

From the Editorial Team

Dear readers, dear friends:

Another year is coming to an end, and while it has not been an easy year for African academic and personal freedoms, we are grateful that as a collective we have been able to do our research, write, and publish the work of colleagues. Over a year on, as we mourn over the senseless loss of lives in the Middle East, there is a forgotten war in Sudan that has, so far, claimed and displaced over 11 million people. At the time of writing, it has been almost twenty months since fighting erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. Most of those displaced are the most vulnerable; more than half are women, and more than a quarter of them are children under the age of five.¹ In the Middle East, as of 5 November 2024, over 45,000 people have been reported killed in the Israel – Hamas war (43,391 Palestinians and 1,706 Israelis, including at least 140 journalists and media workers, 120 academics, and over 224 humanitarian aid workers, including 179 employees of UNRWA).² As at 19 November 2024, the deaths in Lebanon have reached 3,500.³ Human kindness appears to be in very short supply. I just heard news from Nigeria today, about minors who had been arrested and detained for over 90 days, and collapsed when they were arraigned in court over alleged participation in protests over the cost of living, and charged with “treason, felony and inciting mutiny”!⁴ Nigerian youth are

¹ UN International organization for Migration

<https://www.iom.int/news/displacement-sudan-crosses-11-million-devastating-crisis-reaches-new-heights-iom-chief>

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualties_of_the_Israel%E2%80%93Hamas_war

³ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/lebanon-death-toll-tops-3-500-as-35-more-people-killed-in-israeli-attacks/3397097>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdxyqwlwq5qo>

angry. In our country Ghana, our youth have been angry as well. Not only does human kindness appear to be in very short supply, wickedness and cruelty seem to be active on steroids. Forgive me for that painful introduction. Know, however, that in the midst of these crises, there are those simple acts of human kindness that remind us of those universal African Ubuntu principles that embody interconnectedness, and the ethical obligations we share (Ogude and Dyer 2019); for example, through the everyday rituals that define our encounters such as the nod and smile I share with the *trotro* (public transport) driver who stops beside me at the traffic light, or the joke I share with the wheel chair driver at the same traffic light even though on this occasion I have no small change to offer.

In this issue we present readers, with five articles on Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda and Francophone Africa that continue our efforts to bring you empirical papers that extend our understanding of the “African condition”: on language, conflicts, refugee children, and the “management” of news. Joshua Awienagua Gariba & Sulley Ibrahim write about local efforts at peace building in a part of North-eastern Ghana, Bawku, that has, for as long as I can remember, made the news around issues of “chieftaincy conflicts” and inter-group clashes. In their paper, “Resolving Chieftaincy Conflicts through Intercultural Dialogue: The Case of Bawku Interethnic Peace Committee in Northern Ghana”, the authors compel the reader to reconsider the popular images of Bawku. They show how the Bawku Interethnic Peace Committee contributes to peaceful co-existence in Bawku by interrogating the concept and practice of intercultural dialogue. Nonetheless, the authors’ empirical work shows that such local efforts are ultimately only effective if the state is committed to peace and does not align with local parties for political capital.

Philip Adah Idachaba turns his attention to another set of clashes in West Africa that have received a lot of attention from different disciplinary perspectives, in this case between

farmers and herders in North Central Nigeria. In his paper, “Farmer–Herder Conflicts as a Clash of Ontologies in North–Central Nigeria” Idachaba deviates from the usual approach that reads clashes from a perspective of material survival and hence their inevitability around the divergent or discordant needs of farmers and herders for agriculture and feeding cattle. Rather, he applies a social ontological conceptual analysis to suggest that divergent ontologies around land between herders and farmers is the fundamental difference, that will not easily be resolved even if agriculture and grazing needs are (seemingly) met.

Esther Desiadenyo Manu–Barfo’s paper titled, “On Language Attitudes and Language Endangerment: The Domo Language of Ghana in Perspective” addresses a different kind of conflict, that of language endangerment, in this case of the Domo language spoken in the North–Western part of the Bono Region of Ghana. Manu–Barfo discusses the views on and attitudes to the language among respondents in the Domo community.

The next paper turns to a different kind of conflict—or emancipation, depending on how you read the news. Given Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger’s recent shift away from traditional regional (read: ECOWAS) and Western allies (read: France) the final paper by Lyn Kouadio provides a timely and insightful discussion of an important, yet underexamined subject, namely the coloniality of the global news industry and its centrality in knowledge production about the so-called Global South, in this case, Black Francophone Africa (i.e. those sub-Saharan Francophone countries formerly colonised by France). Kouadio reveals the mechanics of the coloniality of knowledge production and circulation of news deemed credible about Francophone Africa by selected presses, and shows the significance for knowledge production about Africa and hence international politics more broadly.

In the final paper for this issue, David Okimait addresses the learning uncertainties that arise for children in

situations of upheaval. He reflects on how unaccompanied children from South Sudan in a Ugandan refugee settlement “camp” managed learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a sense, COVID-19 brought an acute situation and layered it on to the chronic condition of being refugees, introducing new uncertainties. However, Okimait demonstrates the children’s resilience and flexibility as they adapt to the Ugandan education system.

This issue concludes with Ebenezer Bosomprah’s comprehensive review of the book “Who Owns Africa? Neocolonialism, Investment, and the New Scramble” edited by Bekeh Utietiang Ukelina, (2022, Leuven University Press).

On behalf of the entire editorial team at the Institute of African Studies, I want to, as always, thank our authors who consider us an important site for their work, and are patient with us through the onerous process of finding reviewers, waiting for reviews, revising their papers and waiting to get published. To our reviewers for the papers in this issue (and the papers that didn’t make it, sadly), we thank you for your labour of love that keeps CJAS going. We truly survive because of you. We also appreciate the Institute of African Studies and the University of Ghana journals office for their support. On a personal note, I would like to thank the CJAS editorial family – editors, graduate assistants, and National Service staff– for their dedication and commitment.

Akosua Adomako Ampofo

Editor-in-Chief

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