

AFRICA

YEAR IN REVIEW 2022

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Africa: Year in Review 2022

A Letter from the Africa Program

Welcome to *Africa: Year in Review 2022* (AYIR). As a reflection of the previous year, the Wilson Center Africa Program continued its annual tradition of asking policymakers, practitioners, scholars, and Africa watchers to write on what they considered the most impactful developments on the African continent, in U.S.-Africa relations, and about Africa's role in the global arena. 37 authors contributed mini-essays covering various topics in the governance, security, development, and social spheres.

Five contributors focus on the state of U.S.-Africa relations this year. From the U.S. Department of Defense to the recent U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit held in December, authors provide recommendations addressing how the United States could strengthen its relations with the continent, including further engaging with and providing support to African countries. One essay in particular uses how the United States responded to Nigeria's food insecurity issues as an example of a potential roadmap for other African countries with similar challenges.

Regarding African governance, eight authors cover various aspects of leadership across the continent. Two authors highlight the African Union (AU)'s recent accomplishments, including its 20th anniversary and the

launch of its Data Policy Framework. Seven of our AYIR authors express concern over Africa's democratic trajectory, touching on various aspects of the issue. Contributors also highlight the concerning resurgence of coups and democratic backsliding in Africa. Multiple essays name the Wagner Group as a point of concern across the board. In response to these militant challenges, authors propose solutions ranging from effectively enforcing the U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa to recommending that reporters, analysts, and other concerned parties hold the Wagner Group accountable by documenting and tracking their operations.

Regionally, significant elections were a point of interest for several contributors. Four authors provide perspectives on Kenya's 2022 elections. One joint essay covers the technological advancements of the country during the elections as it relates to peacebuilding. Two authors provide their own perspectives by tracking hindrances and outcomes surrounding the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). Another essay speaks to Nigeria's continually improved management of elections despite current challenges and threats and argues the country's vital position for further U.S. engagement.

Security and peacebuilding continue to remain in AYIR's spotlight. The globe witnessed the conflict in Northern Ethiopia and its peace agreement signed in November. Two authors provide insight into the war. One calls for further international involvement, and another offers potential scenarios for the future, hinging on the opposing parties' stances on reconciliation. One essay examines how Francophone youth took peacebuilding into their own hands in 2022 and asks whether there is a movement toward or away from democracy.

Another point made by contributors was the need to educate and inform citizens to promote security properly. One author underscores the importance of civil society on the continent as the need for arming citizens with this knowledge carries the potential to increase instability. Another writer pointing out the central concern of disinformation in Africa notes current developments such as accessible research and training and recommends further interconnection between African actors to fortify policy strategies.

Trade and investment were also points of interest for AYIR's authors. A multi-author piece covers Africa's renewable energy financing gap. It offers recommendations for policymakers, international partners,





and investors to ensure a successful transition toward clean, renewable energy. The role of China in Africa continued to be a major point of debate. One dual-author essay looks at the road to clean energy by examining the topic of critical minerals and how both the United States and Africa can better engage with one another by reducing reliance on China. Another current topic of global interest is investing in cryptocurrency. Despite current bans and setbacks, one contributor highlights Ethiopia's effort to build its digital economy.

Regarding sustainable development, several contributors select specific components for Africa's current state related to climate change and nutrition in 2022. One essay assesses various climate risks in the Horn of Africa. One author examines AU's Year of Nutrition theme for 2022, noting its push to urge actors to accelerate progress on food security. Another multi-author essay cites the lingering effect of COVID-19 as a catalyst for future policymaking in the agricultural sector. Authors also cite the Russia-Ukraine War as a significant cause for the decline in food security this year, with one essay linking the conflict, climate change, and the pandemic as overarching agents in creating ripple effects felt on the continent.

On the other hand, international partners and institutions also see Africa's potential. A joint essay reflects on the multiracial landscape of "Uganda Asians" 50 years after General Idi Amin Dada's regime. The authors write on the progress of India-Ugandan investments and the current potential this presents to other international actors. Another contributor explores Turkey's recent engagement in the Sahel and how a deal with France may benefit the region. One essay assesses overall contributors of major, worldwide digital platforms and their investment in Africa's creative sector. The contributor suggests how these engagements can potentially drive economic development on the continent with African voices and stories at the forefront.

Lastly, one essay offers insight into the rights of people with disabilities, using an optimistic example of Uganda. The author recommends for this example to serve as a potential roadmap for other countries and calls for inclusion honored by the public and upheld by the government.

Africa: Year in Review has secured itself as the Wilson Center Africa Program’s most widely read publication—receiving over 25,000 views and downloads since its first edition in 2015. On behalf of the Africa Program, I thank all of the authors for their contributions to this year’s edition. I would also like to thank the Africa Program staff, including Gamuchirai Mhute, Kyra Chambers, and former Africa Program interns Daniel Lee, Dalya Berkowitz, and Victoria Neal for their hard work, thorough research, and administrative support on this publication. I offer immense gratitude to Dr. Nancy J. Walker (Public Policy Fellow), Steven Walker (Senior Diplomatic Fellow), and Hannah Akuiyibo (Senior Program Associate), who provided insightful editorial assistance for the publication. Lastly, I thank Cheri Ayers (Communications Coordinator) for serving as AYIR’s project manager by coordinating with authors and editors, designing the layout, and producing AYIR 2022.

With 2023 officially underway, the Wilson Center Africa Program asks you to join us in reflecting on the governance, security, and development challenges and opportunities from the previous year raised in these mini-essays in hopes of looking forward to the year ahead.

Ms. Oge Onubogu



Director, Wilson Center Africa Program

We appreciate the richness of the contributions on significant developments in political, economic, and social affairs for our seventh edition of the Africa: Year in Review series. The statements made and views expressed are solely those of the individual authors and do not represent the views or official positions of the Wilson Center.





U.S. AFRICA LEADERS SUMMIT

WASHINGTON, D.C. | 2022

U.S.-Africa Relations

Democracy Exemplars: A New Path for U.S.-Africa Partnership

Dr. Mziwandile Ndlovu

The African 2022 electoral calendar was one of mixed fortunes. Some of the polls showed delightful democratic gains, such as Kenya, which ran arguably the most attention-grabbing election. The poll was viewed as the most [competitive](#) in the country's history and demonstrated a maturing of Kenya's democracy by maintaining a significant post-election peace in sharp contrast with the country's legacy of debilitating violence emanating from contested election outcomes in the past. The post-election stability has cemented Kenya's leadership role in a troubled Horn of Africa region and potentially other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Though small and largely invisible in global affairs, Lesotho also held an impressive poll that is seen as a seismic break with the past. This was characterized by intractable [political instability](#) under the All Basotho Convention that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has failed to address for years. It is notable that in a country with increasing levels of autocracy, a new political coalition led by a political newcomer from the private sector was able to defeat the incumbent party.

Senegal, Angola, and The Gambia all held polls successfully although all of these were characterized by a [narrowing of the victories of the incumbents](#) and all experienced reduced voter turnout. Nonetheless, the countries above were torchbearers of the resilience of democratic consolidation in a year in which democratic regression manifested in the [postponement](#) of elections in Libya, Mali, Guinea, and Somalia for reasons related to military transitions and conflicts.

Additionally, that former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta was the first leader with whom President Joe Biden had [bilateral talks](#) in 2021 speaks volumes about Africa's strategic value to the current U.S. administration. These countries which kept democracy alive are potential allies with which the United States needs to collaborate, particularly in democracy promotion initiatives as it seeks more mutually beneficial partnerships in Africa and to support the continent to play a more pronounced role in international affairs. The U.S. administration demonstrated this intention at the recent U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit by pledging support for permanent [African inclusion in the G-20 bloc](#) and the United Nations Security Council.

Deepening U.S.-Africa Commercial Ties through the U.S.-Africa Business Forum

Ms. Deborah Carey

On December 14, 2022, the third iteration of the U.S.-Africa Business Forum (USABF) took place as a part of the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit (USALS). Eight years after the first USABF in 2014, and 6 years after the second USABF on the margins of the 71st United Nations General Assembly, the event once again convened heads of state, U.S. government officials, and CEOs from the United States and Africa to engage in high-level policy discussions, conduct meetings, and announce new commitments. While each iteration has been impactful, USABF in 2022 was particularly significant due to the current global economic landscape, the makeup of the participants, and the commitments made.

With inflation at [8.8% globally](#) and global growth slowing from 6% in 2021 to [3.2%](#) in 2022, the current business climate is dampened. The United States and African countries are experiencing economic downturns, which do not lend themselves to increased engagement. Despite this, Africa has seen an increase in investment deals to prior years, totaling [\\$5.4 billion](#) from 975 different deals in 2022. The appetite within the public and private sectors to ensure U.S. and African commercial partnerships drive the solutions to current global challenges was palpable at USABF.

USABF aimed to convene business leaders reflective of the U.S.-Africa business landscape. As such, many CEOs from large, established U.S. and African companies were present, but this year pointedly included more leaders from small and medium-sized enterprises and scaling start-ups. Several participants were young entrepreneurs who took part in the African and Diaspora Young Leaders Forum as a part of USALS and were invited to USABF as well—a nod to the importance of disruptive start-up and scale-up companies to the U.S.-Africa business landscape.

Another improvement was the value and breadth of commitments made at the Forum. Prosper Africa (founded in 2018) worked alongside the Department of Commerce to catalyze commitments from private and public sector participants alike. As a result of this partnership, USABF announced a record-breaking [\\$15 billion](#) in new commitments¹—no small feat amidst an economic downturn.

The variety of commitments—from [NBA Africa](#) to [GE Healthcare](#)—demonstrated the wide-ranging commitment President Biden made: “The United States is all in on Africa.”

As U.S. and African governments and business leaders alike tout the benefits of increasing commercial engagement, the old adage to “show not tell” will underpin our mutual success. The 2022 USABF showcased what a more aligned and engaged future between U.S. and African private sector stakeholders might look like—it is now time to build on this momentum.

1. The 2014 USABF garnered \$14 billion in commitments, while the 2016 USABF facilitated \$9 billion worth of deals.

Department of Defense Priorities in Africa

Mr. Mark Stamilio

In Africa, the [2022 U.S. National Defense Strategy](#) (NDS) directs the Department of Defense (DoD) to prioritize disrupting violent extremist organization threats against the U.S. homeland and vital U.S. national interests, working “by, with, and through” our African partners to build states’ capability to degrade terrorist organizations and contribute broadly to security and stability. The NDS states that DoD will orient its approach on the continent towards security cooperation; increase coordination with Allies, multilateral organizations, and regional bodies that share these objectives; and support U.S. interagency initiatives in the region, including efforts to disrupt malign People’s Republic of China and Russian activities on the continent.

This approach to Africa is not a list of discrete objectives, but rather a multi-faceted formula for addressing security challenges that affect the mutual interests of the United States and our allies and partners. This formula recognizes that it is not possible to address security challenges on the continent without addressing the underlying causes of insecurity, including shortcomings in areas such as development and governance, as well as failures to maintain what political philosophers refer to as a legitimate state monopoly over the use of violence. The imperative to address the underlying causes of insecurity demands that DoD nest its approach on the continent in a broader interagency (or “3D,” for development, diplomacy, and defense) strategy for Africa.

Ultimately, the goal of this “3D” approach is to address a vicious cycle that has contributed to instability in several African countries and threatens to destabilize others. In this cycle, deficiencies in development and governance produce insecurity that breeds discontent, which often manifests itself as violent extremism. Governments that employ harsh tactics to clamp down on threats without addressing the underlying causes—or worse, outsource security to foreign entities whose primary interests are self-enrichment and political influence, not the protection of the indigenous population—breed further discontent, which amplifies violent extremism.

There are no shortcuts to success. Breaking this vicious cycle requires a serious, long-term commitment to a whole-of-government solution. Consistent with our NDS goals, DoD stands ready to work with partners who make such a commitment.

Ethiopia's Civil War and a Need for International Coordination

Mr. Awet Halefom Kahsay

Over the past two years, the world witnessed one of the bloodiest conflicts and humanitarian crises in northern Ethiopia. The war started on November 4, 2020 when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered a military operation against the TPLF leadership in response to an attack at a federal military base in Tigray in what the government called a pre-emptive strike.

Fighting, starvation, and lack of access to basic services are estimated to have killed as many as half a million people in two years and rendered millions homeless. Over six million people have been [denied](#) access to electricity, internet, telecommunications, and banking services coordinated with severe restrictions on humanitarian access for over two years through the no-holds-barred approach. International crimes, crimes against humanity, war crimes, rape, sexual violence against women and girls, and ethnic cleansing all [occurred](#) over this period of time.

Diplomatic efforts and engagement from the international community lack consistency and coordination. Efforts by the United Nations (UN) to end the war and address the humanitarian emergency have largely failed, bringing into question its ability to effectively carry out its primary mission of resolving international conflicts and responding to humanitarian crises. Within these limitations, however, UN agencies, the United States, and its partners played a major role in providing aid to the war-affected communities. In 2022, United States became the largest [donor](#) to response efforts, [providing](#) nearly a billion dollars in humanitarian assistance to northern Ethiopia since the crisis began.

The United States, EU, and the UN have also played a critical role in pressing the two parties for peace through successive diplomatic efforts. On the eve of the war's second anniversary, the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed a cease-fire [agreement](#) to end the bloody civil war. The challenge now is to ensure that both parties commit to delivering the provisions outlined in the agreement.

To aid in stabilizing the country, the international community and the United States can help by implementing these three strategies:

First, coordinate diplomacy and high-level engagement to press the parties to stick to their obligations and deadlines to ensure that Ethiopia does not return to war. Second, uphold a thought-through commitment to bring accountability against human rights violators and the heinous crimes they committed. Third, design a coordinated preparation for massive post-conflict reconstruction and development for the sustainability of the peace process. While ending the war in the country resides in the warring parties and the Ethiopian community, coordinated engagement of the international community is pivotal for sustainable peace.

Africa's Food Insecurity, Farming, and Food Production Garner U.S. Responses: A Nigerian Perspective

Dr. Hyginus Banko Okibe

Agriculture provides primary sources of food and income for most of Africa's rural dwellers. The decline in agricultural activities affected food production and supply, thereby triggering food insecurity, which has become a global concern, especially in Africa, which experiences recurring cases of low per-capita income and a high incidence of hunger. Sadly, the [Russia-Ukraine](#) war added to the roadblocks in accessing agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, derailed food supply chains, and worsened the global food crisis that disproportionately affects Africa. In addition, other exogenous shocks (including COVID-19 and climate change) have strained the African agricultural and food sectors across the continent this year, including Nigeria.

In 2022, three factors adversely affected farming and food production in Nigeria: [terrorism](#), [herder-farmer conflicts](#), and ecological factors (climate change, [flooding](#), and [erosion](#)). These factors affected food production by the dominant smallholder farmers that mostly stuck to traditional farming methods. Similarly, desertification, droughts, cattle rustling, and the controversy over the open grazing of cattle on farms without ranches remain the most outstanding issues surrounding agricultural practices in Nigeria. Over this last year, threats of theft, murder, kidnapping, and rape stripped many farmers of the necessary safety and security to continue producing Nigeria's food. The [Middle-Belt Region](#) was the most affected, with many lives lost to the conflict; hundreds of people were declared missing or displaced from their farm settlements and homes. The crisis was so severe that mass-internal displacement worsened environmental hygiene and increased acute malnutrition in refugee camps.

These developments boosted the American priority on Nigerian security and humanitarian concerns. In 2022, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided an additional \$356 million in humanitarian assistance to the people most affected by conflict and food insecurity in Nigeria. Beyond USAID's annual \$539 million development budget for Nigeria, which supports economic growth, health, democratic governance, and education, the United States collaborated with Nigeria to fight terrorism. Since 2000, the United States has provided, facilitated, or approved more than [\\$2 billion](#) in security assistance, sold military [weapons and equipment](#) to Nigeria, and conducted more than [41,000](#) training courses for Nigerian military personnel to support counterterrorism efforts in the country. This robust cooperation deepened the relations between the United States and Nigeria, opened opportunities for Nigeria to harness the economic and military potentials of the United States, and built a roadmap for benefits to continue expanding in the future.

This form of Nigeria-U.S. cooperation could benefit other African nations, and they are therefore encouraged to adopt strategic partnerships with the United States in addressing the challenges posed by the food crisis and terrorism ravaging every part of the continent.

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Governance and Leadership

African Union at 20

Ms. Dalya Berkowitz

The African Union (AU) celebrated 20 years in 2022. [In recognition](#), an AU social media campaign will precede a February 2023 AU Heads of State Summit and the unveiling of a research paper assessment. Created in 2002 as the successor to the Organization of African Unity, the AU's formation reflected a shifting focus from decolonization to addressing with one voice African political and economic development. Striving for "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa," in its first years, the AU established the African Standby Force, produced treaties, enacted early warning systems, and organized consensus among its 55 member states.

Launched in 2015, Agenda 2063 advances comprehensive political, security, and socioeconomic goals for the continent. The AU performed especially well in dismantling trade barriers through the adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Another success is the AU's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, specifically with the 2020 Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion declaration, recognizing women's economic contributions and advocating for gender equality. To amplify Miriam Mukalazi's [suggestion](#) during the 2022 Southern Voices Peacebuilding Network [conference](#), organizations such as the European Union could learn from the AU, particularly from its appointment of a WPS envoy with extensive civil society experience. Engaging civil society gives Africans greater agency over their governments and is essential to promoting political investment and energizing the political will of Africans.

In 2022, the AU made progress on climate change with this year's action plan, food security by dedicating 2022 to nutrition, and on public health with the elevation of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to a public health agency. These initiatives are great beginnings that should be built on. However, the AU [fell short](#) on several Agenda 2063 benchmarks including the 2020 "Silencing the Guns" campaign, which faced setbacks in the face of worldwide trends of democratic decline, the comeback of coups in Africa, and in struggles to effectively combat terrorism in the Sahel region.

Looking to the next 20 years, the AU should seek to:

1. balance economic intervention in the form of competing Chinese and U.S. offers, set more rigorous standards for critical mineral extraction and trade, and increase private investment;
2. address foreign military intervention, such as the Wagner Group's presence;
3. bolster AU peace and security leadership (e.g., through peacekeeping missions), especially in the wake of the war in Northern Ethiopia and resurgent terrorism and insurgency threats;
4. declare inclusive and sustainable education benchmarks; positively frame and provide economic opportunities and political space for the youth bulge; and
5. prioritize the enhancement of civil society engagement.

Additionally, the U.S. and international community's partnership and support will be crucial for the AU's success in these initiatives while simultaneously promoting U.S. national interests.

Ensuring a Safe, Inclusive, and Equitable Digital Future for Africa: The Launch of the African Union's Data Policy Framework

Mr. Christopher Maloney

In July 2022, the African Union released its [Data Policy Framework](#), a document that defines a “common vision, principles, strategic priorities, and key recommendations to guide African countries in developing their national data systems and capabilities.” The document highlights the continent’s recognition that one of its greatest assets is data: the lifeblood of the digital economy, a key tool for accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and a central element of the social contract between citizens and governments.

Underpinning the document are two themes: cooperation and trust. Cooperation because for data to realize its value, it needs scale. This requires cooperation to ensure safe and effective cross-border data flows—especially with the rise of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)—to collaborate on complex issues around standards and safety, thus ensuring an inclusive playing field. In parallel, a culture of trust, particularly on data governance and stewardship, is arguably even more important. For just as much as data offers tremendous economic and social potential, so can it risk profound levels of economic and social harm. As a few examples: the continent lost over [\\$3.5 billion annually to cyber-attacks](#), over 20% of Kenyan women [experienced online harassment](#), and “digital authoritarianism” continues to persist, with [twelve African countries shutting down the internet](#) at least 19 times in 2021 alone.

Watching the implementation of the Framework in 2023 and beyond is important. The work ahead is daunting—only half of Africa’s countries even have [basic data protection laws](#) on the books. Implementation will also require Member States to be clear on their values given how closely personal liberty issues such as privacy, surveillance, and consent will matter as the Framework moves from policy to practice. It also provides an opportunity for the United States, with its robust digital sector and commitment to an “open, reliable, interoperable, and secure internet” (as stated in the new [U.S.-Africa Strategy](#)) to support likeminded African partners. To quote the United Nation’s [Digital Cooperation Roadmap](#), we are at a moment where African governments, civil society, the private sector, and donors must work together to shape a “safe, inclusive, and equitable digital future” for the continent. That journey begins now.

The Creeping Loss of African Sovereignty

Dr. Joseph Siegle

Lost in the whirlwind of crises that have dominated headlines over the past year is the erosion of African popular sovereignty. This is most vividly seen through external authoritarian governments gaining control over national policymaking structures in selected African countries. Prime among these is Russia. Through its [elite cooption model](#), Russia props up unpopular and isolated leaders, gaining Moscow outsized influence.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), Russian “support” to President Faustin-Archange Touadéra includes a Russian National Security Advisor, the Russian paramilitary Wagner Group as his presidential guard, and Russians [embedded](#) in the Ministry of Finance and Customs. The Wagner Group now controls key gold and diamond mining sites in CAR, facilitating the trafficking of its natural resources. Moreover, Russian has become CAR’s third official language.

Russia has similarly gained disproportionate influence in Mali. The military junta of Assimi Goita, which had ties to Moscow prior to its coup, invited Wagner in ostensibly to help fight militant Islamists. Yet, Wagner’s 1,000 troops have focused on keeping the junta in power, while [taking control of gold mines](#) in the country. The junta, in turn, has become more hostile toward regional and Western security partners. Consequently, thousands of partner forces are now departing Mali while the jihadist security threat is escalating.

Wagner, meanwhile, faces accusations of human rights abuses in CAR and Mali as well as Libya and Sudan. Citizens in mineral-rich regions of these countries have been [intimidated into leaving their homes](#), resulting in a form of natural resource annexation.

Russia has attempted to derail democratic transitions in each African country where it has gained influence—and has sights on expanding its influence. [Russian disinformation campaigns](#) have asymmetrically enhanced its sovereignty-sapping efforts—puffing up perceptions of popularity in Moscow’s favored regimes while denigrating and attempting to delegitimize democracy.

China and some Arab Gulf States are also attempting to undermine African sovereignty. China’s approach is highly institutionalized with [investments in Africa’s media houses and journalism training](#) to control the information space. In 2022, China also opened its [first overseas political party leadership school](#) in Tanzania—to strengthen its party-dominated governance model on the continent. Gulf States have been active in North Africa and the Greater Horn, backing proxy politicians in the effort to establish greater influence and prop up autocratic political leaders—[stymieing citizens’ democratic aspirations](#).

2022 has underscored that unaccountable regimes in Africa are highly vulnerable to exploitation by external authoritarian actors—at a heavy cost to citizen sovereignty.

The Military in Politics: Does Democracy have a Future in Africa?

Dr. Joseph Asunka

The recent spate of military coups in Africa is alarming, raising concerns that the continent may be riding a global wave of democratic recession back to the military regimes of yesteryear. The sight of ordinary Malians (twice in one year) and Guineans pouring into the streets to celebrate military takeovers prompts important questions about the future of African democratization: Are Africans becoming comfortable with military rule? Have military coups eroded democratic commitments on the continent? Is there a future for democracy in Africa?

These are legitimate questions. However, data from Afrobarometer surveys in 20 African countries in 2021 and 2022 give reason for cautious optimism: Africans continue to want to live under governments that are democratic, accountable, and responsive.

Across the 20 countries, solid majorities express a preference for democracy “over any other kind of government” (67%) and reject non-democratic alternatives, including one-party rule (79%) and one-man rule (81%). Clear majorities also endorse core democratic norms such as parliamentary oversight of the president (65%), media freedom (67%), and presidential term limits (73%). Moreover, the demand for accountable governance remains strong: 62% say accountability is even more important than effectiveness. That said, only 37% of Africans are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country, and even fewer (30%) think their government is doing an adequate job of curbing corruption, which a majority (62%) see as increasing.

Governments’ inability to meet the democratic aspirations of their citizens may be fueling an increasing appetite for military rule. While two-thirds (67%) of citizens still reject military rule, this represents an 8-percentage-point decline compared to the previous survey round. What’s more, fewer than half (42%) of Africans agree that militaries should never intervene in politics; the slim majority (54%) willing to accept this option if elected leaders abuse power grows to 58% among 18- to 25-year-olds.

This should be a wake-up call for governments and other stakeholders to act now on citizens’ democratic aspirations. The U.S. strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa correctly emphasizes the delivery of democratic and security dividends, but effective, collaborative implementation will be required to reverse a dangerous trend.

The Resurgence of Coups and the State of Democracy in Africa

Dr. Jude Cocodia

The resurgence of coups in Africa continues to mar the continent's third democratic wave. The year 2022 registered six military coups across five countries in Africa, of which two were successful. The resurgence of coups is a sign that all is not well with democracy on the continent. Across the continent, living standards are falling as more people find it difficult to afford decent shelter, decent meals, medical care, and education is beyond reach. Without doubt, the failure of democracy has seen the resurgence of coups on the continent. So, why is democracy not working?

Democracy, [thrives on a well-educated population](#), a large middle class, and fair income distribution—these elements aid democracies in staying stable and progressive. The absence of any of these facilitates the failure of the system and incenses dissatisfaction among the people, which is often the tonic for military takeovers. Unfortunately, most African countries suffer deficits in one or more of these areas, which explains why democracy on the continent has fallen short of its expectations. Some militaries take advantage of this.

Liberal democracy, which is hinged on universal suffrage, has failed to synchronize with most African systems that are ethnically charged amid low literacy levels. Votes are often cast along ethnic lines and emergent leaders use military and government appointments to reward group members. This accounts for the violent election processes in most parts of Africa and why disadvantaged groups often seek a change of power. So, when liberal democracy mixes with primordial identities or sentiments, coups become likely.

If coups are to be a thing of the past, the need arises for African states to modify liberal democracy into more indigenous patterns. Somaliland, where representative democracy synchronizes with Sharia law, is adjudged to be economically stable, and one of the safest places in Africa. When a system of government works for the people, and economic stability is in tow, military coups will cease.

To promote democracy in Africa, therefore, the United States, with Africa as a strategic ally, has three options. Encourage indigenous modifications to democracy on the continent; provide significant funding, expertise, and hold African leaders accountable to ensure the three elements for stable liberal democracies are widespread; or keep the status quo and continue funding a failing system through humanitarian aid. The first option is a win-win for everyone and should be a major focus of the United States in its relations with Africa in 2023 as it would subsequently stem the trend of military coups that plagued 2022.

Effects of Pandemic Mitigation Policies on Agriculture

**Dr. Tharcisse Guedegbe, Dr. Adesoji Adelaja, and
Dr. Justin George Kappiarupampil**

U.S. support for Africa was instrumental in limiting the spread of the COVID-19 virus across the continent. By January 2023, the United States would have [provided](#) over 200 million vaccine doses and technical support to Africa and the Middle East. During 2022, new crises (especially the war in Ukraine) exacerbated most effects of the pandemic, including supply chains disruptions, increased levels and volatility of food, fertilizer, and fuel prices, weakening the agricultural sector. Researchers are raising questions about COVID-19 outcomes that would be useful in responding to future pandemics.

One lesson is that some of the policies adopted to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 may have had some unintended consequences. For example, the stay-at-home orders, travel restrictions, curfews, lockdowns, and the closure of schools and universities implemented to protect the general population adversely affected the agricultural sector. A recent [dissertation](#) by the primary author and subsequent work in conjunction with the other two authors specifically focused on the effects of such policy responses. African governments basically implemented them based on larger macro and national considerations since the incidence of COVID-19 was essentially concentrated in urban and other concentrated areas.

Another lesson noted in the dissertation is that future policies must consider the collateral impacts on agriculture and its unique needs. Since many Africans are farmers, many of them in subsistence farming, it is important to incorporate their unique needs in adopting future containment measures. For example, stay-at-home orders and school closures, which slow down economic activity, actually increased the likelihood that farm income rose in the short run through increased family labor. Similarly, larger farmers were harmed by movement restrictions due to their higher dependence on hired labor.

Most recent studies on the effects of the pandemic in Africa have focused on various socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic itself. By isolating the effects of specific policies adopted to protect the economy and people, our combined research provides greater insights on how COVID-19 benefitted or harmed agriculture on the continent. The design and implementation of future policies responses to health shocks should build upon the recommendation of ground level agricultural experts who can advise on the intricacies of this sector.

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Lessons Learned from Kenya's 2022 Election and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission

Ms. Sharon Anyango Odhiambo

In 2022, Kenyans demonstrated voter maturity by maintaining peace and for the first time, there were no reported cases of election related deaths. Furthermore, the independence of the Judiciary of Kenya was lauded by many amidst criticism of impartiality by the opposition. This evolution of Kenya's democracy continues with lessons learnt from ghosts of the 2007 general election that left more than 1,100 people killed and up to 600,000 displaced.

Since 2012, Kenya has used technology to curb electoral malpractice allegations such as ballot stuffing and ghost voters, amongst others. This was one of the recommendations by the Independent Review Commission formed to investigate events that led to the 2007 post-election violence. In a historic ruling—and the first in Africa—Kenya's Supreme Court became the first on the continent to [annul](#) its presidential elections in 2017 after full due process. The Supreme Court faulted IEBC for not transmitting presidential results as per the law, one of which included announcing results at the National Tallying Center without receipt of the legally required forms 34A and 34B that contains confirmed results at the polling stations and constituency level, respectively.

In 2022, IEBC used its Integrated Election Management System, dubbed the "KIEMS Kit," that allowed electronic voter identification and transmission of results. Unlike previously, once electoral officers and party agents complete vote counting and verification, the returning officer scans a picture of form 34A and submits it to the IEBC server. Thereafter, the forms are made available through the IEBC portal to the public and other stakeholders for scrutiny and tabulation while electoral officers physically deliver original forms to the national tally center.

During the presidential petition, petitioners failed to prove results uploaded in the portal were tampered with; however, continued claims of external interference in servers have been raised in previous and recent petitions, with petitioners crying foul for being denied full access to servers to support their allegations despite granted orders to allow access by the Supreme Court. Full access to servers to petitioners during these investigations will help strengthen transparency and accountability in upcoming elections.

Although Kenya set the bar high with this election, a tribunal has been formed to investigate the conduct of [four commissioners](#) who, during the last minute, disowned the elections results claiming lack of transparency.

Misinformation and disinformation remain rampant on social media amidst freedom of speech; therefore, the government and other key stakeholders should increase efforts on sensitizing the public on the impact of spreading false information and how to verify information. Lastly, the media should have one tally center in the future in order to avoid different presidential results displayed on TV screens as witnessed in 2022 as it builds anxiety amongst citizens.

Technocracy versus Democracy: Perspectives on the Application of Digital Technologies in Kenya's 2022 General Elections

Ms. Margaret Wamuyu Muthee

Transparency and efficiency in the management of electoral processes are fundamental for credible elections whose outcome is uncontested. While the use of digital technologies to support implementation of electoral regulatory frameworks remains prevalent in many jurisdictions worldwide, Kenya has not been left behind. However, the extent to which digitalization of elections supports inclusive governance remains an important question to be explored.

Kenya's 2022 general elections saw an intensified application of digital technologies to reduce the level of human intervention in determining the conduct and outcome of elections. This was mainly due to the declining level of trust in the Independent Elections and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). Prior to the 2022 elections, the IEBC faced and continues to face a credibility test from diverse actors including political parties, the media, and citizens, with accusations of impartiality and manipulation of the electoral process and outcomes, which subverts the people's will. Following recommendations of the Kriegler [report](#) (it records investigations of Kenya's disputed 2007 presidential elections), the IEBC invested in digitization of elections to address inefficiencies manifested through delays, fraudulent identification of voters, and loss of electoral materials.

Exclusive use of electronic identification and transmission of results remained a hotly contested issue until the day when Kenyans went to the polls on August 9, 2022. While the courts ruled in favor of the use of manual registers as a complementary system of identifying voters, the IEBC successfully appealed the decision to maintain exclusive use of the Kenya Integrated Election Management (KIEMS Kit) to identify voters. Notably, the court reversed the exclusive use of the KIEMS Kit to identify votes on polls day. This decision to reintroduce manual identification occurred after [several](#) public complaints by voters across the country who were previously turned away as the KIEMS Kit could not identify them.

The stringent emphasis by IEBC on technology-based identification to avert electoral fraud seemingly privileged integrity while undermining the principle of inclusion, which begs the question: should elections focus on promoting technocracy or democracy? Even with the increased reliance on technology, the outcomes of these elections were contested in court with allegations that external people hired to manipulate results infiltrated the digital platforms.

As Kenya seeks to strengthen its partnership with the United States on governance and democracy, there is a need to reflect deeply on ways to support IEBC to adopt simple, accessible, and verifiable technologies. These will contribute to transparent and efficient electoral processes. The lessons of the 2022 general elections provide an opportunity for Kenya and her partners to organize multi-stakeholder dialogue with leaders, citizens, and the media among others to build trust and promote integrity in the electoral systems. This will promote inclusive governance, minimize fraud, and avert disputes, which have sometimes culminated in violence.

Nigeria Bucking the Trend

Dr. Sophia Moestrup

Africa's largest democracy is headed for highly competitive polls. On February 25, 2023, Nigeria's more than 90 million voters will elect a new president and members of the National Assembly. Bucking the trend in West Africa and in other countries on the continent, incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari will step down at the end of his second term, leaving the field for electing his successor wide open. For the first time since Nigeria's transition from military back to civilian rule in 1999, a presidential runoff is a real possibility, with strong candidates from outside the two main parties in the running. The Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) has ordered a second set of ballot papers, just in case.

Significant electoral reforms over the past decade have contributed to increasingly credible and competitive elections. Well-organized Nigerian civil society groups have leveraged recommendations from international observer missions to advocate for improved transparency of the vote and greater independence for INEC.

These efforts culminated with a successful push for the adoption of a new [Electoral Act](#) in February 2022. The revised electoral framework sets aside early funding for INEC and includes notable innovations, such as biometric voter accreditation, electronic transmission of election results, and more accommodations for people with disabilities. The reforms have raised expectations of credible elections and contributed to more than 9 million newly registered voters this year.

However, Nigeria still faces many difficulties, notably significant insecurity caused by terrorist groups and armed bandits, separatist unrest, and violent clashes between herder and farmer communities over access to water and land. [Political violence has increased](#) steeply over the past year, with attacks on INEC facilities, and thugs employed by politicians disrupting the rallies of competing candidates. As INEC has reduced opportunities for manipulating votes at the ballot box or in the counting process, efforts by political parties at suppressing or [buying votes](#) are on the rise.

Despite these important challenges, there is reason to hope that Nigeria, one of the United States' most important partners in Africa, is well positioned to deliver on expectations of successful, democratic elections, at a time when hard-fought democratic gains are eroding across the continent and in West Africa in particular. Ranked as Africa's largest economy, with a population of 200 million people, the country exercises outsized influence within regional organizations. Successful elections in Nigeria will facilitate continued pressure on military led transition governments in the subregion for a speedy return to democratic rule.



Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding, and Security

Shadow Soldiers in Focus: Uncovering Wagner Group's Operations in Africa

Mr. Stefan Bakumenko

The infamous Kremlin-linked Wagner Group has raised its profile in Africa this year. Since its founding in 2014, this cadre of hyper-nationalist Russian mercenaries has been highly opaque, despite significant engagements in Syria, Ukraine, and half a dozen African countries. However, as the renewed invasion of Ukraine heightens geopolitical tensions, Wagner has become less subtle.

Deploying hundreds of mercenaries to Mali in the winter of 2021-2022, Wagner Group now bolsters a junta set on resolving the country's insecurity militarily. In March, its mercenaries allegedly helped execute [over 300 civilians](#) in Moura, the worst mass killing in the civil war. Wagner forces have been accused of similar abuses in the Central African Republic (CAR), targeting civilians and supporting bloody military offensives. It continues exploiting mineral resources in central Mali and the CAR-Chad-Sudan border area, allegedly killing [hundreds of civilians](#) in the latter in March. Meanwhile, its online presence in Africa has grown from spreading propaganda and disinformation to openly depicting violence and recruiting for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In May, the Russian Foreign Minister admitted Wagner was operating in Mali and Libya, while Putin-ally Yevgeny Prigozhin now [freely discusses](#) leading the group.

Wagner Group has left behind a growing body of evidence of its corrosive activities. Witnesses, open-source intelligence, and their own social media activity paint a fuller picture of how these mercenaries operate. An August 2022 [report](#) from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) found that Wagner Group targeted civilians in 71% of its operations in Mali and 52% in CAR. Satellite imagery helped track Wagner's arrival in Mali, while field reporting has extensively documented their extensive use of extortion, torture, and summary execution.

The Wagner Group's operations are simultaneously destabilizing fragile environments, threatening civilians, and undermining U.S. interests in Africa. This should be of serious concern to African governments and their partners, which should invest greater capacity into tracking Wagner's movements and financial flows. By strengthening the understanding of these mercenaries' tools and priorities, concerned actors can find opportunities to protect civilians from these mercenaries, deny them further inroads on the continent, and undermine the illicit markets they are fueling. Similarly, by continuing to document their abuses, reporters, open-source analysts, and civil society actors can work toward ending Wagner Group's impunity.

Civic Education: Enabling Informed Citizens to Defend Democracy

Ms. Vivian Lowery Derryck

Democracy has had a tumultuous year in several regions across Africa. While Ghana examined its foundational institutions in a comprehensive national effort to strengthen its democracy, neighboring Burkina Faso suffered a double coup. With seven coups in the Sahel [within the past 26 months](#), the continent is part of global democracy backsliding. When democracy is in flux, countries inevitably look for experiences that match their current circumstances and compare outcomes.

That is where the United States becomes relevant. The former exemplar of democracy was rocked by an attempted insurrection on January 6, 2021, immediately before Congress was to certify the 2020 presidential election. The assault on the Capitol reverberated throughout the country and affected foreign policy: the United States appeared less credible when trying to promote democracy.

The failed insurrection had many aspects of an African coup—months of planning, social media disinformation, regional grievances, and a fractured civil society—with lessons learned that are relevant to the continent. Closely watched worldwide, the United States worked to respond to the insurrection including an [investigation](#) spearheaded by an U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee, which concludes in January 2023.

Two standout lessons were: 1) to underscore accountability for all individuals implicated, no matter their position, and 2) to examine the root causes of the rebellion.

In the United States, an important [root cause](#) was a disengaged and uninformed civil society that lacked understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. U.S. democracy was threatened long before the January 6 insurrection, given decades of disinvestment in civic education. The 2022 Annenberg Public Policy Center's Annual Constitution Day Civics Survey [reported](#) that less than half of American adults surveyed could name the three branches of government.

Civil society is the backbone of democracy and a reliable antidote to attempted insurrections. Citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities are more likely to reject unlawful attempts to change their governments. Citizens gain that knowledge through civic education. Extensive research [links](#) robust civic education to sustained citizen engagement. For example, Ghana [followed](#) this principle through its National Commission for Civic Education, formed in 1993 and based on the country's 1992 constitution. Botswana periodically [initiates](#) national reviews its civics teaching, noting the importance of "democratic citizenship education" to sustaining a healthy democracy. Tanzanian scholars [assessed](#) the role of civic education virtually since independence with a National Strategy for Civic Education promulgated in 2011 and ongoing, robust discussion of the role of civic education in a democracy with international scholars as [recently](#) as July 2022.

One of the first priorities of restored democracies should be a massive investment in initiatives to not only strengthen civil society but also expand civic education. One of the U.S.-Africa Strategy's objectives, to "Deliver Democratic and Security Dividends," discusses civil society but does not mention civic education. U.S. assistance should be contingent upon promoting comprehensive civic education programs to consolidate democratic gains.

Disinformation Drilling into Africa's Information Ecosystems

Dr. Mark Duerksen

From Libya to Mali to Mozambique, a precious resource in Africa is being mined, manipulated, and clandestinely used to claim and consolidate power. Information is under systematic attack across the continent as anti-democratic actors seek to distort and undermine the connective and shared resource on which vibrant democracies depend. This war on reliable, authentic, and constructive information sharing takes the form of coordinated disinformation campaigns designed and deployed by external actors—and increasingly by domestic autocrats, elites, and militant groups—toward destabilizing ends.

In the past year, the [scale and sophisticated nature of these operations](#) in Africa have become increasingly recognized as they have been detected and mapped. There have been over 50 (and counting) campaigns documented, which have utilized a variety of tactics, including weaponizing social media algorithms into amplifying disinformation messages through coordinated releases of false and misleading content from inauthentic (fake and front) accounts.

These attacks come at a moment when there is a hunger for actionable information from a growing cohort of young people online on the continent. Nigerians, South Africans, and Kenyans follow the news at some of the highest rates in the world—and [use social media to find news](#) at a higher rate than any other region. The number of social media users on the continent has quadrupled since 2016 to nearly [400 million](#) people today. These users want to know what is happening in their cities, countries, and the world including: information about their political representatives, elections, democratic transitions or backsliding, the economy and job market, climate change, COVID-19, inflation, conflicts—and with what the future might hold for them and how they might improve that trajectory.

These rapidly shifting information pathways have created vulnerabilities that foreign powers led by Russia, China, and the Gulf States have aggressively exploited: roughly 60% of documented disinformation campaigns on the continent are [externally driven](#). Anti-democratic sponsors of disinformation seek to distort, confuse, polarize, and sow distrust into public communications in ways that neutralize the exchange of competing ideas, transparency, and accountability fostered by democratic societies. The resulting warped information landscape enables the purveyors of disinformation to shape societal narratives conducive to their political interests.

African actors have begun developing innovative and effective initiatives—including accessible disinformation research, fact-checking networks, and digital literacy and media training sessions—to build guardrails and resilience for Africa's shifting information ecosystems. These efforts need further strengthening and interconnecting with one another and with policy strategies. Otherwise, as one African counter-disinformation expert recently remarked, divided “they are chasing the wind.”

Francophone African Youth Make Their Voices Heard

Fr. Paterne Auxence Mombe

Has there been a democratic drift or march toward a profound social transformation in Francophone Africa? This is the question one is given to ask in the face of numerous marches or demonstrations by African youth during 2022.

In July, Adama Tereta (32) [marched](#) over 1,600 km to demonstrate his patriotism and support to Colonel Assimi Goita, the leader of the “junta” in power in Mali. This courageous act is just one of many among the youth in Francophone Africa.

Hundreds of young people—with only 50 reported according to official figures—were [massacred](#) in Chad on October 20, 2022. Their crime: marching peacefully to denounce a subtle confiscation of power by a dynastic and unconstitutional regime backed by France.

During 2022, thousands of young people took the lead in marches for pursuing demands including:

1. demanding efficient management of the security crisis and support changes of government ([Burkina Faso](#), January and October);
2. showing their unwavering support to the transitional authorities disavowed by France and ECOWAS, a sub-regional organization ([Mali](#), January);
3. giving a triumphant welcome to the interim Prime Minister after his speech at the 77th United Nations (UN) General Assembly ([Mali](#), September); and
4. demanding the withdrawal of foreign troops—the Barkhane force—from their country ([Niger](#), September).

Considering all the aforementioned examples from the streets, the UN’s podium, and social media, one aspiration transpires: the end of French “neocolonialism”; a postcolonial system rooted in the Colonial Pact—recently denounced by Mali—which has maintained some African countries under France’s subtle political, economic, and military dependence.

Therefore, Francophone African youth support is irreversibly underway for neo-independence. The U.S. government should not condone diplomatic operations aiming at perpetuating Francophone Africa’s subjugation to the disenfranchising French neocolonialist system that leads youth to shout: “We can’t breathe!” It should promote a policy of a proactive presence by the African States in democratic crisis whose leaders strive for political legitimacy despite their ties with Russia, which appears as an ideal partner.

The United States specifically need to:

1. stand as a true military, political, and socioeconomic empowering partner;
2. ensure that coveted African [natural resources](#) contribute to the national development rather than serving only the purposes of any other superpower.

Kenya's Innovations in Tech and Violence Prevention

Mr. Will Ferroggiaro and Mr. Caleb Gichuhi

Kenya experiences [several types of violent conflict](#), ranging from political violence to natural resource conflicts to violent extremism, some of them interacting or overlapping. The 2007 election violence is probably the most [glaring instance](#) in recent times, but periodic Al-Shabab terror attacks and daily criminal or resource-related violence also take their toll on Kenyans. Nonetheless, reflecting Kenya's high rates of literacy and advanced technological development, Kenyans have established innovative applications of technology for prevention and mitigation.

This development is now nearly 20 years on. Following the 2007 violence, the non-profit tech company Ushahidi [pioneered](#) a platform for crowd-sourced reporting of violent incidents, and the peace tech NGO Sisi ni Amani [deployed](#) an SMS-based community counter-rumor program. While countering hate speech remains a focus, online radicalization and recruitment as well as disinformation are key concerns today. Ahead of the 2022 elections, Kenyan researchers [found](#) that Kenya's political actors pay trolls for online disinformation and smear campaigns against opponents, the judiciary, and others. The devolved governance system in Kenya also saw these harms take on multiple dimensions as they spread from the national to county level, [polarizing](#) more communities.

Kenya's elections remain as focal points for tech and conflict prevention. For this year's election, innovative responses using both digital and human resources include:

- *Maskani*, a collaboration between Build Up and the Center for Media, Democracy, Peace and Security at Rongo University, [trained](#) students and faculty from Kenyan universities in key concepts and strategies which they employed to counter and interrupt hate speech and polarization online.
- Mercy Corps [partnered](#) with Champions of Peace to establish a [call center](#) for monitoring and reporting early signals of conflict and with Afluence to deploy social media [influencers](#) to mitigate tensions through peer-to-peer discussions online.
- The Sentinel Project [expanded](#) its *Una Hakika* initiative from the Tana River Delta to 15 counties across Kenya. The initiative trained citizens to monitor, verify, and counter rumors, misinformation, and hate speech.

As Kenyans continue to innovate, technology companies such as Meta, Twitter, and TikTok have been increasingly engaging at the national level with government and civil society on hate speech and disinformation, although thus far, this seems limited to elections. Key challenges remain in ensuring that funding and programming reflects Kenyan priorities and that the focus of violence prevention continues to expand beyond elections to tackling the complexity and interrelatedness of Kenya's conflicts.

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Trade, Investment, and Sustainable Development

Closing Africa's Renewable Energy Financing Gap

Dr. Michael Olabisi, Dr. Robert Richardson, and Dr. Adesoji Adelaja

With over [40%](#) of global solar energy potential, Africa is the most sun-rich continent, but her adoption rate for renewable energy and solar power is the slowest of all regions of the world. The opportunity to confront this slow-uptake problem comes with global consequences. For the sake of Africans' and everyone's future, the world must pay attention to Africa's renewable energy transition. The financing gap holding up this transition has implications for the finance and investment communities.

Why? While per capita energy consumption remains low in Africa, it will more than double in the next two decades due to rapid growth in the share of Africans using electricity and continued economic transformation. About [596 million](#) people in Sub-Saharan Africa alone lack access to electricity. As incomes grow, electricity demand will increase from 700 to 1600 terawatt-hours per year by 2040. Whether Africa's future energy will come from clean, renewable energy sources such as wind or solar; or from diesel, kerosene, charcoal, and firewood, with major adverse environmental impacts, is the burning question. Achieving the world's climate objectives will be difficult in the latter scenario.

It is good for Africans to have access to affordable, clean, and sustainable energy, as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7). The sustainability goal includes a focus on financial flows to developing countries for renewables, energy efficiency, and electrification. Meeting SDG 7 for Africans benefits all countries as the continent draws on its vast potential supply of renewable energy to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It is feasible because solar and wind power now cost less than or are at par with conventional fossil-fuel power. The prospect of global crisis remains if the renewable energy-financing gap remains unaddressed.

In our recently published Climate and Development journal [article](#), we argue for a concerted effort by investors, governments, and global development partners to close Africa's renewable energy gap. African economies cannot afford to self-finance the required energy transition. We recommended financing mechanisms that go beyond traditional public or private finance, given the constraints facing African countries and the sizeable positive externality to the world. In sum, it helps the global community—including policymakers and investors in high-income countries—if Africa succeeds in a timely transition to cleaner renewable energy. Billions of Africans can, in the long run, leapfrog past technologies like charcoal or wood-fired cook stoves, kerosene, or diesel, in a win for both African economies and our global climate goals.

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Ethiopia Strives to Build a Digital Economy Despite Cryptocurrency Bans

Dr. Messay Asgedom Gobena

While Ethiopia has a digital [strategy](#) focused on developing and promoting digital currencies, the country, at odds, banned crypto-based transactions in June 2022. Previously, digital currencies were limited to domestic financial institutions. However, in 2021, the country opened the sector to non-financial institutions and foreign companies including *Ethio-Telecom's* launch of *Telebirr*, the first digital money not owned by a financial institution. On October 6, 2022, the country announced that it will permit Safaricom to operate its *M-Pesa* mobile money service in Ethiopia.

Alongside fiat digital currencies, Ethiopia is seeing the growth of crypto-assets. Individuals have invested in purchasing and/or mining cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin. Government institutions have undertaken several initiatives to develop and utilize blockchain technology. Until June 2022, the country took a wait-and-see approach to the crypto-asset market. The Central Bank of Ethiopia, however, has banned any cryptocurrency-based transactions since June 6, 2022. Despite the ban, the Ethiopian Financial Intelligence Service, with technical assistance from the World Bank, is conducting a [study](#) on the emergence, challenges, and opportunities that crypto-assets pose to Ethiopia's economy and national security. Ethiopia's Information Network Security Agency also registers those who want to engage in the cryptocurrency industry. All of this indicates that Ethiopia will likely legalize and regulate cryptocurrency-based transactions soon.

Unlike its predecessors, ongoing economic reforms and liberalization provided a solid framework for building cordial relations with other countries and financial institutions. However, the war in Tigray, the involvement of the Eritrean army in the war, the heinous human rights violations committed, and the reluctance of disputants to settle the conflict peacefully have all affected relations. In November 2022, thanks to the endeavors of the international community, disputants agreed to *inter alia* cease hostilities. Full compliance by both parties to the Pretoria Peace Accord may therefore create enabling conditions to mend damaged relations and, in time, digitize the economy.

What's Next for Food Security: Responses to the African Union's Year of Nutrition 2022

Dr. Florence Odiwuor

The year 2022 encompassed new weather extremes, food shortages, fuel price spikes, and rising costs of living, with increased geopolitical tensions exacerbating the crises, which have been [particularly](#) intense in Africa. Hunger has sharply increased since 2016. [Approximately](#) one in five Africans goes to bed hungry, about 140 million face acute food insecurity, and 61 million children are stunted. In December, the African Union's high-level meeting in Côte d'Ivoire on the Year of Nutrition [noted](#) the high prevalence of hunger and malnutrition on the continent, and its complex root causes. Malnutrition, the biggest contributor to under-five mortality, has major repercussions on African children, [including](#) their physical, mental, cognitive, and physiological development—barring them from reaching their full potential. In addition, these negative effects [resulted](#) in a loss of up to 16.5% of their Gross Domestic Product from child undernutrition across the continent.

The African Union's (AU) theme “The Year of Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on the African Continent: Strengthening Agro-Food Systems, Health and Social Protection Systems for the Acceleration of Human, Social and Economic Capital Development,” saw the Commission [pledge](#) urgent actions and build strong partnerships to accelerate progress on food security. The Abidjan meeting noted that this theme provided a good opportunity for continued advocacy to maintain gains made in eliminating malnutrition and further [strengthen](#) collaboration with the United States and other partners for adequate financing and effective implementation.

However, the endeavor to reduce malnutrition requires much more effort. The AU further [noted](#) with concern that despite significant achievements, challenges continue to undermine the efforts of Member States. The 2022 crises create a necessity to meet the calorie and nutrition needs of Africa's populations through building resilience.

Supporting ecological sustainability, climate change adaptation, healthy diets, and inclusive socio-economic development can help [transition](#) to more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems. Furthermore, Africa needs to enhance technical and financial support to adapt to the impacts of climate shocks that are stalling progress toward food security. The Abidjan Declaration highlighted this year's theme to COP27 by calling for the [support](#) of new initiatives on climate and sustainable agri-food systems such as the Initiative on Climate Action and Nutrition (I-CAN) and the Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transitions Initiative (FAST) along with a focus on climate change adaptation and building nutrition resilience through enhanced financing. Moving forward into the 2023 [Global Humanitarian Overview](#) theme of “Climate Change and Global Food Insecurity - Key Drivers of Humanitarian Needs”, partners should deliver and scale up their [provision](#) of climate financing for transformational adaptation initiatives to enhance food security of African Nations.

Tackling Climate-Related Risks in the Borderlands of the Horn of Africa

Ms. Miriam Mona Mukalazi

The year 2022 illustrated the continuation of insecurities due to floods, droughts, or plagues in the borderlands of the Horn of Africa (HoA). Applying a conflict-climate nexus in the region allows more profound insights into resilience strategies set in place by traditional governance systems to counter climate insecurities. Since December 2021, water prices have kept rising significantly as a consequence of drought in the HoA borderlands, just to name one of the climate-related insecurities in the region. In most of the conflict analyses around the HoA, pastoral conflicts in the borderlands tend to be identified as isolated disputes among local actors. However, these conflicts can destabilize neighboring regions and feed into internal civil and inter-state conflicts.

To draw a picture of the various conflicts in 2022, it is necessary to understand the conflict-climate nexus in the parameters of ongoing insecurities rather than various shocking events that lead to insecurities. Additionally, it is critical to define the (re-)occurring climate-related risks in the region as dangers intensively influenced by human activity. The borderlands of the Mendera Triangle (Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya) are only one example where climate-related risks exacerbate ongoing conflicts rooted in politics of devolution, regional inequalities, and terrorism. One driver of climate-related instability and insecurity in the Triangle is Al-Shabaab. Although the terror group has been on the radar of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for a long time, a full picture of how Al-Shabaab's activities in the borderlands are connected to climate-related risks could not have been drawn yet. Besides considering only the sources of conflicts in the Triangle, it is essential to look at the dynamics of conflicts around resource availability and competition around livelihoods.

Applying the conflict-climate nexus in the borderland context also reveals international donors and regional institutions tend to overlook conflict resolution actors. Considering institutional actors, the former African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was relevant as it operated in Gedo, the Somali part of the Triangle. The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) replaced AMISOM and became operational in April 2022. However, when it comes to conflicts concerning natural resources, local knowledge, and traditional governance systems (which are often tagged with the label "informal") play essential roles in governing risks, particularly where formal institutions, like the AU, have limited authority over the borderlands. For example, the Mendera Triangle's communities have created elaborate social alliance structures to cope with various economic, violent, and environmental shocks.

Despite the continuation of conflicts rooted in politics of devolution, regional inequalities, and terrorism in 2022, women's civil society groups take part in developing peace committees and providing forums for greater dialogue between traditional and religious leaders and youths so that these groups find common grounds for conflict prevention and transformation. More examples of women's groups involved in mitigating climate-related risks is briefly summarized in the 2022 IGAD report of the "[Gender and Resilience Knowledge Share Fair](#)". If sustainable climate security is the objective, formal actors must consider these local, traditional resilience practices when designing, implementing, and evaluating policy instruments around climate-related risks in the borderlands of the HoA.

Protector and Protected: Optimism from Uganda in Promoting the Rights of People with Disabilities

Ms. Taylor Laube-Alvarez

On December 3, 2022, World Disability Day, Uganda unveiled a revised [national policy](#) on people with disabilities (PWDs). This revision was an important move toward equity and justice in empowering citizens with disabilities by providing them accessible materials for legal recourse.

Most African countries have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) since its adoption in December 2006; however, implementation remains a challenge. This issue is impossible to ignore considering the United Nations has reported that over [80 million](#) people in Africa have a disability. Although PWDs still face stigmas and discrimination in political processes and daily life, 2022 has provided reasons for hope for PWDs across the continent and around the globe.

Uganda's revised policy provides resources to make legal documents more accessible, such as a braille version of the Constitution and an audio-visual form of the Persons with Disabilities Act. According to the Vice President, Jessica Alupo, the country is only the thirteenth in the world to have made a braille Constitution [available](#) to its citizens.

Like many PWDs around the world, Africans with disabilities may face discrimination regularly, making their lives and their families' lives much harder than other citizens. A shift in mindset must simultaneously work from the top down and bottom up. Change and inclusion should be demanded and initiated by the public, and heard and honored by government, as is the [case in Uganda](#). Additionally, if government officials, and subsequently their policies, project an image of inclusion and solidarity, this will spread to the general populace and influence any negative cultural and local beliefs regarding disabilities.

However, the creation of equitable opportunities cannot stop there. The implementation and follow through of promises and policies are of the utmost importance to maintain momentum on the track of progress. Too often, the narrative surrounding people with disabilities is one of sympathy and avoidance rather than empathy and support. As a protector of its people, it is the primary responsibility of the government to take the first step and stand with its citizens with disabilities, not just in words, but also in action.

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Kenyan Ambassador's Speech on Ukraine at the United Nations: Elevating the African Voice

Dr. Terence McNamee

On February 21, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin [recognized](#) breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine as “republics”, presaging Russia’s invasion of the country. That evening, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held an emergency late-night [meeting](#) to discuss the crisis. The world held its breath, waiting to hear the statements from the big powers. Would the U.S. permanent representative threaten a military response? Might Russia offer another fig leaf? How would China respond?

No one gave much thought to what Kenya’s UN Ambassador, Martin Kimani, might say. Kenya was serving only a two-year stint as a temporary member. It had no strategic interest in Ukraine. While it led the African bloc on the UNSC, Africa seemingly had no skin in the game.

Then he spoke.

Writing at the end of 2022, with the war in Ukraine tragically rumbling on, Ambassador Kimani’s moving [speech](#) is the only one that people remember from that historic meeting. He condemned Russia for rejecting diplomacy in favor of brute force and warned Putin that violating Ukraine’s territorial integrity risked putting multilateralism “on its deathbed.”

However, this was no faint whisper at the margins of world politics. Fareed Zakaria, of the major U.S. news outlet Cable News Network (CNN), [called](#) it “the best response” to Putin’s aggression. A clip of his address was [viewed](#) more than 3 million times from one Twitter feed. Convincingly and with uncommon moral clarity, Kimani centered the African voice at the heart of the crisis. He deftly explained how Ukraine echoed Africa’s own history as “across the border of every single African country live our countrymen with whom we share deep historical, cultural, and linguistic bonds. At independence, had we chosen to pursue states on the basis of ethnic, racial or religious homogeneity, we would still be waging bloody wars.” He acknowledged peoples’ yearning for integration with their brethren in neighboring states but using force would only “plunge us back into new forms of domination and oppression.” Additionally, there was a sting in the tail of his statement: Ukraine should not be seen in isolation from “the trend—in the last few decades—of powerful states, including members of the UNSC, breaching international law with little regard.”

U.S. policymakers will have noted how widely Kimani’s speech resonated. In a time of soaring geopolitical tensions, the most compelling advocate of a rules-based international order came from Africa. It was a moment for those usually doing all the talking—the mighty and the powerful—to listen and learn.

Climate Change, COVID-19, and War in Ukraine Threaten Democracy in Africa

Mr. Osei Baffour Frimpong

In 2022, the ripple of three-headed crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and the war in Ukraine has unleashed a geopolitical Cerberus of a sort, threatening democratic stability in Africa. Given the exogenous challenges to democratic governance, the need for the United States to increase its assistance for democracy is necessary to reduce the recent regression in liberal democracy in Africa.

The war in Ukraine has exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities and exposed the lack of resilience in the economies of African States already reeling from the shocks of the global pandemic. The conflict indicated a dependence on imported food, fuel, and other consumer goods, [leaving](#) the continent susceptible to soaring global inflation, food insecurity, energy crisis, and poverty. This nexus has heightened citizens' discontent reflected in rising agitations, protests, and labor strikes in countries this year. While demonstrations and protests are key tenets of liberal democracy, in some contexts, it has resulted in violence and fragmented the social cohesion necessary for democratic stability.

Moreover, climate-induced insecurity and the pandemic have galvanized continued spread of violent extremist and terrorist insurgencies through the exploitation of citizens' discontent against governance fault lines in the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, the Horn, and Southern Africa regions in 2022. Ominously, littoral States in West Africa, including Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire have also experienced spillover effects of terrorist insurgencies in the Sahel in 2022, with Ghana not being immune to the threats. Recent military takeovers, especially in Burkina Faso, further reveal exploitation of insecurity and mounting socio-economic challenges as justification. This suggests that all of the above result in general unrests among citizens—a signpost of existential threats to liberal democracy in Africa.

Several African States devastated by the ripple of the challenges highlighted have sought economic assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to revitalize their economies to lessen the downturn. However, IMF-guided austerity is often contingent on stringent economic measures that could potentially generate social unrest, upheavals and unconstitutional change of governments.

These factors suggest that the United States, at its best the example of promotion of democratic norms, could reset its foreign policy to recognize drivers of insecurity and democracy regression in Africa as part of the core of global challenges and increase support to democratic governance. Similarly, African States and international partners need to increase collaboration to develop measures to relieve stressors induced by global occurrences and provide the required financial assistance to the continent's climate adaptation strategies to assuage the impact on human security and democracy.

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The Ripple Effects of the Russia-Ukraine War on Food Security in Africa

Ms. Jennyfer Jimenez

As Africa and the rest of the world grapple with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, strains to the supply chain, the impact of climate change, and an increased cost of living, an [estimated 1.6 billion people in 94 countries](#) are or will be exposed to food, energy, and finance vulnerabilities. While food prices worldwide rose an estimated [23%](#) than a year ago, increased food prices will hit Sub-Saharan Africa the hardest.

Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa rely on Russia and Ukraine for a significant percentage of their wheat, fertilizer, and vegetable oils imports. The war in Ukraine also [disrupted](#) the global commodity markets and trade flows to Africa, which increased already high food prices. In May 2022, the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, stated that in just two years, the number of severely food insecure people has doubled, from [135 million pre-pandemic to 276 million](#), with more than half a million people living in famine conditions—an increase of more than 50% since 2016. It is discernible that the war in Ukraine has direct and indirect effects on the African continent and will have lingering effects on food insecurity.

While the war in Ukraine shows no signs of ending, the economic hardships and increased food shortage are political and humanitarian stressors worldwide. According to the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), Russia's invasion of Ukraine worsens an ongoing food and security crisis in Africa, with Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan [forecast to be among the hardest hit](#).

To lessen the impact of the food crisis and to prevent even more people across Africa from going hungry, it is necessary that the African Union use mechanisms like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to continue to promote inter-African trade. In countries that have operationalized the AfCFTA, [tariffs have been reduced and customs procedures have been simplified](#), leading to reformed markets and increased outputs in sectors such as agriculture and food. AfCFTA presents an exciting opportunity for the African continent and has the potential to increase food security by ensuring trade and availability of agricultural products to regions with high rates of food insecurity. The continued use of the AfCFTA could potentially re-shape the agri-food sector, improve food security, and deter the ripple effects of the Russia-Ukraine War on food security.

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Critical Minerals: Africa's Importance to Addressing the Energy Transition Bottleneck

Mr. Tony Carroll and William Darbyshire

The world is going green. Global annual investment in low-carbon technologies has [doubled](#) since 2016 to \$800 billion per year. Bloomberg predicts that sales of electric vehicles in the United States will [overtake](#) cars using combustion engines this decade. The Biden Administration and the European Union (EU) are now investing political capital in the success of domestic green energy firms. The coming decades will be defined by the increasing share of global manufacturing and financial investment dedicated to green technologies. Africa should take advantage of this valuable opportunity to ensure its role as an indispensable link in the supply chains of the future.

The transition to clean energy is not free. Cobalt and lithium are required for the batteries of electric vehicles and energy grid power storage. Modernizing and expanding transmission grids will require increasing amounts of copper. Platinum group metals are critical to the production process of green technologies.

These critical minerals have never been so important to satisfying governmental and corporate priorities. [Industrial policy](#) now funnels capital toward industries that use critical minerals as inputs. So long as governments are diverting financial resources toward producing goods made with critical minerals, they will rightly invest in the fate of critical mineral supply chains.

This sustained demand for critical minerals has coincided with an increasing U.S. political aversion to economic dependence on China. Chinese firms extract and refine 70% to 80% of the world's cobalt, largely from mines they control in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). China similarly performs 80% of the world's [lithium refining](#) and a substantial [40% of copper](#). The [dependence](#) of mineral-rich governments on Chinese government credit and investment represents a key vulnerability to a U.S. administration hoping to both stand up to China and rapidly transition the U.S. economy toward carbon neutrality.

The extent to which domestic supply of critical minerals can meet U.S. and EU demand is constrained by limited reserves of these minerals and strict environmental rules, which make processing them difficult. The Biden Administration and allies organized the Minerals Security Partnership to coordinate public and private investment in critical mineral supply chains. African critical minerals producers are correctly engaging with this grouping and winning investment and political goodwill for their role in advancing the green policy agenda; the DRC attended the grouping's [first meeting](#) in New York last September.

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Turkey in the Sahel: A New Actor with High Ambitions?

Dr. Elem Eyrice-Tepeciklioğlu

In the last few years, Turkey has emerged as a new actor in the Sahel. Turkey's engagement with the region is mostly through soft power outreach, including humanitarian efforts, (symbolic) religious diplomacy initiatives, and educational opportunities in an attempt to boost the limited trade ties with the regional countries. This outreach includes the opening of [poultry](#) and [fish](#) farms in Niger and distribution of food packages to [65,000](#) families in Burkina Faso during Ramadan and Eid al Adha in 2022.

Ankara has embassies in all Sahelian capitals. Turkish Airlines—founded and principally owned by the state—also has direct flights to those countries. Turkey's Cooperation and Coordination Agency has been involved in several development projects in the region while Turkey's Maarif Foundation, authorized to operate Turkish schools abroad, runs nearly 100 schools, with 31 of them in Mali alone. Further, more than ten thousand students from the Sahelian countries [receive](#) higher education in Turkish universities. The flows are not exclusive into the Sahel; however, these actions signal an increasing Turkish interest, role and presence on the ground.

In contrast to its robust soft power push, Ankara's military involvement in the region is limited to military training and modest contributions to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions. However, Turkey's signing of military/defense deals with regional countries and increasing arms sales spurred concerns of a looming expansive military footprint in the Sahel.

Turkey's relations are strained with France, arguably still the most influential actor in the region, over several foreign policy issues. Still, cooperation with France and other European countries is possible, especially on security and migration issues. Turkey might not end up playing the leading role in the Sahel. The region does not rest in Turkey's immediate vicinity; therefore, the regional conflicts have little relevance for Turkey. However, its military cooperation within these regions serves its rising power ambitions to play a greater role and presence even in distant geographies.

Although Ankara has limited knowledge of local contexts, Turkey has a long experience in counterterrorism endeavors and a different level of peacebuilding approach that privileges development over security, as reflected in its Somalia [policy](#).

As protracted Sahelian security challenges prove the failure of current military approaches, the end of the French-led Barkhane Operation and the recent withdrawals from the UN Mali Mission (MINUSMA) could potentially create a dangerous power vacuum that might be filled with Russian mercenaries, most notably the Wagner Group. The "[malign influence](#)" of Wagner, [accused](#) of serious human rights violations in the countries where it operates, might well undermine the stability in the region. The security problems in the region require an effective collaboration between Sahelian countries and external powers willing to overcome their differences and complement each other's strengths. A potential partnership between those external players including Turkey, the United States, the European Union (EU), and regional countries might well contribute to strengthen regional initiatives such as the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) and Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and eventually tackle the root causes of the region's conflicts.

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Peace and the Economy in Uganda: 50 Years after Idi Amin

Dr. Shobana Shankar and Mr. Omegere John Patrick

In the Tororo District in eastern Uganda, 2022 brought the opening of a school and factory promising 1,000 jobs, both funded by the Indian-owned Tororo Cement Limited Company. President Yoweri Museveni marked the occasion by recalling that fifty years earlier, in 1972, General Idi Amin Dada ordered roughly 75,000 Asians to leave Uganda within 90 days. “Idi Amin made a mistake of chasing Asians,” [Museveni stated](#), telling the Indian owners of the cement company that, “In Uganda, you have real partners.” Although difficult in the past, African-Indian economic relations are based now on partnerships that will have an enormous impact on Uganda’s future.

The small minority of migrants from the Indian subcontinent, known as Asians in Uganda and the rest of British-ruled eastern Africa in the early 20th century, arrived as railway workers and traders but used colonial-era privileges to become wealthy business holders. When Amin seized Uganda’s presidency through a military coup in 1971, he launched an “[economic war](#),” expelling Indians and confiscating their property. Nearly all but a few hundred Asians [fled](#) to Canada, the United Kingdom, and other countries.

After Uganda’s economy and government collapsed, Asians began to return in the early 1980s. With Museveni’s assumption of power in 1986, economic liberalization and private sector-led development brought back more Asian expellees and newcomers. Museveni’s 1993 promise to return Asian property attracted more foreign businesspeople and direct investment from India and other nations.

Uganda’s multiracial landscape has transformed since Amin’s era. Among the estimated 30,000 South Asians in the country now, less than one-tenth are “Uganda Asians”; the vast majority are Non-Resident Indians from many countries who are not settlers. They drive India’s direct investment in Uganda, estimated to be in the billions, far greater than China’s, and more diversified in healthcare, medicine, agriculture, IT, and telecommunications. Good relations in Uganda help India’s relationships throughout Africa, where the South Asian nation is seeking to convince Africans to work with [the Indian government, state and private banks, and private businesses](#). In a new [government initiative](#) in 2022, New Delhi opened 222 lines of credit worth an estimated \$14 billion for projects in 43 African countries. As African development actors assess their international options—offered by India, China, the United States, and others—reckoning with the successes and failures of the past remains as important as plans for the future.

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Doubling Down on Africa's Creative Sector

Ms. Cheri Ayers

Several initiatives were launched this year to promote Africa's creative sector through well-known international apps and platforms. In May, Netflix [debuted](#) its first African-made podcast, "Never Late | African Time." Furthermore, the streaming platform agreed to a [\\$63 million investment](#) in South Africa's film and TV industry, leading to the announcement of [several](#) African Netflix originals, including some available in local languages. As a result, these deals will not only serve as an investment in Africa's estimated [\\$4.2 billion](#) cultural product value but can also provide economic benefits such as creating jobs.

Beyond film, other international companies noticed Africa's creative potential. Spotify, a leading audio streaming service, [announced](#) the African Podcaster Fund. This initiative aims to support creators on the continent through financial grants, networking opportunities, and workshops. The Kenyan-based company, Africa Podcast, will administer this \$100,000 fund.

Other platforms made an effort to support and collaborate with African content artists, musicians, and entrepreneurs. Meta (the umbrella company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) [launched](#) the "Creators of Tomorrow" campaign to empower those "at the forefront of their communities and industries, leading the charge in how they approach storytelling, interactive entertainment, video formats, and technology." This campaign intends to celebrate each recipient (with 10 from Sub-Saharan Africa) as they pave the way toward new forms of storytelling online.

In May, Meta also highlighted the continent in a solo campaign geared toward Africa Day, which is celebrated on May 25. The second installment of "Made by Africa, Loved by the World" promoted individual African creators and offered [free virtual training sessions](#) on branding/marketing, monetization, and cross-border promotion. The above examples provide instances where titan-level companies offer tailor-made investments to African individuals.

However, business is business—for better or worse. Some of these tactics can be considered as a motive to compete with the widely successful social media platform TikTok. Not only is the Chinese-owned social media platform positioned to [grow](#) to 1.8 billion global users by the end of 2022, it also increased possible [ways](#) to connect to African users along with its own string of [campaigns](#) this year. The year 2022 also saw the rise and fall of the first Twitter office in Ghana. The initial news of the office's opening [offered](#) the opportunity for the company to "be more immersed in the rich and vibrant communities that drive the conversations taking place every day across the African continent." However, the recent transition in Twitter's leadership [served](#) as the catalyst in closing the office's doors officially in December.

Ultimately, considering its unbridled potential, investment in Africa's creativity will be key. If 2022 is any indicator, the creative industry on the continent is on an upswing, but African governments should increase their efforts on garnering international interest and [bringing awareness](#) to this sector alongside others, such as agriculture. To those efforts, the United States (and other international partners) should strive to boost economic collaboration through African creatives while allowing African stories and voices to take the lead in the conversation. To [summarize](#) the Deputy Prime Minister from the Republic of Namibia, the Honorable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah: The creative industry is also social and economic. It brings people together, gives Africa an international role, and creates jobs. It is positive.

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