

ZIMBABWE—POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DISARRAY

By George F. Ward

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Ambassador (ret.) George F. Ward is editor of Africa Watch and a Research Staff Member at the Institute for Defense Analyses.



In this Friday June, 2, 2017, photo, Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe and his wife Grace attend a youth rally in Marondera, about 100 km east of Harare. Zimbabwe's 93-year-old president is ditching the old for the young as he makes a pitch for a fresh five year term ahead of next year's election. (Source: AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi.)

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For the second year in a row South Sudan [canceled](#) its July 9 Independence Day celebrations in the midst of widespread conflict and a growing humanitarian disaster. The current fighting was sparked by a stand-off between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and former First Vice President Riek Machar in the capital, Juba, nearly a year ago. Since then, fighting has led more than 1 million South Sudanese to [flee](#) the country while an additional 1.9 million are [internally displaced](#). Although government forces hold more territory, neither side has been able to decisively rout the other on the battlefield, and diplomatic engagement has proven fruitless. With neither side able to claim a military victory and both rejecting a political settlement, the conflict will likely continue at great cost to South Sudan's citizens. [more...](#)



South Sudan's President Salva Kiir attends a ceremony marking the 34th anniversary of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in the capital Juba, South Sudan, Thursday, May 18, 2017. South Sudan's civil war has killed tens of thousands and driven out more than 1.5 million people in the past three years, creating the world's largest refugee crisis. (Source: AP Photo/Bullen Chol.)

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The ZANU-PF: Mugabe in Control Even in Absentia

On July 7, 2017, President Mugabe, having canceled a planned appearance at a political rally, [flew](#) to Singapore for medical treatment. This absence was the latest in a string of trips that have taken Mugabe out of the country for close to three months this year. Although the government characterized the trip's purpose as a routine medical checkup, rumors of further deterioration in his health are rife, fueled by reports that Mugabe seemed to be physically unsteady and to be dozing off during official functions. One [report](#) quoted an unnamed Zimbabwean government official reportedly close to the Mugabe family as saying, "Because of old age and associated complications, there has been a noticeable decline in his cognitive abilities, including thinking, memory, and speech skills." The same report depicted faction leaders within the ZANU-PF as scrambling for advantage in a post-Mugabe future.

One of the reasons that Robert Mugabe has managed to remain in power for 37 years is that he has maneuvered adroitly to prevent putative successors from gaining too much power. Thus, former Vice President Joice Mujuru, one of ZANU-PF's most popular figures, was [purged](#) from the party and government in December 2014. Emmerson Mnangagwa was installed as vice president in her place. Before long, [two strong factions](#) emerged within the ruling party. "Team Lacoste" coalesced around Mnangagwa, whose nickname is "Ngwenya" (Crocodile), also the symbol of the Lacoste fashion brand. A group of relatively younger party notables formed the "Generation 40," or "G-40," group, which claimed first lady Grace Mugabe as an adherent.

Team Lacoste benefited from the support of most of Zimbabwe's powerful security-service officials and seemed to be ascendant. The G-40 fought back, with Grace Mugabe making no secret of her ambitions. The party infighting was chronicled by Martin Fletcher in an [interesting article](#) in the *New Statesman's* Christmas 2016 issue. Team Lacoste counterattacked through its alliance with the war veterans' association, which in unprecedented fashion attacked not only the G-40 but also President Mugabe. By early 2017, both factions were weakened: Mnangagwa's star had fallen, Grace Mugabe had abruptly ceased her whirlwind barnstorming tour of the country, and Saviour Kasukuwere, the party's "political commissar" and a leading figure in the G-40 faction, was under investigation for alleged political offenses. [Street brawls](#) between the party factions broke out in Harare on April 15. Mugabe's political magic had worked again. His potential rivals were weakened, and his status as the ZANU-PF candidate in the 2018 elections was solidified.

The Political Opposition Draws Together

As foreshadowed in the [March 23, 2017](#), *Africa Watch*, Zimbabwe's two main opposition parties, the National People's Front led by former Vice President Joice Mujuru and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by long-time (and ailing) leader Morgan Tsvangirai, signed a [coalition pact](#) on April 19. Other, smaller opposition parties joined the coalition, called the National Election Reform Agenda (NERA), which was immediately dismissed by President Mugabe



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as inconsequential. Whether or not NERA is a threat to the ZANU-PF's rule, Zimbabwe's security services were taking no chances, [deploying](#) riot police and water cannons on the streets of Harare ahead of a planned NERA demonstration.

The formation of NERA was hailed by some as a momentous development, but the coalition faces sizable [challenges](#). Not the least is that Mujuru was for a decade the deputy in a party and government that authorized the violent repression of the MDC. Tsvangirai was himself threatened, arrested, and assaulted by the government. Second, the coalition at this point consists only of the piece of paper that Mujuru and Tsvangirai signed, which pledges to campaign in the 2018 elections as a united front. There is no coalition structure. Third, it is far from clear who will lead the coalition. Will each party field candidates, or will single candidates represent the alliance? Would Mujuru or Tsvangirai become president in the event of electoral success? There are already reports that the coalition may [break up](#) over this issue. On the positive side, both Mujuru and Tsvangirai are seasoned leaders with significant followings. The MDC's strengths in urban areas complements Mujuru's strong rural base. If the coalition overcomes the obstacles cited above and becomes an operational alliance, it could be a formidable force in the election.

Continued Economic Decline

Zimbabwe's economy remains in ruins. The once prosperous agricultural sector has never recovered from the expropriation in the early years of the century of the lands held by white commercial farmers. The hyperinflation that took hold in the same period progressively destroyed most of Zimbabwe's industrial sector. Lack of investment resources has prevented any recovery. Shortages of U.S. dollars, the country's de facto currency, led to the introduction of so-called bond notes in dollar denominations. Earlier this year, real dollars commanded a [premium](#) of up to 30 percent over bond notes.

Zimbabwe's central bankers have long hoped for a lifeline from the international financial institutions, which cut off lending when Zimbabwe was unable to pay its debts. To that end, the government of Zimbabwe recently conducted consultations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Although the IMF's [statement](#) of July 7 on the conclusion of those consultations noted some progress, its overall tone was negative. On the positive side, the statement noted that exceptional rains promised some recovery in the agricultural sector and welcomed Zimbabwe's clearance of its arrears with the IMF, and it cited progress in improving the business climate. But the statement also stressed that debt arrears, improvident fiscal policies, and the crowding out of private sector investment by government expenditures remained fundamental problems.

Conclusion

Zimbabwe is a country and a society under continual threat of instability. At least three potential triggers of violence are discernible in the circumstances described in this article. Perhaps the [most likely](#) risk is the possibility that factional disputes within the ZANU-PF could spin out of control. Another trigger could be the emergence of the NERA coalition as an effective alliance. Were that to occur, at least some in the ZANU-PF would be tempted to move forcefully against the opposition. Third, greater loss of confidence in the bond notes could lead to significant inflation, which could trigger popular protests and a renewed wave of emigration from the country. Finally, the greatest risk of all might be the sudden death of 93-year-old Robert Mugabe, who, by preserving personal power at all costs, has diminished the likelihood of an eventual smooth transition of power.

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South Sudan's President Salva Kiir attends a ceremony marking the 34th anniversary of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in the capital Juba, South Sudan, Thursday, May 18, 2017. South Sudan's civil war has killed tens of thousands and driven out more than 1.5 million people in the past three years, creating the world's largest refugee crisis. (Source: AP Photo/Bullen Chot.)

Political Solutions in Short Supply

Although it is widely understood that a political solution is needed to stop ongoing fighting, previous efforts to broker an agreement have fallen flat. As [Africa Watch](#) noted, in 2015 both Kiir and Machar agreed to a power-sharing agreement, called the Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan ([ARCSS](#)), brokered by the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

ARCSS fell apart in July 2016 when fighting between forces loyal to Kiir and Machar forced Machar to flee Juba. Machar was ultimately flown to South Africa, where he is [allegedly](#) under house arrest. In his absence, he was replaced as First Vice President by Taban Deng Gai, a Kiir loyalist. Although Deng Gai's appointment was recognized by the international community, opposition forces outside Juba refused to recognize him and have mobilized against South Sudanese government forces.

The international community's attempts to broker peace have so far proved unsuccessful. In December 2016 the UN Security Council [rejected](#) a resolution calling for an embargo on arms sales and sanctions against South Sudanese officials. Regional attempts to launch a recommitment to ARCSS have also failed. In June 2017, IGAD hosted a [summit](#) to revitalize the agreement, but Salva Kiir declined to attend. On July 7, a South Sudanese government spokesman [announced](#) that the government would not renegotiate ARCSS.

Continued Conflict Has No Clear Victors

The Government of South Sudan's reluctance to negotiate may be partly based on its perception that it is close to defeating opposition forces. On July 7, the United Nations announced it was evacuating humanitarian workers from [Pagak](#), an opposition stronghold in Upper Nile region, as government forces reportedly advanced on the area. In Equatoria, a south-central region that has seen significant fighting, [reporters](#) find that opposition forces are struggling to hold territory and face a shortage of weapons as Sudan has cut off its traditional support in response to an [agreement](#) with the United States.

In addition to overseeing military advances against the opposition forces, Kiir has moved to consolidate power within the government. On May 8, he announced he had [fired](#) Chief of the General Staff Paul Malong following rumors Malong was plotting a coup. Malong is a critical power broker with control of a private militia, called [Mathiang Anyoor](#), which has

allegedly been deployed alongside government forces and is accused of widespread ethnic targeting. By firing Malong, Kiir emphasized his personal power independent of Malong's influence. Kiir has further sought to portray himself as South Sudan's legitimate leader by instituting a [National Dialogue](#) to oversee a government-led peace process.

Despite these public displays of strength, Kiir's position remains fragile. The military's use of [collective punishment](#) against civilians has turned many against the government and created an effective recruitment tool for opposition forces. In addition, the country's ruined economy has direct implications for its military effort—the government is reportedly struggling to pay military [salaries](#), and some soldiers complain they have not been paid for months. Historically, South Sudanese power brokers have relied on oil rents to [pay](#) for loyalty from a variety of militia leaders folded into the military. With oil production halted since 2012, the government's lack of revenue gives it few levers for promoting military loyalty.

Ethnic Conflict an Increasing Concern

As the conflict drags on, there are concerning signs that it is entrenching ethnic divides within South Sudan's population. As [commentators](#) have noted, in the absence of financial resources to buy military loyalty, South Sudanese elites have turned to ethnic mobilization to recruit and motivate militias. As armed groups target civilians along ethnic lines, these divides affect the civilian population.

Interviews with South Sudanese [refugees](#) suggest that many blame other ethnic groups, rather than politicians or specific militias, for their suffering. Within South Sudan ethnic rhetoric continues. In [June 2017](#) a group calling itself the "Bor Community Youth Association" issued a letter demanding that Equatorian aid workers be removed from Jonglei state or risk violence.

Conclusion

As conflict continues, a political solution looks increasingly difficult to achieve. With no armed group able to secure a decisive military victory, there are few external inducements to force political leaders to the negotiating table. Further, as the conflict continues to affect civilians along ethnic lines, rebuilding the civic trust needed to reestablish a legitimate government has become increasingly difficult. Despite the humanitarian and economic costs of continued warfare, the likelihood of South Sudan securing a lasting peace appears distant.

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CAMEROON'S AGING PRESIDENT EXPECTED TO RUN AGAIN

By Richard J. Pera

With more than a year remaining before presidential elections in Cameroon, 84-year-old President Paul Biya has not revealed whether he will stand for an unprecedented seventh term. While he has not announced his candidacy, statements and actions suggest he is preparing to run, and [observers predict](#) he will do so. More than 10 other candidates have announced their intention to seek the presidency. Who is Paul Biya and how is he posturing for reelection next year? Who are the opposition candidates so far, and what key election issues are emerging? [more...](#)

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Cameroon's President Paul Biya addresses the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly, at U.N. headquarters, Thursday, Sept. 22, 2016. (AP Photo/Richard Drew)

TANZANIA CONTINUES SLIDE TOWARD AUTHORITARIANISM

By Dr. Alexander Noyes

On July 20, 2017, Tanzanian police [arrested](#) Tundu Lissu, a leading opposition figure. Days earlier Lissu had called President John Magufuli a "dictator." The government has provided no justification for the arrest but [said](#): "the government will not accept that someone, or a group of people, abuse the freedom of expression." Lissu's arrest is the latest in a series of recent developments demonstrating that Magufuli of the ruling CCM [Chama Cha Mapinduzi—Party of the Revolution], who won elections in 2015 on a platform of anti-corruption, has been pushing Tanzania in an increasingly authoritarian direction. [more...](#)

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In this Saturday, July 11, 2015 file photo, Tanzania's presidential candidate John Magufuli speaks at an internal party poll to decide the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party's presidential candidate, which they later chose him to be, in Dodoma, Tanzania. (AP Photo/Khalfan Said, File)

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Paul Biya – “Lion Man” of Cameroon

[Paul Biya was born](#) in the French mandate territory of Cameroon in 1933. Like French President Emmanuel Macron, Biya graduated from the elite Ecole nationale d'administration (National School of Administration – “[ENA](#)”) and the Institute d'études politiques (Institute of Political Studies – “[Sciences Po](#)”). A French speaker and Christian, Biya is a Francophile, and has visited France on many occasions; for example, in 2009 he was [criticized](#) for spending over \$50,000 a day during a vacation in Brittany.

Biya has dominated Cameroonian politics for more than four decades. He served as prime minister from 1975 to 1982 and as president ever since. He is the [longest serving](#), non-royal, national leader in the world and, at 84, he is the [third oldest African leader](#) (after Zimbabwe's Mugabe (93) and Tunisia's Essebsi (91)). Biya is [rumored](#) to have been treated in Switzerland in 2016 for cardiac problems and prostate cancer.

Biya is often called the “[Lion Man](#)” of Cameroon, after the country's football team (the Indomitable Lions). Not long after his initial election as president in 1984, he became increasingly authoritarian, exiled his predecessor, and purged rivals. Biya's Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) became the dominant political party and has held legislative majorities for decades. Biya was reelected overwhelmingly in 2004 and 2011, though [many alleged voter fraud](#). Biya nullified constitutional term limits to permit his candidacy in 2011. Other political parties in Cameroon are largely marginalized, and there is no provision for a presidential runoff, which limits the ability of opposition candidates to unseat the incumbent. Indeed, under Biya, Cameroon is a de facto one-party state: [Freedom House](#) assesses Cameroon as “Not Free,” and [Transparency International's](#) corruption perception index (from least to most) ranks Cameroon as 145 of 176 countries.

Biya Postures for the Next Election

[Opposition parties and the media claim](#) the government has used the security situation with Boko Haram along the Nigerian border as an excuse to limit free speech and assembly. For example, since December 2016, more than 100 people have been arrested, and four were killed when police opened fire during otherwise peaceful protests. In April 2016, security forces arrested an opposition leader for “[rebellion, inciting insurrection and inciting revolt](#).” The leader and her supporters were peacefully passing out flyers that encouraged Cameroonians to wear black to protest President Biya.

President Biya's recent statements and actions have been widely [interpreted as evidence](#) that he will stand for reelection. During a recent trip to Italy, for example, Biya praised his accomplishments as president, and [commented](#) that he wanted to continue as head of state. In April 2017, he appointed a new head of the nation's elections commission, known as ELECAM. So far in 2017, [ELECAM announced](#) that it had registered more than 100,000 new voters. Most of these voters are from Biya's Francophonic stronghold; very few originate from Anglophonic areas, where opposition to him is more prevalent.

Opposition Candidates

More than 10 candidates have announced that they will oppose Biya in 2018. Some have been inspired by “[the Macron effect](#)” – referring to the recent election of an independent candidate, Emmanuel Macron, in France. So far, [candidates include](#) a former government minister, actor, politician, professor, lawyer, businessman, agricultural engineer, television personality, academic, and diplomat. Two of them ran in 2011. Two reside in the United States.

While he has not announced his candidacy, John Fru Ndi, 76, head of the leading opposition party, the Social Democratic Front, remains popular, and [has suggested that he will run](#). Ndi narrowly lost to Biya in 1992, and finished a distant second in 2004 and 2011.

[As in the past two elections](#), there likely will be between 15 and 25 candidates. Since there is no second round, lesser candidates cancel each other out, and it remains to be seen whether opposition parties can rally around a single candidate, like Ndi, in 2018.

Election Issues

Economic and security issues are already on voters’ minds, including the fair distribution of wealth and the war against Boko Haram. The majority of election issues, however, are framed in the context of President Biya’s [allegedly corrupt government](#) which, observers claim, subverts election laws, denies basic democratic rights, and discriminates against large portions of the population:

- The timing of the election is an issue. At least one opposition party, the Movement for Rebirth of Cameroon, fears that the Biya government will “[use the security argument](#) linked to the war against Boko Haram . . . or the pretext of possible electoral reform, to manipulate the electoral calendar so as to remain in power.”
- As in past elections, [electoral reform](#) continues to be a major concern. This includes issues like term limits, a two-round electoral system, independent observers at polling stations, decreasing the voting age from 21 to 18, equal access of all parties and candidates to media, and separation of ELECAM from political parties.
- Unrest in Anglophone areas ([English-speakers account for 17 percent](#) of the population) almost certainly will remain a major issue. Before independence in 1960, the United Kingdom-administered state of Southern Cameroons enjoyed considerable autonomy. Some Anglophones want autonomy reinstated, and others want to establish a new country – the so-called [Republic of Ambazonia](#). Many Anglophones reject the use of French in public schools, and resent that French legal standards have supplanted British common law. One [opposition leader commented](#): “We have problems with water, roads, and healthcare not being delivered.” As [Africa Watch reported](#), the government responded violently to recent strikes by thousands of English-speaking teachers and lawyers. Additionally, in response to the “[irresponsible use of social media](#),” the Biya government banned opposition groups and cut the internet in English-speaking areas for weeks, ruining some businesses.

Conclusion

Barring a serious medical issue, it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which Paul Biya does not hold on to power next October. He has demonstrated a willingness to use security forces to disrupt or attack the opposition, and likely will manipulate public information, including the internet, to help marginalize opponents. As the election approaches, renewed demonstrations in Anglophonic regions may be met with a forceful response. Also, having skirted constitutional laws before, Biya could do so again. Indeed, opposing Biya in Cameroon takes great personal courage. As opposition leader Edith Kah Wallah [explained](#): “Taking this stand in Cameroon will eventually get you water-hosed, jailed, or worse.”

As with Mugabe in Zimbabwe and [Bouteflika in Algeria](#), Biya has survived in part because he has blocked potential successors. When he eventually departs the scene, there is likely to be no clear succession plan, with potential consequences for national unity.

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On July 20, 2017, Tanzanian police [arrested](#) Tundu Lissu, a leading opposition figure. Days earlier Lissu had called President John Magufuli a “dictator.” The government has provided no justification for the arrest but [said](#): “the government will not accept that someone, or a group of people, abuse the freedom of expression.” Lissu’s arrest is the latest in a series of recent developments demonstrating that Magufuli of the ruling CCM [Chama Cha Mapinduzi—Party of the Revolution], who won elections in 2015 on a platform of anti-corruption, has been pushing Tanzania in an increasingly authoritarian direction.

Background

Tanzania is a [low-income](#) country located in East Africa with a [population](#) of 50 million people and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$47 billion. Although the country became a multi-party democracy in 1992, the ruling CCM party has remained in power since 1977, [making](#) it the longest-ruling party in sub-Saharan Africa. With a relatively peaceful recent history, the country enjoys a reputation as a stable country in an unstable region. In 2016, Tanzania was the eighth [fastest](#) growing economy in the world, with a GDP growth rate of 6.9 percent. Although Magufuli came to power on a platform of commitment to anti-corruption, his government has recently clamped down harshly on political dissent.

Recent Crackdown

After his election in 2015, Magufuli quickly won praise for his moves against corruption and his austere spending practices, as reported in the August 18, 2016 [edition](#) of *Africa Watch*. However, Magufuli has also had political opponents and critics arrested, restricted freedom of expression, and cracked down on newspapers that have criticized him. After his arrest, Lissu [charged](#) Magufuli with bringing about a “climate of fear which reigns everywhere” and of overseeing “a system based on favoritism, tribalism and regionalism.” In addition to Lissu’s arrest, in early July another member of the main opposition party, CHADEMA [Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo—Party for Democracy and Development], was arrested for merely [calling](#) the president “ill-mannered.” In March, police arrested a rapper for releasing a track that [asked](#): “Is there still freedom of expression in the country?”

Also in March, Magufuli [said](#): “I would like to tell media owners—be careful, watch it. If you think you have that kind of freedom, (it is) not to that extent.” These have not been idle threats, as the government has recently [suspended](#) a number of radio stations and newspapers for disseminating stories meant to cause “citizens to lose confidence in State organizations.” The government has also cracked down on Tanzania’s [gay](#) community, suspending a number of HIV programs, penalizing homosexuals, and [threatening](#) LGBT activists. In July 2016, Magufuli’s government went so far as to [ban](#) political rallies until the next election in 2020. After the ban was announced, Zitto Kabwe, an opposition Member of Parliament, [called](#) the move “a blatant violation of the constitution and the laws governing political parties” that has led to a “de facto one-party state in a country that has enjoyed multi-party politics for over 20 years.”

New Authoritarian Turn?

While Magufuli has taken Tanzania in an authoritarian direction (the country [slipped](#) in Freedom House’s most recent rankings), some commentators point out that the ruling party has long relied on force and other restrictive measures to remain in power. Michael Jennings, a scholar at the University of London, cites former Tanzanian presidents’ willingness to



In this Saturday, July 11, 2015 file photo, Tanzania's presidential candidate, John Magufuli speaks at an internal party poll to decide the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party's presidential candidate, which they later chose him to be, in Dodoma, Tanzania. (AP Photo/Khalfan Said, File)

violently suppress protests in 2011 and 2012. Jennings [concludes](#) that “Magufuli may look increasingly autocratic, but he is hardly alone and doesn’t actually represent such a shift in Tanzanian politics.”

Dan Paget, a doctoral candidate at Oxford University, [comes](#) to a similar conclusion, arguing that CCM’s and Tanzania’s slide toward authoritarian rule began prior to Magufuli’s election. Paget attributes the party’s “authoritarian turn” to the increasing electoral success of the opposition (the opposition candidate won 40 percent in the 2015 elections, the highest percentage ever). He [argues](#) that the “root cause of CCM’s new authoritarianism lies in the shifting balance between the governing party and the opposition, not the leadership of Magufuli himself.”

Conclusion

Tanzania’s recent slide toward authoritarianism is a troubling development for democracy in the East Africa region. One potential bright spot for the prospects for democracy in Tanzania is that CCM and Magufuli’s autocratic moves appear to be hurting their popularity: Magufuli’s approval rating [dropped](#) 25 percent over the past year. Although his current 71 percent approval rating may still appear high, Tanzania historically has very high ratings of their presidents. Indeed, Paget [argues](#) that “by Tanzanian standards, 71 percent is poor. In fact, it is the worst rate any Tanzanian president has ever received.” Therefore, political realities may eventually force Magufuli and CCM to revise strategies, especially as elections approach.

Dr. Alexander Noyes is an Adjunct Research Staff Member in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

PIRACY IN AFRICA—DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

By Dr. Ashley N. Bybee

Until [2011](#), the waters off the coast of the Horn of Africa (HOA) were considered to be some of the most dangerous in the world. Somali pirates not only posed a security concern, but also imposed significant [economic costs](#) on shipping companies through ransom payments, damages to ships and cargo, and increased insurance rates. In recent years, however, international efforts to rid the HOA of its pirates and increased vigilance by the commercial shipping industry have been [highly effective](#). In [2016](#), the Gulf of Guinea (GOG) overtook the HOA for the unenviable title of Africa's most dangerous waters. Can the same solutions that worked in the HOA work in the GOG? [more...](#)

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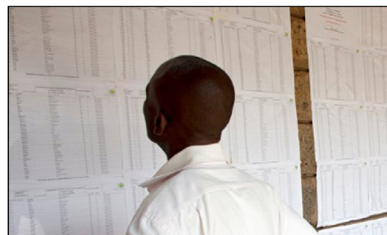


West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. (Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna, "Transnational Organized Crime in the West African Region" (New York: United Nations 2005, ii), <http://tinyurl.com/yb58tfm1>.)

RISKS OF ELECTION VIOLENCE IN AFRICA: 2017–2018

By Dr. Alexander Noyes

Twenty-four people have [died](#) in election-related violence in Kenya since the country went to the polls on August 8, 2017, according to the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights. The country's electoral commission [announced](#) last week that incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta had won reelection with 54 percent of the vote, but his challenger, Raila Odinga, refused to concede. Odinga contends that the election results were hacked. While conditions remain fluid, there are [fears](#) that the violence could escalate. Is the case of Kenya representative of patterns of election violence in Africa? [more...](#)



A Kenyan goes through the names of registered voters posted on the wall at a polling station, in Nairobi, Kenya, Friday, August 4, 2017. (Source: AP Photo/Sayyid Abdul Azim.)

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PIRACY IN AFRICA—DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

By Dr. Ashley N. Bybee

Until [2011](#), the waters off the coast of the Horn of Africa (HOA) were considered to be some of the most dangerous in the world. Somali pirates not only posed a security concern, but also imposed significant [economic costs](#) on shipping companies through ransom payments, damages to ships and cargo, and increased insurance rates. In recent years, however, international efforts to rid the HOA of its pirates and increased vigilance by the commercial shipping industry have been [highly effective](#). In [2016](#), the Gulf of Guinea (GOG) overtook the HOA for the unenviable title of Africa's most dangerous waters. Can the same solutions that worked in the HOA work in the GOG?



West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. (Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna, "Transnational Organized Crime in the West African Region" (New York: United Nations 2005, ii), <http://tinyurl.com/yb58tfml>.)

Background

Piracy (defined broadly as an attack by a nonstate actor occurring on the high seas) and armed robbery (an attack occurring within a country's territorial waters) have been major security threats for East and West Africa since the [2000s](#). In 2008, the number of attacks in Somali waters doubled, focusing the world's attention on a region that plays an important role in the international shipping industry. The attacks by pirates were primarily kidnappings for ransom of ships and crews. Meanwhile, oil theft in the GOG was relatively common—so often that much of it went [unreported](#). In 2016, however, kidnappings for ransom in the GOG [increased dramatically](#), representing a departure from the standard behavior of criminals in that region. The reason for this shift is most commonly attributed to the [declining price of oil](#) at that time, making oil theft a less lucrative option than kidnappings for ransom. More generally, the interaction of a number of economic, social, political, and technological factors has produced an environment in which criminal networks now have the means to pursue new options.

Piracy in the GOG—An Increasingly Sophisticated Pastime

Piracy in the GOG differs in some significant ways from piracy in the HOA. In the HOA, the foreign vessels transiting the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden are not targeted for their freight, but for their crews, whose nationalities are considered to be wealthy and whose governments are likely to pay ransoms. In the GOG, Nigeria's criminal networks have focused on oil theft, targeting vessels exporting crude or importing refined petroleum products, which they then sell on the black market. These incidents tend to occur within 12 miles of a country's shores, qualifying them legally as armed robbery rather than piracy, and warrant a different type of response due to legal definitions. Attacks in the GOG also tend to be [quicker](#) operations and more violent, since preserving the life of the crew is not the same priority as it is for kidnappings in the HOA.

Most significantly, the level of [sophistication](#) of criminal networks operating in the GOG is growing. The region, and Nigeria in particular, is home to a multitude of [criminal networks](#) that operate in many illicit sectors, ranging from trafficking (of drugs, arms, humans, minerals, counterfeit goods) to illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing. According to [David Luna](#), an expert in transnational organized crime, these maritime criminals take advantage of the presence of fishing vessels and other legitimate trades to provide a [cover](#) for their illicit activities. They employ modern technology, have honed their skills, improved their [intelligence](#), increased the degree of their collaboration, and enhanced their understanding of international maritime laws. The enabling power of endemic [corruption](#) in the region, manifested by [collusion](#) of some government officials with criminal networks, undermines law enforcement efforts to counter West African organized crime.

An International Solution to an International Problem

The legal differentiation between piracy on the high seas (as in Somalia) and armed robbery in national waters (as in the GOG) affects the type of response appropriate to each environment. Piracy is considered to be an international crime, warranting an [internationally sanctioned response](#) such as that coordinated among the EU, NATO, and several national navies in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean. Armed robbery, on the other hand, occurs within a state's territorial waters, where most countries [prohibit](#) the use of private armed guards. The use of armed guards and the presence of foreign navies, which proved to be an [effective deterrent](#) in the HOA, are therefore not options for the GOG. Instead, ship owners operating in the GOG must take responsibility for the security of their own vessels and therefore are focusing increasingly on physical security enhancements, such as [fortified engine rooms](#) where crew members can barricade themselves in the event of a hijacking.

The private sector appears to have identified a niche in this regard. The Swedish car manufacturer [Saab](#) has presented itself as a provider of technology for African countries to monitor and protect their maritime assets, producing vessel-to-vessel secure communication systems, vessel traffic management systems, vessel detection systems, and maritime surveillance aircraft. The ability of African maritime forces to effectively employ and maintain such potentially useful equipment remains to be seen.

A Regional Solution to a Regional Problem

The countries in the region should be commended for their commitment to the "Yaounde Code of Conduct," a political agreement for all countries affected by maritime insecurity in the GOG to work together strategically and operationally. This agreement provides the basis for enhanced intelligence sharing and joint counterpiracy operations. In [2016](#), ten navies in the region participated in some capacity in the successful recapture of a hijacked vessel 70 nautical miles south of Côte d'Ivoire. Although the operation was aided by the unplanned but fortunate presence of an American naval vessel, it represents the vision for regional maritime cooperation in the GOG.

Conclusion

Somali piracy, though on a downward trajectory, will continue to pose a threat as long as Somalia remains a [failed state](#) where poverty motivates individuals to resort to criminality. Likewise, the resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of West African organized crime networks, enabled by corruption and undeterred by weak law enforcement institutions, suggests that armed robbery in the GOG will be a persistent threat for the foreseeable future. In addition, unique developments in each region are certain to affect the situation. In the HOA, some analysts have noted that a resurgence in piracy may be [imminent](#) as a result of decreased foreign presence and the cost-cutting measures some ship owners have adopted recently that increase their vulnerability, such as sailing closer to the coast, at slower speeds and with fewer armed guards. In the GOG, the proliferation of illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing and the subsequent depletion of fish stocks have left many West African [fishermen](#) frustrated and [vulnerable to recruitment](#) by criminal gangs.

While enhanced physical security measures may protect the lives of crew members, addressing oil-related corruption, strengthening national law enforcement and naval institutions, and increasing the capabilities and cooperation of navies in the region would provide the best means for deterring criminality in the GOG and punishing it when it occurs.

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RISKS OF ELECTION VIOLENCE IN AFRICA: 2017–2018

By Dr. Alexander Noyes

Twenty-four people have [died](#) in election-related violence in Kenya since the country went to the polls on August 8, 2017, according to the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights. The country's electoral commission [announced](#) last week that incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta had won reelection with 54 percent of the vote, but his challenger, Raila Odinga, refused to concede. Odinga contends that the election results were hacked. While conditions remain fluid, there are [fears](#) that the violence could escalate. Is the case of Kenya representative of patterns of election violence in Africa?



A Kenyan goes through the names of registered voters posted on the wall at a polling station, in Nairobi, Kenya, Friday, August 4, 2017. (Source: AP Photo/Sayyid Abdul Azim.)

Overview: Trends of Election Violence in Africa

In 2015, IDA Research Staff Member Stephanie Burchard [published](#) a book on election violence in Africa. She found that during the 1990-to-2015 period, roughly 50 percent of elections in Africa featured some form of violence. The severity of the violence ranged from harassment and intimidation, to targeted assassinations, to, in a few cases, significant numbers of deaths. Whereas most election-related violence did not go beyond intimidation or harassment, 20 percent of all elections held in Africa featured politically motivated assassinations, widespread violence (20 or more deaths), or both. Most of the violence occurred before elections, but rare cases of post-election violence were the most intense and deadly, as in Kenya in 2008 and Ivory Coast in 2011. Burchard found that some violence is strategic (planned), and some is incidental (spontaneous). She estimated that roughly 40 percent of all election violence in Africa is strategic, and 60 percent is incidental.

Election Violence Factors

What factors put a country at risk for election violence? The existing academic research has identified a number of triggers and conditions that contribute to and correlate with election violence in Africa. These factors include [close](#) elections, a history of electoral violence, a declining economy, weak institutions and weak adherence to the rule of law, tensions over [land](#) rights, economic and ethnic marginalization, certain [types](#) of electoral systems (namely “winner takes all”), biased electoral management bodies, and electoral fraud. The last is especially highly correlated with election violence. Indeed, more than 50 percent of African elections deemed to be fraudulent [experienced](#) election violence as well.

What Countries Are at Risk Over the Next 18 Months?

Eight or nine presidential [elections](#) are expected to be held from now through 2018 in sub-Saharan Africa. Two are scheduled in 2017: Angola (later in August) and Liberia (October). A December 2016 political agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) stipulated that elections should be held by the end of 2017, but they have not yet been scheduled and are highly [unlikely](#) to be held before the end of the year. Six or seven elections are expected to be held in 2018: Sierra Leone (February), Madagascar (May), Mali (July), Zimbabwe (July), Cameroon (October), DRC (not yet scheduled), and South Sudan (scheduled for July but [unlikely](#) to take place on time due to the ongoing civil war).

If past trends hold, given that half of African elections have been violent since 1990, electoral violence might occur in the next 18 months in about four of these countries. The questions are where will violence occur and at what level of severity. While a handful of these countries feature a number of the risk factors outlined above (including Mali, Angola, and Cameroon), the upcoming presidential contests in Zimbabwe and the DRC are particularly at risk of large-scale electoral violence.

Zimbabwe

A handful of factors present in Zimbabwe put the country at significant risk of election-related violence: an extended [history](#) of widespread election violence (more than 200 killed in the 2008 election), a potentially close poll, a history of land-based conflict, a deteriorating economy (GDP growth has [contracted](#) every year since 2013 in Zimbabwe), and partisan institutions (the [security sector](#) in particular). If 93-year-old President Robert Mugabe manages to stay alive and in office, and if a relatively [united](#) opposition alliance appears to be a real threat to his rule, Mugabe is likely to again use the security sector and informal party militias to clamp down on the opposition. On the other hand, if Mugabe departs the scene through death or retirement, his departure will make the race more competitive, as none of his potential successors enjoy his level of [popularity](#).

DRC

A number of conditions in the DRC also put the country at risk of significant election-related violence. Like Zimbabwe, the DRC has a history of election violence (dozens were [killed](#) in both the 2011 and 2006 polls) and a slumping economy (GDP growth has been generally high until 2016, when it [dropped](#) to 2.4 percent). The country also has generally weak institutions and a history of electoral [fraud](#). Compounding these risk factors is the refusal of incumbent President Joseph Kabila, in office since 2001, to step down. Kabila's final term finished at the end of 2016, but after the deaths of at least [56](#) demonstrators, Kabila negotiated an agreement in late 2016 that allowed him to stay in office until elections were held (by the end of 2017). In July 2017, however, Kabila [said](#) that he "promised nothing" in the 2016 political agreement, and the country's electoral commission [claimed](#) that it will be unable to hold elections in 2017 due to a lack of funds and ongoing [unrest](#).

Conclusion

While election violence is common in Africa, the severity of post-election violence seen in Kenya (at present and in 2008) is fortunately quite rare. Given past patterns, varying levels of electoral violence are likely to occur in Africa over the next 18 months, with Zimbabwe and the DRC particularly at risk of election-related violence.

Dr. Alexander Noyes is an Adjunct Research Staff Member in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

AFRICAN URBANIZATION—DEMOGRAPHY, NOT ECONOMICS

By George F. Ward

At a symposium on the United States and Africa co-sponsored by the Institute for Defense Analyses on June 7, 2016, participants identified key [megatrends](#) at play on the continent. Urbanization was one of these. Indeed, Africa's urban population is growing rapidly. In 2016, Africa was reported to have had the world's fastest average urban population growth rate, approximately [3.9 percent](#). By 2035, the majority of Africans will probably live in urban areas. Given the potential significance of Africa's shift from predominantly rural to mostly urban, it is worth looking into the nature of African urbanization, variations in the trend among subregions and countries, and the challenges posed by this important megatrend. [more...](#)



Aerial shot of Lagos, Nigeria, showing the extent of urban sprawl in the city. (Image credit: Sustainable Energy Africa [SEA].)

Ambassador (ret.) George F. Ward is editor of Africa Watch and a Research Staff Member at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

KENYA'S 2017 ELECTIONS

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On August 8, 2017, Kenya [voted](#) in presidential elections. The race was between incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta, of the Jubilee party, and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga, leader of the opposition National Super Alliance (NASA) coalition. Days after the vote, the country's electoral commission declared that Kenyatta had [won](#) a second term, capturing 54 percent of the electorate. But Odinga refused to accept the results, alleging fraud and voting irregularities. Odinga initially called for mass action, but later decided to contest the results through Kenya's court system. [more...](#)



Kenya's opposition leader Raila Odinga, center, shakes the hand of a supporter as he leaves after announcing he will challenge the results of the August 8, 2017 presidential election in the Supreme Court. (Source: AP Photo/Ben Curtis.)

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About IDA

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IDA's three federally-funded research and development centers provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring scientific and technical expertise.

IDA's Africa team focuses on issues related to political, economic, and social stability and security on the continent.

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Aerial shot of Lagos, Nigeria, showing the extent of urban sprawl in the city. (Image credit: Sustainable Energy Africa [SEA].)

From Rural to Urban

Most of the world's population lives in cities, and the proportion of urban dwellers is growing. According to the [Population Division](#) of the United Nations, 54 percent of the world's population resided in urban areas in 2014. By 2050, that proportion is projected to increase to 66 percent.

In contrast to most of the rest of the world, Africa has remained mostly rural, with around 40 percent of the population living in urban areas in 2014. In the run-up to mid-century, the world's rural population is expected to decline from approximately 3.4 billion to 3.2 billion. Africa will again be an exception, with rural populations continuing to increase in many countries. In fact, the world's largest increases in rural populations are expected to be seen in Nigeria (50 million) and Ethiopia and Uganda (39 and 38 million, respectively).

Nevertheless, in the context of high rates of birth and longer life expectancies, Africa's urban population will increase much faster than the rural. By mid-century, Africa's urban population is expected to triple, reaching about 56 percent of total population. That number will still be lower than the global proportion cited above.

Patterns in African Urbanization

In most of the world, recent urbanization has been closely linked to [structural transformation](#) of the economies of developing countries. As in the archetypal case of China, agricultural productivity has increased, producing both surpluses of food and of farmers. The latter have migrated to urban areas and fueled a wave of industrialization.

Urbanization in Africa has not been driven by improved agricultural productivity, and despite the increase in urban populations, industrial output has remained stagnant. The key here is that [natural demographic growth](#)—the predominance of births over deaths—has been the single most important driver contributing to the increase in African urban populations. Rural-urban migration accounted for less than one-third of urban population growth in most African countries from 2010 to 2015.

Looked at subregionally, [African urbanization is not uniform](#). Today, North Africa is already 54 percent urban, while the percentage in East Africa is 26 percent. The other subregions—Central, South, and West—are between 42 and 45 percent urban. By 2050, West Africa is projected to surge to 71 percent urban, surpassing North Africa at 62 percent. East Africa and the Horn would be the only subregions to remain majority rural.

These differentials in rates of growth have led one scholar, Dr. Deborah Potts of Kings College, London, to question the thesis of African urbanization. [Writing](#) in 2012, Dr. Potts asked, "Whatever Happened to Africa's Rapid Urbanization?"

She noted a decline during the first decade of the century in the proportion of Kenyans living in urban settlements, similar declines in Copperbelt towns in Zambia in an earlier decade, and the general unreliability or unavailability of census data. Although the weight of evidence seems to be on the side of increasing urbanization, the examples cited by Potts are reminders that the trend is by no means uniform.

Impact on African Cities

Largely because African urbanization is a demographic rather than an economic phenomenon, African cities display key differences from those in some other regions of the world:

- Africa is urbanizing in poverty. Africa is [strikingly poorer](#) than other developing regions at similar stages of urbanization. When the Middle East and North Africa region became 40 percent urban in 1968, their per capita GDP was \$1,800 (2005 constant dollars). East Asia and the Pacific reached the 40 percent threshold in 1994 with \$3,600 per capita GDP. In contrast, sub-Saharan Africa, which today is 40 percent urban, has a per capita GDP of only around \$1,000.
- Africa's cities [are crowded with people, but they are not dense](#) with economic activity, infrastructure, housing, or commercial structures. Because of the lack of transportation infrastructure, people seek housing close to their work locations. The result has been the growth of large, sprawling slums near city centers. These slums, which often lack access to basic services, are where 60 percent of Africa's urban population lives. The percentage of urban slum dwellers elsewhere is 34 percent.
- Cities have become unplanned patchworks of developed and undeveloped tracts. In the cases of both [Harare, Zimbabwe, and Maputo, Mozambique](#), more than 30 percent of the land within five kilometers of the central business district remains unbuilt.
- Because of their decentralized, unplanned natures, African cities generally do not reap the benefits of "[agglomeration economies](#)." These are places where labor pools, intermediate industrial inputs, and knowledge can be shared and where transaction costs can be reduced. Instead, African cities are places where islands of relative wealth and economic activity are surrounded by seas of poverty.
- The lack of economic density decreases efficiency and drives up the cost of living in African cities. Despite pervasive poverty, necessities such as food, housing, and urban transportation cost strikingly more in Africa cities than in their counterparts in other world regions. According to [World Bank researchers](#), African urban households pay 20 to 31 percent more for goods and services than those in other developing countries.

Conclusion

The net effect of these and other factors is that many African cities today seem condemned to remain local entities, trapped into producing only locally traded goods and services, closed to regional and global markets, and limited in their economic growth prospects. Urban sprawl will likely continue to outdistance efforts to provide the physical infrastructure, educational opportunities, and health services that will be needed to serve Africa's rapidly growing urban population. The [United Nations Human Settlements Program](#) sees indications that the failure of cities to fulfill basic human needs is fueling a rise in urban violence, resulting since 2010 in a spike in the frequency of demonstrations, riots, anti-government violence, and organized crime. At a time in which inter-state conflicts on the African continent have decreased, this increase in urban violence and instability demands the attention of African governments and their international partners.

Ambassador (ret.) George F. Ward is editor of Africa Watch and a Research Staff Member at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

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Kenya's opposition leader Raila Odinga, center, shakes the hand of a supporter as he leaves after announcing he will challenge the results of the August 8, 2017 presidential election in the Supreme Court. (Source: AP Photo/Ben Curtis.)

Background

Kenya is located in East Africa and has a population of [46 million](#). As noted in previous [editions](#) of Africa Watch, Kenya has an extended [history](#) of troubled and violent elections since the country moved to a multiparty system in the early 1990s. Post-election violence in the wake of the 2007 poll left more than [1,200](#) killed and 600,000 displaced. In the 2013 elections, which were largely peaceful, Kenyatta beat Odinga in a very close race. Violence during primary elections and the [killing](#) of an election commission official just days before the 2017 election prompted [fears](#) that this year's poll might return the country to the dark days of 2007–2008, which brought Kenya to the edge of civil war.

The 2017 Vote

The 2017 poll itself was peaceful, with [turnout](#) reaching nearly 80 percent. According to the electoral commission, Kenyatta [won](#) 54.3 percent of the vote, compared with Odinga's 44.7 percent. After Odinga alleged fraud, saying that the results had been hacked (but not providing any evidence), protests erupted in opposition strongholds. Clashes with the police led to the [deaths](#) of up to 28 people, which are currently being [investigated](#) by Kenya's police-monitoring body, the Independent Police Oversight Authority. On August 16, Odinga and NASA announced that they would contest the results through the courts and not in the streets, filing a [petition](#) that is currently with the country's Supreme Court.

The petition [alleges](#) that more than a third of election results are "fatally flawed" due to irregularities that arose from the electronic transmission of paper forms at each local polling station. As Odinga and NASA [contend](#), "The series of gaps, whether deliberate or product of negligence, frustrated the use of technology to deliver an accountable results transmission process. . . . Manipulation and distortion of results renders it impossible to tell who actually won." The opposition also [alleged](#) that there were "numerous instances when their ticket was denied votes and others in which their competitor . . . had undeserved votes added to his total." The Court has until September 1 to make a ruling. If the Court [rules](#) in Odinga's favor, a rerun of the election will be held in 60 days. If the Court rules in favor of Kenyatta, he will be sworn in on September 12.

Domestic and International Observers

Both domestic and international election observers, including the European Union and the Carter Center, have largely [praised](#) the conduct of the vote as peaceful and [credible](#). The Trump administration [agreed](#): "We commend the dedication of candidates, officials, and the public to upholding a peaceful, fair, and transparent contest, and we welcome the statements by international and domestic observer missions affirming the credibility of the election." The Elections Observation Group, a domestic civil society organization that deployed 8,300 observers and ran a parallel vote tabulation, largely [corroborated](#) the official results released by the electoral commission. But domestic and international observers also noted problems with how the [vote](#) was tabulated and called for transparency.

Down-Ballot Results

If Kenya's Supreme Court upholds the election results, in addition to winning the presidency, the Jubilee Party will also have made headway further down the ballot. The Jubilee Party [won](#) a majority in the National Assembly and the Senate, and the party and Kenyatta-aligned candidates also took 28 out of 47 races for governor. Interestingly, with the exception of Kenyatta, [incumbents](#) did not fare well, with 179 Members of Parliament (out of 290) voted out of power. Kenyan women will also be major winners, for the first time [taking](#) three governorships and three seats in the Senate. Sophia Abdi Noor, from northeastern Kenya, will also become the [first](#) ethnic Somali woman to win a seat in parliament.

Conclusion

From a logistical standpoint, the Kenyan election on balance appears to have gone quite well. Indeed, scholars Nic Cheeseman, Gabriel Lynch, and Justin Willis [assert](#), "The electoral process, and the results, currently look much more credible than any since 2002" (Kenya's 2002 election marked the first transfer of power in the country). But concerns remain regarding transparency issues with how the vote was tabulated and the use of force by police. Although the electoral commission [announced](#) this week that the body has handed over all vote tabulation forms to the Supreme Court, many of the forms have yet to be posted publicly, precluding independent verification of the results. The attempted [crackdown](#) on two nongovernmental organizations in the wake of the election is also troubling.

That said, the results of the parallel vote tabulation, as well as Jubilee's down ballot [success](#), suggest that widespread fraud, as Odinga alleges, is unlikely to have taken place. In addition, large-scale ethnically based violence, which many feared, has thus far been avoided. But the country is not in the clear yet. The conduct of Kenyatta, Odinga, and the police will be crucial to avoiding violence in the wake of the upcoming court ruling. As [noted](#) by John Campbell of the Council on Foreign Relations, "If Kenya is to continue to avoid widespread violence, Kenyatta and Odinga must be restrained in their rhetoric and the administration must insist on security service discipline."

Dr. Alexander Noyes is an Adjunct Research Staff Member in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

THE RETURN OF THE STATE TO NORTHERN MALI

By Dr. Ashley N. Bybee

On August 23, 2017, the governor of Mali's Kidal region, Sidi Mohamed Ag Ichrach, [traveled to Kidal](#) for the first time in three years to lay the groundwork for the return of his administration. He had been ousted from his region in 2014 when a visiting government delegation from Bamako came under fire from violent jihadists. Despite a [Peace and Reconciliation Agreement](#) signed in 2015 between Tuareg-led rebels and the Malian government, fighting between the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and the pro-government coalition known as the Platform (led by "*Le Groupe autodéfense touareg Imghad et alliés*" or the GATIA militia) has persisted, resulting in fighting and casualties in the north. The re-entry of Kidal's governor follows the return of several other state authorities who resumed their duties as part of the implementation of the 2015 peace accord. Kidal has been particularly contested because it is a prized city claimed by both sides, so this development could be a significant step forward for the Malian state. [more...](#)



In this photo taken on Thursday, February 23, 2017, Malian troops join with former rebels before a joint patrol in Gao, Mali. Malian soldiers and former Tuareg rebels have staged their first joint patrol in northern Mali, a key step in a 2015 peace agreement meant to help calm a region under threat from multiple extremist and other armed groups. (Source: AP Photo/Baba Ahmed.)

Dr. Ashley Bybee is a Research Staff Member in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

RUSSIA IN LIBYA: CHOOSING TO SUPPORT A SIDE

By Richard J. Pera

During 2017, Moscow has taken sides in the ongoing rivalry between Libyan power centers by aligning itself with General Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA), thereby opposing the positions taken by the United States and the European Union (EU). Libya is a key Arab country on Europe's southern flank, which possesses the [largest oil reserves](#) in Africa. What are Libya's main centers of power, what is Russia's role in Libya, and how does this benefit Moscow? [more...](#)



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, right, welcomes Libyan militia commander General Khalifa Haftar, center, during their meeting in Moscow, Russia, on Monday, Aug. 14, 2017. (AP Photo/Ivan Sekretarev)

Richard J. Pera is a Research Staff Member at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

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In this photo taken on Thursday, February 23, 2017, Malian troops join with former rebels before a joint patrol in Gao, Mali. Malian soldiers and former Tuareg rebels have staged their first joint patrol in northern Mali, a key step in a 2015 peace agreement meant to help calm a region under threat from multiple extremist and other armed groups. (Source: AP Photo/Baba Ahmed.)

Background

The current conflict in Northern Mali started in 2012 when ethnic Tuareg rebels began fighting against government forces in an effort to attain greater autonomy for Northern Mali, the region they call Azawad. Very quickly the rebellion was hijacked by Islamic militants with connections to al-Qaeda and recent combat experience in Libya. After the fall of Muammar Qaddafi's regime, many Tuareg and Arab rebels returned to Mali heavily armed with [sophisticated weaponry](#) and inspired to revive the long history of rebellion in the region. The Malian military, unaccustomed to facing such well-equipped and well-trained fighters, requested support from France in 2013 and also received the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). These forces were able to regain ground lost by the Malian government, but as the [UN](#) has reported, maintaining peace among rival ethnic factions and jihadist groups has been a constant challenge because these "zones also serve as bases and transit points for non-state armed groups, including terrorist groups and criminal and drug trafficking networks with links to the wider Sahel region."

2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement

In the 2015 peace accord that was signed by the government and Tuareg rebels (but excluded jihadists), Mali's [leaders](#) rejected autonomy for the north but agreed to consider decentralized local powers. The agreement stipulated that a government presence would return to the country's five northern regions while also conceding a degree of autonomy by officially referring to the region by its Tuareg name, Azawad. Despite these concessions by the government, there is still considerable [opposition](#) to the terms of the agreement; even the notion that a temporary representative of the state be placed in the northern city of Gao generated a violent [protest](#) in 2016. The reforms contemplated in the peace accord are supposed to be implemented through changes in Mali's constitution, but significant public [opposition has arisen](#). Recently, thousands of Malians [protested](#) against the government's planned referendum on constitutional changes that would give President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita a number of new powers while also implementing some of the reforms stipulated in the peace agreement, including recognizing Azawad. Some of those new powers would include the President's right to remove the Prime Minister at his will, create a new Senate, and appoint a significant portion of seats. The limited popular support for these reforms reveals a divide between the ruling party and the opposition and suggests that implementing the measures described in the 2015 peace agreement will be difficult.

Cease-fire Following a Resurgence in Fighting

A new round of fighting in Kidal that began in [July 2017](#) resulted in significant swaths of territory being captured by the CMA from pro-government forces. MINUSMA confirmed at least [34 cases](#) of human rights abuses in the area, including mass graves and the “enforced disappearances” of minors, whom they suspect may have been recruited as fighters by rebels.

In central Mali, which has been considered to be relatively stable compared with the north, [peacekeepers](#), and [aid groups](#) in particular, have come under attack, raising concerns within those circles regarding the safety of their staffs. This resurgence of fighting resulted in a [reprimand](#) by the head of MINUSMA, suggesting continued violence could threaten the UN’s commitment in Mali.

On August 25, the CMA and Platform agreed to a 15-day [cease-fire](#), during which time the warring factions will seek to initiate a new timetable for the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement.

Looking Ahead

The resumption of fighting in Mali’s north and new insecurity in Mali’s central region show that efforts to contain instability associated with overlapping conflicts among rival Tuareg factions, jihadist groups, nomads, and transient criminals have not been successful. A regional approach to insecurity in the Sahel, including Mali, was [codified](#) in July when Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad agreed to launch a multinational military force with support from France. The [G5-Sahel](#) aims to become a [5,000](#)-strong force with an annual budget of about \$496 million. To date, only \$127 million has been pledged, suggesting that its goal to be operational by October 2017 may be ambitious.

Regardless of when the G5-Sahel becomes operational and whether it is an effective response in Mali’s troubled north, the socioeconomic, geopolitical, and environmental factors at the root of the conflict will continue to exist. Regional and ethnic grievances stemming from the belief by the Tuareg that Bamako has neglected them will endure until the government implements meaningful development programs in the north. The prolonged drought resulting in food insecurity and water scarcity continues to fuel inter-communal conflicts. The consolidation and continued strength of jihadist groups in the north, resourced through criminality, seems likely to exacerbate existing tensions. Whether in the face of these challenges the return of the state to northern Mali will result in increased security remains to be seen.

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RUSSIA IN LIBYA: CHOOSING TO SUPPORT A SIDE

By Richard J. Pera

During 2017, Moscow has taken sides in the ongoing rivalry between Libyan power centers by aligning itself with General Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA), thereby opposing the positions taken by the United States and the European Union (EU). Libya is a key Arab country on Europe's southern flank, which possesses the [largest oil reserves](#) in Africa. What are Libya's main centers of power, what is Russia's role in Libya, and how does this benefit Moscow?

Centers of Power in Libya

As *Africa Watch* has [reported](#), Libya's first civil war ended on October 20, 2011, when Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi was killed. Since the summer of 2014, fighting and political maneuvering—Libya's second civil war—have resulted in a country divided among three competing governments, up to [1,700 factions](#), and paramilitary groups. There are three competing governments in Libya:

- Presidential Council (PC). Based in Tripoli and headed by Fayeze al Sarraj, the PC was created by the United Nations (UN)-brokered [Libyan Political Agreement](#) (LPA) in December 2015. The LPA mandated that the PC preside over a Government of National Accord (GNA), also based in Tripoli. The United States and the EU favored establishment of the GNA, but that government has not been embraced by other key players, including authorities in eastern Libya.
- Government of National Salvation (GNS). Based in Tripoli and headed by [Khalifa Ghwell](#), the GNS is derived from the parliament elected in 2012, known as the General National Congress (GNC)—a group of disbanded lawmakers whose military arm, "Libya Dawn," took control of Tripoli in 2014. The [GNC has forged alliances](#) with various Islamist groups, including Ansar al Sharia, which Washington has accused of involvement in the attack on the U.S. diplomatic office in Benghazi in 2012.
- Authorities in eastern Libya, including the Tobruk-based Libyan House of Representatives (HoR), elected in 2014 and recognized by the UN-brokered LPA. The HoR has refused to endorse the GNA in Tripoli, instead recognizing a rival government ensconced in al Bayda. Tobruk and al Bayda authorities are under the control of anti-Islamist and former U.S. resident, [General Khalifa Haftar](#), commander of the LNA, who now controls about two-thirds of the country and the bulk of its oil resources.

Russia's Role in Libya

Libya was a major client of Russia during Qaddafi's long rule, especially for arms procurement. Russian authorities [acknowledged](#) they lost at least \$4 billion in potential revenues from arms deals after Qaddafi was killed. Moscow abstained on UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011), which authorized NATO intervention in the Libyan civil war and imposed an arms embargo and no-fly zone. Russia has long resented NATO's "[barbaric](#)" operation, which led to Qaddafi's execution.

Russia has pursued an activist foreign policy [based on](#) "arms sales, disinformation, intelligence operations, diplomatic footwork and plain old hard power to further its agenda." Like Syria, Libya is an example of such activism. While officially supporting the UN-backed LPA as the basis for a negotiated settlement, Moscow has taken the following actions to support General Haftar's LNA:

- The Russian government hosted Haftar in Moscow several times in an "[unusually high profile](#)" manner. Sometimes [referred to](#) as "Putin's man in Libya," Haftar was a guest of the Russian Navy aboard the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov in January after the ship concluded combat operations off Syria.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, right, welcomes Libyan militia commander General Khalifa Haftar, center, during their meeting in Moscow, Russia, on Monday, Aug. 14, 2017. (AP Photo/Ivan Sekretarev)

- Russia supported Haftar financially when the [Kremlin mint](#) printed 4 billion dinars (about \$3 billion) worth of banknotes for the eastern Libya central bank. This solved a liquidity crisis and permitted authorities to pay salaries. It also lent legitimacy to Haftar's regime by rivaling the GNA-controlled central bank in Tripoli.
- In February, the Russian oil company, Rosneft, [reached agreement](#) with Libya's National Oil Company (NOC) to invest in Libyan infrastructure, exploration, and production. [Libyan oil production](#) fell from 1.6 million barrels per day (BPD) before Qaddafi was deposed, to a mere 60,000 BPD in August 2011. After the LNA captured large oil terminals at Ras Lanuf and as Sidr earlier this year, production increased to about 1 million BPD, and the NOC is seeking foreign investment to reach [2.1 million BPD by 2020](#).
- Although Moscow denies it is violating the UN arms embargo, [sources have reported](#) that Russia is supplying Haftar's forces with weapons. Using analysis of bureau numbers and roundel markings, [one observer claimed](#) that Russia provided at least one MIG-23/Flogger fixed-wing, ground-attack aircraft to the LNA. The plane reportedly was shipped in pieces and assembled in Libya. [According to Russian military experts](#), Russian arms are reaching eastern Libya via Moldovan companies, with logistic help from Egypt and financial assistance from the U.A.E, both of which are aligned with Haftar. Of note, the [UN has accused](#) the U.A.E. (but not Russia) of supplying weapons to eastern Libya, including Belarus-made attack helicopters.
- [Multiple sources](#) reported that a 22-member Russian special forces unit and unmanned aerial vehicles deployed to northwestern Egypt, near the border with Libya, to support the LNA before its successful effort to regain oil terminals in March. Russia denied the report and U.S. military officials [declined to comment](#) because "U.S. intelligence on Russian military activities is often complicated by . . . use of contractors or forces without uniforms." Russia has also sent [Arabic-speaking military officers](#) from Chechnya to train the LNA. Finally, a Russian military transport aircraft [flew about 70 wounded](#) LNA soldiers from Benghazi to Russia for treatment in February 2017. General Thomas Waldhauser, USMC, Commander, U.S. Africa Command, [noted the ties between Russia and Haftar](#): "They are on the ground, they are trying to influence . . . activities inside Libya . . . the Russians and Haftar, I think that linkage is undeniable."

How Does Haftar Benefit?

For Haftar, alliance with Russia provides political support to bolster his legitimacy internationally. Thanks to Russia and others, including the [U.A.E.](#), [Egypt](#), and [Saudi Arabia](#), Haftar's LNA is receiving weapons. Russian military assistance likely helped the LNA secure the oil terminals. With the GNA dependent on funding generated by revenues from oil, most of which is now controlled by the LNA, Haftar's negotiating position vis-à-vis the GNA has been enhanced.

How Does Russia Benefit?

First, Russia's activities in Libya come at the expense of the United States and the West, and, as experts opined in The Wall Street Journal, they are essentially [payback](#) for NATO operations that deposed its ally, Qaddafi. By supporting Haftar and making him stronger, Russia is in an excellent position to mediate between the centers of power, especially the United States and EU-backed GNA. Note that Russia is hedging its bets, [having met with PC Chairman, Fayez al Sarraj](#), in Moscow for in-depth discussions. On the commercial front, Russia is likely positioning itself to take advantage of a [future Libyan market](#).

Conclusion

Moscow likely will continue support to Haftar because it serves political, military, and commercial interests to do so. For now, such support is low cost and low risk and helps ensure that Russia will play a key role in a future peace settlement.

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