

Med-Or Monthly Africa Report

November 2025



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Editor's Note



We were delighted by the warm reception of the first issue of the Med-Or Monthly Africa Report.

Our goal is to provide a concise yet comprehensive overview of the main recent developments in Africa, sometimes beyond the prevailing narratives about the Continent.

In this issue, we start focusing on a cross-cutting topic: the **nuclear energy ambitions** of many African Countries. This is a fascinating new development, given its possible consequences from both an economic and a geo-political point of view.

The ambition to close the continental energy gap through investments in nuclear plants – and finally connect the 600 million Africans who still lack access to electricity – collides with a number of technical obstacles and possible political shortcomings, clearly highlighted in the article.

Priority is also given to the tragic situation in **Sudan**, where the atrocities accompanying the capture of El Fasher, the main city of Darfur, by the Rapid Support Forces have generated a new wave of indignation across global public opinion. Major geo-political actors (including the United States) seem now willing to strengthen their mediation efforts, in order to secure at least a humanitarian cessation of hostilities and other reciprocal military concessions between the contenders. Med-Or Africa Monthly Report is grateful to Dr Fouad Hikmat, former Advisor to the EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa and a leading Sudan expert, for his invaluable contribution on Sudan's latest developments.

We also observe the situation in **Madagascar**, where **youth led protests** have resulted in the ousting of President Rajoelina's government. Like in a number of countries, the Gen Z has played a pivotal role in mobilizing for inclusive government reform through digital platforms. It is important to monitor the next steps under military leadership, given the desire for inclusion and democratic governance of the youth.

We then focus on the poor results – especially in security terms – of the military regimes in the **Sahel** countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger), where their alliance with Russia has so far failed to deliver, and the victims of terrorism are increasing, particularly among civilians.

At the time of writing, the future of Mali looks especially precarious, due to the new strategy adopted by JNIM extremists to block oil and gas supplies to the capital Bamako and to the main areas still under the control of the military junta.

Finally, we assess the outcome of the **presidential elections** in **Cameroon** and **Côte d'Ivoire**, where both incumbents, Paul Biya and Alassane Ouattara, secured a further mandate from the electorate amid strong criticism, particularly visible in Yaoundé, with riots and chaos in the streets.

We hope you enjoy the reading!

Giuseppe Mistretta

Nuclear Ambitions in Africa

Corrado Čok



Nuclear energy is sparking unprecedented interest in Africa. The continent is still at the starting blocks: South Africa operates the only nuclear power plant in Africa – built by France’s Framatome in the 1980s – and Egypt hosts the only project currently under construction. However, there is a long list of African countries that are making preparations – such as Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria – or are considering adding nuclear power to their energy mix, including Algeria, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan, Tunisia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

For African governments, nuclear energy constitutes an enticing option to extend access to electricity to over 600 million people who still lack it across the continent and to support their industrialisation plans. In a recent report, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) indicated that Africa’s nuclear capacity is set to increase between five- and ten-fold by 2050, with opportunities to further harness its uranium reserves as global demand grows.

Africa’s nuclear fever has profound geo-political implications. Nuclear technology is not easily accessible, and newcomers need to rely on one of the main nuclear energy providers to set up plants and often manage them too, turning these firms into strategic diplomatic assets. These companies are Russian, French, American, Chinese, South Korean and Japanese. Russia, France and, more recently, China assertively jockey in the nuclear diplomacy space, helped by the substantial involvement of their companies in the operational phases, unlike those of others.

Russia and China have taken the front seat in Africa’s nuclear race thanks to deep-rooted political relations and cheaper reactor models. Besides leading the construction of Egypt’s al-Dabaa nuclear plant, Russia has signed co-operation agreements with nearly twenty African countries to support their nuclear development programmes. China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) has entered similar memoranda of understanding with Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya and South Africa, and has been pre-selected by Ghana to build a nuclear plant. Moscow and Beijing are clearly leveraging nuclear co-operation to advance their geo-political status in Africa and are finding little competition from Western players.

This nuclear frenzy, however, clashes with realities on the ground. In some countries, the security situation simply makes such large-scale investment unrealistic. Geo-political tensions would certainly mount if rogue states tried to develop a uranium enrichment industry outside IAEA supervision, given the risk of producing weapons-grade fuel.

In addition, standard (third generation) nuclear power plants are prohibitively expensive for most African countries already shouldering high debt-servicing costs; to understand the scale, Egypt's al-Dabaa is costing nearly USD 30 billion. On top of that, standard plants come with high installed capacity (1,000–1,600 MW), generating more electricity than most grids in Africa can sustain. These factors led the IAEA to suggest that Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) – cheaper, safer and with lower installed capacity (50–300 MW) – provide a more suitable option for most African countries.

SMRs represent an opportunity for Europeans to relaunch their energy co-operation with Africa through the nuclear sector, challenging Russia's and China's dominance. Although SMRs are still experimental, nine models are being developed under the umbrella of the European Industrial Alliance on SMRs. Italian industry and academia possess strong expertise in nuclear energy and are at the forefront of SMR development, with Ansaldo and ENEA partaking in European consortia and Ansaldo, ENEL and Leonardo having established Nuclitalia to promote suitable SMR solutions.

This position paves the way for Italy to support SMR partnerships with interested African countries. In the spirit of the Mattei Plan, co-development partnerships could foster integrated supply chains that also meet Africa's industrialisation demands – including, but not limited to, uranium, where Russia retains a significant footprint. Besides tempering Russian and Chinese influence, joint SMR projects could foster industrial growth, employment, decarbonisation and energy security both in Italy and in Africa.

The Fall of El Fasher: A Turning Point in Sudan's War and a Grim Warning for What Comes Next

Fouad Hikmat



The fall of El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, marks one of the most consequential – and alarming – moments in Sudan's devastating civil war. With the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) tightening their grip over Darfur and advancing towards Kordofan, the United Nations has issued a stark warning: the war in Sudan is “spiralling out of control”.

El Fasher had long stood as the last major army stronghold in Darfur and a symbolic centre of resistance against the RSF's campaign of territorial consolidation. Its fall signals not only the military erosion of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in western Sudan but also the collapse of fragile humanitarian access to millions of civilians already on the brink of famine and displacement. UN Secretary-General António Guterres described the situation as a “horrific crisis”, highlighting credible reports of atrocities, mass executions and ethnically targeted violence since the RSF's entry into the city.

The strategic city of El-Obeid, capital of North Kordofan, has now become the next focal point of military escalation. It lies along the vital corridor linking Khartoum to Darfur and hosts Sudan's largest cash crop market and a key section of the oil pipeline to Port Sudan. The RSF's recent capture of the nearby town of Bara underscores its intent to dominate the region's logistical and economic arteries, and to capture all remaining SAF-controlled pockets within a coherent geographical zone encompassing greater Darfur and the Kordofan region.

Both warring parties continue to mobilise, ignoring international appeals for a ceasefire from the United States and the Quartet (Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE). Meanwhile, civilians are caught between two advancing militaries, trapped in besieged towns and dying from hunger, disease and indiscriminate violence.

The humanitarian and political implications are immense. Protracted RSF control over Darfur and Kordofan – and a possible expansion of the war to the north – could entrench the country's fragmentation and solidify a war economy that thrives on chaos. It would also weaken prospects for a credible peace process, as trust, societal relationships and state legitimacy further erode.

The fall of El Fasher must therefore serve as a wake-up call – to regional powers and international mediators alike – that Sudan's conflict can no longer be managed through rhetorical appeals or fragmented diplomacy. Without a unified international strategy, robust protection for civilians and renewed political momentum towards an inclusive peace, Sudan risks descending into a state of irreversible collapse – one that will reshape the geo-political and humanitarian map of the Horn of Africa for years to come.

The Role of the Gen Z, the Army and the Situation in Madagascar

Adi Guyo



Over the past two months, Madagascar has been facing political unrest following the arrest of two politicians on 19 September. They had been organising a peaceful protest over the severe water shortages and prolonged power outages affecting the country. Their detention was widely perceived as an attempt to silence legitimate dissent and suppress demands for accountability. This became a catalyst for the wave of demonstrations that began on 25 September.

Much of the mobilisation was driven by Gen Z, who co-ordinated online through platforms such as Facebook and TikTok. They were soon joined by civil society organisations, labour unions and other politicians.

Madagascar is the fourth-largest island nation and has a population of around 30 million, with a median age of about 19. Nearly three quarters of the population live in poverty, and the frustration of young people reflects the failure of urbanisation to provide basic public services and equitable opportunities. What began as a protest over poor service delivery quickly evolved into a demand for broader governance reform. The demonstrations spread to eight other cities beyond the capital.

President Andry Rajoelina's response – dismissing the Prime Minister and dissolving parliament – was considered insufficient, and protesters instead called for his resignation. As pressure mounted, President Rajoelina alleged that foreign actors were conspiring to remove him from power. Clashes between protesters and police resulted in at least 22 deaths and numerous injuries.

The dynamics shifted dramatically with the intervention of the military, particularly when the elite unit known as the Corps d'Administration des Personnels et des Services Administratifs et Techniques (CAPSAT) joined the protesters, offering them protection. CAPSAT's defection changed the trajectory of the political landscape as President Rajoelina fled to an undisclosed location. In his absence, parliament impeached him for desertion of duty, a decision later upheld by the High Constitutional Court.

With no civilian authority in place, the military moved to consolidate power. These developments echo Madagascar's turbulent past: President Rajoelina himself rose to power through a coup in 2009 before later securing electoral legitimacy in 2018. Interestingly, the same CAPSAT unit that once supported him has now ousted him, as it did his predecessor. Colonel Michael Randrianirina, the head of CAPSAT, has since been sworn in as interim president for a proposed two-year transitional period, placing Madagascar among the growing list of African nations currently under military leadership.

As the country enters an uncertain phase, questions remain about whether this military-led transition will differ from previous cycles of prolonged interim governance. The country's youthful population – as in Morocco, Kenya and Nepal – continues to push for political reforms that are inclusive and transparent. In recent years, Gen Z has emerged across several countries as a driving force for accountability, given their economic frustration and desire for genuine representation. Although their movements may seem to appear sporadically in different places, they share a common demand for justice and equal opportunity for all. It is possible that similar movements could arise in other countries if systemic inequalities persist.

It remains to be seen in Madagascar whether these aspirations can be realised under the constraints of military rule. For now, the youth of Madagascar watch with cautious optimism as they observe the direction of their nation's future.

Security Situation in the Sahel Region Deteriorates Further

Giuseppe Mistretta



Recently, the security situation in the Sahel region, especially in the three states run by military juntas, has dramatically deteriorated.

The activity of the main terrorist groups, such as JNIM and ISGS, has increased across the region, despite the support given by the Russian Africa Corps to national armies.

This is particularly true in Mali, where since last September JNIM has changed its strategy and blocked fuel distribution to the capital Bamako and to the most strategic areas of the country. After inflicting several defeats on the FAMA (the Malian Army) on the battlefield during the previous year, JNIM – which counts roughly 6,000 fighters – began attacking oil and gas supplies coming from Senegal, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and other neighbouring countries, causing visible difficulties for the military government and for the population.

As a result, tanker trucks and petrol stations have been set on fire, truck drivers kidnapped, construction sites and roads closed, air traffic reduced and many schools shut down. The situation is so tense that some foreign countries, such as the United States and Italy, have issued warnings to their nationals, advising them to avoid travelling to Mali for the time being.

Naturally, Mali's already critical economic situation is being further undermined by this “war scenario”, and new investments to re-energise the country and local communities are difficult to attract (including in the mining sector, where revenues are also falling).

The situation in neighbouring Burkina Faso is similar, with an increase in jihadist activity – particularly by JNIM – and a sharp rise in civilian casualties since 2022 (+90% compared to pre-putsch levels, according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies). Some of those victims are caused by the pro-junta militia “Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland”, created by the military government by recruiting young people willing to fight against JNIM, but often involved in repressive operations against regime opponents.

In Niger, the terrorist operations of JNIM and ISGS, traditionally concentrated in the western area known as the “three borders region”, have expanded to other territories and sometimes intersect with Tuareg armed opposition in the north. Here too, the number of deaths caused by fighting has increased by 49% compared with the pre-coup period.

In all three countries (Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali), which launched the “Alliance des États du Sahel” in 2023, free press and political parties have been effectively banned through specific decrees, while relations with neighbouring states and with ECOWAS remain strained.

After a couple of years of collaboration, the alliance between the military juntas in Bamako, Niamey and Ouagadougou and Russia – and the deployment of its Africa Corps – does not appear to be paying off. Reports in the international press speak of serious disagreements between Russian soldiers and local armies.

While it is not yet clear how the Trump Administration intends to address the Sahel situation, the European Union is attempting a gradual re-engagement, continuing humanitarian and “people-to-people” co-operation, and hoping to launch a new, more ambitious strategic platform (assuming the AES countries accept the plan proposed by EU Special Representative for the Sahel, João Cravinho), to which France is strongly opposed.

At present, the security “void” in the Sahel region is a major concern for European countries, given its direct nexus with irregular migration. At the same time, after the withdrawal of French troops – imposed by AES leaders – and the lack of visible, positive effects from Russian military involvement, a re-engagement by the EU-27 may not be sufficient if it is limited to specific co-operation projects and light military training courses.

In any case, for as long as the Russian presence in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger persists, it will be technically and politically almost impossible for Europe and the wider West to provide more tangible support to the Sahel states, not least due to implications for shared ethical principles and common values.

Africa's Aging Incumbents and the Struggle for Renewal: Lessons from Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon

Luciano Pollichieni



A pivotal month for elections and democracy in Africa has just concluded with the presidential contests in Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire. The victories of Paul Biya (aged 91) in Cameroon and Alassane Ouattara (aged 83) in Côte d'Ivoire underscore at least three key dimensions shaping the continent's future:

- a) the evolution of governance systems in several African states, which can no longer be considered fully democratic yet are not outright authoritarian;
- b) the struggle of the ageing political elite to navigate ongoing demographic transitions; and
- c) the geo-political consequences that stem from both.

The governments reconfirmed in power through these elections cannot simply be dismissed as illegitimate. The RHDP in Côte d'Ivoire and the RDPC in Cameroon have each steered their countries towards substantial economic progress, even if Côte d'Ivoire has attained higher levels of prosperity, resolved major political crises (such as the Ivorian civil war) and become indispensable to regional stability – particularly given Cameroon's role in countering the jihadist insurgency around Lake Chad.

Yet both nations now enter a new phase in which voter expectations are diversifying, placing mounting pressure on entrenched leaderships. Rapid population growth and rising education levels bring new challenges – above all youth unemployment – that the traditional ruling class has failed to address.

In response, the power structures in Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire have adopted increasingly rigid approaches to elections, turning them from expressions of popular will into contests among ruling elites. In Côte d'Ivoire, the incumbent government invoked the so-called “Ivoirité” law to bar key opponents such as Tidjane Thiam and relied on state institutions to restrict the opposition's room for manoeuvre. Despite this, general opinion towards the incumbent president, Ouattara, remains favourable, as the population regards him as the architect of peace and progress in the nation.

In Cameroon, control was less overt but equally pervasive, undermining the full legitimacy of the vote. Within this context, the protests surrounding the campaigns and results (even if weaker in the case of Côte d'Ivoire) can be seen as a predictable consequence of a system that restricts genuine political competition. These elections therefore revive the question of how such regimes should be defined: they are not absolute autocracies – opposition exists, and elections occur – yet they lack transparency and fair access to political and financial resources.



The challenges confronting Ouattara and Biya in their new terms are distinct but parallel. Foremost is youth unemployment: both countries must accelerate industrialisation to generate the jobs needed to absorb demographic growth and prevent instability. For both leaders and their entourages, succession also represents a pressing concern. In this respect, while Ouattara can rely on a relatively cohesive establishment to identify a successor, tensions between Biya and his former protégé Issa Tchiroma Bakary expose fragmentation within the RDPC, deepening uncertainty over internal power balances ahead of any eventual transition.

On the international stage, the two presidential outcomes signal continuity rather than rupture. Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire are expected to maintain their balanced foreign policy – preserving strong ties with European allies and the United States while remaining open to co-operation with the BRICS bloc (both countries have joined the Belt and Road Initiative). In sum, despite their shortcomings, the renewed mandates of Biya and Ouattara provide geo-political steadiness in a region increasingly marked by volatility.

These elections do not mark the collapse of democracy in Africa; populations in both countries still enjoy a significant degree of political freedom, state institutions such as the judiciary retain a meaningful level of autonomy, and independent bodies – including unions and media freedoms – have remained largely intact even after the elections. Yet the recent votes in these countries confirm the entrenchment of non-alternating electoral systems, where incumbents refine their control upstream, ensuring the continuity of power and geopolitics alike.



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