

# AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL

www.africa-confidential.com

11 July 2025 - Vol 66 - N° 14 - online edition

## BLUE LINES

*Was the invitation from US President Donald Trump to the leaders of Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania and Senegal to lunch at the White House on 9 July as random as many diplomats thought? None of them would generate headlines. But the five match the Trump administration's priorities on Africa: minerals, security and migration control. Their invitation to Washington coincided with pushback by bigger countries such as Nigeria and South Africa against Trump's policies on visas and tariffs. Speculation pushed by Trump associates in Washington that Mauritania's President Mohamed Ould Cheikh el Ghazouani would be meeting Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the first stage in a normalisation deal turned out to be overblown.*

*Migration is a key issue in US politics. The Trump administration is following the EU's 'cash for migrant control' deal with Mauritania. The EU is talking with Senegal on a similar arrangement. Some 20,000 people left Mauritania for the US between 2023 and 2025. The US also wants partners to host military bases to replace its hub at Agadez in Niger.*

*Senegal, Mauritania and Gabon are rich in gold, oil, manganese, gas, wood and zircon. The White House says that the gathering represents an 'incredible' commercial opportunity. With a series of US-Africa summits in the diary for the second half of 2025, such mini-summits may be a sign of things to come.*

CONGO-KINSHASA/RWANDA/UNITED STATES

## Trump's peace deal hinges on minerals, militias – and megawatts

**A White House-brokered agreement promises regional calm and economic integration, but success depends on dislodging rebels and securing mining rights**

Speaking at the White House on 27 June, during the signing of a new peace agreement by the Rwandan and Congolese foreign ministers, President Donald Trump declared that no previous United States president had attempted to broker peace between Rwanda and Congo-Kinshasa – and that none could have succeeded as he had. Vice-President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and US Africa Envoy Massad Boulos all echoed the sentiment (Dispatches 6/5/25).

Congolese Foreign Minister Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner and her Rwandan counterpart Olivier Nduhungirehe praised Trump's 'X factor', distinguishing this deal from the many failed ones before it. Boulos, Kayikwamba and Nduhungirehe all highlighted the agreement's economic dimension – which Boulos later, incorrectly, described as unique. He also told *France 24* that the joint security mechanism and oversight committee were unprecedented, though both have featured in previous peace deals between the two countries.

Washington insiders say speed was the priority. The agreement draws on elements from earlier State Department efforts. The Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and *Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo* high commands are expected to establish a joint security mechanism, as required by the deal – though neither is likely to share sensitive intelligence with the other.

The Joint Oversight Committee will include Rwanda, Congo-K, the US, Qatar, an African Union representative and others. Its effectiveness will be critical. If

it can run a functioning secretariat, attract heavyweight leadership and secure strong US backing, it may compel the signatories to honour their commitments.

The agreement's economic integration element is split between infrastructure and mining. Boulos says deals in both sectors will be signed at the White House in July, when Presidents Félix Tshisekedi and Paul Kagame are expected to attend a grand ceremony.

A bilateral US-Congo-K minerals deal is also under discussion. The riches it promises are intended to anchor the Trump administration's commitment to the peace agreement.

### POWER SHARING

The centrepiece is a US\$760 million hydropower plant on the Ruzizi River between Rwanda and Congo-K (AC Vol 66 No 14). Known as Ruzizi III, the 206 MW project has been 12 years in negotiation. It is led by Industrial Promotion Services, the Aga Khan Fund's investment arm and was finalised in June when US-owned, Kenya-based Anzana Electric Group joined IPS, the World Bank, British International Investment and the European Investment Bank. Power will be shared between Rwanda, Congo-K and Burundi.

It remains unclear how the infrastructure deal will address Uganda's push to build roads in eastern Congo-K, which would reorient trade towards Kampala and cut Rwanda's market share. Rwanda and Uganda are competing to shape regional integration with Congo-K – a rivalry that fuels local conflicts. Despite

ZIMBABWE

4

### Tagwirei riles rivals

As Harare's top oligarch edges into politics, senior ZANU-PF cadres push back

KENYA/BITRAIN

5

### Turkana's broken promises

The oil companies have delivered negligible production but lots of environmental damage

SUDAN

6

### Deadly stalemate deepens

As both sides escalate drone warfare, civilians are trapped in a cycle of violence and revenge

SUDAN

8

### Mediators mull a new initiative

US officials have sounded out the combatants and their backers over a new peace plan

CAMEROON, SOMALIA, AFRICA/UN/CLIMATE CHANGE, LIBYA/EU/ MIGRATION, RWANDA/ CONGO-K/US, DISPATCHES, POINTERS

10-19

**AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL**

3rd Floor, 45 Albemarle Street  
London, W1S 4JL, UK  
Tel: +44 20 7831 3511

Editor: Patrick Smith  
Deputy Editor: Andrew Weir  
Website Editor: Juliet Amisshah  
Published fortnightly since 1960  
25 issues per year

**www.africa-confidential.com**  
Proprietors: Asempa Ltd. ISSN 0044-6483  
All material is copyright Africa Confidential

Uganda's military presence and trading interests, Washington has largely ignored it.

The mining agreement will be harder to implement. It stipulates that Congolese minerals should be processed in Rwanda in 'transparent, formalised' ways. That makes economic sense: electricity is cheaper and more reliable in Rwanda, making it better suited to refining Congolese tin and coltan. But the politics are fraught. Many in Congo-K resent the idea of their mineral wealth being processed in a rival state. Tax differentials also distort trade. Rwanda's lower levies incentivise smuggling, which has persisted for years (AC Vol 65 No 15).

The 2010 US Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act aimed at curbing the trade in conflict minerals from Congo-K by requiring supply chain due diligence – but it failed to end smuggling or the flow of such minerals into western supply chains (AC Vol 53 No 23).

Then there is the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23). Qatari officials have been mediating largely inconclusive talks between the militia and Kinshasa in Doha. A new round is due to begin in mid-July.

**Corneille Nangaa**, head of the *Alliance Fleuve Congo* and M23's political wing, had ambitions to march on Kinshasa and depose Tshisekedi – ambitions reportedly reined in by Kagame, according to the United Nations Group of Experts' (GoE) report.

Still, M23 is consolidating its hold on captured territory. The UN GoE says it has expelled traditional leaders and civil servants across North Kivu and South Kivu, destroyed land records and forcibly recruited young men. It has also benefited from *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* fighters repatriated to Rwanda and then sent back into Congo-K by the RDF to fight for the militia.

In late June, Chinese-owned Twangiza Mining accused M23 of forcing its workers to labour without pay after seizing its South Kivu gold mine in May. The militia claimed the

## CONGO-KINSHASA MINERAL-SECURITY DEAL: Hope at Ruzizi hydro, chaos at Rubaya coltan mine



Source: UN ReliefWeb

© africa-confidential.com 2025

**Mines:**  
 + Cassiterite  
 ◆ Coltan  
 ● Gold  
 ◆ Other  
 H Hydroelectric power plant  
 Area under M23 influence, June 2025

company had failed to pay taxes to its new administration.

### RUBAYA DEAL

M23's biggest revenue source is the Bibatama coltan mine near Rubaya, which generates hundreds of thousands of dollars a month. Working conditions have deteriorated. There is no technical oversight of the hundreds of small mining shafts dug into Rubaya's steep hills. A massive mudslide in mid-June buried scores of miners. At least 17 bodies were recovered, many more remain buried in the mud.

On 27 June, *Africa Confidential* reported that **Gentry Beach** – hedge fund executive, chair of America First Global and the finance co-chair of Trump's 2016 election campaign – was negotiating with the Tshisekedi government to acquire the Rubaya permit.

America First Global would partner with *Société Aurifère du Kivu et du Maniema* (SAKIMA), a state-owned firm that took over the permit after it was confiscated from Senator Édouard

Mwangachuchu's *Société Minière de Bisunzu*. Mwangachuchu, a *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple* founder, was sentenced to death by a military court in 2023 and remains in detention.

Complicating matters, the current legal owner of Rubaya, according to the mining cadastre in Kinshasa, is **Serge Mulumba** and his company Congo Fair Mining. Mulumba told *Africa Confidential* he knew nothing about the US investment plans. 'We need markets and off-takers, not investors as the revenues can provide the means to develop the mine,' he said.

If the Rubaya deal materialises, it would be the boldest element of the proposed US minerals accord with Kinshasa. But for it to happen, Kagame needs to eject the M23 from Rubaya and allow the Americans to take over – in partnership with a notoriously corrupt Congolese parastatal.

For the M23 to withdraw would mean surrendering the fiscal base of its proto-state. The GoE report argues – and many agree – that M23 is acting

## PEACE ON PAPER – WAR ON THE GROUND

A United Nations Group of Experts (GoE) report identifies four key dynamics that threaten the viability of the United States-brokered peace deal between Congo-Kinshasa and Rwanda:

- The *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23) militia and its political wing, the *Alliance Fleuve Congo* (AFC) are consolidating control over governance, land rights and natural resources in Kivu Nord and Kivu Sud
- The Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) exercises control over the dominant M23 faction, supporting its seizure of Goma and Bukavu earlier this year (Dispatches 18/2/25, AC Vol 66 Nos 3 & 4)
- The Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) is expanding operations in eastern Congo-K and backing its own M23-aligned faction
- The M23 fully controls the Rubaya tantalum mine, targeted for investment by a US consortium led by **Gentry Beach** and America First Global, and is smuggling coltan to Rwanda at what the UN calls 'unprecedented levels' (Dispatches 6/5/25, AC Vol 66 Nos 8 & 13).

The report, covering developments up to late April, was submitted to the UN Security Council in May. It challenges the Security Council to act, arguing that Rwanda's support for the occupation of eastern Congo-K is sanctionable.

The viability of the peace agreement signed in Washington DC on 27 June hinges on the M23, which was not party to the deal but is strongly backed by Rwanda. The UN report notes growing tensions within the M23 and worsening divisions between Rwandan- and Ugandan-aligned factions.

The GoE says the M23 is entrenching itself in eastern Congo-K, forcibly recruiting and training thousands of combatants – including former *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR) fighters who had returned to Rwanda but were forcibly 'recycled' by the RDF into M23 ranks. The report says the AFC-M23 alliance led by **Corneille Nangaa** is dismantling state authority and replacing it with parallel governance, erasing land records and imposing its own tax regime.

The GoE documents instances of direct RDF military support for M23, stating that RDF officers were 'critical' to the militia's territorial gains. The RDF's Major-General **Ruki Karusisi**, Major-General **Eugène Nkubito** and Lieutenant-General **Mubarakh Mugunga** are named as key planners and commanders. The report rejects Kigali's claim that its deployment is aimed at neutralising the FDLR, asserting instead that the RDF's objective is to conquer territory and enable AFC-M23 consolidation. It concludes that Rwanda's conduct is sanctionable and urges the Security Council to respond.

Uganda's role is also scrutinised. The UPDF has expanded its operations in eastern Congo-K and now polices the de facto border at Lubero in North Kivu. Although officially operating alongside the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* (FARDC), Uganda's General **Muhoozi Kainerugaba** – son of President **Yoweri Museveni** – travelled to Kinshasa in June, where he met President **Félix Tshisekedi** to extend bilateral military cooperation.

The FARDC, under international pressure, launched a brief and unsuccessful offensive against the FDLR in early 2025, but soon resumed collaboration with FDLR units and with the Congolese *Wazalendo* militia.

The GoE confirms that M23 controls the Rubaya mine and is smuggling coltan to Rwanda. It names Boss Mining Solution – run by Rwandan businessman **Eddy Habimana** and linked to the International Tin Supply Chain Initiative traceability scheme – as a key buyer. The Rwanda Development Board is accused of inflating domestic production figures to mask illicit Congolese imports, contradicting data from Rwanda's National Institute of Statistics, independent geological studies and ITSCI records.

The report also details the conflict in Ituri province between the predominantly Lendu *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* and the Hema *Zaire* militias. On June 28, a peace agreement was signed in Aru between CODECO, *Zaire* and other Ituri-based groups.

Rwanda has dismissed the report, claiming the experts misunderstood the RDF's 'defensive posture' in eastern Congo-K. Kigali's denial of well-documented allegations foreshadows likely disputes over the implementation of the Washington agreement – especially as Kinshasa is expected to accuse Rwanda of continued M23 support. It will fall to the Joint Oversight Committee to hold the ring. ●

at Rwanda's behest, as Kagame seeks to establish a loyal client entity next door.

If Trump succeeds in clearing the way for his allies to invest in one of Congo-K's largest mines – while forcing the M23 and Kagame to abandon their political ambitions – it would be a remarkable achievement.

In early June, US-based Denham Capital sold its majority stake in the Alphamin tin mine in Bisie, North Kivu, to the United Arab Emirates's International Resource Holding. Though Alphamin was spared M23 occupation – reportedly after Boulos requested Kagame intervene – Denham sold at a discount. IRH's CEO is **Ali Alrashdi** (AC Vol 66 No 8).

Another potential US target is the Manono lithium deposit. KoBold Metals, backed by **Bill Gates** and **Jeff Bezos**, wants to acquire the permit held

by **Australia's** AVZ Minerals. But in 2023, Kinshasa cancelled AVZ's rights and split the permit, awarding half to China's Zijin. AVZ took the matter to international arbitration, suspended proceedings at Washington's request, but resumed them on 23 June, citing Kinshasa's failure to engage.

KoBold hopes Zijin will retain the northern half while it develops the southern portion. It wants the Congolese government – not AVZ's partner *Cominière* – as its joint venture partner. Like SAKIMA, *Cominière* is bankrupt and notorious for rent-seeking.

Beyond Rubaya and Manono, it is unclear what other Congolese mining assets US companies might acquire. Investors who recently assessed ERG's copper and cobalt assets in Haut-Katanga and Lualaba walked away, deterred by the operational risks.

Glencore's assets are not for sale, nor are those of the major Chinese firms.

### Inbox email alerts

Get daily alerts for new articles and a snapshot of the latest issue each fortnight so that you're made aware of which issues we cover.

#### Subscriber?

Log in to enable or update e-alert preferences from within your subscription account.

#### Not subscribed?

Join the mailing list by visiting:

[www.africa-confidential.com/  
create-my-account](http://www.africa-confidential.com/create-my-account)



Congo-K's mineral wealth is vast but converting it into American

ownership will not be easy. And if the returns disappoint, Tshisekedi may

need to find new ways to keep Trump interested. ●

## ZIMBABWE

# Tagwirei riles ruling party rivals

**As Harare's top oligarch edges into politics, senior ZANU-PF cadres push back – and opposition chief Chamisa prepares a comeback**

**T**he president's favourite oligarch, **Kudakwashe Tagwirei**, is rapidly transitioning from shadowy financier to top public figure – usually wearing the signature striped scarf in national colours introduced by President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** after the 2017 coup (AC Vol 58 Nos 23 & 24).

Tagwirei made his fortune through fuel imports and government tenders via his **Sakunda Holdings** conglomerate. He controls major mines, holds shares in **CBZ Holdings** – Zimbabwe's largest commercial bank – and received US\$1.6 billion in treasury bonds from the **Mutapa Investment Fund** for his stake in **Kuvimba Mining House**. Once close to the **Mugabes**, he has since aligned with the **Mnangagwa** clan. Tagwirei, his wife **Sandra Mpunga**, and business partner **Obey Chimuka**, are among 11 individuals under US Global Magnitsky sanctions, along with **Sakunda** and its subsidiaries, **Fossil Agro** and **Fossil Contracting** (AC Vol 65 No 9).

Now Tagwirei is extending his reach into politics. He is regularly included in meetings at **Mnangagwa's** private farm, **Precabe**, where key state decisions are made. In December 2024, he was appointed Chair of the **Land Tenure Committee**, tasked with overseeing the issuance of tenure documents to beneficiaries of the **Fast Track Land Reform Programme**.

In March, the **Harare** and **Masvingo** Provincial Coordinating Committees of the ruling **Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front** recommended Tagwirei's appointment to the **Central Committee**, the party's main organising body (AC Vol 66 No 12). He has since become a regular presence at **ZANU-PF** by-election rallies, land distribution events and party meetings.

But his induction into the ruling party has not gone smoothly. On 3 July, Tagwirei arrived at a **Central Committee** meeting, expecting a warm welcome – only to be ejected on the instructions of Vice-President **Constantino Chiwenga**. The official line was that his nomination had not yet been ratified but reports suggest the exchange between the two men was far from cordial. The day

before, Tagwirei had addressed the **Politburo** – the party's cabinet – on 'Resource Mobilisation', during which he pledged to donate a 4x4 vehicle to every **Politburo** and **Central Committee** member, totalling over 300 cars. Shortly afterwards, Secretary-General **Obert Mpofu** issued a letter instructing members to surrender any donated vehicles to the party for registration and regularisation. The move was widely seen as an attempt to contain Tagwirei's influence – particularly as vehicles donated by social media influencer **Wicknell Chivayo** were reportedly exempt.

Senior **ZANU-PF** figures including **Mpofu**, party spokesman **Christopher Mutsvangwa**, and legal secretary **Patrick Chinamasa** are uneasy about Tagwirei's co-option into party structures and are likely to resist further promotions. Yet on 6 July, Tagwirei was the main speaker at a rally in the **Harare** constituency of **Epworth**, where he was warmly introduced by **Harare** Chair **Godwills Masimirembwa** as a 'patriotic businessman'.

**Chiwenga's** opposition to Tagwirei's political ascent is becoming more overt. After pushing Tagwirei out of the **Central Committee** meeting, **Chiwenga** told the **Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce**: 'The day of reckoning is inevitable for those who undermine [Zimbabwe's] economic integrity by engaging in shadowy dealings.' Meanwhile, war veteran **Blessed Geza** – who has been releasing videos since January calling for **Mnangagwa's** removal in favour of **Chiwenga** – published another, calling **Mnangagwa** the 'godfather of *zvigananda*', a term for ticks fattened with blood, used to describe those enriched by illicit business, specifically Tagwirei (Dispatches 5/2/25, AC Vol 66 Nos 4 & 9). **Chiwenga** has not publicly endorsed **Geza** but nor has he distanced himself from him.

Tagwirei is also a divisive figure in religious circles. A long-time member of the **Seventh-day Adventist Church**, he has cultivated loyalty through the distribution of cars and other costly

favours. In March, the **SDA General Conference** named him the first black recipient of its **Global Award of Excellence** – but a faction within the church called for it to be revoked, citing his politicisation of the church. On 14 June, he invited Minister of Sport and former army commander **Anselem Sanyatwe** to speak at an **SDA** event in **Nyanga** without consulting elders. Sanyatwe told the congregation that **ZANU-PF** would rule 'until donkeys grow horns'. Advocate **Thabani Mpofu** later lodged a formal complaint with **SDA** leadership, calling it a 'desecration of the pulpit'. With nearly a million congregants, the **SDA** is a significant political constituency.

Sanyatwe's appearance alongside Tagwirei – just weeks after his demotion from Commander of the **Zimbabwe National Army** to Minister of Sport and Recreation – has raised questions about Tagwirei's military ties. The security forces have long backed **Chiwenga** but Tagwirei has been building links to the military since 2016, when **Sakunda Holdings** was appointed to run the **Command Agriculture** programme. He is also said to be cultivating relationships with key figures, most notably **Felix Mhona**, Commander of the **Presidential Guard**. **Mhona's** wife, **Nyasha**, is leading Tagwirei's land tenure campaign in **Masvingo**, and, according to **Geza**, Tagwirei pays **Mhona** US\$25,000 a month for personal protection.

## NELSON'S RETURN

On the other side of the political fence, a more experienced politician is returning to the fray – perhaps encouraged by the deepening antipathy to President **Mnangagwa** and factionalism in the ruling party. **Nelson Chamisa**, former president of the **Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC)**, resigned in January 2024 in protest at the takeover of his party by **Sengezo Tshabangu** after the disputed August 2023 elections (AC Vol 65 No 3).

On 3 July, he posted an 'appreciation post' on X, thanking 'the citizens of Zimbabwe' and announcing he had been 'consulting' and 'building a new strategy'. The next day, he told local radio station **ZiFM** he would launch a new project – not a political party, he said, as 'political parties divide people' – but a 'movement uniting Zimbabweans'. We hear his team is preparing to relaunch under a new political identity.

While some are sceptical – **Chamisa** has lost two parties to internal coups and infiltrators in just seven years –

many opposition activists are rallying around him. At the 27 June launch of **Job Sikhala's** prison memoir, *Footprints in the Chains*, Chamisa spoke of uniting the opposition. Also present were senior Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and CCC figures, including his sometime rivals **Tendai Biti** and **Chalton Hwende**. **Botswana's** former President **Ian Khama** gave the keynote address, drawing parallels between the opposition's struggle and the liberation war.

In Chamisa's reworked vision, one target constituency is the war veterans and supporters of the 1970s liberation struggle – traditionally ZANU-PF's

core base, now fractured by Geza's anti-Mnangagwa campaign. Chamisa is also said to be in talks with senior security figures divided by ZANU-PF's factionalism. Within the CCC, Chamisa's proxy, **Jameson Timba**, appears to command more support than either Tshabangu or **Welshman Ncube**: when Timba and Tshabangu called rival caucus meetings in June, Timba's drew twice the number of MPs.

A measure of the Mnangagwa government's jumpiness is its crackdown on journalists and non-aligned activists. It may also sense the lack of almost any external censure when it comes to human rights abuses. On 1 July, **Faith Zaba**,

editor of the independent newspaper *The Independent*, was arrested on charges of undermining the authority of the president, following a column criticising Mnangagwa's leadership of the Southern African Development Community. She was released on bail after three nights in detention. This followed the 72-day pretrial detention of HSTV journalist **Blessed Mhlanga**, arrested for interviewing Geza. These arrests – along with the recent enactment of the PVO Amendment Bill, which imposes sweeping restrictions on civil society organisations – serve as a reminder of the risks facing those who organise against the regime. ●

## KENYA/BITAIN

# How Turkana's promises of oil riches became a pipe dream

**The oil companies arrived with pledges of roads, schools and clean water. Instead there has been negligible production but lots of environmental damage**

**M**ore than 15 years have passed since British-based Tullow Oil came to the remote plains of northern Kenya, raising expectations of transformation. Once oil was confirmed, it was meant to bring roads, electricity, clean water, phone networks, hospitals and schools – a new era for Turkana County. Instead, while reserves of 460 million barrels have been announced, production has barely begun. The state has earned just US\$2 million in crude oil royalties, and the region around the town of Lokichar bears the scars of heavy environmental damage.

Tullow obtained a licence from the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) in 2011 and discovered oil the next year. Protests soon followed: local communities blocked trucks transporting oil, demanding jobs, security and a share of the profits. Financial constraints and disputes with both local and national authorities slowed progress. Major partners – including **Canada's** Africa Oil and **France's** TotalEnergies – withdrew. In 2024, the Kenyan government rejected Tullow's Field Development Plan, citing inadequate funding, technical deficiencies and a lack of viability.

Tullow then announced in 2024 that commercial production would begin by 2028 – only to sell its Kenyan assets to Gulf Energy in April 2025, a company managed by **Francis Njogu**, a close ally of President **William Ruto**. When Gulf Energy was acquired by

French firm Rubis Énergie in 2019, Njogu is estimated to have earned 1.9 billion shillings (\$15m) from his 20% stake. Tullow retains a cost-free right to re-enter with a 30% stake in future development phases. The handover will unfold in stages, with final payments scheduled between 2028 and 2033.

Some communities near the drilling sites learned of the oil plans only when machinery arrived and camps were built. Others were told at village meetings hosted by Tullow, where camels and goats were slaughtered in customary hospitality. With little room for dissent, residents have had to adapt to oil exploration on land used as communal pasture for generations.

The first challenge is understanding the environmental impact. A 2022 study by Kenyatta University found that eight of 11 groundwater samples near oil well pads in the Lokichar Basin were contaminated with heavy metals and salts exceeding drinking water standards. The researchers also noted that increased groundwater abstraction had contributed to declining borehole levels – a trend likely to worsen as oil activity continues. The small black plastic water tanks Tullow installed in villages as part of its 'corporate social responsibility' efforts are widely seen as inadequate and unsustainable.

In 2024, after livestock died from drinking water near a shallow well close to an oil site, the Nairobi-based legal support organisation *Kituo cha Sheria* helped residents file a petition. It cites letters from NEMA in 2018 and the

county government in 2019, both urging the proper disposal of toxic waste – allegedly withdrawn under pressure from Tullow. The petition refers to the 'violence of development' – the often-overlooked harms of so-called development projects. Health workers in Lokichar have reported a rise in kidney disease. In June, **Edward Wawire**, newly appointed NEMA County Director for Turkana, urged journalists to request groundwater data and toxic waste records from Tullow. The company did not respond.

A second challenge is land ownership. When the Kenyan government brokered the deal with Tullow in 2009, the community did not legally own the land. The contracts remain unpublished. The 2010 constitution introduced devolution, giving 47 counties like Turkana more control over local matters such as budgets and local governance structures.

Under the 2016 Community Land Act, communities can register land collectively and obtain title deeds. Many remain unaware of this right, says **Muturi Kamau** of the Kenya Oil and Gas Working Group. He has spent the past decade in Turkana, supporting

Supported with a grant from Journalismfund.eu



communities like Kapese village near Lokichar – led by chair **Enok Pauli** – in registering their land. They now await renegotiation of land use terms with Gulf Energy.

**Triza Amoni**, Chief Officer for Energy in the county government, has said there are no funds for community engagement and invited NGOs to step in. The national government, based in Nairobi – or ‘downtown Kenya’, as locals call it – feels distant. Tullow’s headquarters in London are even further removed. That is where the next legal battle may unfold, says *Kituo cha Sheria* lawyer **Anthony Mulekyo**.

Experts are questioning the viability of oil production in Kenya. Exporting oil would require a pipeline to the coast – over 1,200 kilometres away – which does not yet exist. The pipeline was

originally part of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, a project under **China’s Belt and Road Initiative** (AC Vol 56 No 23 & 57 No 10). Its route had to be altered after a World Wildlife Fund assessment found it would pass through protected areas. Due to the high wax content of Turkana crude, any pipeline would have to be heated above 40 degrees Celsius to keep the oil flowing – a costly requirement in a region where only around 15% of households are connected to the grid (AC Vol 66 No 10).

‘Whatever the actual production costs may be, Turkana crudes’ waxy content imposes a requirement that oil transportation methods – whether by road or pipeline – include costly heating mechanisms,’ writes Kenyan economist **Emmanuel Wa-Kyendo** of the Institute

of Economic Affairs. He notes: ‘It seems that no matter how one looks at it, Turkana crude oil does not rank among the cheapest to produce.’

The oil project has brought some infrastructure investments to the region. The World Bank funded a road project from 2020 to 2024, with attached schools and health centres, citing the need to ‘boost trade and transport’. Yet in 2019, lawyer **Donald Kipkorir** called Tullow’s Kenyan venture ‘a hoax’. Gulf Energy has also faced accusations of repeatedly overcharging clients and securing government tenders through opaque means. Cabinet Secretary for Energy and Petroleum **Opiyo Wanda** recently claimed that crude oil production would begin in 2026. On present showing, few have much faith in that promise. ●

## SUDAN

# The deadly stalemate deepens

**As both sides escalate drone warfare backed by foreign patrons, civilians are trapped in a cycle of violence, revenge and economic devastation**

**T**he Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) have clawed back large tracts of land in the heart of the country forcing the Rapid Support Forces to refocus on western Sudan and Darfur. Even in Darfur, despite new military hardware arriving via **Kenya, South Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic**

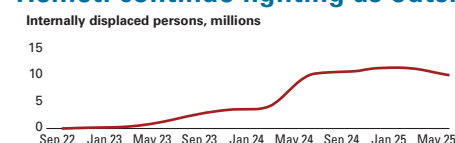
(CAR), and **Libya**, RSF fighters have failed to take El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, after laying siege to it for over a year (AC Vol 66 No 9). They have suffered heavy casualties in this and all the other offensives they have launched against the SAF and their local allies, the Joint Forces. In this latest phase of

the conflict, the SAF is defending its territory but is making only incremental advances against the RSF.

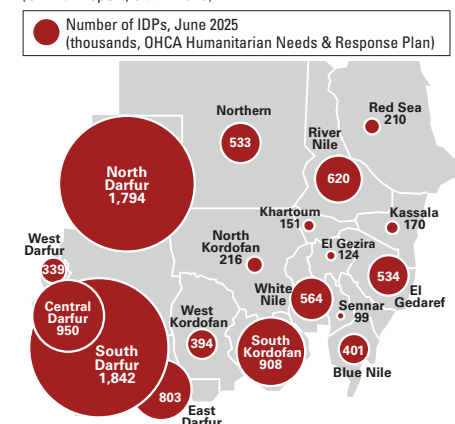
It is a stalemate with two big consequences. The RSF is running a recruitment campaign extending far beyond Darfur and Sudan to rebuild its ground troops. But it is training its recruits too quickly for them to be effective fighters (AC Vol 66 No 7). For most of the new recruits, the primary aim is not victory but money and plunder. Today’s RSF bears little resemblance to the determined fighting force that launched the war in April 2023.

RSF commanders are responding to this weakening of their ground forces by stepping up their use of drones (AC Vol

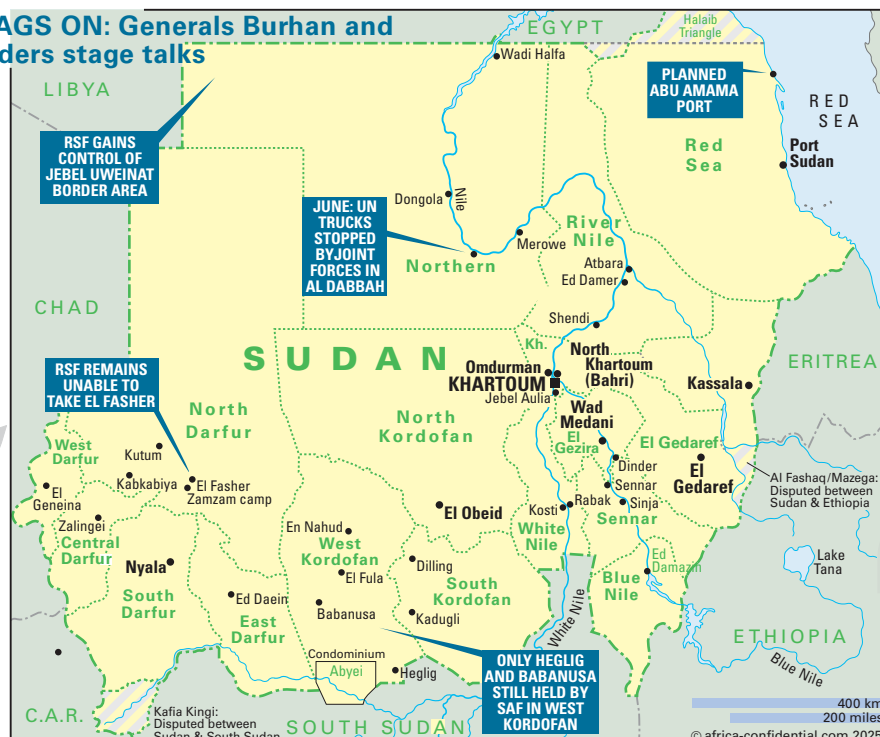
## SUDAN’S DEVASTATING WAR DRAGS ON: Generals Burhan and Hemeti continue fighting as outsiders stage talks



**12.1 MILLION INTERNALLY DISPLACED**  
of whom, 7.7 million displaced since April 2023  
(UNHCR report, 5 Jun 2025)



Sources: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)





66 No 11).

They are helped by multiple logistical lines and facilities in neighbouring countries. Chad is still part of this effort but South Sudan and Libya are getting more important. CAR's use is in doubt as Wagner and the *Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations unies pour la stabilisation en Centrafrique* (MINUSCA) are questioning the type of cargo that planes from United Arab Emirates could deliver in the Vakaga prefecture in CAR once the Birao airstrip is rehabilitated and extended. And armed opposition groups in CAR may choose to raid Birao once they discover the UAE is using the base for arms transshipment.

The dual use airstrip at Amdjarass in eastern Chad suited UAE officials as they delivered arms and munitions there to **Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo Hemeti's** RSF fighters while insisting to the outside world – though no one believed them – that they were delivering humanitarian aid. But there are not many other such facilities in the region.

The SAF has its own air force and a drone fleet. It bombed Nyala airport in South Darfur in May and other concentrations of RSF troops. It launched its campaign to eradicate RSF supporters in Khartoum and other recaptured areas but it is getting out of hand. Its zealots are targeting individuals and entire communities deemed to be enemies; their houses are destroyed, people are kidnapped or shot dead.

What was initially seen as collateral damage from recapturing territory is now raising concerns across the country and overseas – in the same way that the RSF's brutal assaults on cities sounded alarms in the early stages of the war. United States sanctions triggered by reports that the SAF had been using chemical weapons (chlorine) were meant as a warning by State Department officials over multiple human rights violations. SAF abuses may not be as random or generalised as those carried out by RSF fighters but they continue a cycle of revenge.

The RSF has lost territory in central Sudan but it has also launched successful offensives in several areas of strategic value. In west Kordofan, only Heglig and Babanussa are still controlled by the SAF; the battle for control of the area is continuing despite heavy casualties on both sides. This means that Sudan's oil fields could soon be under RSF control. It isn't clear whether the RSF is planning to take the North Kordofan capital, El Obeid. It controls the surrounding villages and is mounting pressure on SAF troops in the capital. Taking over west Kordofan will expand the RSF's

## IDRISS RUNS BURHAN'S WAR CABINET

General Burhan's appointment of Dr **Kamel Idriss** as the new Prime Minister was shrewd. Before Idriss assumed office, **Abdel Fattah al Burhan** and his fellow generals had rewritten the 'constitutional rules' to allocate more powers to the military over the civilian ministers and the prime minister (Dispatches, 9/6/25). The Sudan Armed Force's brief to Idriss was to prioritise three aims: defeating the Rapid Support Forces (RSF); appointing a technocratic interim government; and advancing the national dialogue. Idriss insists that no party should be excluded from the dialogue, which is code for talking to the National Congress Party (NCP), who welcomed his appointment, and other Islamist factions.

After dissolving the cabinet on 1 June, Idriss has been trying to balance interest groups in the SAF, the allied militias and the former ruling NCP/National Islamic Front (NIF) under ousted President **Omer Hassan Ahmed el Beshir** (AC Vol 60 No 9). They want to convert the help they gave to the SAF – such as organising militias instrumental in the White Nile, Sennar, and Khartoum states – into political power.

Signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement of October 2020 have much to lose: they include the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council (SLM-TC); Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and Sudan Liberation Forces Alliance (SLFA). Those groups previously controlled the key ministries and departments that raised taxes for the Khartoum government. Having fought on Burhan's and the SAFs side, they don't want to become third-class officials in the regime, as under el Bashir.

Idriss plans to establish a 22-member cabinet including technocrats. Burhan had already nominated his candidates to the top security posts: ministers of defence and interior, having consulted with Idriss. Both conform to Idriss's plan to build legitimacy: one is from Beja in Eastern Sudan, the other is from the Nuba Mountains. They are senior police and military officers respectively. On 3 July, Idriss named **Muaz Omer Bakhit** as Health Minister, **Ismat Qureshi Abdallah** as Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, and **Ahmed Madawi** as Minister for Higher Education. Bakhit, a distinguished neurologist, founded the Princess Al-Jawhara Centre for Molecular Medicine in **Bahrain**. Abdallah was Dean of the Agriculture Faculty at the University of Khartoum. And Madawi, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Khartoum, was in a team that discovered a new treatment for leishmaniasis in 2022. Madawi is described as explicitly non-political but Abdallah supported the demonstrations that toppled the el Beshir/NCP regime in April 2019. Bakhit, based in Bahrain for years, openly supported the revolution against the NCP.

In parallel to SAF's attempt to sponsor a civilian regime, RSF Commander **Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo 'Hemeti'** presided over disputes within the Sudan Founding Alliance (Tasis) then announced it had agreed to appoint him as Chairman and **Abdel Aziz al-Hilu** as his deputy. The emerged at a press conference in Nyala, indicating that the RSF is unlikely to take El Fasher, which it has laid siege to for over a year. The 31-strong Tasis leadership is meant to administer the areas in west and central Sudan controlled by RSF.

The Tagadam group, initially led by ousted prime minister **Abdalla Hamdok** (AC Vol 65 No 9) has split. Those closest to the RSF have gone over to Tasis and are working with Hemeti's entourage. Hamdok's group, known as Sumoud, positions itself as equidistant to Burhan's SAF and Hemeti's RSF.

Sumoud rejects Burhan's focus on victory over the RSF at all costs, arguing instead for an immediate end to the war via negotiations. Hamdok told *Africa Confidential* that Idriss has no legitimacy as he was appointed by a general who mounted a coup against a transitional government. Sumoud also opposes any dialogue the former ruling NCP and other Islamist factions.

Trying to head off the readmission of Sudan to the African Union, which would imply recognition of the Burhan's SAF regime in Khartoum, Sumoud has assurances from **South Africa, Nigeria and Ethiopia** that they would block it. The new AU Commission Chair **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf**, former foreign minister of **Djibouti**, has welcomed Idriss's appointment and looks keen to wave through Sudan's readmission, but insiders say that with the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security Commission headed by top Nigerian diplomat, **Bankole Adeoye**, it is unlikely that Youssouf will be able to push it through.

Yet questions remain about Sumoud's stance and its ability to coalesce a new constituency for peace and a transition civilian rule – whether it is calling on the RSF, SAF and their supporters but also to those civic activists who stayed out of Hamdok's Tagadam project. ●

access to agricultural production (such as gum arabic) and allow it to control much of the border with South Sudan, an important supply route.

The RSF also launched an offensive to control the tri-border areas (Libya, Sudan and Egypt) near the Jebel Uweinat. This mountain area was known for its smuggling routes. The Joint Forces (allies of the SAF) operating there said that had they wanted a large group of fighters from Kuffrah in Libya to join the fray in northern Darfur. These forces left Libya because their relations with the ruling militia group, *Subul al Salam*, had soured since 2024, provoking several skirmishes.

SAF commanders blamed these tensions on the UAE and its support for Libyan National Army commander, Gen Khalifa Haftar and his son Saddam Haftar. It accuses them of carving out a new logistical route for the RSF to allow Hemeti's forces to dominate the border area (AC Vol 66 No 11)

But there are other less politically aligned explanations for this crisis. The Joint Forces were said deeply involved in smuggling routes and worked on these

with their Libyan (and maybe Egyptian) counterparts.

This would explain why the RSF so easily seized control of the area, probably with the support of Libyan fighters under Haftar. Egyptian officials had mixed feelings about these developments. Staunch supporters of the SAF, they have no sympathy for the RSF. This is despite Hemeti's recent calls for warmer ties with Egypt. But Cairo is worried about the quantity of light arms smuggled across its borders. For now, the RSF's base in the region is less worrying to Cairo than the rampant arms flow. And President Abdel Fattah el Sisi cannot afford to lose Haftar's support when regional alliances are becoming more fluid. Turkey is negotiating privileged access to the Mediterranean oil fields. And the UAE financiers of the El Sisi's government are running out of patience with the slow pace of his economic reforms.

The RSF's territorial gains here could have other important consequences. It may enable the RSF to regain control of the gold mines it seized in 2018-2019. Those mines were confiscated by

the SAF in 2023. And it may move to seize others. Access these mines would strengthen the RSF's economic base and reduce its dependence on UAE's support.

The RSF can import suicide drones to target Merowe, Dongola and other cities in northern Sudan which have not yet been drawn into the fighting. These threats put the SAF into a defensive posture, tying up troops that could have been used in an offensive in Western Sudan.

### DIGGING IN

The balance of power or terror relies heavily on the technological investments made by the two protagonists, thanks to their regional or international patrons. It's still evident that there is no military resolution, regardless of claims by the rival Sudanese leaders. Even if the UAE winds down its support for the RSF, Hemeti has amassed enough cash and gold reserves to continue fighting for months, if not years. And – given the lack of international pressure – there is no obvious reason why Abu Dhabi would give up its longtime ally. ●

## SUDAN/UNITED STATES

# Would-be mediators mull a new initiative

**US officials have sounded out the combatants and their backers over a new peace plan – but nobody is jumping into fresh talks**

A flurry of peace initiatives put to the warring factions in Sudan and their main sponsors is yet to move the needle. But it may prompt would-be mediators such as the UN, African Union, and the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as well as officials from the United States and Europe to pressure the protagonists and their backers from the sidelines.

The highest profile would-be mediator is Massad Boulos, President Donald Trump's advisor on African affairs (and father-in-law of Trump's daughter, Tiffany).

On 2 July, he announced that Washington would soon host a meeting with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates to revive the peace process in Sudan. He added that Washington was talking to the two Sudanese warring factions.

That may have prompted the UN Secretary-General António Guterres to announce that his Special Representative on Sudan and former Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ramtane Lamamra, would launch a new Consultative Group

meeting with the African Union in Addis Ababa to scale up efforts to resolve the Sudan crisis. It seems the UN wanted to respond both to criticisms of Lamamra's lack of progress and to contest the US leadership on another mediation effort in Sudan.

Yet it is all moving slowly. On 3 June, the ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Egypt met with US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau and Massad Boulos in Washington. Nothing came out of that. The sense of a stalemate was reinforced when a few days later, a Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in Kuwait City was unable to agree on a statement on Sudan.

### EMIRATI TEST

When Egypt proposed a meeting in Sharm el Sheikh on June 10 to resolve issues between Abu Dhabi and the Sudan Armed Forces regime under General Abdel Fattah al Burhan, the UAE delegates listed preconditions such as restoring an economic deal that was signed in December 2022 with the Sudanese junta but cancelled in August 2024 after the outbreak of war.

The agreement with investments costed at more than \$6 billion, included the building of a port 200 kilometres north of Port Sudan, Abu Amama Port, and agricultural projects covering up to 400,000 acres.

The signatory on the UAE side was Mubadala Investment Company's chief executive who is Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al Nahyan, a younger brother of the UAE's President Mohamed bin Zayed. Mansour, a collector of super yachts and the owner of Manchester City football club, is widely seen as the chief military strategist for the UAE's push into Africa, as reported in the *New York Times*.

It looks like the UAE preconditions for talks were designed to be unacceptable to Burhan but were a way of testing the waters. The exchange of drones between Gen Burhan's SAF and the Rapid Support Forces under Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo 'Hemeti' in April and May, which killed Emirati and Turkish technicians on each side, seems to have been a turning point.

Just before that we hear that the UAE proposed a ceasefire to Burhan that would involve him accepting a role for Hemeti in a reunited national army in Sudan (AC Vol 66 No 2). Fresh from the SAF retaking of Khartoum, Burhan rejected the offer out of hand. And his stance hasn't changed since then.

On the UAE side, perhaps Abu Dhabi wasn't interested in serious negotiations in June either. It maximalist



preconditions may have just been a ploy to remind Burhan and his fellow generals that they were distrusted by the UAE, for grabbing funds and failing to honour commercial commitments. Perhaps that precondition was inserted to provoke a debate and compel Burhan to defend the SAF position. But he didn't rise to the bait.

A less likely reason for the preconditions is that commercial gain is now the primary driver for the UAE role in Sudan's war. Doubtless Abu Dhabi is eyeing Sudan's arable and has benefited copiously from trading in tonnes of its smuggled gold. But those commercial gains would be available without backing a force such as Hemeti's RSF (AC Vol 65 No 8).

US envoy Massad Boulous's statement of intent on Sudan is regarded as a follow-up to his mediation in the mineral-security deal between Congo-Kinshasa and Rwanda signed on 27

June in Washington. Then US Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** said that after the Kinshasa-Kigali accord that the Trump Administration wanted to address the crisis in Sudan. But the Kinshasa-Kigali deal was achieved via negotiations involving leverage from the US and from Qatar. The same framework may be tried in Sudan, but it may struggle to overcome the difficulties rooted in competition between the Gulf states, not so evident in Central Africa.

#### BRAIN DRAIN

A further problem is diplomatic capacity. For the last few months, the State Department has been undergoing a comprehensive overhaul. Many senior diplomats and regional experts have left or have been redeployed. Following the 3 June meeting, Landau relinquished the Sudan file and was tasked with bureaucratic duties. The last US Special Envoy on Sudan, **Tom Perriello**, had

to step down after Trump became president.

Some argue that Washington should focus its efforts on humanitarian access and a regional containment of the crisis. This would be welcome by most Sudanese who face the destruction of their national economy and their communities and a death toll into the tens if not hundreds of thousands.

But to improve conditions, without a sustained ceasefire, each side would have to respect its own commitments. There are numerous incidents in which RSF or SAF allied militias have blocked humanitarian convoys.

Easing humanitarian access is based on a debatable assumption that Sudan is de facto divided into two parts; so the two protagonists should assume responsibility for the situation in each area. This doesn't account for the heterogeneity of the two sides and the changes over the past few months. ●

## CAMEROON

# Splits appear in Biya regime's façade

Published online 4 July

**Once-stalwart loyalists are breaking with the regime just as opposition strength swells ahead of the October elections**

**T**he previously confident guardians of Paul Biya's presidency are looking concerned as they absorb the impact of the defection of two previously dependable, even crucial, allies – **Bello Boubra Maïgari** and **Issa Tchiroma Bakary**.

In response, Biya's right-hand man and de facto government leader, Presidency Secretary-General **Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh**, has embarked on a lightning consultation with members of the ruling *Rassemblement démocratique du Peuple Camerounais* (RDPC) in all the country's 10 regions between 1 and 8 July in an effort to stem further defections. Both

veteran ex-colleagues of the President, keystones in his governing alliance, have declared themselves candidates in the presidential election, challenging assumptions that Biya's re-election in October was a foregone conclusion.

The 78-year-old Maïgari's *Union nationale pour la démocratie et le progrès* (UNDP) had, until his declaration on 28 June, been in alliance with the RDPC for three decades. Yet he remains a member of the government as tourism minister.

His move came two days after the resignation from the government of Bakary, 76, the employment and training minister and leader of the RDPC's

other partner, the *Front pour le Salut National du Cameroun* (FSNC), and his own declaration for the presidency. Regime supporters tried to minimise the defections but failed to conceal their seriousness.

The regime was already on guard after opposition leader **Maurice Kamto** mobilised thousands of Cameroonians to a mass rally at the *Place de la République* in Paris on 31 May. Kamto tried to soften any alarm in Yaoundé at the size of the crowds by reassuring Biya about his safety if he stepped down. He would not persecute him or his followers, he said.

It's the latest in a number of ploys by opposition figures and former regime stalwarts to survive the transition.

Biya, who has not yet formally said he will stand, still wields absolute power of patronage and law, and can cancel polls, imprison rivals and enemies, disbar candidates, and manipulate military appointments to keep coups at bay.

Opinion remains divided in the regime camp as to whether Kamto

## Subscribing

The price of an **individual annual subscription** for a print copy (including subscriber's online access) is **£1019/US\$1429**. Reduced prices are available for academic institutions, NGO/charities and students.

The price for an **individual, single-user online-only annual subscription** is **£876/US\$1226**.

Basic, online individual subscriptions for shorter periods are also available. Alternatively, provide direct online access for all your offices and staff via the IP Multi-Site Licence.

**IP Multi-User and Multi-Site Licences:** Online access via IP recognition provides access for all your staff wherever they may be located in the world. The cost is determined by how many people you want to be able to access the site at the same time. Prices start at **£2567/US\$3594** for 2 concurrent users.

#### FREE for all annual subscribers

All annual subscribers have full access to the searchable archive of issues dating back to 1996.

#### Subscriptions contact

Charlotte Bryan  
Asempa Limited, Vine House,  
Fair Green, Reach  
Cambridge CB25 0JD, UK  
Tel: +44(0)1638 743633  
[subscriptions@africa-confidential.com](mailto:subscriptions@africa-confidential.com)  
or purchase online at:

**[www.africa-confidential.com](http://www.africa-confidential.com)**

has done enough to make himself and his *Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun* (MRC) acceptable to them.

Kamto's assurances regarding Biya did not convince some hardliners within the ruling elite, who seem divided on what to do about him. Kamto returned to Cameroon to a tumultuous welcome on 7 June to refine his campaign message and soften perceptions of his radicalism, but the government may stop any effort to replicate his Paris rally and could yet cancel his candidacy.

Police surrounded his Douala residence for two days on his return, preventing him from attending party meetings.

### ANGLOPHONE VOTE

The two leading Anglophone candidates have no realistic chance of winning and cannot even unite the Anglophone vote against the background of violent separatist conflict. But they see potential in various opportunistic compromise scenarios.

**Joshua Osih**, of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), has chosen a moderate approach, avoiding the fierce criticism of Biya that Kamto and his late predecessor, **John Fru Ndi**, embraced (AC Vol 64 No 25). Well-connected within ruling circles, Osih manages travel logistics contracts in **Switzerland** – his mother's country – for Biya. He positions himself as a compromise figure – not part of the regime, but no threat to it either.

He has encouraged this impression by criticising Kamto, who is deeply hated and feared by the Biya circle, implicitly offering himself as an alternative.

Lawyer **Akere Muna**, now the presidential candidate for **Univers** –

**Cabral Libii's** former party – hopes to unite the opposition behind him as an Anglophone candidate with strong Francophone ties, and wants to be thought of as a potential leader of a transition regime. Muna backed Kamto in 2018 and hopes for reciprocal support (AC Vol 59 No 20).

Libii remains a divisive figure. Some Cameroonians suspect the university lecturer is aligned with the government behind a cloak of oppositionism. In 2018, officials welcomed his candidacy, as it split the youth vote and weakened Kamto (AC Vol 59 No 22).

The government in late May abandoned its two-year effort to block Libii from running for president, which deepened suspicions that Libii is really working in Biya's interests by trying to split the Kamto vote.

In 2018, Kamto claimed victory, sought annulment of the election at Biya's partisan Constitutional Council and led protests that were swiftly crushed by police. His efforts failed largely because other opposition candidates – Libii (who came third) and Osih (fourth) – refused to back him.

The government hopes to replicate this scenario in October, exploiting Kamto's Achilles's heel: his inability to secure the loyalty of key opposition figures.

Kamto's momentum from the Paris rally worries the ruling circle, which may think it safest to ban him from standing (AC Vol 66 No 1). This would not displease supposedly opposition politicians anxious to be co-opted.

It could be easily done. To stand, Kamto must gather 300 signatures from elected officials and paramount

chiefs evenly distributed across Cameroon's 10 regions. Government validation is required for each signature, and improper candidate registration is a popular method for excluding undesirables.

Efforts to unite the opposition behind a single candidate have stalled, but some organisers argue that the best time to consolidate support is after the Constitutional Council has vetted candidates. If Kamto is disqualified, protests or a default opposition coalition – or both – could follow.

The MRC is wary of taking that risk. Its leadership is exploring deals with smaller parties eligible to field a candidate, effectively buying their ticket. Three or four such parties qualify but lack the voter base to rank in the top five. Kamto may face a bidding war with **Paul Atanga Nji** – Biya's hardline Minister of Territorial Administration – who has made opposing Kamto a priority after failing to resolve the Anglophone crisis (AC Vol 65 No 8).

The calculations of Biya's entourage, however, have become more complicated since placating the forces behind northerners **Maïgari** and **Bakary** requires different methods and skills than those in play against Kamto. Their defection offers renewed hope for an opposition consensus candidate as both have declared they are interested.

Many see **Ngoh Ngoh's** national tour of the ruling party as a sign of desperation. The President's camp must find a way to woo back deserting northerners, midwife a new regional alliance or fine-tune the repression and rigging machinery with only three months to the poll. ●

## SOMALIA

# Politicians seek a way out of the impasse

**With Al Shabaab holding its own, the viability of next year's elections diminishing, and donors in dismay, the constitution has moved centre stage**

**M**ogadishu's politicians are ending a period of bitter dispute and beginning to talk to each other as they all conclude that the conditions are not yet right for the general election scheduled for next year. The change from a parliamentary to a presidential system is still controversial and unclear in its implications.

The background includes a resurgence in *Al Shabaab's* power in the past couple of years as the government's security efforts founder for want of unity and good co-ordination. It does not help that nobody yet knows if the

**United States** will withdraw from the Somalia conflict.

The easing of the political confrontation between President **Hassan Sheikh Mohamud** and high-ranking politicians including the presidents of Jubaland and Puntland is partly because, if no elections take place next year, the term of the current president must be extended (AC Vol 66 No 10).

If that happens, the government's western backers feel they must back the Mogadishu regime because anything less would mean political collapse and a signal victory for the militant Islamists.

But the background could hardly be more volatile. The US is still making up its mind about the future of Africom within the US military, and Somali counter-insurgency, and shows signs of possibly recognising Somaliland's sovereignty, hitherto a red line for the foreign backers of the fight against **Al Shabaab**.

The **United Arab Emirates**, a key source of funds, is strongly opposed to **Hassan Sheikh** because of his strong alliance with **Turkey** (AC Vol 66 No 11). It also distrusts him because of his close relations with *Damul Jadiid* ('new blood'), a splinter group from the Muslim Brotherhood (AC Vol 55 No 3). And the future of the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission (AUSSOM), has been in question since 30 June because its budget can't be agreed (see box).

The government organised a large consultation exercise from 16 to 19 June attended by elders, intellectuals, and

representatives of opposition political parties in South-Central Somalia, as well as some of their counterparts from Puntland.

It aimed to demonstrate public support for the electoral process as outlined in the constitutional amendments passed in March 2024 and reassure donors that the government was being conciliatory to its opponents (AC Vol 65 No 8). Under those amendments, political associations would compete in local elections and the three with the most votes would become the three sole legal political parties.

The associations are highly varied; some centre on an individual, while others have potentially huge constituencies, such as *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jam'a*, moderate Sufis (i.e. most Somalis) who are opposed to militant Salafism.

The presidential 'association', the Solidarity and Justice Party, whose members include all ministers, high-ranking civil servants, and the presidents of South-West State, Galmudug, and Hirshabelle, is considered likeliest to come top in the polls.

The three parties-to-be are expected to play the part of a loyal, 'constructive', opposition, which never questions the ground rules of the federal government of Somalia.

The success of the meeting encouraged the radical opposition led by former leading ministers or presidents in a group called the Somali Salvation Forum to soften its opposition.

It agreed to give up pre-conditions, consented to the meeting taking place at the far from neutral Villa Somalia (the presidential compound) and to meet the president and his team without the presence of the Jubaland and Puntland presidents, **Ahmed Madobe** and **Said Abdullahi Deni**.

The gathering on 25 June was generally thought a success.

The two sides agreed that:

- Somalia's unity must be strengthened (and, implicitly, Somaliland's independence thwarted),
- a review of the amended Constitution is needed,
- terrorists should be eradicated,
- the model under which a Somali general election would be from one electorate be reviewed, and
- the 'radical opposition' under the Somali Salvation Forum should facilitate new contacts between the government in Mogadishu and the two dissident federal states, South-West State and Puntland.

The discussions mark a broadening of debate with political issues achieving prominence. Political parties seem to be beginning to discuss national issues

## INSIDE THE DIVISIONS OF THE ANTI-AL SHABAAB FORCES

On 3 July Mogadishu's Prime Minister **Hamza Abdi Barre** delivered an emotional speech at a parade at the Turksom compound in the capital for officers and NCOs graduating from the **Turkish** training programme.

He reminded the audience that fighting *Al Shabaab* meant protecting their mothers, their children, and that the conflict was truly a jihad against the *Khawareej* (early Islamic schismatics and the usual label used for extremists).

The speech came just as the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) had run out of money, suffering the same fate as its predecessor, the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

The European Union is also getting tired of this 'forever war' and wants to spend less on an operation that has shown poor results for over 10 years (see box, 'No cash, no mission'). Despite incurring high casualties, the African contingents are accused of habitually keeping to their barracks and reluctantly supporting Somali National Army operations with logistics only.

The different African contingents often clash, undermining trust between them while cooperation, when they can manage it, is often sabotaged by a disorganised and poorly led SNA.

**Egypt** wants its AUSSOM contingent to go the quieter coast rather than the more turbulent Jowhar, 90 kilometres north of the capital. To accommodate Cairo, the government finds itself building a base near Warsheikh and two nearby locations for other than military considerations, which bodes ill for the fight against *Al Shabaab*.

Ugandan officers are angry at the government because their longtime colleagues on the ground in Somalia, the **Burundians**, have been edged out in favour of Egyptians, although the Burundians, few as they are, have lost 500 troops since they arrived in 2007. The **Ugandans** have a poor opinion of Egyptian soldiery, and Uganda is on good terms with the **United Arab Emirates**, which does not favour an Egyptian presence in Somalia because of the disquiet it causes Prime Minister **Abiy Ahmed** of **Ethiopia**.

No amount of poor performance by foreign troops can conceal the deficiencies of the SNA. Three years ago Hassan Sheikh decided to support the *Ma'wisley* militias against *Al Shabaab* (AC Vol 63 No 21 & 23). These alliances expelled the jihadists from many areas in Galmudug and Hirshabelle, but the tactical success was bought at the expense of the SNA whose problems of morale and low efficiency were not dealt with. Supporting the *Ma'wisley* has been expensive. Unlike a national army, such a militia needs cash to buy off clan elders, officers, traders, and politicians. Even so, given the number of clans involved internal disputes are frequent. *Ma'wisley* sometimes split up or refuse to move when the jihadists return to areas they had previously been cleared from.

*Al Shabaab* was taken aback by the level of animosity it faced on moving back into Hirshabelle so it adapted by concentrating instead on the SNA and ATMIS. Instead of fighting the *Ma'wisley*, which could have compromised future reconciliation with their own clans, they made mobility a strategic advantage, as from 2007 to 2011, and concentrated their attacks on the SNA contingents that were most exposed and worst prepared. The SNA strength exceeds 22,000, but thousands are stationed in Jubaland and South-West State far from the crucial theatre of operations north of Mogadishu. Recruits lack motivation, as witnessed in Lower Juba, where Barre deployed 1,500 SNA to defeat Ahmed Madobe's forces in December 2024 (AC Vol 66 No 2). In a matter of days, more than 1,000 soldiers reached the **Kenyan** border and applied for asylum.

President **Hassan Sheikh Mohamud** seems to be betting on further sophisticated military equipment and a massive Turkish involvement, especially if the oil and gas survey is as good as the rumours say (AC Vol 66 No 10). ●

instead of factional issues. The SSF acknowledged that federal states may have specific arguments with the federal government, while political parties are discussing national issues more broadly.

The issues also revolve around the change from an essentially parliamentary system of government as under Article 1 of the 2012 Constitution to the amendments passed in 2024 authorising only three political parties.

The new system is presidential, with the government formed by the elected president, who would appoint and fire the prime minister, rather than as now, where the prime minister is appointed after a confidence vote in parliament.

### NO RETURN

On 26 June, Madobe and Deni met in Garowe, Puntland's capital. They responded to the consultation exercise





member states to control the Electoral Commission, which would allow nearly all federal states to appoint their clients, as in 2016 and 2021.

Hassan Sheikh and his team believe this hardline stance is being encouraged or insisted on by the UAE to advance its agenda of weakening the Mogadishu government at all costs. Some are saying that Abu Dhabi is playing a negative role and indirectly helping *Al Shabaab* portray the government as a corrupt, western-backed entity.

### DOUBLE GAME

Much depends now on the opposition's view of the double game being played by Hassan Sheikh. On the one hand, without waiting for any conclusion in the current dialogue, he is working on the local elections. Electoral registration in Galmudug and South-West State began on 4 July. Meanwhile, he is also trying to prove to the international community that he is engaging in dialogue with the opposition and has no intention of monopolising power.

His strength lies in the fact that many voters do not want a repeat of the 2022 elections, when FMS presidents controlled the appointment of MPs.

But the new electoral system the March 2024 constitutional amendments brought about is poorly understood by most Somalis, whom many believe should be made more familiar with what's in store to support it.

From a legal perspective, the SSF is right to raise concerns about the implications of these amendments and demand they be largely frozen.

An advantage of the amendments is that they could curtail parliamentary bickering, but on the other hand they could also allow for more authoritarian presidential behaviour. ●

by insisting on a full return to the 2012 Constitution and that no amendments should be passed before this text is approved by referendum, even though this would destroy parliamentary work done over more than a decade.

And holding a national referendum is impossible anyway.

The problem for both men is that with only one national electorate for the presidency local influence is minimised. They also want the federal

## NO CASH, NO MISSION

The fate of the new African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) is unclear after a row between the **United States** and the European Union left it without guaranteed funding. The EU has spent €2.7 billion on the wages of peacekeeping forces involved in anti-*Al Shabaab* operations since 2007 – part of a broader €4bn investment in the Horn of Africa. That includes support for its naval force in the Indian Ocean, a military training mission in Somalia, and programmes tackling youth radicalisation in Somaliland and **Kenya** (AC Vol 65 No 11).

But patience in Brussels has worn thin. The EU has paused its funding pending a request for 75% of the mission's cost to be covered by the UN – with the remaining 25% to come from voluntary contributions – under UN Security Council Resolution 2719. EU officials told Africa Confidential that continued support for AUSSOM depends on 'fairer burden-sharing between international partners'.

But that proposal has been vetoed by the Trump administration, which has halted funding citing corruption. Republican **Jim Risch**, who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has tabled a bill demanding guaranteed audits and accountability about the mission's spending. 'Funding schemes like UNSCR 2719 let others dodge the bill and dump the cost on U.S. taxpayers, while giving the UN a welcome distraction for its own failure,' says Risch.

Agreement on the mission's composition – an initial deployment of 12,626 troops and police – was only reached in January after months of wrangling over troop numbers from Somalia's neighbours (Dispatches 7/1/25).

AUSSOM's budget stands at \$832.5 million until June 2030. The African Union has sought funding from **Qatar**, the **United Arab Emirates** and **Saudi Arabia** – all key players in the Horn – but without success. **China**, **South Korea** and **Japan** have contributed \$5.6m. ●

# Bonn summit exposes rifts and inertia on climate action

Published online 8 July

**Geopolitical rivalries are sinking the UN treaty to cut carbon emissions and protect developing economies ahead of the Brazil summit in November**

The UN's preparatory climate summit in Bonn from 16-26 June offered a grim portent of what may happen in the main event – the UN COP30 climate summit to be held in Belem, on the edge of Brazil's Amazon forest in November. With the summit hosted by Brazil, one of the most activist developing countries on climate issues, expectations of a positive outcome were initially running high. The Bonn meeting was held up for two days while delegates argued over the agenda (Vol 65 No 13).

The next test was not encouraging. Ahead of the Belem summit, all signatories to the landmark 2015 Paris climate treaty, from which the United States has quit for the second time, were supposed to submit their national plans to cut carbon emissions to keep the increase in average global temperatures, since the industrial age, under 1.5°C.

These plans were due in February. But most countries, responding to tariff wars and sharpening geopolitical rivalries, are holding back. Brazil now wants the plans in by September – so the COP30 summit can discuss whether the 1.5°C target is still possible. Some western officials argue that it's time to drop the target as unachievable; others say that would undermine the bigger principle and encourage more cheating and backsliding.

Signatories must also submit 'just transition' plans which are meant to attract international funding. South Africa, Senegal and Morocco have already made progress on these but there have been tough negotiations on policy. Delegations in Bonn agreed to form a Just Transition Work Programme leading to a new technical forum at Belem to share knowledge and experience on these schemes.

Brazilian officials are wisely downplaying the chances of bold new commitments emerging from Belem. They point to the lack of progress on the hundreds of commitments from previous summits. That is a problem for Africa, which has contributed just 4% of greenhouse gases but whose economies are hardest hit by climate change and extreme weather.

The African group of negotiators, chaired by Richard Muyungi, a climate advisor to Tanzania's president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, went into the Bonn

conference calling for movement on financing, particularly 'adaptation' funding to cope with climate change. They came out of it arguing that Germany, the permanent host of these interim session, is excluding voices from the continent. African countries, totalling over 1.4 billion people rely on external grants and loans for around 70% of the funds they need to reduce emissions and cope with rising temperatures.

Most of the climate finance has gone to India and China, now a green-energy super power and the world's biggest economy measured by purchasing power parity. The Bonn summit was low-key which, according to a veteran activist from South Asia, was due to 'everything going on outside' after the United States joined Israel's war on Iran.

The overarching question in Bonn was whether rich countries will deliver after agreeing at COP29 in Baku to boost climate finance to US\$1.3 trillion a year to developing economies by 2035 (Vol 65 No 24).

Some \$300 billion a year of this was due to come from public finance and the rest from innovative fiscal and financing measures, such as carbon trading, private investment and higher levies on polluting companies.

If the signatories make good on their pledges, then African governments will stick with the COP process. But doubts are growing. The alternative for African states would be side deals with China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, on climate-linked issues. These include the carbon trading of wetlands and forests and the critical minerals, in Congo-Kinshasa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe needed for batteries, electric vehicles and solar cells.

In Bonn, the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group of 44 states, which includes many in Africa, called for a trebling of the 'adaptation' part of the total to \$60bn annually, an increase from the Baku demand. 'Adaptation is a lifeline', Malawi's Evans Njewa, one of the LDC chairs, told a press conference.

Such demands are likely to get lost amid the realpolitik. Military budgets and protectionism are increasing and multilateralism is weakening under the pressure (Vol 66 No 13). Fewer in western treasuries now accept that they should pay to clean up the environmental mess

that they have primarily caused. That undermines the arguments for climate justice; it is sapping all vitality from the prolonged UN negotiations.

Hopes are receding that Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva can produce a grand deal on climate finance this year. The taxes on private jets and boats that were proposed when Brazil was appointed to the COP presidency last year now seem off the table. Lula's grand forest fund may still be doable but he is struggling to get support even for that given the geopolitical winds.

At the summit of the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa and six other full members) opening on 7 July in Brazil, Lula called for a far stronger commitment to cut carbon emissions.

BRICS members account for 40% of the global population and half the world's greenhouse gas emissions which should give the organisation a weighty international voice. But the response from US President Donald Trump threatening a 30% hike in tariffs on any BRICS member state pushing for anti-US policies sharpened differences within the organisation about how to revive multilateral action on climate and financial sector reform.

Perhaps the leading champion of multilateralism and the celebrants of a multi-polar world order, Brazilian officials see the BRICS summit as a dry run for COP30. But Lula's officials don't want to overload a crammed agenda. COP30's High-Level Champion and top Brazilian businessman Dan Ioschpe told journalists at Bonn that, while 'we are not against new initiatives' at Belém, the Brazilian government is 'very much focused on what has already been drawn [up] and solutions that are already coming up over time'.

At the start of the Bonn summit, there was a skirmish when rich countries tried to block discussion of the provision in the Paris treaty that says rich countries have to financially support poor ones that didn't cause climate change.

Later, the group of Like-Minded Developing Countries, led by Bolivia, but with the backing of China and Saudi Arabia, wanted to prevent Europeans focusing on mitigation: a policy prescription that would mean developing countries leaving oil, coal

and gas in the ground. Such positions are well rehearsed. Officials worry that with so much working against COP30 that, as with the Baku summit, some of the key economies won't send delegates to Belém.

Adding to the disconsolate mood in Bonn, 200 climate campaign groups issued a joint call asking whether Germany should remain permanent host of the interim conferences. Outside the venue, activists played a recording

of **Roaa Alobeid**, a young Sudanese campaigner, explaining her difficulties in obtaining a visa. 'I'm not there. I will never be there,' she said. 'Why? I'm not worth it?... We shouldn't be left behind when we are the ones impacted.' ●

## LIBYA/EUROPEAN UNION/MIGRATION

# Brussels flailing as Sudan war triggers new wave of migration

Published online 3 July

**Boats from eastern Libya accounted for over 90% of illegal Mediterranean crossings after Benghazi warlord rekindled ties with Sudanese rebels**

**D**ata showing that irregular crossings from **Tunisia** and **Libya** fell by 59% to 66,766 in 2024, prompted **Italy's** Prime Minister **Giorgia Meloni** and the European Union to trumpet the success of the bloc's migration control (AC Vol 66 No 2).

Now EU leaders are panicking about a spike in illegal crossings from eastern Libya for which they blame **Russia's** expanding operations and its alliance with key figures in rogue general **Khalifa Haftar's** regime in Benghazi, eastern Libya. The reality is more complex; driven mainly by the spread of **Sudan's** war in eastern Libya and a triangle of land bordering **Egypt**.

This year, **Haftar** rekindled ties between his militia, which he calls the Libyan National Army (LNA), and Sudanese General **Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo Hemeti's** Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia to open a route for arms deliveries from the **United Arab Emirates** into North Darfur. For the past year the RSF has been trying to seize control of **El Fasher**, the regional capital.

Successive UN investigations have reported that the UAE has backed **Haftar's** LNA and **Hemeti's** RSF with arms and logistics as part of a web of commercial interests in the region.

**Haftar** and **Hemeti's** forces also control much of the gold production and trade from eastern Libya and western Sudan. Their collaboration has pushed back troops from the Sudan Armed Forces under the command of General **Abdel Fattah al Burhan** in Khartoum who have been desperately trying to hold on to **El Fasher** and some of the hinterland.

The fighting in the triangle of land between Libya, Sudan and Egypt has become so intense with the RSF making key strategic gains that President **Abdel Fattah el Sisi** brought **Haftar** and **Burhan** together for a secret meeting in Cairo on the evening of 30 June, the London-based *Middle East Eye* reported.

**El Sisi's** main concern was to prevent the spread of Sudan's war into Egypt but also to reinforce the position of his ally **Gen Burhan**. Egypt, along with **Turkey**, **Iran** and **Saudi Arabia**, continues to support **Burhan** and the SAF against **Hemeti's** RSF in the Sudan war. This is despite the fact that the UAE, the main sponsor of **Hemeti**, is also the biggest foreign investor in Egypt.

### MIGRATION MYOPIA

Faced with this regional cauldron, Brussels officials look like rabbits caught in the headlights, still obsessing over migration quotas. Unable to offer any diplomatic help to resolve Sudan's war, EU officials are reduced to working with criminal gangs promising to operate as coastguards to control illegal crossings from eastern Libya.

In a letter circulated to governments ahead of an EU leaders' summit on 25 June, European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen** pointed to data from the EU's statistics agency, Eurostat, showing that departures from Libya accounted for 93% of illegal border crossings in the first six months of 2025, with an increase of 7% on the Central Mediterranean route and a 173% increase of arrivals to **Greece** from eastern Libya.

In the first six months of 2024, arrivals via the sea route from **Tobruk** in Libya to Europe via the southern Greek islands of **Gavdos** and **Crete** stood at 2,297. More than 7,300 arrivals have been recorded since the start of this year.

'Given the situation and observing a possible use of migration for political ends, we also need to be able to engage with the various actors on the ground,' said **von der Leyen**, noting the 'geopolitical consequences of developments in Libya for the EU.'

'As regards migration, we need to maintain close cooperation and continue providing financial and operational support to the Libyan authorities, particularly as regards search and rescue operations,' added **von der Leyen**.

The Commission is now demanding more support for the Libyan authorities, as well as its coast guard (AC Vol 66 No 8). That marks a significant shift since the Commission has previously stated that the Libyan coast guard had been infiltrated by criminal gangs, posing questions on its continued support.

The first commitment is the European Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya, whose mandate was extended by EU leaders by two years until 30 June 2027, with a budget of nearly €52 million (US\$ 60m).

In exchange for more money, EU officials will 'be able to insist on strengthening border management and the fight against migrant smuggling, managing work visas and onward movements to the EU, as well as ensuring protection and voluntary returns from Libya to countries of origin.'

EU migration commissioner **Magnus Brunner**, an Austrian conservative, was expected to meet officials in eastern and western Libya in the week ending 5 July, as part of a EU push to expand cooperation on migration control. **Brunner** says that would-be migrants have been 'encouraged' to make the crossing by both the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity and **Haftar's** allies in the east.

Libya and **Algeria** are the only North African states without formal 'cash for migration' deals with the EU. In Libya's case, that is largely due to the absence of a functioning government. On 27 June, **Brunner** described the Tripoli-based government as 'a bit dodgy' but that the EU had no option but to work with them.

The situation is complicated by **Russia's** presence in eastern Libya and a controversial maritime agreement between the Tripoli-based government and **Turkey**.

Pointing for plans by **Russia** to move a naval base from Syria to eastern Libya, Italy's minister of foreign affairs, **Antonio Tajani**, warned that



this would have a 'destabilising effect in whole Mediterranean area' with 'an incremental impact on migratory flows'.

It would also 'make it harder to seek unity in Libya', he said. **Malta** and **Spain** have made similar warnings after observing Russia moving equipment from Syria's Hmeimim airbase and Tartus naval base to the Al-Khadim airbase near Benghazi.

Signed in November 2019 with former GNA leader **Faiez el Serraj**, it sets out 'precise and equitable delimitation of their respective maritime areas in the Mediterranean' and effectively ignores existence of the Greek island of Crete,

around which Greece and **Cyprus** have signed a number of deals with energy giants such as Italy's **ENI** and **France's** **TotalEnergies** to drill offshore (AC Vol 61 No 3).

In October 2022, the parties extended the initial agreement with a new MoU granting Turkey rights to explore oil and gas within Libyan territorial waters and inland.

Ahead of the Brussels summit, the Greek government announced plans to deploy two frigates and third naval vessel off the coast of Libya. Greece has previously announced that it would only support a peace deal in Libya if it involved

the scrapping of the Turkey agreements. Last weekend, the European Council declared that the Libya-Turkey MoU 'violates the sovereign rights of third countries, does not comply with the Law of the Sea and cannot produce any legal consequences for third States.'

In response, the Libyan Parliament's Committee on Displaced Persons and Refugees refuted the EU's criticism of the MoU. It also criticised the EU's classification of Libya as a 'priority transit' country on migration describing the EU's stance as 'an unfair oversimplification of the Libyan people's suffering.' ●

## RWANDA/CONGO-KINSHASA/UNITED STATES

# Trump allies broker Central African deals

Published online 27 June

**Multiple investments are riding on Kigali and Kinshasa making peace but details on military arrangements remain thin**

**U**S Africa Envoy **Massad Boulos** and US hedge fund executive **Gentry Beach** – both with close links to US President **Donald Trump's** family – were prime movers in the discreet business-infused negotiations leading to the signing of a peace accord between the foreign ministers of Congo-Kinshasa and Rwanda in Washington DC on 27 June (Dispatches 16 June).

Boulos, whose businessman son **Michael Boulos** is married to President Trump's daughter **Tiffany Trump**, took on the Congo-Kinshasa dossier shortly after being appointed as senior Africa envoy to Trump in April. He immediately travelled to Kinshasa, then on to Kigali and Kampala.

Alongside the Boulos mission, **Gentry Beach**, has been surveying the commercial prospects of Congo's mining sector; he is a hunting partner and business associate of **Donald Trump Junior**, they studied at Pennsylvania University together. Beach was an enthusiastic fundraiser for Donald Trump's presidential campaign in 2016 and was vice-chair of the 2017 inauguration fundraising committee.

While Boulos was trying to win diplomatic support for the deal, Beach was galvanising investors for Congo mining projects. Beach's chosen vehicle for the project will be his company, **America First Global** with all the resonance that carries in Washington DC these days.

The prompt for Boulos was a letter that President **Félix Tshisekedi** in Kinshasa had sent to President Trump in February offering special access to

his country's estimated US\$3 trillion reserves of critical minerals in return for security guarantees and help in expelling Rwandan troops and their M23 militia allies from Congo-K (AC Vol 66 No 6).

Diplomats described the plan as 'Ukraine light': drawing parallels with Trump's offer to President **Volodymyr Zelensky** in Kyiv to trade mineral rights for continued military assistance.

Tshisekedi's offer was premised on two of the Trump administration's priorities: preferential access to critical minerals for US and other western companies; and the building of supply chains which circumvent **China's** current dominance of the sector in Africa.

Officials in Washington quickly dismissed any chance of US troops joining Kinshasa's side in its war with Rwandan in eastern Congo. But advisors close to the negotiations told *Africa Confidential* that pledges of investment by the US would be structured as a 'gagnant-gagnant' deal to benefit both Kinshasa and Kigali, a condition of which would be the demobilisation of the M23 militia.

Initially concerned by the lack of US security muscle on offer, Tshisekedi was persuaded by Boulos to take the negotiations seriously, and appointed **Patrick Luabeya**, the director of the *Autorité de Régulation et de Contrôle des Marchés de Substances Minérales*, the mining regulatory agency in Kinshasa, to lead talks with Rwanda.

The thinking in Kinshasa was that once the talks gathered speed, Rwanda would be pushed by the US into a full

withdrawal of its troops from Congo and taking responsibility for the demobilisation of the M23. Yet Rwanda's President **Paul Kagame** refuses to admit publicly that he has any troops in Congo, or that his government has any command and control over the M23 militia. Most of the detailed negotiation between Boulos and Rwanda was managed by Kagame's special advisor **Mauro de Lorenzo** (Dispatches 6/5/25).

It is the sternest test so far of the logic of the US's commercial diplomacy. The theory is that Rwanda will agree to withdraw 8,000 troops from Congo-Kinshasa and ensure that the M23 militia pulls back from the mines and other key economic zones – in return for promises of US and European investment in processing facilities and transport links on the Rwanda side of the border.

We hear the breakthrough came after the wording of the draft agreement replaced the demand for the immediate withdrawal of all Rwandan troops from Congo with Kigali making a commitment towards 'de-escalatory measures'. Once Kinshasa accepted that change on 16 June, the pace of the negotiations picked up sharply.

For Congo, the accord promises US and European investors in the tantalum mine at Rubaya, currently controlled by the M23 militia which ships ore across the border to Rwanda and **Uganda**.

We understand that negotiations are in train for a foreign consortium to take over the Rubaya mine, updating and mechanising its operations. One of the front-runners in the bidding for Rubaya is a consortium grouping Congo's state-owned *Société Aurifère du Kivu et du Maniema* (SAKIMA), Beach's **America First Global** and **Swiss** commodity trader, **Mercuria**. And on the other side of the border in Rwanda, **Mercuria** is also being named as an investor in a Coltan processing operation, alongside Rwanda's state investment vehicle **Ngali Holdings**.

There are two serious obstacles to

these arrangements, the first of which is meant to be tackled in the peace accord between Kigali and Kinshasa. The lack of incentive for M23 to relinquish its control of the Rubaya mine, let alone the capitals of Kivu-Nord and Kivu-Sud provinces (Dispatches 2/6/25).

The other point is that the legal owner of the Rubaya mine, according to the mining cadastre in Kinshasa, is **Serge Mulumba** and his company Congo Fair Mining. Mulumba insisted he knew nothing about the US investment plans when *Africa Confidential* contacted him. 'We need markets and off-takers,' he

said, 'not investors as the revenues can provide the means to develop the mine.'

Supporters of such commercially driven diplomacy working in Central Africa, in the context of weak regional and international institutions to enforce and monitor its provisions, argue the arrangements will create the essential political will. They add that the possibility of high-tech monitoring of deployments and cantonment operations via drones might incentivise compliance with the accord.

And they are also celebrating a rare regional consensus – between **Burundi**,

Congo-Kinshasa and Rwanda – backing a \$760 million hydropower project known as Ruzizi III driven by Industrial Promotion Services, an investment arm of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development. In negotiation for 12 years, funding commitments for the project were finalised in June when the US-owned Azana Electric Group joined IPS, the World Bank, **Britain's** International Investment and the European Investment Bank. **France** pulled out of the project in January for security reasons – much to the irritation of its regional and international investors. ●

## DISPATCHES

### SOUTH AFRICA

## Ramaphosa seeks to deflect focus from Democratic Alliance challenge

7 July

**Instead of removing ANC ministers, allies of former President Zuma have been arrested**

**Brian Molefe** and **Siyabonga Gama**, both deputies for former President **Jacob Zuma's** *uMkhonto weSizwe* (MK) party will appear in court in October after being arrested on multiple corruption charges last week.

The pair are veteran Zuma loyalists who were both brought into the MK parliamentary party late last year after Zuma fired 20 MPs who had been elected at last May's general election. Yet graft charges have hung over Molefe and Gama for some time, and date to their tenures as executives at Transnet, a government-owned logistics company (AC Vol 65 No 24).

Transnet and parastatal energy firm Eskom, which Molefe was chief executive of during Zuma's presidency, were seen as the main vehicles for the Gupta brothers and Zuma allies to illicitly benefit from state funds (AC Vol 63 No 22).

The arrests may have been timed to try and shift the focus from the Government of National Unity's problems. It was tottering last week after the Democratic Alliance reacted to the dismissal of a deputy trade minister by demanding that President **Cyril Ramaphosa** sack the ministers from his African National Congress party who face corruption allegations (Dispatches 30/6/25). There is therefore a clear

reason for Ramaphosa to put Zuma-era 'state capture' back in the spotlight, especially as MK has positioned itself to go after ANC votes.

MK spokesperson **Nhlamulo Ndhlela** described the arrests as being part of a 'pattern of selective and politically motivated prosecution aimed at black intellectuals in the party'. He added: 'This two-tiered approach to justice is morally bankrupt and constitutionally dangerous.'

Yet any hopes ANC had of shifting the narrative were hurt by the DA submitting a formal fraud allegation against ANC Minister of Higher Education **Nobuhle Nkabane** on 1 July, a day after Molefe and Gama were released on bail.

### TANZANIA

## President Hassan tightens her party grip

7 July

**Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa will not seek re-election in October**

President **Samia Suluhu Hassan** appears to be consolidating her control of the ruling *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) party after Prime Minister **Kassim Majaliwa** became the latest senior official to announce plans to retire from politics.

Majaliwa, who had previously said that he would seek re-election at October's elections, will instead stand down from parliament and as premier. His decision comes just weeks after Vice-President **Philip Mpango** said he was stepping away from politics (AC Vol 62 No 7, Life after the bulldozer).

Majaliwa was appointed prime minister in 2015 shortly after **John Magufuli** won that year's presidential election. Many saw him as a potential

successor to Magufuli, who died from Covid-19 in 2021 and was instead succeeded by his then Vice-President Hassan.

'It is time to allow others to build on what we have started,' he said, without giving further explanation.

Both Majaliwa and Mpango were seen as technocrats, though Majaliwa was also a Magufuli loyalist (Dispatches, 5/10/22). Majaliwa, like Hassan, is a Muslim in a Christian majority country and his resignation could be part of a move to balance religious representation at the top of government. At the same time, the departure of both will leave President Hassan with more options after the October polls if she forms a new government.

President Hassan is unlikely to face a significant opposition challenge later this year. Her main potential opponent, Chadema leader **Tundu Lissu**, is in jail facing trumped up treason charges having already been banned from standing. Party analysts say that she has spent much of her first four years in the presidency balancing factions loyal to Magufuli and his predecessor **Jakaya Kikwete**.

### EU/AFRICA/ENERGY

## Africa cuts carbon, Europe takes the credit

7 July

**The EU is pushing ahead with carbon credit schemes despite criticism from its own advisory board**

EU governments will be encouraged to use carbon credit schemes in Africa to count towards their own emissions reduction targets by 2040, under a new law tabled on 2 July.

'The planet doesn't care about where

we take emissions out of the air,' said EU Climate Commissioner **Wopke Hoekstra** on 2 July. The law will allow EU states to buy carbon credits from overseas projects from 2036. These credits, capped at 3% of total emissions, could be counted toward domestic CO<sub>2</sub> targets as part of the EU's push towards net zero.

The proposal was pushed by a group of countries including **Germany**, **Italy** and the **Netherlands** who complain that the EU's net zero agenda risks hurting the bloc's industrial competitiveness.

Carbon credit schemes have become a favourite of the EU as a way to encourage other countries, primarily in Africa and South-East Asia, to 'green' their economies. Hoekstra says that developing nations are eager to access European financing for activities like afforestation and forest restoration through carbon credit projects.

Under a proposal backed by the United Nations last year, carbon credits allow one country to pay for emissions-slashing projects in another and deduct the CO<sub>2</sub> reduction from its own balance sheet.

Consultants McKinsey have forecast that 'voluntary carbon markets' could be worth over US\$50 billion by 2030, prompting a handful of African countries, including **Kenya** and **Tanzania**, to sign a series of carbon offset deals (AC Vol 64 No 20).

However, the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (ESABCC), set up to advise EU institutions, says that carbon credits are flawed and risk creating 'perverse incentives' for other countries to maintain or increase their own emissions. In Tanzania, one of the African states most enthusiastic about the credits, such projects are offset by major new investments in coal. The ESABCC warned that only 16% of credits issued to date have delivered 'genuine emission reductions'.

## GHANA/ZAMBIA/DEBT

### Accra inches towards end of debt path, but Lusaka's cash flow woes continue

30 June

**With a debt deal nearly done, Ghana's government now has to meet IMF targets to access credit facility**

Ghana has taken another key step towards stabilising its economy

after its parliament approved a debt restructuring deal on 24 June with 25 creditor nations, including **China**, **France**, **Britain**, **Germany** and the **United States**.

Under the restructuring terms, which were agreed in March, and are worth US\$2.8 billion in debt relief, debt service payments due between 20 December 2022, and 31 December 2026 will be rescheduled and repaid from 2039 to 2043 (AC Vol 66 No 7).

Getting the deal with sovereign creditors over the line has been tortuously slow, and leaves the \$2.7bn arrears to private creditors as the final hurdle facing President **John Mahama's** government. That will involve negotiations with about 60 commercial banks.

However, forecasts from officials in Accra that these negotiations could be concluded by the end of June have proved to be optimistic.

Completion of the debt restructuring should guarantee access to a \$3bn credit facility over three years agreed with the International Monetary Fund, though to meet the IMF's criteria Mahama's government still has to cut inflation and the budget deficit while raising revenues.

But the lesson from Zambia, which agreed its own debt restructuring deal worth \$13.4bn in October 2023, is that debt relief does not spell the end of budget challenges (AC Vol 65 Nos 7 & 12).

Finance Minister **Situmbeko Musokotwane** announced on 26 June that the Treasury would borrow an additional \$624 million from the domestic market to cover a bigger-than-expected shortfall in this year's budget. Like Ghana, President **Hakainde Hichilema's** government is expected by the IMF, with whom its 38-month loan facility ends in October, to increase revenues.

## AFRICA/UN/HEALTH

### Summit delivers vaccine cash but US sits out

30 June

**US health secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr has criticised a key Gavi vaccine**

Gavi, the global vaccine alliance, secured most of the funding it needs for its next five years of operations at a pledging summit in Brussels on 25 June, though nothing was forthcoming from a critical **United States**.

Ahead of the summit, Gavi's officials

had been anxious that they would not be able to obtain new donors to offset expected cuts in funding from the **United Kingdom** and **US** (AC Vol 66 No 13). However, a US\$1.6 billion pledge from the Gates Foundation and a larger than expected \$1.7bn from the **UK** formed the core of more than \$9bn in pledges. Gavi officials say that they require a total of \$11.9bn for 2026-30.

Officials also agreed a mechanism, developed with the European Investment Bank and the Gates Foundation, that will guarantee the purchase of at least €100 million of medical supplies from developing countries, primarily in Africa, as part of broader efforts to increase their manufacturing capacity. Similarly, Gavi and the UN Children's Fund (Unicef), have also committed to procure up to 20% of vaccines from African producers. Additionally, they are moving closer to concluding a raft of technology transfer agreements that would allow African manufacturers to make generic vaccines, another key priority for the continent and the African Union (AC Vol 65 No 19).

However, the gathering pointed to the growing isolationism of **US President Donald Trump's** administration. In a video address, Trump's Health Secretary **Robert F Kennedy Jr** confirmed that the US would halt its contributions and criticised the diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis immunisation used by Gavi, which he claimed was linked in a 2017 study to higher infant mortality in girls.

The study he highlighted regarding the vaccine has been refuted by other research and dismissed by multiple health professionals as a conspiracy theory. In a statement, Gavi said that it 'continues to have full confidence' in it. Ahead of the summit, Gavi officials briefed that raising \$9bn would protect 500 million children and save over eight million lives between 2026 and 2030.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### Centre-right DA baulks at collapsing the coalition after President Ramaphosa sacks its trade minister

30 June

**The latest crisis in the government of national unity points to its fragility and questions about how much longer it can survive**



The Government of National Unity (GNU) was on the brink of collapse following the Democratic Alliance's reaction to the sacking of Deputy Trade Minister **Andrew Whitfield**. The ostensible reason for the dismissal is Whitfield travelling with another DA deputy, **Emma Powell**, to Washington for meetings with officials and lawmakers without President **Cyril Ramaphosa's** approval. Whitfield says that he requested permission from the president's office but received no reply.

No explanation for his removal has been given by Ramaphosa's office. But Whitfield's trip to Washington DC contributed to it. He appeared to be freelancing diplomatically when South Africa was in the **United States** administration's firing line. It was mooted that South Africa would be targeted for wide-ranging economic sanctions after President **Donald Trump's** second term started in January.

After Whitfield's sacking, Ramaphosa tried to minimise the damage to the coalition with his office saying that the president: 'has not indicated any intention to conduct a wholesale cabinet reshuffle.'

Other political sources said that Whitfield's public discussion of action against those ministers from the African National Congress who are under investigation for corruption triggered pressure from senior party officials, such as Vice-President **Paul Mashatile** and Mines Minister **Gwede Mantashe**, to sack him.

Parliamentary business continued as the row blew up. DA MPs voted in favour of the key budget. Yet Ramaphosa's decision, with the fiscal row still fresh in the memory, is curious. The GNU, in which Ramaphosa's ANC is the largest party, is fragile following months of bitter wrangling over this year's budget, and his government would be unlikely to

survive without DA support (AC Vol 66 No 8 & Dispatches 28/4/25).

Whitfield has described his dismissal as 'an unnecessary provocation,' and party leader **John Steenhuisen** convened a meeting of the party's Federal Executive on 26 June. Following that, Steenhuisen gave Ramaphosa 48 hours to dismiss several senior ministers from the ANC who have been implicated in looting and corruption, in a thinly veiled threat to collapse the government.

'This unilateral action is the result and a product of a flagrant double standard,' said Steenhuisen, adding that 'if this situation is not corrected, it will go down as the greatest political mistake in modern South African history.' Yet on Saturday evening it was the DA that backed down, leaving many to conclude that its financial backers have more to lose from the collapse of the coalition than Ramaphosa and the ANC. ●

## POINTERS

## Gambia

## OIL REPORT BLAMES OFFICIALS

■ A report by Gambia's lawmakers has blamed three state officials for interfering with a police investigation into the importation and sale of 36,000 tonnes of sanctioned **Russian** diesel worth US\$29 million in 2023 (AC Vol 65 No 23). **United Arab Emirates**-based importers Apogee bought the fuel in Russia, which is under sanctions over the war with **Ukraine**, shipped it to Banjul and then used 80% of the local storage facilities until it was sold locally.

Apogee supplanted all the customary importers and fuel agents, who complained to the authorities and the storage company but were ignored. The proceeds of sales were banked in the UAE without any Gambian tax being paid.

The state's Financial Intelligence Unit investigated and shared its findings with the police, the Gambia Revenue Authority and the Central Bank, but no action followed.

The FIU alleged bribery by Apogee, tax evasion and money-laundering. A police inquiry commenced but was halted after officers claimed to have received an 'order from the top' to stop.

The parliament report does not identify who 'at the top' was responsible, but it said former petroleum minister **Abdoulie Jobe**, now minister of tourism, 'interfered'. The report added that Jobe issued an unprecedented, obscure ruling giving Apogee a 'near monopoly' in diesel sales. The lawmakers also said the then police chief **Abdoulie Sanyang**, now interior minister, failed to hold Apogee accountable. The inquiry also found that **Yerro Jallow**, the managing director of storage company Gam Petroleum, interfered with the police investigation by visiting the head of Apogee, **Aurimas Steiblys**, after he was briefly detained by police.

The report is scheduled to be debated next week but sanctions appear extremely unlikely.

## Kenya

## DEATH TOLL MOUNTS AFTER PROTESTS

■ With police barricading every available route into Nairobi's central business district and effectively suspending business activity across the country, the hotspots of protests marking the 35th anniversary of the 7 July *Saba Saba* pro-democracy demonstrations, moved to the capital's satellite towns. So did the violence. Protests swiftly turned violent in

## NIGER: PUTSCHIST FACES HIS OWN MUTINY

Nigériens are two weeks away from the second anniversary of the putsch that deposed President **Mohamed Bazoum**, breaking military partnerships with **France**, the **United States** and the European Union in the process. Then Niger joined **Burkina Faso** and **Mali** to form the *Association des États du Sahel* (AES) and quit the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas). This radical shift in national trajectory has been overseen by General **Abdourahamane Tiani**, who, over 12 years as commander of the presidential guard by President **Mahamadou Issoufou**, was notoriously taciturn on political matters. Even now he trusts only a few confidants – aside from lengthy televised diatribes against the foes of his *Conseil national pour la sauvegarde de la patrie* (CNSP) – France and **Benin**.

The latter he accuses of harbouring jihadists and troops of the former colonial power – a claim dismissed by Paris and Cotonou (Dispatches 31/12/24). Suspicion also abounds towards **Nigeria**, fuelled by Ecowas threats of military intervention to reverse the coup. For Tiani, confirmed in March as head of state for at least five more years, the driving motivation appears to be sovereigntist defiance. For 17 months since Ecowas scrapped post-coup sanctions, he has kept the border with Benin closed, at a severe cost to Nigérien consumers. Then his regime first paralysed and has now nationalised the uranium mining operations of France's Orano – without agreeing an alternative partner (AC Vol 65 No 23).

Tiani been equally obdurate in demanding the **Chinese** slash expatriate staff in the oil sector, even at the risk of shutting down this key export earner. His CNSP has welcomed a small **Russian** military contingent but has not invited Moscow to join the fight against jihadist militant groups. French and US air support and intelligence has not been effectively replaced. Attacks by *Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen* (JNIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) are accelerating.

The Nigérien army, once regarded as among West Africa's strongest, is paying dearly: some 40 soldiers lost near Falmey on 29 May, then 58 at Ekwéna the next day and between 34 and 71 at Banibangou on 19 June. And more than 100 civilians were murdered during the same period.

There are signs that the soldiers' patience is running out. The last three months have seen four mutinies, including on Tiani's home terrain at Filingué, where the president's livestock herds have been raided by armed groups. Tiani should understand this restiveness: he commanded a unit of the Multinational Joint Task Force fighting *Boko Haram* near Lake Chad.

A bright schoolboy – with an arts-subject baccalauréat – from a rural Hausa background, he joined the army in 1985 as an ordinary soldier, during the military dictatorship of **Seyni Kountché**, before working his way to the top. But as the security crisis intensifies, it is unclear whether Tiani has the popular skills to sustain morale – or the political flexibility to rebuild ties with neighbours and international partners whose help Niger now badly needs? ●

Kitengela, Ngong, Kiserian and Ong'ata Rongai in neighbouring Kajiado County to the city's south, and Kiambu in the north. Riot police, alongside their plain clothes colleagues in balaclavas, met the protestors with teargas and bullets. On 8 July, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights was reporting a death toll of 31, with 107 injured and two abducted.

Regime supporters have sought to give the protests an ethnic tint, claiming that it has been sponsored by Kikuyu oligarchs loyal to impeached former Deputy President **Rigathi Gachagua**. The resignation of **Moses Kuria** on 8 July is another sign of the growing discord between President **William Ruto** and the central Kenya constituency that secured him a narrow, disputed victory in the 2022 elections. Kuria, a senior economic advisor to Ruto, and former cabinet secretary, has been an outspoken defender of Mount Kenya's

ethnic communities (AC Vol 64 No 21).

The government's nationwide deployment of police since 'Gen Z' relaunched street protests three weeks ago suggests that it is well aware of the scale of public disaffection (Dispatches 16/6/25). And with security minister **Onesimus Kipchumba Murkomen** ordering police to shoot to kill, the government appears to have declared war on the protestors. A week ago, Nairobi Women's Representative, **Esther Passaris** tabled a bill in parliament seeking to clamp down on protests, before withdrawing the bill following public outcry. With opinion polls showing the Ruto government's approval plummeting to 14%, Ruto supporters, such as Nandi Senator **Samson Cherargei**, are now attempting to push through constitutional amendments that would extend presidential and legislators' term limits from five to seven years.