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EDITORIAL

Africa in the Year of Geopolitics

SIPHAMANDLA ZONDI , TINUADE OJO  & JOSEF KEUTCHEU 
Editors

The year 2023 ended with the world on the precipice. The war in Gaza, a disproportionate Israeli military response to Hamas attack on a festival in Israel, is among the deadliest in decades. More than 20 000 people, mostly civilians including women and children had been killed in the Israeli bombing campaign to avenge the Hamas killing of 120 in October. Thousands have been displaced and injured. Thousands of housing units and other buildings have been destroyed. Hatred has deepened. The drums of war have grown with the US willing to stand along alongside Israel when the latter arrogantly decides to ignore international efforts to end the carnage in Gaza.

This is fast overshadowing the War in Ukraine that broke out following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, violating international law. The war in Ukraine hogged headlines from February 25, 2022, until Israel's military invasion of Gaza. This spotlight was very helpful in shaping the global public opinions about just wars, east-west rivalry, Ukraine as a victim and Russia as an aggressor. Ukraine was able to garner public sympathy, beg for support in Western capitals which has come in handy. Today, the skillful message by Ukraine now has diminished supporters. We also almost beginning to forget Ukraine and the war.

Both developments have had a bearing on South Africa at least in three ways. The first is that these wars have disrupted economic activity including in Africa. The world economy has felt the effects of this with consumer and commodity prices rising, shortage of food and so forth. Disruption of grain supplies hurt Africa. Today, the uncertainty generated by the

carnage in Gaza creates risks for Africa's export and import trade. The attacks on ships off the coast of Yemen that are part of the Gaza conflict harms the economies of Africa too.

Regarding Ukraine, Africa is divided between those siding with the West in condemning Russia and those dissuading both sides from military means towards diplomatic means. Africa has dispatched a team of 5 heads of state to make the case for the peaceful settlement of the conflict. This is yet to yield results, but it is suggestive of an Africa with agency in complex geopolitical conflicts.

On Gaza, Africa has condemned Hamas attack and Israel bombing campaign that has been disproportionate. It has been more united in this case than on Ukraine, an outcome of the historical position in favour of the struggle of Palestinians against Israeli occupation.

This edition does not consider these issues, but they have to be borne in mind as the readers read the articles in this edition. This is also a call upon readers to consider sending analyses of Africa's role in the world in future editions.

This edition would not have been possible without the contribution of authors of selected papers, peer reviewers, and the editorial team at AJPS and at the UJ Press. We thank you all.

Editor-in-Chief

Siphamandla Zondi