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**This is our
150th edition!**

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Illustration: Wynona Mutisi

All Protocol Observed's
THE CONTINENT
A NEWSROOM PROJECTION



THIS WEEK'S COVER STORY:

If you truly love us, you are reading your 150th edition of *The Continent*! Whether you are a day one or new subscriber, we are grateful for how you helped us get here (p3). Our team is joyously waving at you (p4) – you just can't see it. This project is about working with great journalists to get quality African journalism to you, anywhere in the world.

In this edition, we revisit the scintillating soccer of the ongoing Afcon (p20). Have fun at the finals tomorrow! But raining on the parade in Senegal is Macky Sall, who postponed the election – for reasons we get into (p13); and European fleets vacuuming up Senegalese fish stocks (p16). But maybe Macky Sall just wants to audition for the Coupdashians (p30).

Inside:

- **Journalism:** The UN is debating a law that could see journalists detained (p9)
- **Sudan:** As the warlords fight, a phone blackout makes life even harder (p10)
- **Hot mess:** The world passes another deadly climate milestone (p11)
- **Afrobarometer:** Senegalese people support democracy but are dissatisfied with how it's working out (p27)
- **Review:** Egypt's underground hip-hop scene lets people talk about the power of the army (p28)
- **The Quiz:** What is Tunisia's currency? And other brain twisters (p30)

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go to the Press Council's website, www.presscouncil.org.za or email the complaint to enquiries@ombudsman.org.za. Contact the Press Council on +2711 4843612.

All Protocol Observed

Somehow, we've put together 150 of these things.



Siphso Kings

"Biting criticism of Africa with love as the engine." That's how one of you described *The Continent* in our last reader survey. In the office Slack, our editor-in-chief responded to this with: "I feel seen."

We are because you are. In April 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, we sent this newspaper to a few people and asked them to share it if they thought it would be of use to others. We now have over 20,000 subscribers in 130 odd countries. From church WhatsApp groups to work Slack channels and forwarded Signal messages, we keep hearing of the ways you share *The Continent* with people all over the place.

This makes our hearts happy.

In that sharing, you are spreading the work of the 400 different journalists and contributors who have written, drawn and photographed for our newsroom. Putting this work together, editing it, designing it

into a newspaper and then getting it to all of you now takes up the time of 11 of us.

This journalism has been supported by a mix of funders: the African Climate Foundation; Africa No Filter; the International Institute of Education; Internews; the MOTT Foundation; the National Endowment for Democracy; 11th Hour Foundation; Pulitzer Centre for Crisis Reporting; Open Society Foundations; the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung; and Luminat. We have also sold the odd advert, and had readers chip in.

In sharing *The Continent*, you are spreading the work of 400 different journalists and contributors.

All this support has seen us grow to our 150th edition and move into a new home – the nonprofit All Protocol Observed, which will allow us to do ever-more journalism about Africa and the world. As we promised in our very first edition, we will keep you informed, we will hold our leaders to account, and this will be done by an African newsroom.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Siphso Kings is the publisher at All Protocol Observed.

Meet the team



Ashleigh Swaile is our chief designer. She figured out how to make a newspaper look good on a smartphone, and keeps it looking good week after week.



Evania Chiza is our finance manager. She gets our hundreds of contributors in dozens of countries paid, fast, and helps to keep our books shipshape.



Lydia Namubiru is our editor-in-chief. She makes the final call on what we publish, how, and how we look after our journalists.



Paul Botes is our photography editor. He works out how to make these pages pop, and how to ethically tell the stories of people through a lense.



Simon Allison is our international editor and co-founder. That means reporting on the rest of the world from an African perspective.



Wynona Mutisi is our designer and illustrator. She lays the paper out, and is the genius behind our beautiful graphics.



Dumi Sithole handles our weekly distribution. If you talk to us on a platform like Signal, you are probably talking to him (a real person!).



Kiri Rupiah is our communities editor. She came up with our innovative distribution model, and gets people across Africa to report on their communities.



Matthew du Plessis is our managing editor and subeditor. He's responsible for many of the punny headlines and keeps the financial side of things in shape.



Refiloe Seiboko is our production editor. She manages all the behind-the-scenes processes that mean the newspaper comes out on time and without (sp) errors.



Sipho Kings is our publisher and co-founder. He tries to make this a nice place to work, while figuring out how *The Continent* grows towards world domination.

LIBERIA**A very slippery Weah**

In a tale better than TV, a man purporting to be former president George Weah's brother allegedly fleeced the Ukrainian energy ministry of over \$4-million, Liberia's *Daily Observer* reports. Christian Geepley Weah (no relation to George) reportedly promised to sell crude oil from a non-existent oil block to a millionaire acting for Kyiv. To clinch the deal, Weah reportedly forged a Liberia exploration licence but also made his own version of the seal of the Republic *and* threw in pictures of Liberia's Executive Mansion for good measure.

PALESTINE - ISRAEL**Two-million left without aid in Gaza**

Since the International Court of Justice ruled that Israel's actions in Gaza are plausibly genocide, the UN aid agency for Palestine has lost nearly 80% of its funding. The United States led this cancellation by pulling its \$344-million funding. At least 12 other Western nations followed: Germany, Sweden, Japan, France, Switzerland, Canada, the Netherlands, the UK, Italy, Australia, Austria, Finland, Iceland, Estonia as well as the EU. The cancellers say that they are reacting to Israel's reports that some of the UN staff in Gaza were Hamas members.



Photo:
Michele
Spatari/
AFP

NAMIBIA**A president died in office ... and no drama ensued**

Hage Geingob's story is intertwined with that of Namibia's quest for freedom, first from genocidal German colonisation and then racist South African rule. He spent three decades abroad building up support for the South West Africa People's Organisation liberation movement, eventually getting it UN recognition. When independence arrived in 1990, he headed the assembly that drafted a new constitution and got elected as the first prime minister, a role he kept until 2002. Elected president in 2015, he died in office last Sunday. His party had already chosen a new candidate to contest elections in November, with Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah looking likely to be the country's first woman president. Luckily for Namibia, he helped to build a nation that could survive him.

COLONIALISM

Stolen artefacts finally make it home

The Fowler Museum at the University of California in the US returned Ghanaian artefacts that it has held since 1965 to their rightful owner: the Asantehene, the BBC reports. The items, which include an elephant tail whisk, a golden necklace, two golden stools, two bracelets and a chair, were stolen by British soldiers in 1874 from the Asantehene's Manhyia Palace in Kumasi, in what was then the Asante Kingdom.

EGYPT

'El Meksiki' goes global

In his latest gaffe, octogenarian US President Joe Biden referred to Egyptian President Abdul Fattah El-Sisi as the president of Mexico. Biden might be onto something though. To evade government censors, Egyptians often say "El Meksiki" instead of "El-Sisi" when criticising their thin-skinned president. It translates as "The Mexican" but still sounds a lot like El-Sisi.



Photo:
Jekesai
Njikizana/AFP

ZIMBABWE

New one-party state just dropped

Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU-PF party now holds a two-thirds majority in Parliament after by-elections in six constituencies. The seats fell vacant after one Sengezo

Tshabangu declared himself secretary general of the largest opposition party, the Coalition for Change (CCC), and recalled six of the party's MPs. Suspicions swirl that Tshabangu was a covert ZANU-PF agent who took advantage of rifts within CCC. With a supermajority, the party can now extend the rule of their octogenarian President Emmerson Mnangagwa.



PRESS FREEDOM

Journo checklist: Do job. Hide.

Gregory Gondwe, a Malawian journalist (pictured above) is in hiding after being told of plans to arrest him or worse. The threats on him reportedly arose from Gondwe's latest reporting which alleged the Malawian army paid millions of dollars to buy 32 armoured vehicles from a company linked to businessman Zuneth Sattar. Malawi-born British Sattar is already embroiled in the country's biggest corruption investigation in which Vice President Saulos Chilima was arrested in 2022. It is alleged that Chilima took a bribe from Sattar but both deny this.

ELECTRICITY

Ramaphosa makes vague noises and Nigeria goes dark

In his state of the nation address, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said that the end of his country's infamous electricity load shedding is "within reach". It remains unclear how long an arm one needs to reach it – it's been 15 years. Meanwhile in Nigeria on Sunday, several cities including Abuja, went dark when the national power grid recorded its first collapse of 2024. The grid collapses frequently: nine times in 2019, four in 2020 and 2022, and two in 2021.

NIGERIA

Food price protests hit three states

Hundreds of women and young people took to the streets in the Niger, Kano and Kogi states of Nigeria to protest high food prices. Nigeria's inflation (now at 30%) is mostly driven by skyrocketing food prices. The protests in the three northern states have rattled the government, with a series of meetings held to discuss how to prevent them from spreading to other states. On Wednesday, the Federal High Court in Lagos ordered the government to fix the prices of some goods including milk, flour, salt, sugar and petroleum products.

DRC**M23 rebels 'don't want to' take Goma**

Fighters of the M23 rebel movement surrounded the town of Sake on Wednesday, forcing thousands of civilians to flee into Goma, about 10km away. This led to speculation that the rebels are gunning for a Goma takeover. M23 denies that this is their goal but in 2012, they did briefly take Goma. The city of two-million people is at the DRC's border with Rwanda, which has denied accusations of supporting the rebels.

MALAWI**A warm welcome to the Warm Heart**

As of Wednesday, citizens of SADC and COMESA member states do not need visas to visit Malawi, unless their countries impose visa restrictions on Malawians. These are: Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. According to a gazette notice by the homeland security minister, multiple entry visas are now valid for a year, up from six months.



Photo:
Yasuyoshi
Chiba/AFP

MADAGASCAR**Giant tortoises return after 600 years**

Once upon a time, two kinds of giant tortoises roamed Madagascar. Swimming and drifting with floating vegetation six-million years ago, one kind moved to the Seychelles where it evolved into today's Aldabra giant tortoise. Back in Madagascar, humans came along, hunted down the tortoises left and wiped them out 600 years ago. In 2018, better humans came along and moved five male and seven female Aldabra tortoises from the Seychelles to Madagascar. The giants, which can grow to 100 years and 350kg, have since hatched 152 others and are happily roaming Madagascar again.

Cyber crime

Global treaty threatens journalism

Final negotiations on a cyber crimes treaty have begun but it still looks eerily similar to current gag laws in Africa

Justina Asishana

Defenders of press freedom in Africa have warned the United Nations that its international cyber crimes treaty could be used to punish journalists for doing their jobs.

The UN is preparing a treaty formally known as the Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes. It is meant to protect people and prevent crime.

But Nompilo Simanje, of the International Press Institute, believes that the proposed treaty has a wide scope and minimal human rights safeguards.

In an open letter, 49 press freedom groups caution the UN that it may be exploited by authoritarian governments.

They point out that governments in Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, among others, are already using their national cybercrime laws to harass critics.

Last October, Nigerian journalist Samira Sabou was charged with “disseminating data likely to disturb the public order,” over a Facebook post. She was not the first to be charged this way under a cybercrime law passed in 2019. She is not the only journalist jailed in Niger and elsewhere. Busola Ajibola, a deputy director of the Center for Journalism Innovation and Development, one of the open letter signatories, said: “A host of others resorted to self-censorship which has severe implications for investigative journalism, freedom of expression and press freedom.”

In Tunisia, authorities have charged “at least 20 journalists, lawyers, students and other critics for their public statements online or in the media” following a 2022 cyber crimes decree, Human Rights Watch reports.

The press freedom advocates fear that the UN treaty is just as open to abuse, since it includes overly broad and vague definitions of crimes about content “tagged” as offensive, indecent, or causing annoyance. It “might create a global surveillance dragnet that could ensnare journalists, activists, researchers, and critics,” said Simanje. ■

Sudan

The massacres will not be tweeted

Ordinary Sudanese are responding to the crisis with humanitarian efforts. But this week their efforts were knee-capped by blocked communications.

Liban Mahamed

Abdulkareem Ameen, a Sudanese in Egypt, has been trying to check if his family in Omdurman received the money he sent them recently. “I haven’t talked to them for two days now,” he told *The Continent* mid-week. At that point, Sudani, MTN Sudan and Zain Sudan, the three main telecom companies in the country, were offline. “My family won’t get the money I sent.”

All day Tuesday and Wednesday, Jamila Mohamed, a Sudanese student in Germany, tried both phone calls and online messaging to reach her mother whom the war displaced to Omdurman from Khartoum. She could not reach her. “I am completely stressed. I have the worst fears.”

Blocking mass communications is the latest escalation in the country’s conflict, which has entered its eleventh month and shows no sign of slowing down.

On Monday, Sudan’s state news agency accused the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia of being behind the countrywide communication shutdown. Without denying the accusation, RSF, which is battling the national military for control of the country, said the army had earlier blocked communication in Darfur – which the militia largely controls.

As the armed men traded accusations, the people trying to live through the impacts of their brutal war struggled.

Yusuf, a Sudanese activist abroad, is desperately trying to fundraise for a community kitchen in Omdurman to feed displaced civilians. “If the communication blackout continues I won’t be able to send funds to the kitchen,” Yusuf said.

“It has completely paralysed us as a business. We can’t sell because we rely on e-payments,” said Mai Abdelmoniem, who runs an air cooling company. The war has already decimated the business and driven Abdelmoniem to Egypt. “Our last remaining operations are in Port Sudan. I have no idea what’s going on with [my staff] while I’m in another country.”

Sudan’s army has announced a new offensive to retake areas from RSF, adding to fears that the communication shutdown will last longer. ■

Climate change

Deadly climate milestone passed

The world is hotter. People are dying. Livelihoods are being destroyed. Africa continues to pay the highest price. And the rich are dancing all the way to their offshore banks.

Sipho Kings

In September, *The Continent* reported on Libya's devastating floods, and on the wall of water that destroyed the town of Derna, with the headline "There will be many, many more Dernas". Over 11,000 people died, and rebuilding the 20 affected communities requires an estimated \$1.8-billion.

This week, BP executives celebrated near-record profits of \$13.8-billion, following similar ululations by Shell. Those profits come from burning fossil fuels, the root cause of global heating. That pollution could be less, but petrochemical companies suppressed the science proving a link, and ran slick PR campaigns for decades to prevent any action.

A day after the BP announcement, the European Union's climate agency said the world was on average 1.5 °C hotter in the last 12 months. Each of the last eight months have set heat records. This is the hottest period in recorded history.

In 2015, nearly 200 countries agreed to "limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels". The agreement recognised "that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change". African countries fought hard for that number because anything higher poses an existential problem.

The continent, responsible for just 4% of carbon emissions, is acutely vulnerable to climate changes, thanks in large part to centuries of its resources and wealth being stolen to grow other parts of the world. That means communities are less resilient to the droughts and floods that wipe away lives and livelihoods. In the last year, this has happened in places like Somalia (drought and then floods), the DRC (floods), Madagascar (floods), Zimbabwe (drought) and Niger (drought).

Scientists expect that in a decade, 1.5°C hotter years will be normal. And even if every country does what it has promised to do to reduce emissions, the world will still heat by over 2.5°C.

Meanwhile, the number of billionaires globally has grown from 1,800 in 2015 to 2,600 today. ■

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The Continent

Macky Sall's latest choice is less murky when seen through oil and gas

The president's official reason for postponing the upcoming election has been met with suspicion. Analysts say: follow the money.



Kiri Rupiah and Papa Ismaila Dieng in Dakar

President Macky Sall's decision to postpone Senegal's presidential elections left many of his international allies stammering for a response. The country is one of Africa's strongest

democracies. Last July, Sall bowed to pressure not to run again after serving his two terms. All seemed set for the people to elect his successor from a pool of 20 candidates on 25 February.

Then he had another thought.

The Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) initially put out

a statement asking Senegalese authorities to set a new date, apparently agreeing with Sall's Saturday decree. But the bloc made a quick about-turn, issuing a second statement calling for a return to the original electoral timetable.

In a similar show of vacillation, the European Union supported Ecowas' first statement only to issue another statement of its own on 7 February warning that, "the postponement tarnishes Senegal's long tradition of democracy and opens up a period of great uncertainty".

The African Union asked "the competent national authorities to organise the elections as soon as possible in a spirit of transparency, peace and national harmony", more or less repeating Sall's own words.

Within Senegal, Sall's move was not as mystifying.

Analysts and people on the street echo each other in saying Sall's action has a lot to do with the fact that Senegal is on the verge of becoming an oil and gas giant.

Between 2014 and 2016, during Sall's tenure which began in 2012, Senegal discovered oil and gas that could earn the country \$1.5-billion from exports in the first three years of production.

"Whoever gets to run the country will have the upper hand regarding how to manage the resources," says Marc-Andre Coly*, a lecturer at a university in Dakar. This is partly "why people are motivated in taking part in the elections not as voters but as candidates" he said.

Seventy-nine people put their names forward to run for the presidency, each paying the 30-million CFA (\$49,000)

required to apply.

Moussa Ndiaye* a street trader in Dakar echoed Coly. "I am not a politician," said Ndiaye. "They want to make money with oil and they will keep it for themselves."

Macky maths

Sall maintains his promise not to run in the election but his chosen successor Prime Minister Amadou Ba is not popular. Of the other candidates who expected to run on 25 February, one Karim Wade is popular and crucially, not hostile to Sall, unlike Bassirou Diomaye Faye, another strong contender. Faye is the candidate from the party of Ousmane Sonko, the opposition figure who has been prosecuted several times and ultimately disqualified from running.

But on 20 January when the Constitutional Council which vets and validates electoral candidates released the final list of 20, Wade's name was missing. The son of former president Abdoulaye Wade, he was born in Paris to a French mother and the council found that he was a dual France-Senegal citizen at the time of registering his candidacy. The law requires presidential candidates to hold Senegalese citizenship and none other.

A row erupted between the council and MPs in Wade's Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS). The legislators accused the seven judges on the council of having "dubious connections" and "conflict of interest". A parliamentary inquiry into the MPs' accusations was set up.

Officially, Sall is postponing the election to allow this conflict time to

resolve. But some see his own self-interest playing a part.

Speaking anonymously to *The Continent*, a political analyst in Senegal said that the president escalated the row to a crisis because the ruling party faced the prospect of losing. A delay would buy it time to find a more suitable candidate or negotiate a backroom agreement with Wade – if he can get back on the ballot. On 16 January, days before the final candidate list was released, France formally stripped him of his French citizenship. With an ally in the presidential mansion, Sall and his party won't be cut off from the oil and gas windfall.

Where to from here?

While described by some as a “constitutional coup”, the postponement now has the legal dressing it needs to be formal. Lawmakers heatedly debated it into Monday night, with some being forcibly ejected from the parliamentary chambers, and eventually voted to delay the elections until 15 December. No party has an absolute majority in Parliament, but the alliance between the ruling party, Benno Bokk Yaakaar, and Wade's PDS was sufficient.

But outside the corridors of power, “there's a fog around the alliances and the deals that are taking place. Therefore everything is difficult to understand,” said Coly. He has decided not to vote. “That in itself is a statement. I feel utter disgust regarding politics,” he said.

Regardless of where the chips may fall, Ndiaye is planning to migrate outside of the continent because money is tight for



Plus ça change: Protesters continue undeterred after being tear gassed outside the General Assembly in Dakar this week. Photo: John Wessels/AFP

people like him and he does not believe the oil and gas windfall will change that. “Whether it's Sall or Wade or whoever, I am struggling. They are wasting time and making noise,” he said.

Tensions remain high in the capital. In WhatsApp messages seen by *The Continent*, civil society groups have called for “civil disobedience” including a halt to economic and educational activities. On the streets around the National Assembly building, groups of heavily armed security enforcers visibly stand and any hint of a growing gathering has been met with tear gas. ■

**Names have been changed*

Kiri Rupiah is the Communities Editor at *The Continent*. Papa Ismaila Dieng is a freelance journalist and trainer. He specialises in politics and legal reporting in Senegal and abroad

Hopeful
crossing:
Migrants
traverse the
Mediterranean.
Photo: Matias
Chiofalo/AFP



Europe brewed its 'migrant crisis'

Decades before today's migrants boarded small boats to Europe to 'take their jobs', European fishing ships were trawling West African waters, taking food and jobs from the locals. And they still are.

**Jaume Portell and Èlia Borràs
in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria**

Fish is central to Senegalese life. On Senegal's shores, fishermen unload their catch onto trucks that drive it inland to the markets where women sell it. Across the land, fish is a core ingredient in thieboudienne, the UNESCO-stamped national dish and cultural artefact.

But a series of fishing treaties with the European Union (EU) have decimated Senegal's fishing culture and livelihoods.

Three decades ago, people in Spain and Senegal ate about the same amount of fish: 35kg per person per year. Today, Spain's consumption has risen to 40kg; in Senegal it has dwindled to 12kg, according to data from the United Nations.

Acting as one "fishing nation", the EU has signed enough ocean-use agreements with countries in the Global South that by 2013, European ships were taking a billion kilograms of fish from beyond EU waters.

The current treaty with Senegal

came into force in 2019 and expires in November 2024. It says that as long as the EU pays the Senegalese government around \$3.2-million each year, European – mainly Spanish – vessels are allowed to trawl for tuna and hake off Senegal's coast. This, despite the fact that several species of hake in West Africa are overexploited, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation.

Less fish, more migration

The EU signed its first agreement with Senegal in 1979 and renewed it dozens of times. In one spell covered by those treaties, 1994 and 2008, fish on the Senegalese market fell from 95-million to 45-million kilograms and the number of local small fishing boats nearly halved, researchers at the Transnational Institute found. They could not keep up with the pace at which larger EU ships with better technology were sweeping the waters. Senegal cancelled the treaty in 2006.

Then, eight years later, the government signed a new treaty saying that this time, the European ships would not just take the fish away but sell a significant amount of it to Senegalese canneries. This does nothing for small-scale fisherfolk trying to make a living from the sea. Some have since turned their small boats into transport for migrants to Europe, contributing to what European countries bemoan as the “migrant crisis”.

The small boats

These small boat owners charge each migrant as much as \$800 for the precarious journey to Spain. Families

and friends often collectively raise the amount, expecting that the migrant will pay them back upon arrival in Europe.

In the small village of Arinaga, in Spain's Canary Islands, fishermen's boats and canoes pile up in a cemetery next to an industrial area, near the beach, swarmed by a colony of cats. Some still have inscriptions betraying Senegal as their origin. These vessels stand as testimony to the thousands of journeys made between Senegal and Spain by West Africans looking for work. In 2023, almost 40,000 people entered Europe via the Canary Islands archipelago from the coasts of West Africa.

Moudou was one of them. He arrived in Las Palmas, Canary Islands in October. He used to be a fisherman in Saint Louis, in northern Senegal. He left Senegal on the guidance of his uncle, Mourtalla who had made the crossing years earlier. Mourtalla was imprisoned for “human trafficking” on arrival in Europe but is now out and working odd jobs in Spain's agricultural sector.

Despite Mourtalla's hardships in Spain, both felt that the journey was worth risking. “It is becoming increasingly difficult to fish because of large ships,” Moudou says. He is eagerly looking for a job in Spain because like many others, the pressure to send money back home started even before he left Senegal.

The big wigs win either way

The political establishments whose decisions forced Moudou into Spain will lose little for sticking him between a rock and a hard place.



Small catch: Fishing boats in Dakar's Soumbédioune market. Photo: Xaume Olleros/Bloomberg via Getty Images

In Europe, despite populist anti-immigration talk during electioneering, their economies have much to gain from migrant workers.

Spain is a European export powerhouse for products like pork, olive oil, citrus fruits and other fresh produce. The average age of farm owners in Spain is around 45. The arrival of youthful undocumented migrants has been a source of cheap labour for years.

Without proper documentation, new migrants cannot demand better conditions like local workers do. “Blacks do the jobs that whites do not want to do,” says Mor, a Senegalese man who has worked loading sacks of bananas, one of the main exports of the Canary Islands. The work was gruelling and the wages, a pittance. Cheikh, who has been in Spain for two years, once had a job picking broccoli. “I remember my hands freezing because it was very cold,” he says.

While the process of obtaining documents is a challenging, often years-long struggle, some like Mor eventually get work permits and secure jobs in the

formal sector. Here the minimum wage is €1,000 (\$1,000), roughly six times the amount they would earn in the informal sector in Dakar. Then, they start sending money back home. This is good for the national accounts of the Senegalese government. Senegalese workers abroad already send between \$2.5-3-billion a year of their earnings back home, contributing nearly 10% of the country's GDP.

It also means that Senegalese politicians can continue pursuing what economist Ndongo Samba Sylla describes as “jobless growth” to spruce up their economic statistics.

Macroeconomic indicators show Senegal has registered considerable economic growth for years. That growth could be supercharged by the export of gas and oil from deposits located in the northern part of the country. As Europe tries to wean itself off Russia's gas following the war in Ukraine, German chancellor Olaf Scholz expressed interest in importing some of this gas. President Macky Sall reassured him Senegal was ready to work towards supplying the European market with liquefied natural gas (LNG), forecasting that the country's LNG output would reach “10-million tonnes by 2030”.

That growth would have to happen over the cries of fisherfolk in Saint Louis who have already staged protests against the potential impact of oil extraction on their livelihoods.

But if those fisherfolk go to Europe to work on its farms for a pittance, there will be fewer protests against the LNG gas project. ■

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Big hearts, big wins: The Cape Verdeans shook the footballing world order.
Photo: Franck Fife/AFP

An Afcon for the ages

Teams have battled temperatures that have threatened to touch 40°C. The tournament is happening early in the year when European clubs prefer not to let their top players spend a month away. And it's still one of the most exciting in recent years.

Firdose Moonda

Cape Verde has a population of just over half a million people and qualified for its first Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) only 11 years ago. This year the team beat four-time champions Ghana and held strong against seven-time winners Egypt to have a decisive say in knocking both powerhouses out of the tournament.

This was only one of several upsets that shifted the narrative of the continent's biggest football tournament.

The Lusophone countries headlined the surprises. Cape Verde reached the quarterfinals for the second time in history, Angola reached the knockouts for the first time since 2010 and Mozambique shared top points with both Ghana and Egypt, exiting with their heads held high.

While Cape Verde benefits from their players' experience in Europe – only one of the 24-man squad plays on the islands – Angola and Mozambique are success stories from the Council of Southern African Football Associations (Cosafa).

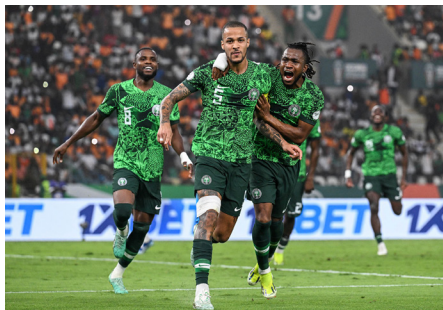
The regional body hosts tournaments at under-17 and under-20 level, developing talent. Angola has won two of the last five under-17 events while Mozambique was triumphant in the 2020 under-20 event and losing finalists in the 2022 edition.

Timothy Shongwe, chairman of Cosafa's Competitions Committee, says the hard work the body has done at junior levels "is paying dividends". Shongwe said in a statement: "Many of the players who are now starring for their senior national teams started in our junior competitions, which was their first exposure to international football."

Shongwe says the hard work the body has done at junior levels 'is paying dividends ... Many of the players who are now starring for their senior national teams started in our junior competitions'.

Namibia appears to be sharing in those dividends. Ranked 115th in the world, against all odds, they stunned 28th ranked Tunisia in their opening match. The 1-0 win was Namibia's first at Afcon and threw Group E wide open. The core of Namibia's squad, including captain Peter Shalulile and the goalscorer against Tunisia, Deon Hotto, are based in South Africa's Premier Soccer League. But a lot of the talent grew out of regional junior levels. The country won the 2016 under-17 Cosafa Cup and reached the final of the 2020 under-20 event.

South Africa resurged. In the run-up to the semi-final which Nigeria ultimately



Fly, eagles, fly: Captain William Troost-Ekong (centre) celebrates after scoring a penalty against South Africa in the semifinal. Photo: Issouf Sanogo/AFP

won on penalties, Bafana Bafana re-entered the public imagination after years in the shadows of their country's champion rugby team. South Africa put paid to their goal-shy reputation by scoring four against Namibia and two against World Cup semi-finalists Morocco before goalkeeper Ronwen Williams' heroics became the stuff of legend. His four penalty saves in the shootout against Cape Verde were the most by any player at a FIFA-sanctioned event and embodied the resilience that is South African sport. Williams made a nation believe again and ensured South Africa stayed at the event until the final weekend.

Alas, they won't be competing for the main prize. That is the domain of Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, unlikely finalists perhaps, but from the region that continues to dominate the game on the continent: the west.

The more remarkable story of tomorrow's finalists is that of the hosts, who snuck into the knockouts through the



Allez: Supporters of Côte d'Ivoire celebrate their team making it into the final. Photo: Sia Kambou/AFP

back door as the fourth-best of the teams ranked third and sacked their coach on the same day that they qualified.

Jean-Louis Gasset was shown the door after he oversaw a disastrous run through the group stage in which the Ivorians suffered their heaviest defeat at an Afcon tournament, losing 4-0 to Equatorial Guinea. He called the game a “nightmare match”, which left the team in a “catastrophic scenario”. Former national midfielder Emerse Faé took the team through the rest of the tournament.

Faé's first match in charge was against the current cup holders, Senegal, and they appeared much-improved as they drew 1-1 in extra time before emerging victorious in a 5-4 penalty shootout. Then, they were down to 10 men in the quarterfinal against Mali but a stoppage goal from Oumar Diakité put them in the last four where their coup de grâce came from Sébastien Haller, whose lone strike against the Democratic Republic of the Congo means the hosts will compete in the final.

For Côte d'Ivoire, the target is clear: become continental champions. They enter the final knowing that no home team has won Afcon since Egypt in 2006 and that Nigeria, who have had a disappointing run since winning the trophy in 2013, lie in wait.

Nigeria already beat the Ivorians in the group stage and boast an array of superstars in their ranks including their Dutch-born captain William Troost-Ekong, Atalanta winger Ademola Lookman and Napoli striker Victor Osimhen.

Osimhen, who wears a mask during play – a safety measure required after multiple injuries – has 18 metal screws and six plaques in his face. Yet, he continues to play football with a fearlessness that belies his history. In a way, he embodies what the tournament is all about: bravery.

For Côte d'Ivoire, the target is clear: become continental champions.

The next edition of Afcon will be held in Morocco as part of the country's drive to show readiness to co-host the 2030 men's World Cup. The one after that will be held in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. Both editions will take place between June and July, coinciding with the European summer break when all the best players are available for their national teams.

The success of those tournaments depends heavily on the hype created by this one. So far, it has brought drama and unpredictability that will be remembered for years to come. ■

The highs and lows of an Elephants' supporter



CRUSHING LOSSES FROM 1996 TO 2004. IN 2000, AFTER A GROUP STAGE EXIT, MILITARY RULER ROBERT GUEI SENT THE PLAYERS TO A MILITARY CAMP FOR THREE DAYS AS PUNISHMENT!



IT DIDN'T HELP: THE TEAM WAS KNOCKED OUT OF AFCON 2002 AT THE GROUP STAGE AGAIN AND DIDN'T EVEN QUALIFY FOR THE 2004 COMPETITION.



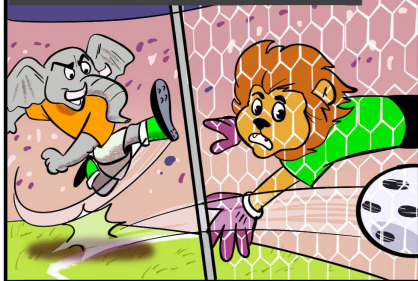
THOSE WERE ABSURD YEARS ANYWAY. FROM 2002, THE COUNTRY WAS TORN APART BY WAR; NOT THE ATMOSPHERE FOR FOOTBALL.



THEN CAME A GENERATION THAT WOULD CHANGE EVERYTHING, LED BY NUMBER 11: DIDIER DROGBA!

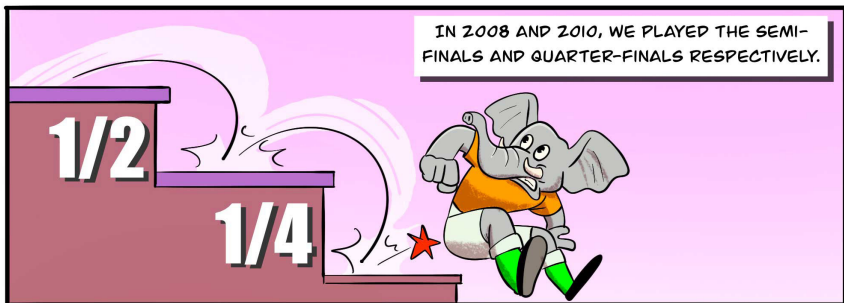


THAT WAS THE TEAM! IN 2006 THEY BEAT CAMEROON, ONE OF THEIR NEMESSES.



WE LOST THE AFCON FINALS BUT THE TEAM WON THE WAR BACK HOME. THEIR VICTORIES ON THE PITCH BROUGHT US TOGETHER, TRANSCENDING THE CONFLICT THAT HELD OUR COUNTRY APART.





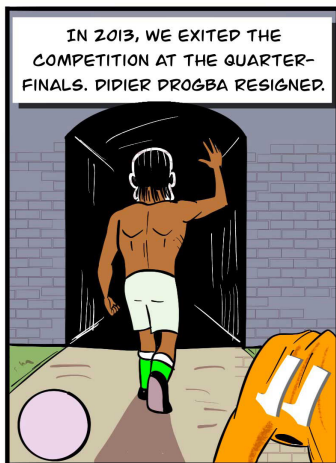
IN 2008 AND 2010, WE PLAYED THE SEMI-FINALS AND QUARTER-FINALS RESPECTIVELY.



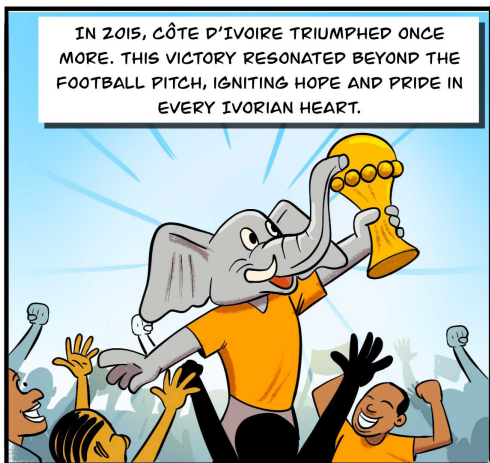
2012 WAS OUR TRUE COMEBACK! THE TEAM WAS UNITED, AND WON EVERY GAME... BUT LOST IN THE FINAL.



DESPITE THAT LOSS, WE WERE PROUD OF OUR TEAM.



IN 2013, WE EXITED THE COMPETITION AT THE QUARTER-FINALS. DIDIER DROGBA RESIGNED.



IN 2015, CÔTE D'IVOIRE TRIUMPHED ONCE MORE. THIS VICTORY RESONATED BEYOND THE FOOTBALL PITCH, IGNITING HOPE AND PRIDE IN EVERY IVORIAN HEART.

BUT WE WENT BACK TO THE CRUSHING LOSSES IN THE NEXT THREE COMPETITIONS.



UNTIL AFCON 2023. IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE. DESPITE A MISERABLE GROUP STAGES START ...



... THE TEAM SLINKED PAST TO ENTER THE SEMI-FINALS!



WHERE THEY PLAYED AGAINST THE DRC.



TRIUMPH AGAIN! OUR TEAM IS BOUND FOR THEIR FIFTH AFCON FINALS!



Senegalese people support elections but still question their democracy

President Macky Sall’s controversial move to postpone Senegal’s election until December prompts us to wonder how the Senegalese people see their democracy.

In Afrobarometer’s 2022 survey in Senegal, respondents expressed strong support for democracy, elections, and the rule of law, along with growing dissatisfaction with the way their democracy is working.

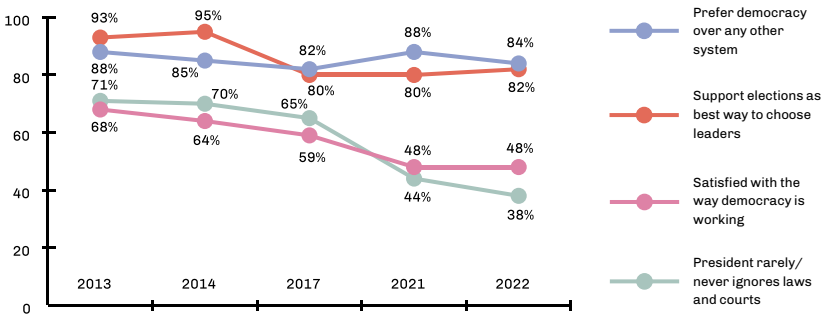
More than eight in 10 preferred democracy over any other system (84%) and saw elections as the best way to choose their leaders (82%) – both well above the average across 39 African countries surveyed in 2021/2023.

They also favoured limiting their presidents to two terms (79%), a limitation that Sall has promised to respect, and said the president must always obey the country’s laws and courts, even if he thinks they’re wrong (76%).

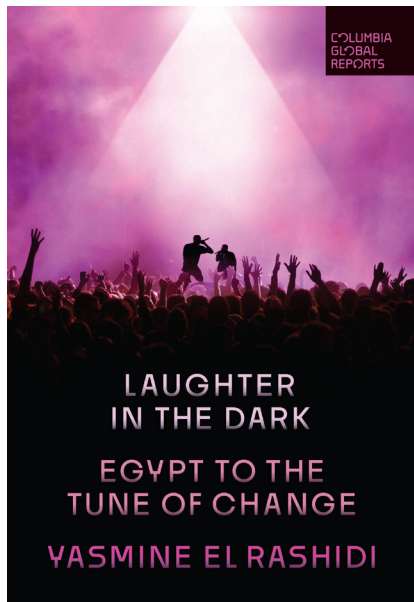
But the share of Senegalese who said they were “fairly” or “very” satisfied with the way democracy is working has declined sharply, from 68% in 2013 to 48%. More than half (53%) said the country is less democratic now than it was five years ago.

And only a minority (38%) said the president “rarely” or “never” ignores the laws and courts – about half as many as in 2013 (71%). ■

Perceptions on democracy | Senegal | 2022



Source: Afrobarometer is a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.



The revolution is neither dead nor done

Egypt's controllers would do well for themselves to let the poor have their music – if not jobs.

Jacqueline Nyathi

In her latest book, Egyptian journalist and author Yasmine El Rashidi updates readers on the state of affairs in Egypt

through the lens of mahraganat, the underground street music scene there.

Mahraganat is the music of the people in working class neighbourhoods known in Arabic as manatiq shaabiya. Its state is telling of the wider country's frictions.

Under the current President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the army has encroached on businesses and political life, with military-connected companies taking huge infrastructure projects including the controversial reconstruction of old and storied parts of Cairo.

Sixty percent of the country's population is under the age of 25 yet jobs are scarce for young people. In this climate, the rise of mahraganat feels predictable. Taking inspiration from hip-hop elsewhere, young men like Alexandria's Marwan Pablo rap about their lives and hopes.

Egypt, says El Rashidi, is also at its "most oppressive point in its modern history". Official censorship has heightened as the leaders face-off with younger citizens who came of age during or since the Arab Spring revolution of 2011, and don't have "inherited silence" from Hosni Mubarak's days when citizens did not dare comment publicly on politics for fear of being disappeared or worse. Mahraganat's undertones of political criticism have caught the attention of government's censors at the Egyptian Musicians Syndicate.

Laughter in the Dark: Egypt to the Tune of Change chronicles government control of mahraganat in recent years. Artists



'It's bigger than hip-hop': Egyptians come together in the Dar El Salaam district of Cairo. Photo: Mohammed Elshamy/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

are required to audition for a licence to perform or banned outright. Ramy Essam, one of the voices of the 2011 revolution, was harassed into exile. Sadat moved to France. Wegz, the only musician who seems to have escaped the crackdown, and whose music is more acceptable to the government and conservative public, is telling us not from the working class.

The flashier artists, like former actor Mohamed Ramadan, have achieved international renown with performances in the United States, Qatar, Dubai and Saudi Arabia, and manage to evade censorship that way. However, others who are not positioned for that, like 3enaabb (formerly known as 3enba), try to toe the government line.

Yet, suppressing working class music can itself trigger the same energies authorities hoped to diffuse. In night time Cairo, frustrated young men turn to hooliganism for release; playing loud music in residential areas, consuming alcohol and occasional drugs in public, breaking bottles, littering and harassing women. "I throw bottles because it feels good," one youth said to El Rashidi. "It's like a release."

Egypt's demographics and extreme wealth inequality make it once again ripe for change. In *Laughter in the Dark: Egypt to the Tune of Change* El Rashidi shows that the mahraganat scene is an indicator of undercurrents that may lead to social unrest. ■

THE QUIZ

0-3

"I think I need to start reading more newspapers."

4-7

"I can't wait to explore more of this continent."

8-10

"Make me sweat, make me hot— Sorry, it's stuck in my head."



Photo: Marco Longari/AFP

- 1_ Name the African leader who was born Isaïe Tasumbu Tawosa.
- 2_ The team nicknamed Les Lions de la Teranga won the last Afcon. Which country do they represent?
- 3_ The president of Namibia died last week. What was his name?
- 4_ Lake Retba (pictured) is in which country?
- 5_ What is said lake also known as?
- 6_ Who won this year's Grammy for Best African Music Performance? (Hint: check the roundel.)
- 7_ What is the largest city in Tanzania?
- 8_ True or false: Burundi is known as "the pearl of Africa".
- 9_ What currency is used in Tunisia?
- 10_ Zambia gets its name from which natural landmark?

HOW DID I DO? WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

Dear Reader,
 We stand before you with our heart in our hands. That's all we can afford this Valentine's Day, thanks to the economic policies of one William Ruto. We aren't sure which part of the world Billy – Dora The Explorer – Ruto will be in on the day. We of course will be in Nairobi with our lovely bae, and may require you to give us our heart back so we can present it to him, because a card and presents? In this economy?

Not that any of us understand what real love is. We'll talk up the roses, chocolates, date nights and the connection between two people. But love? Real love? For that we need to look at the love leaders have for staying in power for decades, making the ultimate sacrifice for The People. That love shows itself in stuffed ballot boxes, arrested opposition figures, jailed journalists, changed constitutions, and the gift of copious amounts of teargas (bought using people's own taxes).

Reader, we promise there is no greater love; and if the love ain't like that, then we don't want it!

And just in time for Valentine's Day, last week we got the ultimate PDA (public

display of affection) from President Macky Sall of Senegal.

After all that speculation last year on whether he'd run for a controversial third term, Sall said he would be stepping down after the next election — initially scheduled for 25 February 2024.

But then his heart took over and he remembered the people he serves. Hours

before campaigning was set to begin, Sall appeared on television and said the election would need to be postponed. There were protests the next day, but a little Eau de Teargas was enough to remind people that their leader was acting out of love. Some individuals, including at least two opposition figures, were arrested (handcuffs kink, anyone?). In

the National Assembly, a few elected lawmakers sought to question this sudden change in the electoral system, but their removal allowed for a vote to delay the election until this December.

Critics have branded all this a “constitutional coup” so a note to Macky: if that's you auditioning for *Keeping Up With The Coupdashians* then it's a no because military chic is a strict requirement.

To love is to demand justice



CONTINENTAL DRIFT

Samira Sawlani

In more democratic gyrations, South Africa's president, Cyril Ramaphosa, has been swinging his hips to a hit by his country's Grammy award winner, Tyla. Her song *Water* got the president twerking — that's how you know it's an election year. Not that people are falling in love with what he's selling. Polls show the ANC, in power for a quarter of a century, could get 40% of the vote and be forced into a ruling coalition. If it sticks to democracy.

His “moves” keep interrupting our brain as we try to sleep. But it's the heavy heart that has made sleep so hard to come by, with the terrifying events continuing to unfold in Sudan and the DRC.

Sudan was under an internet blackout this week “amid heightened tensions between the military government and the RSF paramilitary group” said NetBlocks. A population currently living through a deadly conflict, dependent on the internet to communicate with loved ones, access services and make payments, has been completely cut-off. The United Nations say the expansion of fighting in the country “has created one of the world's largest displacement and protection crises”, with an estimated 25-million people needing humanitarian assistance. In Darfur in particular, the warring generals are accused of carrying out (yet another) genocide. Not that this stopped Hemedti – RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo – from jetting around the continent to receive the warm welcomes of leaders including Cyril.

Further south, in the DRC, thousands of people have been forced to flee



#FreeCongo: The DRC's players silently protested ahead of their Afcon semifinal. Photo: Franck Fife/AFP

as conflict in the North Kivu region intensifies. According to the UN, 130,000 people in the Masisi territory have been displaced in the past two weeks. The country has also been affected by flooding with an estimated 2-million people, nearly 60% of which are children, needing assistance. Its election has come and gone, with Félix Tshisekedi winning another dubious ballot in December. But this week the country's men's football team used a silent protest during their Afcon pre-game anthem to ask the world to pay attention to what is happening in the DRC. They lost the game but showed just how powerful love for your nation can be.

Love. Yes, it's texts back, hearts and roses. But there is a greater kind of love. The kind which sees us demand justice, peace, safety and equality for each other. This Valentine's Day we think of the people of Sudan, the DRC, Palestine and all those facing conflict and oppression. Our heart is with you. ■

Failing to capitalise on government failures

Malawi's opposition parties would have good odds at the polls if they overcame their internal battles.

Kelly Napolo

If there is anywhere the opposition should be making hay while the sun shines, it is Malawi. Support for President Lazarus Chakwera's Tonse Alliance government has plummeted amidst economic hardship and public protests about rising prices and corruption. However, internal divisions mean the opposition is failing to take advantage.

The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of Peter Mutharika became the main opposition party when it lost in 2020 after 12 years in power. That year, secretary general Grezelder Jeffrey called for another leader to take over in light of Mutharika losing popularity. Rather than galvanise DPP towards reform, the call accelerated the party's fragmentation. The DPP postponed their leadership convention to 2024, ensuring that factional competition continued to be the order of the day.

Making a mockery of the party's name, Mutharika loyalists turned to increasingly authoritarian strategies to contain the resulting infighting and retain control – including suspending and expelling rivals. In turn, some supporters have abandoned the party.

There is space for other opposition leaders to emerge and fill the political vacuum. One possibility is that Saulos Chilima, the current vice president, will seek to take his United Transformation Movement (UTM) out of the fragile Tonse Alliance government. His defection is especially likely if a pre-election agreement between Chilima and Chakwera is broken. The president promised to make way for his deputy after his first term. Yet Chilima would struggle to sell himself as a credible “change” candidate given his 2022 arrest for corruption and having spent the previous four years in government.

Given that the winning presidential candidate in 2025 will need over 50%+1 of the vote, an opposition victory is likely to once again require a coalition, but this time between UTM and the DPP. Such a coalition is feasible, as Chilima was formerly a DPP member, but will only happen if opposition leaders can put their factional battles behind them. ■

Kelly Napolo studied journalism at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Science. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa



THE BIG PICTURE

Beach life: A man poses next to a horse as he enjoys an afternoon at a popular beach in the Tefargh Zeina district of Nouakchott in Mauritania. In precolonial times, Nouakchott was considered a “fortified fishing village” and the city is still home to vibrant fish markets today.

Photo: Marco Longari/AFP



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