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Dr. Stephanie M. Burchard is a Research Staff Member in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.



In this Monday, August 7, 2017, file photo, a Kenyan election volunteer walks past ballot boxes and electoral material to be distributed to various polling stations in Nairobi, Kenya. (Source: AP Photo/Jerome Delay, File.)

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Ugandan lawmakers brawl in the Parliament in Kampala, Uganda, on Tuesday, September 26, 2017. (Source: AP Photo/Ronald Kabuubi.)

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Kenya's Election Voided

The Supreme Court of Kenya ruled that the presidential election was [invalid](#) due to substantial procedural irregularities and ordered fresh elections held within 60 days. The opposition had filed a petition challenging the election after incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta was declared the winner of the August 8 poll. The opposition presented nearly 25,000 pages of evidence [alleging](#) the results were fraudulent and "[computer-generated](#)." The crux of the opposition's case was that (1) the final results were uploaded onto the electoral commission's website even though thousands of official election forms were not available until more than a week after the results were announced and (2) approximately one-third of the forms lacked the requisite [security features](#) such as watermarks or serial numbers. Furthermore, the electoral commission refused to comply with the court's order to give the opposition full access to its server. In a landmark [decision](#), the Supreme Court sided with the opposition. If the process could not be trusted, the Supreme Court reasoned, how could the results?

Criticism of Election Observation

International observers in Kenya have been [sharply criticized](#) by a [number](#) of [actors](#) for passing such a quick and favorable judgment on an election that was ultimately revealed to have significant problems. While the Kenyan election has brought recent attention to international election observation, many of the criticisms surrounding election observation are not new. Early proponents believed that international observation would promote democracy by detecting or deterring fraud, which would increase the credibility of the electoral process as a whole. But Thomas Carothers cautioned in [1997](#) that election observation suffered from several problems that could serve to undermine its positive contributions. These included the proliferation of organizations involved in observation efforts, which resulted in several low-quality observation missions and a myopic focus on election-day events.

Writing 20 years after Carothers, [Stephen Chan](#) argues that election observation still suffers from some of these same problems and that the model hasn't evolved much beyond its original design. Observers remain hyper-focused on the act of voting itself, neglecting other important steps in the election process, especially the tabulation, transmission, and verification of results. Chan also argues that observer groups have failed to keep pace with the many technological advances that have occurred in the intervening years. Fraud has become more sophisticated, yet election observation relies on a model that is almost 40 years old.

[Judith Kelley](#), who has written [extensively](#) about election monitoring, has [noted](#) several problems with international election observation. She finds that the quality of observer assessments worldwide varies from



In this Monday, August 7, 2017, file photo, a Kenyan election volunteer walks past ballot boxes and electoral material to be distributed to various polling stations in Nairobi, Kenya. (Source: AP Photo/Jerome Delay, File.)

organization to organization, with some groups unlikely to levy genuine criticism. She also finds that there is an increased likelihood that certain observers will endorse elections held by major recipients of foreign assistance. Kelley argues this is because these observers are seeking to avoid upsetting key development assistance relationships, suggesting that not all observers are immune to political considerations.

Why Different Interpretations of Kenya's Elections

How did the observers and the Supreme Court come to two different conclusions about the integrity of the Kenyan election? There are several possible explanations. First, the observers were using a much lower standard than the Supreme Court. The observers were [reportedly](#) looking for obvious evidence of fraud that would have changed the outcome of the election. But the Supreme Court was looking at the integrity of the process as a whole, as well as the inability of the electoral commission to produce evidence that would verify the outcome.

Second, the observers were not equipped to detect the type of fraud that the opposition alleged occurred. Not a single one of the [nine](#) international observer groups was able to evaluate the opposition's claims on their merits. The groups either lacked the technical skills to evaluate the claims or had failed to secure the permission of the electoral commission before the election to access its servers. That they could not properly evaluate these allegations yet felt comfortable offering up a preliminary judgment about the credibility of the election is troubling.

Another explanation centers on the implicit biases of the observer groups themselves and exactly what they intend to accomplish through election observation. A recent [article](#) published in the American Journal of Political Science argues that election observation suffers from an inherent "curse." According to the authors, to be effective at reducing both fraud and post-election violence in most elections, observers must be indifferent to potential post-election violence. Observers must be willing to objectively comment on fraud, regardless of the likelihood that it will provoke post-election violence in a given situation, because it is the threat of violence that might then deter fraud in other future elections. Given Kenya's [long history](#) of electoral violence, how likely is it that observers can remain indifferent to the prospect of post-election violence occurring?

Conclusion

The differing assessments of the quality of the Kenyan elections indicates there are structural problems with election monitoring as currently constituted. Observer groups need to rethink the standards by which they assess election quality, what aspects of the electoral process they should be observing, and the technical skills of their staff. Additionally, if observers believe they are preventing violence in the short term by withholding criticism of the quality and conduct of elections, they should be aware they may be encouraging both fraud and violence in the long term.

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Ugandan lawmakers brawl in the Parliament in Kampala, Uganda, on Tuesday, September 26, 2017. (Source: AP Photo/Ronald Kabuubi.)

Museveni's Path Toward Authoritarianism

Museveni's interest in extending his term did not come as a surprise. Although early in his career he famously [criticized](#) leaders who stayed past term limits, he has undergone a change of heart over the past 15 years. In [2005](#), he benefitted from a parliamentary movement to remove term limits, making the two-term president eligible to run again. While the same act reinstated multiparty politics, Museveni has proven adept in quieting the opposition through [co-optation or coercion](#).

Museveni has also maintained strong public popularity. His approval rating is consistently between 60 and 70 percent, in part bolstered by his [legacy](#) as the leader who stabilized Uganda following the chaotic and violent regimes of Idi Amin, Milton Obote, and Tito Okello. This made a difference at the polls. As [Africa Watch](#) has reported, despite widespread irregularities in the 2016 election, Museveni likely won the popular vote by a wide margin.

A January 2017 [Afrobarometer](#) survey showed that 75 percent of Ugandans did not think the constitution should be altered to remove the age limit. The same survey showed, however, that Museveni maintained a 70 percent approval rating.

Growing Opposition, Growing Problem

Although Museveni continues to dominate Ugandan politics, there are signs that his control is beginning to slip. Before the 2016 election he fired Amama Mbabazi, a long-time supporter and former prime minister, who promptly ran against him on an opposition ticket. Richard Dowden, Director of the Royal African Society, [pointed out the consequences](#): "[Museveni's] former comrades have abandoned him. The best went first, and he is now just left with servants rather than comrades."

The administration has responded to growing opposition with a heavy hand. Before the debate over removing the presidential age limit, more than 20 university students were [arrested](#) for violating a ban against protesting, and the [mayor](#) of the capital, Kampala, was arrested in the midst of a television interview and charged with allegedly planning to lead a protest.

In addition, the Uganda Communications Commission [forbade](#) broadcasters from playing live footage of the parliamentary debate over the motion to abolish the presidential age limit. Opposition parliamentarians were violently [expelled](#) from parliament chambers, allegedly by Ugandan Special Forces dressed as plainclothes police.

This forceful response is in keeping with previous repressive moves. For example, in 2011, "Walk to Work" [protests](#) were violently put down in urban areas across the country. While Museveni may be able to control the public narrative by cracking down on opposition, stemming public debate does little to address Uganda's broader challenges.

How Will Museveni Address Growing Economic Problems?

If Museveni does extend his time in office, he may face a growing set of economic challenges. Although [GDP](#) growth is strong, at 4.5 percent, it has declined from the 7 percent it reached in the 1990s and early 2000s.

More important, Uganda's [debt](#) has risen to 38.6 percent of GDP. The country has secured billions of dollars of [Chinese loans](#) for infrastructure projects. While the [World Bank](#) reports that Uganda's "risk of debt distress is low," both the [IMF](#) and Uganda's [central bank](#) have expressed concern over Uganda's debt level.

Museveni has seemingly banked on Uganda's oil reserves to solve its economic problems. In 2011, Museveni [predicted](#) that oil revenue would mean Uganda "should be able to achieve 12, 13, or 15 percent economic growth." Oil was first discovered in 2006, but production will likely not begin until at least 2020. The delay is due in part to the resistance of potential partners to Museveni's demands that investing companies build a large [refinery](#). Although Uganda has finally agreed to terms with a [consortium](#) to build a pipeline and refinery, critics are already concerned by [missing payments](#) and the [risk of corruption](#). Given these challenges, and reduced oil prices globally, oil will likely not prove a magic bullet for Uganda's economic woes.

Conclusion

Uganda's economic challenges directly affect its citizens. The [National Household Survey](#) recently released by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics showed that the poverty level rose from 19.7 percent in 2013 to 27 percent in 2017. The survey also found that at 17 percent, youth unemployment is high, which is concerning given the country's [youth bulge](#).

As Museveni continues in office he will face increasing pressure to respond to these challenges. So far he has opted to suppress dissent rather than seek economically meaningful solutions. While Museveni's continued popularity may mean he will be able to continue to avoid dealing with Uganda's fundamental challenges, he is likely to bequeath a difficult legacy to a new generation of Ugandans when he finally departs office.

Sarah Graveline is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

THE THREAT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN TANZANIA

By Dr. Alexander Noyes

Tanzania is often viewed as a stable country in a region plagued by civil wars and coups d'état. Yet its proximity to Somalia and a rise in violent extremist incidents over the past five years—both on mainland Tanzania and the semi-autonomous island region of Zanzibar—have recently stirred [fears](#) that the country could become a new frontier of radicalization and terrorism in East Africa. Are such fears warranted?

Background

Tanzania is a [low-income](#) country in East Africa with a population of 50 million. While reports vary, the [population](#) of Tanzania, which comprises over 120 ethnic groups, is [estimated](#) to be roughly 61 percent Christian, 35 percent Muslim, with the remaining population animist or other religions. There are no domestic polls covering religious affiliation. While Tanzania moved to multiparty democracy in 1992, the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM, Party of the Revolution) remained in power, winning elections in 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015. As a result, the CCM is currently the [longest](#) ruling party in sub-Saharan Africa.

Zanzibar, a semi-autonomous federal entity within Tanzania, is made up of a series of islands located off the east coast, with most of the population of 1.3 million mainly on the islands of Pemba and Unguja. The population, which is [believed](#) to be 96 percent Muslim, comprises mainland Africans, Arabs, and mixed ethnic groups. Zanzibari elections, with a history of closely contested polls and violence since the shift to multiparty politics, have been much more competitive than those on the mainland.

Uptick in Violent Extremist Attacks

While Tanzania has experienced relatively few terrorist attacks, incidents have peaked during times of political uncertainty on both the mainland and Zanzibar. [According](#) to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism's (START) Global Terrorism Database, 42 terrorism incidents have occurred in Tanzania during the past 15 years. Over the same period, Nigeria, Kenya, and Somalia experienced 3,091, 2,193, and 450 incidents, respectively. Starting in 2013 in Tanzania, in the midst of the [constitutional review process](#) and in the run-up to the 2015 elections, attacks spiked, reaching a high of 13 in 2015. After the 2015 elections, the country (both mainland and Zanzibar) saw a sharp decrease, with only three reported attacks in 2016. (See Table 1.)



President John Pombe Magufuli at a rally in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, October 23, 2015. Magufuli has banned all opposition rallies until 2020, when the next election is due and approved a tough new cybercrime law under which some Tanzanians have been charged with insulting him in WhatsApp chats. (Source: AP Photo/Khalif Said, File)

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Zanzibar has a long [history](#) of religious and political tensions. Akin to the mainland, starting in 2013 incidents increased, reaching a high of four in 2014 and 2015. After a controversial [annulment](#) of the 2015 election and the opposition's boycott of the 2016 rerun, one attack was reported in 2016.

Attacks have allegedly been carried out by a variety of militant actors and groups, including Muslim Renewal, the Association for Islamic Mobilization and Propagation (UAMSHO), and Sheikh Ponda Issa Ponda, although attribution remains unclear in many incidents. The incidents [include](#) a series of bombings of restaurants and bars popular with foreigners, killings of Catholic priests and moderate Muslim leaders, burning of churches, storming of radio stations, and attacks using acid and grenades. In 2016, a [report](#) alleged that several militants in an unknown cave location in Tanzania had proclaimed their allegiance to the Islamic State. In addition, the government has also unearthed a number of foreign fighters and indoctrination camps in Tanzania, and border officials in the region have interdicted a handful of Tanzanians attempting to join the al Shabaab extremist group based in Somalia.

Distinctions between political violence and terrorism are blurry in Tanzania because the CCM government has historically been quick to label their political opponents and any instance of violence as terrorism-related. The government has also [inflated](#) local groups' connections to transnational groups for political purposes. Also, because the Tanzanian government actively controls information and reporting on terrorist activity, especially under the [increasingly](#) authoritarian-leaning rule of current president John Magufuli, some incidents may not be reported.

Domestic versus Transnational Drivers?

Local groups' ties to regional and international extremist groups exist and appear to be a growing threat in Tanzania. That said, interviews the author conducted last month in Tanzania and Zanzibar, along with an examination of the incidents of violent extremism, reveal that the drivers appear to be largely domestic, especially in Zanzibar. As noted in Table 1, terrorist attacks spiked around the 2015 elections, with incidents sharply declining afterwards, when plans for constitutional change were shelved. This suggests that domestic political concerns were driving the attacks, especially in Zanzibar, where the UAMSHO group called for independence and became increasingly [active](#) during the constitutional reform process in the run-up to the 2015 elections.

Seif Sharif Hamad, the former first vice president in Zanzibar and current leader of the Zanzibari opposition, told the author: "So far we don't have a direct link with these regions' [East Africa, the Middle East] radicalism, but if you frustrate these young people, you make it easier for these forces to persuade people to join their forces there." When questioned about local groups' involvement with regional and international networks, Lawrence Masha, the Tanzanian minister of home affairs from 2008 to 2010, rejected the idea: "That's not happening. It's local politics."

Conclusion

While overall levels of terrorist attacks remain relatively low in Tanzania, conditions appear to be ripe for the emergence of larger scale violent extremism in Tanzania, especially in Zanzibar. The existing literature on the drivers of violent extremism globally identifies a number of "push" and "pull" factors that are expected to contribute to the radicalization process across different contexts. [According](#) to Robinson and Kelly, push factors, which focus on structural issues, help explain how "particular

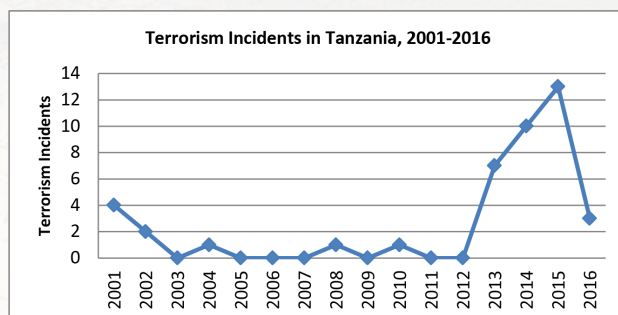


Table 1 Terrorism Incidents in Tanzania, 2001–2016. (Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2017). Global Terrorism Database [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>.)

political, economic, and social systems create opportunities for violent extremist groups to gain traction.” These include curtailment of political rights, poverty, and male unemployment, which are all particularly relevant to the Tanzanian context. Pull factors, which focus on why people are attracted to join violent extremist groups, include “various aspects of personal beliefs and aspirations, extremist group messaging tactics, and content of extremist narratives.”

Both factors are present in Tanzania. The Tanzanian government has cracked down on militant groups, particularly UAMSHO in Zanzibar. The leader of the group, along with 19 others, is currently facing [terrorism](#) charges. But deploying overly securitized responses to the threat might fuel, rather than defuse, the situation. The experiences of other African countries, namely Kenya and Nigeria, are instructive in this regard. Both countries’ repressive reactions to an emerging violent extremist threat proved to be [counterproductive](#), serving as fodder for potential recruits and [exacerbating](#) religious and ethnic grievances. To avoid a similar experience in Tanzania, domestic and external actors might focus instead on less securitized and more comprehensive rule-of-law and governance approaches that promote dialogue and seek to improve domestic political and socioeconomic conditions in Tanzania.

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MAINTAINING MOMENTUM IN THE SAHEL

By Dr. Ashley N. Bybee

A recent ambush in Niger that left four U.S. soldiers dead and two wounded serves as a poignant reminder that violent extremist organizations (VEOs) operating in Africa's Sahel region continue to pose a threat not just to local populations but also to U.S. interests. To counter this threat, countries in the region have established a second multinational joint counterterrorism force in the region, the G5 Sahel Joint Force. Like the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) designed to counter Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria, the G5 Sahel Joint Force is intended to combat the several regional VEOs that move relatively freely among Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad. The commitment of these Sahelian countries to eradicating regional terrorism and the commitment of Western partners to supporting these efforts are important steps forward. At the same time, the most competent of the regional militaries—the Chadian armed forces—have withdrawn some troops from the MNJTF contingent operating in Niger. This potentially significant loss in capability underscores the importance of growing other regional capabilities and strengthening security institutions in the Sahel. [more...](#)

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In this image provided by the U.S. Air Force, a U.S. Army carry team transfers the remains of Army Staff Sgt. Dustin Wright of Lyons, Georgia, Thursday, October 5, 2017, upon arrival at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. Wright, 29, was one of four U.S. troops and four Niger troops killed in an ambush by dozens of Islamic extremists on a joint patrol of American and Niger Force. (Source: Staff Sgt. Aaron J. Jenne/U.S. Air Force via AP)

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Kenyan politics have entered an unprecedented time of uncertainty in the wake of the August 8, 2017, general elections. On September 1, Kenya's Supreme Court [nullified](#) the presidential election results and determined that a fresh poll should be held by the end of October. On October 10, lead opposition candidate Raila Odinga [announced](#) his withdrawal from the race, generating uncertainty about whether and how to hold the vote. While Kenyan courts will determine how the poll will proceed following Odinga's withdrawal, Odinga has called his supporters to the streets to demand changes to electoral processes. Although the tenuous situation increases the risk of violence, the moment also presents a unique opportunity for Kenyans to set new precedents for holding their political institutions to a higher standard. [more...](#)

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In this Sunday Aug. 13, 2017 file photo, Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga addresses thousands of supporters gathered in the Mathare area of Nairobi, Kenya. It was his legal challenge that led the court to nullify the August 8 election that President Uhuru Kenyatta won. (Source: AP Photo/Ben Curtis, file.)

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Background

On October 4, 2017, four U.S. soldiers from the 3rd Special Forces group were [killed](#) in southwest Niger while accompanying Nigerien counterparts on a patrol in the dangerous Tillabery region. This area, where Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso meet, has become a hotbed for extremist militancy. *Africa Watch* previously reported a significant [uptick in insecurity](#) and numerous attacks on security forces in the subregion since October 2016. In response to heightened insecurity, the three countries formed a regional joint force under the purview of the Liptako-Gourma Authority. With the addition of Mauritania and Chad, this effort became the [Group of Five Sahel Joint Force](#) (known by its French acronym FC-G5S, for “Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel”), with the mission of countering transnational organized crime by VEOs in the region.

East of Niger are Chad, Nigeria, and Cameroon, situated in a region known as the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). This region has also seen a rise in insecurity in recent years, most commonly associated with the activities of Boko Haram, which is based in northeastern Nigeria. In [2009](#), Boko Haram began its insurgency, which has claimed approximately 20,000 lives and forced more than 2.6 million people from their homes. Many of those have fled to neighboring LCB countries

Sahelian Joint Forces—A New Way of Operating

The MNJTF and the FC-G5S, whose charters include provisions for cross-border pursuit, are a political acknowledgment that the threat posed by VEOs is transnational in nature. Pooling resources to achieve a common goal is also a sensible strategy for countries with limited national resources. Although many hurdles must be overcome to ensure that these joint forces are effective, regional coordination offers greater potential for success than individual national operations.

The U.S. Army Increases Support to the LCB

Meanwhile, U.S. Army Africa (USARAF) recently [stated](#) that it will shift resources to support partners in the LCB, specifically Niger, Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon. In fact, 80 percent of USARAF's security-cooperation activities will take place in these countries in FY 2018. This purpose of this heightened attention paid to the LCB is to counter the threat posed by Boko Haram and the fallout from that conflict, including a large increase in [displaced and refugee populations](#). USARAF fears VEOs will continue to recruit from vulnerable populations, who may be willing to accept resources for their families in

exchange for joining a VEO. Other Western partners, led by France, the EU, and, most recently, Germany, which is motivated by its own migration crisis, have also targeted much of their security assistance on the Sahel.

Chad Draws Down

In an unfortunate turn of events, Chad recently [withdrew hundreds of troops](#) from Niger, where they had been heavily engaged in the MNJTF's operations against Boko Haram. President Deby [warned](#) earlier this year that Chad could not afford to maintain the same number of troops in operations outside its borders, particularly in Mali, where it is the third largest contributor of troops to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). He noted that Chad has been very active in the MNJTF and is now being asked to contribute more troops to support of the G5—requiring an investment of resources that Chad cannot afford. Chad is a key counterterrorism partner, and its armed forces are considered to be among the [most competent](#) and professional in the region. Local Nigeriens in the affected region of Diffa have already complained of rising banditry since the Chadian forces' departure. This development represents a clear loss of capability in the fight against Boko Haram.

Conclusion

The countries of the Sahel most affected by terrorism have made progress in developing new operational concepts in an attempt to more effectively counter VEOs. Their Western partners are continuing to support these new security institutions and assisting in making them operationally effective. The loss of capability associated with Chad's withdrawal from Niger, however, could be an impediment to combatting VEOs.

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Election Nullification Sets New Precedent, Political Challenges Remain

As [Africa Watch](#) reported, when incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta won the August 2017 poll, Odinga challenged the results in court. To the surprise of nearly all observers, Kenya's Supreme Court sided with Odinga, determining that the [election results](#) were null because Kenya's Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), which administered the poll, failed to follow procedures laid out in the 2010 Kenyan Constitution.

The ruling marked the first time a court has overturned an election in sub-Saharan Africa, and so was a precedent-setting decision for Kenya and the wider continent. The ruling was particularly surprising because the Supreme Court had ruled against Odinga four years ago when he contested the results of the 2013 general elections. Given the similar irregularities observed in the 2013 and 2017 polls, the Supreme Court's willingness to challenge the 2017 results was [hailed](#) as a sign of Kenya's strengthened judicial independence.

The Supreme Court's ruling set an important legal precedent, but it did not fix the underlying political issues that led Odinga to challenge the election. Odinga's opposition coalition alleged that the ruling Jubilee party had pressured the IEBC to engage in electoral fraud. The IEBC [refused](#) to give the Supreme Court access to its electronic system, meaning the Court could not prove or disprove the allegations. Although the IEBC indicated it would coordinate new elections on October 26, on October 18 IEBC Chairman Wafula Chebukati [announced](#) he could not guarantee the integrity of the upcoming vote, while another IEBC member resigned and fled to the United States after receiving death threats.

Odinga's Decision to Withdraw Creates Legal Headaches

Odinga's withdrawal has created widespread uncertainty over the planned election rerun. By withdrawing, Odinga intended to trigger a new election cycle. He based this argument on the Supreme Court's [2013 interpretation](#) of Article 138(8) (b) of the Kenyan Constitution, which holds that if a candidate dies before the election, a new vote must be held within 60 days. According to the 2013 interpretation, a candidate's withdrawal is treated the same as his or her death. Further, Odinga [claims](#) that this interpretation means "the electoral commission is then required to start to do a fresh nomination exercise and then a subsequent election." This would set the timetable for new polls significantly past October 26.

The ruling Jubilee party disputed this interpretation. Following Odinga's withdrawal, Kenyatta [said](#) that the October 26 vote would go forward as planned. In addition, a day after Odinga announced his withdrawal, Jubilee MPs were able to pass an [election law amendment](#) to ensure that if a candidate withdrew from a presidential election, the remaining candidate would automatically win. Although Kenyatta has yet to sign the amendment into law, its passage ratcheted up tension between the ruling party and opposition.

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Kenya's judiciary has given guidance for a third path forward. On October 11, the Kenyan [High Court](#) ruled that minority candidate Ekuu Aukot should be included on the slate for the October 26 poll. The election commission [interpreted](#) this ruling to mean that all candidates who originally contested the election, including Odinga, would be on the ballot for the October 26 election. This guidance may not be final, however, as either party may appeal the High Court's ruling. Further, there may be [technical difficulties](#) in rolling out a new ballot by October 26.

Can Election Uncertainty Strengthen Kenya's Political Institutions?

The current political unrest has created a crisis of legitimacy within Kenyan politics. As analyst [Wachira Maina](#) has noted, Kenya is undergoing growing political and social polarization. Recent protests are making this divide visible. Despite a recent [government ban](#) on urban protests, Odinga's supporters have launched a series of demonstrations in [Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa](#). Police have [responded](#) with tear-gas and [water cannons](#). As protests continue, the potential for widespread political violence is real. Already human rights organizations report that Kenyan police are responsible for [67 deaths](#) in the post-election period.

Despite the risks, the current uncertainty also has the potential to strengthen Kenya's political framework. As Kenyan political cartoonist [Patrick Gathara](#) notes, Kenyan institutions are responding to uncertainty by "clarifying the rules and laws." As [many commentators](#) have pointed out, the international community was willing to praise the results of the August 2017 elections despite apparent flaws. Kenyans now have a chance to show that they hold their country to a higher standard.

Sarah Graveline is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

ISLAMIST ATTACK IN MOZAMBIQUE

By Dr. Alexander Noyes

On October 5, 2017, an [attack](#) by 30 armed men on three police stations in Mocimboa da Praia in northern Mozambique left two policeman and 14 attackers [dead](#). A community leader was also killed, and 52 were [arrested](#). While details on the attack remain unclear, the perpetrators appear to be a local Islamist group. Locals in the area refer to the group as “Al-Shabaabs,” although the [group](#) does not appear to currently have any links to the al-Shabaab extremist group in Somalia. The attack is a new development in Mozambique, which to date has not seen Islamic violent extremism. [more...](#)



Soldiers trying to help people escape an armed confrontation between government forces and unknown gunmen in Mocimboa da Praia. (Source: “Gunfire continues in Mocimboa da Praia,” Club of Mozambique, October 6, 2017, <http://clubofmozambique.com/news/gunfire-continues-in-mocimboa-da-praia-aim/>.)

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

ANGLOPHONE PROTESTS IN CAMEROON—MORE THAN LANGUAGE

By George F. Ward, Jr.

The Anglophone protest movement in the Republic of Cameroon in West Africa boiled over into violence once again in late September 2017. By October 3, the [death toll](#) had reportedly risen to 17. The Anglophone movement in Cameroon has its roots in the country’s colonial and immediate post-colonial history. Today, the concerns of the English-speaking minority, which makes up 20 percent of the population, extend beyond language to include political, economic, and ethnic factors. The Anglophone protests add to the stress on the government of Paul Biya, one of Africa’s longest-serving strongmen, which is already challenged by the Boko Haram threat in the country’s north and insecurity on the border with the Central African Republic to the east. [more...](#)



Protestors in Cameroon. (Source: Screen capture of video, “Cameroon Civil Society Urges Anglophone Regions to Continue Protests,” Africa News, January 5, 2017, <http://tinyurl.com/y75326tr>.)

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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Background

Mozambique is a [low-income](#) country with a population of 28 million located in southern Africa. The [population](#) is 28 percent Catholic, 18 percent Muslim, 15 percent Zionist Christian, and 12 percent Protestant, with the remainder identifying as other or as not religious. President Filipe Nyusi leads the ruling FRELIMO party (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*), while Afonso Dhlakama heads the main opposition party, RENAMO (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*). The two parties fought a decades-long civil war that ended in 1992 and left close to a [million](#) dead.

Islam in Mozambique

As reported in previous [editions](#) of *Africa Watch*, the FRELIMO and RENAMO parties have reengaged in a low-level conflict since 2013. But the emergence of Islamist violent extremism is a new dynamic in the country. Eric Morier-Genoud, a scholar at Queens Belfast University, [called](#) the October attack the “first confirmed Islamist armed attack in Mozambique.” Indeed, Mozambique has a history of relatively harmonious inter-religious relations. The majority of Muslims in Mozambique are Sufi, belonging to a variety of brotherhoods called Turuq. Only recently have have reformist [Wahhabi](#) groups, returning from universities in Saudi Arabia, gained a foothold in Mozambique. Although Mozambique has not seen violent religious conflict, most of the country’s Muslims live in the underdeveloped and isolated northern areas of the country, which, along with other historical grievances, has given rise to a sense of [marginalization](#).

Group Behind Recent Attack

The “Al-Shabaabs” group behind the October attack is believed to comprise young Mozambican Muslims who formed a sect in 2014 and have taken over [two mosques](#) in Mocimboa da Praia. The attackers [reportedly](#) spoke Swahili, Portuguese, and Kimwani, the local dialect on the Cabo Delgado coast of Mozambique. Some of the group’s members are believed to have attended schools in Saudi Arabia and Sudan. [According](#) to Fernando Neves, the mayor of Mocimboa da Praia, former members of the group hailed from Tanzania and were recently repatriated.

The group’s [demands](#) include the imposition of Sharia law, the banning of alcohol, and the removal of children from the secular state education system. According to locals, a number of events led up to the October attack, including incidents in March and April of this year in which “Al-Shabaabs” attempted to prevent community members from seeking state medical care and sending their children to state schools. The police [arrested](#) three men for these earlier incidents.

Government Response

Local Muslim leaders have been aware of the group for several years and previously informed the government of the group’s practices and ideologies. According to Sheik Ahumar Alifa, a Muslim leader in Mocimboa da Praia, those warnings went unheeded. After the October attacks, Alifa [pointed out](#): “We have always presented our concerns about these people of Al-Shabaab, who call themselves [Muslims]. . . It’s all up to the government. We have always reported what’s been going on.”



Soldiers trying to help people escape an armed confrontation between government forces and unknown gunmen in Mocimboa da Praia. (Source: “Gunfire continues in Mocimboa da Praia,” *Club of Mozambique*, October 6, 2017, <http://clubofmozambique.com/news/gunfire-continues-in-mocimboa-da-praia-aim/>.)

The government appears to be taking the October attack seriously, but so far has ruled out the possibility of links to transnational Islamist extremist groups. Celmira da Silva, the governor of Cabo Delgado, [said](#) the attacks were “extremely frightening.” Despite the aforementioned ties to Tanzania, the government is currently viewing the threat as homegrown. Inacio Dina, spokesman for the police, [said](#) the attackers were from a “radical Islamic sect.” He went [on](#): “The way they operated makes us believe that there is a structure behind the group,” but “there is no evidence that they are members of Shabaab or Boko Haram. According to the information gathered, all those captured or killed are Mozambicans.”

Conclusion

The October Islamist attack in Mozambique marks a potential shift for the country. How the Mozambican government reacts moving forward will shape the extent and nature of the threat. Morier-Genoud [argues](#), “Downplaying the affair as ‘banditry’ and dealing only with the sect when it’s clear that there are broader religious and social dynamics at play risks seeing the problem reemerge elsewhere.” However, “going for an all-out repression to eradicate the ‘Islamist threat’ could radicalise other Muslims and root the problem deeper and more widely.” As noted in the October 12, 2017, [edition](#) of *Africa Watch*, the experiences of both Nigeria and Kenya provide useful cautionary tales in this regard, as both governments’ harsh responses to the threat of violent extremism proved counterproductive.

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Protestors in Cameroon. (Source: Screen capture of video, "Cameroon Civil Society Urges Anglophone Regions to Continue Protests," *Africa News*, January 5, 2017, <http://tinyurl.com/y75326tr>.)

The Anglophone Factor in Cameroon

The [Federal Republic of Cameroon](#) was born on October 1, 1961. That event marked the reunification of two territories—British and French dependencies—that were the product of the partition of the German Kamerun Protectorate after World War I. During the process of decolonization, two segments of the British territory, called Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons, went different ways. The smaller Northern Cameroons became part of Nigeria, while the Southern Cameroons, after a period of negotiations, adhered to the new Federal Republic of Cameroon and became known as West Cameroon.

From the outset, the Anglophone minority in West Cameroon chafed under the central government dominated by the Francophone majority. The English speakers felt that constitutional commitments to federalism were flouted in practice. The dominance of the Francophones gradually became evident in [many aspects](#) of everyday life, ranging from which side of the road to drive on (right rather than left), units of measure (meters rather than feet), and, most important, education, where elements of the French-derived *Baccalauréat* crept into the Anglophone General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination. In 1972, Cameroon's autocratic president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, orchestrated a constitutional change that transformed the federal republic into a unitary state, the United Republic of Cameroon.

Cameroon—A Nation Divided

Today, [Cameroon](#) consists of 10 regions, of which two, Northwest and Southwest, are Anglophone. Those two regions cover only 3 percent of the country's land area, but they include slightly more than 20 percent of the population. They are also relatively prosperous, with dynamic agricultural, commercial, and information technology sectors, and they produce most of Cameroon's oil, which accounts for one-twelfth of the country's GDP. The Anglophone area is also the stronghold of the main opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF).

Although English speakers hold some prominent offices, such as that of prime minister, they are underrepresented in the government and administration of Cameroon. As of this year, there was only [one Anglophone](#) among 36 ministers with portfolio. Out of a total of 514 [judicial officers](#), only 15 are Anglophones. Over half the magistrates in the English-speaking Northwest region are French-speaking, with backgrounds in French-derived civil code rather than in the Common Law tradition that has applied in the English-speaking regions.

The Anglophones also feel that they have been economically disadvantaged, claiming that the central government has abandoned development projects in their regions in favor of ones in French-speaking areas.

Interestingly, [ethnic divisions](#) in Cameroon do not mirror linguistic ones. The two English-speaking regions, Northwest and Southwest, are dominated by different ethnic groups, each of which has cultural links with French speakers in adjacent regions. These divisions have been used at times by the central government leaders to divide the Anglophone leadership.

Today's Unrest—Law and Education

As reported in [Africa Watch](#) in February 2017, the chronicle of Anglophone protests and governmental responses in Cameroon is long and complicated. The current unrest, which began in October 2016, has crystallized around two sets of issues: law and education. On [October 11, 2016](#), lawyers from both English-speaking regions went on strike over the justice system's failure to use Common Law. The lawyers demanded the translation into English of key legal texts, and they criticized the "Francophonization" of the Common Law jurisdictions.

On November 8, 2016, a protest march mobilized by the lawyers turned violent. On November 21, teachers joined the strike in protest over the appointment of teachers who did not have sufficient command of English and the failure to respect the distinct character of schools and universities in the English-speaking regions. Additional protests occurred, including on campuses, and the movement expanded from the Northwest region to the Southwest. The police and army reacted with violence. From October 2016 to February 2017, at least nine people were killed and many more were wounded. In a campaign of intimidation, security forces arrested up to 150 Anglophone leaders, some of whom are being prosecuted through military tribunals.

Leaders of the protest movement responded with calls for a two-day "Operation Ghost Town," asking people to stay in their homes. The government answered with additional arrests and by shutting down the internet in the two English-speaking regions. The "Ghost Town" movement, eventually renamed "Country Sundays," continued. Boycotts of schools resulted in the shutdown of schools and universities, many of which [remain closed](#). On April 2, 2017, the government turned the internet back on after a 92-day cut, but service has been intermittently interrupted during the violence that began on October 3 of this year.

Calls for Separation as Protests Spread

Demands for independence have been on the agenda of a minority of Anglophone activists for many years, but these sentiments have recently come to the forefront. Beginning in [September 2017](#), some demonstrators have hoisted the separatist flag of their would-be nation, the Republic of Ambazonia, on public buildings and at road junctions. No group has actually declared independence, but that goal has become a central theme of protests. The Ambazonian Defense Forces, an armed wing of the protest movement, have claimed credit for a number of [improvised explosive device \(IED\) attacks](#) against government security forces and infrastructure targets. So far, the IED attacks have claimed no lives.

Conclusion

As [Africa Watch](#) pointed out on July 27, 2017, President Biya has consistently demonstrated a willingness to use force in order to hold on to power. With presidential elections looming in 2018, he can be expected to continue that pattern. Even though he will probably be able to contain the Anglophone protests, the turmoil is likely to impede economic development and could reduce Cameroon's capacity to contribute to the fight against Boko Haram and other militant groups.

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

THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF BIAFRA: ANOTHER STAB AT BIAFRAN INDEPENDENCE

By Dr. Ashley N. Bybee

Nigeria has long contended with a separatist movement in the southeastern part of the country. In 1967 the breakaway independent Republic of Biafra was established by the Igbo people. Despite a civil war in which the Nigerian state prevailed, a deep-seated desire for independence has persisted among some in the region. Calls for Biafran independence have become more vociferous in the last two years, with the separatist group “Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)” leading the movement. Recent [arrests](#) of scores of its members and the disappearance of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu, have brought the issue to the forefront of Nigerian news. Do recent developments signify a fundamental shift in the movement’s power and influence, or are they simply another flurry of Biafran agitation? [more...](#)



In this May 28, 2017, file photo, Uboha Damia, a 75-year-old Biafra veteran, holds a Biafra flag as members of the Biafran separatist movement gathered during an event in Umuahia, Nigeria. (Source: AP Photo/Lekan Oyekanmi, File.)

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ERITREA—WILL DECLINING REMITTANCES LEAD TO DOMESTIC UNREST?

By Sarah Graveline

Eritrea, one of the most isolated countries on Earth, is best known for its struggling economy, widespread human rights violations, and the large percentage of its population that has fled the country. The international community has provided a pressure relief valve for these tensions by granting asylum to many Eritrean refugees, who then support relatives through remittances back home. Recent trends, such as declining remittances and Europe’s growing desire to limit Eritrean migration, are challenging this system and may encourage increased domestic unrest. [more...](#)



In this file photo dated Friday, September 23, 2011, President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea addresses the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters. (Source: AP Photo/Jason DeCrow, FILE.)

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A Long History of Biafran Secessionist Activity

The desire for Biafran independence is almost as old as Nigeria itself. Nigeria received its independence from Great Britain in 1960. States in the eastern region of Nigeria, led by the Igbo ethnic group, declared their independence from Nigeria in 1967. A civil war ensued in which at least 1 million people lost their lives, most due to starvation. The war ended in 1970 when Biafran forces surrendered. Since then a number of groups advocating for a separate country for the people of southeast Nigeria have emerged. The Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) rose to prominence in the early 2000s, followed by the Biafra Zionist Federation, which took over the separatist reins in 2012. These groups have continued the [narrative](#) initiated by their predecessors, which accuses the Nigerian state of marginalizing the region by depriving it of public investment and economic development and failing to recognize the religious and ethnic differences that warrant an independent state of Biafra.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

In 2014, a new wave of Biafran activists emerged, led by the dual Nigerian-British citizen Nnamdi Kanu. Kanu created IPOB after gaining popularity through his broadcasts on [Radio Biafra](#) from London, which he began in 2009. Soon after IPOB’s creation, Muhammadu Buhari, a northerner who was a young officer in the Nigerian army during the civil war, was elected as Nigerian president in March 2015. The impact of his election on the Biafran separatist movement was swift. Kanu was arrested in October 2015 on six counts of [treason](#) and subsequently [detained](#) without trial for one-and-a-half years. While Kanu was imprisoned, [Amnesty International](#) reported on the deadly repression of pro-Biafra activists by Nigerian security forces, who killed 150 activists between August 2015 and August 2016. Kanu was finally [released](#) on bail in April 2017 on the condition that he not engage the public on the matter of Biafran independence.

Recent Events and the Government Crackdown

Since September 2017, there has been a [heightened](#) military presence in southeastern Nigeria as part of [Operation Python Dance](#), which has the mission of cracking down on rising insecurity in the southeast, including secessionist agitation. On September 14, Kanu’s home was targeted in an alleged army raid. According to Kanu’s family, he and many other IPOB members have not been seen since. The following day, a military spokesman [refuted](#) the assertion that the raid was led by the army, [referring](#) to IPOB as a “militant terrorist organization” (a declaration the government [recanted](#) days later, calling it a “pronouncement” instead). On September 20, a Federal

High Court in Abuja declared the IPOB's activities in [violation](#) of the provisions of the Terrorism Prevention Act of 2011. Since then social, print, and online media reports have [reported](#) the discovery of the corpses of 28 IPOB members apparently killed by Nigerian soldiers and placed in the bush near Kanu's home, fueling speculation that the Nigerian government was behind this attack in an effort to silence the Biafran separatist activists.

Looking Ahead

IPOB appears to appeal to the region's younger generation, but its support among the older generation is limited. It is the opinion of several influential elites, including former [President Obasanjo](#) (who was a senior Nigerian commander during the civil war) and Igwe Christopher Ejiofor (a [prominent Igbo King](#) who fought for Biafra), that IPOB represents legitimate grievances but that its goal of independence is unrealistic. Rather, they encourage the Nigerian government to engage the southeast in a meaningful dialogue that addresses economic development and prospects for a better future. In contrast, President Buhari's recent response to all security threats in Nigeria, including Biafran agitation, has been to [instruct](#) the Service chiefs to address those problems militarily. His public comments have been similarly [uncompromising](#): "Nigeria's unity is settled and not negotiable. We shall not allow irresponsible elements to start trouble, and when things get bad they run away and saddle others with the responsibility of bringing back order, if necessary with their blood."

Conclusion

At present, IPOB has neither the resources to pose a significant threat to the Nigerian government in the southeast nor the widespread support required to mobilize the population. Its main strength may turn out to be the unintended consequences of the government's oppressive response. [Preventing](#) freedom of assembly and [arresting](#) nonviolent protesters may reinforce IPOB's claims of marginalization and mistreatment. Moreover, if the Nigerian government or army is found to be complicit in the death of Nnamdi Kanu and many other IPOB members, the government may have succeeded in making him a martyr, potentially inspiring IPOB to adopt a more aggressive stance.

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Revolutionary Government Turned Sour

Eritrea, a small country bordering the Red Sea, has an estimated [population](#) of 5.9 million. It [broke](#) away from Ethiopia in 1991 after 30 years of civil war. Rebel leader Isaias Afwerki officially became President in 1993. Initially popular, Afwerki has grown increasingly authoritarian and unpopular. The 2016 [report](#) of a UN Commission of Inquiry described a system of government in which political elites are kept under control through arbitrary detention and torture.

Ethiopia and Eritrea enjoyed a brief period of good relations, but disagreement over their shared border led to conflict in 1998. While the countries signed a ceasefire in 2000, there have been occasional minor [clashes](#) along the border, and tensions remain high. In 2009, the UN sanctioned Eritrea for [supplying weapons](#) to al-Shabaab in an effort to undermine Ethiopian operations in Somalia.

Life in the Black Box

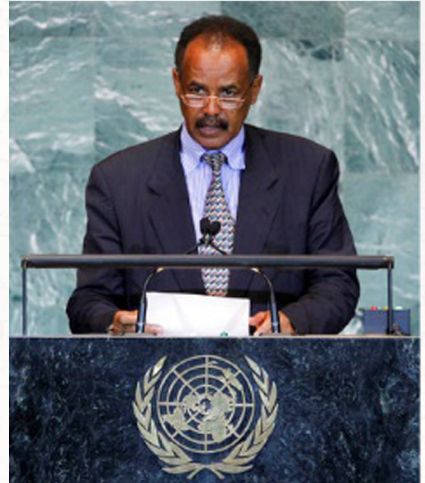
Today, Eritrea is one of the most closed-off countries in the world. It ranks second to last, ahead of only North Korea, in Reporters without Borders' [2017 World Press Freedom Index](#). The Eritrean government does not publish economic indicators and denies access to humanitarians, making it difficult to monitor domestic conditions. Most information comes from [dissidents](#) who report that conditions within the country remain dire.

Eritrea's government claims that its long-running conflict with Ethiopia is to blame for its most unpopular policy: indefinite conscription. Citizens between ages 18 and 40 are required to serve the state for an unspecified period, either in the military or through civilian service, in conditions activists [describe](#) as "forced labor."

Economic Challenges an Increasing Concern

Eritrea's economy has traditionally been limited, but self-reliant. Its government refused to accept most [foreign assistance](#) following its 1991 victory over Ethiopia. With little domestic infrastructure, a large portion of its income has come from remittances. Eritrea requires citizens living outside the country to pay a [2 percent tax](#) on income. In addition, individual Eritreans rely on money remitted directly from relatives abroad. In 2005, [remittances](#) were estimated to account for roughly 30 percent of Eritrea's GDP.

A 2016 Atlantic Council report estimates that remittances have [declined](#) significantly since 2005. A 2015 [BBC](#) report noted that the Eritrean government recognized the challenges posed by declining remittance income and quoted one



In this file photo dated Friday, September 23, 2011, President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea addresses the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters. (Source: AP Photo/Jason DeCrow, FILE.)

Eritrean official, who attributed the decline to the diaspora, which now was “spending the money on helping people leave Eritrea instead of supporting relatives at home.”

This challenge of declining remittances was compounded by the government’s [2015 decision](#) to recall existing currency, which was to be replaced with new bills. To complete the transfer, Eritreans would have to declare the source of their earnings and pay heavy fines on currency earned outside Eritrea’s formal economy. The move effectively wiped out the savings of citizens who did not keep their money in Eritrean banks.

Financial hardship has driven Eritrea’s government to allow some foreign investment. In 2011, it opened a [gold mine](#) in a joint venture with the Canadian firm Nevsun Resources, and in 2016 it opened another mine through a joint partnership with a Chinese firm. Government officials say they intend to have four mines in production by 2018.

The new mines have been a [positive](#) for the government because they have brought a much-needed influx of foreign reserves. Their impact on Eritrean citizens is mixed. The mines have yet to create many [jobs](#) for Eritreans, and some former employees have [sued](#) for being forced to work in the mine as part of their national conscription service. Overall, it seems unlikely that the mines will provide the economic opportunity needed to ease domestic pressures.

Migration as a Form of Protest

Despite the lack of civic and economic opportunities in Eritrea, domestic opposition has been limited. According to opposition activists, on October 30 and 31, 2017, Eritrean security forces [allegedly killed](#) 28 protesters in the country’s capital, Asmara. The protests were limited in scope, aiming only to stop the government from closing an [Islamic school](#), not to oppose government policies more broadly.

Rather than publicly opposing the government, many Eritreans have chosen to flee. Large-scale emigration from Eritrea has become an indicator of poor domestic conditions. Between 2012 and 2016, the [UN estimated](#) that a total of 9 percent of Eritrea’s population fled the country. This includes high-profile cases. For example, members of Eritrea’s [football team defect](#) nearly every time the team plays abroad. Even President Afwerki’s son allegedly [attempted to defect](#) in 2015.

Recently, however, migration has become a more precarious option as European countries have taken steps to limit the number of Eritreans granted asylum. In 2015, the EU provided Eritrea a [grant of €200 million](#) to limit migration, and the [UK](#) and [Switzerland](#) have begun to debate whether their countries should accept fewer Eritrean asylum seekers.

Conclusion

Despite Eritrea’s longstanding challenges, there does not currently appear to be enough domestic pressure to force political change at home. As it becomes more difficult for Eritreans to claim asylum abroad, however, this calculus may change. Without revenue from remittances or hope of a viable path out of conscripted service and into financial self-sufficiency, Eritreans may become more willing to risk confronting the government over its seemingly unsustainable policies.

Sarah Graveline is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses

ZIMBABWE IN TRANSITION: MOVE ALONG, NOTHING TO SEE HERE

By George F. Ward

Only days after the resignation of longtime president Robert Mugabe and the inauguration of Zimbabwe's new leader, Emmerson Mnangagwa, the government, the army, and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union–Popular Front (ZANU–PF) are making a concerted effort to project a return to normalcy. Shops, schools, and civil government institutions have remained open, and ordinary citizens have continued to go about their business. The presence on city streets of joint army–police patrols serves as a reminder, however, that there has been an extraordinary turn of events. Looking toward the future, President Mnangagwa and his allies are faced with many challenges, including securing their dominance within the ZANU–PF, maintaining the party's governing role, addressing the economic problems that become more urgent every day, and dealing with the aspirations of ordinary Zimbabweans for freedom and democracy. [more...](#)

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



Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa speaks after being sworn in at the presidential inauguration ceremony in the capital Harare, Zimbabwe, Friday, November 24, 2017. (Source: AP Photo/Ben Curtis.)

LIBERIA'S 2017 ELECTIONS: FRAUD, DEMOCRACY, AND REMNANTS OF THE PAST

By Dr. Stephanie M. Burchard

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In this Tuesday, October 10, 2017, file photo, people wait to cast their votes during a presidential election in Monrovia, Liberia. (Source: AP Photo/Abbas Dulleh, File.)

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ZIMBABWE IN TRANSITION: MOVE ALONG, NOTHING TO SEE HERE

By George F. Ward

Only days after the resignation of longtime president Robert Mugabe and the inauguration of Zimbabwe's new leader, Emmerson Mnangagwa, the government, the army, and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Popular Front (ZANU-PF) are making a concerted effort to project a return to normalcy. Shops, schools, and civil government institutions have remained open, and ordinary citizens have continued to go about their business. The presence on city streets of joint army-police patrols serves as a reminder, however, that there has been an extraordinary turn of events. Looking toward the future, President Mnangagwa and his allies are faced with many challenges, including securing their dominance within the ZANU-PF, maintaining the party's governing role, addressing the economic problems that become more urgent every day, and dealing with the aspirations of ordinary Zimbabweans for freedom and democracy.



Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa speaks after being sworn in at the presidential inauguration ceremony in the capital Harare, Zimbabwe, Friday, November 24, 2017. (Source: AP Photo/Ben Curtis.)

An Adroitly Managed Transition

As circumstantial details of the tumultuous month of November 2017 in Zimbabwe have emerged, it has become evident that what occurred was more a [settling of scores](#) within the ZANU-PF than a traditional military coup. As the author pointed out in a Council on Foreign Relations [memorandum](#) in June 2017, the most likely source of instability in Zimbabwe had long been the intra-ZANU-PF strife that former President Mugabe was unwilling or unable to quell. When Mugabe finally acted to end the in-fighting and removed Mnangagwa, leader of the "Lacoste" faction within the ZANU-PF, as vice president, he set in motion the chain of events that led to his own downfall. In the end, the alliance of self-interest between the leaders of the Zimbabwe Defense Force (ZDF) and Mnangagwa and his party faction proved stronger than the ties of loyalty to Mugabe himself.

Mnangagwa and army chief Gen. Constantine Chiwenga were the orchestrators of an adroitly managed scenario. On November 5, Chiwenga, having reportedly learned of a planned purge of the ZDF leadership by the ZANU-PF faction that supported former first lady Grace Mugabe, left for a meeting in Beijing with China's defense minister. According to [press accounts](#) and [commentary](#), the hastily arranged meeting may have been aimed at gaining China's support for President Mugabe's removal. On the same day, Robert Mugabe denounced Mnangagwa for stirring division within the party, and Grace Mugabe accused Mnangagwa of planning a coup. The next day, Mugabe removed Mnangagwa as vice president, and the latter fled on November 7 to South Africa via Mozambique. In South Africa, according to [The New York Times](#), Mnangagwa, met with officials to persuade them not to describe any intervention as a "coup."

When General Chiwenga arrived back in Harare on November 12, ZDF soldiers, who had infiltrated the airport grounds wearing maintenance worker coveralls, overpowered police officers who had been dispatched by supporters of President Mugabe to arrest the general. Two days later, on November 14, Chiwenga launched "Operation Restore Legacy," sending armored vehicles into the streets of Harare and effectively placing both Robert and Grace Mugabe under house arrest. Mnangagwa returned to Harare on November 22, and he took the oath as president two days later. To all appearances, Chiwenga and Mnangagwa did their jobs in China and South Africa well, as both countries refrained from criticizing the transfer of power.

Can Mnangagwa Succeed?

The apparent rapid return to normalcy in Zimbabwe may be misleading. Retaining power may prove more difficult for Mnangagwa than seizing it. To succeed, he will have to solidify his hold on both the party and the government and deal effectively with Zimbabwe's economic dilemma. Within the party, he has already moved to limit the risk of dissent at the Extraordinary Congress of the ZANU-PF that is planned for December 2017. According to [The Herald](#), which functions as the government's mouthpiece, the duration of the congress has been reduced from six to three days, the number of delegates has also been reduced, and the budget for the congress has been slashed.

Even though reduced in size and scope, the ZANU-PF congress will be an important moment for Mnangagwa. There will be other challenges for him in the coming months. Here are some of them:

- **Dealing with opponents within the ZANU-PF.** So far, Mnangagwa has emphasized national unity and has reached out rhetorically to other factions in the ZANU-PF and in the political opposition. On the other hand, former Finance Minister Ignatius Chombo and former party youth Kudzanai Chipanga remain [incarcerated](#). Chombo is accused of financial crimes that allegedly occurred decades ago. At local and regional levels, [factional fights](#) between the Lacoste and G40 factions have not disappeared. Will Mnangagwa hold out the olive branch, or will he act in accordance with his revolutionary *nom de guerre* of "The Crocodile"? If the former, will he seek to make peace with former vice president Joice Mujuru, who founded an opposition party after Mugabe replaced her with Mnangagwa in 2014?
- **Securing the loyalty of all the security services.** At Mnangagwa's [swearing-in ceremony](#), Gen. Chiwenga was cheered, but the head of the police, who seemed to have backed the G40 faction, was booed. The loyalties of the intelligence service during the succession scenario were not clear. Mnangagwa will need the support of the ZDF, the police, and the intelligence service to survive, and he appears to have work to do in two of the three areas.
- **Avoiding hyperinflation and economic ruin.** Despite a good harvest and rising international prices for Zimbabwe's commodities, the economy remains in shambles, with unemployment rampant. The availability of U.S. dollars, the *de facto* currency, has dropped to unworkable levels, and the [depreciation](#) of the so-called "bond notes," issued in U.S. dollar denominations, has reached 65 percent. Increased economic assistance from China may be a possibility, but real economic recovery will be contingent on dealing with Zimbabwe's large international financial arrears and attracting Western private investment. To accomplish the latter, Mnangagwa will need to limit corruption, which is the glue that holds together both the ZANU-PF party and the party's alliance with the ZDF leadership. Doing that, of course, could threaten his leadership of the party.
- **Maintaining ZANU-PF dominance.** With elections due in 2018, Mnangagwa has the advantage of facing a divided opposition. Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, is [seriously ill](#). Joice Mujuru's effectiveness as an opposition leader has been limited by [difficulties](#) within her own party. Mnangagwa also can rely on the Zimbabwean military's determination, demonstrated in the past, not to allow an opposition candidate to take office. On the other side of the ledger, Mnangagwa has been for decades a notoriously unpopular figure in Zimbabwe. He is seen as responsible for regime excesses in the past. If he tries to prevail in the election by repressing the opposition, he may find himself confronted by a populace that has been emboldened by social-media-driven movements such as [#ThisFlag](#) and that is determined not to have one strongman replaced by another.

In summary, Emmerson Mnangagwa has triumphed in a long-running intraparty feud. Whether he will succeed in replacing Robert Mugabe as leader of his country over the long haul is an open question.

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The First Round

The October presidential election was the third since Liberia's return to civilian rule in 2003, after more than a decade of civil war that left at least 250,000 dead and many more injured or displaced. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, having served two terms in office, is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term. She will officially leave office in January 2018. The successful conclusion of this election would mark the first time that Liberia, independent since 1847, has experienced a peaceful transition of power under its new democratic dispensation.

Approximately 20 candidates vied for the presidency on October 10. The main contenders included Senator George Weah of the Congress for Democratic Change, a retired soccer star; Vice President Joseph Boakai of the ruling Unity Party; Senator Prince Yormie Johnson, a former [rebel leader](#); and lawyer Charles Brumskine of the Liberty Party, former president pro tem of the Senate, and one-time close ally of ex-rebel leader Charles Taylor. Taylor, president of Liberia from 1997 to 2003, is currently serving a 50-year sentence in a British prison for [war crimes](#) committed in Sierra Leone.

Initial election returns had Weah and Boakai in first and second place, receiving 38.4 percent and 28.8 percent of the vote, respectively. The NEC was preparing for a second round of elections to be held on November 7, but one day before the election, the Supreme Court [postponed](#) the runoff indefinitely, ordering a full investigation by the NEC into claims of fraud and mismanagement made by Brumskine, who finished in third place with about 10 percent of the vote. Election observers, however, have stated that they saw [no evidence of fraud](#). Boakai and the ruling Unity Party have [allied](#) with Brumskine and publicly supported a rerun of the first round. Prince Johnson, on the other hand, has thrown his support behind Weah.

Violence, Rebel Leadership, and Conflicted Support

Previous elections in 2005 and 2011 experienced [low levels of pre-election violence](#) and intimidation, and, according to a 2017 national survey, [61 percent](#) of respondents were concerned about the potential for election disputes to lead to violence. The number of candidates reduced the access individual candidates had to state resources, especially state security forces, which in the past helped prevent violence and worked to level the playing field. Fortunately, the campaign period was deemed [relatively peaceful](#), although there were some instances of hate speech and [fisticuffs](#) breaking out between rival supporters.

The role that Charles Taylor has played in the election has also been a cause for concern. Taylor still has a small support base in Bong County, which includes former combatants. His ex-wife, Senator Jewel Howard Taylor, is Weah's running mate, and they have been deliberately courting Taylor's supporters. It was alleged in late 2016 that Weah had traveled



In this Tuesday, October 10, 2017, file photo, people wait to cast their votes during a presidential election in Monrovia, Liberia. (Source: AP Photo/Abbas Dulleh, File.)

[to visit Taylor in prison](#) to secure his support, reportedly by placing Senator Taylor on the ticket. On the campaign trail, Senator Taylor told local reporters that the country needed to return to the [agenda](#) that her ex-husband had been pursuing as president. Audio recordings of Charles Taylor [endorsing](#) his ex-wife were also leaked at the beginning of the 2017 presidential campaign, much as they were before her 2014 senate run.

Surprisingly, President Sirleaf [did not campaign](#) on behalf of her vice president, Boakai. She reportedly shifted her support to his opponents, and Boakai even accused her at one point of backing Weah. Perennial opposition candidate Weah, who spent the majority of the civil war playing soccer in Europe, enjoys significant popularity among the youth. He has come close to the presidency in previous elections but was defeated by Sirleaf in 2005 and 2011 when he ran as vice president

Next Steps

To many, the Supreme Court's decision to force the NEC to thoroughly [investigate](#) the opposition's claims of fraud was a welcome demonstration of judicial oversight of the electoral process. The opposition has a [seven-day](#) window from the issuance of the NEC's decision on November 24 to appeal. The Supreme Court will then have [seven days](#) to issue a ruling. The Supreme Court could call for a complete repeat of the first round, or it could determine that the NEC's investigation was sufficient and allow the second round to proceed based on the results of the October 10 election. The NEC has stated it could organize fresh elections within about [two weeks](#) of a Supreme Court ruling, so late December is the earliest the next election would held.

Peaceful compliance with the Court's rulings by all actors up until this point bodes well for the next phase of Liberia's elections. On the other hand, it is troubling that Charles Taylor is still relevant in Liberian politics. To continue to shore up its democratic gains, the next government of Liberia needs to return to implementing the 2009 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [final report](#), which stalled under President Sirleaf. The report's recommendations were made as part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed to end the civil war in 2003. They included provisions for reparations; justice and reconciliation mechanisms; reforms in the fields of governance, anticorruption, and human rights; and stipulations as to who should and should not run for political office.

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SOUTH AFRICA: ANC PREPARES TO ELECT NEW LEADERSHIP

By Sarah Graveline

From December 16 to 20, 2017, South Africa's ruling political party, the African National Congress (ANC), will hold its National Conference to elect the next party leader and nominee for the 2019 presidential elections. In preparation, ANC local branches this week finished nominating delegates. The leading candidates are the current deputy president, Cyril Ramaphosa, and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, former AU chairperson and ex-wife of embattled current president Jacob Zuma. The tense race reflects the ANC's struggle to determine its path forward in the wake of increasing evidence of malfeasance under Zuma's administration. [more...](#)

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In this file photo taken Wednesday, July 5, 2017, former African Union Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma looks toward Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa during their policy conference in Johannesburg, South Africa. (Source: AP Photo/Themba Hadebe, File.)

SADC TROOPS DEPLOY TO LESOTHO

By Dr. Alexander Noyes

On December 2, 2017, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) officially [launched](#) a peacekeeping mission in Lesotho. Lesotho has suffered from several bouts of political instability and violence since 2014. In June 2017, the country held an election ahead of schedule for the [third](#) time in five years, bringing a coalition led by Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's All Basotho Convention (ABC) party to power. The SADC mission, launched three months after the [assassination](#) of Lesotho's top army commander in September 2017, aims to stabilize the country and oversee the implementation of a number of institutional and security reforms. Will it succeed? [more...](#)



Part of the SADC Contingency Force. (Source: "SADC officially launches the SADC Preventive Mission in the Kingdom of Lesotho on December 2, 2017," SADC Press Release, December 2, 2017, <http://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/sadc-officially-launches-sadc-preventive-mission-kingdom-lesotho-december-2-2017/>.)

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Zuma Seemed Untouchable...

Zuma has faced allegations of misconduct for nearly as long as he has been a public figure. In 2005, he was [fired](#) from his position as deputy president over allegations of corruption. He was also charged with rape, although later [acquitted](#). In 2007, Zuma was [charged](#) with 783 counts of corruption for allegedly accepting bribes when he was deputy president. Despite the scandal, Zuma pushed out Thabo Mbeki to become the head of the ANC in 2007 and, in 2009, was elected president of South Africa after the National Prosecuting Authority [dropped](#) the corruption charges against him.

Scandal continued to follow Zuma in office. In 2016, he was found guilty of using state funds to pay for luxury upgrades to his [Nkandla](#) estate. In December 2015, Zuma announced the appointment of [David van Rooyen](#), a politician with no finance experience, to be his finance minister. He was almost immediately forced by public opinion to replace van Rooyen with, Pravin Gordhan, an experienced financial advisor. In March 2016, however, Zuma abruptly fired Gordhan, leading major credit agencies to [downgrade](#) South Africa's credit to junk status.

In November 2016, South African Public Protector Thuli Madonsela released the blockbuster "State of Capture" [report](#), which alleged that Zuma's shuffling of finance ministers was part of a larger strategy to ensure that South African government bodies were subservient to Zuma's patronage network. The report further alleged that the Gupta brothers, a family with extensive business interests in South Africa, exercised significant control over this network. The report catalyzed public frustration with Zuma's administration, which has intensified as further [media investigations](#) have provided new details of financial wrongdoing.

Thus far, Zuma has faced few repercussions for his alleged misconduct. As president, he survived eight parliamentary [votes of no confidence](#), and he maintains significant support from ANC branches in the country's North West province. This support has made his ex-wife, Dlamini-Zuma, [competitive](#) in the race for party leadership.

... But Is the Jig Up?

Since the release of the State of Capture report, however, it has become increasingly likely that Zuma will be held responsible for malfeasance. Public opinion has turned against him. In [April 2017](#), a polling firm found that his approval rating had dropped to 20 percent in urban areas and that even in the province where his support was strongest, 63 percent of respondents thought he should resign.



In this file photo taken Wednesday, July 5, 2017, former African Union Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma looks toward Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa during their policy conference in Johannesburg, South Africa. (Source: AP Photo/Themba Hadebe, File.)

Growing frustration is also reflected internationally, where the Gupta brothers' brand has become toxic. Following allegations that McKinsey and KPMG improperly interacted with Gupta-owned companies, two banks announced they would no longer work with [McKinsey](#), while [KPMG's](#) South African leadership was forced to resign. The PR firm [Bell Pottinger](#) was forced to close altogether following backlash against its racially charged campaign on behalf of the Guptas. In addition, U.S. and British governments have opened [investigations](#) into the Gupta's businesses that may limit the family's ability to move money internationally, further curtailing their political clout and financial flexibility.

Zuma is also facing increased legal scrutiny. In [2016](#), the South African High Court ruled that the National Prosecuting Authority had improperly dropped corruption charges against him in 2009. Currently, the National Prosecuting Authority is [considering](#) whether to reinstate the charges.

The likelihood of legal charges against Zuma raises the stakes for the ANC National Congress. Zuma's support for his ex-wife, Dlamini-Zuma, suggests he would expect her to help protect his legacy. A former cabinet minister and chairperson of the African Union, [Dlamini-Zuma](#) has promised in her campaign speeches to unite the ANC. By contrast, her opponent, [Ramaphosa](#), is running on a reform platform, positioning himself as a pro-business and anti-corruption candidate.

Is It Too Late for ANC Reforms?

South Africans are increasingly looking beyond the ANC for political solutions. The longstanding tripartite agreement that links the ANC with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has come under strain. For the first time, on [November 29](#), the SACP ran its own candidates in a local by-election instead of supporting ANC politicians, signaling that SACP links to the ANC may be weakening.

Where elections have already taken place, opposition parties are proving their ability to function without the ANC. As [Africa Watch](#) reported, in local elections held in August 2016, the ANC lost control of Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Nelson Mandela Bay. In Johannesburg, the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), two parties on opposite ends of the political spectrum, have proven able to govern in an uneasy coalition, largely due to both parties' opposition to the ANC. On November 30, the EFF provided the DA the necessary votes to cancel an ANC-led vote of [no confidence](#) against the mayor, a DA politician.

Conclusion

The compounding challenges of shrinking public support and widespread concern over corruption have raised the stakes for the December ANC national conference. Ramaphosa's lead in [delegates](#) suggests the party recognizes the need for change. The vote could go either way, however, because delegates do not have to vote as publicly pledged and some branches' delegates have refused to [declare](#) their intentions ahead of time. While a Ramaphosa victory would signal the ANC's intent to tamp down on corruption, given the scale of malfeasance under Zuma, the party will have an uphill battle to regain South Africans' trust.

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Background

Lesotho, a landlocked country with a population of 2 million, is located in southern Africa. South Africa entirely surrounds the small country and has long played an influential role in the country's politics. In 1998, SADC launched a controversial military intervention to quell a military coup in Lesotho, [sending](#) a contingent of security forces from South Africa and Botswana. As highlighted in [earlier editions](#) of *Africa Watch*, an attempted coup in 2014 sparked a volatile period in Lesotho, punctuated by several outbreaks of political violence, intrasecurity sector scuffles and assassinations, and SADC involvement, led by South Africa's deputy president, Cyril Ramaphosa. Previous SADC mediations led to several investigations and reports calling for political and security reforms, which largely went unheeded. A series of early elections failed to put an end to the political instability. The latest bout of violence took place in September 2017, when Khoantle Motsomotso, Lesotho's army commander, was [killed](#) by troops thought to be loyal to former head of Lesotho's military, Tlali Kamoli (who was behind the 2014 coup attempt).

SADC Force Arrives

While initial [reports](#) suggested that the SADC peacekeeping force would be made up of approximately 1,000 troops and deploy on November 1, the size was later reduced to around 250. After several delays, the SADC force began to [arrive](#) on November 20 and was officially launched on December 2. The contingent, known as the Preventive Mission in the Kingdom of Lesotho (SAPMIL), [includes](#) 207 troops, 24 police officers, 15 intelligence officers, and 12 civilian experts. It has an initial mandate of 6 months, but is expected to be renewed. [Contributing countries](#) are Angola, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Acting Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki [welcomed](#) the SADC mission at the launch: "your presence here today bears witness to yet another historic and firm resolve by SADC to support the Kingdom of Lesotho in her quest to institute reforms aimed at achieving lasting political and security [stability], necessary for economic development and the general well-being of Basotho [citizens of Lesotho]." SADC's Director of the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Affairs, Jorge Cardoso, [noted](#) at the launch ceremony that the purpose of the mission "is not here to take over or replace the Lesotho Defense Force or other security institutions" but aims to "support and complement" the Lesotho government and its security forces.

Early Positive Signs

While it is too early to tell if the SADC mission will succeed, early signs indicate that the force deployment may already be having a salutary impact on the ground. On December 1, eight soldiers were charged with the killing of Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao in June 2015. The Lesotho Times, a local newspaper, [called](#) this development in the delayed



Part of the SADC Contingency Force. (Source: "SADC officially launches the SADC Preventive Mission in the Kingdom of Lesotho on December 2, 2017," SADC Press Release, December 2, 2017, <http://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/sadc-officially-launches-sadc-preventive-mission-kingdom-lesotho-december-2-2017/>.)

case “a major breakthrough.” On December 2, four other soldiers were [arrested](#) for the July 2016 shooting of Lesotho Times editor Lloyd Mutungamiri, which took place after the paper had published critical accounts of the military. Prime Minister Thabane [told](#) the *Daily Maverick*, a South African newspaper, that the deployment of the SADC force was finally allowing him the space to arrest soldiers for their past crimes: “That’s the objective and the intention and nothing more than that.”

Conclusion

Lots of work remains to be done. An SADC Commission of Inquiry into the killing of Mahao, which finished its work in July 2015, delineated a series of political and security reforms necessary to put the country on a stable path. Because previous governments failed to implement these reforms, the difficult task now falls to the current government and the SADC mission.

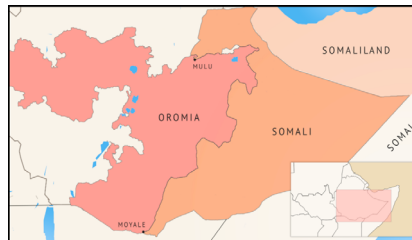
SADC’s past efforts at mediation proved insufficient and were unable to bring stability to Lesotho. With the deployment of troops, this time may be different. Early indications suggest that the backing of force may open up new opportunities for genuine progress and reform. International actors might be wise to support the SADC mission, paying particular attention to needed security sector reforms.

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

WHAT DOES UNREST IN OROMIA SIGNIFY?

By Dr. Stephanie M. Burchard

In mid-December, a series of violent clashes between ethnic Oromo and ethnic Somalis in the Oromia region of Ethiopia resulted in at least [61 fatalities](#). This outbreak of violence followed the deaths of [16 protesters](#) who were shot by state security forces on December 12 in Chelenko, located east of Mulu in northern Oromia. Ethiopia was previously under a state of emergency from October 2016 to August 2017 in response to waves of protest that originated in Oromia and swept the country beginning in 2014. What is driving the recent spate of violence in Oromia, and is it indicative of potential larger unrest? [more...](#)



A map of Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regions. (Source: Salem Solomon, "What's Driving Clashes Between Ethiopia's Somali, Oromia Regions?" VOA News, September 29, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/lyan5my9y>.)

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SAUDI ARABIA: DEVELOPING AN AFRICA STRATEGY

By Dr. Ashley N. Bybee

Saudi Arabia does not typically spring to mind as an important Arab or Islamic partner on the African continent. On the contrary, its ideological rival Iran has been most commonly associated with Africa, deepening diplomatic ties, promoting economic development, and exporting the Shia revolution beyond its borders. The global food crisis of 2007–2008 prompted the initial push by several Gulf nations, among them Saudi Arabia, to invest in Africa's agricultural sector. While food security continues to be an important driver of Saudi investment in the continent, its engagements have taken on a decidedly more strategic flavor, seeking to strengthen diplomatic relationships, supporting militaries, investing in development projects, all while countering the prevailing Islamic power player in the region—Iran. [more...](#)



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman speaks at a meeting of the Islamic Military Counterterrorism Alliance in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Sunday, Nov. 26, 2017. Saudi Arabia's crown prince on Sunday opened the first high-level meeting of a kingdom-led alliance of Muslim nations against terrorism, vowing that extremists will no longer "tarnish our beautiful religion." (Source: Saudi Press Agency via AP.)

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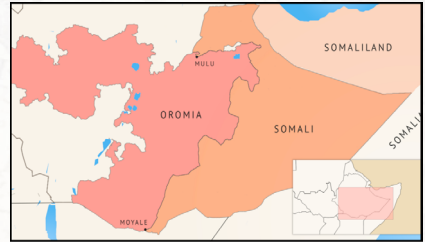
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A map of Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regions. (Source: Salem Solomon, "What's Driving Clashes Between Ethiopia's Somali, Oromia Regions?" VOA News, September 29, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/yan5my9y>.)

Origins of Unrest

Despite commonalities in language, religion, and culture, Oromo and ethnic Somalis have experienced intermittent conflict for at least the past 25 years. Their two regional states, Oromia and Somali, share a border that is poorly demarcated. Much of the conflict between the Oromo and Somali groups has historically [centered](#) on access to resources and land.

Both ethnic groups complain about being marginalized by the Ethiopian government, which has been dominated by the Tigray ethnic group. Ethiopia is ethnically heterogeneous, with more than 80 recognized ethnic groups. The Tigray are one of Ethiopia's smaller ethnic groups, representing about 6 percent of the total population. The members of the country's largest ethnic group, the Oromo, which comprises an estimated 35 percent to 40 percent of the population, feel particularly [underrepresented](#) by the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front.

Although tensions between the Oromo and ethnic Somalis are long-standing, the most recent conflict needs to be contextualized against the backdrop of previous unrest in Oromia that began in 2014. After the announcement of a [development scheme in 2014](#) (detailed in the August 25, 2016, issue of *Africa Watch*) that would have enabled the government to incorporate parts of Oromia into the capital city, Addis Ababa, protests broke out across Oromia. During the initial phases of the project, Oromo leaders [accused](#) the government of taking over land and forcibly evicting families. Protests continued and the grievances [expanded](#) to include concerns over human rights abuses, political representation, and limitations placed on freedom of expression. The government ultimately abandoned its expansion plan in January 2016 in response to the unrest, but anti-government protests continued to [spread](#) to the [Amhara](#) community, Ethiopia's second largest ethnic group, and the [capital](#). The government imposed a state of emergency in October 2016.

Current Conflict

Details are sparse about the most recent clashes, but reports indicate that members from the Oromo ethnic group were killed [first](#), which then triggered reprisal killings of ethnic Somalis. The [clashes](#) are alleged to [involve](#) the Somali Special Police, the Liyu. The [Liyu](#) are a paramilitary group created by the government in the mid-2000s to deal with a previous secessionist group located in the Somali region, the Ogaden National Liberation Front. The Liyu have been accused of using excessive force and engaging in [extrajudicial](#) killings. Coincidentally, in October, government forces were accused of killing four people in Oromia who were [protesting](#) the delivery of a shipment of arms to the Liyu. While some are attempting to define the recent clashes as primarily ethnic in nature, activists in Oromia [claim](#) that the involvement of the Liyu indicates that it is actually state-sponsored violence.

The December 2017 clashes appear to be part of an escalation of violence and protest in the region. From October 1 to November 30, around 118 violent events took place in Oromia, almost 50 percent of which were protests. An estimated 200 fatalities occurred and tens of thousands are believed to have been displaced. This increase in violence follows a lull from April to July. Roughly 30 percent of all conflict activity in 2017 has involved the Liyu in some capacity; almost 50 percent has involved state security forces (military or police).

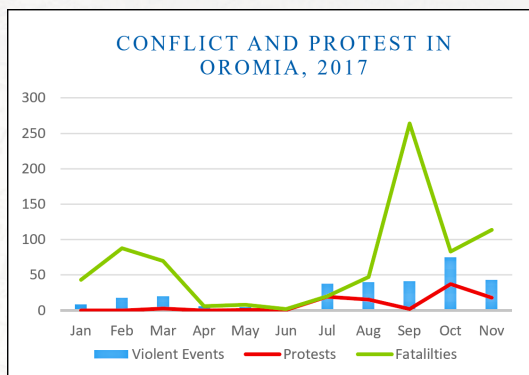
Government Response to Unrest

The Ethiopian government responded to the 2014 Oromia security situation with a heavy hand. Ethiopian police were responsible for [hundreds of deaths](#) during protests from 2014 to 2016. In 2016, at the height of the conflict, more than 1,000 fatalities were reported in Oromia. The government arrested protesters *en masse* and attempted to control the flow of information into and out of Oromia. During the state of emergency, at least [29,000](#) persons were arrested, many of whom are still awaiting trial. The government arrested scores of journalists and frequently [jammed](#) nonstate news sources to prevent them from broadcasting. According to Human Rights Watch, the government also routinely [cut cell phone service](#) in areas where the military was deployed, presumably to prevent information about the military's actions from being publicized widely.

Conclusion

The Ethiopian government announced in August 2017 that it was lifting the state of emergency due to an [improved security](#) situation, but recent events suggest a resurgence of violence and protest in Oromia. The uptick in violence may signal the beginning of renewed unrest in Ethiopia. This should serve as a reminder that the core issues underlying the previous unrest, namely state repression and political representation, were never adequately addressed.

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Data taken from the Africa Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED): <https://www.acleddata.com/data/realtime-data>.

SAUDI ARABIA: DEVELOPING AN AFRICA STRATEGY

By Dr. Ashley N. Bybee

Saudi Arabia does not typically spring to mind as an important Arab or Islamic partner on the African continent. On the contrary, its ideological rival Iran has been most commonly associated with Africa, deepening diplomatic ties, promoting economic development, and exporting the Shia revolution beyond its borders. The global food crisis of 2007–2008 prompted the initial push by several Gulf nations, among them Saudi Arabia, to invest in Africa's agricultural sector. While food security continues to be an important driver of Saudi investment in the continent, its engagements have taken on a decidedly more strategic flavor, seeking to strengthen diplomatic relationships, supporting militaries, investing in development projects, all while countering the prevailing Islamic power player in the region—Iran.



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman speaks at a meeting of the Islamic Military Counterterrorism Alliance in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Sunday, Nov. 26, 2017. Saudi Arabia's crown prince on Sunday opened the first high-level meeting of a kingdom-led alliance of Muslim nations against terrorism, vowing that extremists will no longer "tarnish our beautiful religion." (Source: Saudi Press Agency via AP.)

Economic Interests

With a rapidly growing population and insufficient land suitable for agricultural cultivation, Saudi Arabia has been [heavily dependent](#) on food imports. To reduce this dependency, it has identified foreign agricultural production as an important pillar of its food strategy, negotiating deals abroad that [ensure](#) that a significant portion of the food produced will be exported to the Kingdom. With massive amounts of uncultivated yet fertile land, Africa is a prime target for Saudi investment in agriculture sectors, and [Ethiopia, Sudan, and Zambia](#) have been major recipients of Saudi foreign direct investment since [2009](#). By [2016](#), Saudi Arabia was the fifth largest foreign investor in Africa, with \$3.8 billion in capital investments.

In 2016, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in his role as president of the Council of Economic Affairs and Development, presented [Vision 2030](#), Saudi Arabia's road map toward economic diversification for a non-oil future. As part of this plan, the government's sovereign wealth fund, called the [Public Investment Fund \(PIF\)](#), will be an important vehicle through which the Kingdom will secure long-term returns through global investments in non-oil sectors. Emerging markets such as Africa's, where rising [entrepreneurship](#) and a growing middle class offer plenty of opportunities for economic reward, have been identified as a target for PIF investment.

Countering Iranian Influence

Until 2014, Iran was unopposed as the favored Islamic partner of most African countries. Sudan and Iran enjoyed a particularly close relationship until the Sudanese government expelled Iranian officials, whom they accused of spreading Shiite Islam throughout Sudan's Sunni institutions. Recognizing the opportunity to supplant Iran as Sudan's Islamic partner of choice, Saudi Arabia began to cultivate this relationship, continuing to invest heavily in the Sudanese agriculture sector and funding Islamic projects. In 2015, when Sudan sent [6,000](#) troops to the Saudi-led campaign against the al-Houthi militia in Yemen, Saudi Arabia deposited [\\$1 billion](#) in Sudan's Central Bank. In May 2017, Saudi Arabia raised some eyebrows when it invited Sudanese [President Omar al-Bashir](#), who has been indicted by the International Criminal Court, to participate in a summit meeting that included President Trump.

The year 2016 was pivotal in the competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran for influence in Africa. On January 2, Iranian protesters [set fire](#) to the Saudi embassy in Tehran, prompting Saudi Arabia to sever diplomatic relations with Iran. Under pressure from the Kingdom to do the same, Djibouti and Somalia, which had been longtime allies of Iran, followed suit.

The Gulf crisis during the summer of 2017 offered another opportunity for the Kingdom to lobby support from African states and test the loyalty of existing partners. When Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt announced a [diplomatic break](#) with Qatar, which they characterized as supporting terrorist groups and being too close to their regional nemesis, Iran, they concurrently called on African countries to express solidarity with their position. Senegal, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, and Eritrea [obliged](#), while Somalia, which has strong ties with Qatar, remained neutral.

Security

Saudi Arabia's involvement in African security is a relatively new development in the Kingdom's foreign policy. In December 2015, Saudi Arabia announced the formation of an [Islamic military alliance](#) to combat terrorism. Members (half of which are African states) can [request or offer assistance](#) to each other to fight militants through this forum. Although this forum has been considered by [some](#) to be as much a vehicle for containing Shia Islam as for containing violent extremism, the United States has [welcomed](#) its creation and applauded the Kingdom for taking a more proactive role in counterterrorism. In another example of its commitment to campaigns against extremists, Saudi Arabia pledged [\\$100 million](#) to the G5-Sahel Force in December 2017. The G5-Sahel Force, which involves Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania, has the mission of fighting armed extremist groups and transnational crime across the Sahel. Saudi Arabia's financial pledge to this force is a noteworthy expansion of its military support to countries beyond East Africa or troop contributors to its combat operations in Yemen.

Early in 2016, Saudi Arabia provided [\\$22 billion](#) to help finance Morocco's military industry. Soon thereafter, it diverted [\\$5 billion](#) from Lebanon to the army of Sudan. Given that Morocco and Sudan had contributed troops to the Saudi-led campaign against Houthi rebels in Yemen (along with Senegal), it seems logical to assume that the financial support was a reward for their contributions. In March 2016, following Djibouti's severing of diplomatic relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia [announced](#) that it would establish a military base in the tiny East African country. Situated on the Bab Al Mandeb Strait, Djibouti is a strategic location not only for its proximity to the Suez Canal but also for [monitoring](#) Iranian activity in the region.

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia seems to be crafting a comprehensive strategy in Africa. It is addressing its own food-security challenges through increased investment in Africa's agricultural sector, while seeking opportunities to diversify its oil-dependent economy through investments in Africa's rapidly growing emerging markets. It continues to compete with Iran through diplomatic and political engagement. Although Crown Prince Mohammed has presented himself as a champion of moderate Islam, the Kingdom's use of "soft power tools," particularly through the construction of Quranic schools and other public goods, is a method of advancing Sunnism as the dominant form of Islam on the continent. In return for contributions of troops to its coalition in Yemen, Saudi Arabia has provided African states with billions in military assistance. Supporting multinational counterterrorism alliances is another means of advancing its influence. In summary, Saudi Arabia's activities in Africa, to date, seem to have been fruitful in achieving its objectives.

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

ANGOLA—REAL CHANGE OR MORE OF THE SAME?

By George F. Ward

Angola ranked [164th out of 176 countries surveyed](#) in the 2016 Corruption Perception Index compiled by Transparency International. Therefore, many Angolans likely viewed as empty rhetoric the anti-corruption stance taken by João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, the leader of the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), in the campaign for the August 2017 elections. Somewhat surprisingly, Lourenço since his inauguration as president has seemed to make good on his promises by sacking several dozen senior government officials and parastatal executives, including the son and daughter of former President José Eduardo dos Santos. Given Angola's importance as a major petrochemical producer and the important political role it plays in Southern Africa, it is worth examining Lourenço's motivations. Will he change Angola's culture of official corruption? [more...](#)



Angola's MPLA main ruling party candidate, João Lourenço, shows his ink-stained finger as he faces the media after casting his vote in elections in Luanda, Angola, Wednesday, August 23, 2017. (Source: AP Photo/Bruno Fonseca.)

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

NEW ROUND OF DEADLY PROTESTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

By Sarah Graveline

On December 31, 2017, Congolese security forces used tear-gas and live ammunition, [killing](#) five and injuring 92, to disrupt protests coordinated by churches across Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Organized by the [Catholic Lay Coordinating Committee](#) (*Comité Laïc de Coordination*, or CLC), and endorsed by the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO) and the Vatican embassy, the demonstrators sought a relatively modest goal: for the Congolese government to honor the CENCO-negotiated political agreement, signed December 31, 2016, which laid out terms for the next election. The government's harsh response signals its determination to continue delaying elections. [more...](#)



A Congolese young man protests against President Joseph Kabila's refusal to step down from power in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sunday, December 31, 2017. (Source: AP Photo/John Bompengo.)

Sarah Graveline is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

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

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A Party Man in a Challenging Position

[Oil](#) represents around a third of Angola's GDP and over 95 percent of its exports. The decline in the price of oil since mid-2014 has had a significant impact on the Angolan economy. In addition, oil production has been falling due to challenging operating conditions in Angola's largely offshore installations. During the first half of 2017, average oil production was 8.2 percent lower than at its peak in 2010. Accordingly, Angolan GDP growth decelerated from an annual average of 10.3 percent in the 2004–2014 decade to only 1.5 percent annually since 2015. The kwanza, Angola's currency, has been under pressure, and debt has increased. On January 3, 2018, the *Financial Times* [reported](#) an announcement by Angola's central bank that the country would "renegotiate" its debts and abandon the kwanza's peg to the U.S. dollar, allowing it to float. These economic difficulties have impeded progress on Angola's massive development challenges, and large numbers of Angolans remain in poverty.

This difficult economic situation, accompanied by increased social unrest, was the backdrop for Angola's 2017 elections, in which the head of the party winning the most votes would become president. In February 2017, former President dos Santos [confirmed](#) his intention not to lead the MPLA in the elections. In selecting his successor, the party chose from within its own ranks, avoiding a dynastic transition to one of dos Santos's high-profile children. Lourenço possesses impeccable party credentials, has served in a variety of party and government positions, and maintains solid relationships with Angola's powerful military leaders. While Lourenço has enjoyed a remarkably corruption-free reputation, he was viewed as unlikely to look deeply into the ways in which members of the Angolan elite had amassed large personal fortunes over the decades of the country's oil boom.

The MPLA emerged victorious from the August 2017 elections, but with a [reduced majority](#) of 61 percent of the vote and 150 out of 220 parliamentary seats. (In the two previous elections—2008 and 2012—the MPLA had won 191 and 175 seats, respectively.) After court challenges of the August election results, Lourenço assumed the presidency from dos Santos in September.

A New Broom Sweeps—But Clean?

Perhaps spurred on by the MPLA's relatively weak showing in the elections and by popular sentiment for change, Lourenço [began to move](#) in late October. On October 27, days after a speech in parliament in which he had called for professionalism and competence in the leadership of the central bank, he dismissed the bank's director. Soon

afterward, he replaced the board of administrators and editors-in-chief of state-owned media outlets and, on the same day, canceled government contracts with a company owned by one of dos Santos's children. Then, on November 15, Lourenço made his most startling move by [firing](#) Isabel dos Santos, the daughter of the former president and allegedly Africa's richest woman, from her post as chair of Sonangol, the state oil company. Also dismissed were six other members of the Sonangol board and two technocrats who had been brought in to clean up the company's finances and lead a restructuring. Following that high-profile dismissal, the new president continued his campaign, sacking the administrators of [nine public utilities and companies](#) and the [police and intelligence chiefs](#). He also announced plans to open the telecommunications industry to foreign bidders. He offered a temporary amnesty to rich Angolans who repatriate funds but threatened to take legal action against those who do not.

A further indication of Lourenço's commitment to change came on January 10, 2018, when he [fired](#) José Filomeno de Sousa "Zenu" dos Santos, son of the former president, as chairman of Angola's sovereign wealth fund (Fundo Soberano de Angola, or FSDEA). The FSDEA disposes of \$5 billion in assets. Although the FSDEA's [website](#) emphasizes the fund's transparency and dedication to the welfare of the people of Angola, it has often been at the center of allegations of cronyism and self-dealing. Some of these allegations emerged from the so-called Panama Papers and Paradise Papers, which delivered massive amounts of offshore financial information to investigative journalists. Allegedly, the FSDEA's principal investment adviser, a close associate of Zenu dos Santos, received [\\$41 million](#) for 20 months of work and also benefited from FSDEA funding for a port-development project. At a [press conference](#) on January 8, 2018, President Lourenço had foreshadowed change in the leadership of the FSDEA, and he denied any tensions with former President dos Santos over the changes made so far.

As in the previous dismissals, Lourenço appointed a party loyalist as the new head of the FSDEA. The new chairman of the fund is Carlos Alberto Lopes, a former Minister of Finance. Lopes assumed the finance portfolio in 2010 and was [dismissed](#) by former President dos Santos in 2013. Angola enjoyed rapid economic growth during Lopes's tenure as finance minister, and he successfully negotiated a loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund.

Conclusion

The extent of these changes and the speed with which they have been implemented are particularly surprising in the Angolan context, where one man, dos Santos, had been in power for 38 years. But although the changes have been broad, there are questions about their depth and where they will lead. Lourenço has targeted members of the dos Santos family and officials with particularly close ties to dos Santos, as in the case of the police and intelligence chiefs. Those dismissed have been replaced not by reformers, but with party loyalists. In the case of Sonangol, as noted above, technocrats who might have been agents of real change were let go. Thus, it looks as if the net effect so far has been to install new MPLA faces in place of old. Real change is still possible, but the moves so far have had mainly public relations value. On their own they will not necessarily do much to resolve Angola's dilemmas of economic stagnation, corruption, and debt.

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For President Kabila, Delaying Elections Has Proven Effective

One year ago, the DRC entered a state of constitutional crisis. By failing to step down on December 19, 2016, President Joseph Kabila remained in office past his constitutionally mandated term limit. As [Africa Watch](#) noted, this was the expected outcome after Kabila's administration deliberately obstructed election planning and sought a court ruling to ensure Kabila would be able to remain in power past 2016.

The immediate crisis was resolved through a negotiated [agreement](#) mediated by CENCO and signed by the government on December 31, 2016. The deal laid out the terms for a political transition, in which Kabila would step down and elections would be held by the end of 2017.

As it became increasingly obvious throughout the course of 2017 that Kabila's government did not intend to follow the terms of the agreement, opposition [politicians](#) and [civil society organizations](#) organized protests. Their impact was limited, however, in part due to the opposition's fragmentation, particularly after the death of long-time opposition leader [Etienne Tshisekedi](#) in February 2017.

The Catholic Church Takes on Increasingly Political Role

The Catholic Church has played an influential role in Congolese civic life since the colonial era. Today, approximately half the DRC's population is Catholic, and the [church](#) fills gaps in government services by providing health care and education in locations throughout the country. This, combined with the church's history of engagement with the state, gives the institution standing to intercede in Congolese politics, as seen in its [mediation](#) of the December 2016 agreement.

The church has increasingly found itself at the vanguard of efforts to pressure Kabila's government toward political change. In the absence of clear leadership from the DRC's opposition parties, the church has publicly begun to push the government to honor the December 2016 agreement. In early December 2017, Father Vincent Tshomba, head of the College of Deans in the diocese of Kinshasa, instituted a weekly [bell-ringing campaign](#) to protest Kabila's failure to abide by the agreement. In addition, both CENCO and the embassy at the Vatican offered strong support to the December 31 protests, which were [planned](#) by Kinshasa's Lay Coordinating Committee in tandem with local parishes.



A Congolese young man protests against President Joseph Kabila's refusal to step down from power in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sunday, December 31, 2017. (Source: AP Photo/John Bompengo.)

Can the Church Effect Change Beyond Protests?

The imagery of the demonstrations, in which security forces tear-gassed and shot at protesters [inside church property, killing five](#), marked a new deterioration of relations between church and state. In the aftermath, [Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo](#), head of the Catholic Church in the DRC, accused the government of “barbarism” in its response to the protestors.

While the church has broad support in its efforts to push the government toward political reform, demonstrated by its ability to mobilize citizens across Kinshasa, it may be reaching the limits of its influence. As [commentators](#) have noted, the church's political authority derives from public perception that it is an impartial organization interceding between highly partisan political parties. If the government perceives the church to be supporting the opposition, the government may be even less open to church-led arbitration.

Absent a role as mediator, the church's ability to stand up to the government is questionable. During the protests, the Congolese government signaled its willingness to forcefully oppose the institution by allowing security forces to attack protestors on church property. While the church can provide a moral call for reform, it can do little against state-sponsored violence.

Conclusion

The December 31 protests are notable for the government's violent response against one of the most powerful independent institutions in the country, but they are unlikely to change the DRC's political trajectory. Indeed, by responding so disproportionately to nonviolent, church-led protests, Kabila has demonstrated more clearly than ever his intent to remain in office.

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