

CLAWS Newsletter



Faultlines: Africa and Latin America | Volume I | Issue No. 01

By Janavi Mohanraj Jagajothi

AFRICA – SECURITY & GEOPOLITICAL

10 May ([France 24](#)): Jihadist Attacks in Central Mali Kill Over 70.

Jihadist attacks in central Mali have killed more than 70 people in recent days, with some estimates placing the toll at 80, as Islamist armed groups intensify violence across the region. The Al-Qaeda-linked JNIM claimed responsibility for the assaults, reportedly targeting villages that resisted local agreements. Residents criticised the military for failing to intervene despite repeated calls for assistance. The attacks follow a major offensive against Mali's ruling junta, further deepening the country's deteriorating security crisis.

10 May ([Aljazeera](#)): CODECO Militia Kills 69 Civilians in DRC's Ituri Province.

Explanation: At least 69 people were killed in Ituri province in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo after attacks by CODECO militants, reportedly carried out in retaliation for an earlier assault by the CRP armed group. The violence reflects the long-standing ethnic conflict between the Hema and Lendu communities in the mineral-rich region. The UN condemned the attacks, while concerns grow over overstretched security forces leaving civilians vulnerable to armed groups.

11 May ([US African Command](#)): African Lion 26 Concludes, Showcasing Advanced Multinational Military Cooperation in Africa.

The multinational military exercise African Lion 26, led by the U.S. Army Southern European Task Force-Africa (SETAF-AF) alongside Morocco and over 40 partner nations, concluded after weeks of joint operations across land, air, sea, cyber, and space domains. General Dagvin Anderson, head of U.S. Africa Command, described the exercise as a demonstration of evolving warfare and international security cooperation, highlighting the integration of AI, autonomous systems, and coordinated multinational response capabilities.

11 May ([DW](#)): Honour 25, Eureka, And Sward Hijackings Signal Return of Somali Piracy.

Somali piracy is making a troubling comeback, with the oil tankers Honour 25 and Eureka, along with the cargo ship Sward, hijacked in recent weeks. The attacks come as global shipping routes are diverted away from the Red Sea and Strait of Hormuz, bringing more vessels near Somalia's coastline. Experts warn that overstretched naval patrols and regional instability have created conditions for pirate networks to re-emerge, threatening global trade and shipping costs.

12 May ([BBC](#)): France Recasts Africa Strategy Through Kenya Summit.

France is seeking to redefine its engagement with Africa by hosting the Africa Forward Summit in Kenya, signalling a shift beyond its traditional Francophone sphere of influence. Against rising anti-French sentiment in parts of West Africa and accusations of neo-colonialism, President Emmanuel Macron emphasised “equal footing” partnerships centred on investment, digital innovation, energy, and maritime cooperation. The summit reflects Paris’s broader attempt to rebuild credibility and expand strategic ties with a more diverse African leadership, as geopolitical competition on the continent intensifies and African states demand more balanced international partnerships.

12 May ([The New York Times](#)): UN Warns Drones Caused 80% Of Civilian Deaths in Sudan.

The UN human rights chief reported that low-cost armed drones accounted for 80% of conflict related civilian deaths in Sudan (Jan–Apr 2026), with at least 880 fatalities, including 26 from strikes on Al Quz and El Obeid.

19 May ([U.S. Department of War](#)): US Shifts Middle East and Africa Strategy Toward Burden-Sharing and Strategic Competition.

Daniel Zimmerman, Assistant Secretary of War for International Security Affairs, told the House Armed Services Committee that the U.S. will focus on regions where American power can be most decisive. Admiral Brad Cooper, head of U.S. Central Command, identified Iran as the primary regional threat, citing its nuclear ambitions and proxy networks. General Dagvin Anderson, commander of U.S. Africa Command, highlighted counterterrorism cooperation and efforts to counter growing Chinese and Russian influence in Africa.

24 May ([Inquirer.net](#)): US Nigeria Joint Airstrikes Kill 175 Islamic State Fighters.

Joint US-Nigerian airstrikes killed at least 175 Islamic State fighters, including a senior global IS commander, according to US Africa Command (AFRICOM). Nigerian President Bola Tinubu welcomed the operation, thanking US President Donald Trump for support. However, analysts have raised concerns over the expanding American military role in Nigeria, warning that while such strikes may weaken terrorist groups in the short term, they risk civilian casualties and do not address deeper issues such as extremist recruitment.

LATIN AMERICA – SECURITY & GEOPOLITICAL

05 May ([The Hindu](#)): Nine Killed in Coal Mine Explosion in Central Colombia.

At least nine miners were killed in a coal mine explosion in Sutatausa, Cundinamarca, central Colombia, caused by a buildup of gases, according to the National Mining Agency. Emergency responders managed to rescue six miners following the incident. The tragedy highlights ongoing safety concerns in Colombia's mining sector, where hazardous working conditions continue to pose significant risks to workers.

08 May ([BBC](#)): Trump-Lula Meeting Signals Effort to Stabilise Strained US-Brazil Relations.

US President Donald Trump and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva held a private Oval Office meeting aimed at easing tensions in bilateral relations despite continued disagreements over trade, organised crime, Iran, and Brazil's domestic politics. While both leaders publicly described the talks positively, the absence of a joint press appearance suggested unresolved differences. Analysts viewed the meeting as a pragmatic effort by both sides to prevent further diplomatic friction ahead of upcoming elections.

12 May ([Reuters](#)): Mexico Retains School Calendar After Backlash Over World Cup Disruption Plan.

Mexico has decided to keep its 2025–26 school calendar unchanged after criticism over a proposal to end the academic year early due to World Cup-related disruptions and extreme heat. Education Minister Mario Delgado said the decision followed a call from President Claudia Sheinbaum, providing certainty for families. While the school year will end as scheduled on July 15, local authorities may still make adjustments in exceptional circumstances.

16 May ([Global Voices](#)): May Day Protests Across Latin America Highlight Labour Struggles and Political Discontent.

Workers across Venezuela, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, and Ecuador marked May Day with mass demonstrations against low wages, precarious employment, inflation, shrinking social protections, and political repression. While some protests remained peaceful, others saw clashes with authorities, reflecting deepening socioeconomic frustrations. The mobilisations underscored both shared regional concerns over economic inequality and country-specific

political crises, with labour unions, women's groups, and grassroots movements demanding greater economic justice and accountability.

24 May ([The Wion](#)): US Southern Command Oversees Military Drill in Caracas Amid Regional Tensions.

The US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) oversaw a rapid response military exercise in Caracas, involving US Marines and MV-22 Osprey aircraft at the US Embassy, in a move presented as an emergency preparedness drill. The exercise was observed by General Francis Donovan, head of SOUTHCOM, and comes amid continued geopolitical tensions between Washington and Caracas, highlighting the US's visible military presence in the region.

AFRICA – POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

16 May ([Somali Guardian](#)): Somalia Faces Deepening Political Crisis Over President's Legitimacy.

Somalia has entered a renewed political crisis after President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud asserted that his presidency remains valid until 2027, while opposition leaders argue his constitutional mandate has expired. The dispute follows failed negotiations over electoral and constitutional reforms, intensifying fears of institutional paralysis and instability in the fragile federal state. The standoff reflects broader tensions over governance, legitimacy, and Somalia's delayed political transition.

20 May ([ANC](#)): ANC Opens Public Nominations for Mayoral Candidates to Rebuild Local Trust.

South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) has opened public nominations for mayoral candidates for the 2026 local government elections, allowing even non-party members to nominate or self-nominate candidates. Framing the move as part of its renewal agenda, the ANC said the initiative aims to restore public trust, improve local governance, and identify competent leadership to address service delivery challenges across municipalities, part of its "Year of Decisive Action".

21 May ([African Union](#)): AU Chairperson Calls For 'Greater African Unity and Stronger Peace Institutions'.

African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, speaking at the 17th High-Level Retreat on Peace and Security in Africa in Gabon, stressed the need for stronger

continental unity, conflict prevention, and effective governance to address Africa's evolving security challenges. He emphasised the implementation of AU peace decisions, sustainable financing for peace operations, and renewed commitment to the "Silencing the Guns by 2030" agenda.

22 May ([Polity](#)): Thabo Mbeki Foundation Says Africa's Crisis is Institutional, Not Continental.

Writing for Africa Day 2026, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Chairperson of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, argued that Africa's greatest crisis is not diversity but the declining legitimacy of public institutions. Citing falling trust in governments, parliaments, courts, and electoral bodies, she warned that weak institutions fuel democratic erosion, instability, and fragmentation. The piece calls for rebuilding accountable, citizen-centred institutions as the foundation for genuine African unity and renewal.

LATIN AMERICA AFRICA – POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

14 May ([UNDP](#)): UNDP Warns Latin American Democracies Face Rising Pressure Despite .

A new UNDP regional report finds that while Latin America and the Caribbean remain one of the world's most democratic developing regions, rising pressures such as political polarisation, disinformation, organised crime, inequality, and institutional distrust are straining democratic governance. Launched in Uruguay alongside President Yamandú Orsi, the report calls for stronger institutions, better political representation, and renewed state capacity to safeguard democratic resilience.

15 May ([Americas Quarterly](#)): Colombia's Presidential Race Tightens.

With Colombia's presidential election approaching, Iván Cepeda, backed by President Gustavo Petro's coalition, remains the frontrunner, though likely headed for a runoff. Conservative rivals Abelardo De La Espriella and Paloma Valencia are competing to consolidate right-wing support amid concerns over crime, armed violence, and constitutional reform. The election is shaping into a highly polarised contest at a politically fragile moment for Colombia.

18 May ([npr](#)): Peru Heads for Polarised Presidential Runoff.

Peru is set for a high-stakes presidential runoff between conservative candidate Keiko Fujimori and left-wing contender Roberto Sánchez, reflecting the country's deep political divisions and

voter frustration with chronic instability. With crime, corruption, and economic uncertainty dominating the campaign, the June 7 runoff is expected to shape Peru's political direction after years of leadership turmoil.

19 May ([FIU News](#)): Hemispheric Security Conference Focuses on Transnational Crime and Democratic Resilience.

The 2026 Hemispheric Security Conference, held from May 5–8, brought together regional leaders, policymakers, and security officials to address growing threats from transnational organised crime, governance challenges, and democratic instability across the Americas. Discussions centred on strengthening regional cooperation, countering illicit networks, and reinforcing democratic institutions amid rising security concerns in the hemisphere.

AFRICA – ECONOMIC & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENTS

01 May ([Socialist China](#)): China Grants Zero-Tariff Access to 53 African Countries in Major Trade Move.

China has implemented zero-tariff treatment for imports from 53 African countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations, significantly expanding market access for African exports. The policy, effective from May 1, 2026, is being presented by Beijing as a boost to China-Africa trade cooperation, industrialisation, and Global South economic partnership amid rising global protectionism. The move excludes Eswatini, which maintains diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

01 May ([minning.com](#)): Sumitomo Exits Madagascar's Ambatovy Mine for \$418 Million.

Sumitomo Corporation will divest its stake in Madagascar's Ambatovy nickel project to Ambatovy Mineral Resources Investment (AMRI), effectively paying \$418 million to exit the loss-making venture after nearly two decades. The Japanese firm, which invested around \$3 billion in the project since 2005, cited persistent production and profitability challenges. Despite recording a significant quarterly loss from the sale, Sumitomo will retain certain nickel offtake rights.

22 May ([African Development Bank](#)): AfDB and OCP Group Sign €450 Million Guarantee for Green Fertiliser Facility.

The African Development Bank Group and Morocco's OCP Group have signed a €450 million partial credit guarantee to support OCP's industrial transition and low-carbon investment

programme. The agreement will help mobilise €530 million in green financing for projects focused on renewable energy, sustainable water management, and low-emission fertiliser production, strengthening Morocco's industrial resilience and broader African food security.

LATIN AMERICA – ECONOMIC & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENTS

01 May ([Bloomberg](#)): Colombia Central Bank Surprise Pause Signals, Emerging Easing Sentiment in Latin America.

Colombia's central bank shocked financial markets by unexpectedly pausing its interest rate tightening cycle, prompting investors to scale back expectations of further rate hikes in the near term. The move has fuelled speculation over a steepening yield curve and potential peso weakness, while also indicating a broader shift toward easing monetary conditions in parts of Latin America. Lower borrowing costs could gradually improve the investment climate for infrastructure and capital-intensive sectors, including critical minerals, as regional economies seek to stimulate growth amid global uncertainty.

07 May ([CNBC](#)): Brazil's Rate Hike Signals Latin America's Uneven Monetary Path Amid Inflation Pressures.

Brazil's central bank raised its benchmark Selic interest rate by 50 basis points to 14.75%, marking the sixth consecutive hike and pushing borrowing costs to their highest level in nearly two decades. While policymakers left future action open, the decision reflects continued concern over persistent inflation and global uncertainty rather than an immediate easing cycle. The move highlights the uneven monetary landscape across Latin America, where some economies are beginning to signal caution while others remain focused on inflation control, shaping investment sentiment across infrastructure, commodities, and strategic sectors.

23 May ([DW](#)): EU And Mexico Sign Landmark Free Trade Deal Amid Us Tariff Pressures.

The European Union and Mexico signed a long-delayed free trade agreement aimed at reducing dependence on the United States and expanding bilateral economic ties. Announcing the deal, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum highlighted the importance of diversification amid growing global trade tensions and US tariff pressures under President Donald Trump. The agreement grants near duty-free access for most goods and is expected to significantly boost Mexican exports to Europe.

INDIA – BILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH AFRICA & LATIN AMERICA

14 May (PIB): India-Africa Trade Surges as New Business Dialogue Targets Strategic Economic Partnership.

India is seeking to deepen its economic engagement with Africa as bilateral trade reached USD 93.69 billion in 2025–26, marking a 14.39% increase over the previous year. Ahead of the 4th India-Africa Forum Summit, New Delhi positioned the India-Africa Business Dialogue as a platform to expand cooperation beyond traditional raw material trade into critical minerals, renewable energy, digital infrastructure, manufacturing, and defence production. The initiative reflects India's broader strategy to strengthen South-South cooperation, diversify supply chains, and build resilient partnerships aligned with Africa's economic transformation ambitions.

17 May (Financial Express): India Deepens East Africa Economic Push Through Trade and Strategic Sector Expansion.

India is strengthening its economic footprint in East Africa, with exports to the region rising 13.7% to USD 12.6 billion in FY 2025–26, reflecting growing demand for Indian manufactured goods and strategic partnerships. Beyond traditional trade, New Delhi is increasingly positioning East Africa as a key partner in critical minerals, renewable energy, digital infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, and maritime connectivity. As India seeks to diversify supply chains and expand South-South cooperation, East Africa's strategic geography and resource potential make it a vital pillar in India's broader Global South and Indo-Pacific economic outreach.

21 May (Ministry of External Affairs): India Postpones Africa Summit (IAFS IV) Amid Ebola Outbreak.

India has postponed the 4th India-Africa Forum Summit, originally scheduled for late May, following the Ebola outbreak in parts of Central and East Africa and the World Health Organization's emergency alert. The decision reflects the growing intersection between public health crises and diplomacy, as large multilateral engagements become vulnerable to transnational health threats. While the postponement may temporarily delay India's diplomatic outreach to Africa, it also underscores New Delhi's cautious approach to health security while maintaining its broader strategic commitment to strengthening partnerships with African nations.

BRICS

15 May (Ministry of External Affairs, India): BRICS Reinforces Africa-Centric Global South Agenda with Support for Reform and Development Cooperation.

The BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi reinforced the grouping's commitment to amplifying Africa's voice in global governance, explicitly backing greater representation for African states in institutions such as the UN Security Council. Beyond political reform, BRICS emphasised cooperation on infrastructure, climate finance, energy transitions, food security, and development financing through the New Development Bank. For East Africa, these signals expanded opportunities in trade, connectivity, resilience-building, and South-South partnerships, as BRICS increasingly positions Africa not merely as a partner, but as a central pillar in shaping a more multipolar international order.

15 May (AP News): BRICS Divisions Over Middle East Expose Limits of Bloc Unity Despite Global South Ambitions.

BRICS foreign ministers failed to issue a joint statement after divisions emerged over the conflict in the Middle East, underscoring the internal contradictions of the expanded bloc. Differing national positions, particularly on Gaza, Red Sea security, and responses to the US and Israel, highlight the difficulty of sustaining consensus among members with competing geopolitical interests. While BRICS continues to project itself as a voice of the Global South and a challenger to Western-led institutions, the episode reveals the strategic complexities of transforming a diverse coalition into a coherent geopolitical force.

INFRASTRUCTURE, TECHNOLOGY & ENERGY TRANSITION

19 May (Submarinenetworks): South America's Bi-Oceanic Digital Corridor Signals Push for Resilient Regional Connectivity.

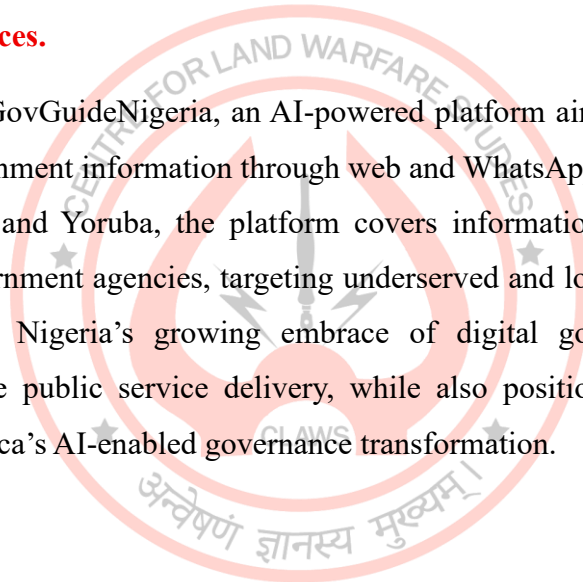
A new partnership between Sparkle and Entel Bolivia to commercialise the Bi-Oceanic Digital Corridor marks a significant step in strengthening South America's digital infrastructure. The 4,370-km terrestrial route connecting Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil is expected to halve latency between Lima and São Paulo while reducing reliance on traditional submarine cable routes. Beyond improving connectivity for cloud services, AI, and digital commerce, the initiative reflects a broader regional push toward resilient, diversified digital infrastructure, positioning Bolivia as an emerging strategic transit hub in Latin America's evolving digital economy.

19 May (The Nation): US Pushes Secure Digital Infrastructure Expansion in West Africa Through Wireless Connectivity Project.

The United States is expanding its digital footprint in West Africa through a project to deploy approximately 1,500 American-made mobile communications base stations across Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Benin. Backed by the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, the initiative aims to bridge the urban-rural connectivity gap by expanding reliable broadband access in underserved regions. Beyond improving telecommunications access, the move reflects Washington's broader strategic effort to promote trusted digital infrastructure, counter rival technological influence, and strengthen its economic and geopolitical engagement in Africa's rapidly growing digital landscape.

22 May (Premium Times): Nigeria Launches AI Governance Platform to Expand Citizen Access to Public Services.

Nigeria has launched GovGuideNigeria, an AI-powered platform aimed at improving public access to official government information through web and WhatsApp interfaces. Available in English, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, the platform covers information from over 35 federal ministries and 60 government agencies, targeting underserved and low-literacy communities. The initiative reflects Nigeria's growing embrace of digital governance and artificial intelligence to enhance public service delivery, while also positioning the country as an emerging leader in Africa's AI-enabled governance transformation.



About the Author

Janavi MOHNRAJ JAGAJOTHI is currently serving as a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi. Her research primarily focuses on Africa, Latin America, and Energy Security, with particular interest in strategic affairs, geopolitical developments, and India's evolving external engagements with the Global South. She is motivated to pursue her doctoral studies in the field of International Relations and Strategic Studies. Prior to joining CLAWS, she was an Erasmus+ ICM scholarship holder and undertook an academic exchange at the Université Catholique de Lille, France. She completed her Master's in International Relations from Loyola College, Chennai, where she developed a strong academic foundation in international security, foreign policy analysis, political communication, area studies, and International Relations theory. With a multidisciplinary academic background and a focus on contemporary global strategic dynamics, Janavi brings analytical depth to her work on Africa, Latin America, energy policy, and broader geopolitical and security issues.

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