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Ten Things to Watch in Africa in 2021

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Fears that the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to massive deaths in sub-Saharan Africa have not materialised. However, the region will not be spared from its effects in 2021 regardless. Many challenges unrelated to the pandemic persist and are likely to be aggravated by the coronavirus outbreak, putting at risk previous progress made. We present a selective list and analysis of “ten things to watch” in Africa in 2021.

- **Fighting the Pandemic:** As the world watches the race over vaccines and the start of mass vaccination, it remains doubtful that vaccinations will be available on the African continent anytime soon. Rising infection rates give reason to worry, and 2021 has already seen new lockdown measures that again hit the already poor and vulnerable.
- **Conflicts:** Jihadism will fuel further conflict while additional conflict potentials in Central Africa and elsewhere need to be watched closely too, especially in Ethiopia given it is on the verge of civil war and state disintegration.
- **Politics:** COVID-19-related restrictions may increase authoritarian tendencies. In several countries – including Ethiopia, The Gambia, Uganda, and Zambia – crucial elections will be held in 2021 that pose the risk of further democratic backsliding. Africa’s giant Nigeria may see a continuation of the EndSARS protests.
- **Development:** The current crisis entails important risks for Africa’s economic outlook, including the delay of regional integration, increasing government debt, and the drying-up of foreign investment flows. Poverty will remain on the rise, while the food crisis is likely to be exacerbated.

Policy Implications

Regarding the pandemic, it will be key that Africa gets its share of vaccines. European Union–Africa relations deserve a reset at the upcoming Africa–EU summit that is likely to be mainly concerned with the economic fallout of the pandemic. After Donald Trump’s demise, it remains to be seen whether the new United States Africa policy will overcome “Africa apathy” or will instead turn the continent into a battleground in the expanding rivalry with China.



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The Pandemic and Africa in the Race for the Vaccine

To the surprise of many observers, sub-Saharan Africa has been less hit by the coronavirus than other world regions, with the notable exception of South Africa. Many African governments imposed strict lockdowns in March 2020, often even before the first cases were detected in their countries and citizens have shown strong solidarity to help contain the virus. The explanations for this positive development are manifold and range from – in addition to the prompt lockdowns – prior experience with fighting the Ebola virus and cholera outbreaks, Africa’s young population, the warm climate, to potentially higher protection as a lot of citizens might be exposed to pathogens on a more regular basis than in other world regions. Others point to the fact that the weak public health systems produce only poor data and might underestimate infection rates. Yet after these initial successes, as in other world regions, transmission rates are steeply rising again with 1.1 million infected individuals and more than 30,000 COVID-19-related deaths (Johns Hopkins University 2021). The year 2021 will probably soon see new lockdown measures that again hit the already poor and vulnerable particularly hard. Even without new lockdowns, the economic slowdown means extreme poverty in Africa will be on the rise again – in contrast to the years before the pandemic.

Although African countries are making it, overall, better through the pandemic than expected, hopes for the vaccines are high. Yet, experts do not expect vaccination to begin until mid-2021 due to logistical difficulties. Hence, as the world watches the race over doses and the start of mass vaccination in the West, it remains to be seen if and when vaccination will be available on the continent and to what extent the COVAX facility – the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator of the World Health Organization – will be able to cushion the strong global inequalities in access. Thus far, the initiative has secured two billion doses for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Yet, Africa will not receive nearly enough vaccines from COVAX to achieve herd immunity – in other words, to vaccinate 60 per cent of the population. In fact, for 2021 the target for Africa currently stands at 20 per cent.

The inequalities in purchasing related vaccines are likely to be exacerbated by difficulties in actually testing and delivering them. Thus far, neither the Pfizer-BioNTech nor the Moderna candidates have been tested on population samples in Africa. Countries in the region are therefore putting high hopes on AstraZeneca’s vaccine candidate. Kenya is currently running trials with this product. Experts do consider it an alternative for LMICs as it is logistically easier to distribute – that because it can be stored at room temperature, meaning its effectiveness will not rely on cold-storage facilities and reliable electricity sources. Furthermore, AstraZeneca is contractually obligated by the vaccine’s developer, Oxford University, to sell it at a price that just covers costs. Hence, poorer countries may not be subjected to the bidding war with richer nations that we have seen in the past.

Jihadist Violent Conflict: The Other Lingering Pandemic

Violent conflicts will continue to challenge governments and societies in sub-Saharan Africa in 2021, although fears of massive escalation due to the pandemic have

not (yet) materialised. Often concentrating on individual conflicts, observers tend to overlook the region-wide spread of militant jihadist conflict. Long-term trends show what might resemble a “political pandemic”: At the start of the new millennium, there were no active jihadist insurgencies. In 2006, Al-Shabaab emerged in Somalia and later spilled over to neighbouring Kenya. In 2009, the Boko Haram insurgency started in Nigeria, spreading to Cameroon, Chad, and Niger in subsequent years. In 2012, the Tuareg rebellion in north Mali was joined by Islamist rebels; the insurgency has now spread to Burkina Faso and Niger. In 2015, Ansar al-Sunna started its attacks against the Mozambican government in the northern Cabo Delgado region. In 2020, attacks spilled over to southern Tanzania with a further risk of escalation. The Allied Democratic Front, originating in Uganda and operating in the Democratic Republic of Congo, pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2019.

In sum, jihadist violence has “infected” almost one-quarter of all sub-Saharan African countries; the majority of armed conflicts there have a jihadist dimension to them (Pettersson and Öberg 2020). Jihadist groups are connected through a transnational ideology, often cooperate, most groups are affiliated with either Al-Qaida or ISIS, and they receive material and ideological support from the Middle East and North Africa region. Jihadist and other religious conflicts tend to be bloodier and are more difficult to resolve given the groups’ demands. Most worryingly, they may further spread to previously rather peaceful countries with a religiously mixed population as found in Central, East, and West Africa (e.g. Benin, Central African Republic, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Tanzania, or Togo). Jihadist conflicts often mix with ethnic conflict and other non-religious conflict drivers, and have already produced large-scale intercommunal violence in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Weak states enable operations and make extremist ideology relatively attractive as governments do not deliver in terms of development and good governance. Counter-insurgency has failed to defeat these groups and often escalates violence by killing civilians, creating additional grievances.

A decisive reaction to jihadism must address both security and development; in terms of security, capable state forces remain indispensable – but in the long run only a new “social contract” will help (Lierl 2020). External support will be necessary. It remains to be seen how exactly the European Union’s new Counter Terrorism Agenda 2020–2025, published in December 2020 and explicitly aiming at cooperation with African governments, will be brought to life. Yet the long-term answer must be African in origin, and possibly include the pro-peace potential of religion. We should not underestimate risks largely unrelated to jihadism either, especially in conflict theatres like Cameroon, CAR, the DRC, South Sudan, as well as Ethiopia.

Ethiopia on the Verge of Civil War and State Disintegration

In Ethiopia a power struggle between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the leadership of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) escalated slowly, and culminated in a direct military confrontation between the federal army and the TPLF in November 2020. Since his coming to power in 2018, Abiy – who is of mixed Oromo and Amhara descent – has strived to weaken the TPLF’s dominant role in Ethiopia’s political system. In response, the Tigrayan leadership withdrew its members from

the federal government. Further, following the postponement of scheduled national elections in August 2020 – allegedly due to the pandemic – the TPLF successfully held its own regional ones in Tigray instead.

In a further escalation of events, both of the political entities that are the Federal Government and Tigray’s Regional Government consider each other illegal, and in early November a war between federal forces and the TPLF broke out. Despite claims by the prime minister that this was a mere law enforcement operation during which “not one single civilian has been killed” (*Reuters* 2020), the TPLF retreated to the mountains and launched a guerrilla struggle. So far, about 50,000 civilians have fled from Tigray to Sudan, with ethnic-based massacres resulting in hundreds of deaths (*UN News* 2020). Eritrean soldiers were clandestinely involved in the military operation (Stewart and Lewis 2020). Thousands of Eritrean refugees were displaced from refugee camps in Tigray, and many have been deported back to Eritrea against their will.

In 2021, Ethiopia’s internal cohesion finds itself threatened by this conflict in Tigray and a looming humanitarian tragedy (including displacement and famine). Ethnic conflicts are also imminent in other parts of Ethiopia, and ethnic profiling against Tigrayans – even among the staff of Ethiopian Airlines – is on the rise. Ahmed has rejected international mediation attempts and rescinded much of his political reform agenda. He has increasingly resorted to repression, and state media outlets have been turned into propaganda tools. Meanwhile a new date for national elections has been set for June, but parts of the opposition, including influential Oromo activists, have announced a boycott due to the extensive detainment of their members and supporters. It is doubtful if the elections will be carried out in a free and democratic manner, and it is unclear how Abiy will proceed with his political reforms. So far, the prime minister has not provided an alternative to the system of ethnic federalism introduced by former TPLF leader and prime minister Meles Zenawi. It also remains to be seen if Abiy will be ready to return to the negotiating table to solve political power struggles. Otherwise, ethnic conflict may lead to further tragedies, and in the worst-case scenario to state disintegration.

The Pandemic’s Political Fallout: Increased Authoritarian Tendencies

COVID-19 still bears the risk of disrupting democratic governance in Africa. The pandemic could weaken authoritarian regimes in the long run, yet it seems more likely that it will favour authoritarian practices like it did in 2020. While current government responses to the pandemic on the continent have started to exhibit fewer violations of democratic rights (Kolvani et al. 2020), several (authoritarian) regimes continue to use the outbreak as a justification for repression and the consolidation of power. Examples of the excessive use of violence by the police to enforce coronavirus-related emergency measures have included Uganda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Rwanda, Kenya, and Angola. Even within single countries, there was light and shadows. Ghana has been characterised as one of the few African countries that only experienced minor violations of democratic standards in response to COVID-19, but some journalists were nonetheless attacked by soldiers enforcing the lockdown there (Cascais 2020).

This mixed record of political responses to the pandemic is likely to persist over the next year. Two developments deserve particular attention here. First, COVID-19 will continue to shape electoral processes (see also, “Election Watch 2021”). In 2021, elections will be held in several countries where pandemic-related measures have affected the respect for democratic standards, including Ethiopia, The Gambia, Uganda, and Zambia. During the past year, elections have also been postponed in response to COVID-19, yet occasionally also for political ends. Even in countries that held elections as planned, the pandemic allowed governments to exercise tight control over the process. In Burundi, for example, quarantine obligations were used to impede external election observation. As long as the ongoing pandemic requires election safety regulations to contain the spread of the virus during campaigns and polling, this will continue to offer possibilities for political abuse. Second, public health regulations can affect public protest. Sub-Saharan Africa had seen a significant increase in anti-government demonstrations during the 2010s, but COVID-19 has since undermined this trend. In Zimbabwe, members of the opposition and civil society were ostensibly detained for violating lockdown regulations during the government’s violent crackdown on political opponents. As the continent now faces the pandemic’s second wave, strict public health measures could once again be abused to restrict political protest.

Election Watch 2021: No Electoral Turnover in Sight

In 2021, not very many elections are due in sub-Saharan Africa. Ethiopia with its parliamentary system and related elections due in June aside, the crucial elections are about the presidency. It is unlikely that they will bring any electoral turnovers of power. In seven countries – Benin, Chad, Djibouti, The Gambia, Republic of Congo, Uganda, and Zambia – incumbent presidents will stand for re-election. Beyond COVID-19-related authoritarian tendencies, in general incumbents enjoy several advantages like higher visibility, agenda control, and access to state resources – factors increasing their odds of winning office (Przeworski 2015). The incumbents running for president in 2021 are unlikely to buck this trend. Among them are several long-time rulers: Chad’s Idriss Déby (in power since 1990), Djibouti’s Ismail Omar Guelleh (in power since 1999), Republic of Congo’s Denis Sassou Nguesso (in power since 1979, but interrupted in the period 1992–1997), and Uganda’s Yoweri Museveni (in power since 1986). These leaders have shown in the past how to weaken the opposition and manipulate elections. Only Museveni has faced a more severe threat to his hold on power. The 38-year-old Robert Kyagulanyi, aka Bobi Wine, a popular musician and actor, was able to gather substantial electoral support. Museveni has fought back harshly by arresting Wine several times, attacking the latter’s rallies, and by intimidating media outlets. At the time of writing, in January 2021, Museveni seemed to have secured a clear victory in presidential elections. However, Wine’s popularity among the younger generation, the majority of the Ugandan population, will continue to pose a threat to Museveni’s rule.

Benin and Zambia hold greater democratic credentials than the countries discussed above, but their respective incumbents Patrice Talon and Edgar Lungu do not shy away either from authoritarian practices when it comes to containing opponents. Benin’s two most prominent opposition figures – Sébastien Ajavon and

Lionel Zinsou – are currently in exile after having been convicted by Beninese courts in controversial rulings. Due to severe national economic problems Lungu could lose the election, but he proved already in 2016 his willingness to manipulate the electoral process when required. The most open presidential race may take place in The Gambia in December. In 2016, Adama Barrow unexpectedly defeated then president Yahya Jammeh and ended the latter's 22-year-long rule. However, Barrow's candidacy was only possible because veteran opposition politician Ousainou Darboe was in prison at the time. Barrow stepped in and was supported by an alliance of opposition parties. Darboe became Barrow's vice president. Yet, in the meantime, the alliance between Barrow and Darboe has collapsed, and the latter plans to challenge the incumbent – accusing him of blocking democratic reforms and of corruption.

EndSARS Protest: Shifting Nigeria's Political Paradigm

The demand to end the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) – created in 1992 to deal with robbery, vehicle theft, kidnapping, and cattle rustling – began in 2016. It arose after several reports of human rights abuses by SARS, including illegal “stop-and-search” measures, illegal arrests and detentions, extrajudicial killings, the sexual harassment of women, and the mistreatment of young, male Nigerians. In 2020, social media protests popularised the #EndSARS hashtag. This movement has been one of a kind, as it is the first time Nigerians of different classes, ethnic groups, and religions have united behind a shared cause. For a protest without leadership and amidst government suppression, it succeeded in systematically organising funds, welfare packages, lawyers, doctors, and ambulances at protest sites, including cleaning up after themselves at the end of each protest. Also, the protest moved beyond the shores of the country to Nigerians in the diaspora. The movement went global, with massive protests in other parts of Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Nigerian celebrities in the diaspora and the Black Lives Matter movement have supported the cause. On 20 October 2020, armed soldiers shot at protesters; the number of casualties has not yet been ascertained (*Aljazeera* 2020). The shootings may have halted physical protests, but not the movement. Protests will continue online and in more formalised formats.

EndSARS will proceed to become a more active social media movement, as protesters continue to force concessions through various platforms. Social media has played a crucial role in the movement. By 9 October 2020, the hashtag had accumulated 2.4 million tweets and was the number one trending topic on Twitter in several countries (*Global Voices* 2020). This attracted the global attention that the protest aimed for: having the International Criminal Court open an inquiry into the shootings (Samuel 2020). However, as expected from the Nigerian political elite, the movement will not proceed with online protests unsuppressed. There will be intensified calls for a social media bill as a means of clamping down. Besides, the recent increase in COVID-19 infections will provide the government with a legitimate reason to ban any mass protests. Yet, protesters have begun working towards more formalised means of holding the Nigerian government accountable. Past events have motivated protesters to think and plan more seriously for upcoming elections. Town-hall meetings have been organised, and those at the forefront of the movement have encouraged Nigerians to get their voter cards.

Dealing with the Pandemic's Economic Fallout and Medium-Term Risks

The economic impacts of the pandemic in Africa so far differ considerably from country to country; this also holds for the economic outlook. The direct economic effects of the pandemic vary due to differences in the length and intensity of lockdown measures. Infection rates will have to be watched and new lockdown measures may come, but so far it seems that the indirect effects of the crisis will matter more than the direct ones for most countries. Again, these effects have varied and will vary considerably between countries, depending, inter alia, on their main exports (Lakemann, Lay, and Tafese 2020). In October, the International Monetary Fund forecast a moderate recovery for most countries of the region that would, however, typically not make up for the recessions of 2020. In light of the developments since then, these predictions may prove too optimistic, as many of the negative spillovers in particular from the EU and US will remain relevant for the first half of 2021. At the same time, positive signals come from commodity markets where prices for many African exports – from oil to cotton – have recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

The current crisis entails important risks for the medium- and long-term economic outlook. First, the crisis has reinforced a looming debt problem. Although fiscal responses have been much more limited in Africa than elsewhere in the world, government debt has risen across the continent – very considerably so in Ghana (from 63 per cent of gross domestic product in 2019 to 77 per cent thereof in 2020) and South Africa (62 per cent to 79 per cent), two regionally important economies. As fiscal consolidation cannot be a short-term remedy, debt sustainability will be an issue and requires continued international support, including for troubled middle-income economies. The G20 debt service suspension initiative will probably need even further extension beyond the first half of 2021, but a more fundamental agreement on debt restructuring will most likely not be achieved.

Second, the economic downturn and the uncertainty induced by the pandemic has caused massive disinvestment by foreign firms and postponements and cancellations of planned and new investment projects. Dwindling foreign direct investment inflows put Africa's future integration into the world economy at risk, something which has been singled out by many African governments and multilateral and donor initiatives as key for structural transformation and the creation of jobs for the continent's youth. Third, there is a risk that the pandemic stalls progress regarding projects of regional economic integration. Last year we suggested to watch "Implementing the Eco," following a 2019 agreement of the heads of state of the 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States to introduce a common currency. Nothing happened ultimately, and the plans were shelved for at least three years (if not longer). In contrast, the African Union recently reported some progress on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) with "trading" supposed to start on 1 January 2021. Under the AfCFTA, AU member states – everyone but Eritrea signed the agreement – must phase out 90 per cent of tariff lines over a period of five or 10 years, depending on their level of development. As of today, 37 of the zone's 54 members states have ratified the agreement and 41 have submitted tariff-reduction schedules. Yet, effective implementation of the AfCFTA is likely to remain on our list of economic developments to be watched for a number of years to come.

Looming Food Crises

Food shortages will remain a major concern in the region. Recent data from the World Bank's High Frequency Phone Survey initiative suggests that across all countries surveyed, at least 45 per cent of households reported being worried about running out of food in the last 30 days. This illustrates the potentially destructive effects of the pandemic, but the situation is also exacerbated by an already-tense food-security situation in the conflict-ridden parts of the Sahel and the locust-infected areas of East Africa. Continued infestations and adverse weather conditions will make food insecurity an issue in many African countries in 2021. By October 2020, also Southern Africa – Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and parts of Angola – had been hit by the locust plague. Currently a second wave is hitting East Africa. In addition to the already-drastic harvest losses due to repeated locust infestations, the La Niña weather cycle with expected dry conditions and a poor rainy season in March to May 2021 bears the risk of bring devastating drought and hunger to East Africa, threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya in particular.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not helping matters. Rather, it has once again exposed the general vulnerability of many African countries to turbulences in global food markets. The current situation is special because it not only disrupts production but also national and international supply chains. Disrupted supply chains push up prices. There are reports of sharply rising food prices – for example for some key staples in East and West Africa – that are likely to persist into 2021. Higher food prices coinciding with lower incomes poses a heavy burden for urban households. Yet, it should not go unnoticed that some global food supply chains have proven to be relatively resilient during the past year.

Africa–EU Relations: Catching Up on Urgent Issues at the Summit

In March 2020, the EU presented its “Comprehensive Strategy with Africa.” The new strategy builds on a growing momentum in EU–Africa relations that – at least on paper – emphasises a continent-to-continent partnership and was meant to prepare the EU for the 2020 Africa–EU summit, which was eventually postponed to 2021 because of the coronavirus outbreak. Progress in EU–Africa relations more or less stalled in 2020 as a result, but the summit – if it can take place – will be the key diplomatic event of this upcoming year.

It can build on an unexpected success: Late in 2020, the chief negotiators from the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States reached a political deal for a new comprehensive Partnership Agreement that will succeed the Cotonou Agreement and will be signed in the second half of 2021. This post-Cotonou agreement will cover a range of traditional areas of cooperation including political dialogue, trade, financial and technical cooperation, but also new areas such as the digital economy and cybersecurity. The new agreement's main innovation is the three regional protocols (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific): they will have their own specific governance, and focus on each region's needs. In the African protocol, economic aspects dominate – with special emphasis on the role of (foreign) investment for growth and job creation.

The Africa–EU summit will likely have to deal with the issue of access to and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines. On some economic topics, the summit can probably produce certain tangible results, including additional support for LICs and debt reduction/restructuring, and the post-pandemic recovery of European investments. The trade agenda may (again) not see much movement this year, as it: (a) is overshadowed by the pandemic; (b) is further complicated by uncertainties regarding regional integration and the AfCFTA; and, (c) builds on a model of agreements that appears to remain unacceptable to key economies. Note that, in principle, trade matters are meant to remain governed through Economic Partnership Agreements – also under the post-Cotonou agreement. This is despite the opportunities for reshaping the future of EU–Africa trade relations and intra-African trade provided by the political progress made in recent years.

The space for breakthroughs in 2021 is limited in other key policy arenas. With the United Kingdom leaving the EU, other countries need to step in to fill the expertise and the attention for Africa that left the Union. The EU and its member states will continue their support for creating peace and security, especially in the Sahel – where France and other EU members states have deployed troops, including Germany within the framework of a United Nations mission. Although Europe’s efforts in the Sahel have proven largely unsuccessful (see Lierl 2020), no decisive turn for the better is likely to be seen in the cooperation with the G5 (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad) in 2021 – although the EU’s new Counterterrorism Initiative does aim at greater strategic cooperation. This year is certain to see yet more of the dramatic examples of the EU’s failure to offer solutions to the migration crisis. Yet, EU member states remain caught between humanitarian challenges and the – often unspoken – hard interest to contain migration flows. Pandemic-induced economic hardship and conflicts throughout the region will increase the motivation to emigrate.

Africa–US relations: The End of “Apathy” after Trump?

The new US president Joe Biden will drastically change the tone of American foreign policy towards Africa. While his predecessor Trump infamously referred to African nations as “shithole countries,” rigorously pursued his “America First” policy, and introduced a “Muslim travel ban” that also denied entry to individuals from African countries with a Muslim majority, Biden has promised the restoration of “mutually respectful engagement” with the continent. Biden’s new foreign policy team and in particular his designated secretary of state, Antony Blinken, promise a more professional, consistent, and effective approach to foreign policy and a stronger diplomatic footprint in Africa in the years to come.

However, rhetoric will change more dramatically than actual policy. Since the Bill Clinton era, Democrats and Republicans have strongly converged in their views on US Africa policy. Even President Barack Obama, whose election as the first black US president was hailed in Africa, largely neglected the continent. Obama’s much-touted “Pivot to Africa” set the tone not only for his but also for – admittedly in a very different fashion – the Trump presidency. The obsession of foreign policymakers in Washington with the geostrategic competition with China will most likely also be the prism with which they look at Africa. This may create an impetus for

more substantive US engagement in Africa under President Biden so as to balance China's broad spectrum of activities and its growing influence there.

The biggest issue might be reviving trade relations with the continent and stepping up engagement with African countries on global and UN affairs – they constitute more than one-quarter of all UN members. Yet in other policy fields, Biden's administration will most probably show more continuity. For one, US bilateral security and development assistance to Africa has hovered at around the USD 7 billion per year mark in recent years; some 70–75 per cent of these funds are dedicated to address health challenges like HIV/AIDS and malaria. It is doubtful whether the Biden administration will massively increase these funds amidst the current pandemic's economic fallout. Second, security will remain a major concern. American counterterrorism efforts will probably remain in place or might even grow to fight intensifying Islamist extremism in, for instance, the Sahel, Nigeria, Mozambique, and East Africa. Finally, Presidents George W. Bush, Obama, and Trump all launched their signature Africa initiatives, including the latter's "Power Africa" scheme. It would be a surprise if President Biden did not follow this precedent and start his own signature Africa initiative then.

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This GIGA Focus deviates from the series' typical format. It is the joint product of several IAA staff. Julia Grauvogel wrote the part on authoritarian tendencies in the context of the pandemic. Charlotte Heyl authored the section on elections; Lynda Iroulo contributed the part on protests in Nigeria. Christian von Soest wrote about the new US Africa policy and contributed to the part on the “race for the vaccine.” Matthias Basedau wrote the segment on jihadist and other conflicts; Nicole Hirt authored the part on conflict in Ethiopia. Jann Lay, Renate Hartwig, and Tevin Tafese wrote the parts on the economic outlook, the food crises, the “race for the vaccine,” as well as EU–African relations. Matthias Basedau and Jann Lay edited this GIGA Focus.

Related GIGA Research

The IAA investigates across a range of different projects the democratic practices and legitimisation strategies of African regimes, in particular presidential term limits and the effects of sanctions. In our conflict-related research, we have recently focused on the role of religion in inducing and shaping violence. A recently approved project will investigate potential conflict escalation as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our research on the development of labour markets, integration into the global economy, and rural transformation in Africa sheds light on the deep socio-economic changes that are under way across the continent.

Related GIGA Publications

Basedau, Matthias (2017), *The Rise of Religious Armed Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa: No Simple Answers*, GIGA Focus Africa, 04, August, www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/11576059-rise-religious-armed-conflicts-saharan-africa-simple-answers/.

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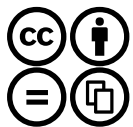
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