests are not well-served with Sudan divided and in conflict.

The Need for Better Regional Coordination for Peace and Stability in the IGAD region

Mr. Nebiyu Meshesha

The IGAD region—comprising Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda—has experienced multiple deadly conflicts in 2023. The ongoing devastating conflict in Sudan, violent conflicts in the Amhara and Oromia regions of Ethiopia, the continued terrorist attacks of Al-Shabaab in Somalia, and overall instability in the region present multiple security challenges.

There was hope for peace in some conflicts, such as the Tigray in Ethiopia, but unresolved [underlying issues](#), including the status of Western and Southern Tigray and the continued presence of non-Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) parties in Tigray, remain threats to the region's stability. The potential inter-state conflicts are increasing in the region, especially following Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announcing Ethiopia's need for direct sea access, raising concerns about a conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

IGAD has engaged in diplomatic interventions to help address some of the conflicts. In Sudan, IGAD designed a [roadmap](#) for the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of Sudan and participated in the [Jeddah talks](#) between the Sudanese factions as a co-facilitator on behalf of the African Union. Nonetheless, insufficient peace initiatives, lack of a consistent position on mediation, and mistrust among member states—such as the Sudanese government's [refusal](#) to accept Kenya's leadership of the IGAD Quartet—have raised doubts about IGAD's effectiveness in promoting regional diplomacy to help resolve conflicts.

For regional engagements to succeed, IGAD leaders first need to commit to political processes to end conflicts. This commitment would immensely change the regional environment, so diplomatic interventions may deal with conflict. Additionally, such an approach would help the [United States](#) and the international community to better collaborate with the region on locally-led peace initiatives by creating, for instance, a conducive situation to develop and implement effective mechanisms for technical and financial assistance.

IGAD should also hold regular high-level dialogue with partners and regional countries. This dialogue would help find ways to address violent conflicts by creating a venue for consultations with regional powers [involved](#) in conflicts in the region. IGAD and its Member States should continue to support peace initiatives that complement regional interests and back the ongoing implementation of the [Pretoria agreement](#)—the Ethiopia–Tigray peace agreement—including engaging Eritrea to withdraw its forces from the parts of Tigray they still occupy. Finally, as potential conflicts emerge in the region, IGAD must be alert and take proactive measures in coordination with the African Union through its early warning mechanisms.

Cascading Regional Fallout from Sudan Catastrophe

Dr. Joseph Siegle

Sudan burst into conflict in April 2023 following four years of delays by the Sudanese military in implementing a transition to a democratic, civilian government despite having committed to doing so. The military actors had tenaciously resisted demands for democracy from an overwhelming majority of Sudanese organized by grassroots networks of non-violent civil society groups.

This is not a civil war but a war between rival military factions—the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia, which has maintained a parallel command structure since its creation as the notorious Janjaweed responsible for the Darfur genocide of the 2000s.

The still-expanding [conflict has caused at least 12,000 direct fatalities](#), many more indirect deaths, the [displacement of 7.5 million people](#), and the collapse of the Sudanese state. Systemic rapes, forced conscription, and ethnic cleansing are regularly attributed to the RSF.

Aside from hurtling a country of 45 million people into the abyss, the Sudan conflict is significant for its regional and geostrategic implications. Sudan borders seven countries in a region that already had [13 million internally displaced people and 40 million facing acute food insecurity](#) prior to the outbreak of the conflict in Sudan.

Given its location on the Red Sea, Sudan is in the crosscurrents of interests between Africa and the Arab World. The United Arab Emirates and Russia are actively supporting the RSF. Moscow is also vying to gain naval port access on the Red Sea. Egypt is a close partner of the SAF. The longer the conflict persists, the more Sudan risks becoming a Yemen on a larger scale with a myriad of actors who are intent on carving it up.

Priorities for resolution include elevated international diplomatic engagement that conveys to the SAF and especially the RSF that they will not be recognized as the sovereign authority, even if they should prevail. Further incentives to reach a ceasefire include the prospect of a safe exit from the country for the military leaders, along with the threat of arrest warrants for war crimes at the International Criminal Court (ICC). Sudanese civilian leaders must be central to any negotiation in order to establish a civilian, democratic government. A joint United Nations/African Union peace operation will be needed to restore stability.

The fallout from the Sudan conflict will only worsen the longer it festers.

Unlocking its Full Potential: AGOA and Human Rights

Ms. Diane Furstenau, Ms. Alaina Rudnick, & Mr. Wondemneh Pawlose

On November 2, 2023, US Government officials, trade officials, and other stakeholders from across Africa held the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa, to discuss how to foster economic cooperation. AGOA is a preferential trade agreement between the United States and eligible countries in Africa. Notably, AGOA provides for the protection and guarantee of internationally recognized human and labor rights, a component that has been underutilized. For instance, some of the [eligibility requirements](#) include “protection of internationally recognized worker rights” and a prohibition on engaging in “gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.”

By bridging the gap between the trade and the global human rights communities, AGOA has the potential to bring stakeholders together to advance trade and human rights priorities between the United States and various African countries. Unfortunately, the use of the AGOA mechanism for advocacy thus far has been limited. Sparse knowledge of the Act in many countries hampers the uptake of AGOA as a tool for civil society organizations (CSOs) and trade unions. At higher levels, such as trade ministries, a lack of awareness of the AGOA human rights eligibility component creates unintended gaps in compliance.

When utilized, the human rights mechanism within AGOA has faced criticism¹ over its inconsistent application. Several AGOA-eligible [countries](#) have a checkered human rights record and remain active members, such as the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), [Rwanda](#), and [Angola](#), which are all considered “not free” in Freedom House’s Freedom in the World [report](#). The removal of others has sparked an outcry over perceived bias. These disparities in application send the message to human rights defenders that their efforts are better placed in more responsive avenues. When they elect to utilize AGOA, processes in place are often informal and lack broad, consultative, and participatory structures. The uneven interpretations perceived, functional bias, and lack of consistency hamper AGOA’s ability to harmonize its trade and human rights mechanisms to engage all stakeholders.

Uncertainty over AGOA’s future also plays into these dynamics. While AGOA has made strides to further conversations around the inclusion of human rights in trade, the US Government needs to reinvest in and sustain these structures to ensure that human rights remain a critical aspect of future trade agreements.

Considering the challenges outlined above, stakeholders should work together to spread awareness of AGOA and its human rights eligibility requirements. Stakeholders also should ensure that these requirements are consistently on the table at human rights-centered discussions between the United States and AGOA-eligible countries.

1. The authors thank Business and Human Rights Tanzania, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project, and the Civil Society Resource Center for the observations included in this post.

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The statements made and views expressed are solely those of the author and do not represent the views or official positions of the Wilson Center.

“Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?” The Withdrawal of External Military Forces from the Sahel and Its Implications for the Region

Dr. Elem Eyrice Tepecikliođlu

The security situation in the Sahel continues to be a source of significant concern, one that has persisted since 2012. The region has been marred by a series of coup d'états, the most recent taking place in Niger in late July 2023. Following the coup, ECOWAS was quick to impose stringent [sanctions](#) on Niger and threaten military intervention.

Suspended from ECOWAS following military takeovers, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger signed a mutual defense [agreement](#)—the Liptako-Gourma Charter—to thwart possible external aggression. Furthermore, the military leaders of Burkina Faso and Niger recently announced their decision to withdraw from the regional G5 Sahel Joint Force, following in the footsteps of Mali.

Western-led missions trying to help fight violence and combat terrorism were terminated due to strained relations with the junta administrations. Following the end of the EU's training missions in Mali last year, the EU also suspended its material and technical support to the G5 after the Niger coup. Upon the order of the new military junta, France has begun to withdraw its troops from Niger. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) will complete its withdrawal from Mali by the end of 2023. The US drone base in Agadez, Niger, also faces an uncertain future.

With international military missions leaving the region and regional organizations suffering from limited financial and human resources, the security situation will continue to deteriorate in the Sahel, a region already riddled with violent extremism and humanitarian crises. The terrorist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State could exploit the withdrawal of these missions, and insecurity spreading across these countries would pose security risks to Europe and the United States. There are growing fears that the new power vacuums might be filled by private mercenaries, such as Russia's Wagner group, an organization accused of serious human rights violations.

Maintaining the security assistance provided by Western missions is crucial to stabilizing the Sahel and preventing total state collapse. Equally important is addressing the root causes of conflict rather than exclusively relying on militarized approaches that have evidently proven ineffective. This requires a reinvention of the current approaches to tackling the Sahel's security challenges.

The Conclusion of MINUSMA: An Opportunity to Re-Strategize US Response in Mali Towards Sustainable Peace

Ms. Ramatoulie Isatou Jallow

After ten years on the ground, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) will cease operations before the [end of 2023](#). It is doing so at the [demand](#) of Mali's ruling military junta, which seized power in 2021 following earlier coups in 2012 and 2020. Mali's current coup leaders are the latest to inherit the country's growing insecurity and conflicts involving Le Mouvement National Pour La Libération de L'Azawad, Ansar Dine, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and Le Mouvement pour L'Unité et Le Jihad en Afrique de L'Ouest, among other armed groups.

The conflict abated temporarily in 2012 when the UN established MINUSMA to stabilize and secure the population, take active measures to defend and prevent the return of armed groups, and protect civilians. In terms of its successes, MINUSMA has been [praised](#) for its support of the country's peace process culminating into a peace agreement concluded in 2015 between Mali's government and two coalitions of armed groups, being the Coordination of Azawad Movements and the Platform of Armed Groups. MINUSMA is also praised for its efforts in overseeing Mali's elections in [2018](#), protecting civilians from armed groups, and preventing their return to previously controlled areas. MINUSMA is also acknowledged for being one of the most [multifaceted peacekeeping missions](#), with units dedicated to intelligence and the analysis of illegal trafficking and drug trade, ethnic dynamics and corruption trends among other issues.

Despite this, in terms of MINUSMA's criticisms, Mali has never fully stabilized, particularly in light of the mission's severe [resource](#) constraints. The 2015 peace agreement has since [crumbled](#) with the proliferation of new extremist groups not party to it. Continued conflict, crippling socio-economic conditions, and weak governance have eroded a general sense of security for civilians.

The current military government has taken a new approach, seeking assistance from Russia's [Wagner Group](#) paramilitary force to secure areas under the control of armed groups. In doing so, Mali's leaders have strained the country's relations with the United States, which has invested significant resources to address the growing influence of extremist groups associated with Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Mali and the Sahel through the US [Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership](#) and support for the [Joint Force G-5 Sahel](#). This is worsened by the decision of Mali's current leaders to depart from the Joint Force G-5 Sahel. Now, with the withdrawal of MINUSMA, its former camps have been overrun by armed groups, presenting a massive gap in maintaining security and supporting the US counterterrorism strategy.

Despite the presence of Wagner, this growing chaos and insecurity provides an opportunity for the United States to come forward with an improved approach by ensuring a healthier balance between providing security assistance in countering terrorism and addressing the root causes of instability, moving away from an overly militarized response. It should also ensure greater collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union for a more unified response.

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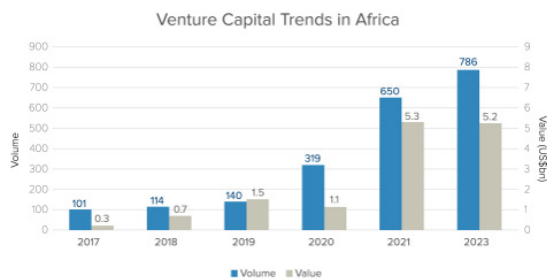
Trade, Investment, and Sustainable Development

Scaling Up Support to Africa’s Private Sector for Sustainable Development

Dr. Raymond Gilpin

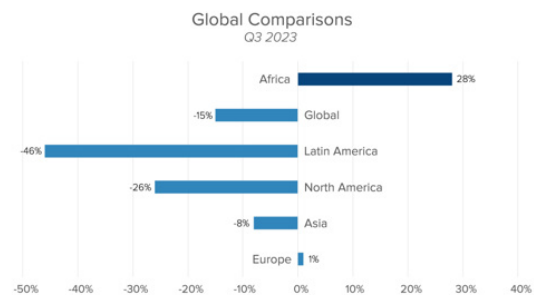
The Economist magazine notes that African startups have raised “[unprecedented amounts](#)” of venture capital since 2020 (Chart 1). This trend continued in 2023 when Africa experienced increased venture capital inflows while other regions struggled (Chart 2). Kenya’s [Hustler Fund](#), which disbursed over \$240 million in small business loans by November 2023, provides a national level example of vibrant private sector activity. Africa’s private sector continues to drive innovation, opportunity, and wealth.

Chart 1



Source: AVCA Venture Capital in Africa Report, 2023

Chart 2



Source: AVCA Q3 2023 Venture Capital in Africa

These trends make a compelling case for a shift to the private sector as Africa’s development catalyst. They also signal that Africa’s private sector is ready to scale up. Central to the success of a private sector-led approach is understanding how to price risk in Africa’s business sector. Kenya’s Hustler Fund worked with [Safaricom](#) to develop risk-reward algorithms to address this issue. At a continental level, the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) has developed a suite of digital platforms in its [Africa Trade Gateway](#) designed to address the risk assessment challenge. On a macro level, the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Africa Bureau [estimated](#) the development costs of erroneous risk pricing in “[Lowering the Cost of Borrowing in Africa](#).”

Development institutions like [USAID](#), the [US Export-Import Bank](#) (ExIm), and the [International Development Finance Corporation](#) (DFC) can scale up financing to Africa’s private sector significantly. USAID could use its strategic partnerships to mitigate risk by identifying African value chains ripe for scaled-up investment. ExIm Bank could use its global market presence to structure bespoke financing for national and regional African project investments. DFC could leverage its investment acumen to de-risk sector-wide investments, especially in energy, infrastructure, and technology. But, these interventions must be coordinated, consistent, and scaled up to be impactful.

‘Business unusual’ in this context will entail two strategic shifts. First, there must be a conceptual shift from funding projects to financing development. Second, there needs to be an operational shift from short-term financing fixes to longer-term sustainable solutions. Development policy and practice must focus on expediting these shifts in African countries and among Africa’s development partners. Accessible and affordable financing for Africa’s private sector is critical to unlocking transformative economic change and more resilient communities across the continent.

Unlocking Africa's Green Potential: Insights from the Inaugural Africa Climate Summit and the Nairobi Declaration

Ms. Amanda Logan Clark

Kenya hosted the inaugural [Africa Climate Summit](#) from September 4- 8, 2023, bringing together leaders from across the continent to forge a unified platform for the upcoming COP28. The summit culminated in the groundbreaking [Nairobi Declaration](#), an unprecedented document emphasizing the need to remobilize finance to safeguard vulnerable populations from the impacts of climate change and harness Africa's potential as a global sustainability leader.

The African continent is primed to be a key source of clean energy for the world if only it can receive the funding and technology transfers necessary to get the ball rolling. The continent is home to [over 40%](#) of the cobalt, manganese, and platinum crucial to the energy transition. Though it has [60% of the world's solar radiation potential](#), it only held 1% of the world's solar photovoltaic capacity in 2022. Furthermore, as of 2021, wind power installations in Africa only accounted for [0.01% of the continent's wind power potential](#), which could be enough to power the entire continent's demand 250 times over.

"We must go green fast, before industrializing, and not vice versa," [urged](#) the conference leader, Kenyan President William Ruto. To do so, funding must be mobilized. Currently, the continent only attracts [3% of global energy investment](#). Africa is estimated to need USD 200 billion in energy investments annually through 2030 to reach all of its energy-related development goals, double the current expenditure levels. Furthermore, Africa only receives about [12% of the nearly \\$300 billion](#) annual financing it needs to adapt to the coming climate crisis, presenting another barrier to a just and sustainable future.

In response to these meager numbers, the [Nairobi Declaration](#) calls for new global carbon taxes and reforms of international financial institutions, focusing specifically on Special Drawing Rights, debt relief, international tax cooperation, and representational governance of Millenium Development Banks. Throughout the summit, governments, development banks, private investors, and philanthropists committed a combined [\\$23 billion](#) for green projects. While this is an important step forward, it remains uncertain whether this funding can be effectively mobilized and targeted to protect those who are most vulnerable to the climate crisis but have contributed to it least.

Nigeria's Fossil Fuel Dilemmas

Dr. Deirdre LaPin

When Nigeria's new President, Bola Tinubu, and 1,411 compatriots attended COP 28 in 2023, they had two conflicting existential concerns. One was Nigeria's climatic fragility in its low-lying coastline, biodiversity, and desiccating breadbasket. The other was the oil and gas share of national income, which had fallen from typically [80% to 55%](#) after nearly six decades. Consequences include 28% inflation and a \$ 113 billion debt, claiming 94% of annual revenue.

As a signatory to the Paris Climate Agreement, Nigeria reported in 2021 its updated "nationally determined contributions" (NDCs) to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Meanwhile, the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned that combined NDCs showed that global warming would exceed the Paris 2050 target of 1.5C unless all new fossil fuel development ceased. The warning jolted Nigeria's industry leaders to safeguard vital oil and gas investment. After a twenty-year negotiation, they passed an industry reform act (PIA) and announced a permanent "war" on longstanding crude oil theft, causing an estimated loss of [437,000 barrels](#) daily.

The financial dilemma for Nigeria's leadership at COP 28 was clear: How to decarbonize rapidly while continuing to progress economically. One option included doubling down on the national Energy Transition Plan by decarbonizing power, cooking, industry, transport, and oil and gas using \$410 billion in investment and climate or development financing. A second choice was incentivizing economic diversification by enhancing power, infrastructure, and financing. A third choice was to restore and protect forests and mangroves. A fourth was to decarbonize or abate existing oil and gas projects where feasible with partner support and to apply these conditions to new projects.

Signs are that all choices are on the table, some are underway, and most are open to US government and private engagement. USAID has [supported](#) GHG emissions reductions and carbon sequestration through reforestation. Power Africa is [helping](#) with solar systems, the modernization of Nigeria's grid from 5 to 25 gigawatts, and a Gas Flare Commercialization Program that harnesses gas to power while halving flare emissions. Nigeria's abundant natural gas is seen as a "transition fuel" to pioneer green manufacturing and industrialization. Gas export will continue through liquified natural gas (LNG) and possibly two planned trans-West Africa pipelines. Oil production will give new attention to methane and flare reduction. By building the competence of operators in decarbonizing technology, major oil companies can encourage local operators on divested leases to match their standards.

Ghana's Economic Challenges: A Path to Recovery

Ms. Fabiola Lawson

Ghana, previously celebrated as one of the fastest-growing economies in 2019, now faces a significant economic [downturn](#) marked by inflation, low revenues, and mounting debt. This predicament, not solely a consequence of post-pandemic repercussions, is also the result of fiscal indiscipline and mismanagement. Ghana has sought assistance from various international partners, including the IMF, World Bank, and the United States, its largest bilateral donor.

The crisis affects the health, agriculture, and energy sectors. It has prompted Ghana to secure a [\\$3 billion loan](#) from the IMF under a program focused on restoring macroeconomic stability and implementing reforms to address fiscal indiscipline, mismanagement, and weaknesses in the energy and agricultural sectors. Through USAID and Feed the Future, the United States has prioritized diversifying Ghana's economy, particularly in agriculture, an untapped employment source. USAID has partnered with two Ghanaian financial institutions, Absa Bank Ghana and Opportunity International Savings and Loans, to provide up to [\\$25 million](#) in new financing for small agriculture-focused enterprises. Additionally, USAID initiated a [\\$7 million](#) program to aid farmers in periods of reduced productivity and to align with the broader goals of enhancing Ghana's economy, fostering good governance, and advancing key sectors. With this same goal, the World Bank has provided [\\$500 million](#) to Ghana, for 3 projects aimed to boost economic, climate, and social resilience; to improve flood and solid waste management; and to expand societal safety nets and creating income opportunities for the poor.

Amid the economic crisis, the youth have taken the initiative online, using the X platform (formerly Twitter) with the movement [#occupyjulorbihouse](#) to express discontent towards the government. What began as an online movement rapidly evolved into anti-government [protests](#) in September 2023 that led to multiple arrests. The protests focused on economic hardships, the rising cost of living, and inadequate infrastructure and job opportunities for young people amid high public debt and taxes.

Is the government plunging the country into more debt, or will it stabilize its economy and regain momentum? This question is especially relevant leading up to Ghana's 2024 presidential elections. According to the World Bank, the GDP growth shrank to 1.5% in 2023 and is expected to increase to 2.8% in 2024 before [recovering growth in 2025](#). These indicators and forecasts, coupled with the new loans and investments from the IMF and the United States, could significantly shape aid strategies, diplomatic relations with the United States, and influence foreign direct investment decisions. This evolving economic situation will be pivotal in determining Ghanaian citizens' future prosperity and well-being.

Taking Africa's Perspective on the Climate Crisis Seriously

Dr. Michael Olabisi, Dr. Robert Richardson, and Dr. Adesoji O. Adelaja

The World Bank-IMF meetings were held in Africa for the first time in 50 years in October 2023 in Marrakesh, Morocco. The message to the world's finance leaders from African leaders and activists, young and old, was clear and consistent: the world needs to invest in climate action for Africa.

The message was the same a few weeks earlier in Nairobi, Kenya, at the African Climate Summit. Their request was not for loans nor for aid-focused approaches that have held development back for decades. Young Africans and their leaders instead asked for [climate-focused investments](#).

The world must stop allowing successive COP meetings to come and go without taking notice of Africa's perspective. The global economy is heading toward the immovable object of climate change's consequences resulting from humanity's century of fossil-fuel dependence. Whether the global economy sinks or survives is [not just an African problem](#).

There are greater projected losses for the most vulnerable, such as the African farmers who will face losses in agricultural productivity and severe weather shocks. However, as shocks propagate through the global economy, everyone suffers, even those on the upper decks of our unequal global situation.

Presently, there is not enough lending capacity among international financial institutions to meet climate resilience needs. The World Bank recently moved to increase its lending capacity by \$150 billion, and the IMF's lending capacity rose from \$780 billion in 2018 to \$1 trillion. However, their combined lending capacity is nowhere near the trillions of [financing needed](#).

Our thinking must shift to new financial arrangements that include equity and private sector participation. The limited capacity of bond markets looks less promising in solving Africa's climate crisis than the private sector's \$100 trillion [global equity market and](#) its potential to invest in Africa.

The choice facing high-income economies today, the central bankers and global corporations, is to save this global economy with timely investments directed at the [region of highest impact](#): Africa. The resources, efforts, and resolve of governments and private institutions can all play a part.

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Making African Continental Integration Sustainable: Digital Trade and the Role of the AfCFTA

Dr. Odilile Ayodele

Although the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) was signed in [2018](#), moving towards faster operationalization took five years. The agreement, boasting 54 signatories, is one of the world's most extensive free trade agreements and encompasses over a billion people. It aims to establish a unified market, bringing life to the long-standing dream of continental integration. In pursuit of this vision, the African Union's (AU) [theme](#) for 2023 was "Acceleration of African Continental Free Trade Agreement Implementation."

The AfCFTA has breathed life into [plans](#) to bridge Africa's digital divide and develop a single digital market (SDM). Nevertheless, successfully implementing the AfCFTA will require several fundamental components to bridge the digital gap while fostering sustainability. These key elements, namely security and regional harmonization, must be supported by a suitable partnership. The United States positioning itself as a strategic enabler would strengthen US-Africa relations.

Holistic sustainability requires digital technologies for social and economic transformation while [promoting innovation](#). Digital trade under the AfCFTA hinges on effective policy harmonization and interoperability. These are crucial to address vulnerabilities in various areas, including intellectual property protection, data protection, and cybersecurity.

Bodies like the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) need to establish the groundwork for an SDM as they work towards utilizing the AfCFTA. Moreover, African states too often focus on becoming "regional digital hubs" but neglect the significance of working collectively. For example, how can regional digital trade be facilitated if a pivotal state like [Nigeria](#) lacks adequate digital policy harmonization within the Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#))?

The AU took nine years to ratify and implement the [Malabo Convention on Cyber Security](#). Similarly, the slow pace of negotiating and implementing an AfCFTA [protocol on Digital Trade](#) (the e-commerce protocol) threatens the SDM's viability. These efforts could be supported by expanding the [scope](#) of the Biden-Harris administration's [Digital Transformation in Africa \(DTA\)](#).

Importantly, the e-commerce protocol immensely benefits Africa and its partners by improving inter-continental trade. Equipping African states with the ability to leverage cross-border data flows will sustain their contribution to the global digital economy beyond the initial enthusiasm of the historic AfCFTA.

HIV's Funding Landscape: How to Boost Public Health Success in Africa

Dr. Jamie Van Leeuwen & Ms. Rumbi Anne Gumbie

While many initial strategies against COVID-19 (i.e., lockdowns and mask mandates) have lessened over the last few years, there are several long-term impacts from the pandemic still affecting society today. [The global economic downturn and COVID-19 pandemic](#) have impacted the health-related funding landscape, and areas where we made significant strides in public health best practices, such as HIV prevention and treatment, are at serious risk of retrogressing in some of the most underserved communities. This could have significant implications for US-Africa relations that have been strengthened through these investments.

In 2023, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Global Fund, and the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) made a [united call](#) to action to fund the global AIDS response and sustain progress against the HIV pandemic. This appeal reflects challenges at the implementation level where organizations like ours—the Global Livingston Institute (GLI)—face new obstacles in securing funding to sustain work at the community level, which is the backbone of the HIV response.

GLI works with communities in Africa hit hardest by the HIV epidemic. Globally in 2022, there were 1.3 million HIV infections with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for [51% of all cases](#). Access to [HIV funding](#) for community-based public health organizations has helped to make significant inroads in rural communities through initiatives such as community-led monitoring, condom distribution, and adherence and retention monitoring. Such interventions are decreasing the mortality and prevalence of HIV. For example, an estimated 50 million HIV infections have been [averted](#) through condom use since the 1980s.

However, post-COVID-19, there have been significant [reductions](#) in HIV funding, meaning fewer proven interventions are in place to support people living with HIV. With better funding and international partnerships, high-impact programs could expand beyond linking people with treatment and care to focusing on skills-based training that incentivizes young people to adhere to treatment and ensure better health outcomes across the continent and worldwide.

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Africa's Role in the Global Arena

Africa and the United States within the BRICS+ World

Dr. Olusegun David Sotola and Mr. Thompson Ayodele

The 15th Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) Summit was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August 2023. Like most previous meetings, deliberation centred on economic and trade themes. The event also re-ignited discussions on geopolitical and global power imbalance, with participants expressing displeasure with the current global order that is too Western-dominated and calling for remedial measures.

The highlight of the meeting was the [expansion](#) of BRICS membership with the inclusion of 6 more countries (Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates). These additions will dramatically increase the group's shares of the world's population, trade, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The group now accounts for [46% of the world's population and more than 30% of global GDP](#). Properly leveraged, BRICS+ has the potential strength to successfully lobby for a more equitable international economic system. However, existing and further geopolitical fragmentation could become an ever-increasing source of geopolitical tension, including among old and non-BRICS allies. Moreover, given its current development realities, Africa's role in a new order might remain limited.

The call for a new [BRICS currency](#), to supplant the dollar's position as the global trade and reserve currency, would have dramatic consequences for the US as a global leader. However, establishing a common and reputable currency among BRICS+ members will be no easy task. Trade between BRICS+ nations remain small, and it is not apparent that individual member countries' institutional strengths, especially the political and economic systems (capital market, banking system, and institutional strength), are sufficiently developed to support the legitimacy and strength of a BRICS currency.

The dynamic of intra BRICS+ trading would need to change to accommodate a new BRIC currency. China is a significant trading partner for most African countries, and there are currency swap arrangements between China and major African countries. Introducing a new BRICS currency would likely require a radically different Chinese currency policy. On the other hands, the United States is a significant trading partner with many countries on the African continent and will most likely remain so, even with the establishment of BRICS+.

US and Saudi Arabia's Jeddah Talks: What's the Endgame?

Ms. Maram Mahdi

On April 15, 2023, expected [conflict](#) broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces on the outskirts of the capital city, Khartoum. It is a conflict that centers on the state's monopoly of the use of force, notions of legitimacy and capacity to govern Sudan. The violence had been long predicted as a result of the deliberate dismantling of the Sudanese Armed Forces and certainly since the militia's entry into Khartoum in 2017.

Since mid-April, several initiatives have been underway to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table, but each has had only limited success. The most visible of these initiatives has been the [Jeddah talks](#) led initially by the United States and Saudi Arabia. After a brief round of negotiations early in the conflict and again in late October, and a series of failed temporary ceasefires, a new approach is needed. Mediation is vital; however, the belligerents need to be in a position to make concessions. Given that the warring parties continue to maintain zero-sum positions and battle for control of strategic towns and locations, mediation is likely futile at present.

Another challenge is that the United States has utilized a laissez-faire approach ceding responsibility for driving the process to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Despite the geopolitics in the Red Sea, the war in Sudan necessitates greater attention and more effective foreign policy as opposed to an ad-hoc process, reflecting the hard, smart, and soft leverage the United States can provide.

With its arsenal of sanctions, the United States recently [targeted](#) several Sudanese individuals for their role in undermining the country's peace, security, and stability. It is a welcomed effort, but sanctions imposed by the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control should go beyond allies and associates of the warring parties and be directly imposed on the generals. The protraction of the conflict and early indicators of a full-blown civil war to come necessitate a stronger action-oriented response from the United States in 2024. Yielding the stick through the use of targeted sanctions is the leverage needed for the warring parties to engage in good faith in Jeddah.

African Union Agenda 2063: What's Next for Food and Nutrition Security in the Context of Current Global Crises

Dr. Florence Odiwuor

The Africa Union's (AU) [Agenda 2063](#) is a 50-year plan for delivering economic growth and positive development outcomes. It aspires to make Africa prosperous by reducing poverty, inequality, hunger, producing healthy well-nourished citizens and increasing food production. Some say the plan's [implementation](#) has commenced and continues to progress tremendously at all program levels. However, there are still numerous challenges, setbacks and financial constraints that remain a significant obstacle in its domestication and popularization. The climate crisis has also rapidly accelerated humanitarian emergencies by exacerbating droughts, floods, and other natural disasters.

Conflict and economic turmoil have pushed Africa's population into a more profound crisis. According to the World Economic Forum, energy supply, cost-of-living, rising inflation and food supply crises were among the top [global risks](#) for 2023. In addition, the lagged effect of price spike in fertilizer, escalating food production, debt crisis, and hiked international food and fuel prices, have all driven food insecurity globally. These risks were [amplified](#) by an economic overhang of COVID-19, wars in Europe and the Middle East, and sanctions that impact a globally integrated economy. Together, these are [converging](#) to shape a unique, uncertain, and turbulent 2020s, especially for Africa. They could further lead the current cost-of-living crisis into a catastrophic scenario of hunger and distress for millions in Africa. In 2023, record levels of acute food insecurity persisted, with 48 countries and 238 million people facing [high levels](#) of acute food insecurity—10% more than last year.

[Eradicating hunger](#) by 2030 is becoming a mirage, given the complexities of overcoming the global crises while ensuring food availability. Examining conflicting food lenses that address food insufficiencies on the way to Agenda 2063 is necessary to [address](#) the food security crisis. The current food security paradigm requires a well-planned strategy for [realigning](#) food systems toward responses to escalating vulnerabilities. To achieve Agenda 2063, there must be a shift in Africa's food transition through a re-imagination of principles that enhance resilience to climate-related events, a commitment to diligently identifying solutions, and taking proactive stances in spearheading approaches that inform and mobilize resources. With the support of development partners and the United States, African governments should collaborate decisively and with a long-term lens to shape a pathway to a more inclusive and stable Africa. They must adopt policy coherence and practices to maximize Africa's vast food potential and close its widening food gap with the rest of the world.


The African Union in the G20: Pragmatic US-Africa Collaboration in a World Evolving Towards Multipolarity

Dr. Mziwandile Ndlovu and Dr. Alex Jiya

After years of constant advocacy, the African Union (AU) was [formally admitted as a permanent member](#) of the G20 (now G21) in an unprecedented move hailed as bestowing on Africa a voice that the continent has never had in global affairs. Previously an observer international organization of the G20, the AU is now expected to amplify its grievances, such as Africa's disenfranchisement from the global financial infrastructure and the disproportionate ill effects of climate change on the continent. The ability of the AU to do this and the extent to which it succeeds will impact the evolution of US-Africa relations. It is important to note that President Biden had made the call for Africa's inclusion alongside other world leaders before it materialized.

The presence of the AU on platforms such as the G21 will deepen difficult conversations, such as calls for reparations for the slave trade and colonization, and the development and implementation of more realistic strategies to address the root causes of poverty in the Global South. The AU and its Caribbean counterpart are already at the center of a growing global movement demanding compensation for slavery and colonization. Indeed, Ghanaian President Nana Akufo Addo made these demands at the [Accra Reparations Conference](#) in November 2023. The call is gaining momentum, and it is expected that US policymakers at various levels will begin to participate sincerely in the dialogue as a means to stem increasing anti-Western sentiment in Africa.

The latitude that the AU will be afforded to amplify its issues at the G21 will be supported by Africa's involvement in recent major geopolitical shifts, such as the [expanded BRICS bloc](#) in which Egypt and Ethiopia have joined South Africa as African representatives. These major geopolitical shifts in the Global South have been further compounded by increased accusations by Western powers that many African governments support Russia in the Ukraine-Russia war. The AU's presence in the G-21, thus, presents the United States with an opportunity to thaw tensions with Africa through more sustained mutually respectful engagements. The United States must mend relations with Africans, championing the Global South's cause worldwide.



Cross-cutting Focus on Women, Youth, and Technology

Are the AI Robots Coming for Africa? The US-Africa Relationship and the Role of AI

Mr. Christopher Maloney

It is no secret that artificial intelligence (AI) offers tremendous benefits and risks to the world—Africa is no exception. By 2030, [AI will contribute nearly \\$16 trillion to global GDP](#). However, maximizing AI's benefits to Africa—and minimizing the risks—means taking great care with the data that goes into AI and how that data is governed. 2023 highlighted this time and again.

A particular challenge to Africa is that much of the data that goes into training AI technologies does not come from Africa. This can lead to bizarre and even racist results—such as “[South Sudan Barbie](#)” carrying an AK-47 in June 2023—to much more dangerous outcomes, such as the failure of AI facial recognition technologies to accurately distinguish African faces in cases ranging from [asylum-seeking](#) (February 2023) to [law enforcement](#) (May 2023).

And even when the data is African, weak governance of it risks creating yet another example of extractive (neo)-colonialism. The August 2023 case of [Worldcoin in Kenya](#) illustrates this well—whereby thousands of primarily impoverished Kenyans queued up to have their irises scanned to train Worldcoin's “proof of personhood” AI in exchange for \$50. With little clarity on how that data would be protected or used—and few viable recourse options if something went wrong in the future—the Kenyan government [shut the operation down](#) after [pressure from civil society](#) and a [parliamentary inquiry](#).

With much of the AI sector based within the country, the United States has a significant role in ensuring AI's benefits to Africa and minimizing its risks. President Biden's October 2023 [Executive Order](#) (EO) on “Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy AI” makes this clear—from international standard-setting to ensuring US AI technologies meet rigorous safety, security, and privacy provisions. Successful implementation of this EO is therefore critical for the United States and Africa. With major global AI initiatives happening in parallel—such as the African Union's [draft continental AI strategy](#)—now is the time to ensure that “safe, secure, and trustworthy AI” is for everyone.

Mr. Christopher Maloney leads a grant-making portfolio at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation focused on data revolution and data governance issues in Africa. He was a Wilson Center Global fellow in Washington, DC.

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Africa's Youth: Struggling to Find Their Voice and Place

Dr. Joseph Asunka

The African Union Commission continued the celebration of [Africa Youth Month](#) in November, reinforcing the critical role of young people in the continent's development agenda. The month-long celebration aimed to build momentum for empowering young people and enhancing their participation in national and continental peace and development. This initiative aligns with the African Youth Charter, which highlights the importance of young people to Africa's socio-economic and political advancement and explicitly calls on member states to protect the rights of youth and to guarantee equal opportunities for young women and men to play meaningful roles on decision-making platforms at local, national, regional, and continental levels of governance.

With a [median age near 20](#), Africa's potential for accelerated growth through its youthful workforce is high. Turning this potential into real value requires implementing policies and programs that facilitate youth engagement in governance, civic and political life, and development. Unfortunately, data from the latest Afrobarometer survey show that young Africans remain [grossly under-represented](#) in formal governance structures and political discourse—an essential voting bloc marginalized from decision-making processes.

Across the continent, addressing unemployment and sound management of the economy are top policy priorities that people—especially young people—want their governments to address. Although African youth are more educated than their elders, they are also more likely to be unemployed. It is little surprise that young Africans give their governments failing marks on job creation and economic management. Compared to older generations, they are less trustful of government institutions and officials and more likely to view them as corrupt.

While the Youth Charter and Youth Month emphasize youth engagement in civic and political life, Afrobarometer [data](#) shows they are less likely than their elders to vote, identify with a political party, and attend community meetings. Encouragingly, young Africans are about as strong as older cohorts in their support for democracy and their rejection of non-democratic alternatives, including military rule. But, they are more dissatisfied with the way democracy works within their countries.

Harnessing the skills and energies of Africa's youth to reap a demographic dividend, achieve accelerated growth, and secure democracy will require today's leaders and policy—at all levels—to empower and create greater opportunities for the youth.

One Giant Step for Womankind: Sierra Leone's Historic Gender-Equality Law

Ms. Milkee Bekele

Sierra Leone President Julius Maado Bio, in January 2023, [signed](#) into law the historic Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWA). This law confronts Sierra Leone's deep-rooted gender-based discrimination, which marginalizes women who account for 52% of Sierra Leone's population and who hold only [27%](#) of formal jobs. The law stipulates that women will make up at least [30% of parliament](#) and all other facets of government, including local councils, diplomatic corps, and the civil service.

GEWA predeceased the June 2023 elections in Sierra Leone, which prior to GEWA, only [4% of parliament positions](#) were held by women. Countries like Argentina, that have a gender quota, have seen an [increase of women electoral candidates](#). In Sierra Leone, the gender quota will be crucial in electing women into senior positions of government, however [it is unlikely](#) that the 30% benchmark will be met as women candidates are continuously placed on the bottom of the candidate list. On the other hand, in the private sector, the law stipulates women must hold [30% of the jobs](#) in companies with 25 or more people and that maternity leave be extended from 12 to 14 weeks. In its implementation, employers who do not adhere to the new gender quotas can be fined [\\$2,500](#) and sentenced to prison. Additionally, employers will be held [legally responsible](#) for gender-based work discrimination, such as separation from employment during a woman's pregnancy and inadequate commercial supporting opportunities for women.

GEWA is crucial for Sierra Leone's fight against the varying forms of [gender inequality](#) that marginalize women economically, politically, and socially. Following the end of the Sierra Leone Civil War in 2002—where women were subjected to systemic gender marginalization—GEWA continues the country's ongoing rebuilding process. Longstanding harmful practices of [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#) continue to violate the rights of many Sierra Leonian women, and it is predicted that an estimated [68 million girls](#) will be at risk of mutilation by 2030. [Barriers to workforce participation](#) and [low education retention](#) rates reinforce harmful social roles that reaffirm gender-based household responsibilities.

The catalyzation of Sierra Leonian women in governance decision-making through GEWA begins a process of reconstruction and development that could encourage neighboring countries to follow suit. Since GEWA's implementation, [41 women](#) have been historically sworn into parliament, but continue to face discrimination due to a manipulation of votes into parliament. Additionally, Sierra Leone's party-based election system does not give individual women the opportunity to fill seats in parliament while parties are specifically placed in [lower party rankings](#). Parliament leadership is also a crucial pang of GEWA, as only [one of the 14](#) parliamentary chiefs is a woman.

Ms. Manty Tarawalli, Gender and Children's Affairs Minister, says that GEWA is about "[mainstreaming gender, and having gender units within all ministries, departments and agencies, and gender-responsive budgeting](#)." Moving forward following the June elections, while women faced difficulty is fully increasing their representation in parliament, they also [continue facing difficulties](#) accessing finance, struggle passing laws in a [hung parliament](#), sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), and land rights. Though GEWA was a crucial step for Sierra Leone to take, it must also be met with a horizontal structural approach that tackles the multidimensional reality of gender inequality in Sierra Leone.

Across the Spectrum: An Overview of Current Continental Contestations of Queer Rights

Mr. Daniel Maweu Lee

Across Africa, queer rights vary widely, spanning from constitutional protections to [severe anti-queer laws and hostile environments](#). Despite an extensive [pre-colonial legacy](#) across Africa of queer [identity and acceptance](#), [colonial-era laws](#) and [religious entrenchment](#) shape the continent's current stance on gender and sexual minority (GSM) rights. Often, anti-queer African leaders will cloak themselves in the language of combatting Western influence.

This year, rapprochements between Africa and [Putin](#) and [Raisi](#) emphasized the [anti-queer/anti-Western nexus](#). Recent years have [witnessed](#) both progress and setbacks regarding GSM rights. Grassroots movements clash with institutional power and inculcated norms as they employ civil society and courts to bring about change.

In February 2023, Kenya's high court ruling in [Eric Gitari vs NGOCB](#) allowed LGBTQI+ groups to register as organizations but avoided broader acceptance. Even this narrow ruling from a [decidedly](#) not [queer-friendly](#) body led to significant [backlash](#) across Kenya, including [mass protests](#), the [introduction](#) of harsher anti-queer legislation, and upticks in discrimination and violence.

Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill, passed in May, [intensified decades-long anti-queer aggression](#), leading to [arrests, evictions, and violence](#) against queer people while also creating a [chilling effect](#) on GSM rights advocacy groups.

In October, on the other hand, the culmination of an ongoing shift in the Mauritian legal landscape occurred. In [Abdool Ridwan Firaas Ah Seek v. Mauritius](#), the high court both [decriminalized](#) same-sex relations and integrated queer people into the enshrined constitutional protections.

As some African courts lean towards GSM protection, the reliance on Western arguments—and thus the dishonest attacks on queer movements—diminishes. Ah Seek and Gitari both cite African case law alongside international pacts. However, courts and constitutions across Africa will not provide sufficient nor permanent protections for queer rights. The consequences are seen in the constitutional (re)definition of marriage to only include heterosexual relationships in [Mali](#) and continued structural and physical violence against GSM communities across Africa, [even in ostensibly](#) GSM-protecting [countries](#). Despite setbacks in some places, [Afrobarometer](#) data suggests growing tolerance in more countries towards proximity to gender and sexual minorities, especially where queerness is legal—with 51% of respondents expressing positive or neutral feelings towards having queer neighbors in such countries as compared to only 14% in countries where queerness is criminalized.

Rather than [promoting](#) universalist pressures towards a liberal philosophy of equality—which plays into the rhetoric of those dovetailing anti-Western and anti-queer messaging—Western practitioners should focus on supporting local [indigenous voices](#) and [movements](#) towards GSM liberation.

Strides and Struggles: Driving Gender Equality in Sub-Saharan Africa

Ms. Stephanie Lizzo

In 2023, Sub-Saharan Africa reached a critical juncture in its quest for gender equality, with some countries achieving great success. For instance, Sierra Leone enacted [groundbreaking legislation](#) strengthening women's rights, while South Sudan finally [ratified the Maputo Protocol](#). Another example was Rwanda, which remained among the best global performers regarding women's political participation and hosted the prestigious "[Women Deliver](#)" conference on gender equality.

However, progress across the continent remained uneven. The [Global Gender Gap Report 2023](#) ranked Sub-Saharan Africa sixth out of eight regions worldwide, with a gender parity of 68.2%. This reveals a substantial gap with the global leaders, Europe (76.3%) and North America (75%). Moreover, it represents a mere two-percentage-point increase for the region over the past decade.

While gender inequality is profoundly entrenched and an incredibly complicated challenge, the United States remains well-positioned to drive progress in African countries. Such an objective seamlessly dovetails with the new US [2023 Women, Peace, and Security Strategy and National Action Plan](#). Under this strategy, the United States has expanded its support, endorsing efforts such as the Supporting Her Empowerment: Women's Inclusion for New Security ([SHE WINS](#)) program and the Advancing Women's and Girls' Civic and Political Leadership initiative.

However, generating and sustaining momentum around the strategy and these initiatives demands sufficient, consistent funding for gender equality policies and programs. Despite its recent efforts, the United States lags behind its peers in committing resources, allocating only [18% of its official development assistance](#) (ODA) to gender equality and women's empowerment—versus an average of 44% from [Development Assistance Committee](#) members. Closing the annual \$360 billion gender equality financing gap necessitates substantially increasing ODA dedicated to this aim.

With additional allocations of resources, the United States could direct more support toward women's civil society organizations and networks, as these groups aim to empower women by securing equal opportunities and enshrining women's rights and perspectives in policies. Currently, the United States provides only minimal aid (several hundred thousand dollars), compared to countries like Canada and Norway, whose annual funding for these entities reaches tens of millions of dollars annually.

With the 2030 [deadline](#) for gender equality looming and Sub-Saharan Africa's unequal progress, the United States must lead by example and invest meaningfully in shaping a more equal future for all.

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Exploring the Policy Options for Platform-Enabled Gig Work in Africa

Ms. Margaret Wamuyu Muthee

Like other parts of the world, Africa has experienced unprecedented growth in platform-enabled gig work. A phenomenon viewed as disruptive, it has radically shaped and re-shaped societal and labor relationships, paving new ways for the production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services. The low entry barrier to global labor markets and flexibility make platform-enabled gig work attractive to women and youth who have faced obstacles to standard employment.

On the other hand, digital labor platforms have been [associated](#) with algorithmic surveillance and poor working conditions characterizing on-demand work, such as employment uncertainty, irregular earnings, unstable working hours, fewer social rights, and diminished voice for workers. Thus, gig work platforms are viewed as the new arena for the exploitation of disadvantaged groups. They expand informalized precarious work by workers dispersed worldwide with minimal opportunities to unionize and bargain collectively for improved working conditions, wages, and other benefits.

Driven by the need to support digital labor, governments across Africa have [continued](#) investing in digital infrastructure and skills to increase opportunities for unemployed youth. Nonetheless, the policy and regulatory regime for digital labor has not been adequately addressed, as gig workers operate outside the existing labor and social security benefits.

Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to create a single market for goods and services that facilitates the movement of persons has been significantly boosted, with 54 African Union member states [signing](#) the agreement thus far. Accordingly, the policy and regulatory lacunae of digital labor can be effectively addressed under AfCFTA, recognizing the reduced physical movement of persons accorded by digital labor platforms. It is vital to create a policy and regulatory regime to foster labor and social security, reduce precarity, and avoid exploitation of workers. The United States remains a crucial partner in realizing this agenda since many platform-based companies originate there. Creating a conducive environment for gig workers in Africa will bring mutual benefits in increased productivity and incomes for a secure, prosperous, and stable world.

Bridging the Gap: Africa's Education System and Its Impact on Tomorrow's Workforce

Dr. Azeb Tadesse

One insufficiently reported development in Africa has been the alarmingly low pass rates in school-leaving exams. In 2023, [among the 39 million students taking exams, one in four failed](#), with a country-by-country survey revealing even grimmer outcomes.¹ Ignoring this development would be a significant oversight because of the vital link between educational outcomes and [socio-economic](#) and [political](#) dynamics. Research shows the benefits of population growth stem not just from an increase in the working-age population but from an [increase in the number of educated individuals](#). With Africa accounting for an estimated [30 million jobs requiring digital skills by 2030](#), today's education crisis constitutes a systemic failure with potentially disastrous consequences.

An underperforming education system stalls economic growth and fails to prepare youth for meaningful futures, leading to high unemployment and [societal dissatisfaction](#). This frustration often results in risky migration, radicalization, and political unrest. Recent events in Africa underscore the link between education and socio-political changes. The continent's latest coups go beyond politics, fueled by young people [desperate for personal change](#). The youth unemployment crisis is twofold: a [lack of necessary skills](#) and [substantial skills mismatch](#), reflecting a gap in human capital alongside a scarcity of job opportunities. This combination of factors essentially excludes millions of young people from both [formal employment and entrepreneurship](#), resulting in significant [economic impacts](#) ranging from stalled growth to erosion of any progress made to date. These compounding challenges highlight the crucial need for a robust and effective [education and skills training system to harness the potential of this demographic shift](#).

The [Biden Administration's Africa strategy](#) states: "Africa is critical to advancing [US] global priorities" and "will shape the future." This paradigm shift is particularly needed in education, where US engagement must go [beyond literacy and numeracy](#) to embrace Africa's dynamic educational and training landscape. The United States must [catch up](#) and comprehensively engage beyond traditional formal education at all levels. A key component is an emphasis on fostering a digital transformation agenda that includes training, infrastructure development, and entrepreneurship assistance. This approach recognizes Africa's unique position as the [only region with a growing workforce](#) by mid-century. It emphasizes the importance of accessible, relevant, and comprehensive education in fostering open societies that deliver democratic and security dividends.

1. In 2020, Kenya's national school leaving exam results showed 55% of students scored D+ or lower, with 69% achieving C- or below (Ng'ethe, 2021). Ethiopia reported more concerning outcomes in 2023 and 2024, with an alarming 100% failure rate in over 43% of schools in 2023 and more than 96% of students failing in 2024 (Molla & Tiruneh, 2023; Tamrat, 2023). [Malawi](#) demonstrated slightly better yet still concerning results, with a 54% pass rate, which drops to 48% among female students, while some schools recorded a zero-pass rate.

Saving African Women's Lives

Ambassador (ret.) Bisa Williams

"Women are not dying because of diseases we cannot treat. They are dying because societies have yet to make the decision that their lives are worth saving."

-[Professor Mahmoud Fathallah](#),

Former President of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO)

In February 2023, Niger became the first country—in the world—to have successfully [reduced](#) death by Postpartum Hemorrhage (PPH) by a whopping 70% over 72 months. PPH is defined as a blood loss of 500 ml or more within 24 hours after birth, and according to the [World Bank](#), PPH is the leading cause of maternal mortality in low-income countries. How did Niger do it? Its Health Ministry was able to save thousands of women's lives by applying a prevention and three-step treatment strategy using (a) misoprostol, followed, if needed, by (b) an intrauterine condom tamponade, and (c) a non-inflatable anti-shock garment, with a specific set of organizational public health tools. Applying this methodology as an ensemble rather than optional, à la carte treatments saved women's lives.

Careful monitoring and synchronizing proved to be the proverbial Rosetta Stone, revealing how to prevent death from postpartum bleeding. And the nationwide, consistent application of the intervention produced triumphant results. The Nigerien strategy can be—and should be—replicated elsewhere to yield the same promising results. Applied robustly in Africa's 33 Least Developed Poor Countries alone, an estimated 1.6 million women might benefit each year with their families made more secure.

The Nigerien strategy can be implemented at minimal expense in countries with high maternal mortality rates. It's simple and affordable and strengthens the coordination between the highly trained, usually capital-based medical professionals and the village confidants and rural health focal points who are often the first responders to women living in remote areas experiencing distress during delivery.

The proven effectiveness of this inexpensive, low-tech methodology should incentivize the US Government to re-calibrate how it directs bilateral—and multilateral—resources to support maternal health in Africa. Widespread implementation of the Nigerien strategy would also drastically reduce the incidence of obstetric fistula, which afflicts women in Africa at rates higher than anywhere else in the world.

Ambassador (ret.) Bisa Williams chairs the Board of Directors of Health & Development, International (HDI.org). She is a Senior Fellow at Yale Jackson School of Global Affairs and is a former career diplomat and Ambassador to Niger for the US Government.

The statements made and views expressed are solely those of the author and do not represent the views or official positions of the Wilson Center.

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The Africa Program focuses on four core issues:

- i. Good governance and leadership
- ii. Conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and security
- iii. Trade, investment, and sustainable development
- iv. Africa's evolving role in the global arena





The Program maintains a cross-cutting focus on the roles of women, youth, and technology, which are critical to Africa's future: to supporting good governance, to securing peace, to mitigating poverty, and to assuring sustainable development.







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