

The AfriFiles



Volume III - June, 2026

We Know Africa

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

Africa one goal



**TANZANIA'S WOUND,
A NATION'S CURE**

**TRUMP STRIKES HARD
BARGAIN WITH AFRICA**

**MNANGAGWA 2030
POWER GRAB**





Cover Story:

We chose to place the World Cup story on The AfriFiles cover because Africa's greatest goal at this global tournament is not merely to score on the pitch, but to remind the continent that unity, togetherness and shared pride can rise above borders, politics and old differences, turning football into a common language of hope where 10 African countries carry one continental dream before the watching world with courage, dignity, passion, and renewed belief together.

Listen to an audio analysis- Page 7

The AfriFile Profile

The AfriFiles is the continent's flagship monthly technology-powered magazine, driven by Africa's top editors and journalists. Shared free through Emails, WhatsApp, Signal, LinkedIn, and social platforms. Here, Africa's leaders and citizens unite to tell the real stories - of victories, challenges, and futures being built. Bold, incisive, and unapologetically African. The AfriFiles delivers the insights and perspectives that shape today and tomorrow. Is printed by special request.



TAF Team

The AfriFiles is a monthly magazine published by **Impact Africa Journalists Consortium (IAJC)**.
Interim Chairman: **Simon Martha MKINA** (Tanzania)
Interim Vice Chairman: **Emmanuel DOGBEVI** (Ghana)
Secretary: **Emmanuel MUTAIZIBWA** (Uganda)

Contact:

Secretariat - IAJC,
20 Bldg -Baker Street,
Rosebank, Johannesburg,
South Africa.
Email: iajc@africa
www.iajc.africa

Editorial:

Editor-in-Chief: **Simon Martha MKINA** (Tanzania)
Editorial Director: **Isabella ELIJAH** (Namibia)
Managing Editor: **Manaseli GDOBOI** (Ghana)
Editor: **Phinius GANIZWA** (Uganda)
Chief Sub Editor: **Nkwame AWESI** (Ghana)
Chief Reporter: **Julie KAMANENE** (Rwanda)
Senior Reporter: **Johnson WILLIAMS** (Nigeria)
Visual Creative Lead: **Yassin LUPATU** (Tanzania)

Address:

General Enquires: info@theafrifiles.com
Editorial: editor@theafrifiles.com
Advertisement: adverts@theafrifiles.com
Ombudsman: In case of any complaints, please channel your concerns to: ombuds90@gmail.com
Web: www.theafrifiles.com

Who Reads The AfriFiles?

The AfriFiles reaches a global audience of institutions and individuals seeking timely, accurate, and incisive analysis of Africa's history, challenges, and developments.

Its subscribers include elite individuals, government agencies, defense, intelligence, foreign affairs, and diplomatic corps - alongside multilateral bodies, business networks, universities and academic institutions.

SUBSCRIBE. IT'S FREE

GET The AfriFiles free. Do you value real and undistorted stories on Africa? Just send an email to; editor@theafrifiles.com or follow us on all social media through the handle; [@theafrifiles](https://twitter.com/theafrifiles)

INSIDE

Contents



African roots, global football glory

10

Tanzania's wound, a nation's cure

16

Mahama between a rock and a \$3.8bn wall

19

France faces Traore's defiance

20

The mercenary pipeline to Darfur

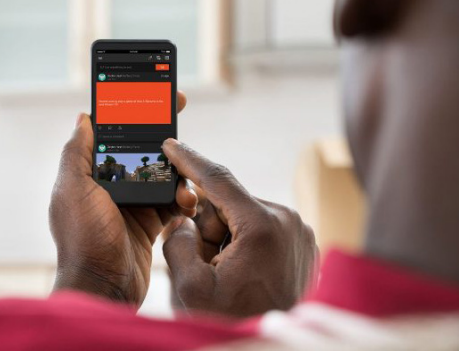
22

Trump strikes hard bargain with Africa

39

Migrants torn from families, homes and dreams

42



23.4m

Kenya has attracted that number of internet users which is 40.5 percent of the population

20.6m

Tanzania is estimated to have that number of internet users, representing 29.1 percent of the population. (source: Datareportal)

Canada eyes Asia on oil

CANADA has unveiled plans to build a new West Coast oil pipeline from Alberta to British Columbia, aiming to loosen its heavy dependence on the United States as the main buyer of its crude.

Prime Minister Mark Carney and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith said the project could move more than one million barrels a day to Pacific ports, opening wider access to Asian markets.

The pipeline is expected to follow the existing Trans Mountain corridor and start construction in September 2027, subject to fast-tracked approvals, Indigenous partnerships and environmental safeguards. Ottawa says the northern British Columbia tanker ban will remain.

Critics, however, warn of spill risks, higher emissions and another costly political fight over Canada's energy future ahead nationally too.

Global Beats



First son muzzles the media

UGANDA'S army chief, General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, ordered the closure of Nation Media Group Uganda after publicly accusing its outlets of operating without his approval and declaring that he "does not believe in a free press."

Soldiers were deployed to NMG's Kampala premises, blocking access and forcing NTV Uganda, Spark TV, Daily Monitor and related platforms off air.

Kainerugaba, President Yoweri Museveni's son, claimed the president had approved his plan, but gave no detailed legal justification.

Government officials later framed the shutdown as part of a security investigation. Press freedom groups condemned the move as intimidation of independent media and demanded immediate reopening and protection of journalists' rights across Uganda today.

Sahel states begin ICC Exit

BURKINA Faso, Mali and Niger have formally begun the process of withdrawing from the International Criminal Court (ICC), marking another major break with Western-backed institutions by the three military-led Sahel nations.

The ICC confirmed that the withdrawals, initiated through formal notifications to the United Nations, will take effect after one year, in line with the Rome Statute.

The juntas have accused the Hague-based court of selective justice and political bias, insisting they will pursue their own accountability mechanisms. However, the ICC stressed that existing investigations and obligations remain unaffected until the withdrawals become effective.

Human rights groups warned the move could weaken accountability for alleged war crimes and deny victims access to international justice.

Kim fears the open internet

NORTH Korea has – once again blocked ordinary citizens from using foreign social media because the Kim Jong Un regime sees outside information as a direct threat to its political control.

Access to the global internet is reserved for foreigners and a small elite, while most citizens are limited to state-controlled intranet services and heavily monitored phones.

Authorities fear platforms such as Facebook, X, YouTube, TikTok and Instagram could expose North Koreans to foreign news, criticism of the regime and evidence of life beyond official propaganda.

Rights groups say Pyongyang has tightened surveillance, phone inspections and punishments for consuming or sharing foreign media. The restrictions are therefore less about technology than survival of an isolated one-party dictatorship today and fear.



Cartoon by Gado



Share with us:

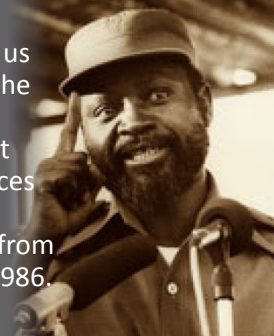


We welcome your voice. Share your views, opinions, suggestions, queries or reflections with our Editor. Your letters / message help enrich dialogue and broaden perspectives for our readers worldwide.

Send to editor@theafrifiles.com



The duty of each one of us is to give everything to the people, to be last when it comes to benefits, first when it comes to sacrifices - " Samora Machel was Mozambique President from 1975 until his death in 1986.



Letters to the Editor

No African is a stranger

Hello editor,

I appeal to South Africans to stop chasing, threatening or humiliating fellow Africans who have migrated to their country in search of safety, work and dignity.

No African is a stranger on African soil. The pain of poverty, conflict and unemployment should unite us, not turn us into enemies.

South Africa's freedom was supported by many African nations; that history should inspire compassion today.

Authorities must enforce the law fairly, but citizens must reject xenophobia and protect the humanity that binds Africa together as one people again.

Mutasa Heleli,
Harare, Zimbabwe,
Via email.

The AfriFiles deserves Africa's applause

Hello editor,

I warmly congratulate The AfriFiles, the Pan-African magazine, for its bold, balanced and inspiring analysis and stories covering Africa.

At a time when many global narratives reduce the continent to crises, The AfriFiles is giving Africans a dignified mirror; showing our struggles, ideas, cultures, leadership, innovations and shared destiny.

Its commitment to telling African stories through African eyes deserves applause. May the magazine continue informing, uniting and challenging the continent to believe in its own voice, power and future.

This is journalism Africa needs; confident, responsible, fearless and deeply human.
Maweke Kuyunga,
Via WhatsApp

Africa must add value first

Hello editor,

AFRICA must urgently stop exporting raw materials cheaply to America and Europe while importing expensive finished products made from the same resources.

This old pattern keeps the continent poor, dependent and vulnerable. Our minerals, crops, timber and energy resources should create jobs at home before enriching foreign factories.

It is now high time for African countries to start exporting semi-finished goods with added value.

Governments must invest in processing industries, skills and regional markets. Africa's wealth must finally build Africa first.

Concerned Citizen,
Accra, Ghana.
Via email.

Africa must score peace first

THE 2026 FIFA World Cup has given Africa a rare and powerful moment - ten African nations are carrying the continent's flag on football's biggest stage; Morocco, Senegal, Ghana, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Cape Verde and South Africa.

This is not merely a sporting achievement, it is a continental statement.

For decades, Africa entered the World Cup with talent, passion and hope, but often with limited representation. This year, the continent arrives with more shirts, more flags, more songs and more dreams.

Every African child who kicks a plastic ball in a dusty street can look at this tournament and believe the world is not too far away.

But as we celebrate, we must also confront a painful truth that Africa is going to the World Cup with many teams, but not always with one heart.

Some African countries are being mocked, not because of their footballers, but because of what some of their citizens are doing against the Pan-African spirit.

The clearest and most painful example is South Africa, where xenophobic anger against fellow Africans has again stained the conscience of the continent.

Reports of migrants being threatened, attacked, chased from communities, and told to leave have wounded the very idea of African brotherhood.

The AfriFiles - a pan-African magazine states clearly; xenophobia is not patriotism. It is fear dressed as nationalism, it is poverty being misdirected at the poor. It is failed politics searching for a scapegoat. No African country will solve unemployment, crime, inequality or weak public services by humiliating another African.

Yet, we must also be careful, The South Africa national team; Bafana Bafana players should not be hated for the sins of mobs, politicians or reckless anti-migrant groups. They are athletes, sons, workers and ambassadors of the game.

Many may reject xenophobia themselves. To wish failure upon innocent footballers is not justice. But South Africa must understand why many Africans feel hurt. A country cannot wound the continent on the streets and expect automatic applause in the stadium.

This is why the World Cup must become Africa's moral mirror. When Morocco plays, Africa should cheer. When Senegal plays, Africa should cheer. When Ghana, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo and Cape Verde play, Africa should cheer. And when South Africa plays, Africa should also remember that correction is better than hatred.

We can condemn xenophobia without abandoning African unity.

The bigger goal before Africa is not only to score against opponents on the pitch. It is to score against division. It is to defeat hatred, tribal arrogance, narrow nationalism and border-based contempt. The one goal Africa needs at WC26 is peace.

Our leaders must speak it, our players must symbolize it, our journalists must defend it and our supporters must live it.

The World Cup will end, but Africa will remain and the migrant rejected today may be the doctor, teacher, trader, driver, striker or neighbour needed tomorrow.

Let Africa compete fiercely, let every African team fight with pride. But above all, let Africa remember; we are many nations, but one continent; many flags, but one destiny; many teams, but one goal; Peace.



Simon Martha MKINA,
Editor-in-Chief



South Africa National Team

FIFA World Cup 2026

Africa one goal

By **Unathi SIBOSISO**

WHEN Africa marched into the 2026 FIFA World Cup with a record 10 national teams, it was supposed to be a celebration of progress, pride and continental ambition. From Morocco's Atlas Lions to Senegal's Teranga Lions, from Ghana's Black Stars to Egypt's Pharaohs, from Algeria and Tunisia to Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Cape Verde and South Africa, the continent arrived in North America carrying more flags than ever before.

This is not a small football footnote. It is history. The 2026 tournament is the biggest World Cup ever staged, bringing together 48 teams, 104 matches and 1,248 players across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

▶  [Listen to analysis on mobile](#)

▶  [Listen to analysis on PC](#)

For Africa, the expanded format has opened a wider door; 10 teams, double-digit representation, and a louder continental voice on the world's biggest sporting stage.

But even as Africa celebrates the ball, it must confront the wound. The continent has more teams at the World Cup, but does it have one heart? It has many flags, but does it still have one spirit? It has many football ambitions, but does it still have the courage to defend one African dignity?

That million question has become painfully relevant because of South Africa.

In recent weeks, South Africa has again been shaken by anger over migration, anti-foreign protests and threats directed at undocumented African migrants.

Some protest groups have pushed a June 30 deadline for undocumented foreigners to leave the country, a call that has left many migrants living in fear. It is important to be accurate; this deadline is not an official government order. It is a demand by anti-migrant groups. But the fear it has created is real.



Egypt National Team

This is where football becomes more than football. South Africa's Bafana Bafana are not only playing matches; they are carrying the moral weight of a country whose streets are being questioned by the rest of Africa.

It may be unfair to make footballers answer for the anger of mobs, but national teams never travel alone. They carry flags, histories, memories and contradictions.

Africa knows South Africa's history too well. When apartheid brutalized Black South Africans, the continent did not stand aside. African countries gave refuge, training, diplomatic support, platforms and moral oxygen to the liberation struggle.

Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola, Ghana, Nigeria and many others paid political, economic and security prices for South Africa's freedom. That is why xenophobia in South Africa cuts so deeply. It feels like a child of liberation forgetting the family that sheltered it.

Nelson Mandela once said sport "has the power to unite people in a way that little else does." He was right. Football can make strangers hug. It can make a poor child in Kinshasa cheer for a player in Rabat, a student in Dar es Salaam shout for Senegal, and a market trader in Accra celebrate Cape Verde.

But sport cannot unite what politics and society keep breaking. A World Cup jersey cannot cover the bruises of xenophobia. A goal cannot erase the humiliation of a migrant chased from a clinic, a shop, a taxi rank or a rented room. A national anthem cannot sound noble if, outside the stadium, fellow Africans are being treated as enemies.

That is why the theme for Africa at this World Cup should not only be qualification, goals or rankings. It should be peace.

Kwame Nkrumah warned Africa long ago; "We must unite now or perish." His words were not poetry for independence ceremonies; they were a political alarm. Africa's borders were drawn by colonial rulers, but its future will be judged by whether its people allow those borders to become walls of hatred.

Julius Nyerere, another giant of African conscience, put it even more sharply when he said that without unity, there is no future for Africa. Nyerere understood that unity does not mean pretending our countries have no problems. It means solving those problems without turning vulnerable Africans into scapegoats.

Migration is not simple. South Africa has real challenges; unemployment, crime, poverty, pressure on public services and frustration among poor citizens who feel abandoned.

These are serious issues. No responsible African should dismiss them. But the answer to unemployment is not xenophobia. The answer to weak border systems is not street violence.



Cape Verde National Team

The answer to pressure on hospitals is not chasing a sick migrant mother from a clinic. The answer to crime is law enforcement, not mob justice.

Even South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has acknowledged the tension while warning that only state authorities have the power to enforce immigration law.

His message matters because once ordinary citizens begin acting as police, judge and executioner, the state itself begins to shrink.

The World Cup therefore offers Africa a mirror. Morocco, after its historic semi-final run in 2022, enters as a symbol of African possibility. Senegal enters with power and discipline.

Ghana carries history and emotional memory from 2010, when the continent nearly touched a semi-final through the Black Stars. Egypt brings tradition and global recognition.

Algeria brings North African fire. Tunisia brings tournament experience. Côte d'Ivoire brings confidence and physical authority. DR Congo brings energy and a wounded but proud national story.

Cape Verde brings the romance of a small nation that refuses to dream small. South Africa brings talent — but also a question.

Can Africa cheer for a country whose citizens are accused of chasing Africans?

The answer should not be blind hatred. It should be moral pressure. Africans should not hate Bafana Bafana players. They are professionals, sons, brothers and workers. Some may themselves reject xenophobia.

Many may have teammates, friends and roots across borders. But South Africa must hear the anger from the continent. That anger is not born out of jealousy. It is born out of betrayal.

Thabo Mbeki, in his famous - “I am an African” speech, spoke of being born of the peoples of the continent. That line still matters. To say “I am African” is not merely to claim land. It is to accept shared pain, shared memory and shared duty.

The African Union has also placed free movement and integration at the heart of the continental dream. The 2018 Protocol on Free Movement of Persons speaks of the right of residence and establishment as part of a wider African project.

The protocol does not mean countries should abandon immigration laws. It means the long-term African vision is integration, not hatred; orderly mobility, not violence; dignity, not fear. [8]



That is why the World Cup should be used as a campaign platform. African football federations should carry peace messages. Players should speak against xenophobia. Captains should make gestures of unity.

Journalists should tell the stories of migrants who built homes, businesses, churches, mosques, classrooms and football dreams across borders. Governments should strengthen immigration systems without feeding public anger against the poor.

Africa's football story has always been human. It is the bare-foot child playing with a plastic ball in Lusaka. It is the young goalkeeper in Bamako dreaming of Europe.

It is the Cape Verdean family watching its flag at the World Cup for the first time. It is the Senegalese fan believing Sadio Mané's generation changed what is possible.

It is the Moroccan grandmother who cried in 2022 because Africa finally stood among the last four. It is the Ghanaian father who still remembers 2010 with both pride and pain. It is the South African child who wants to love Bafana Bafana without carrying the shame of xenophobia.

This is the life inside the figures. Ten African teams are not just 10 teams. They are millions of stories. They are taxi drivers, nurses, teachers, miners, fishermen, students, traders, refugees and dreamers. They are the continent's scattered heartbeat.

But a heartbeat can weaken when hatred enters the bloodstream.

So let Africa compete fiercely. Let Morocco chase history again. Let Senegal roar. Let Ghana rise. Let Egypt organize. Let Algeria fight. Let Tunisia resist. Let Côte d'Ivoire charge. Let DR Congo surprise. Let Cape Verde inspire. Let South Africa reflect.

The final may be played on July 19, but Africa's bigger match will continue long after the trophy is lifted. It is the match between unity and division, dignity and hatred, law and mob justice, Pan-Africanism and narrow nationalism.

At this World Cup, Africa has many teams. But it needs one goal – which is known as “Peace.” ■



African roots, global football glory

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

The 2026 FIFA World Cup has reopened one of football's most sensitive but unavoidable debates; if many of the brightest players in European and American national teams are of African origin, does that mean Africa is quietly dominating the tournament?

The answer is both yes and no.

Yes, because African blood, African families, African migration stories and African football culture are now spread across the tournament like an invisible tactical formation.

From France to England, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Canada and the United States, players with African roots are not only filling squad lists; they are deciding matches, shaping identities and giving modern football its explosive rhythm.

But no, because the success of African-origin players in European or American shirts is not the same as institutional dominance by African football itself.

This is the central contradiction of the 2026 World Cup: Africa's talent is everywhere, but African football power is still uneven.

The tournament in Canada, Mexico and the United States has made the point more loudly because it is the first 48-team World Cup.

More countries mean more players, more diasporic stories and more complex ideas of nationality. According to Oxford migration researchers writing in 2026, nearly one in four of the 1,248 players selected for the tournament was born in a different country from the one he represents.

That is not a small statistic. It means the World Cup is no longer simply a competition between nations; it is also a mirror of migration, colonial history, dual citizenship, family memory and global opportunity.

African countries are central to that story. Some African national teams themselves are built partly through the diaspora. Morocco,



Bukayo Saka



for example, has long benefited from players developed in France, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands. DR Congo, Senegal, Algeria, Tunisia and Ivory Coast also draw from the rich football nurseries of Europe.

This means the flow is not one-way, European countries benefit from African-origin talent, but African countries also benefit from European-trained African diaspora players.

The difference is that Europe has often turned this talent into trophies, while Africa is still trying to turn it into sustained World Cup power.

France remains the most famous example. For decades, French football has been powered by players from families connected to Africa, the Caribbean and the wider former French empire.

Kylian Mbappé, Ousmane Dembélé and many others represent the modern face of a French football machine that combines immigration, academy systems, urban football culture and elite coaching.

England has its own examples, including Bukayo Saka, whose Nigerian heritage has become part of the wider story of a multicultural England team. Spain's Lamine Yamal, Belgium's Jérémy Doku and other young stars also show how African-rooted families are now deeply present in the football identities of European nations.

In North America, the picture is slightly different but equally revealing. The United States and Canada are immigrant societies whose national teams increasingly reflect African, Caribbean, Latin American and European family histories.

Their squads are not built around a single ethnic football identity, but around the reality of modern migration. The 2026 World Cup, hosted partly on American soil, has therefore become a stage where the children of migrants are not guests in the game; they are the game.

But does that mean Africa dominates the tournament?

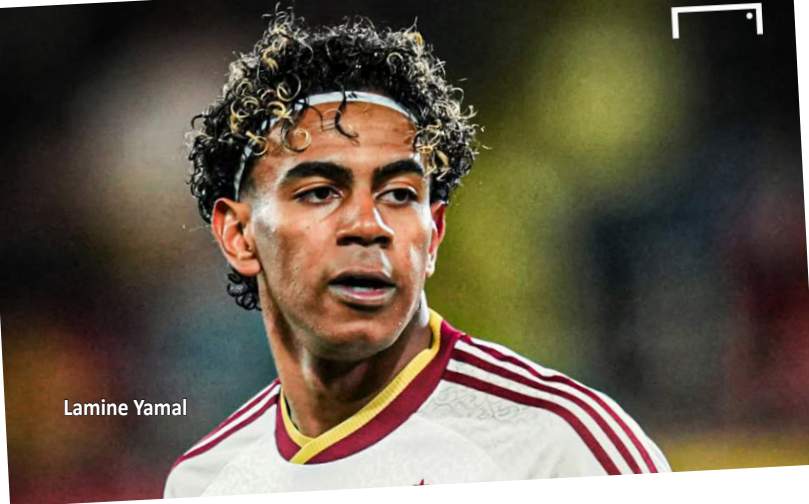
Emotionally, one can argue yes. If a French forward of Cameroonian or Algerian origin scores, if an English winger of Nigerian descent dazzles, if a Spanish teenager with Moroccan and Equatorial Guinean roots changes a match, many Africans feel a legitimate pride.

These players carry family names, stories and cultural echoes that stretch back to African homes, African food, African languages and African discipline. In that sense, Africa is present in every sprint, every celebration and every anthem sung by players whose family journeys began elsewhere.

Yet football dominance must also be measured by institutions; federations, academies, leagues, coaching systems, sports science, player welfare, tactical planning and tournament management. On that front, Africa is still fighting to catch up.

The 2026 tournament has offered encouraging signs. South Africa reached the Round of 32 after beating South Korea, turning criticism into motivation and making history by progressing beyond the group stage for the first time.

Morocco, already respected after its 2022 breakthrough, again showed why it has become one of Africa's most serious World Cup forces. Ivory Coast also advanced to the knockout phase after a strong group-stage recovery, proving that African teams are no longer content merely to participate.



Lamine Yamal

Ghana has shown strength and ambition. DR Congo, Cape Verde, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Senegal have all carried different shades of Africa's football hopes, though the tournament has also exposed familiar weaknesses; defensive lapses, federation politics, tactical inconsistency, missed chances and uneven squad management.

Senegal's difficult campaign, for example, has reminded the continent that talent alone cannot rescue a team from administrative confusion and poor preparation.

That is why the argument must be handled with maturity. African-origin players are helping dominate world football, but African teams are not yet dominating the World Cup. The continent is producing or inspiring many of the world's best athletes, but the structures that should convert this human wealth into national-team supremacy remain inconsistent.

The uncomfortable truth is that Europe has often been better at harvesting African talent than Africa has been at protecting, developing and rewarding it.

Many families migrate because they seek better schools, safer communities, stronger academies and clearer professional pathways for their children.

A boy born in Paris, London, Brussels, Madrid, Amsterdam, Toronto or New York may carry African heritage, but his football development often benefits from European or North American infrastructure. By the time he reaches the World Cup, he is the product of both African origin and Western systems.

This is not theft in every case. Many players genuinely feel European, American or Canadian. National identity is personal, legal and emotional. It would be unfair to reduce them to Africa simply because of ancestry. But it would also be dishonest to pretend Africa has no claim to their story. The truth sits in between: they are children of multiple worlds.

For Africa, the lesson is clear. Pride in diaspora stars must be matched by investment at home. The continent cannot celebrate African-origin players in European shirts while neglecting youth academies, local leagues, coaching education, women's football, sports medicine and player protection.

If Africa wants to dominate the World Cup as Africa, it must build systems strong enough to keep more talent, attract more diaspora players by choice, and prepare national teams with the seriousness of title contenders.

The 2026 World Cup proves that Africa is no longer outside the centre of global football. It is inside the DNA of the tournament. It is in the pace of France, the flair of Spain, the courage of England, the muscle of Belgium, the diversity of North America and the rising confidence of African national teams themselves.

But true domination will come only when African heritage and African institutions rise together.

Until then, Africa can proudly say it is shaping the World Cup. But it cannot yet honestly say it owns it. ■



Mombasa Port

Tanzania, Uganda seek economic escape route

By Julius MAKOENI

ALL EAST African countries; Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are entering a less forgiving economic and diplomatic season.

For many years, governments in the region built their development calculations around a familiar mix; domestic revenue, concessional loans, grants, foreign direct investment, security partnerships and political goodwill from powerful Western capitals.

That formula is now changing as the United States and the United Kingdom are becoming more selective, more strategic and, in some cases, less generous.

Money is still available, but it increasingly comes with sharper political questions, tougher governance language and a stronger link to Western security interests.

In this new environment, Tanzania and Uganda find themselves walking a tightrope. Both countries are accused by rights actors, opposition groups and media freedom defenders of narrowing civic space, squeezing journalists and placing pressure on opposition politics.

Tanzania's post-election political climate and Uganda's long-running confrontations with dissent have attracted scrutiny at a time when donor budgets in Washington and London are also under pressure. The effect is not a dramatic Western exit, but a cooler, more transactional relationship.

Kenya, meanwhile, is enjoying warmer weather. Under President William Ruto, Nairobi has positioned itself as a dependable diplomatic, security and economic partner of both Washington and London.

The country's domestic economy is far from perfect, and its citizens have challenged tax measures, corruption and debt pressure in the streets. Yet, in the eyes of the two Western giants, Kenya has become a useful regional anchor: a security partner, a climate diplomacy voice, a peacekeeping contributor and a convenient gateway into East Africa.

That difference has created a revealing regional paradox. Tanzania and Uganda, though under sharper political criticism, are projected to grow faster than Kenya in 2026. Uganda is projected to expand by 7.5 percent, Tanzania by 5.9 percent and Kenya by 4.5 percent, while Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole is expected to average about 4.1 percent.

The numbers tell an important economic story; Western favour can improve diplomatic comfort, but it does not automatically produce stronger growth; Western criticism can damage reputation, but it does not automatically stop an economy from moving.

The real question is whether Tanzania and Uganda can convert their growth prospects into durable resilience while repairing the political trust that investors, donors and citizens require. Economies do not only run on roads, ports, pipelines and tax systems. They also run on confidence.

Tanzania's budget lines

For Tanzania, the response to this tougher environment is visible in the design of the national budget. The proposed 2026/27 budget stands at TSh62.33 trillion, a significant fiscal statement for a country that wants to continue building infrastructure, financing social services and protecting growth despite external political pressure.

More important than the size of the budget is its source of financing. At least 75 percent is expected to come from domestic sources. In real terms, that means Dodoma is aiming to raise roughly TSh46.8 trillion from within the country through taxes, non-tax revenues and domestic financing instruments.

This is not simply accounting. It is a political economy strategy. Tanzania is telling citizens, investors and development partners that it wants to reduce its exposure to unpredictable donor politics. If Western partners delay, reduce or redirect support because of governance concerns, Tanzania wants to show that it can still fund its core priorities.

In the language of economics, this is fiscal self-insurance. In the language of politics, it is sovereignty through revenue.

The challenge, however, is that domestic financing is not free money. Raising TSh46.8 trillion internally requires a more efficient tax authority, stronger compliance, broader formalisation of businesses, reduced leakages and a careful balance between collection and economic breathing space.

A government can collect more revenue by improving efficiency, but it can also hurt private enterprise if taxation becomes aggressive, unpredictable or politically selective. The success of Tanzania's self-reliance budget will therefore depend not only on how much money is collected, but how fairly, transparently and productively it is collected.

Tanzania's growth base gives it room to manoeuvre. Tourism is recovering and expanding; mining continues to attract attention; agriculture remains central to employment and rural income; ports and logistics are strategic assets; and infrastructure projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway, roads, water systems and energy expansion are intended to improve productivity over time.

These investments are more than construction projects. They are part of Tanzania's attempt to build economic muscle strong enough to withstand diplomatic discomfort.

But one of the country's professor warning is simple; growth without trust becomes expensive. If political repression, media pressure or opposition exclusion damage Tanzania's reputation, the country may still grow, but investors may demand higher returns, lenders may price risk more aggressively and development partners may shift from confidence to caution.

Uganda also in the hot

Uganda faces the same equation, but with a different tool kit. Kampala's most dramatic signal is its planned reduction of external budget support in the 2026/27 financial year. External support is expected to fall from about USh2.1 trillion to USh330.9 billion, an 84.2 percent reduction.

Such a sharp fall is not a normal budget adjustment; it is a major fiscal turn. It means Uganda is preparing to live with far less direct comfort from external loans and grants that support the budget.

The government's answer is domestic revenue mobilisation, spending discipline and the long-awaited oil economy. Uganda believes oil can shift the country's fiscal position, strengthen revenues, finance infrastructure and accelerate industrialisation.

The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (Eacop), petroleum investments and related infrastructure are expected to open a new chapter in the economy. If managed properly, oil can help Uganda replace donor dependence with export earnings, tax revenue, petroleum receipts and local business opportunities.

Yet oil is not magic. It can build schools, hospitals and roads, but it can also finance patronage, deepen inequality and feed corruption if public institutions are weak.

The history of resource-rich countries teaches one repeated lesson: natural wealth becomes a blessing only when governance is stronger than greed. Uganda's projected 7.5 percent growth in 2026 is impressive, but the quality of that growth will matter more than the headline number.

If oil revenues are captured by elites, the economy may grow while citizens remain excluded. If revenues are invested transparently in human capital, infrastructure and productive sectors, Uganda could turn fiscal pressure into structural transformation.



Dar es Salaam Port



Uganda's political risk is also heavier because its civic space debate is long-running. Allegations of harassment of journalists, restrictions on expression, pressure on opposition actors and interruptions to digital freedoms have made governance a persistent issue in relations with Western partners and rights institutions.

Kampala often frames criticism as foreign interference, while critics describe restrictions as a systematic narrowing of democratic space. Economically, both interpretations matter because they shape investor confidence, aid flows and the cost of external partnerships.



Uganda's Minister of Finance, Henry Musasizi

Kenya, the favoured child

Kenya's projected 4.5 percent growth in 2026 is lower than Uganda's and Tanzania's, but Nairobi enjoys a diplomatic premium.

President Ruto has worked hard to position Kenya as the West's most reliable East African partner. The United States has elevated Kenya's security status, and the United Kingdom continues to treat Nairobi as a central partner in trade, security, climate diplomacy and regional stability.

Kenya's role in Haiti, counterterrorism, peace initiatives, climate finance discussions and global reform debates has given it influence beyond the size of its economy.

That is why some analysts privately describe Kenya as the current favourite child of Washington and London in East Africa. The phrase may sound informal, but it captures the reality of diplomatic preference.

Kenya is seen as useful as it provides strategic services that Western capitals need: security cooperation, regional mediation, access, diplomatic messaging and a pro-Western platform in a region where China, Russia, Turkey and Gulf states are also active.

But Kenya's warmth comes with its own contradictions. Diplomatic affection does not erase debt. It does not automatically create jobs. It does not remove public anger over taxes.

It does not solve corruption or guarantee social stability. Kenya remains under fiscal pressure, and the country's difficult relationship with the IMF shows that Western partnership can open doors, but it cannot exempt a government from economic arithmetic.

This is why the regional story should not be reduced to a simple morality play in which Kenya is rewarded and Tanzania and Uganda are punished. The truth is more complex. Western governments are also changing.

The UK has reduced its development aid ambitions as it shifts more resources toward defence and security. The United States has become more openly transactional, linking foreign engagement to security, migration, strategic minerals, counter-terrorism, trade routes and competition with China.

Human rights still matter in statements, sanctions and diplomatic pressure, but money increasingly follows strategic usefulness.

New lessons learnt

For Tanzania and Uganda, this creates a new incentive structure. They can no longer assume that historical donor relationships will cushion every fiscal need. They must collect better, spend better and invest better.

They must expand productive sectors, reduce waste, build export capacity and deepen regional trade. They must also ask whether political control is worth the economic risk it creates.

A government may silence critics in the short term, but in the long term, fear weakens feedback, hides corruption and prevents early warning signs from reaching decision-makers.

The three countries are not following the same route, but they are responding to the same global reality; aid is shrinking, geopolitics is hardening and credibility is becoming a form of capital.

In economics, information is essential. Markets need information. Investors need information. Citizens need information. Policymakers need information. A free media environment is not an enemy of economic management; it is part of the information system that helps a country identify waste, corruption, service failure and policy mistakes.

When journalists are intimidated, when opposition voices are squeezed, when civil society is treated as hostile, the state may appear stronger politically, but it becomes weaker analytically. It loses the truth before the truth becomes a crisis.

Tanzania's TSh62.33 trillion budget and Uganda's USh330.9 billion external support shock therefore belong in the same story. Both show that East African governments are trying to build fiscal independence in a world where external generosity is less reliable.

Tanzania is choosing a domestic-revenue-heavy budget model. Uganda is preparing for a sharp fall in budget support while betting on oil and domestic mobilisation. Kenya is choosing strategic diplomacy, making itself indispensable to Western capitals even while managing debt and domestic discontent.

The three countries are not following the same route, but they are responding to the same global reality; aid is shrinking, geopolitics is hardening and credibility is becoming a form of capital.

The strongest economy in this new era will not necessarily be the one with the warmest handshake in London or Washington. Nor will it simply be the one with the highest GDP growth forecast. It will be the country that can combine growth with trust, investment with accountability, domestic revenue with fairness, and sovereignty with openness.

Uganda's 7.5 percent growth projection is a powerful opportunity, but oil must be governed with discipline. Tanzania's 5.9 percent projection and domestic financing ambition show resilience, but the tax burden must be matched by public value and political confidence.

Kenya's 4.5 percent growth projection may appear modest, but its diplomatic advantage could attract investment if the government manages debt, corruption and public anger wisely.

The final lesson is that political space and economic space are not separate rooms. They are connected corridors. When one narrows, the other eventually feels the pressure.

Tanzania and Uganda may repair their economies through domestic revenue, oil, infrastructure and regional trade. But to make that repair sustainable, they must also repair confidence.

Investors look at roads, ports and pipelines, but they also look at courts, contracts, media freedom, electoral stability and whether citizens believe the system is fair.

The new development equation is clear to all three countries; self-reliance without accountability becomes extraction; Western friendship without fiscal discipline becomes dependency; growth without freedom becomes fragile.

And in a world where aid is shrinking and strategic competition is rising, fragile growth is no longer enough. ■



Uganda's President
Yoweri Museveni



Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan

Tanzania's wound, a nation's cure

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

After October 29, national healing will not come from silence, but from truth, justice, reform and a new social compact.

Tanzania does not need to be told that it is wounded – everybody knows; families know, young people understand, churches, mosques, hospitals, mortuaries, courts, newsrooms and frightened neighbourhoods recognize it.

The October 29, 2025 elections did not end as a democratic ritual of renewal; they left behind grief, fear, anger, suspicion and a dangerous question; can Tanzanians still disagree politically without becoming enemies?

The answer must be yes, but that answer cannot be declared from a podium. It must be built - brick by brick, through truth, accountability, constitutional repair, security-sector reform, national dialogue and public compassion. Healing is not a public relations exercise, it must be a national project.

The facts are painful and has been verified by a government-appointed inquiry later said at least 518 people died in the post-election violence, with thousands injured and more than 800 people suffering gunshot wounds.

The commission chairman, Mohamed Chande Othman who served as Chief Justice of Tanzania and was appointed Eminent Person by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said the number of deaths could be higher because some families buried relatives without taking bodies to morgues.



It also reported 245 people still unaccounted for and families who said they had seen bodies in morgues before they disappeared.

The African Union Election Observation Mission was equally direct. It said the election did not comply with AU democratic principles and international standards, that the environment before, during and after the vote was not conducive to peaceful acceptance of results, and that Tanzania should prioritise electoral and political reforms rooted in transparency, inclusion, citizen participation and respect for human rights.

SADC, too, observed low voter turnout in polling stations it visited, signs that created a perception of ballot stuffing, internet shutdown effects on observation, and concluded that in most areas voters could not express their democratic will.

Therefore, Tanzania's first linctus is a total truth. Not selective truth, not party truth, not state truth, but national truth. It is high time victims' families must know who died, where, how and the injured must be documented.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have both argued that withholding or limiting the report undermines accountability and deepens injustice for families.

Lesson from Madiba

South Africa offers a hard lesson. After apartheid, it did not pretend that the past had vanished because a new flag had been raised. Its Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created by President Nelson Mandela -popularly Madiba, to establish a fuller picture of gross human rights violations and to promote national unity and reconciliation.





Many victims felt reparations were inadequate, some perpetrators escaped punishment. But South Africa understood one thing Tanzania must now understand; a nation cannot bury truth and expect peace to grow from the grave.

Nelson Mandela put reconciliation in practical terms; it means working together to correct the legacy of past injustice and making reconstruction and development succeed. That is powerful advice for Tanzania.

Reconciliation is not asking mothers to forgive before they know who killed their sons. It is not asking opposition parties to smile while their leaders remain in prison or under threat. It is not asking security officers to carry all blame while political commanders escape scrutiny. It is correcting injustice so that the country can move forward without lying to itself.

The second medicine is justice to rescue the country must distinguish between genuine criminal violence and legitimate political dissent. Those who burned, looted or killed should face fair trials. But citizens arrested merely for protesting, reporting, questioning or belonging to an opposition movement should not be treated as enemies of the state.

And more so, treason charges should never become a net thrown over political frustration. Courts must be allowed to work independently, quickly and publicly.

Kenya warning

Kenya's 2007–2008 post-election violence is a relevant African warning. More than 1,000 people died and hundreds of thousands were displaced, but the violence was reduced through mediation, a National Accord and constitutional reform.

The Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation process called for freedom of expression, press freedom, peaceful assembly, joint peace rallies and grassroots peacebuilding committees.

Tanzania should study that carefully. Kenya did not heal because leaders exchanged polite statements, it stepped back from the cliff because rivals were pushed into dialogue, institutions were redesigned and the political settlement was widened.

The third medicine is constitutional reform. This is not a favour to the opposition; it is insurance for the republic. AU observers identified major unresolved issues; the method of appointing INEC commissioners, the inability to challenge presidential results in court under Article 41(7), and restrictions against independent candidates.

SADC similarly urged an inclusive constitutional review covering independent candidates, presidential election petitions and judicial review of electoral body decisions.

A democracy where presidential results cannot be challenged in court invites street anger. When the courtroom is closed, the road becomes the courtroom. When institutions are trusted, losers can grieve, complain, sue, reorganise and wait for another election. When institutions are distrusted, every election becomes a possible national rupture.

The fourth medicine is reform of security conduct. Police and military institutions must protect the state, but the state is not a party, a president or a ruling elite. The state is the people. Every order to use live ammunition against civilians must be investigated. Every commander who failed to prevent unlawful force must answer. Every officer falsely accused must also be cleared. This is why independent investigation matters: it protects citizens from state violence and protects professional officers from political scapegoating.

The fifth medicine is public compassion. Tanzania should establish a victims' reparations and rehabilitation fund. Families of the dead should receive official recognition, financial support, counselling and education support for children left behind. The wounded should get medical care without fear of arrest. A national memorial day should honour all victims, including civilians and security officers. South Africa's TRC understood that reconciliation without reparations is incomplete; victims cannot be asked to carry the burden of national peace alone.

The sixth medicine is inclusive dialogue. President Samia Suluhu Hassan, CCM, CHADEMA, ACT-Wazalendo, religious leaders, youth groups, women's organisations, media, business leaders, lawyers and victims' families should sit in a structured national dialogue with clear timelines and public outcomes. John Paul Lederach, one of the world's respected peacebuilding thinkers, argues that peace requires moral imagination: the ability to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes even our enemies. Tanzania badly needs that moral imagination.

Rwanda also offers lessons, though not a perfect model. After the 1994 genocide destroyed its economy and institutions, Rwanda rebuilt through institutional reconstruction, governance reforms and social recovery efforts. The World Bank recorded that between 1995 and 2008, Rwanda averaged over

8.6 percent annual GDP growth, while poverty declined from 78 percent in 1994 to 57 percent by 2005. The lesson is not that Tanzania should copy Rwanda's politics. The lesson is that broken societies recover when institutions are rebuilt deliberately, when development becomes part of healing, and when the state treats national recovery as a long-term mission.

Sierra Leone provides another important example. After its brutal civil war, its Truth and Reconciliation Commission was designed to produce an accurate historical record, give victims and perpetrators a chance to speak, recommend reforms, address impunity and promote healing. Tanzania does not need a post-war mechanism, but it does need the same principle: public truth, victim dignity and reforms to prevent repetition.

Finally, Tanzania must return to Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's deepest national lesson; unity is not decoration; it is survival.

Nyerere warned that unity may not solve every weakness, but without unity Africa cannot even begin to end its weakness. In Tanzania today, unity cannot mean silence. It must mean a country where CCM members, opposition supporters, journalists, police officers, judges, students, clerics and ordinary citizens can belong to one republic without fearing one another.

October 29 should become Tanzania's turning point, not its permanent wound. The country can heal, but only if it chooses courage over denial.

Truth must come before reconciliation. Justice must come before forgiveness. Reform must come before the next election. And leadership must mean more than winning power; it must mean saving the nation from fear.

Tanzania has not lost itself. But to find itself again, it must stop asking people to forget what happened and start proving that it will never happen again. ■





President Mahama

Mahama between a rock and a \$3.8bn wall

By Julius HOLISE

THE President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama now stands between a rock and a hard place.

On one side is a parliament, religious lobby and conservative public mood demanding his signature on the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill.

On the other side is a fragile economy that could lose US\$3.8 billion in World Bank financing and place a US\$3 billion IMF programme under serious strain if he turns the bill into law.

This is no longer just a cultural debate, it has become a test of political courage, economic judgment and presidential statecraft.

Parliament passed the bill by voice vote on May 29, imposing up to three years in prison for anyone who identifies as LGBTQ+ and up to five years for those who promote, sponsor or fund related activities.

Its supporters present it as a defence of Ghanaian family values, religion and cultural sovereignty. To them, Mahama would be betraying the moral voice of the nation if he refuses to sign.

But the Finance Ministry's warning has turned the matter into a national balance-sheet crisis. Ghana is still recovering from one of its worst economic periods in recent memory.

Debt restructuring, inflation, pressure on the cedi, rising living costs and public frustration have forced the government to lean heavily on multilateral confidence. The World Bank and IMF are not just outside lenders; they are part of the credibility architecture holding Ghana's recovery together.

That is why Mahama's decision is so dangerous. Signing the bill may please powerful domestic constituencies, especially churches, traditional leaders and conservative politicians. But it may also frighten development partners, unsettle inves-

tors and revive doubts about Ghana's commitment to rights-based governance.

Refusing to sign may protect the economy, but it could expose him to accusations of bowing to foreign pressure and abandoning African values.

This is the cruel mathematics of modern African leadership; a president may win applause at home and lose confidence abroad, or defend international financing and be branded a puppet by his own political opponents.

Mahama also inherits a political contradiction. As an opposition figure, he criticised delays around the earlier version of the bill. Now, as President, he must confront the full weight of the consequences. Campaign language is easy. Governing is harder. A slogan does not stabilise a currency. Moral posturing does not replace lost concessional finance.

Ghana's dilemma reflects a wider African pattern. Governments increasingly frame controversial social laws as acts of sovereignty against Western liberal influence.

Yet many of the same governments depend on Western-backed financial institutions to stabilise budgets, support social services and protect economic recovery. The result is a sovereignty debate funded by the very global system it condemns.

Mahama's best escape may be delay through constitutional review, judicial scrutiny or quiet renegotiation. That would allow him to avoid an immediate political explosion while protecting Ghana's economic lifeline. But delay is not leadership unless it leads to a principled decision.

The President must now decide whether Ghana's future is better served by symbolic toughness or economic prudence. The bill may promise moral certainty, but its cost could be painfully material. For a country still rebuilding confidence, Mahama's pen may become more powerful than Parliament's voice vote. ■



President Traoré

France faces Traore's defiance



France's President
Emmanuel Macron

By Marjoe HURIEL

BURKINA Faso's decision to sever diplomatic relations with France marks one of the sharpest breaks yet between a former French colony and Paris in the turbulent Sahel.

For President Ibrahim Traoré, the move is being sold as an act of sovereignty, dignity and historical correction. For France, it is a hostile and unfounded step that confirms the worrying drift of a military government increasingly hostile to Western influence.

For Burkina Faso, however, the consequences will be deeper than diplomatic theatre.

The break did not come from nowhere. Since taking power in a 2022 coup, Traoré has built much of his political legitimacy around rejecting French influence.

French troops were pushed out, cooperation agreements were reviewed or abandoned, and Ouagadougou moved closer to alternative partners, including Russia and other anti-Western forces in the Sahel. The latest rupture is therefore not a sudden explosion but the final formalisation of a long political divorce.

The government argues that relations with France could no longer continue because the necessary conditions of mutual respect, trust, non-interference and national sovereignty were no longer in place.

This language speaks directly to a powerful popular feeling across parts of West Africa: that France's post-colonial presence has too often looked like partnership in public but control in practice. For many young Burkinabè and Pan-African activists, Traoré's decision will be celebrated as another blow against neo-colonialism.

But national pride alone cannot secure a country facing one of Africa's most dangerous insurgencies.

Burkina Faso has been battling jihadist violence for nearly a decade, with thousands killed and millions displaced. Large areas remain insecure, schools and health facilities have been

shut in conflict zones, and communities live under pressure from armed groups, state forces and local defence militias.

In this context, the diplomatic rupture with France may strengthen Traoré's nationalist image, but it does not automatically improve security on the ground.

The first effect will be diplomatic isolation from a powerful European state that once played a central role in military, intelligence, development and humanitarian networks in the Sahel.

France may no longer enjoy the influence it once had, but it remains a major actor within the European Union, the United Nations system and international financial circles. If reciprocal measures include restrictions on visas, diplomatic staffing or cooperation channels, Burkina Faso could find it harder to engage Western partners at a time when it still needs humanitarian support and investment.

The second effect concerns security. Traoré has argued that Burkina Faso must build its own path and choose partners that respect its sovereignty. That is a legitimate national ambition.

Yet replacing France does not automatically produce victory against jihadist groups. Russian support, local volunteers and regional coordination through the Alliance of Sahel States may offer political alternatives, but the battlefield test is harsher than speeches.

If security worsens, the public may begin asking whether anti-French politics has delivered real protection.

The third effect is economic. Burkina Faso is landlocked, poor and exposed to insecurity. Investors watch political stability, diplomatic relations and legal predictability.

A further breakdown with France may please nationalist

audiences, but it could also raise risk perceptions among European investors, donors and lenders.

Gold, agriculture and infrastructure projects need confidence. If the country becomes seen as diplomatically closed and politically unpredictable, the cost of doing business may rise.

The fourth effect is domestic politics. Traoré's popularity has been strengthened by his image as a young, defiant leader standing up to old colonial power.

But the same decision may also deepen authoritarian tendencies. When leaders build legitimacy around external enemies, they often become less tolerant of internal criticism.

Burkina Faso has already seen political restrictions and growing pressure on dissent. The danger is that sovereignty becomes a shield not only against foreign interference, but also against domestic accountability.

Still, France also faces a hard lesson. Its influence in Africa is shrinking because many citizens no longer believe its language of partnership.

Paris has repeatedly failed to convince young Africans that its role has truly changed. In Burkina Faso, as in Mali and Niger, the collapse of French influence is also a collapse of trust.

Traoré's decision will therefore affect Burkina Faso in two ways. Symbolically, it gives the country a powerful nationalist moment.

Practically, it increases diplomatic, economic and security risks. The real measure of this break will not be how loudly it is celebrated, but whether ordinary Burkinabè become safer, freer and more prosperous after France is pushed out of the room. ■



The mercenary pipeline to Darfur



By Dr. Musatpa MALESE

THE war in Sudan has entered another disturbing chapter. What began as a brutal power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has increasingly become an internationalised conflict.

It is charged that the conflict is fed by foreign money, weapons, logistics and now, according to Human Rights Watch, Colombian private military contractors routed through the United Arab Emirates before being deployed to support the RSF.

The allegation is explosive because it does not merely place foreign fighters inside Sudan's battlefield. It raises a deeper question; who is sustaining the machinery of violence behind the scenes?

In its late-May report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Colombian contractors were apparently hired by a UAE-based company, Global Security Services Group, and passed through UAE military facilities before reaching Sudan.

HRW identified Ghiyathi military base and an apparent military facility in Al Wathba, both in Abu Dhabi emirate, as transit points. Some contractors, according to HRW, were later deployed in and around El Fasher, the North Darfur capital whose fall to the RSF in October 2025 was followed by reports of mass killings, rape and other atrocities.

The UAE has repeatedly denied providing military support to the RSF. That denial matters legally and diplomatically.

But HRW's findings, if confirmed by independent investigations, would add weight to a growing body of evidence that Sudan's war is not being fought only by Sudanese hands.

It is being extended by a transnational network of private security firms, foreign fighters, regional interests and strategic silence.

The Colombian connection is particularly revealing. Colombia has a large pool of retired soldiers shaped by decades of internal conflict. Many possess combat experience, weapons skills and counterinsurgency training.

For private military recruiters, such men are attractive; professional enough to be useful, economically vulnerable enough to accept dangerous contracts abroad, and distant enough from the conflict to offer plausible deniability to sponsors.

This is the dark economy of modern war. Fighters are recruited in one continent, processed through another, and deployed into a third. The battlefield becomes global, while accountability remains local, confused and weak.

For Sudanese civilians, however, the issue is not abstract. In Darfur, communities have already endured ethnic massacres, starvation, displacement and systematic terror.



War in Sudan is still happening. Photo: Albert Gonzalez Farran/AFP/Getty Images



Sudan's armed forces. Photo: Rhett Sentinelle

If foreign contractors helped train RSF forces, operate weapons, support drone warfare or stand alongside fighters during abuses, their role cannot be dismissed as technical assistance. In a war marked by alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, technical support can become moral and legal complicity.

The UAE's alleged role is also significant because Abu Dhabi is not a marginal actor. It is a wealthy Gulf power with deep economic, security and diplomatic links across Africa, the Middle East and the West.

Its ports, gold networks, investment funds and military partnerships make it influential. That influence brings responsibility. If UAE-linked companies or facilities were used to move fighters into Sudan, the international community cannot pretend this is a private business matter.

The scandal also exposes the weakness of global regulation over private military contractors.

Mercenaries are often condemned in speeches but tolerated in practice when they serve powerful interests. They operate in the grey zone between soldier and contractor, state policy and private profit, deniable proxy and direct intervention. Sudan is now paying the price of that ambiguity.

The real failure belongs not only to those who recruited or deployed the Colombians, but also to governments that know enough to be alarmed yet say too little.

Western capitals have strong ties with the UAE. African and Arab institutions have issued calls for peace. The United Nations has mechanisms for sanctions and arms embargo monitoring. Yet Sudan's war continues to attract outside support because the cost of interference remains too low.

If HRW's findings are substantiated, the response should be direct; independent investigations, targeted sanctions, scrutiny of private security companies, stronger enforcement of the Darfur arms embargo and public pressure on any state or company enabling RSF operations.

Sudan's tragedy is no longer only a civil war. It is becoming a marketplace of impunity. The Colombian contractors are not the whole story, but they are a symbol of how foreign interests can turn African suffering into paid military labour.

For the people of Sudan, the question is painfully simple; how many outsiders must profit from their war before the world decides to stop them? ■



President Ruto with Raila

Ruto faces Raila vacuum

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

KENYA'S next general election is shaping up as one of the most unpredictable contests in the country's multiparty history. For the first time in more than two decades, President William Ruto will go into a national election without Raila Odinga standing across the battlefield as the principal opposition magnet.

Raila's death removed not just a candidate, but a political institution: a man who could mobilise emotion, ethnic loyalty, democratic memory, street pressure and national debate almost single-handedly.

That absence changes the 2027 election completely.

Ruto's advantage is obvious; he is the incumbent, controls the state machinery, commands a wide parliamentary network, and still enjoys the organisational strength of the United Democratic Alliance. Kenyan elections are expensive, constituency-based and deeply dependent on ground structures. In that sense, Ruto begins the race ahead of any single rival.

But he is not invincible, his biggest weakness is that his presidency has created a broad field of anger. Rising taxes, cost-of-living pressure, unemployment, corruption allegations, police brutality and youth disillusionment have damaged the "hustler" promise that carried him to power in 2022.

The Gen Z protests showed that a new political energy exists outside the traditional ethnic kingpins. These young voters may not belong to any party, but they have already proved they can shake the state.

The central question is whether this anger can be converted into votes.

Without Raila, no opposition politician currently looks strong enough to defeat Ruto alone. Kalonzo Musyoka has experience, name recognition and a loyal base, but he has never demonstrated Raila's national emotional pull.

Rigathi Gachagua, Ruto's former deputy turned rival, can hurt the President in Mount Kenya, but he cannot easily become a national consensus candidate without frightening other regions.

Martha Karua has reformist credibility, but her national electoral machinery remains limited. Fred Matiang'i carries an image of firmness and state experience, but he must prove he can build a mass movement.

Okiya Omtatah, Boniface Mwangi and other reform voices speak powerfully to the angry citizen, but moral authority is not the same as national electoral infrastructure.

This means the politician who can make Ruto lose is not yet a single person; it is a coalition.

Kenya's presidential arithmetic demands more than popularity in rallies. A winning candidate must secure more than 50 percent of the national vote and at least 25 percent in 24 counties.

That constitutional threshold punishes narrow ethnic candidacies and rewards broad alliances. Raila understood this better than most. He could stitch together Luo Nyanza, parts of Western Kenya, Coast, Ukambani, urban reformists and anti-government sentiment.

The opposition's challenge now is to recreate that national map without the man who made it believable.

Ruto's nightmare is therefore not Kalonzo alone, Gachagua alone or Karua alone. His nightmare is a disciplined opposition ticket that combines Mount Kenya rebellion, Ukambani loyalty, Luo sympathy, Western numbers, Coast frustration and Gen Z anger.

If those forces remain scattered, Ruto can win with incumbency and a divided field. If they unite early behind one candidate, his path becomes dangerous.

The coming election will not be about Raila's ghost alone, but his absence will haunt every calculation. Kenya has lost the old opposition centre. The question now is whether a new one can be built before Ruto turns fragmentation into victory. ■

Mnangagwa 2030 power grab

By Piersel CHURCHIL

ZIMBABWE's President Emmerson Mnangagwa appears to have mastered the old art of African power survival; when the people become unpredictable, shift the battlefield to Parliament.

The latest constitutional changes approved by Zimbabwean lawmakers are not merely a legal adjustment; they are a carefully engineered political bridge designed to carry Mnangagwa from 2028 to 2030 without facing the full heat of a direct presidential election.

At the centre of the storm is a constitutional amendment that extends presidential and parliamentary terms from five to seven years. In practical terms, it allows Mnangagwa, now in his eighties and serving what was widely understood to be his final term, to remain in office for two extra years.

Even more controversial is the proposal to replace direct presidential elections with a system in which Parliament chooses the head of state. That change strikes at the heart of democratic accountability because it transfers presidential power from the hands of voters to the hands of political insiders.

For Mnangagwa's critics, this is not reform, it is power retention dressed in constitutional language. They argue that the president and his ruling ZANU-PF machinery have coerced, pressured and co-opted enough Members of Parliament to deliver the required numbers.

The result is a parliament that appears less like an independent guardian of the constitution and more like an instrument for extending one man's political life.

The irony is painful.

Mnangagwa came to power in 2017 after the dramatic fall of Robert Mugabe, promising a "new dispensation" that would break with the habits of fear, economic ruin and political manipulation.

Many Zimbabweans hoped the post-Mugabe era would bring cleaner governance, institutional renewal and a return to democratic normalcy.

Nearly a decade later, the country is witnessing a familiar script; the constitution is being stretched, the ruling party is closing ranks, and the citizen is being pushed further away from the centre of political decision-making.

Supporters of the amendment insist that the move will promote stability, policy continuity and long-term planning. They argue that Zimbabwe needs time to consolidate economic recovery, complete development projects and avoid the disruptions of frequent elections.

But this argument is weakened by one obvious question: why should national stability depend on the continued stay of one leader? A confident democracy builds strong institutions, not permanent presidents.

This 2030 project also exposes deep anxiety within ZANU-PF itself. Mnangagwa's succession has become a dangerous subject, with factions quietly circling around competing centres of power.

Extending his rule may delay the succession battle, but it will not resolve it. Instead, it may harden resentment within the ruling party, embolden opposition voices and deepen public cynicism toward constitutionalism.

Zimbabwe's tragedy is that its politics continues to treat the constitution as clay in the hands of power. Each amendment that weakens direct public choice may look like a victory for the ruling elite, but it damages the legitimacy on which durable authority depends.

Mnangagwa may win the parliamentary numbers, but numbers alone do not equal consent.

If this amendment becomes the foundation of Zimbabwe's political future, the country will have moved from ballot-based uncertainty to parliamentary-controlled certainty.

That may suit those in power, but it leaves citizens with a bitter lesson; in Zimbabwe, the road to 2030 is not being paved by popular mandate, but by managed politics, institutional pressure and the cold mathematics of survival. ■



President Mnangagwa



How dirty money moves through Kenya's car yards

How car yards became one of the easiest places to wash illicit money through Kenya's economy.

By Elsa N KARIUKI

IN the backstreets of Kenya's major cities and along the highways that feed them, rows of imported vehicles move through a billion-shilling market.

Some arrive legally, fully documented, their histories traceable across borders. Others enter the system more quietly, their value reshaped long before they ever reach a forecourt. The difference is not always visible in the cars themselves but in the money behind them.

Kenya is estimated to lose around Ksh 243 billion every year to illicit financial flows, money that disappears through corruption, tax evasion and trade mispricing before it can reach public coffers. That is roughly almost twice Kenya's entire health budget (Ksh 136.8 billion), or about a third of the annual education allocation (Ksh 702.7 billion) for the 2025/26 financial year; funds that would otherwise support schools, hospitals and public services already under strain.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has long warned that money laundering is the mechanism that makes this possible, allowing proceeds of corruption and crime to be cleaned and reinserted into the formal economy without detection.

This is the environment where "wash wash" often finds entry points. A significant portion of that money does not sit in offshore accounts, it moves through everyday markets. In Kenya, one of those markets is the second-hand vehicle trade.

This is where car yards become part of the system, not on the margins of it, but inside it. They function as hubs for money laundering in a very direct sense: large sums of cash enter the market, vehicles are purchased, resold, or imported through layered transactions, and value is reintroduced into the economy in a form that looks legitimate on paper. The process is simple in structure, even if the networks behind it are not.

And yet, despite every imported vehicle passing through customs declarations, tax assessments and registration systems, Kenya still cannot say with certainty how much illicit money moves through the second-hand vehicle trade.

The Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) can see the imports, the declared values and the taxes attached to them, but there is little publicly available data showing how much suspicious money passes through the sector or how aggressively it is monitored. That gap is what makes the market difficult to police: the cars are visible, but the money behind them often is not.

In 2022, Kenya's anti-money laundering assessment by the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group found that second-hand car dealers, real estate actors and casinos remain among the most exposed sectors to illicit financial flows, largely because they handle large cash transactions with uneven oversight.



Law enforcement records and court reporting over the past few years show a steady stream of fraud and suspicious vehicle deals tied to the sector. In one documented case, a victim lost KSh 1.1 million in a fake car import scheme linked to a dealership-style setup operating along Ngong Road, where suspects posed as legitimate sellers before disappearing with deposits.

In another, police investigations into a separate import racket revealed victims paying tens of thousands of dollars for vehicles that were never delivered or were repeatedly delayed through shifting costs and storage fees. What links many of these cases is the structure of the market itself. Financial crime assessments have repeatedly flagged second-hand vehicle dealers as vulnerable to illicit money flows because transactions are often cash-based and lightly scrutinized.

The used-car market fits that description closely. It is large enough to absorb significant sums, informal enough that customer checks are inconsistent, and fast-moving enough that value can be layered and reintroduced before questions are asked.

How the system works

Lewis Kundai, Policy and Research Officer at the Civil Forum for Asset Recovery (CiFAR), describes Kenya's car yard economy as a system that unintentionally aligns with money laundering logic.

"There are two problems with car bazaars in Kenya. The first is second-hand vehicle markets. They are very poorly regulated, and cash-intensive because no one pays attention to it," he says.

At the centre of the risk is trade-based money laundering, where value is shifted through pricing distortions rather than physical movement of cash alone. In some cases, imported vehicles are overvalued or undervalued to move money across borders without triggering scrutiny. In others, local resale cycles are used to integrate illicit funds into the formal economy.

This aligns with patterns identified in regional risk assessments by the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group, which highlight trade-based laundering as a persistent vulnerability in economies with large informal trade flows.

Kundai describes cars as particularly efficient laundering instruments because of how quickly they move through the market. Unlike property, which is slow to sell and heavily documented, vehicles can change hands rapidly with limited traceability.

"The way you can buy many homes and sell them is the way you can buy many cars and sell them," he says. "The difference is one is more regulated than the other."

"In some cases," he adds, "depreciation is irrelevant to the actor behind the transaction. The objective is not profit but conversion of illicit value into clean assets. I already have the money so I don't mind taking a 50 percent cut. As long as the money is clean."

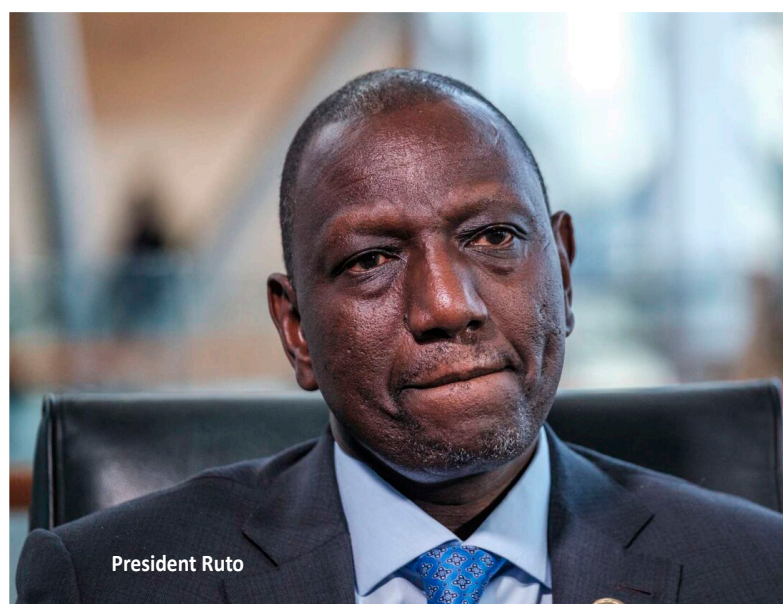
The missing data problem

Despite repeated policy attention, one of the hardest problems in tracking illicit finance is still surprisingly basic: no one can say with confidence how much money is actually moving through specific parts of the informal economy.

Kundai points to this gap in blunt terms. "Nobody has done that," he says. "The amount of money going into any particular sector would require sifting through court documents for the last 10 years."

In other words, the risk is widely acknowledged, but the numbers behind it are missing. When regulators cannot quantify exposure in sectors like second-hand vehicle sales or other non-financial businesses, enforcement tends to stay broad rather than targeted, shaped more by suspicion than by measurable evidence.

The contradiction becomes harder to ignore when viewed through Kenya's own import system. Every vehicle entering the country passes through customs declarations, import duty assessments and registration processes that give state agencies visibility into both the declared value of the car and the taxes attached to it.



President Ruto



KRA, as the primary gateway through which imported vehicles enter the economy, what comes in and what is paid for it. Yet despite repeated anti-money laundering warnings around the second-hand vehicle trade, there is still little publicly available data showing the scale of suspicious transactions linked to the sector or how aggressively compliance failures are pursued.

This is not a uniquely Kenyan problem. Global assessments of illicit financial flows have repeatedly run into the same constraint: the data is fragmented, often spread across court records, customs filings, tax disclosures and financial intelligence reports that are not designed to be stitched together at sector level.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), for example, has noted that the scale of illicit financial flows is difficult to measure precisely because much of it is deliberately hidden within legitimate trade and cash-based activity, making reliable sector-by-sector estimates elusive.

The result is a familiar policy tension. Governments can identify where risk is likely to exist, but without clear figures on how much money is involved or how it moves through specific markets, designing precise enforcement tools becomes more difficult.

A cash economy with weak verification

While the rest of the industries seem to be heading towards going cashless, Kenya's used-car market still runs heavily on cash, creating a system where large sums of money can move quickly with limited scrutiny.

Under Kenya's anti-money laundering laws, businesses classified as reporting institutions are required to flag suspicious transactions and report large cash dealings to the Financial Reporting Centre. Current regulations require reporting institutions to file cash transaction reports for transactions above the equivalent of US\$15,000, or roughly Ksh 1.9 million.

But outside the banking sector, enforcement remains patchy. Financial crime reports and policy discussions have repeatedly raised concerns that large cash purchases in sectors like second-hand vehicle sales often happen with limited scrutiny, weak customer checks and few questions about where the money came from.

Proposals and compliance guidelines from the Financial Reporting Centre have called for stricter reporting requirements and closer monitoring of suspicious transactions, reflecting growing concern that high-value deals can still happen with little meaningful oversight.

Kundai says that customer verification is rarely prioritised in day-to-day operations.

"No car dealer would actually care to ask for your KRA PIN or verify the source of your funds," he notes.

Investigations into vehicle import scams have revealed how easily money can disappear in parts of the market. Buyers hand over large deposits for cars that never arrive, only to find themselves passed from one broker to another, with no clear paper trail and no one willing to take responsibility. In some cases, suspects have operated through dealership-style setups that appeared legitimate, before vanishing with the payments.

These cases mirror patterns seen in investigations by the Directorate of Criminal Investigations, where fake import schemes and advance-payment scams have been linked to informal vehicle sales networks operating across Nairobi and nearby towns.

A market without clear gates

One of the structural weaknesses in the sector is its low barrier to entry. Unlike regulated financial institutions, car yard operators and brokers do not always operate under a uniform licensing or registration framework that allows for consistent oversight.



Kundai describes the market as fragmented and informal. “Anyone, including you or I, can operate as a broker despite not being registered. The market is so unstructured that it makes it hard to regulate.”

This fragmentation is important because it limits the effectiveness of anti-money laundering controls that rely on traceability. When ownership structures are unclear, enforcement becomes dependent on post-transaction investigation rather than real-time prevention.

It also complicates beneficial ownership transparency, particularly when vehicles are bought through proxies or layered through multiple intermediaries.

The regional networks

Kundai traces a significant share of this laundering to trade networks that extend well beyond Kenya’s borders, where vehicles do not simply change ownership but change identity.

In parts of Southern Africa, organized theft syndicates have for years stolen cars on demand, feeding them into a cross-border pipeline that pushes them into markets across Eastern and Central Africa, where oversight becomes progressively weaker and tracing ownership more difficult.

Research by Interpol and the Institute for Security Studies’ ENACT programme shows how quickly a stolen vehicle can be transformed. Cars are routinely repainted, fitted with forged number plates, or broken down into parts before being reassembled or resold in different jurisdictions.

Once these changes are made, the original identity of the vehicle is often lost in layers of paperwork and informal transferring. “It mostly happens through trade-based money laundering,” Kundai says. “In Southern African countries, this issue is linked to theft. And a lot of those cars stolen in those Southern African countries end up in Eastern and Central African markets.”

The system depends on movement and fragmentation. A vehicle stolen in Johannesburg, for instance, may pass through several hands, cross multiple borders, and re-enter circulation through informal dealers long before it appears on a yard in another country.

Each step adds distance from the original crime, and by the time it reaches a buyer, the documentation often no longer reflects where it came from or how it got there.

Regional enforcement studies have repeatedly highlighted how structured these flows are. ENACT researchers describe networks made up of specialised roles; those who steal, those who forge documents, those who transport vehicles across borders, and those who reintroduce them into legitimate markets.

In some cases, the reports note, weak points in border enforcement and corruption among intermediaries have helped these vehicles move with little resistance.

When illicit money enters normal prices

One of the more consistent findings across expert analysis and policy reporting is that illicit finance does not stay contained within criminal networks. Once it enters a market, it begins to shape how that market behaves, including how prices are set and how quickly goods move.

Kundai is direct when asked whether dirty money distorts the car market.

“An obvious yes. It’s a thing with the real estate sector as well.”

What he points to is less about dramatic price surges and more about how competition itself changes. When some buyers are not constrained by normal commercial pressures, such as profit margins or resale risk, they can move differently in the market. Cars are bought faster, held for shorter periods, and pushed back into circulation in ways that can make demand look stronger than it actually is.

That kind of activity does not always show up as obvious inflation. Instead, it shows up in pace. Vehicles in certain segments move unusually quickly. Stock turnover speeds up. And prices begin to reflect urgency and liquidity rather than underlying value.

The reporting on Nairobi’s second-hand car market has pointed to similar patterns, where fast-moving sales and heavy reliance on cash have raised questions about why some categories of imported vehicles seem to attract demand that is difficult to fully explain through income levels alone.

The result is a market where the distortion is not always in the price itself, but in the rhythm of the market, what moves, how fast it moves, and what kinds of money are driving that movement.

How this affects the people

The impact of money laundering through sectors like car yards is often discussed in technical terms, but on the ground, it shows up in more immediate and ordinary ways.

When illicit money enters everyday markets, it changes who gets to compete and on what terms. Buyers who are operating within normal income limits can find themselves priced out, not necessarily because prices are soaring, but because they are competing in the same space as actors who are not constrained by profit margins, cost recovery, or even legitimacy of income. The market becomes uneven in ways that are hard to see in a single transaction, but clearer when viewed across many deals.

There is also a quieter fiscal cost that builds over time. Cash-heavy and under-declared transactions reduce the amount of tax collected, shrinking the resources available to the state.

The Office of the Auditor-General of Kenya, in its annual audit reports, has repeatedly flagged persistent weaknesses in revenue collection systems across sectors where documentation is weak and enforcement inconsistent, noting gaps that allow significant amounts of potential revenue to go uncollected.

These findings are not specific to car yards, but they point to a broader structural issue where economic activity does not fully translate into taxable records.

That gap matters because it eventually shows up in public services. When less revenue is collected than should be, there is less to spend on infrastructure, healthcare, and county-level services. Budgets tighten, projects slow down, and pressure builds on already stretched public systems.

Kenya is losing an estimated hundreds of billions of shillings every year through illicit financial flows, money that slips out of the formal economy before it can be taxed, tracked, or spent on public services.

A widely cited estimate by the National Taxpayers Association and Oxfam places the figure at around Ksh 243 billion annually, roughly 1.5% of Kenya's GDP, driven by corruption, tax evasion, trade mispricing, and other financial crimes.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has long warned that money laundering is the mechanism that makes this possible, turning proceeds of corruption into assets that can circulate freely in the formal economy.

In practice, it means money that may have left the public sector through inflated contracts or unpaid taxes does not simply disappear. It re-enters the economy through familiar channels, including property, vehicles and high-value trade, where it is almost indistinguishable from legitimate income.

The result is a silent, persistent drain. It is a steady leakage of resources that would otherwise fund hospitals, roads and county budgets. Over time, the impact is cumulative: fewer public investments, tighter fiscal space, and a system where illicit money does not just sit outside the economy, but helps



shape it from within.

At a broader economic level, persistent exposure to illicit financial flows can also affect how investors view the stability and transparency of a market. Weak anti-money laundering enforcement can increase perceived risk in an economy, which in turn can influence borrowing conditions and the cost of public debt.

None of this is always visible in the moment a car changes hands. What is visible is the transaction. What is harder to see is everything that the transaction fails to contribute to, from tax revenue to public investment, and how that absence accumulates across the wider economy.

What happens when the money becomes a car?

Once illicit money is converted into vehicles, the trail does not disappear entirely. It becomes harder to follow, but not impossible. What changes is not the visibility of the asset itself, but the ease with which ownership can be disguised.



Kundai argues that this is where the real difficulty begins.

“It is actually not that hard,” he says. “The only challenge would be if you are using proxies, and that is where the beneficial ownership question comes in.”

Tracing a car is usually straightforward. It has a registration number, an import history, and a paper trail that can be followed across licensing systems. The problem starts when the person who appears to own the vehicle is not the person who actually controls it.

In anti-money laundering systems, this is known as beneficial ownership, and it refers to the real individual behind an asset, especially when ownership is layered through other people, companies or intermediaries.

The Financial Action Task Force, which sets global anti-money laundering standards, has repeatedly warned that opaque ownership structures are one of the most common ways illicit wealth is hidden in legitimate markets, particularly in sectors involving high-value movable assets and cash transactions.

In practical terms, a vehicle can be bought in one name, registered under another, and controlled by a third party who never appears in official records. Each layer makes it more difficult for regulators to connect the asset back to the original source of funds.

That is why, as Kundai puts it, the problem is not the car itself but the identity behind it.

A system built for speed

Car yards sit at a particular intersection of Kenya's economy, where speed matters more than structure. Vehicles move quickly, cash moves easily, and deals are often completed with only the lightest trace of paperwork. That efficiency is part of what keeps the market alive. It is also what makes it difficult to fully see.

Financial crime assessments, including Kenya's mutual evaluation under the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group), have consistently pointed to a model where non-bank sectors that handle high-value goods remain harder to supervise because oversight systems were not designed for markets that move this fast.

Globally, the Financial Action Task Force has reached similar conclusions, noting that sectors dealing in high-value movable assets are particularly exposed when transactions are cash-heavy and ownership is easy to obscure.

Seen from that angle, the question is not whether car yards sit inside or outside Kenya's financial system.

They do both at once.

They are formal enough to facilitate legitimate trade, and informal enough for value to pass through with limited scrutiny. That is what makes them important. Not as outliers, but as interfaces, points where everyday commerce and illicit financial flows can pass through the same space with very little friction.

Money does not have to leave the economy to be lost. It only needs to change shape until no one can tell where it came from. In that transformation, a car yard goes beyond being a place of trade and becomes where clean money and dirty money learn to look the same.

And what remains, regardless of where it came from, rarely makes its way back to the ordinary citizen. ■

This investigative article was first published by Africa Uncensored. The AfriFiles publishes it for its importance with some few edits.

Small loans, big hope for forest communities

By Tina MEHNPAINE

MAYBEL Payne walks along a dirt path in Najor, a tub of harvested chili peppers balanced on her head.

She is not rushing to the market, but to a meeting that has become central to life in this remote Liberian farming town.

Payne is the box keeper of Najor's Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), locally called a money club. She usually arrives first, carrying the metal box that holds the group's savings and records.

For years, Payne farmed like many rural Liberians: harvest, sell, spend and begin again. Food, school fees, medicine and transport swallowed earnings almost immediately. With no nearby bank, saving was rarely possible.

Now residents save, borrow and invest through a conservation programme that links livelihoods to forest protection. Members can take small loans for farms, emergencies or businesses, reducing pressure on forest resources.

Najor is among 10 communities covering 7,131 hectares under a payment-for-stewardship project supported by the Irish government and implemented by Integrated Development Learning (IDL), a Margibi-based NGO. The communities, in Jeadea and Wedjah districts, have received US\$21,392 for protecting forests.

The savings clubs were introduced in 2022 as livelihood support. IDL provided training, metal boxes, padlocks and stationery. The clubs are community-owned; one person keeps

the box, while three others hold separate keys. It can only be opened when key holders, leaders and members are present.

"It is open to everybody; nobody can cheat," says Oretha Swen of Jorwee Town.

In Najor, daily life is shaped by distance, poverty and forest. The town has no school, clinic, police station or electricity. Mobile reception is weak, roads worsen during rains, and motorbikes are often the only transport.

"It is helping us to stand on our own," says Payne, a mother of nine. "We can now save and support our farms."

The programme reached Najor in 2025. After earning L\$8,000 from her harvest, Payne bought two shares worth L\$1,200. She used L\$5,000 for her children's school needs in Greenville.

Liberia holds more than 40 percent of the remaining Upper Guinea rainforest. But illegal logging, farming pressure and deforestation continue to threaten it. Najor's forest borders Sapo National Park, Liberia's largest protected area and only national park.

Saah David Jr., former national programme coordinator of the Liberia Forest Sector Project, says payment for standing forests has long been "a dream" for communities and conservationists.

Beyond Najor, the loan scheme operates in 43 southeastern communities, benefiting 2,207 people, including 1,623 women and 585 men.

In Jarwee, IDL donated a cassava-processing mill to a savings club. Members pay small fees to use it, helping cover maintenance and repairs. Some communities also received motorbikes through a revolving scheme.

IDL also provides small-business grants to disciplined savers and borrowers. Bahnavileh Jones, who leads IDL's grant and savings programmes, says 148 members; 123 women and 25 men, have received L\$6,436,820, more than US\$35,700.

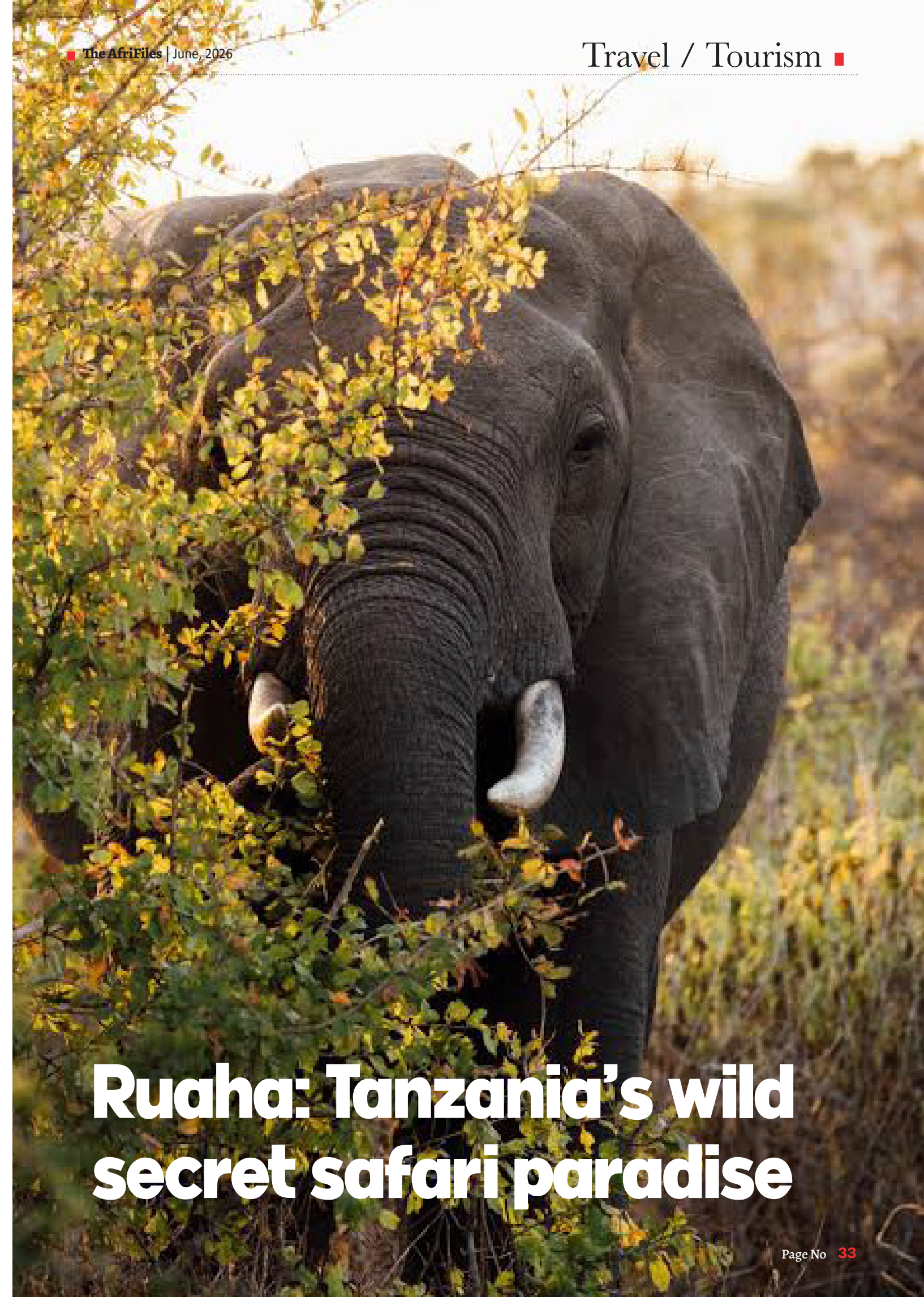
Still, barriers remain. Transport costs are high, roads are poor and security is fragile. In towns without police, savings boxes can become targets, forcing some groups to use heavier metal boxes.

For Payne, the box represents more than cash. In a town without banks, electricity or basic services, it is a practical symbol of trust and survival—proof that communities can protect forests while building a future of their own.

This story was produced by the Community of Forest and Environmental Journalists of Liberia (CoFEJ). It has been edited to suit The AfriFiles space and guidelines. ■



Some members of the club met at their meeting in Diyankpo Town, and a staff member of the Integrated Development Learning visited to take records. Photo: Tina Mehnpain



Ruaha: Tanzania's wild secret safari paradise



Ruaha: Tanzania's wild secret safari paradise

By The AfriFiler REPORTER

THERE are places in Africa where safari feels like a performance, with lines of vehicles gathering around a single lion and cameras clicking from every direction.

Then there is Ruaha National Park; Tanzania's grand wilderness of silence, space and soul, where the road bends through baobab country, elephants move like ancient kings, and the horizon seems to belong entirely to you.

For travellers seeking a safari that is intimate, raw and deeply personal, Ruaha is not merely another national park. It is an invitation to rediscover what African wilderness once meant before mass tourism crowded the dream.

Here, visitors can spend hours exploring without meeting another vehicle. A lion sighting can remain your private moment. A herd of elephants can cross the sandy riverbed before your eyes without the pressure of other engines arriving.

The wilderness breathes at its own pace, and you are given the rare privilege of breathing with it.

Located in southern Tanzania, west of Iringa, Ruaha is the country's largest national park, spreading across more than 20,000 square kilometres of rugged beauty.

Its size alone is astonishing, but what makes Ruaha magical is not simply its scale. It is the feeling of freedom that comes with that scale. The park is vast enough to make every game drive feel like an expedition, yet rich enough to reward patience with unforgettable encounters.

The Great Ruaha River is the park's lifeline and emotional centre. During the dry season, when the landscape turns golden and water becomes precious, wildlife gathers along its banks

in scenes that seem painted for cinema.

Elephants come to drink and bathe. Buffalo move in heavy, dark formations. Giraffes step delicately through the light. Hippos grunt from the pools, crocodiles warm themselves on sandbanks, and predators follow the rhythm of thirst and opportunity.

In Ruaha, the drama of nature is not staged. It unfolds quietly, powerfully and honestly.

This is one of the finest places in East Africa for travellers who love predators. Lions are a signature of Ruaha, often seen in strong prides that reflect the park's abundance of prey.

Leopards favour the shade and secrecy of riverine trees. Cheetahs patrol open country with elegant speed. Spotted hyenas, jackals and endangered African wild dogs add to the sense that this is a living, breathing predator landscape.

For wildlife photographers and safari purists, Ruaha offers the kind of raw encounters that remain in the memory long after the dust has left your boots.

Yet Ruaha is not only about predators. It is also one of Tanzania's great elephant strongholds. Few safari images are more moving than a family of elephants crossing the Ruaha River, calves tucked safely between mothers and aunties, trunks lifted, ears fanning in the heat.

These are moments that connect the traveller to something older than tourism — the dignity of wild Africa.

The park also carries a beautiful ecological surprise. It sits at a meeting point between East African savannah and southern African woodland, creating an unusual mix of habitats and species.

Visitors may see greater and lesser kudu, sable antelope, roan antelope, impala, zebra, giraffe, buffalo and many smaller creatures that reveal themselves to those who slow down and look carefully. Ruaha is a place that rewards curiosity. The more patiently you watch, the more it gives.

Bird lovers will find their own paradise here. With more than 570 recorded bird species, Ruaha turns every drive into a moving gallery of colour and sound.

Hornbills, kingfishers, bee-eaters, storks, raptors and waterbirds animate the skies and riverbanks. During the green season, migratory birds add even more brilliance to the landscape, while fresh grasses and flowering plants soften the park's rugged face.

The dry season is excellent for big game, but the wet season has its own poetic beauty.

That is the secret of Ruaha; it is never empty of wonder.

For the luxury traveller, Ruaha offers exclusivity without artificial glamour. Its best camps and lodges are designed for people who want comfort without losing the pulse of the bush.

Imagine waking before sunrise to the sound of distant lions, taking coffee as the sky turns pale gold, then setting out into a landscape where baobabs stand like guardians. Imagine returning in the evening to a sundowner above the river, watching the last light fall across the plains as elephants move through dust and shadow.

This is not rushed tourism. This is safari as a slow, elegant conversation with nature.

For honeymooners, Ruaha offers privacy. For families, it offers wonder. For photographers, it offers light, texture and drama. For seasoned safari lovers who have already seen the famous northern circuit, it offers something increasingly rare; the feeling of discovery. Ruaha does not shout for attention; it waits for the right traveller to understand its depth.

Its uncrowded character is one of its greatest selling points. In more famous safari destinations, wildlife sightings can sometimes become social events.

In Ruaha, they remain wilderness moments. You can follow tracks for miles, pause beneath a baobab, watch vultures circling in the distance, or sit in silence beside the river and feel that the park has opened itself only to you.

That sense of exclusivity is not manufactured. It is born from remoteness, scale and low visitor pressure.

Ruaha also combines beautifully with other southern Tanzania experiences. Travellers can pair it with Nyerere National Park for a deeper southern circuit adventure, or end the journey on the beaches of Zanzibar for a classic bush-and-beach escape.

Flights into the park make access easier than many expect, while the journey by road through Iringa country offers its own taste of Tanzania's landscapes and local life.



The best time for classic big-game viewing is generally the dry season, when animals concentrate around the Great Ruaha River and other water sources.

This is when the drama is most visible; predators hunting along dry riverbeds, elephants gathering at pools, and herds moving through open country. But travellers who love birds, green scenery and softer light may find the rainy months equally rewarding in a different way.

Ruaha is not for those who want a safari of checklists and crowds. It is for travellers who want space, silence, depth and authenticity.

It is for those who understand that luxury is not always marble and chandeliers; sometimes luxury is having a lion sighting to yourself, hearing only the wind in the grass, or watching the moon rise above a baobab without another vehicle in sight.

In a world where many famous safari routes are becoming increasingly busy, Ruaha remains Tanzania's wild secret; immense, dramatic, uncrowded and unforgettable.

It offers the traveller not just animals, but atmosphere; not just photographs, but emotion; not just a holiday, but a memory that feels personal.

Come to Ruaha for the lions. Come for the elephants. Come for the river, the birds, the baobabs and the golden silence.

But above all, come for the rarest safari gift of all; the feeling that, for a few extraordinary days, wild Africa belongs only to you. ■



Chilembwe, Malawi's first architect of freedom

By The AfriFiler REPORTER

REVEREND John Chilembwe occupies a sacred and complicated place in Malawi's national memory.

He was not merely a preacher who rebelled against British colonial rule, he was a moral architect, a political prophet and an early nationalist whose life exposed the brutality of colonial domination long before independence became an organised national project.

To call him the "first true architect of Malawian independence" is not to suggest that he designed the modern state in legal or constitutional terms.

Rather, it means he planted the earliest bold idea that Africans in Nyasaland, now Malawi, were not born to live permanently under racial humiliation, forced labour and foreign command.

Chilembwe's greatness lies in the fact that he imagined freedom before freedom was fashionable.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Nyasaland was a British protectorate marked by deep racial inequality. European settlers-controlled land, commerce, political power and social status.

Africans were treated as labouring bodies rather than citizens with rights, intellect and destiny. Plantation owners demanded cheap labour, colonial officials enforced obedience, and racial hierarchy shaped everyday life. In that environment,



questioning white authority was dangerous. Leading an uprising against it was almost unthinkable.

Chilembwe thought differently

His journey from local mission education to the United States helped shape his worldview. In America, he encountered Baptist theology, Black religious leadership and ideas of racial uplift that sharpened his understanding of African dignity.

He returned to Nyasaland not as a man satisfied with preaching only about heaven, but as a pastor convinced that the gospel also had meaning on earth. For him, Christianity could not be separated from justice. A faith that tolerated racial oppression was not holy; it was compromised.

That conviction led him to establish the Providence Industrial Mission at Mbombwe. The mission was more than a church. It was a school of self-respect.

Chilembwe used education, discipline, agriculture, religious instruction and moral reform to prepare Africans for leadership. He believed that knowledge could break the psychology of colonial inferiority.

He wanted Africans to read, write, work, farm, organise and see themselves as capable of building their own society.

This is why Chilembwe should be understood as an architect, not simply as a rebel. Before he picked up the language of resistance, he had already built institutions.

He trained minds, created a community and offered an alternative to the colonial claim that Africans were naturally inferior. In a world that denied African humanity, his mission declared that Africans could lead themselves.

Yet, Chilembwe was not operating in a vacuum of theory. He was responding to real suffering. The plantation economy, especially in southern Nyasaland, placed Africans under harsh conditions.

Labour exploitation, land alienation, racial insults and violent treatment by estate managers produced deep resentment.

The outbreak of the First World War added another layer of injustice, as Africans were drawn into imperial conflict while still being denied equal status in the empire they were expected to serve.

Chilembwe's famous criticism of African participation in a European war captured this contradiction.



Why should Africans shed blood for an empire that denied them dignity at home? Why should black men die for freedom abroad while being oppressed in Nyasaland? These questions were radical because they attacked the moral foundation of empire. They asked whether Britain could claim civilisation while ruling through racial contempt.

Shaking insurgence

The 1915 uprising was therefore born from anger, faith and political awakening. It was brief, violent and ultimately crushed. Chilembwe and his followers attacked symbols of colonial abuse, including plantation authority.

The revolt did not have the military strength to defeat the British. It was poorly armed, quickly isolated and brutally suppressed. Chilembwe himself was killed soon after the rebellion, and many of his followers were executed, imprisoned or hunted down.

It seemed like the uprising failed - on the surface, but history does not judge liberation struggles only by immediate military success.

Some revolts lose on the battlefield but win in memory. Chilembwe's uprising did not remove British rule in 1915, but it broke the myth of African silence.

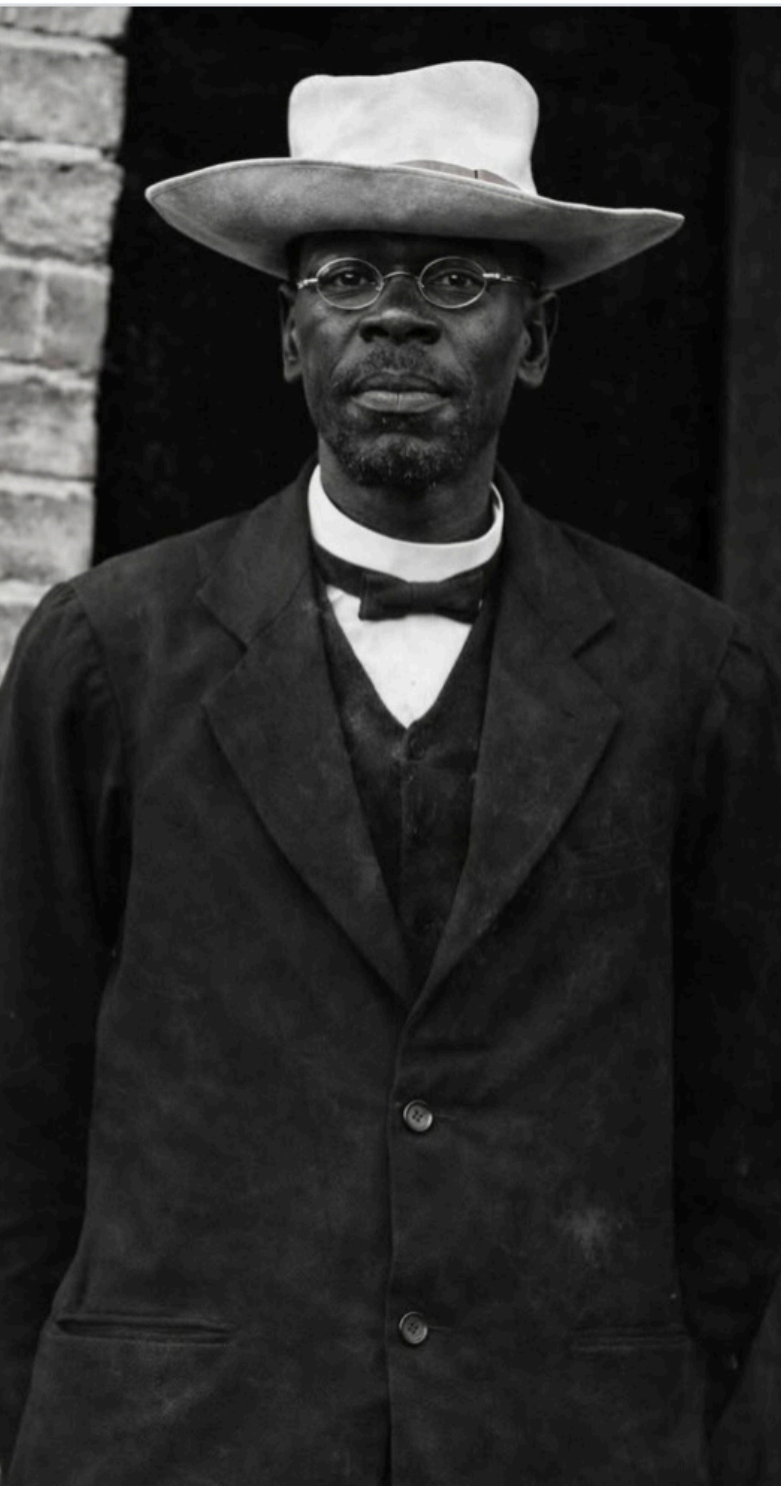
It showed that colonial authority could be challenged. It frightened the colonial state because it revealed that beneath the surface of obedience there was thought, anger and organisation. It also gave later nationalists a symbol of courage.

This is the deeper meaning of Chilembwe's legacy. He transformed resistance from private suffering into public defiance.

Like many early liberation figures, Chilembwe was not a perfect hero. The uprising involved violence, and any serious analysis must acknowledge that moral complexity.

Malawi's later independence movement did not copy Chilembwe directly in every method, but it inherited his moral vocabulary.

Anti-colonial history should not turn human death into romantic decoration. But neither should colonial violence be erased while African resistance is judged in isolation.



The British colonial system was itself built on structural violence: land seizure, racial domination, labour coercion and political exclusion. Chilembwe's revolt emerged from that violent order.

His significance is also theological. In many African societies, religion was used by colonial forces as a tool of obedience. Mission schools sometimes taught discipline without liberation, humility without equality and salvation without citizenship.

Chilembwe disrupted that model. He used the pulpit as a platform of dignity. He insisted that an African Christian could not be spiritually equal before God and politically inferior before man. That was a revolutionary message.

In this sense, Chilembwe belongs to a wider tradition of religious resistance in Africa, where pastors, prophets and independent church leaders challenged both colonial rule and missionary paternalism.

He understood that liberation required not only political organisation but mental emancipation. People who have been taught to see themselves as inferior must first recover belief in their own worth before they can build a free nation.

Malawi's later independence movement did not copy Chilembwe directly in every method, but it inherited his moral vocabulary.

The demand for dignity, African leadership and national self-determination became central to the struggle.

When Malawi eventually gained independence in 1964, Chilembwe was no longer alive, but his shadow stood behind the flag. He had died before seeing the nation he helped imagine, yet the idea he defended survived him.

That is the power of an architect; the builder may die before the house is complete, but the foundation remains.

Today, Chilembwe's memory matters beyond Malawi; across Africa, many nations still wrestle with the unfinished business of liberation.

Political independence removed colonial flags, but inequality, foreign dependency, elite corruption and social injustice continue to challenge the promise of freedom.

Chilembwe's life asks uncomfortable questions of modern Africa. What is independence if citizens remain poor, voiceless and humiliated? What is sovereignty if leaders fear criticism more than injustice? What is development if education does not produce dignity?

His legacy also challenges the church and religious institutions. Chilembwe reminds faith leaders that religion can either comfort oppression or confront it.

A preacher who speaks only to power's convenience may fill churches, but a preacher who defends human dignity can change history.

Chilembwe's pulpit was not neutral because oppression is never neutral. He chose to stand with the wounded, and that choice made him dangerous to empire.

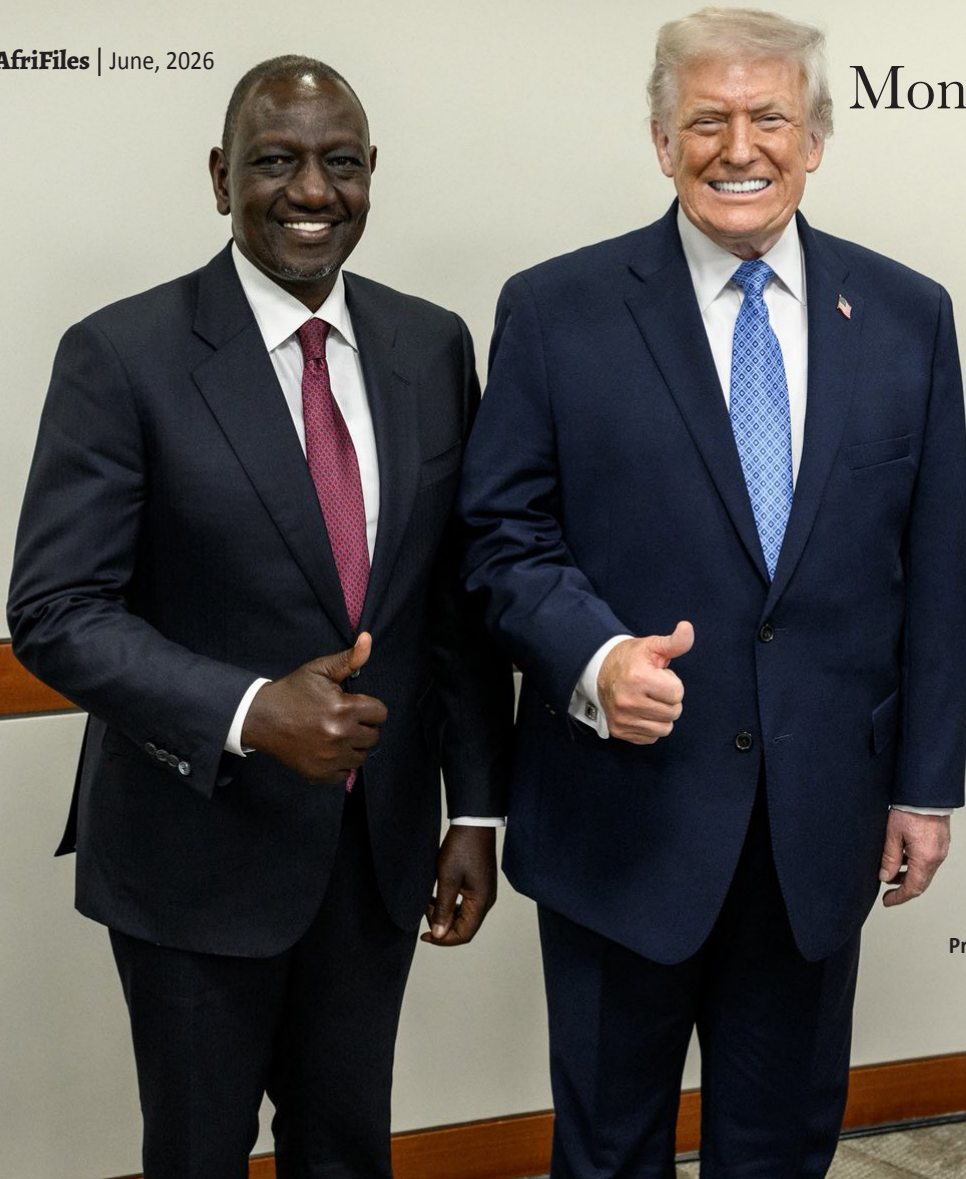
More than a century after his death, Reverend John Chilembwe remains Malawi's first great nationalist conscience.

He was an educator before he was a revolutionary, a pastor before he became a martyr, and a builder before he became a symbol. His uprising was crushed, but his message was not.

He taught that Africans were not colonial subjects by destiny, but human beings with a right to dignity, land, education, leadership and freedom.

That is why Chilembwe is not remembered merely as the man who led the 1915 uprising. He is remembered as the man who first gave Malawian nationalism its moral architecture.

He did not live to see independence. But he helped Malawi dream it. ■



President Trump with Ruto

Trump strikes hard bargain with Africa

By Special CORRESPONDENT

PRESIDENT Donald Trump's legacy in Africa is one of the most divisive in modern American foreign policy.

To his supporters, he is the president who finally told African governments that the age of automatic American aid, soft diplomacy and donor charity was over.

To his critics, he is the leader who weakened America's moral authority, damaged health programmes, frightened exporters, insulted allies and reduced Africa to a bargaining table for minerals, migration, security and trade advantage.

The truth sits somewhere in the middle, but closer to disruption than construction.

Trump's Africa policy is not empty. It has a clear philosophy, it says America should give less, demand more and treat African countries not as development partners but as strategic actors expected to pay, trade, align and deliver.

That is the heart of "America First" in Africa. The problem is that Africa is not only a marketplace. It is also a continent of public health emergencies, fragile democracies, debt distress, insurgencies, young populations, climate shocks and fierce competition among global powers.

A policy that sees only minerals, tariffs and geopolitical advantage risks missing the human and political realities that define the continent.

Trump's most dramatic break with the past came through foreign aid. In July 2025, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) effectively stopped implementing foreign assistance as its operations were transferred into the State Department.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio described the new model as targeted, limited and focused on trade over aid. For Trump, the old USAID system represented waste, dependency and charity politics.

For many Africans, aid workers and public health experts, it represented clinics, food programmes, refugee support, democracy assistance, emergency relief and decades of American soft power.

This is where Trump's Africa legacy becomes most controversial. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, known as PEPFAR, is one of the most successful American interventions ever carried out on African soil.

Launched by President George W. Bush in 2003, it is credited with saving about 26 million lives globally, much of that impact in sub-Saharan Africa. It turned America into a life-saving presence in villages, clinics and hospitals across the continent.



President Trump with Paul Kagame

The plan helped mothers give birth to HIV-free babies, kept millions on treatment and created a rare reservoir of goodwill toward Washington.

Trump did not create that legacy. He inherited it. His second administration is now accused of weakening it.

The numbers are telling

PEPFAR's bilateral programming received about US\$4.85 billion in FY2025, but the Trump administration's FY2026 request proposed about US\$2.9 billion, a reduction of roughly US\$1.9 billion. Even where life-saving services were protected, broader prevention work was narrowed or interrupted.

In South Africa, where around eight million people live with HIV, the United States had previously contributed more than US\$400 million annually through PEPFAR and supported thousands of health workers.



The decision to phase down or cut support has alarmed UNAIDS and health advocates who warn that reduced prevention, testing and treatment support could reverse decades of progress.

This is the first major charge against Trump's Africa legacy; he may be remembered as the president who treated public health as a bargaining chip.

His defenders argue that African governments must eventually fund their own health systems. That argument has merit. No continent should build permanent dependency into its hospitals. But the speed, method and political tone of the cuts matter.

A responsible transition strengthens domestic systems before reducing external support. An abrupt withdrawal leaves clinics confused, patients exposed and governments scrambling. In public health, ideology does not treat patients; medicine, systems and money do.

Trade is the second pillar of Trump's Africa record, and here too the legacy is mixed. The African Growth and Opportunity Act, signed by President Bill Clinton in 2000, gave eligible African countries duty-free access to the American market for thousands of products.

It was never perfect, but it helped industries such as textiles, apparel, agriculture and automotive exports in countries including Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar and South Africa. It also symbolised a shift from aid to trade long before Trump adopted that language.

Trump's administration eventually supported and signed a short extension of AGOA, but his tariff policy severely weakened its confidence value. African countries that had built export models around duty-free access suddenly faced the threat or reality of import taxes.

Lesotho, one of the most vulnerable economies in Southern Africa, was initially hit with a 50 percent tariff under Trump's reciprocal tariff drive. South Africa faced a 30 percent tariff environment, while many African exports were exposed to 10 to 30 percent duties. In practical terms, Trump gave with one hand and removed certainty with the other.

This creates the second charge against Trump's legacy; he turned trade partnership into trade anxiety.

To be fair, US-Africa trade remains small compared with America's trade with China, Mexico, Canada or the European Union. In 2025, US goods trade with Africa stood at about US\$83.4 billion, with exports of US\$40.4 billion and imports of US\$43 billion.

The US goods trade deficit with Africa was only about US\$2.6 billion. These figures show that Africa is not the source of America's trade imbalance. Yet some small African economies were treated as if they represented a major threat to American workers.

That mismatch damaged Washington's image among African business communities.

Trump's strongest African argument may be found in critical minerals. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and Angola, the United States is trying to regain ground lost to China in cobalt, copper, lithium and other strategic minerals.

The Lobito Corridor, first strongly promoted under President Joe Biden, has continued to matter under Trump because it offers a Western-backed route from the mineral-rich heart of Central Africa to the Atlantic. Washington's interest in Congo's copper and cobalt is not charity; it is industrial strategy. Electric vehicles, batteries, defence systems and clean technologies all require minerals Africa has in abundance.

Here, Trump can claim realism. Africa is not poor; it is under-leveraged. It has minerals the world needs, young markets, strategic ports, votes in international institutions and a rising consumer class.

A more business-minded American policy could benefit both sides if it brings investment, processing capacity, railways, power projects and fair contracts. But if the policy becomes extraction without development, it will look like another scramble for Africa, only with modern language.

Trump's relationship with South Africa may become one of the darkest chapters of his Africa file. His administration cut financial assistance, attacked Pretoria over land policy, criticised its genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, expelled South Africa's ambassador and offered refugee consideration to white Afrikaners.

South Africa is not blameless in its own governance, economic and diplomatic contradictions. But Trump's language on race and land often inflamed more than it clarified. For many Africans, it reinforced the perception that his administration viewed the continent through ideological and racial lenses rather than careful diplomacy.

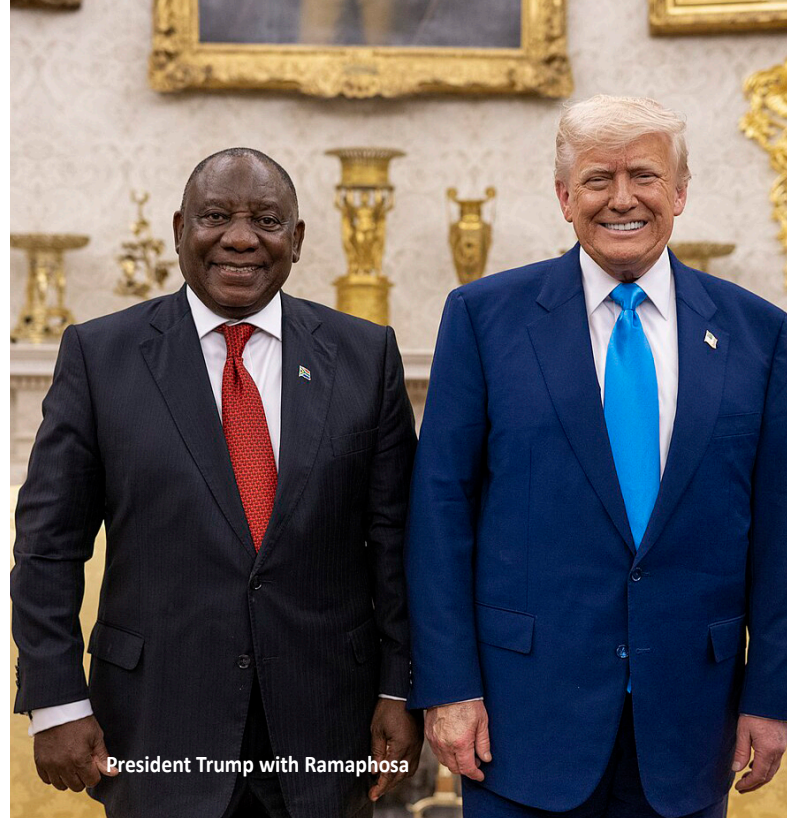
Trump versus former presidents

Bill Clinton gave Africa AGOA, a trade framework that endured for more than two decades.

George W. Bush gave Africa PEPFAR, perhaps the greatest single American humanitarian achievement on the continent.

Barack Obama gave Africa symbolic inspiration, the Young African Leaders Initiative, Power Africa and the first US-Africa Leaders Summit, although critics say expectations exceeded delivery.

Joe Biden restored high-level engagement through the 2022 US-Africa Leaders Summit, pledged US\$55 billion over three years, supported the African Union's permanent G20 membership and pushed strategic infrastructure such as the



President Trump with Ramaphosa

Lobito Corridor.

Trump's place is different. He is not the Clinton of trade architecture, not the Bush of life-saving health diplomacy, not the Obama of soft power and youth engagement, and not the Biden of summit diplomacy and multilateral inclusion. He is closer to a disruptive dealmaker; sceptical of aid, aggressive on tariffs, hard on migration, blunt on sovereignty, interested in minerals and willing to pressure allies publicly.

That does not make him irrelevant. It makes him consequential in a different way.

His legacy in Africa may be remembered as the moment America stopped pretending its engagement was mainly benevolent.

Trump stripped US-Africa relations down to interests: What minerals do you have? What market access do we get? Whose side are you on? How much will you pay? Will you align with us against China, Russia, Iran or other rivals?

Prospect for Africa?

For African leaders, this is both warning and opportunity. The warning is that sentimental diplomacy is over. The opportunity is that Africa can also become more transactional, more united and more strategic.

If Washington treats Africa as a deal table, African governments must arrive as negotiators, not beggars. They must demand value addition, technology transfer, fair taxation, local jobs, health safeguards and respect.

In the final analysis, Trump's Africa legacy is not one of affection. It is one of pressure. He has forced the continent to confront the fragility of depending on American aid and trade preferences. He has also reminded African leaders that global powers have interests, not permanent friendships.

But compared with America's most consequential presidents in Africa, Trump's record remains weaker in compassion, weaker in institutional imagination and weaker in moral leadership.

Bush saved lives. Clinton opened a trade door. Obama inspired a generation. Biden restored diplomatic courtship. Trump has brought disruption, leverage and uncertainty.

History may credit him for forcing a harder conversation about self-reliance. But unless his transactional model produces real African jobs, stronger health systems, fair mineral deals and durable investment, his legacy will be remembered less as a reset and more as a retreat wrapped in bravado. ■



Migrants gather outside their country's consulates in Johannesburg. Photo: Rogan Ward/Reuters

Migrants torn from families, homes and dreams

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

THOUSANDS of Malawians in South Africa, have left South Africa as departure was no longer a journey of choice; it was an escape from fear.

Men and women who crossed the border years ago in search of work and dignity are now boarding buses with plastic bags, children's clothes and the crushing knowledge that a life built over years can collapse in a week.

Behind the word “repatriation” lies a deeper human tragedy; broken families, abandoned properties, shuttered businesses, unpaid debts and children suddenly forced to grow up without one parent at home.

The crisis has been triggered by a dangerous mixture of anti-migrant mobilisation, economic frustration and weak protection of vulnerable foreign nationals. Anti-immigrant groups had pushed an unofficial June 30 deadline demanding that undocumented foreigners leave South Africa.

The government insisted that this deadline was no legal force and that only state authorities can enforce immigration law. Yet for many Malawians, legality has been overtaken by fear. When neighbours threaten you, when mobs search for foreigners, when shops are looted and homes are burned, a government statement is not always enough to keep a terrified family in place.

This is the agony facing Malawian migrants. Many are not faceless statistics. They are husbands married to South African women, fathers of South African-born children, shopkeepers, construction workers, domestic workers, restaurant hands, welders, mechanics and street traders.

Some arrived with nothing and slowly built small businesses from informal savings. Others rented rooms, bought furniture, paid lobola, raised children and became part of local communities. Now they are being forced into painful calculations; stay and risk attack, or leave and lose everything.

The cruelest burden

A Malawian man married to a South African woman may not be able to take his wife and children with him overnight. The children may be in school; the wife may have work, relatives and legal roots in South Africa. The husband, especially if undocumented, may be the main breadwinner. Repatriation then becomes not just a border movement but a domestic rupture.

A father leaves Durban or Johannesburg for Blantyre, Lilongwe or Mzuzu, while his wife remains behind to explain why he is no longer coming home after work.

There is also the quiet disaster of property as migrants who flee quickly rarely have time to sell household goods, recover rental deposits, collect debts or protect stock from shops.

A small salon, grocery stall, tailoring kiosk or welding shed may represent years of labour. Some migrants borrowed money in Malawi to travel to South Africa; others used earnings to send remittances home while investing in small ventures where they lived. When violence erupts, a business can disappear not because it failed, but because its owner's nationality became a target.

The South African state is trying to frame the operation as orderly migration management, but officials say undocumented foreign nationals must be verified, processed and, where necessary, deported or repatriated according to law.

They also condemn vigilantism and insist that violence, intimidation and demands for documents by unauthorised people are illegal.

It is true that a sovereign state has the right to regulate migration as no country can ignore documentation, overstaying or criminal exploitation of porous borders. But the moral and political crisis begins when immigration enforcement is effectively accelerated by fear created outside the law.

Unfinished business

For Malawi, the return of thousands of citizens is also a shock to the national system, many returnees come back traumatised, broke and ashamed. They face a country with limited formal employment and already stretched social services.

Some return home with no capital, no tools and no certainty of reintegration, families that depended on remittances from South Africa may suddenly lose their main income. They may be welcomed at border posts, stadiums or processing centres, but once the bus reaches the village, the real struggle begins; food, school fees, debts and starting again from zero.

The tragedy is bigger than Malawi and South Africa as it exposes the contradiction at the heart of African integration. Leaders speak of free movement, regional markets and African unity, yet ordinary Africans face hostility when poverty pushes them across borders.

South Africa's economy has long attracted workers from neighbouring countries, just as its mines, farms, factories and informal markets have historically depended on migrant labour. To suddenly treat such migrants as invaders is to erase decades of regional economic interdependence.

The anger of many South Africans should not be dismissed as unemployment is painfully high, public hospitals, housing, schools and policing systems are under severe pressure. Poor citizens feel abandoned by a state that promised dignity after apartheid but has often delivered corruption, inequality and failing services.

Yet migrants have become convenient scapegoats for problems they did not create. A Malawian cleaner, Mozambican vendor or Zimbabwean builder did not collapse municipal governance, loot public funds, underinvest in clinics or design an economy unable to absorb millions of young job seekers.

That is why xenophobia is politically dangerous. It offers emotional satisfaction without solving structural failure. Chasing migrants may empty a few streets temporarily, but it will not create jobs, rebuild schools, fix hospitals or end crime.

Instead, it normalises mob justice, weakens the rule of law and tells desperate citizens that violence can produce policy outcomes. Once that lesson is learned, no democracy is safe.

For Malawians caught in this storm, the immediate question is survival. They need safe transport, documentation support, food, water, medical care, child protection and legal advice.

Those with South African spouses and children require special consideration, because family unity cannot be treated as a minor administrative detail. Those who owned businesses or property need mechanisms to recover assets, transfer money, close accounts or pursue compensation where property was destroyed through criminal violence. Repatriation without safeguards risks turning victims into destitute returnees.

South Africa also faces a reputational test. The country's moral authority in Africa was built partly on the solidarity it received during the anti-apartheid struggle. Many African countries sheltered exiles, supported liberation movements and paid diplomatic costs for South Africa's freedom.

That history does not give anyone a blank cheque to violate immigration law, but it does demand a higher standard of humanity. A nation that once asked Africa for solidarity cannot look away when Africans on its soil are hunted by fear.

The Malawian exodus is therefore not merely an immigration story. It is a story of African families split by borders, of dreams burned by prejudice, and of governments struggling to control a crisis once mobs have set the emotional agenda. If the region fails to respond with justice and compassion, the buses leaving South Africa will carry more than undocumented migrants, they will carry a warning that Africa's dream of unity remains fragile whenever poverty, politics and fear are allowed to decide who belongs. ■



A man holds his identity document after being attacked by a mob in Pretoria, South Africa.
Photo: Reuters

Mayaki's hopeful roadmap for Africa at the crossroads

By Anyimiwe CHRISTIAN

MANY books about Africa's development begin from a familiar place; crisis, failure, dependency and impending collapse, but Ibrahim Mayaki's *Africa's Critical Choices: A Call for a Pan-African Roadmap* takes a different road.

It does not deny Africa's burdens, but it refuses to imprison the continent inside them. Instead, Mayaki writes with the conviction of a statesman, technocrat and Pan-African thinker who believes Africa's future will not be rescued from outside, but built from within.

The book examines contemporary Africa at a time when the continent faces powerful pressures; globalisation, climate change, demographic growth, trade imbalances, migration, education gaps, governance deficits and the influence of external powers.

Its strength lies in how it connects these issues rather than treating them as isolated problems. Mayaki sees Africa's challenges as structural, but not hopeless; urgent, but not beyond repair.

Description of the book stands as an examination of Africa amid globalisation and multiple pressures, including climate, demographics, trade, migration, education, economics, governance and foreign influence.

What makes the book compelling is its moral centre. Mayaki's argument is not merely economic. It is political, philosophical and generational. He warns against the habit of searching for Africa's solutions in other regions of the world, arguing that doing so weakens the continent's ability to influence its own destiny.

This is perhaps the book's most important message; Africa must stop outsourcing imagination, it must stop waiting for imported blueprints and begin trusting its own institutions, knowledge systems, youth, entrepreneurs, farmers, women and policy thinkers.

The preface by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo gives the book historical weight as Obasanjo was among the leaders who championed the creation of NEPAD in 2001, and his praise of Mayaki's "40-year multifaceted career" places the book within a long tradition of African leaders wrestling with the unfinished project of continental renewal.

Mayaki himself writes not as an outsider diagnosing Africa from a distance, but as someone who has operated inside the machinery of governance and development.

The book's Pan-African spirit is its greatest virtue, it calls for African countries to think beyond narrow national boundaries and to build shared responses to shared problems.

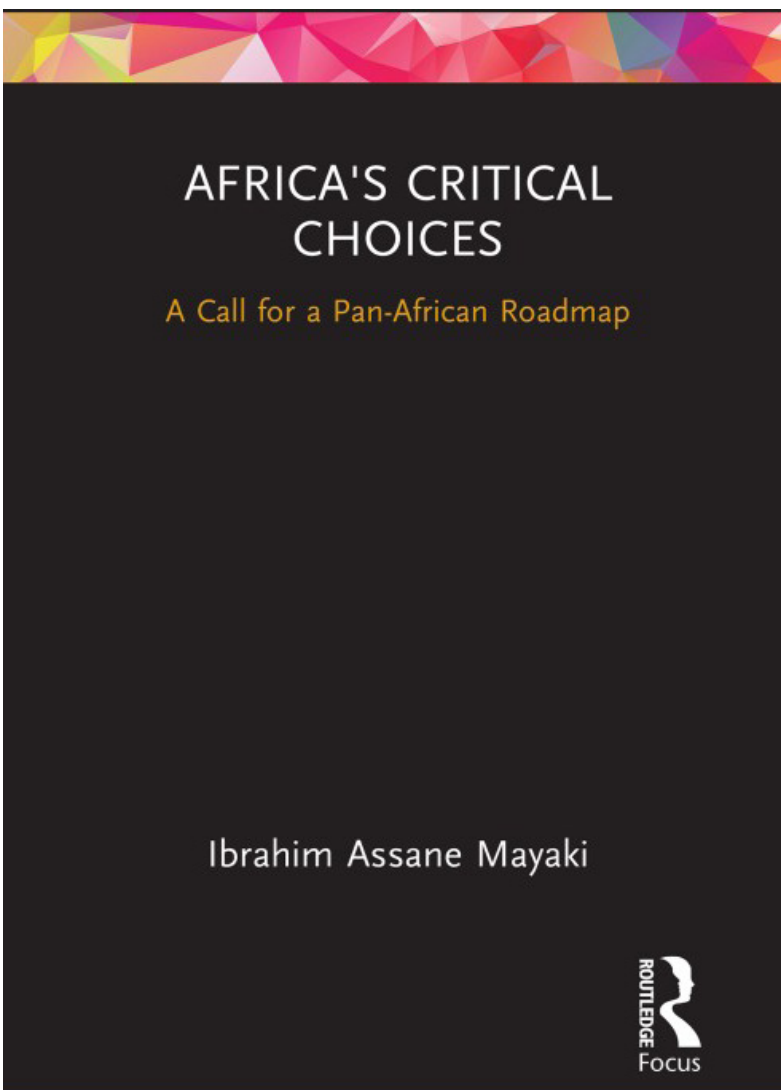
That argument remains urgent as no single African country can fully confront climate shocks, food insecurity, illicit financial flows, migration pressures or unfair global trade arrangements alone. Mayaki's roadmap insists that Africa's sovereignty in the 21st century must be collective.

Still, the book's optimism could have been sharpened further by more direct confrontation with the continent's political failures; authoritarianism, corruption, weak parliaments, captured institutions and leaders who speak Pan-Africanism while practicing personal rule.

A roadmap is only useful if those holding power are willing to be accountable.

Even so, *Africa's Critical Choices* is a serious and necessary intervention. The UN's Africa Renewal described it as a "wake-up call" for Africa to make critical choices, while noting that policymakers, development experts, researchers and political leaders would find it valuable.

Mayaki's book ultimately leaves the reader with one clear conclusion; Africa is not condemned to failure, but greatness will not arrive through slogans. It will require hard choices, disciplined leadership, regional integration, accountable governance and a generation brave enough to believe that the continent can design its own future. ■





**Easy, fast
and secure.
Welcome to digital
port services.**



YOUR GATEWAY TO GLOBAL TRADE AND PROSPERITY



Toll Free :0800-110032



WWW.PORTS.GO.TZ



@tpa_tz



It pays to keep the truth alive.

Great journalism takes courage and sacrifice to
bring you fact-checked stories that matter.
The AfriFiles exists so the world may know,
and thus change may come.
If our mission speaks to you, read us every month.

Truth matters. Find it in The AfriFiles.

SUBSCRIBE. IT'S FREE

GET The AfriFiles free. Do you value real and undistorted stories on
Africa? Just send an email to; editor@theafrifiles.com or follow us on
all social media through the handle; @theafrifiles



The AfriFiles