



# Africa Political Monitor No. 27

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**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Islamic Extremism; Terrorism; Warfare; Africa; East Africa; North Africa; West Africa

## THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF SUDAN'S UNREST

For months, the North African nation of Sudan has been in crisis, as two warring factions commanded by rival generals vie for political primacy. Now, there are alarming signs that the country's turmoil is leeching beyond its borders. The UN's envoy for South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, has warned the world body's Security Council that neighboring South Sudan could be next to unravel, as hundreds of thousands of Sudanese men, women, and children flee there to escape the violence. South Sudan is ill equipped to handle this influx of refugees, both because of limited resources and the impact on the country's fragile economy, which has put commodities "out of reach for ordinary people." And more hardship is potentially in store; if Sudan's violence continues, it could threaten South Sudan's oil exports, upon which the country is deeply dependent.

In response, South Sudan is stepping up its regional diplomacy. The country's president, Salva Kiir Mayardit, is spearheading peace efforts designed to bring an end to the Sudanese conflict. That, however, could end up harming South Sudan's own political process. President Kiir, Haysom has warned, needs to devote more attention to the country's upcoming elections and the drafting of a constitution for the twelve-year-old nation. If those processes are delayed, it could worsen South Sudan's security, political, and humanitarian situation. (*The Independent*, June 21, 2023)

## MOSCOW POISED TO REOPEN EMBASSY IN TRIPOLI

Russia is continuing to work to deepen its foothold on the African continent. Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Dbeibah recently met with Russia's new Ambassador to the country, Aydar Aganin. Moscow's diplomatic presence in Libya, which has been shuttered for some time as a result of the country's ongoing civil unrest, is slated to start up again in August. That resumption is part of Russian President Vladimir Putin's ongoing support for the Government of National Unity (GNU), Aganin emphasized, and stressed that Moscow is committed to "strengthening bilateral relations and supporting the efforts of the GNU to achieve stability and hold elections." (*The Libya Observer*, June 27, 2023)

## UN TO END PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN MALI

In June, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to end its peacekeeping mission in Mali, following demands from that country's ruling junta that UN personnel depart and its employment of Russia's notorious Wagner paramilitary group. The vote initiates the removal of more than 15,000 personnel by the end of the year. Western leaders are expressing their regrets over Mali's shift away from the UN and toward Wagner. That partnership will not "deliver long-term stability or security for the Malian people," Britain's envoy to the UN, Barbara Woodward, has cautioned. According to UN estimates, Mali's ruling junta has paid over \$200 million to Wagner since 2021, but the security situation has not improved appreciably. Nevertheless, Malian authorities claim they no longer have confidence in the UN peacekeeping mission, and are looking to take charge of their own affairs. Moscow, for its part, celebrated the country's decision and pledged to "continue providing comprehensive bilateral support to Mali." (*ABC News*, June 30, 2023)

## AL-SHABAAB COMPLICATES THE KENYAN-SOMALI BORDER

Kenya has delayed reopening its shared border with Somalia after violent attacks by the al-Shabaab terrorist group killed several security officers and civilians in recent weeks. Kenya's Interior Minister, Kithure Kindiki, will indefinitely delay any reopening until his government can get a handle on what he terms "the recent spate of terror attacks and cross-border crime." The boundary originally closed over a decade ago due to penetration into the country by al-Shabaab militants crossing over from the group's stronghold of Somalia. However, despite the delay in reopening the border, Kenya says it remains committed to aiding refugees fleeing Somalia's violence. At the same time, however, Nairobi deploying more security officers along the border to prevent criminals from blending in with refugee flows and crossing into the country. (Reuters, July 5, 2023)



### **CAIRO PLAYS HOST TO SUDAN PEACE TALKS**

Sudan's neighbors, eager to end the protracted conflict in that country, recently met in Cairo to discuss ways to bring about peace. The summit comes weeks after a ceasefire brokered by Saudi Arabia and the United States failed, with the two warring sides resuming their fighting. Egypt's President, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, called on both sides to commit to a ceasefire before negotiations can resume. The prospects for a breakthrough, however, are unfortunately dim. Sudan's military leader, Abdel Fattah al Burhan, and Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, leader of the rival RSF militia, have either rejected or violated the past ten cease-fire agreements. (*Africa News*, July 13, 2023)

### **ECOWAS TAKES A STAND**

The newly-installed chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has reaffirmed the group's commitment to supporting democracies in the region. The statement by Nigerian president Bola Ahmed Tinubu follows multiple coups that have dismantled governments in three member states over the past three years, and signals a potentially more activist posture by the bloc. Tinubu has vowed not to support coups in West Africa, and warned that both military takeovers and rising terrorism are threatening "the progress and development of the region." To alleviate these threats, Tinubu intends to mobilize ECOWAS resources in order to strengthen each member nation's democratic institutions. This includes pledges to "enhance engagements with authorities" in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea to restore those nations to democratic rule. If, however, the countries fall behind in their transition back to civilian control, Tinubu has cautioned, ECOWAS members stand prepared to enact sanctions. (*Africa News*, July 10, 2023)