

## MALI: ELECTIONS HIGHLIGHT GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

By Sarah Constantine

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In this photo taken on May 30, 2018, a member of the army stands guard at the entrance of the headquarters of a new, five-nation West African counterterrorism force in Mali. On June 29, 2018, a car packed with explosives detonated at the headquarters, setting off a gun battle that left at least two soldiers and two attackers dead and several soldiers wounded, officials with the Mali-based force told The Associated Press. (Source: AP Photo/Baba Ahmed.)

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Madagascar's President Hery Rajaonarimampianina shown in Paris, France, Wednesday, June 28, 2017. Hery recently appointed Christian Ntsay as prime minister, part of a "consensus" unity government meant to ease escalating political tensions before elections scheduled for November 7. (Source: AP Photo/Michel Euler.)

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### About IDA

The Institute for Defense Analyses is a non-profit corporation operating in the public interest.

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

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

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## Presidential Elections Underscore Security and Governance Concerns

On July 7, 2018, [campaigning](#) for Mali's presidential elections officially began. While 24 [candidates](#) will take part, the race will likely be won by either incumbent President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta or Soumaïla Cissé, former finance minister and leader of the opposition Union for the Republic and Democracy (URD).

The vote was nearly delayed following a two-week [strike](#) by election workers responsible for distributing voter cards. The unions representing the workers did agree to a settlement with the government on July 7, but the strike highlighted general [dissatisfaction](#) in the capital, Bamako, with economic conditions in the country.

This [dissatisfaction](#) is echoed nationally as citizens grow increasingly frustrated with the government's failure to control violence, reduce corruption, and deliver services. In June 2015, the central government and two coalitions of armed groups signed a [peace agreement](#), but failed to follow through on a shared implementation plan. Three years on, critics argue that the agreement has failed to stem [violence](#) and has had the perverse effect of encouraging [splintering](#) within the signatory coalitions, complicating peacebuilding efforts.

Notably, the al-Qaeda-linked [Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wa-l-Muslimin](#) (JNIM), which emerged as an amalgamation of four armed groups in 2017, is not a signatory of the 2015 Bamako agreement. JNIM militants have become significant spoilers of the peace process, claiming responsibility for many [attacks](#) against Malian soldiers and members of the UN peacekeeping mission, the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). While some Malian officials have [reportedly](#) considered attempting to negotiate with the JNIM, international partners reject this approach in favor of continued stabilization operations.

## Regional and International Stabilization Efforts Show Mixed Success

Mali is currently home to several stabilization operations. A unilateral French force of approximately 4,500 troops has been deployed in Mali since 2012, first under Operation Serval and then under its successor, [Operation Barkhane](#). In addition, there are approximately 15,000 UN peacekeepers deployed in [MINUSMA](#). Finally, a planned 5,000 soldiers will participate in the regional [G5 Sahel](#) force (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger), which formally declared operational readiness in April 2018 and has conducted operations along Mali's borders with Niger and Burkina Faso. The Malian army, or [Forces Armées Maliennes](#) (FAMA), deploys independently and in support of the MINUSMA and the G5 force.

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Within the past year the international community has significantly expanded its support to stabilization missions within Mali. In [February 2018](#), the European Union (EU), UN, United States, African Union (AU), Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and G5 regional nations committed to raising €414 million for the G5 Sahel force to be channeled through a coordination hub managed by the EU. This commitment comes on top of continued assurances of support for MINUSMA and multilateral development efforts, including the EU-organized [Alliance for the Sahel](#).

Despite these declarations of support, coordinating security assistance to Mali has proven challenging. To date, the G5 Sahel has [received](#) only €100 million of the pledged total. The G5 Sahel effort also faces significant [coordination](#) challenges with the other forces operating in Mali and neighboring countries.

Other armed groups have further exacerbated this problem, seeking to disrupt coordination efforts and increase political pressure on international partners through attacks that increase the human and financial costs of operating in Mali. Ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Mauritania in July 2018, [JNIM](#) took credit for a car bomb attack on the G5 Sahel force headquarters in Sèvre, Mali, and a suicide bombing in Gao.

Since its 2013 establishment, MINUSMA has become the world's [most dangerous](#) peacekeeping mission, with [169 peacekeepers killed](#). Conditions for regional forces are also difficult, and morale within FAMA is a concern given the lack of equipment and [grueling conditions](#) soldiers face even when not actively engaged in combat. These recent attacks show the continued cost of security operations in Mali.

### **Government Abuse a Looming Threat**

Both Malian and international observers have by now recognized that government abuses are likely perpetuating the existing conflict. While [human rights organizations](#) have long expressed concern about the negative impact that arbitrary arrests and corruption have on marginalized communities, recent reporting on extrajudicial killings has forced the international community and Malian government to consider the negative impacts stemming from security force violations.

On June 19, the Malian government announced that members of the FAMA were "implicated" in extrajudicial killings of civilians after mass graves were discovered in the Mopti region. This announcement followed several [reported instances](#) of extrajudicial killings in 2018. In July 2018, a [UN Independent Expert](#) on the situation for human rights called on the government to open inquiries into allegations of security force human rights violations.

[Interviews](#) with marginalized communities suggest that abuses committed by security forces encourage young men to join armed groups, both for self-protection and as an expression of frustration with government abuses. A [security-focused response](#), without strong efforts to improve the rule of law and livelihoods, could therefore exacerbate conflict by driving marginalized communities to tolerate or support terrorist organizations.

### **Conclusion**

The upcoming elections in Mali may prove to be an inflection point in the country's progress since the 2015 peace agreement. The government has improved its coordination with regional and international partners, but the impact of increased security operations within the country remains mixed. Although counterterrorism and peacekeeping operations remain necessary to control high levels of violence, Mali's government needs to improve its responsiveness to its citizens to compensate for the underlying factors driving conflict. By improving service delivery, limiting corruption, and addressing security force violations, the Malian government could win back citizen support for a conflict-resolution process.

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Madagascar's President Hery Rajaonarimampianina shown in Paris, France, Wednesday, June 28, 2017. Hery recently appointed Christian Ntsay as prime minister, part of a "consensus" unity government meant to ease escalating political tensions before elections scheduled for November 7. (Source: AP Photo/Michel Euler.)

## Background

Madagascar is a low-income island nation of [24 million](#) located off the southeast coast of Africa. In 2016, it had a GDP of \$10 billion, with a growth rate of 4 percent. The country has a long history of instability punctuated by military coups and political violence. Indeed, no president has both [gained and left](#) power through elections in the country's history. An oft-shifting political battle among Hery, Ravalomanana, and Rajoelina continues to play a central role in the country's politics. In 2009, Rajoelina launched a military-backed overthrow of Ravalomanana, leading to a four-year period of international isolation. Through a deal negotiated by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), both Ravalomanana and Rajoelina were barred from the 2013 poll. Following Hery's peaceful election in 2013, international cooperation resumed, and the country made some political and economic [progress](#), a positive development following years of crisis. But Hery has not escaped controversy during his time in office, as exemplified by a 2015 [impeachment](#) attempt and the recent deterioration of political conditions ahead of the 2018 elections.

## Latest Crisis

The latest escalation of tensions has been [brewing](#) for some time. Despite sitting out the 2013 elections, Ravalomanana and Rajoelina have refused to depart the political scene and maintained significant [political support](#) throughout Hery's tenure. Hery's attempted amendment of the electoral laws in April was seen by supporters of both Ravalomanana and Rajoelina as a move to again sideline the two influential politicians before this year's elections. A group of 73 MPs, called [MPs for Change](#) and comprising several different opposition parties—including Ravalomanana's TIM [Tiako-i-Madagasikara] and Rajoelina's MAPAR [Miaraka amin'ny Prézidà Andry Rajoelina]—came together to fight the proposed electoral bills and launched protests. Hery took a hardline stance in response to the demonstrations. He deemed the actions as a [coup](#) attempt aimed at his overthrow and met protestors with force.

Signaling the security establishment's enduring political role, General Beni Xavier Rasolofonirina, the Defence Minister, [weighed](#) in on the crisis in May: "We, the law enforcement officials, call loud and clear for the leaders of the political parties involved in the current crisis to be responsible and find a solution as soon as possible." The African Union, SADC, and the European Union also appealed for a resolution and [sent mediators](#). But outside intervention was rejected by the MPs for Change. Referring to the 2013 SADC deal, Hanitra Razafimanantsoa, the spokesperson for the group, [said](#), "We no longer want solutions imposed by the international community."



## Will Unity Government Bring Unity?

Madagascar's Constitutional Court ultimately delivered a domestic solution in the form of a unity government with broad cross-party representation. After appointing Ntsay, a technocrat with a background at the International Labor Organization, Hery [declared](#) that the mission of the coalition government was to deliver elections "whose results have to be accepted by all." Opposition parties were allotted 12 of 30 ministerial positions. The makeup of the new government is meant to reflect the 2013 legislative election results, but some in the opposition are not satisfied, seeing the arrangement as bloated. Honore Tsabotokay, an independent MP, [decried](#) the arrangement: "The government has given birth to a seven-headed monster and must be buried unconditionally." But Hery [hailed](#) the unity government as "a victory for the country, for democracy because it proves that when the best interest of the nation requires it, pride and partisan claims must be set aside."

## Conclusion

The formation of a unity government in Madagascar will likely ease tensions and avoid a relapse into conflict, but its impact is likely to be only temporary. In the run-up to national elections in November, significant risks remain for election-related violence between the government and anti-government protestors, as well as between supporters of Rajoelina and Ravalomanana. Indeed, upcoming elections threaten to unravel the current marriage of convenience between Rajoelina and Ravalomanana, which could reopen long-running political fault lines between the two camps.

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## ZIMBABWE: ELECTION OUTLOOK

By George F. Ward

Zimbabweans will head to the polls on July 30, 2018, in the first national elections since the army deposed longtime strongman Robert Mugabe in November 2017. The elections are “harmonized,” in that there will be contests for the presidency and both houses of parliament. All eyes are on the presidential race, which has attracted a record-breaking 23 candidates. Of that number, it is likely that [only two will matter](#)—incumbent President Emmerson Mnangagwa, the candidate of the Zimbabwe African National Union–Popular Front (ZANU-PF), and Nelson Chamisa, running under the banner of the Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC–Alliance). To avoid a runoff election that would be held on September 8, a candidate must win a majority of all votes cast. While trends and circumstances seem to favor Mnangagwa, it is not clear that a runoff election will be avoided. [more...](#)



Supporters of Zimbabwe's opposition leader, Nelson Chamisa, sit during the launch of the party's election manifesto in Harare, Thursday, June, 7, 2018. Zimbabwe's main opposition party says it will create a \$100 billion economy within a decade and improve ties with Israel if it wins July 30 elections. The MDC, which has re-energized under 40-year-old Chamisa, launched its election manifesto Thursday. (AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi)

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Mosque in Mocimboa da Praia destroyed after the October 5, 2017, attack. (Source: VOA Portugues, “Islam in Mozambique – The Roots of Fundamentalism,” January 16, 2018, <https://www.voaportugues.com/a/islao-mocambique-raizes-fundamentalismo/4208808.html>, still taken at 2:39 from video.)

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Supporters of Zimbabwe's opposition leader, Nelson Chamisa, sit during the launch of the party's election manifesto in Harare, Thursday, June, 7, 2018. Zimbabwe's main opposition party says it will create a \$100 billion economy within a decade and improve ties with Israel if it wins July 30 elections. The MDC, which has re-energized under 40-year-old Chamisa, launched its election manifesto Thursday. (AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi)

## The Political Atmosphere

The polling organization Afrobarometer conducted a [survey](#) of a representative sample of 2,400 Zimbabweans between April 28 and May 12, 2018. The results showed Zimbabweans expressing contradictory views. While gloomy on economic conditions and worried about electoral violence, most of those surveyed were also cautiously hopeful that the upcoming election would set the country on a better path. The euphoria that prevailed in the immediate aftermath of Mugabe's fall seems to have been replaced by wary anticipation.

Strikingly, the survey revealed that for most voters the election is about economic issues. Asked to name the most pressing issues of the day, 64 percent cited unemployment, 39 percent management of the economy, and 25 percent wages and salaries. The focus on unemployment was particularly strong among voters aged 18–25, who comprise 29 percent of the voting population. The proportion of this group that has registered to vote has surged from 54 percent in 2005, to 57 percent in 2013, and to 73 percent in this election.

Another [survey](#), this one conducted by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in Bulawayo and Midlands province during March and April 2018, also revealed a significant level of voter ambivalence. While the survey results showed a high level of interest in the election and majority support for the notion that elections provide opportunities to choose among policy options, 80 percent of respondents agreed that elected candidates soon lose touch with voters, becoming estranged from the public. A majority also thought that politicians always manipulate the electoral system.

## The Candidates

As mentioned above, the presidential contest is seen as a two-person race. The Afrobarometer poll pegged support for Mnangagwa at 42 percent of registered voters and support for Chamisa at 31 percent. The two candidates are contrasting figures. Mnangagwa is a 75-year old ZANU-PF stalwart who did Mugabe's bidding, sometimes ruthlessly, for decades before being dismissed by Mugabe from the office of vice president. He came to power in November 2017 when the military deposed Mugabe. Chamisa, who is 40 years old, rose rapidly through the ranks of the MDC under the late Morgan Tsvangirai's leadership. Chamisa had a cabinet position in the government of national unity from 2009 to 2013. When Tsvangirai died earlier this year, Chamisa emerged victorious from an intraparty struggle to become provisional MDC leader and the party's presidential candidate.

In keeping with the electorate's priorities, both candidates have focused their campaigns on the economy. During his first days in office, Mnangagwa [declared](#), “Zimbabwe is open for business,” even traveling to the World Economic Forum

in Davos to make the point. He inked a sizable investment deal with China, restored land to a number of expropriated white farmers, and reached out to the United Kingdom and former Commonwealth partners. In its manifesto, the ZANU-PF promises to transform Zimbabwe into a middle-income country by 2030, attain an economic growth rate of at least 6 percent annually over the 2018–2023 period, attract \$15 billion annually in foreign and domestic investment, and build 1.5 million medium-income housing units by 2023. Not to be outbid, Chamisa's coalition promises development of world-class infrastructure, including bullet trains, roads, waterworks, and sewerage. Chamisa has promised to end Zimbabwe's long-running cash crisis within 90 days. He also has promised to turn thousands of vendors who subsist in the informal economy into millionaire entrepreneurs. Achievement of the objectives of either candidate is somewhat improbable.

Several formerly important political players have been reduced to playing minor roles in this election. For example, Grace Mugabe, the former first lady, and her "G40" faction left the ZANU-PF to form the National Patriotic Front (NPF). The NPF has engaged in talks, so far unsuccessful, to form an alliance with Chamisa's party. Likewise, Joice Mujuru, another vice president who was deposed by Mugabe, heads a "[Rainbow Coalition](#)" that includes some defectors from the MDC. At best, these and other minor candidates can aspire to win enough votes to force a runoff.

### **A Mostly Peaceful Campaign**

Compared with other election campaigns in Zimbabwe, this one has been relatively nonviolent. The only major incident has been a [grenade attack](#) on a ZANU-PF rally in Bulawayo that killed two people and injured almost 50 others. President Mnangagwa escaped unharmed, but both of the country's vice presidents were injured. Mnangagwa accused the G-40 faction of his own party of having perpetrated the attack. There have been numerous other reports of scattered electoral violence, but no particular pattern has emerged.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), which has the responsibility of organizing polling places, printing ballots, transporting completed ballots, and counting votes, has been the subject of [opposition protests](#). Chamisa and his party unsuccessfully demanded to be allowed to observe the ballot printing process. They have alleged that the army is being given too great a role in the election, and they have threatened further demonstrations and protest marches. It is unlikely that these protests will have a significant effect on the election process.

Significantly, the Mnangagwa government has reached out internationally to seek legitimization of the upcoming polling. The Southern African Development Community, of which Zimbabwe is a member, sent an [advance team](#) to evaluate the electoral environment and provide advice. More significantly, the [European Union](#) (EU) has launched a robust election observation effort. Fifty-five EU observers are already deployed in all 10 provinces. By election day, they will be joined by European parliamentarians and diplomats, bringing the EU mission strength to 140.

### **The Outlook**

President Mnangagwa and the ZANU-PF hold several trump cards: significant financial resources, control of the electoral process, residual good feelings over the departure of Robert Mugabe, and a claim to moderate progress on resuscitating the economy. Nelson Chamisa is fighting an uphill battle. His most significant assets may be his youth and his claim to be the only viable alternative to continued ZANU-PF rule. His party, the MDC-Alliance, also has significant strength in Zimbabwe's cities. If city dwellers, especially young people, come out in large numbers for the MDC, July 30 could turn out to be an important day in Zimbabwe's political history. At the very least, the ruling party's candidate might be forced into a runoff poll.

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## Background

Mozambique is a low-income country of roughly 26 million people in southern Africa. President Filipe Nyusi heads the ruling party, FRELIMO [Front for the Liberation of Mozambique], which has been in power since 1994. The main opposition party, RENAMO [Mozambican National Resistance Movement], is now led by Ossufu Mamade after the [sudden death](#) in May of its longtime leader, Afonso Dhlakama. Mamade's ascent marks the first time since the end of the civil war in 1992 that RENAMO is led by someone other than Dhlakama. Mozambique is a [predominantly](#) Christian country with Christians comprising roughly 56 percent of the population, Muslims 18 percent, and other religions and non-religious people accounting for the majority of the remaining 26 percent. Despite a long history of political conflict, the country had until recently avoided the type of violent Islamist extremism that other countries in West and East Africa have experienced.



Mosque in Mocimboa da Praia destroyed after the October 5, 2017, attack. (Source: VOA Portugues, "Islam in Mozambique – The Roots of Fundamentalism," January 16, 2018, <https://www.voaportugues.com/a/islao-mocambique-raizes-fundamentalismo/4208808.html>, still taken at 2:39 from video.)

## Origins and Status of Islamic Extremism in Mozambique

The Islamic group behind the attacks calls itself [Ansar al-Sunna](#) (Defenders of Tradition), though the locals refer to them as "al-Shabaab." Despite the nickname, Ansar al-Sunna does not appear to have any clear links to Somalia's al-Shabaab, but the two groups espouse similar ideologies. Both wish to impose Sharia and to [withdraw children](#) from local school systems. Other than Mozambicans, the group is believed to include Tanzanian, Somali, and Sudanese nationals. While its genesis in [Cabo del Gado](#) is linked to the region's large Muslim population, high youth unemployment, and limited economic opportunities, Ansar al-Sunna has never officially stated its objectives or provided a rationale for its attacks on communities.

*Africa Watch* last reported on the rise of Islamic extremism in Mozambique in [January 2018](#) when Ansar al-Sunna first gained international attention after a series of attacks primarily focused on police stations. For the next several months the group continued to focus on government targets. In response, the government of Mozambique reacted swiftly and forcefully. In January, it was unclear whether the threat would continue or die out.

Six months later, the end appears nowhere in sight. In May, the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium attributed 20 deadly [attacks](#) in Mozambique in 2018 to Ansar al-Sunna, and the month of [June](#) saw 39 more people killed and more than 400 homes razed. Perhaps more disturbing, the group's attacks are becoming less discriminate and more violent. In the late May attack, the extremists decapitated 10 civilians, some of whom were women and children. Within the next two weeks two separate attacks resulted in the death of 13 more civilians, and in each instance, the bodies were found hacked to death with [knives and machetes](#). [Alex Vines](#), head of the Africa Program at the Chatham House in London, has been surprised at the speed with which the violence has spread: "there's been a real deterioration (in security) since October of last year."

## Government Blamed for Both Inaction and Action

When confronted with the extremist threat, the government of Mozambique used force. In December 2017, the government [responded](#) to attacks on police with a helicopter raid and naval bombardment of what was believed to be

Ansar al-Sunna's stronghold, reportedly killing 50 and detaining more than 200 people. Since Ansar al-Sunna's tactics shifted toward targeting civilians in the spring, the state has been accused of responding in a [similar manner](#): "killing, flaying, burning and closing mosques." It is estimated that more than 70 civilians have been killed compared with just 16 militants since the fighting started. An additional 470 people have been detained. Despite the government's efforts, Amnesty International's Media Manager for Southern Africa [has called for it to do more](#): "the Mozambican authorities must take immediate and effective action to end the killings including by reinforcing security measures to protect the lives of villagers in the region."

Much has been written on how to respond to violent extremism, and most authors recommend a less heavy-handed approach by security forces. A 2017 UNDP [report](#) titled *Journey to Extremism in Africa* highlights the conundrum. According to the study, interviews from the field showed that over [70 percent](#) of the extremists involved in committing acts of violence identified government actions such as the killing or arrest of a family member or friend as their impetus for joining an extremist group. When confronted with an extremist threat, the Mozambican authorities are expected to do something; however, mounting evidence suggests that heavy-handed actions are more likely to exacerbate than curb the threat.

## Conclusion

While Islamic extremism in Mozambique remains limited to the northern part of the country, it appears to be gaining strength. A growing cycle of [grievance and revenge](#) between extremist groups and the government's security forces is fostering a climate of vengeance, which makes finding common ground increasingly difficult. In this environment, some are calling for a different approach. For example, one study recommended [training](#) the National Police and other security actors on how to respond in a manner more consistent with international norms and human rights. Another identified the need for [socioeconomic development](#) and community engagement to help foster trust between the disaffected region and the government. Achieving such trust would be difficult; furthermore, Islamic extremism is but one of the major challenges facing the government. In the near term, its most pressing challenge is solidifying the recent political agreement on [military issues](#) between RENAMO and FRELIMO that would enable not only the reintegration of RENAMO into the military and government, but would also ensure that local elections take place as planned in October. Given the government's other concerns and the long-term nature and difficulty of implementing recommendations needed to address the roots of the conflict in the north, it appears likely that the government will continue to respond to extremist activities primarily with force.

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## UGANDA: DISSIDENT DRAWS ATTENTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND AUTHORITARIANISM

By Sarah Constantine

In August 2018, the arrest and [alleged torture](#) of Ugandan Member of Parliament (MP) Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, popularly known as Bobi Wine, drew attention to the extent of authoritarian rule in Uganda. Over the past decade, as the population has become younger and the economy has stagnated, Uganda's leadership has become less tolerant of dissent. While Wine's activism has helped to galvanize increased enthusiasm for political change, the impact of this fervor is uncertain. Uganda's long-term President, Yoweri Museveni, will likely contest elections in [2021](#) and has shown little inclination to pursue economic or social reform in the interim. [more...](#)



Ugandan pop star-turned-lawmaker Bobi Wine, at the National Press Club, Thursday, September 6, 2018 in Washington. Wine says he will return to Uganda to continue his struggle on behalf "the oppressed" after allegedly being tortured by security forces. (Source: AP Photo/Tom Sampson.)

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

## POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

By Sydney Deatherage

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Countries of the Horn of Africa. (Source: United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section, Map No. 4188, Rev. 5, March 2012. <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/horne.pdf>.)

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### About IDA

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

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

# UGANDA: DISSIDENT DRAWS ATTENTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND AUTHORITARIANISM

By Sarah Constantine

In August 2018, the arrest and [alleged torture](#) of Ugandan Member of Parliament (MP) Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, popularly known as Bobi Wine, drew attention to the extent of authoritarian rule in Uganda. Over the past decade, as the population has become younger and the economy has stagnated, Uganda's leadership has become less tolerant of dissent. While Wine's activism has helped to galvanize increased enthusiasm for political change, the impact of this fervor is uncertain. Uganda's long-term President, Yoweri Museveni, will likely contest elections in [2021](#) and has shown little inclination to pursue economic or social reform in the interim.

## Uganda: Still a Success Story?

From the 1990s through early 2000s, Uganda was seen by its allies as a political and economic success. Taking power in 1986, [Museveni's administration](#) brought stability and economic reform to much of the country during the 1990s. Following a counter-insurgency campaign against a series of northern guerilla groups, including most famously the Lord's Resistance Army, the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF) regained full territorial control in 2008. In the aftermath, the North saw a small [peace dividend](#) as the government poured additional resources into regional economic development.

Internally, Uganda experienced significant economic growth as the [poverty rate](#) fell from 56 percent of the population in 1992 to 20 percent in 2012. Uganda also undertook constructive diplomacy within the region. With support from the United States and European Union, Uganda has been a [major contributor](#) to the African Union Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and played a [significant](#), if occasionally [controversial](#), role in intermittent peace negotiations for South Sudan. The country received praise for its leading role in [refugee](#) admissions and resettlement, and the government is an active participant within the Inter-Governmental Authority of Development (IGAD) regional bloc and the African Union.

These achievements are increasingly threatened by the government's failure to address long-term economic challenges and unwillingness to tolerate dissent. Its challenges are in part demographic. Uganda has a young population, with over [78 percent](#) of its citizens under the age of 30. While this population could be a dynamic source of growth, jobs have not grown commensurate to the population. The African Development Bank reported that [83 percent](#) of Ugandan youth aged 15–24 are unemployed.

## Demographic Distress: Youth Increasingly Critical of Their Government

Frustration with large-scale unemployment intersects with political grievances. [Youth reportedly feel](#) that Uganda's elites actively limit outsiders' opportunities to accrue the benefits of crony capitalism to themselves. As [commentators](#) have pointed out, Uganda's youth, who do not remember the conflicts before Museveni came to power, no longer believe that his role as a resistance leader is a compelling reason for him to stay in power. Overall, youth have shown themselves to be more willing than their parents to actively challenge the government.

In 2011, the ["Walk to Work" protests](#) spread nationwide as a means to highlight rising costs of living ahead of the presidential election. Spearheaded by longtime opposition figure Kizza Besigye, the protests were violently suppressed and Besigye was arrested. While Besigye's arrest was hardly a surprise—he has spent his [career](#) in and out of prison—the protests did mark the growing impact of youth frustration.



Ugandan pop star-turned-lawmaker Bobi Wine, at the National Press Club, Thursday, September 6, 2018 in Washington. Wine says he will return to Uganda to continue his struggle on behalf "the oppressed" after allegedly being tortured by security forces. (Source: AP Photo/Tom Sampson.)



The latest round of activism, led by [Bobi Wine](#), has drawn attention because of Wine's youth—he is 36—and dynamic personality. Having grown up in a slum in Kampala's capital, Wine began his career in music and is a popular rapper in Uganda. His songs address political and economic challenges in the country, and he has long been vocal in calling attention to social issues.

In June 2017, Wine [won a seat](#) in parliament despite refusing to join a mainstream opposition party. Within parliament he proved a savvy operative, building his national reputation with a [series of rallies](#) throughout the country. He lobbied hard against the decision to [amend](#) Uganda's constitution to allow Museveni another term and actively supported other opposition candidates' campaigns.

### **Intolerance of Dissent Takes on a New Flavor in the Digital Age**

Just as Wine's activism is tailored to a younger generation, the government's intolerance of dissent has taken on a new flavor in the era of the smartphone. In July 2018, Uganda levied a tax on social media apps like Facebook or Twitter that Ugandans must pay to open on their phones. While the government presented the tax as a [measure](#) to bring "fake news" under control, commenters accused the government of using the tax to silence dissent.

Increased intolerance is also seen in the violent response to Wine and other opposition MPs. Before the September 2017 vote to amend the constitution, MPs [accused](#) the administration of using security forces to coerce their votes. The August 2018 arrest and [alleged torture](#) of Bobi Wine and his colleagues showed a further escalation in the administration's willingness to use repressive tactics against elected officials.

### **Conclusion**

Wine's youth, charisma, and large following clearly worry Museveni, who has [responded](#) personally to Wine's critiques in comments on social media. Ugandans in turn have responded to Museveni's posts with criticism and mocking comments. Although enabled by social media, these comments are also a sign of [changing norms](#) as public criticism becomes more socially acceptable. Museveni can limit Wine's ability to act as a parliamentarian, but repressive tactics will not solve the larger challenge of a young population increasingly willing to publicly criticize their government and demand improvements. Unless Museveni responds more effectively to the public's demands for change, he is likely to encounter greater popular frustration and political dissent.

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## The Players

*Ethiopia:* Ethiopia is the economic and military powerhouse in the Horn, but it has struggled with ethnically based political turmoil. The Tigray minority—hailing from the region bordering Eritrea—has dominated Ethiopia's government and military for decades through the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). After years of political repression, escalating protest from the Oromia region and a new alliance between Oromo and Amhara activists have put pressure on the TPLF. As a result, the Ethiopian government replaced unpopular Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn with Abiy Ahmed, an Oromo, in May.

*Eritrea:* Under the 25-year regime of President Isaias Afwerki, Eritrea remains one of the most isolated and undemocratic countries in the world, with compulsory long-term military conscription, a suffering command economy, and one of the world's worst human rights records. Eritrea has been subject to international sanctions since 2009 for its support of al-Shabaab militants in Somalia and aggression against Djibouti. It has justified its perpetually militarized state on the basis of its border conflicts with Ethiopia and Djibouti, as well as general hostility toward Somalia. Eritrea has never held elections, and ailing 72-year-old President Afwerki has not named a successor.

*Somalia:* Somalia remains the most unstable regional state. Its government has made uneven progress against the al-Shabaab insurgency, lacks control over large swaths of territory, and is plagued with clan violence and corruption. President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmaajo, who came to power in 2017, has had some success in sustaining popularity across clans and garnering donor support.

*Djibouti:* Djibouti, which has been under the regime of President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh since 1999, is the most politically stable in the region. Its strategic location at the intersection of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden is the basis of its economy, and it hosts the most diverse array of foreign military bases in the world, including those for the United States, France, Great Britain, Japan, China, and Saudi Arabia. Djiboutian ports have been one of few points of sea access for Ethiopian exports.

## The Stakes

Interstate tensions in the Horn are deeply rooted and enduring. Ethiopia and Eritrea have existed for 20 years in a state of “no war, no peace.” Tensions have troubled relations between Ethiopia and Somalia. Eritrea and Somalia have not had diplomatic ties for 15 years due to Eritrea's support of al-Shabaab in Somalia, while Eritrea and Djibouti have shared hostilities over a border dispute.



Countries of the Horn of Africa. (Source: United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section, Map No. 4188, Rev. 5, March 2012. <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/horne.pdf>)



What do these countries stand to gain from recent diplomatic maneuverings? First, for Ethiopia and Eritrea, the restoration of diplomatic ties supports the narrative of reform its leaders are utilizing to quell domestic discontent. In Ethiopia, this change in government is the latest of a series of rapid reforms. The restoration of trade and economic ties with Eritrea is an important step for a country that has indicated its intent to [open](#) its private sector. In Eritrea, formalizing the end to conflict with Ethiopia may help Afwerki fulfill his promise to reform military conscription. Second, in addition to pursuing reform, Ahmed and Afwerki also have a [common enemy](#) in the TPLF, the previously dominant Ethiopian political party that continues to hold significant official and unofficial power. The TPLF-dominated Ethiopian military has yet to withdraw from the Eritrean border, although on September 11 both countries announced plans to [withdraw troops](#). Third, for landlocked Ethiopia, access to Eritrea's ports might diminish the costs of trade. Finally, in restoring ties with Eritrea, both Ethiopia and Somalia issued calls to end international sanctions on Eritrea. These overtures may diminish Eritrea's image as a pariah.

For a fragile Somalia, engaging in regional diplomacy helps it project an image of improved central authority and institutional capacity. Implementation of the economic agreements resulting from this diplomacy—such as its agreement with Ethiopia to open four seaports—would make regional actors greater stakeholders in its security and development. As international debates continue over [reducing](#) the African Union Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Somalia has a strong motive to engage its immediate neighbors.

Finally, Djibouti in its call for the UN to mediate its border dispute with Eritrea in July may have seen an opportune moment to extract concessions from Eritrea, given that country's efforts at conciliation in the Horn. Indeed, in a win for Djibouti, Eritrea's commitment to normalize ties last week may partly reflect pressure to maintain its new conciliatory image.

## The Risks

In gauging the potential for a positive outcome from these diplomatic events, Eritrea is the wild card. Rarely has the liberalization of undemocratic and low-income societies been a peaceful process. With newfound freedoms and economic privatization, citizens typically demand more accountability from their governments, and this [often results in unrest](#). As the primary justification for its mass forced conscription [fades](#) and the practice is limited, Eritrea's rulers will be faced with a militarily oriented and largely unemployed population. With an aging and recently sick leader with no plan for succession, the possibility of volatility is increased.

A similar risk exists in Ethiopia, with a large proportion of its military deployed on the Eritrean border. Furthermore, this military is dominated by the TPLF, which may [not be pleased](#) with rapprochement with their historic enemy.

In Djibouti, Ethiopia's moves to open ports in Somalia and Eritrea pose a threat to its monopoly on Ethiopian export routes.

There is less risk in Somalia to regional rapprochement because it only stands to gain from increased economic engagement with its neighbors. Whether Somalia's domestic security situation can improve enough to absorb economic investment that normalization of ties promises is another question.

## Conclusion

The diplomacy taking place in the Horn is progress in its own right. Without apparent pressures from international actors, over the course of four months leaders in the Horn issued well-received public overtures; held bilateral, tripartite, and regional high-level meetings; opened embassies; and signed political and economic agreements—many of which they are already implementing. The progress made, however, is fragile and could easily be shaken by domestic events. Should Ethiopia's fragile course of reform hold steady, it may be what transpires in Eritrea—the wild card and the pariah—that determines the outcome of rapprochement.

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## PREPARING FOR NIGERIA'S 2019 ELECTIONS

By Dr. Stephanie M. Burchard

Nigeria's 2019 presidential elections are scheduled to take place on February 16, 2019. Almost five months out, there are several questions about whether the country is ready. Both major political parties have yet to hold primaries to select their presidential candidates; high-level defections from the ruling party have strained an already fragile coalition; and the sequencing of elections (presidential, legislative, and state level) is still being debated, leading to delays in procurement of election materials. [more...](#)

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



Nigeria's presidential race has sparked to life with the announcement by Senate president Bukola Saraki that he intends to run in the election in 2019. (Source: AP Photo/Sunday Alamba, File.).

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The murder of three Russian journalists in the Central African Republic (CAR) in late July 2018 has pushed Russia's expanding presence in Africa into the spotlight. According to [reports](#), the journalists traveled to the CAR as part of an investigation into one of Russia's private corporate military forces: Wagner (also known as PMC [Wagner](#), where PMC suggests private military company). The blurry relationship between the Russian government and Wagner, in combination with the suspicious circumstances surrounding the journalists' deaths, has led to speculation about official Russian involvement. The Kremlin firmly denies these insinuations and has deflected questions about Wagner's doings in the CAR. Media attempts to parse Wagner's involvement in the CAR and its role in official Russian foreign operations lay bare the gaps in knowledge about the ties that Russia has developed across the African continent in the last decade. The recent scrutiny does, however, point to Africa's integral role in Russia's broader bid to return to geopolitical prominence. [more...](#)



A woman holds a portrait of journalist Alexander Rastorguyev, who was killed in the Central African Republic (CAR), during funeral ceremony in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, August 7, 2018. Three Russian journalists had been working on an investigation into Russian private military contractors and the mining industries in the CAR, their editor said, when they were ambushed and killed outside the town of Sibut in the CAR. (Source: AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin.).

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## The Promise of 2015

As Nigeria prepares to return to the polls, it is instructive to reflect on the country's recent electoral past. The March 2015 general elections were a critical point in the country's democratic trajectory, producing an outcome that is rare in Africa: alternation of power. Sitting presidents don't often [lose](#) elections, and when they do lose, it is most often not under [peaceful](#) circumstances. But after a tense election, postponed once due to insecurity related to the terrorist group Boko Haram in the north of the country, incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan lost to opposition challenger Muhammadu Buhari. Just hours before the results were announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Jonathan [conceded](#) defeat. The election was [hailed](#) as a watershed moment in Nigerian politics.

Before the March 2015 elections, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) had been in power since the transition from military rule in 1999. The PDP had been an electoral juggernaut, winning the presidency and commanding majorities in every election from 1999 until 2015. Buhari's All Progressive Congress (APC) victory in 2015 was the result of a combination of factors, [including](#) massive corruption scandals, high-level party [defections](#) resulting in a weakened PDP, [poor economic performance](#), and insecurity in the Northeast. Coupled with electoral reforms that produced Nigeria's freest and fairest election in its history, these factors allowed the opposition to handily unseat the PDP. Buhari was declared the winner of the 2015 presidential contest by a margin of about 9 percent.

## The Honeymoon Is Long Over

The optimism that accompanied the opposition's victory in 2015 appears to have all but disappeared. Buhari campaigned on an anti-corruption platform and made a significant number of promises at the outset of his administration. Many supporters of Buhari have been [disappointed](#), claiming that he has little to show for his 4 years in power. According to the [Buharimeter](#), an independent monitoring tool created by a domestic civil society organization, since coming to office Buhari has achieved only 7 of his more than 200 campaign pledges. In addition, the 75-year old president has spent [more than](#) 8 months of his presidency in London on official medical leave, attending to an undisclosed illness.

In the Afrobarometer Round Seven [survey](#) (conducted April to May 2017), support for Buhari was relatively low. His approval rating was around 52 percent. He received average marks from respondents for attempts at reducing crime (53 percent approval) and above average for his handling of corruption (60 percent thought Buhari had done either fairly well or very well in combating corruption), but only 33 percent of respondents approved of how his administration was handling the economy, and only 40 percent of respondents said they would vote for him again.

Dissatisfaction with Buhari is especially pronounced at the elite level, as evidenced by the mass defection of APC politicians in July 2018. Dozens of members from the House of Representatives and 16 senators [announced](#) in late July 2018 that they were quitting the APC; most decamped to the PDP. Just a few days later, Senate President Bukola Saraki [followed](#) suit. As a result, the president no longer enjoys a legislative majority in either chamber.



Nigeria's presidential race has sparked life with the announcement by Senate president Bukola Saraki that he intends to run in the election in 2019. (Source: AP Photo/Sunday Alamba, File.).

## Preparing for 2019

For the 2015 elections, the APC and PDP both held presidential primaries in December 2014, so the time period between candidate selection and the election is generally abbreviated. Currently, both main parties are still in the planning stages for their primaries. Although it should be a foregone conclusion that Buhari would be the APC's candidate for the 2019 election, there are rumors that the party is not solidly behind the aging and increasingly unpopular president. Four other APC members have also announced their intention to vie for the presidential nomination at the party's primary, tentatively scheduled for [late September](#). The PDP is planning to hold its primary [October 5–6, 2018](#). Currently, 13 candidates are competing for the PDP ticket, including former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, once a member of the APC and a former ally of Buhari; Senate President and recent defector Saraki; and several current and former governors and lawmakers.

In addition to the ongoing political machinations over presidential aspirants, logistical problems are looming large. The legislature has not yet [formally](#) approved a final budget for the elections, and the timing of the election is still being [debated](#). Typically, state and gubernatorial elections have been held a few weeks after legislative and presidential elections, but the legislature passed a bill in April to adjust the order. The bill calls for national legislative elections, followed by gubernatorial and state assembly elections, and finally presidential elections. Many commentators think the purpose is to separate legislator prospects from the presidential contest out of fear that Buhari's unpopularity will drag down legislative incumbents. Buhari has [refused](#) to sign the bill into law.

## Conclusion

Recent [reports](#) by the Economist Intelligence Unit and HSBC, a global banking and financial service organization, have predicted that Buhari will most likely not be reelected. The high level of economic dissatisfaction within the electorate supports this projection. The state of the economy did play a significant role in the defeat of the incumbent in 2015. Furthermore, continuing ruptures in the APC could doom Buhari's reelection prospects.

For Buhari to be defeated, the opposition would need to remain united behind a single candidate. Although [many](#) opposition parties, including the PDP, have promised to field a single candidate for president, party cohesion and unity are weak. The current field of candidates vying for the PDP ticket is full of wealthy long-time politicians with sizable war chests and dedicated bases of support. Paradoxically, Buhari's vulnerability in the 2019 elections could stymie attempts at unifying the opposition, because the PDP, a weakly disciplined party of free agents, may have difficulty convincing individual candidates to sacrifice their presidential aspirations for the good of the whole. It is possible that one or more of the PDP's current field of candidates could decide to strike out on their own and attach to any number of Nigeria's 60-plus smaller parties. Such candidates could act as spoilers by preventing a clear winner in the country's two-round electoral system, which requires a candidate receive more than 50 percent of the vote and at least 25 percent of the vote in two-thirds of states to win outright in the first round. It is also possible that additional disaffected APC members could do the same. The election may be only months away, but with so many moving parts and unknowns, the outcome is anyone's guess.

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A woman holds a portrait of journalist Alexander Rastorguyev, who was killed in the Central African Republic (CAR), during funeral ceremony in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, August 7, 2018. Three Russian journalists had been working on an investigation into Russian private military contractors and the mining industries in the CAR, their editor said, when they were ambushed and killed outside the town of Sibut in the CAR. (Source: AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin.).

## Renewing Historical Ties

In the mid-20th century, the Soviet Union portrayed itself as a counterbalance to the “imperialist” West in Africa, providing arms and support for anti-colonial movements, offering scholarships for [tens of thousands](#) of Africans to study in Moscow, and enjoying trade relationships with over [40](#) African nations. While its presence greatly diminished in the 1990s, Russia has slowly reformed bonds in all corners of the continent over the past decade.

To reclaim its position as a world power, Russia needs international support. In that light, reviving the Soviet “[trade and aid](#)” strategy in Africa, with its 54 UN member states, makes sense. In March 2018, veteran Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov traveled to Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia. This followed meetings earlier this year in Moscow with representatives from Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Burundi, Mauritania, Angola, and Algeria. In June, he visited Rwanda before joining President Putin in attendance at the BRICS (i.e., Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit in South Africa. This flurry of diplomacy resulted in numerous agreements. While the details varied from country to country, the arrangements illustrated the Russian strategy of offering economic incentives in return for political support.

## Political Posturing

Throughout his meetings with African leaders, Lavrov supported African calls for stronger representation in UN decisions (which dovetails with Russia's similar stance and statements regarding its Latin American partners), promised military and technical support, and renewed commitments to energy and agriculture development assistance. In an echo of another Soviet-era program, the Foreign Minister made offers for Africans to study in Russia, including invitations for diplomats to study at the [Diplomatic Academy](#) in Moscow.

By fostering goodwill with African nations and advocating a stronger African voice within the UN, Russia hopes to boost its own [influence](#) in the world body. In the midst of reports of [military drawdowns](#) by the United States in Africa, Russia is presenting itself as a viable partner. Like China, Russia promotes a policy of noninterference in African domestic affairs. That may appeal to African governments that have been targets of Western criticism for human rights violations.

## The Economic Elements

In addition to courting African allies for support in the UN, Russia stands to benefit economically from involvement in Africa. Russia is interested in Africa's vast [mineral](#) and other natural resources. And much like [China](#), Russia is willing to do business where security and political risks are high. In fact, some have suggested this as a reason for Wagner's involvement in the CAR: to protect growing Russian [mineral extraction](#) assets.

Russia also seeks to maintain Africa as a market for military supplies and equipment. [Arms deals](#) have been a [staple](#) of Russian-African trade in the 2000s. Russia contributes indirectly as well through sizable contracts to provide transportation and logistical support for UN peace operations in Africa. From 2012 to 2016, Russian contractors earned [\\$927 million](#) from such contracts. In addition to its commercial contributions, Russia plays a key role in training African police and military forces, particularly in strife-torn countries such as Sudan and the CAR.

These training missions, however, have drawn criticism due to Wagner's role. For instance, Russia claims to have five military members and 170 civilians participating in the security effort in CAR, but the 170 "civilians" are understood to be Wagner mercenaries, and [reports](#) indicate that their numbers could be much higher. This dynamic caused alarm recently when an arms import from Russia [bypassed](#) the UN prescribed audit upon its arrival in the CAR. Despite the UN's insistence that an accounting be made of the weapons after the fact, none has been undertaken by any of the parties involved.

## Conclusion

Russian partnership suits many African nations: they gain an ally on the UN Security Council that often opposes sanctions and respects state sovereignty in fields such as human rights. And Russia delivers on its promises. In 2017, it successfully lobbied for an exemption from the UN arms embargo to the CAR. Following Lavrov's trip in March, Russia announced its cancellation of \$20 billion in African debt. Russia has also asked the UN to lift sanctions on Eritrea, where it plans to construct a [military logistics center](#). In return, Russia appears to enjoy privileged relationships with partner nations that it supports both directly and indirectly. This is particularly evident in the CAR, where Russian inroads have ranged from the [appointment](#) of a Russian national as a national security adviser to a poetry contest offering the winners the opportunity to attend a youth [camp](#) in Crimea.

In its endeavor to restore its global influence, Russia has found willing partners in Africa, and it is strengthening political, economic, and social bonds across the continent. But even with Russia's professed support of "African solutions to African problems," the geopolitical, commercial, and military underpinnings of Russia's increased activity in Africa could more aptly be characterized as "African solutions to Russian problems." Although Russia's lack of financial and economic resources will probably limit its commercial activities, its employment of private military companies to support its commercial agenda merits closer attention, particularly given questions about the exact relationship between the private military companies and the Russian government. Also, an increase in Russian military sales could contribute to instability on the continent. To counter this possibility, it will be important to maintain UN mechanisms that promote transparency in arms transfers and multilateral military cooperation.

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