
THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

AFRICA

2026 EDITION

An Encyclopedic Reference

EIGHT VOLUMES — THE MAIN REFERENCE

FIFTY-FOUR COUNTRY PROFILES — FIVE REGIONAL APPENDICES

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

The Collection

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

This master volume gathers the complete reference into a single document. It comprises two parts: an **eight-volume thematic reference** that maps the continent as a whole — from its geology and ancient civilisations to its economies, societies, technologies, geopolitics, and possible futures — and a **five-part companion series of country profiles** covering all fifty-four of Africa’s sovereign states, grouped by the African Union’s regional framework.

Compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry’s Spy Shop imprint in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, the work was assembled to a single editorial standard and presented in one consistent house style. The thirteen constituent documents that follow retain their own internal page numbering and reference lists; this collection adds a master cover, the combined table of contents opposite, and a full set of navigable bookmarks.

A NOTE ON METHOD, DATA, AND CITATION INTEGRITY

The reference distinguishes two kinds of fact. *Volatile figures* — current heads of state and the latest population and GDP figures — were individually verified against identifiable public sources (national statistics, the World Bank, the IMF, the United Nations, and reputable news and reference works) and are keyed to numbered reference lists within each document. They represent a **June 2026 snapshot** and will drift over time. *Stable facts* — capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, and official languages — are drawn from established reference knowledge.

This edition deliberately captures an extraordinary year of African elections, transitions, and upheavals — reflected as faithfully as the public record allowed at the time of compilation. Nothing in the work is reproduced verbatim from any source; all prose is original.

Table of Contents

PART ONE — THE MAIN REFERENCE

Eight thematic volumes · the continent as a whole

Vol. I	Foundations	18 pp
	<i>Geology, geography, climate, deep time, and the origins of humanity</i>	
Vol. II	Civilization Layers	17 pp
	<i>Ancient kingdoms and empires, trade networks, writing, and faiths</i>	
Vol. III	Modern States	15 pp
	<i>The slave trades, colonial partition, independence, and nation-building</i>	
Vol. IV	Economic & Resource Systems	16 pp
	<i>Minerals, agriculture, energy, infrastructure, and trade</i>	
Vol. V	Society, Demographics & Culture	16 pp
	<i>People, languages, religion, urbanisation, and the arts</i>	
Vol. VI	Technology & Digital Transformation	15 pp
	<i>Mobile telephony, fintech, connectivity, and innovation</i>	
Vol. VII	Geopolitics & Global Positioning	13 pp
	<i>Power, alliances, external partners, and Africa on the world stage</i>	
Vol. VIII	Future Trajectories	15 pp
	<i>Demographic, economic, and climate scenarios for 2026–2100</i>	

PART TWO — COUNTRY PROFILES

Five regional appendices · all 54 sovereign states

App. A	North Africa	11 pp
	<i>Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia (7 states)</i>	
App. B	West Africa	20 pp
	<i>Benin to Togo, incl. Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and the Sahel states (15 states)</i>	
App. C	Central Africa	13 pp
	<i>Angola, Cameroon, the Congos, Chad, Gabon, and others (9 states)</i>	
App. D	East Africa	18 pp
	<i>The Horn, Great Lakes, and Indian Ocean islands (14 states)</i>	

App. E	Southern Africa	15 pp
	<i>Botswana to Zimbabwe, incl. South Africa (9 states)</i>	

Complete collection: **13 documents** · **54 country profiles** · **over 200 pages**

Navigating this master volume. Each volume and appendix begins on its own cover page and keeps its original internal page numbering and reference list. Page counts above indicate the length of each constituent document. For direct navigation, use your PDF reader's bookmarks or contents/outline panel: the collection is fully bookmarked, with every volume and appendix listed under the two parts.

A SYSTEMS-LEVEL ATLAS

AFRICA

2026 EDITION

*An Encyclopedic Reference to the Continent
in Transition*

Geography · Deep Time · Climate Systems · Civilizational Layers ·
Political Architecture · Resource Economics · Demographics ·
Technology · Geopolitics · Future Trajectories

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

About This Edition

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

A Systems-Level Atlas of the Continent in Transition. Compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry. Published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

This reference work is organised as a structured knowledge architecture rather than a narrative history. It is intended for academic, policy, and applied-research use. Its governing analytical premise is that Africa is most accurately read not as a single region but as a **planetary-scale system** — a set of interacting geological, climatic, ecological, demographic, economic, and political subsystems whose behaviour cannot be understood in isolation from one another.

The work is released in cited installments. The present document contains the complete **Volume I — Foundations of the Continent** (Chapters 1–4). Subsequent volumes (II–VIII) and the appendices — including individual encyclopedic profiles of all 54 internationally recognised African states — are issued separately within the same house standard.

A NOTE ON METHOD AND CITATION INTEGRITY

Every quantitative, empirical, or time-sensitive claim in this volume has been verified against a live, identifiable public source at the time of writing (June 2026) and is referenced by a numbered citation keyed to the *References* section. Sources are not fabricated, and no source text is reproduced verbatim; all material is restated in original prose. Where the published record is genuinely contested — as with the precise tempo of continental rifting, the dating of the earliest HOMO SAPIENS fossils, or the carbon balance of tropical peatlands — the disagreement is reported rather than resolved. Well-established background science (for example, the existence of Precambrian cratons or the basic mechanics of monsoon circulation) is presented as settled knowledge without individual citation; citations are concentrated on the specific, current, and quantitative assertions where verification matters most.

Figures for population, economic output, and conservation status are drawn from 2024–2026 estimates and are inherently provisional; readers requiring decision-grade precision should consult the cited primary sources directly. © 2026 Landry Industries Inc. All rights reserved.

The Complete Architecture

The full reference comprises eight thematic volumes and five appendices. Volume I is presented in this installment; the remainder follow in sequence.

VOLUME I — FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONTINENT (*THIS INSTALLMENT*)

1. Continental Definition and Scope · 2. Geological and Deep Time History · 3. Climate Architecture · 4. Biodiversity and Ecological Systems

VOLUME II — CIVILIZATION LAYERS & HISTORICAL SYSTEMS

5. Prehistoric Africa and Human Origins · 6. Classical African Civilizations · 7. Trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean Networks · 8. Colonial Disruption Systems

VOLUME III — MODERN STATES AND POLITICAL ARCHITECTURES

9. Post-Colonial State Formation · 10. Regional Blocs and Continental Governance · 11. Conflict Systems and Security Landscapes · 12. Law, Governance, and Institutional Capacity

VOLUME IV — ECONOMIC AND RESOURCE SYSTEMS

13. Macroeconomic Structures · 14. Natural Resource Geography · 15. Agriculture and Food Systems · 16. Industrialization and Manufacturing Futures

VOLUME V — SOCIETY, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND CULTURE

17. Population Dynamics · 18. Urban Systems and Megacities · 19. Languages and Knowledge Systems · 20. Religion and Belief Systems · 21. Arts, Identity, and Cultural Production

VOLUME VI — TECHNOLOGY, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & FUTURE SYSTEMS

22. Digital Infrastructure · 23. Artificial Intelligence and Automation · 24. Energy Systems Transition · 25. Biotechnology and Health Systems

VOLUME VII — GEOPOLITICS AND GLOBAL POSITIONING

26. Africa in Global Power Systems · 27. Military and Strategic Geography · 28. Climate Change Frontline Status

VOLUME VIII — FUTURE TRAJECTORIES (2026-2100)

29. Scenarios of African Futures · 30. Continental Integration Futures · 31. Risks, Constraints, and Structural Bottlenecks · 32. Strategic Opportunities

APPENDICES

A. Country-by-Country Profiles (54 states) · B. Key Cities Database · C. Resource Atlas · D. Timeline of African Civilizations · E. Data Tables and Indices

VOLUME ONE

Foundations of the Continent

Before history, economy, or politics, there is the physical platform: a continent of extreme age and scale, sitting astride the equator in all four hemispheres, whose rocks, rains, and living systems set the boundary conditions for everything human that follows.

1. Continental Definition and Scope
2. Geological and Deep Time History
3. Climate Architecture
4. Biodiversity and Ecological Systems

CHAPTER ONE

Continental Definition and Scope

Defining Africa is deceptively difficult. The continent is at once a precise geographic object, a contested political category, and an analytical unit that fractures the moment it is examined closely.

Africa is the world's second-largest continent by both area and population. Its land area is conventionally given as roughly 30.3 million square kilometres — about a fifth of Earth's total land surface — though land-only measurements that exclude inland water bodies run closer to 29.6 million square kilometres.^{[3][2]} It is the only continent that extends into all four hemispheres, straddling the equator and reaching well into both the northern and southern temperate zones.^[4] That single fact of position governs much of what follows in later chapters: the symmetry of climate belts north and south of the equator, the doubling of monsoon systems, and the distribution of deserts, rainforests, and savannas in mirrored bands.

AFRICA AT A GLANCE (2024–2026 ESTIMATES)

- **Area:** ~30.3 million km² (second largest continent; ~20% of global land).^{[3][4]}
- **Population:** ~1.5 billion (2024), with continental estimates surpassing 1.55–1.58 billion by 2026 — roughly 19% of humanity.^{[5][2][4]}
- **Recognised states:** 54 fully recognised by the United Nations; the African Union counts 55 members (it admits the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic / Western Sahara). Somaliland functions as a de facto state without broad recognition.^{[1][3]}
- **Median age:** ~19.5 years — the youngest of any continent.^[2]
- **Most populous state:** Nigeria, ~233–237 million.^[5]

Geographic Boundaries and Contested Cartographies

The continent's outline is among the least ambiguous on the planet: it is bounded by the Mediterranean to the north, the Red Sea and the narrow Sinai isthmus to the northeast, the Indian Ocean to the east and south, and the Atlantic to the west. The only genuine cartographic decisions concern the Sinai Peninsula — politically part of Egypt and therefore of Africa, geologically part of the Asian plate margin — and the offshore islands. Beyond these edges, contestation is political rather than coastal: the borders that matter most in Africa are internal, and many of them are notoriously straight, ruled across deserts and sa-

vannas by nineteenth-century European negotiators with little regard for the human geographies they bisected.^[6] The artificiality of these lines is not a historical curiosity; it is a live structural variable analysed throughout Volume III.

North Africa versus Sub-Saharan Africa: A Framing Debate

The most consequential conceptual division applied to the continent is the split between “North Africa” and “Sub-Saharan Africa.” The distinction is useful and misleading in equal measure. It captures a real climatic and linguistic gradient — the Arabic-speaking, Mediterranean-facing north differs in obvious ways from the regions south of the desert. Yet the term “sub-Saharan” encodes an implicit hierarchy and treats the Sahara as a barrier when, for most of recorded history, it functioned as a connective medium. Camel caravans, gold, salt, manuscripts, and ideas moved across it for a millennium, knitting the supposedly separate halves of the continent into a single commercial and intellectual system. Reading the Sahara as a wall rather than a sea is one of the more durable distortions inherited from colonial-era geography, and this reference treats the north-south distinction as a soft gradient rather than a hard boundary.

Africa as a Planetary System

The organising premise of this work is that the continent behaves as a coupled system. Its mineral wealth is a function of its ancient geology; its agricultural potential is governed by monsoon dynamics that are themselves modulated by orbital cycles; its demographic trajectory feeds directly into its economic and security futures. Treating Africa as a regional unit — one block among several on a world map — obscures the fact that several of its subsystems operate at planetary scale. The Congo Basin is a globally significant regulator of atmospheric carbon. The continent holds the genetic baseline of the entire human species. Its critical-mineral reserves are a chokepoint for the global energy transition. These are not regional facts; they are planetary ones, and they recur as connective threads across every volume.

Island States and Maritime Extensions

Africa’s land mass is accompanied by a set of island states and maritime territories that are easy to overlook and analytically important. Madagascar — the world’s fourth-largest island and a continent-scale evolutionary laboratory in its own right — anchors the Indian Ocean flank, alongside the Comoros, Seychelles, and Mauritius. In the Atlantic lie Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe. These states extend Africa’s exclusive economic zones far beyond its coastlines, embedding the continent in Indian Ocean and Atlantic maritime systems that carry strategic weight in later discussions of trade, fisheries, and chokepoint security. Several external dependencies — among them Réunion and Mayotte (France), and the remote South Atlantic territory of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha

— remain under non-African sovereignty, a residue of the colonial period that complicates any clean count of “African” territory.^{[4][6]}

CHAPTER TWO

Geological and Deep Time History

Africa is, geologically, one of the oldest and most stable platforms on Earth — and simultaneously the site of one of the planet's most dramatic acts of ongoing continental destruction.

Beneath the soils and sands of the continent lies a foundation of *cratons*: vast, ancient blocks of continental crust, some carrying rocks among the oldest known anywhere on Earth. The Kaapvaal craton of southern Africa, the Congo craton at the continental core, the West African craton, and the Tanzania craton are the stable nuclei around which Africa was assembled. Because these blocks have escaped the crustal recycling that destroys older rocks elsewhere, they preserve an exceptionally deep record of planetary history — and, crucially, they host the conditions under which much of the continent's mineral wealth was concentrated over billions of years. The link between this deep stability and present-day resource geography is direct, and it is taken up in detail in Volume IV.

The East African Rift: A Future Ocean Basin

Cutting against this image of stability, eastern Africa is being torn apart. The East African Rift System — a network of faults, valleys, lakes, and volcanoes — extends for more than 3,000 kilometres from the Afar region of Ethiopia southward through Kenya and Tanzania toward Mozambique.^{[7][11]} Along it, the African plate is splitting into two: the larger Nubian plate to the west and the smaller Somali plate to the east. The two are separating at only a few millimetres per year — comparable to the rate at which fingernails grow — with the fastest extension, on the order of 6.9 millimetres annually, measured in the Afar depression.^{[9][7]}

The process is genuinely ancient: rifting is thought to have begun some 20 to 30 million years ago, and the eventual flooding of the rift to form a new ocean basin lies tens of millions of years in the future.^[10] This timescale is worth stressing, because the phenomenon is routinely sensationalised. Periodic viral reports describe Africa as “tearing apart” in real time, often citing a dramatic crack that opened across a Kenyan highway; in fact, that fissure was largely a long-existing weakness exposed by rainfall and erosion, not a sudden tectonic leap, and essentially no geologist expects the continent to split on any human timescale.^[10]

THE AFAR TRIPLE JUNCTION

- Three rift arms meet in the Afar region of Ethiopia — the Red Sea Rift, the Gulf of Aden Rift, and the main East African Rift — making it one of the few places on Earth where a continental break can be studied above sea level.^[7]
- Recent work led by Earth scientists at the University of Southampton identified rhythmic pulses of molten rock rising from the mantle beneath Afar, suggesting the rifting is more dynamic and focused than once assumed.^[8]
- Researchers now report direct evidence of nascent oceanic crust forming beneath the rift zone — a marker that the transition from continent to ocean is already underway rather than merely projected.^[11]
- If the split completes, parts of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania would separate as a distinct landmass, and present-day landlocked states could acquire coastlines.^[11]

Mineral Formation and the Logic of Resource Concentration

Africa's extraordinary mineral endowment is not accidental; it is the product of its geological history. The same ancient cratons and the magmatic and hydrothermal events associated with rifting and mountain-building over deep time produced concentrated deposits of gold, platinum-group metals, diamonds, cobalt, and a long list of other resources. The rift system itself, by thinning the crust and channelling heat and fluids, is part of the machinery that mineralises continental interiors. The consequence — explored fully in Volume IV — is a continent whose physical inheritance is among the richest on Earth, a fact that stands in sharp tension with its economic position.

The Fossil Record and Hominin Emergence Corridors

Eastern Africa's rift valleys are not only a geological spectacle; they are the world's richest archive of human ancestry. The continuous deposition and periodic exposure of sediments along the rift has preserved an unmatched sequence of hominin fossils, from early bipeds through the genus *HOMO*. For decades this concentration led researchers to treat the Great Rift Valley as the singular "cradle" of humankind.

That picture has since broadened. Fossils from Jebel Irhoud in Morocco — first found by miners in the 1960s and long misdated — were re-dated in 2017 to roughly 300,000 years old, making them the oldest remains attributed to our species and pushing the emergence of *HOMO SAPIENS* back by about 100,000 years.^{[12][13]} Critically, Morocco lies at the continent's northwestern corner, far from the eastern rift. The lead researchers argued the finding supports a *pan-African* model in which early forms of our species were already dispersed widely across the continent, rather than emerging from a single region.^{[13][14]} The older East African benchmark — the Omo remains of Ethiopia — has itself been revised to

roughly 233,000 years.^[15] The full treatment of human origins and migration appears in Volume II; the point for deep-time geology is that Africa's status as the genetic source of humanity is written into its sediments continent-wide.

CHAPTER THREE

Climate Architecture

Africa's climate is not a fixed backdrop but a dynamic machine driven from two directions at once: slow astronomical cycles that green and brown the Sahara over millennia, and fast monsoon systems that decide each year whether tens of millions of people eat.

Because the continent sits symmetrically across the equator, its climate organises into mirrored bands: equatorial rainforest at the centre, flanked north and south by savanna, then by semi-arid steppe, then by the great deserts — the Sahara above, the Kalahari and Namib below — and finally by Mediterranean-type climates at the northern and southern extremities. This banded architecture is the stage on which the continent's two defining climatic dramas play out: the long oscillation of the Sahara, and the annual gamble of the monsoon.

The Sahara's Cycles: From Green Sahara to Desert

The Sahara has not always been a desert. Between roughly 11,000 and 5,000 years ago, during the period climatologists call the African Humid Period or “Green Sahara,” the region was vegetated, dotted with lakes and rivers and populated by elephants, giraffes, hippos, and the herds depicted in its prehistoric rock art.^[16] Some of these ancient lakes were enormous: a megalake in the Chad basin, for instance, once rivalled today's Caspian Sea in extent.^[16]

The driver of this transformation is astronomical. Earth's axial precession — a slow “wobble” on a roughly 20,000-year beat — periodically shifts the timing of the seasons relative to Earth's closest approach to the Sun. Around 10,000 years ago, summer in the Northern Hemisphere coincided with that close approach, boosting summer sunlight over North Africa by several percent and dramatically strengthening the African monsoon, which pushed the rain belt far north into what is now desert.^[16] As the orbital configuration drifted back, summer sunlight waned, the monsoon weakened, and vegetation-and-rainfall feedbacks collapsed in turn, re-establishing the modern desert.^[17] This termination was not uniform: paleoclimate evidence shows the drying was “time-transgressive,” beginning earlier in the north and east and lingering longer in the west and south, a pattern reproduced by recent Earth-system model simulations.^{[18][17]} The lesson embedded in this record is sobering — the Sahara is capable of crossing between radically different states, sometimes within centuries.

The Congo Basin Hydrological Engine

At the continent's equatorial core, the Congo Basin operates as a continental-scale water regulator. Drained by the Congo River — the second-largest river in Africa after the Nile, and among the largest in the world by discharge — the basin spreads across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, and parts of several neighbours, including portions of Cameroon, Zambia, Angola, and Tanzania.^[19] Its rainforest recycles vast quantities of moisture back into the atmosphere through evapotranspiration, sustaining regional rainfall far beyond the basin itself and earning it the label “the lungs of Africa.” Its role as a carbon system is taken up in Chapter Four; its role as a hydrological system makes it indispensable to agriculture and water security across central Africa.

The Sahel: A Transition Zone Under Stress

Between the Sahara and the wetter savannas to the south lies the Sahel, a semi-arid belt stretching across the continent from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. It is one of the most climatically volatile and politically fragile regions on Earth, where erratic rainfall, recurrent drought, overgrazing, and unsustainable land use combine to drive desertification — the most severe form of land degradation. By some estimates, around 45% of the African continent is affected by desertification, with the Sahel at the sharpest edge of the problem.^[27]

THE GREAT GREEN WALL — AMBITION VERSUS REALITY

- Launched by the African Union in 2007 — building on an idea associated with Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara — the initiative aims to create a band of restored land across the Sahel.^[25]
- Headline 2030 targets: restore **100 million hectares** of degraded land, sequester **250 million tonnes** of carbon, and create **10 million** rural jobs, along a corridor some **8,000 km** long from Senegal to Djibouti.^{[25][27]}
- Reality check: with the 2030 deadline approaching, much of the wall remains unrealised despite billions of dollars committed; reaching the target would require restoring roughly 8.2 million hectares every year.^[25]
- The project has evolved from literal tree-planting into a broader rural-development and resilience programme — with documented gains in millions of hectares under improved management — even as the headline goal slips.^[24]

Atlantic and Indian Ocean Monsoon Systems

Africa's year-to-year climate is governed by the seasonal migration of the tropical rain belt — the Intertropical Convergence Zone — and by the monsoon circulations that draw mois-

ture inland from the surrounding oceans. The West African Monsoon pulls Atlantic moisture northward each boreal summer, watering the Sahel and the Guinea coast; its failure produces the droughts that periodically devastate the region. On the eastern flank, the Indian Ocean monsoon shapes the rains of the Horn and East Africa. Both systems are sensitive to ocean-temperature patterns — including the El Niño–Southern Oscillation and the Indian Ocean Dipole — whose phases can tip entire regions between flood and drought from one year to the next. The same precessional forcing that greened the Sahara over millennia is, in effect, the slow background to these fast annual rhythms; together they make rainfall, not temperature, the climatic variable on which African agriculture and stability most depend.

CHAPTER FOUR

Biodiversity and Ecological Systems

Africa holds some of the planet's most important living systems — and is losing biodiversity fast enough that the loss now registers as a security problem, not merely an environmental one.

From the carbon vaults of the Congo to the migratory herds of the Serengeti and the hyper-endemic flora of the Cape, Africa's ecosystems are globally significant and structurally interdependent. They are also under accelerating pressure. Understanding them as systems — carbon sinks, trophic webs, endemism clusters, and corridors — is essential to grasping both the continent's ecological value and its vulnerability.

The Congo Rainforest and the World's Largest Tropical Peatland

The Congo Basin contains the second-largest tropical rainforest on Earth after the Amazon, and is frequently described as the world's most vital rainforest carbon sink — one of the last large regions that still absorbs more carbon than it emits, taking up on the order of 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.^{[20][19]} Beneath it lies an even more concentrated store. The Cuvette Centrale peatland, mapped only in 2017 and spanning the two Congo republics, is the largest tropical peatland complex in the world — covering roughly 145,000 square kilometres and locking away an estimated 29 to 30 billion tonnes of carbon, a quantity comparable to about three years of global fossil-fuel emissions.^{[19][20]}

A CARBON VAULT UNDER PRESSURE

- The Congo Basin’s peat and forest store a globally decisive volume of carbon; disturbing the peatlands — through drainage, fire, or extraction — would release it.^{[19][20]}
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo opened oil-and-gas blocks for auction, some overlapping carbon-rich peatlands and protected areas; in late 2024 the government announced the auction would be relaunched while excluding the most sensitive peatland and protected zones.^{[20][22]}
- A 2026 study in *Nature Geoscience* found that large “blackwater” lakes in the basin are already outgassing ancient, millennia-old peat carbon into the atmosphere — evidence that the system’s carbon balance is more fragile than a simple “sink” label implies.^[21]
- Above 2°C of global warming, scientists warn of potential destabilisation of the African tropical-forest carbon sink altogether.^[23]

Savanna Biomes and Trophic Structure

Africa’s savannas are the planet’s archetypal large-mammal ecosystems. The grasslands of East and Southern Africa support trophic structures of a completeness now rare elsewhere on Earth: abundant grazers and browsers — wildebeest, zebra, antelope, elephant, giraffe — sustaining intact guilds of large predators, with fire and seasonal rainfall acting as the system’s pacemakers. The great annual migration of the Serengeti-Mara, in which more than a million wildebeest track the rains in a continental loop, is the most visible expression of a savanna machinery driven by the same monsoonal rhythms described in Chapter Three. These systems are not static wilderness; they are dynamic, rainfall-pulsed economies of grass, herbivore, and predator.

Endemic Clusters and Extinction Pressure

Africa concentrates an outsized share of global biodiversity in a handful of exceptional regions. The continent hosts 9 of the world’s 36 recognised biodiversity hotspots — regions defined by exceptional endemism combined with severe habitat loss — among them Madagascar and the Indian Ocean islands, the Cape Floristic Region of South Africa, the Eastern Afromontane (Eastern Arc) mountains, and the Guinean forests of West Africa.^[23] Madagascar alone, isolated for tens of millions of years, evolved a flora and fauna found nowhere else on Earth.

That richness is eroding rapidly. According to assessments compiled by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, more than 6,400 animal species and over 3,100 plant species in Africa are at risk of extinction.^[23] Vertebrate populations across the continent are estimated to have fallen by around 39% since 1970, and tree cover has declined by roughly 30% across large stretches of the African tropics since 2001.^[23] The trajectory

worsens sharply with warming: under scenarios exceeding 2°C, researchers project the risk of local extinction for more than half of plant, vertebrate, and insect species across parts of the continent, alongside steep losses among freshwater fish.^[23] The framing adopted by security analysts — that biodiversity loss in Africa is now a driver of human insecurity, through collapsing fisheries and degraded ecosystem services — reflects how far the problem has moved beyond conservation alone.^[23]

Wildlife Corridors and Fragmentation

The central spatial problem for African conservation is fragmentation. As farmland, settlement, and infrastructure expand, once-continuous habitats are carved into islands too small to sustain wide-ranging species or seasonal migrations. The strategic response has been the wildlife corridor — protected connective tissue linking core habitats — scaled up into transfrontier conservation areas that cross national borders, of which the Kavango-Zambezi area spanning five Southern African states is the largest example. Corridors reconnect the trophic and migratory systems described above; their absence converts protected areas into ecological dead ends. Mapping and defending this connectivity, against the compounding pressures of agriculture and a warming climate, is among the defining ecological challenges of the century ahead — and a thread that returns in the climate and future-trajectory volumes.

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END OF VOLUME I — FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONTINENT

Volume II — *Civilization Layers & Historical Systems* — continues the reference in the next installment.

A SYSTEMS-LEVEL ATLAS

AFRICA

VOLUME II

Civilization Layers & Historical Systems

Human Origins · Classical Civilizations of the Nile, the Sahel & the Stone Plateau · Trans-Saharan & Indian Ocean Networks · The Colonial Disruption

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

About This Volume

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

Volume II of an eight-volume reference work compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

Where Volume I established the physical platform of the continent — its geology, climate, and living systems — **Volume II traces the human layers built upon it:** the origin of our species in Africa, the classical civilizations that rose along its rivers and trade corridors, the premodern networks that linked it to Asia and the Mediterranean, and the colonial rupture that reorganised it for external extraction. The governing argument of the series carries through here: that Africa's present condition is the cumulative product of deep, interacting systems, several of which were engineered — the colonial reordering of the continent most explicitly of all.

A NOTE ON METHOD AND CITATION INTEGRITY

As in Volume I, every quantitative, empirical, or contested claim is verified against an identifiable public source at the time of writing (June 2026) and keyed to the numbered *References* at the end of this volume. No source text is reproduced verbatim; all material is restated in original prose. History is treated honestly: where the evidence is genuinely disputed — the precise dating of the earliest stone tools, the size of Great Zimbabwe's population, the human toll of the Congo Free State — the range of scholarly estimate is reported rather than a single convenient figure asserted. Long-settled background (the basic chronology of the Stone Age, the mechanics of monsoon-driven sailing) is presented as established knowledge.

This volume continues the series architecture introduced in Volume I:

I — FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONTINENT (*PUBLISHED*)

II — CIVILIZATION LAYERS & HISTORICAL SYSTEMS (*THIS INSTALLMENT*)

5. Prehistoric Africa and Human Origins · 6. Classical African Civilizations · 7. Trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean Networks · 8. Colonial Disruption Systems

III — MODERN STATES AND POLITICAL ARCHITECTURES · IV — ECONOMIC AND RESOURCE SYSTEMS · V — SOCIETY, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND CULTURE

VI — TECHNOLOGY & FUTURE SYSTEMS · VII — GEOPOLITICS & GLOBAL POSITIONING · VIII — FUTURE TRAJECTORIES · APPENDICES A-E

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VOLUME TWO

Civilization Layers & Historical Systems

Humanity began here. So did some of the world's most sophisticated premodern states, and some of its longest trade routes. And here, too, the modern world performed its most violent act of cartographic engineering. This volume reads African history not as a sequence of events but as a stack of systems.

1. Prehistoric Africa and Human Origins
2. Classical African Civilizations

3. Trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean Networks
4. Colonial Disruption Systems

CHAPTER FIVE

Prehistoric Africa and Human Origins

Africa is not merely where humans happen to have evolved. It is the reservoir of the species — the place that holds the deepest record in stone, the oldest bones, and the greatest genetic diversity on Earth.

The human story is, for the overwhelming majority of its length, an exclusively African story. Stone tools were being struck on the continent more than three million years before the rise of any city, and our own species emerged and spread across Africa for the better part of three hundred thousand years before a single founding population carried a sliver of that diversity out into the rest of the world. To understand humanity at all is to begin here.

The First Toolmakers

The archaeological record of technology opens in Africa earlier than anyone expected. At Lomekwi 3, on the western shore of Lake Turkana in Kenya, researchers led by Sonia Harmand recovered deliberately flaked stones dated to about 3.3 million years ago — pushing the start of the known archaeological record back by some 700,000 years in a single discovery.^{[4][6]} These “Lomekwian” artefacts predate the genus *HOMO* itself, implying that toolmaking was practised by earlier hominins such as australopithecines or *Kenyanthropus*, and overturning the long-held assumption that tool use and our own genus arose together.^[4]

The better-known Oldowan industry — simple choppers and sharp flakes first identified by Louis and Mary Leakey at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania — appears around 2.6 million years ago and persisted for the better part of a million years.^[5] A 2023 discovery at Nyayanga, near Lake Victoria, found Oldowan tools alongside butchered hippo remains, evidence that these implements were used to process large animals.^[7] By roughly 1.76 million years ago the more refined Acheulean tradition, defined by its teardrop-shaped handaxes, had emerged — a versatile implement sometimes called a Stone Age multi-tool.^{[5][7]} Tools, as the Leakeys put it, are fossilised behaviour; in Africa that behavioural record runs deeper than anywhere else.

The Emergence of HOMO SAPIENS

As established in Volume I, the picture of where and how our species arose has broadened dramatically. The fossils from Jebel Irhoud in Morocco, re-dated in 2017 to roughly 300,000 years old, are the oldest remains attributed to HOMO SAPIENS, while the East African benchmark at Omo Kibish in Ethiopia has been revised to about 233,000 years.^{[8][9]} Crucially, Jebel Irhoud sits at the continent's far northwestern corner, and its discoverers argued for a *pan-African* model: early forms of our species were already distributed across the continent, evolving as a loosely connected web of populations rather than descending from one localised "cradle."^[8] Africa did not produce humanity at a single point; it produced humanity across its whole expanse.

Out of Africa: Waves of Migration

The peopling of the rest of the planet was not a single clean exodus. Fossil and archaeological evidence points to earlier dispersals beginning perhaps 120,000 years ago, during the humid intervals of the Last Interglacial when green corridors briefly opened across the Sahara and Arabia — the same precession-driven climate machinery described in Volume I.^[1] Early modern human remains in the Levant, at sites such as Misliya, Skhul, and Qafzeh, record these probing excursions, some dated well before 90,000 years ago.

Yet genetics tells a striking secondary truth: essentially all people living outside Africa today descend from a single later dispersal, around 50,000 to 60,000 years ago, which passed through a population bottleneck detectable in the DNA of every non-African population.^{[2][3]} The earlier pioneers, in other words, left little or no genetic trace in living people. A 2025 analysis offered a compelling explanation for why the later wave succeeded where earlier ones petered out: beginning around 70,000 years ago, human ecological flexibility expanded markedly, allowing populations to thrive across habitats from forest to desert — an adaptability that equipped the later migrants to survive the climatically hostile lands beyond Africa.^[3] As they spread, these populations interbred with Neanderthals and Denisovans, whose genetic signatures persist in non-African genomes today.^[1]

DEEP TIME, IN BRIEF

- **~3.3 million years ago:** oldest known stone tools, Lomekwi 3, Kenya — before the genus HOMO.^[4]
- **~2.6 million years ago:** Oldowan industry begins (Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania).^[5]
- **~300,000 years ago:** earliest HOMO SAPIENS fossils (Jebel Irhoud, Morocco).^[8]
- **~120,000 years ago:** earliest dispersals out of Africa (Levant); little surviving genetic trace.^[1]
- **~50,000-60,000 years ago:** the major dispersal from which all non-Africans descend.^[2]
^[3]

Genetic Diversity as Planetary Baseline

One consequence of this long African tenure is decisive for human biology: African populations harbour the greatest genetic diversity of any peoples on Earth. Because only a small founding group ever left, the entire non-African world represents a subset of African variation — a single branch drawn from a far larger tree. Genomic studies reveal deep population structure within Africa long predating the migrations, with some lineages diverging from the ancestors of non-Africans well over 100,000 years ago.^[2] This is not a point of regional pride alone; it is a fact of planetary significance, returned to in Volume VI, where Africa's genomic diversity emerges as a frontier resource for medicine and the study of human disease. The continent is, in the most literal sense, the genetic homeland of every human being alive.

CHAPTER SIX

Classical African Civilizations

Long before European contact, Africa built monumental states, minted its own gold currency, and ran cities of stone and scholarship. The persistent myth of a continent “without history” collapses on contact with the evidence.

Across more than two thousand years, African societies produced complex, literate, wealthy, and architecturally ambitious civilizations — on the Nile, across the Sahel, on the southern plateau, and along the Indian Ocean coast. Each was distinct; together they refute the colonial-era fiction that Africa stood outside the stream of world civilization.

The Nile Valley: Kemet and Nubia

Ancient Egypt — Kemet to its own people — needs little introduction, but its southern neighbour does. Upriver in what is now Sudan lay Nubia, home to the Kingdom of Kush, whose successive capitals at Kerma, Napata, and Meroë anchored a civilization that was Egypt’s peer and, for a time, its ruler. In the eighth century BCE, Kushite kings conquered Egypt and governed it as the 25th Dynasty — the line of “Black Pharaohs” including Piye, Taharqa, and Tantamani — ruling from the Nile’s sources to the Mediterranean for roughly a century.^[10]

After losing Egypt, the Kushites withdrew south and their civilization flourished in relative isolation at Meroë until about 400 CE, developing its own script, its own gods, and a celebrated metallurgical and goldworking tradition.^[10] Their most arresting legacy is architectural: the necropolis at Meroë holds more than 200 pyramids, and by one well-known count Sudan contains roughly 255 ancient pyramids to Egypt’s 118 — more pyramids than Egypt itself.^{[10][11]} Steeper-sided and more slender than their northern counterparts, and built across nearly a millennium from about 700 BCE to 350 CE, they were inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2011.^{[11][12]}

The West African Empires: Ghana, Mali, Songhai

The Sahel — the trade-rich belt between the Sahara and the forests — gave rise to a succession of gold empires. The Kingdom of Ghana (unrelated to the modern state of that name) was the first great power, so associated with the metal that Arab writers called it the land of gold. It was eclipsed by the Empire of Mali, founded by Sundiata Keita around 1240 and enduring, in diminishing form, until the mid-seventeenth century.^[14] Mali’s wealth derived from controlling the trade between West African goldfields and the trans-

Saharan routes north, and its most famous ruler, Mansa Musa (reigned c. 1312–1337), is widely described as perhaps the wealthiest individual in recorded history.^[13]

MANSA MUSA'S PILGRIMAGE, 1324

- Mansa Musa set out on the hajj to Mecca in 1324 with an entourage reported in the tens of thousands and a vast supply of gold.^{[13][14]}
- His lavish spending and gift-giving during a stopover in Cairo is said to have depressed the value of gold in Egypt for years afterward.^{[13][14]}
- The pilgrimage announced Mali's wealth to the Islamic world and to Europe; a Spanish cartographer depicted Musa, gold in hand, on the 1375 Catalan Atlas.^[14]
- On his return he patronised mosques and scholarship at Timbuktu and Gao, seeding the knowledge economy detailed in Chapter Seven.^{[13][15]}

Mali was in turn succeeded by the Songhai Empire, centred on Gao, which grew into the largest of the three West African empires under rulers such as Askia Muhammad before falling in 1591 to a Moroccan invasion equipped with gunpowder weapons.^[14] Across this sequence, the underlying engine was constant: gold flowing north, salt and goods flowing south, and a string of cosmopolitan market cities — Timbuktu, Gao, Djenné — growing rich at the meeting point.

Great Zimbabwe and Southern African Metallurgy

On the plateau between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers, the ancestors of today's Shona built Great Zimbabwe, the largest stone structure in sub-Saharan Africa. Constructed without mortar in skilled dry-stone technique between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, its central ruins cover some 80 hectares, while the state it commanded likely extended across roughly 50,000 square kilometres.^{[16][18]} Population estimates for the city range from about 10,000 to 20,000 at its peak; recent statistical modelling argues for a figure at the lower end.^[18] Its wealth came from cattle, agriculture, and above all the export of gold to the Indian Ocean coast.^[16]

That Great Zimbabwe was plugged into a global economy is proven by the finds within it — Chinese porcelain, Persian glass beads, and Arab coins, reaching it through the Swahili port of Sofala.^[18] It is also a cautionary case in the politics of knowledge: for much of the colonial period, European and settler authorities refused to credit Africans with building it, attributing the ruins to Phoenicians or the biblical Queen of Sheba, and the Rhodesian state actively suppressed the archaeological consensus.^[17] Modern radiocarbon dating and decades of research have settled the question conclusively in favour of indigenous

Shona authorship — a reminder, central to this work's thesis, that narratives about Africa have themselves been engineered.^[17]

| The Swahili Coast: A Maritime Trade Civilization

Along the East African seaboard, from roughly the eighth and ninth centuries, a chain of independent city-states flourished — Kilwa, Mombasa, Zanzibar, Malindi, Lamu, and Sofala among them — growing wealthy as intermediaries in Indian Ocean commerce.^{[19][20]} Their civilization was a genuine synthesis: as Arab and Persian merchants settled and intermarried with the Bantu-speaking coastal population, a new culture and language took shape. Swahili (Kiswahili) fuses Bantu grammar with substantial Arabic vocabulary and remains today the national language of Kenya and Tanzania.^[21] Kilwa grew especially powerful by controlling the gold flowing out of Sofala from the Zimbabwe plateau, and even minted its own coinage — a mark of sophisticated, monetised commerce on African terms.^[19] The Swahili world is the bridge to Chapter Seven, where the trade systems that made these cities rich are examined in full.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean Networks

Africa was never the isolated continent of colonial imagination. For a thousand years it was a hinge between two of the world's great commercial systems — one crossing the desert, the other crossing the sea.

Two long-distance networks integrated Africa into a premodern world economy centuries before European ships arrived: the trans-Saharan caravan routes connecting the Sahel to the Mediterranean, and the monsoon-driven Indian Ocean trade linking the East African coast to Arabia, Persia, India, and China. Both moved not only goods but knowledge, religion, and people.

The Trans-Saharan Routes: Gold, Salt, and Knowledge

The Sahara became crossable as a regular commercial space once the camel was widely adopted in the early centuries CE, transforming a barrier into a sea of sand traversed by caravans. The defining exchange was gold for salt: West African goldfields supplied a metal that was scarce in the north, while the Sahara's salt mines supplied a mineral as precious as gold to societies that needed it to survive. Alongside these moved copper, textiles, enslaved people, and books. The economic gravity of this trade was immense: West African gold underwrote coinage across the Mediterranean world, and Mansa Musa's gold-laden passage through Cairo in 1324 sent ripples as far as Europe, advertising the southern source of the continent's wealth (Chapter Six).

The northern termini of these routes became centres of learning as much as commerce. Timbuktu, at its height from roughly 1400 to 1600, was a flourishing hub of the trans-Saharan gold-and-salt trade and a renowned seat of Islamic scholarship.^[22] Its Sankoré mosque and more than 150 schools drew students and teachers from across the Muslim world; by some accounts, around a quarter of the city's 100,000 residents in the sixteenth century were students.^[22] The Moroccan traveller al-Wazzan — known in Europe as Leo Africanus — observed after visiting in 1510 that, for all the city's wealth, books were the most valuable commodity in its markets.^[22]

THE TIMBUKTU MANUSCRIPTS — A LIVING ARCHIVE

- An estimated 300,000 manuscripts — on law, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and poetry — survive in and around Timbuktu, attesting to a deep written intellectual tradition. ^[23]
- During the 2012–2013 jihadist occupation of northern Mali, militants burned roughly 4,000 manuscripts at the Ahmed Baba Institute as they fled. ^{[23][24]}
- In a clandestine rescue, the librarian Abdel Kader Haidara and the SAVAMA association smuggled the contents of some 45 libraries — hundreds of thousands of manuscripts — out of the city to safety in Bamako. ^{[24][23]}
- European treasure-hunters had earlier removed manuscripts to museums abroad, prompting Timbuktu's families to hide their collections for generations — the corpus has survived repeated attempts at its erasure. ^[24]

The Indian Ocean: A Monsoon-Powered World

On the eastern flank, trade ran on the wind. The Indian Ocean monsoon reverses seasonally — blowing from the northeast between roughly November and March, and from the southwest between April and October — a regularity that allowed sailing vessels to cross from East Africa to western India in twenty to thirty days and return months later. ^[21] This predictable rhythm made long-distance maritime commerce reliable, and the East African coast had participated in it since antiquity; the Greek text known as the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, from the first century CE, already describes the coast's ports.

From this commerce emerged the Swahili-Arab-Persian synthesis of Chapter Six. African exports — gold, ivory, mangrove timber, and enslaved people — flowed outward, while textiles, Chinese porcelain, glazed Persian pottery, glass beads, and spices flowed in. ^{[20][19]} Through the Swahili ports, the gold of the Zimbabwe plateau reached markets as distant as China, and goods from China and Southeast Asia reached the African interior. The continent was a working node in a vast, interconnected Old World system.

Early Globalization Corridors

Taken together, these two networks dissolve the myth of a continent sealed off from the world. For a millennium before the European age of sail, Africa was integrated into a pre-modern global economy — exporting the gold that monetised Mediterranean trade, importing Asian luxuries, hosting universities that drew international scholars, and adopting and adapting Islam across vast regions. The arrival of Portuguese ships on both coasts in the late fifteenth century did not connect an isolated Africa to the world; it inserted European power into trade systems that Africans had been running for centuries — the first move in the disruption that is the subject of Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Colonial Disruption Systems

In the span of a single human lifetime, an entire continent was drained of people, carved into European possessions, and rewired for extraction. The disruption was not incidental; it was systematic, and its architecture still shapes Africa today.

The encounter between Africa and an industrialising Europe produced three overlapping systems of disruption: the transatlantic slave trade, which removed millions of people; the partition of the continent into colonies after 1885; and the extractive economic and infrastructural order built to serve external markets. This chapter treats them as the interlocking machinery they were.

The Atlantic Slave Trade as an Extractive Algorithm

The transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in human history. According to the comprehensive Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, slaving vessels embarked roughly 12.5 million Africans between the early sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, of whom about 10.7 million survived the Middle Passage to land in the Americas — meaning some 1.8 million people died at sea.^{[29][30]} Portugal and its colony Brazil dominated the traffic; Brazil alone received around 4.86 million captives, while only about 388,000 were carried directly to North America.^[30] Before 1820, four enslaved Africans crossed the Atlantic for every European migrant, making Africa the demographic engine that repopulated the post-Columbian Americas.^[29]

The demographic and developmental cost to Africa itself was profound and is taken up again in later volumes: by removing millions of people of working and reproductive age over four centuries, the trade suppressed population growth and distorted economies across vast regions. Older slave trades across the Sahara and the Indian Ocean, smaller in any given year but spanning far longer, compounded the drain. The trade functioned, in effect, as an extractive algorithm operating on human beings — the most violent expression of a logic that would soon be applied to the continent's land and minerals.

The Scramble for Africa and the Berlin Conference

In 1870, only about 10 percent of Africa lay under European control. By 1914 that figure had reached roughly 90 percent, leaving only Ethiopia and Liberia independent.^{[25][26]} The decisive instrument was the Berlin West Africa Conference, convened by the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck and held from November 1884 to February 1885. Fourteen nations attended; not a single African was present.^[28] The conference's General Act,

signed in February 1885, did not itself partition the continent but established the rules that accelerated the land-grab — chiefly the principle of “effective occupation,” which required powers to actually occupy territory to claim it, together with free navigation on the Congo and Niger rivers.^[26]

THE PARTITION, IN NUMBERS

- **~10% → ~90%:** share of African land under European control, 1870 to 1914.^[25]
- **Berlin West Africa Conference:** Nov 1884 – Feb 1885; 14 European and other powers; no African representatives.^[28]
- **Two states stayed independent:** Ethiopia and Liberia.^{[25][26]}
- **Adwa, 1896:** Emperor Menelik II’s Ethiopia defeated an invading Italian army — the most significant African victory over a colonial power, securing Ethiopian sovereignty.^[28]

Border Artificiality and Export Asymmetry

The boundaries drawn in European chancelleries paid little heed to the human geographies they cut across. Straight lines ruled over deserts split single peoples between colonies and welded historic rivals into the same administrative unit — and most of these borders were retained at independence, where they continue to generate conflict.^[25] The economic infrastructure built under colonial rule followed the same extractive logic: railways and roads ran from interior mines and plantations to coastal ports, oriented toward shipping raw materials out rather than knitting African regions together. This deliberate *export asymmetry* — economies engineered to face outward toward the metropole rather than inward toward one another — is among the most consequential structural legacies of the period, and a central thread of Volume IV.

Labour Extraction: The Congo Free State

No case exposes the era’s extractive logic more starkly than the Congo Free State, the vast territory — more than 2.6 million square kilometres, over eighty times the size of Belgium — that King Leopold II of Belgium held from 1885 to 1908 as personal property rather than a national colony.^[32] Granted to Leopold under the pretext of a humanitarian mission, it became a regime of forced labour for rubber and ivory enforced by a colonial militia, the Force Publique, whose methods included hostage-taking and the amputation of hands.^[32] The American historian George Washington Williams condemned these practices as “crimes against humanity” as early as 1890, and the later reports of the British consul Roger Casement and the campaigning of E. D. Morel forced the abuses into international view; Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* drew on the same horror.^{[31][32]}

The human toll is genuinely disputed and difficult to fix, in part because the pre-colonial population is itself uncertain; modern estimates of the population decline during Leopold's rule range from about 1.2 million to as many as 10 to 15 million, with the widely cited figure of roughly 10 million representing about half the population.^{[31][32]} International outcry eventually compelled Belgium to annex the territory as the Belgian Congo in 1908.^[31] The Congo Free State was an extreme, but it illustrated the underlying principle of the colonial economy with brutal clarity: maximal extraction of resources and labour at minimal cost to the metropole.

These three systems — demographic removal, political partition, and economic reorientation — together left Africa with artificial borders, externally-facing economies, and infrastructure built to drain rather than develop. That structural inheritance, more than any single event, is what the modern political and economic volumes of this reference set out to explain.

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END OF VOLUME II — CIVILIZATION LAYERS & HISTORICAL SYSTEMS

Volume III — *Modern States and Political Architectures* — continues the reference in the next installment.

A SYSTEMS-LEVEL ATLAS

AFRICA

VOLUME III

Modern States and Political Architectures

Post-Colonial State Formation · The African Union, AfCFTA & the
Regional Blocs · Conflict Systems & Security Landscapes · Law,
Governance & Institutional Capacity

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

About This Volume

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIA REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

Volume III of an eight-volume reference work compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

Volumes I and II established the continent's physical platform and its deep human history, ending with the colonial rupture. **Volume III takes up the modern state:** how Africa's fifty-odd countries were formed out of the colonial partition, the continental and regional institutions they have built (and, in one live case, are dismantling), the conflict systems that strain them, and the uneven capacity of their governing institutions. More than any earlier volume, this one concerns the present moment — and the present moment in African politics is unusually turbulent.

A NOTE ON CURRENCY AND CITATION INTEGRITY

This volume is heavily current-events dependent, and political facts change quickly. Every figure here — displacement totals, ratification counts, conflict casualties, governance scores — was verified against an identifiable public source at the time of writing (June 2026) and is keyed to the numbered *References*. Readers consulting this volume later should treat fast-moving conflict and institutional data as a snapshot and re-verify against the cited primary sources. As throughout the series, no source text is reproduced verbatim; contested figures (war death tolls above all) are given as the reported ranges rather than as single certainties.

Series architecture:

I — FOUNDATIONS · II — CIVILIZATION LAYERS & HISTORICAL SYSTEMS (*PUBLISHED*)

III — MODERN STATES AND POLITICAL ARCHITECTURES (*THIS INSTALLMENT*)

9. Post-Colonial State Formation · 10. Regional Blocs and Continental Governance · 11. Conflict Systems and Security Landscapes · 12. Law, Governance, and Institutional Capacity

IV — ECONOMIC & RESOURCE SYSTEMS · V — SOCIETY, DEMOGRAPHICS & CULTURE · VI — TECHNOLOGY & FUTURE SYSTEMS · VII — GEOPOLITICS · VIII — FUTURE TRAJECTORIES · APPENDICES A-E

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VOLUME THREE

Modern States and Political Architectures

Dozens of nations born in a single generation, inheriting borders they did not draw; a continental union and a single market built atop them; and, cutting against the integrationist grain, a bloc fracturing in real time amid the worst security crisis in decades. This volume maps the African state as it actually functions in 2026.

1. Post-Colonial State Formation
2. Regional Blocs and Continental Governance
3. Conflict Systems and Security Landscapes
4. Law, Governance, and Institutional Capacity

CHAPTER NINE

Post-Colonial State Formation

The modern African state was born in a rush. Within roughly two decades, dozens of new nations emerged from the colonial partition — inheriting borders they had not drawn, bureaucracies built to extract, and economies pointed outward toward former metropolises.

Decolonisation reshaped the political map of the continent faster than almost any comparable transformation in modern history. At the close of 1950, only a handful of African states were independent — Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, and white-minority-ruled South Africa. A decade later the continent was unrecognisable, and the institutions, borders, and internal tensions established in that compressed founding period still define African politics today.

The Independence Waves (1950s-1970s)

Ghana's independence in 1957 made it the first sub-Saharan colony to break free, and the floodgates opened three years later. 1960 is remembered as the "Year of Africa": seventeen countries gained independence in that single year — fourteen from France, two from Britain, and one (the Congo) from Belgium — bringing the number of free African states to roughly twenty-seven by year's end.^{[1][2]} One historian captures the resonance precisely: Africans regard 1960 much as Americans regard 1776.^[3] Most of the continent was independent by the end of the 1970s; later additions came through distinct routes — Zimbabwe (1980), Namibia (1990), Eritrea (1993), and majority rule in South Africa (1994). The newest state of all is South Sudan, which seceded from Sudan in 2011 to become the continent's fifty-fourth recognised country.^{[1][3]}

Military Regimes and Cold War Proxy Structures

Independence rarely delivered stable democracy. Within years, coups proliferated across the continent, and one-party states became the norm as founding leaders consolidated power. Africa also became a theatre of the Cold War, with the superpowers backing rival regimes and insurgencies. The Congo is the archetype: after independence in 1960 the country fell into crisis, and Colonel Joseph Mobutu seized power with covert American support intended to block Soviet influence.^[3] Similar proxy dynamics played out in Angola, the Horn of Africa, and elsewhere, militarising politics and propping up client governments whose legitimacy rested on external patronage rather than popular consent.

Nation-Building versus Ethnic Federalism

Because colonial borders had been drawn without regard to the peoples they enclosed (Volume II, Chapter 8), the new states faced a foundational problem: how to forge single nations from populations that shared no common language, history, or prior political unit. Different states answered differently. Many pursued centralised, often single-party “nation-building,” suppressing sub-national identities in the name of unity. Others experimented with federalism organised around ethnic or regional lines — Nigeria most prominently, and later Ethiopia, whose constitution made ethnicity the basis of its federal structure. The tension between centralisation and accommodation of diversity remains unresolved and underlies many of the conflicts examined in Chapter 11.

The Administrative Inheritance

Beneath the new flags, much continued unchanged. The post-colonial state inherited the colonial administrative apparatus, European-derived legal codes, colonial languages as the language of government, and — most consequentially — an economic structure engineered for export to the former metropole rather than for internal development or intra-African exchange. Independence transferred sovereignty without transforming these inherited structures, and the gap between formal political freedom and continued structural dependency is the central tension that the economic volume (Volume IV) takes up in detail. The work of building genuinely independent states, in other words, did not end in 1960; in important respects it had only begun.

CHAPTER TEN

Regional Blocs and Continental Governance

Africa has bet heavily on integration — a continental union, the world's largest single market, and a dense web of regional blocs. Yet at the very moment that bet is being scaled up, one of its oldest pieces is being torn apart.

Continental and regional integration has been a defining ambition of post-colonial Africa, rooted in the pan-African idea that unity could deliver the economic and political weight that individual states lack. That ambition is institutionalised today in the African Union, the African Continental Free Trade Area, and a set of regional economic communities — an architecture now being tested by both its greatest project and its sharpest crisis.

The African Union

The African Union, established in 2002 as the successor to the Organisation of African Unity (founded 1963), is the continent's overarching political body, with 55 member states and headquarters in Addis Ababa. Its long-term vision is set out in Agenda 2063, a fifty-year development blueprint adopted to guide the continent toward integration and prosperity.^{[4][6]} The AU maintains a peace-and-security architecture and has adopted the practice of suspending member states whose governments seize power by coup. Its limitations are equally real: weak enforcement powers, heavy dependence on external funding, and a recurring gap between continental declarations and national action.

The African Continental Free Trade Area

The flagship project of Agenda 2063 is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Signed in Kigali in March 2018, it entered into force in May 2019, and trading under its regime formally commenced on 1 January 2021.^[4] By number of participating countries it is the largest free-trade area in the world, linking some 1.3 billion people with a combined GDP estimated at around 3 to 3.4 trillion US dollars.^{[6][7]} The agreement targets the elimination of tariffs on 90 percent of goods, rising to at least 97 percent over time, alongside protocols on services, investment, and digital trade.^[4]

AFCFTA: FROM AMBITION TO EXECUTION

- 54 of the African Union's 55 members have signed the agreement; Eritrea is the lone holdout.^[5]
- As of January 2026, 49 of 54 members (roughly 90 percent) had deposited instruments of ratification.^[6]
- A Guided Trade Initiative, begun in 2022, has piloted real trade among a growing set of members to test the system in practice.^[5]
- Five years in, analysts increasingly frame the central challenge as one of *execution* — customs, infrastructure, and rules-of-origin implementation — rather than political ambition.^[6]

The Regional Economic Communities

Beneath the continental level sit the regional economic communities, recognised as the building blocks of African integration: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS, founded 1975), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn, among others. These blocs vary widely in cohesion and capacity, and their overlapping memberships have long complicated the integration agenda.

The ECOWAS-Sahel Rupture

The most consequential development in African regional governance in a generation is unfolding in West Africa. Following a wave of military coups — Mali (2020 and 2021), Burkina Faso (twice in 2022), and Niger (July 2023) — the three Sahelian juntas formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in September 2023, upgrading it to a confederation in July 2024.^{[9][10]} On 29 January 2025, after a year-long standoff, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger formally withdrew from ECOWAS — the most significant crisis in West African regional integration since ECOWAS was founded in 1975.^[8]

The break was triggered above all by ECOWAS's heavy-handed response to the 2023 Niger coup — sweeping sanctions and the threat of military intervention — which the juntas experienced as both ineffective and an affront to their sovereignty, compounded by long-standing grievances over the CFA franc and perceived French influence within the bloc, and by ECOWAS's failure to help them counter jihadist insurgency.^{[8][10]} The AES has stood up a joint 5,000-strong military force and, in a pointed assertion of independence, begun issuing its own biometric identity documents to replace ECOWAS passports.^{[10][11]} The episode is a striking counter-current: even as the AfCFTA pools sovereignty continent-wide, the Sahel states have chosen issue-based security alignment over geographic eco-

conomic integration — a reminder that Africa's integrationist trajectory is contested, not inevitable.^[8]

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Conflict Systems and Security Landscapes

Africa's conflicts are not random violence but systems — driven by contested resources, weak state reach, and transnational insurgent networks. Several of them are, in 2026, at their most destructive in a generation.

The continent's security landscape is best read structurally. Wars cluster where valuable resources meet weak institutions; insurgencies spread along ungoverned borderlands; and external actors amplify local conflicts. Two theatres — eastern Congo and the Sahel — dominate the present picture, alongside the catastrophe in Sudan examined throughout this volume.

Resource-Linked Conflicts and Eastern Congo

The link between mineral wealth and violence — the “resource curse” — runs throughout African conflict, from Niger Delta oil to the diamonds that once funded wars in Sierra Leone and Angola. Its paradigm case today is the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the mineral-rich Kivu provinces have drawn in regional armies and proxy militias for three decades. The M23 rebellion — part of the Alliance Fleuve Congo and, according to UN experts, backed by thousands of Rwandan troops with de facto control over the group (a charge Kigali denies) — escalated dramatically in early 2025.^{[19][17]} In January 2025 M23 seized Goma, the North Kivu capital of around two million people, followed weeks later by Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, and by Uvira in December; the rebels established parallel administrations in the territory they hold.^{[18][17]}

EASTERN DRC: CONFLICT AND FRAGILE DIPLOMACY

- M23 first rebelled in 2012 and was reactivated by Rwanda around 2022; UN experts report thousands of Rwandan soldiers operating in the DRC.^[19]
- A US-mediated peace agreement between the DRC and Rwanda was initialled in June 2025 and signed by both heads of state in December 2025.^[17]
- A parallel, Qatar-mediated Doha framework addresses the M23 rebellion directly; both tracks remain fragile amid continued fighting.^{[18][17]}
- In March 2026 the United States sanctioned the Rwanda Defence Force for violations of the accords.^[20]
- The UN Security Council extended the MONUSCO peacekeeping mission to December 2026 as fighting persisted.^[18]

The Sahel: Global Epicentre of Terrorism

The Sahel has become the deadliest theatre of terrorism on Earth. According to the 2025 Global Terrorism Index, the region accounted for roughly 19 percent of terrorist attacks worldwide but 51 percent of all terrorism-related deaths in 2024, up from 48 percent the year before, with Burkina Faso the single most affected country for a second consecutive year.^[21] Pentagon-backed research from the Africa Center for Strategic Studies counted nearly 24,000 terrorism-related fatalities across Africa in 2025, a 24 percent rise, with the Sahel alone accounting for almost 9,826.^[22] The principal armed groups are the al-Qaeda-affiliated JNIM — assessed as among the deadliest terrorist organisations in the world — and the Islamic State’s Sahel Province (formerly ISGS), alongside ISWAP and Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin.^[23]

This violence is tightly bound to the political rupture of Chapter 10. The juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger justified their coups partly by their predecessors’ failure to contain the insurgency; yet the subsequent withdrawal of French and UN forces and a pivot toward Russian military partners coincided with rising, not falling, violence, which is now spilling into coastal states such as Benin and Togo.^{[23][21]} The UN reports that extremist violence has shuttered more than 14,800 schools and 900 health facilities across the region.^[23]

Maritime Piracy and Chokepoints

Africa’s waters frame two strategic maritime theatres. In the Gulf of Guinea — historically linked to Niger Delta oil and onshore insurgency — piracy has fallen sharply, from 84 incidents in 2020 to around 21 in 2025, thanks to the Nigerian Navy’s Deep Blue programme and coordinated regional and international patrols; yet the gulf still accounts for

the large majority of the world's crew kidnappings.^{[24][25]} Off the Horn, Somali piracy — long suppressed by naval deterrence — showed renewed reach in 2023–2025 amid the turmoil in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, underscoring the strategic sensitivity of the Bab el-Mandeb chokepoint through which much global trade passes.^[24]

Peacekeeping in Retreat

The era of large UN stabilisation missions in Africa is closing. The MINUSMA mission departed Mali at the junta's insistence at the end of 2023, and MONUSCO in the DRC is on a drawdown trajectory even as its mandate was extended to December 2026 in response to the M23 crisis.^[18] The vacuum is being filled unevenly — by regional arrangements such as the AES joint force, by external security partners including Russian formations, and by ad hoc coalitions — raising hard questions, returned to in Volume VII, about who provides security in Africa, and on what terms.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Law, Governance, and Institutional Capacity

Beneath constitutions and elections lies the harder question of capacity: whether states can actually deliver justice, services, and accountability. The continental scorecard is genuinely mixed — with real development gains undercut by a decade of declining security and shrinking democratic space.

Governance in Africa resists single-sentence summary. The continent contains both some of the world's better-governed small states and some of its most fragile, and the aggregate trend conceals sharply divergent national trajectories. What the best available measures agree on is a bifurcation: progress in human and economic foundations, set against deterioration in security and democratic participation.

Legal Pluralism

Most African legal systems are plural by design. Inherited statutory law — built on European civil-law or common-law foundations (Volume II, Chapter 8) — operates alongside customary law and, in many states, religious law, particularly in matters of family, inheritance, and land. This layering can extend justice into communities the formal system never reaches, but it also produces jurisdictional conflict and uneven rights protection, and the integration of customary and statutory systems remains an unresolved governance challenge across much of the continent.

Corruption as a Structural Problem

By the most widely used global measure, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest-scoring region in the world. It averaged 33 out of 100 in 2024 — with 90 percent of countries scoring below 50 — and slipped to an average of 32 in the 2025 index, in which only four of the region's 49 countries scored above 50.^{[26][27]} The continent's strongest performers, such as Seychelles, Botswana, and Cabo Verde, score respectably, while conflict-ravaged states including Somalia and South Sudan rank among the most corrupt anywhere.^[27] Crucially, the problem is best understood as structural rather than individual: it reflects state capture, patronage networks, and weak accountability institutions, and Transparency International explicitly links it to weak democracy and armed conflict.^[27]

Democratic Trajectories and the Governance Scorecard

The most authoritative African-led measure of governance, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation's Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), assembles 322 variables across four categories for all 54 countries. Its 2024 edition, covering the decade 2014–2023, found that overall continental governance progress stalled and effectively halted in 2022: substantial gains in human and economic development were undercut by deterioration in the security and democratic landscape.^[28] Every security-and-rule-of-law sub-category declined over the decade, and more than 77 percent of Africa's population now lives in a country where security and participation are worse than they were in 2014.^[28]

A BIFURCATED DECADE (IBRAHIM INDEX, 2014–2023)

- Overall continental governance was essentially flat — a score near 49 out of 100 in 2023, barely changed over the decade — as gains and losses cancelled out.^[28]
- Human development and economic foundations improved; security, rule of law, and democratic participation declined.^[28]
- The junta-led states that left ECOWAS — Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger — saw security deteriorate roughly five times faster than in countries that remained in the bloc.^[29]
- Trajectories diverge sharply: alongside the decliners, a set of countries — among them Seychelles, Côte d'Ivoire, and The Gambia — posted real, sustained governance gains.^[28]

Digital Governance

One area of genuine forward momentum is the digitisation of the state. Across the continent, governments are rolling out biometric identity systems, e-government services, and digital public infrastructure — building on the mobile-first character of African economies examined in Volume VI. The promise is leapfrogging: skipping legacy bureaucratic systems to deliver services and identity at scale. The constraints are real too — gaps in connectivity, data capacity, and data protection — and the same digital tools that improve service delivery can also extend state surveillance.

The institutional story of modern Africa is therefore neither the failure caricatured abroad nor an unqualified success. It is a bifurcation: measurable advances in what states deliver in health, education, and economic opportunity, set against a decade-long erosion of security and democratic space that has left the aggregate governance trend essentially flat. Which of those vectors prevails — development momentum or democratic and security decline — is among the central questions carried forward into the economic, geopolitical, and future-trajectory volumes that follow.

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END OF VOLUME III — MODERN STATES AND POLITICAL ARCHITECTURES

Volume IV — *Economic and Resource Systems* — continues the reference in the next installment.

A SYSTEMS-LEVEL ATLAS

AFRICA

VOLUME IV

Economic and Resource Systems

Macroeconomic Structures · Natural Resource Geography · Agriculture & Food Systems · Industrialization & Manufacturing Futures

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

About This Volume

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

Volume IV of an eight-volume reference work compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

Volume III examined how the modern African state is governed. **Volume IV turns to how it makes its living.** It maps the continent's macroeconomic structure, its extraordinary endowment of the minerals the energy transition depends on, the paradox of a food-importing continent that holds most of the world's unused farmland, and the long struggle to industrialise. A single argument runs through all four chapters: Africa's economic predicament is less a story of scarcity than of *value capture* — of who refines, who manufactures, who profits, and where.

A NOTE ON FIGURES AND CITATION INTEGRITY

This is the most data-intensive volume in the series, and economic figures vary by source, methodology, and year. Where reputable sources disagree — on the size of the food-import bill, the exact electricity-access gap, or cobalt's precise share of supply — this volume gives the reported range rather than a false single figure, and keys every quantitative claim to the numbered *References*. All data was verified against an identifiable public source in June 2026; nothing is reproduced verbatim. Monetary values are in US dollars unless stated, and refer to the most recent year available at the time of writing.

Series architecture:

I — FOUNDATIONS · II — CIVILIZATION LAYERS · III — MODERN STATES & POLITICAL ARCHITECTURES (*PUBLISHED*)

IV — ECONOMIC AND RESOURCE SYSTEMS (*THIS INSTALLMENT*)

13. Macroeconomic Structures · 14. Natural Resource Geography · 15. Agriculture and Food Systems
· 16. Industrialization and Manufacturing Futures

V — SOCIETY, DEMOGRAPHICS & CULTURE · VI — TECHNOLOGY & FUTURE SYSTEMS · VII — GEOPOLITICS · VIII — FUTURE TRAJECTORIES · APPENDICES A-E

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VOLUME FOUR

Economic and Resource Systems

A three-trillion-dollar economy growing among the fastest on Earth, yet whose growth barely outpaces its population; the planet's richest store of the metals that power clean technology, exported mostly as raw ore; most of the world's unused farmland on a continent that imports its food. This volume maps the structures behind the paradoxes.

1. Macroeconomic Structures
2. Natural Resource Geography
3. Agriculture and Food Systems

4. Industrialization and Manufacturing Futures

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Macroeconomic Structures

Africa's economy is at once one of the world's fastest-growing and one of its most structurally constrained — a roughly three-trillion-dollar continent whose growth is largely eaten by population, whose workers are overwhelmingly informal, and whose money and debt are only partly under its own control.

To understand the African economy one must hold two facts together. The headline numbers are genuinely dynamic: the continent is growing faster than the global average and is home to a dozen of the world's twenty fastest-expanding economies. Yet beneath the growth lies a structure — informal, externally oriented, and monetarily constrained — that has proven remarkably persistent, and that determines whether headline growth reaches ordinary lives.

Scale and Growth

Africa's combined output was roughly US\$2.83 trillion in nominal terms in 2025 — about US\$10.8 trillion at purchasing-power parity — making it the world's fifth-largest continental economy, with a nominal income per head near US\$1,930.^[2] Growth has been strong: the African Development Bank reported real GDP expansion of 4.2 percent in 2025, up from 3.1 percent in 2024 and ahead of the global average, with growth projected to reach 4.3 percent in 2026 and 4.5 percent in 2027; twelve of the world's twenty fastest-growing economies in 2025 were African.^[1] The crucial qualifier is demographic: because population is rising fast, GDP *per capita* grew only about 1.9 percent — too slow to transform living standards quickly. Remittances from the diaspora, at US\$104.6 billion and rising, have become the continent's single largest source of external non-debt finance, outstripping foreign investment flows.^[1]

The Informal Majority

The defining structural fact of African economic life is informality. Around 83 percent of the continent's workforce is employed informally — a share that has barely shifted in two decades, down only marginally from 84.3 percent in 2005 — and the informal economy generates an estimated 30 to 40 percent of GDP.^[3] In sub-Saharan Africa more than 80 percent of employment is informal and roughly 90 percent of consumer spending is still conducted in cash.^[4] This is a dual economy: a small formal sector of government, services, and limited industry, alongside a vast informal one characterised by low productivity

and working poverty — nearly 29.3 percent of employed Africans lived on under US\$2.15 a day in 2024.^[5]

WHY INFORMALITY MATTERS STRUCTURALLY

- It starves the state of revenue: countries with high informality forgo an estimated 5 to 12 percentage points of GDP in potential public revenue, limiting spending on health, education, and infrastructure.^[3]
- It leaves workers exposed: by ILO estimates, between 60 and 80 percent of African workers have no access to any formal social protection.^[3]
- Headline unemployment is therefore misleading — about 6.7 percent in 2024 — because most people cannot afford *not* to work, and so are counted as employed even in survival activities.^[5]
- Mobile money and digital platforms are emerging as the most promising route to formalisation, building financial identities for the unbanked (developed in Volume VI).^[4]

Monetary Sovereignty and the CFA Franc

Money itself is a site of contested sovereignty. Fourteen African countries use the CFA franc, split into two zones — the West African franc (XOF), used by eight members and managed by the BCEAO in Dakar, and the Central African franc (XAF), used by six and managed by the BEAC in Yaoundé — together covering some 180 million people, each pegged to the euro at a fixed rate of 655.957.^{[9][11]} The arrangement delivers low inflation and stability, but critics argue it constrains monetary autonomy and perpetuates a neo-colonial tie to France and the euro. Reform is under way but partial: the requirement to deposit half of foreign-exchange reserves with the French Treasury was ended for the West African zone in 2019, and ECOWAS plans a new common currency, the ECO, now slated for 2027 — yet because the euro peg and a French guarantee role persist, sceptics dismiss the ECO as a “rebranded CFA franc.”^{[10][11]} The debate maps directly onto the sovereignty politics of Volume III.

Debt and the IMF

Africa’s debt burden has become its most acute macroeconomic vulnerability. External debt surpassed US\$1 trillion in 2024, roughly double the 2020 figure, and at least 22 low-income African countries are in or at high risk of debt distress.^{[6][8]} External debt service reached about US\$89 billion — roughly twice the level of foreign direct investment — trapping countries in a cycle in which repayment crowds out development spending, and IMF programmes now operate in around ten African countries.^[7] Two structural features make the problem intractable. First, the composition of debt has shifted from Western official

lenders toward China (roughly 12 percent of the total) and private bondholders, whose uneven participation complicates restructuring.^{[7][8]} Second, governance is skewed: as one prominent report observed, sub-Saharan Africa holds about 5 percent of IMF votes yet absorbs around half of its loans.^[7] Senegal's 2024 discovery of some US\$11 billion in hidden debts — pushing public debt to 132 percent of GDP — illustrates how quickly the picture can deteriorate.^[7]

The macroeconomic paradox, then, is real growth that does not yet translate into rising incomes, layered atop a cash economy the state cannot fully tax, inside monetary and debt structures the continent only partially governs. Loosening those structural constraints — not merely raising the growth rate — is the central macroeconomic challenge of the decade.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Natural Resource Geography

Africa holds an outsized share of the minerals the twenty-first century runs on — and exports most of them as raw ore, capturing only a sliver of their value. This is the engineered dependency of the earlier volumes, updated for the age of the battery.

Nothing connects this reference work more tightly than the gap between what Africa possesses and what it captures. The continent accounts for roughly 30 percent of the world's mineral resources, and as the global economy electrifies, that endowment has moved from the periphery of the world economy to its strategic centre.^[12] Whether this translates into African prosperity or merely a new chapter of extraction is the defining resource question of the era.

The Mineral Endowment

The energy-transition metals are where Africa's dominance is starkest. The Democratic Republic of the Congo alone produces roughly 70 percent — by some estimates 70 to 80 percent — of the world's cobalt, mining about 254,000 tonnes in 2024, some thirteen times Indonesia's output, and holds around 71 percent of proven global reserves; Africa as a whole holds about 57 percent of cobalt reserves, of which the DRC accounts for 97 percent.^{[14][16]} The DRC is also the world's second-largest copper producer after Chile, with some of the highest ore grades anywhere, and sits atop vast deposits of coltan.^[17] Beyond the Congo, South Africa, Gabon, and Ghana together supply more than 60 percent of global manganese; Zimbabwe, the DRC, and Mali hold globally significant lithium; and South Africa dominates the platinum-group metals.^[12] To this must be added the older extractive economy of oil and gas, concentrated in Nigeria, Angola, Algeria, and Libya.

The Value-Chain Trap

The central problem is not extraction but value capture. African producers remain confined to the lowest-value end of the supply chain, exporting raw material while refining, manufacturing, and profit accrue elsewhere.^[17] The figures are stark: around 99 percent by value of the DRC's cobalt is exported in unrefined form as oxides and hydroxides, and only a small share of African cobalt is refined on the continent at all, in South Africa.^[14] Downstream, China refines an estimated 60 to 70 percent of the world's lithium and cobalt and some 90 percent of its rare earths and graphite, and processes more than half of the DRC's cobalt.^[15] The pattern is precisely the colonial export structure described in Volume

II — raw materials out, finished goods in — reproduced in the battery age, and concentration is intensifying rather than easing: the market share of the top three mining countries for key energy minerals rose from 73 to 77 percent between 2020 and 2024.^[18]

ASSERTIONS OF “MINERAL SOVEREIGNTY” (2025)

- The DRC suspended all cobalt exports in early 2025 — with prices at a nine-year low — then resumed in October 2025 under strict quotas: 18,125 tonnes for the rest of 2025 and 96,600 tonnes annually for 2026–27, less than half its 2024 output.^[16]
- Zimbabwe and Namibia have imposed lithium export restrictions, and Malawi has banned raw-mineral exports — part of a continental push to force value-addition onshore.^[16]
- The limits are real: when the US and China struck a minerals truce in late 2025, they prioritised bilateral accommodation over Global-South diversification, exposing the ceiling on African leverage.^[16]
- The US convened its first Critical Minerals Ministerial in February 2026, and export-control measures have proliferated worldwide since 2023.^{[17][18]}

Land and Water

Africa’s resource wealth is not only subterranean. The continent also holds roughly 60 percent of the world’s uncultivated arable land and major freshwater systems — the Congo, Nile, and Niger basins among them — endowments that frame the agricultural paradox examined in the next chapter.^[20] Here too the question is the same: whether abundance is converted into domestic value or exported as raw potential.

The resource paradox of modern Africa is therefore sharply drawn. The continent most essential to the global energy transition risks repeating the extractive pattern that has defined its economic history for centuries — unless, as a growing number of governments are now attempting, the capture of value can be moved onshore. That contest, more than the size of the reserves themselves, will determine whether minerals make Africa rich.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Agriculture and Food Systems

The starkest paradox on the continent: Africa holds most of the world's unused farmland and most of its people farm, yet it imports tens of billions of dollars of food each year while hundreds of millions go hungry.

Agriculture is the economic foundation of African life — the largest employer on the continent and the sector on which food security, rural incomes, and political stability all rest. It is also the arena of the continent's most confounding contradiction. By any measure of natural potential, Africa should be a food exporter to the world. In practice it is a net importer, and the gap between potential and performance is among the most consequential development failures of the age.

The Productivity Paradox

Africa holds roughly 60 percent — nearly 65 percent by the African Development Bank's 2026 estimate — of the world's uncultivated arable land, yet remains a net food importer, spending on the order of US\$50 to 80 billion a year on food imports (around US\$70 billion by the AfDB's reckoning) with projections rising toward US\$110 billion by 2030.^{[19][20][22]} Productivity is the core failure: African cereal yields average about 1.68 tonnes per hectare against a global average of 4.2.^[19] Agriculture's share of GDP has slipped to about 17 percent in 2025, from 18 percent in 2020, even as it remains the largest single employer; an estimated 307 million people face hunger or undernourishment, and on current trends close to 60 percent of the world's chronically hungry will be in Africa by 2030.^[19] The causes are structural and compounding: low use of fertiliser and improved inputs, dependence on rain-fed cultivation, fragmented smallholdings, weak rural infrastructure, climate shocks — the FAO estimates extreme climate events have cut sub-Saharan agricultural productivity by 34 percent since 1961 — and, increasingly, conflict across the Sahel, Sudan, and the Great Lakes.^[23]

Smallholder Foundations

African agriculture rests on smallholders, who produce up to 80 percent of the food consumed in sub-Saharan Africa, mostly on small, rain-fed, low-input plots.^[21] Alongside this subsistence base sits a commercial and export tier — cocoa, coffee, cotton, and horticulture — producing the cash crops inherited from the colonial economy. The smallholder system carries deep agronomic knowledge, including crop diversification and agroforestry,

and the continent is home to tens of thousands of edible plant species, only a fraction of which are widely cultivated — a reservoir of under-used potential.

The Logistics and Loss Problem

A striking share of what Africa grows never reaches a plate. Post-harvest losses run at 30 to 50 percent, costing more than US\$4 billion a year — enough, by one estimate, to feed 1.6 billion people — the product of inadequate storage, cold chains, roads, and processing. ^[21] Moving food, in other words, matters as much as growing it. The fiscal consequences are severe: in countries such as Zimbabwe, Guinea, and Sudan, the food-import bill exceeds total foreign-currency earnings, draining the reserves that Chapter 13 showed are already under strain. ^[22]

The Transformation Bet

The opportunity is correspondingly large. The African Development Bank projects the continent's food and agriculture market will grow from about US\$280 billion in 2023 to US\$1 trillion by 2030, and the AfCFTA (Volume III) could sharply expand intra-African agricultural trade once tariffs fall. ^{[22][20]} The strategy that follows is consistent across the development literature: shift from raw export crops toward staple foods for domestic markets, invest in value-added processing, cut post-harvest losses through better logistics, and finance smallholders directly. The food paradox, like the minerals paradox before it, turns out to be less about scarcity than about productivity, infrastructure, and value capture — the same structural themes, transposed to the land.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Industrialization and Manufacturing Futures

For decades Africa has been told that industrialisation is its road to prosperity. Instead its share of global manufacturing has shrunk — though a handful of countries, and a continent-wide push to electrify, hint at a possible turning point.

The minerals and the farmland represent Africa's raw potential, manufacturing is where that potential would be converted into broad-based prosperity and jobs. It is here, however, that the continent's economic record is most disappointing — and understanding why is essential to understanding both the present predicament and the routes out of it.

The Deindustrialisation Problem

Manufacturing's share of African GDP has stagnated under 13 percent since 2020 — about 12.7 percent in 2023, up only slightly from 12.2 percent in 2016 — and the continent's share of global manufacturing output has fallen from roughly 3 percent in the 1970s to under 2 percent today, a trajectory economists call premature deindustrialisation.^[24] As of 2023 only five countries — Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Algeria, and Morocco — had manufacturing value added exceeding US\$10 billion, while low-end services and subsistence agriculture still employ around 60 percent of the workforce.^[24] The roots are historical: post-independence import-substitution drives that faltered, followed by the structural-adjustment liberalisation of the 1980s and 1990s, which removed protective tariffs and saw many local industries collapse under import competition, compounded since by inconsistent policy and, above all, by the cost and unreliability of inputs — especially power.^[24]

The Energy Bottleneck

No constraint binds African industry more tightly than electricity. Nearly 600 million people — about half the continent, some 571 million by the World Bank's count — lack access to electricity, representing more than 80 percent of the entire global access gap, and unreliable supply costs African economies an estimated 2 to 4 percent of GDP each year.^{[26][27]} The flagship response is Mission 300, launched by the World Bank and African Development Bank in 2024 to connect 300 million Africans by 2030; by early 2026 some 43 million had been connected, against roughly US\$90 billion in committed finance and an annual energy-investment gap estimated near US\$160 billion.^[27] The shape of the solution

is changing fast: more than half of new electricity access in sub-Saharan Africa between 2020 and 2022 came from off-grid solar and mini-grids, and over 55 percent of the continent's energy already comes from renewable sources.^[27] Reliable power is the precondition on which every industrial ambition depends.

WHERE INDUSTRIALISATION IS WORKING

- **Morocco** has built deliberate automotive and aerospace clusters; automobiles, at roughly US\$8 billion, are now its single largest export category, within total exports of about US\$67.5 billion in 2024.^{[24][29]}
- **Ethiopia** raised manufacturing value added from about 3.4 percent of GDP in 2012 to 7.4 percent in 2023 through industrial parks in textiles, apparel, and leather — progress disrupted, but not erased, by conflict.^[24]
- **Egypt** sustains a broad industrial base in textiles, fertilisers, and electronics, while Rwanda, Ghana, and Senegal advance through special economic zones and export-processing zones.^{[25][28]}
- The AfDB found 37 of 52 countries improved their industrial-development scores between 2010 and 2021, and projects manufacturing could reach 16 percent of GDP by 2043, adding some US\$168 billion and around 35 million jobs.^{[25][28]}

The Demographic Clock

Industrialisation is not merely an economic preference but a demographic necessity. Roughly 12 million young Africans enter the labour market every year, and without the job creation that manufacturing and modern industry provide, the much-discussed “demographic dividend” (Volume V) risks curdling into a demographic crisis.^[27] Shifts in global supply chains have opened a window for African producers, but they must compete with deeply established Asian manufacturing bases.

Africa's industrial future thus hinges on three linked tasks drawn together in this volume: solving the energy bottleneck, sustaining consistent industrial policy rather than treating industrialisation as a slogan, and moving up the value chains in minerals and agriculture rather than exporting raw potential. Whether the continent accomplishes them is, in the end, the difference between a demographic dividend and a demographic emergency — the question carried forward into the society and future-trajectory volumes that follow.

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END OF VOLUME IV — ECONOMIC AND RESOURCE SYSTEMS

Volume V — *Society, Demographics & Culture* — continues the reference in the next installment.

A SYSTEMS-LEVEL ATLAS

AFRICA

VOLUME V

Society, Demographics & Culture

Demographic Transformation · Urbanization & Megacities · Languages, Ethnicity & Religion · Education & Health Systems · Culture, Media & the Creative Economy

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

About This Volume

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

Volume V of an eight-volume reference work compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

The previous volumes traced the land, the deep history, the modern state, and the economy. **Volume V is about the people.** It examines the demographic surge that will make Africa home to a quarter of humanity, the explosive growth of its cities, the staggering diversity of its languages and faiths, the condition of its schools and clinics, and the cultural industries through which Africa increasingly speaks to the world. This is the largest volume in the series — five chapters rather than four — because society is where every other system in this work ultimately registers.

A NOTE ON FIGURES AND CITATION INTEGRITY

Demographic and social data are estimates drawn from differing instruments — UN projections, census returns, survey research, and agency reports — that do not always agree. Where they differ, the text gives the reported range rather than a false single figure, and keys every quantitative claim to the numbered *References*. Long-range population projections in particular are scenarios, not predictions, and are presented as such. All data was verified against an identifiable public source in June 2026; nothing is reproduced verbatim.

Series architecture:

I — FOUNDATIONS · II — CIVILIZATION LAYERS · III — MODERN STATES · IV — ECONOMIC & RESOURCE SYSTEMS (*PUBLISHED*)

V — SOCIETY, DEMOGRAPHICS & CULTURE (*THIS INSTALLMENT*)

17. Demographic Transformation · 18. Urbanization and Megacities · 19. Languages, Ethnicity, and Religion · 20. Education and Health Systems · 21. Culture, Media, and the Creative Economy

VI — TECHNOLOGY & FUTURE SYSTEMS · VII — GEOPOLITICS · VIII — FUTURE TRAJECTORIES · APPENDICES A-E

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VOLUME FIVE

Society, Demographics & Culture

By 2100, roughly two of every five people on Earth will be African. This volume maps the human consequences of that fact: a youthful, fast-urbanising, extraordinarily diverse society straining its schools and clinics even as its films and music reshape global culture — and decides, in the process, whether the great demographic wave becomes a dividend or an emergency.

1. Demographic Transformation
2. Urbanization and Megacities
3. Languages, Ethnicity, and Religion
4. Education and Health Systems
5. Culture, Media, and the Creative Economy

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Demographic Transformation

Africa is the demographic centre of the twenty-first century. As the rest of the world ages and shrinks, the continent will add billions of people and remain overwhelmingly young — a fact that will reshape not only Africa but the entire human population.

No single statistic captures the African future more completely than its demography. The continent that held about 9 percent of the world's people in 1950 is on course to hold around 40 percent by 2100. This is the master trend beneath every other subject in this volume, and arguably in the entire work — the force that will determine whether the century's defining story is one of opportunity or of strain.

The Scale of Growth

Africa's population reached roughly 1.55 billion in 2025 and is projected, on the UN medium variant, to reach about 2.5 billion by 2050 and somewhere between 3.8 and 4.5 billion by 2100.^{[2][3]} By the end of the century the continent is expected to account for around 39 percent of all humanity, up from 16 percent in 2015 — meaning roughly two of every five people on Earth will be African.^[5] Growth is not uniform: the UN projects that between 2017 and 2050, half of the world's entire population increase will be concentrated in just nine countries, of which three — Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ethiopia — are African, and that 26 African countries will at least double in size over that period.^[4] Nigeria alone is on track to become the world's third most populous country shortly before 2050.^[4]

The Youngest Continent

Africa is, and will long remain, the youngest region on Earth. Its median age is about 19 years, against a global figure near 30, and historically around 60 percent of Africans have been under the age of 25.^{[1][5]} This youthfulness is the demographic basis of the much-discussed “demographic dividend” — the economic boost a country can capture when a large working-age population supports relatively few dependents. But the dividend is conditional, not automatic: it materialises only if those young people find education, health, and above all jobs, the central challenge identified in Volume IV. Without them, a youth bulge becomes a source of instability rather than growth.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION UNDER WAY

- Fertility has fallen sharply from its 1972 peak of about 6.7 births per woman to roughly 3.9 today, and the UN projects continued decline to 2.8 by 2050 and around 2.0 — replacement level — by 2100.^[1]
- The continent's median age is projected to rise from about 19 today to 35 by 2100 as fertility falls and lifespans lengthen.^[1]
- Fertility varies enormously: Niger, Somalia, Chad, the DRC, and the Central African Republic still record more than six children per woman, while Tunisia and Mauritius have fallen to replacement level or below.^[3]
- Population momentum means growth continues even as fertility falls, because so many Africans are entering their childbearing years.^[3]

The Stakes

The transformation is double-edged. The opportunity is a vast, young, increasingly educated workforce at the very moment the rest of the world is greying — a potential engine of global growth and a source of labour and dynamism. The risk is that the continent fails to generate the jobs and services its young people need: an estimated 438 million Africans were already living in extreme poverty, on under US\$2.15 a day, in 2025.^[6] Which of these futures arrives depends less on the demographic numbers themselves — which are now largely locked in — than on the economic, educational, and political choices examined throughout this work.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Urbanization and Megacities

Africa is urbanising faster than any region in history. The bulk of its coming population growth will land in cities — producing some of the planet's largest urban agglomerations, and some of its hardest urban-management challenges.

Where Africa's billions will live is as consequential as how many there will be. The continent is in the midst of the fastest urban transition the world has seen, as hundreds of millions move from countryside to city in the span of a few decades — a compression of the urbanisation that took Europe and the Americas more than a century. By 2050, an estimated 80 percent of Africa's population growth is expected to be absorbed by its cities.^[8]

The Megacity Surge

Africa today has three megacities — urban areas of more than ten million people. Cairo is the largest, with a metropolitan population on the order of 23 to 25 million, followed by Kinshasa and Lagos, each now above 17 million.^{[7][9]} Their scale is already reshaping the continent's economic geography: Lagos State's economy has been estimated at around US\$131 billion, equivalent to a fifth or more of Nigeria's GDP and large enough to rank among Africa's biggest national economies in its own right.^[10] Nigeria appears nine times among the continent's fifty largest cities, a measure of how urbanisation concentrates in the most populous states.^[7]

AFRICA'S URBAN TRAJECTORY

- By 2050, Africa is projected to gain four more megacities — Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Khartoum, and Luanda — bringing the total to seven.^[9]
- On current projections Cairo could reach about 32.6 million by 2050, with Kinshasa near 29 million and Lagos near 28 million.^[9]
- Dar es Salaam and Nairobi are among the fastest-growing, each projected to roughly double between today and 2050.^[9]
- Gabon and Libya are already the most urbanised African states, each above 80 percent.^[12]

The Informal City

This growth is outpacing the capacity of governments to manage it. In cities such as Lagos, Nairobi, and Kinshasa, informal settlements are expanding rapidly, with inadequate access to clean water, sanitation, electricity, and formal housing.^[11] The result is a distinctively African form of urbanisation — rapid, youthful, and largely informal, mirroring the informal-economy structure described in Volume IV — in which a large share of urban residents live and work outside formally planned and serviced systems. The central question, returned to in Volume VIII, is whether African cities can convert their demographic density into the productivity and innovation that cities have historically generated, or whether infrastructure and service deficits will trap that potential. (Notably, the UN's 2025 projections revised several African city forecasts downward from earlier rounds, a reminder that even these trajectories carry real uncertainty.^[71])

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Languages, Ethnicity, and Religion

Africa is the most linguistically and ethnically diverse continent on Earth, and one of its most religious. This plurality is a defining feature of African life — a source of extraordinary cultural richness and, at times, of political strain.

Itemography is the scale of African society and urbanisation its shape, diversity is its texture. No other continent contains anything like the variety of peoples, tongues, and faiths found across Africa's fifty-four states — a plurality rooted in the deep human history traced in Volume II and carried, largely intact, through the colonial reordering and into the present.

A Continent of Languages

Estimates of the number of languages spoken in Africa range from roughly 1,250 to 3,000 — on the order of a third of all the languages on Earth.^[13] These belong to the major families introduced in Volume II — Niger-Congo (the largest, including the Bantu languages), Afroasiatic across the north and Horn, Nilo-Saharan, and the Khoisan languages of the southwest. The density of this diversity is hard to overstate: Cameroon alone is home to more than two hundred languages and roughly two hundred and fifty ethnic groups.^[14] Colonial languages — principally English, French, Portuguese, and Arabic — serve as the languages of government, commerce, and inter-ethnic communication, layered atop this indigenous foundation, while languages such as Swahili function as major regional *linguae francae*.

Peoples and Identities

Africa's ethnic composition is correspondingly intricate, comprising several thousand distinct groups whose identities are bound up with language, kinship, and territory. As Volume III examined, the colonial borders that became national boundaries rarely aligned with these groupings, so that most African states are multi-ethnic by construction. The management of that diversity — through federalism, power-sharing, or, in the worst cases, the politicisation of ethnicity into conflict — remains one of the central tasks of African governance.

The Religious Landscape

Africa is overwhelmingly religious: survey research finds that around 95 percent of Africans claim a religious affiliation.^[17] Two faiths predominate. Estimates for the continent as a whole place Christianity at roughly 49 percent of the population and Islam at about 42 percent, with traditional African religions and others making up the remainder.^[13] The two are divided largely along geographic lines, a pattern with deep historical roots: North Africa and much of the Sahel are overwhelmingly Muslim — over 90 percent in countries such as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya — while sub-Saharan Africa is majority Christian, at roughly 60 percent, with Muslims around 30 percent.^{[14][15]}

AFRICA AND THE FUTURE OF WORLD RELIGION

- Sub-Saharan Africa was home to roughly 650 million Christians in 2020, a number projected to exceed one billion by 2050.^[15]
- By 2060, an estimated 40 percent of the world's Christians and 27 percent of the world's Muslims are projected to live in sub-Saharan Africa.^[14]
- Nigeria, the continent's most populous country, contains both its largest Christian and its largest Muslim population.^[16]
- Traditional African religions persist widely, frequently practised alongside Christianity and Islam in syncretic forms rather than wholly displaced by them.^[16]

The demographic story of Chapter 17 thus carries a religious corollary: as the continent's population grows, Africa is becoming the demographic centre of gravity for both of the world's largest religions — a shift whose cultural and geopolitical consequences extend far beyond the continent itself.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Education and Health Systems

Whether Africa's demographic wave becomes a dividend depends, more than anything, on its schools and clinics. Both have made real gains over a generation — and both remain stretched far past their capacity by the sheer scale of need.

The human-development systems of education and health are where the demographic future of Chapter 17 is either realised or squandered. A young population is an asset only if it is healthy and skilled; a large cohort of under-educated, under-served young people is a liability. The African record on both fronts is one of genuine, underappreciated progress running up against the relentless arithmetic of population growth.

Health: Progress Against a Heavy Burden

Life expectancy in Africa has risen by roughly a decade since 2000, reaching an average of about 64 years — though this remains some nine years below the global average, and conceals a continental range of more than twenty years, from about 77 in Tunisia to around 55 in Nigeria.^[18] The continent carries a uniquely heavy disease burden. Malaria alone kills on the order of 600,000 people a year, the overwhelming majority of them African children under five, and tuberculosis and HIV together account for well over a million more deaths annually.^[21] Child mortality, while much improved, remains stark: a child in sub-Saharan Africa is roughly sixteen times more likely to die before the age of five than one in a high-income country.^[20]

A HEALTH SYSTEM UNDER PRESSURE

- Africa is undergoing a “double burden” of disease: non-communicable conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes now account for more than 37 percent of deaths, up from about 24 percent two decades ago, even as infectious disease persists.^[19]
- Average health spending is around 5 percent of GDP — roughly half the global average — leaving systems chronically under-resourced.^[21]
- Healthy life expectancy rose by more than five years between 2000 and 2019, driven by infectious-disease control and improved maternal and child care.^[22]
- The suspension of major external health funding in early 2025 disrupted HIV services across some 55 countries, mostly in Africa; analysts warned a permanent halt could cause millions of additional infections and deaths by 2029.^[22]

Education: Access Rising, Learning Lagging

Schooling has expanded enormously, but quality and reach have not kept pace with the growing school-age population. Adult literacy in sub-Saharan Africa has risen to about 69 percent, yet because population growth outstrips it, the absolute number of illiterate adults has actually *increased*, from around 196 million to 225 million in recent years.^[23] The continent is home to nearly 30 percent of the world's out-of-school children, and more than half of all out-of-school children worldwide live in sub-Saharan Africa; primary-school completion stands at roughly 65 percent against a global average of 87 percent.^{[23][24]} Nigeria alone has an estimated 18.3 million out-of-school children, the most of any African country.^[26]

Most troubling is the “learning crisis” that lies beneath enrolment figures: by some estimates, nearly nine in ten children in sub-Saharan Africa cannot read a simple text by age ten.^[25] With up to 12 million young Africans entering the labour market every year — and sub-Saharan Africa set to have the world's largest and youngest workforce by 2050 — closing this gap between access and actual learning, and aligning skills with the labour market, is among the most urgent tasks on the continent, and the hinge on which the demographic dividend turns.^[25]

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Culture, Media, and the Creative Economy

If the rest of this volume describes Africa's challenges, this chapter describes one of its clearest triumphs. Through film, music, fashion, and sport, African culture has become a genuine global force — and an increasingly serious economic one.

Culture is the domain in which Africa is most visibly reshaping the wider world's perception of the continent — and, increasingly, the global cultural marketplace itself. The creative economy turns the youth and dynamism described earlier in this volume into exportable influence and, more and more, into jobs and revenue, making it a rare arena where Africa's demographic energy is already paying clear dividends.

Nollywood and the African Screen

Nigeria's film industry, Nollywood, is the clearest example. By volume it is one of the largest film industries on Earth — producing well over 2,000 films a year, second only to India's Bollywood and far exceeding Hollywood's output — and it contributes billions of dollars to Nigeria's economy while employing hundreds of thousands directly and supporting around a million jobs in related sectors.^{[28][31]} Its reach is expanding through global streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Showmax, which have brought African storytelling to worldwide audiences. The shift is not merely cultural but commercial: in 2025, Nollywood overtook Hollywood in West African box-office market share, taking 49.4 percent of gross receipts against Hollywood's 48.8 percent, with cinema revenues climbing sharply year on year.^[30]

Afrobeats and the Sound of a Generation

In music, the Afrobeats genre — led by Nigerian and Ghanaian artists and now branching into subgenres such as Afro-fusion and Afro-rave — has moved from regional popularity to global dominance, filling arenas worldwide and topping international charts.^[30] The economics are following the influence: Nigerian artists earned tens of billions of naira from streaming platforms in 2024, and Africa's music-streaming market, though still young, is projected to approach half a billion US dollars in annual revenue by 2025 — roughly a fivefold increase since 2017.^{[28][30]}

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY BY THE NUMBERS

- Nigeria's creative sector — led by film and music — is projected to reach roughly US\$15 billion in value, contributing about 2.3 percent of GDP, up from 1.4 percent in 2023.^[27]
- Africa could capture up to 10 percent of the US\$200 billion global trade in creative goods by 2030, equivalent to around 4 percent of the continent's GDP.^[29]
- Cultural and creative industries already contribute more than 4 percent of GDP in Côte d'Ivoire and over 5 percent in Kenya.^[28]
- Nollywood employs hundreds of thousands directly and supports on the order of a million jobs across distribution, marketing, and retail.^[28]

Sport, Fashion, and Soft Power

The cultural surge extends well beyond screen and sound. African footballers anchor the world's leading leagues, the Africa Cup of Nations is a major global tournament, and in 2022 Morocco became the first African and first Arab nation to reach a FIFA World Cup semi-final — a landmark moment of continental pride. African fashion, design, and contemporary art are commanding growing international attention and prices. Taken together, these industries represent a form of soft power: a means by which Africa projects identity, narrative, and creativity onto the world stage, reshaping a global image long shaped by others. It is, in the context of this volume's harder statistics on poverty and schooling, a powerful reminder that the African story is not only one of need but of extraordinary and increasingly influential creative capacity — the human dividend already visible, even as the larger one waits on the choices examined in the volumes to come.

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END OF VOLUME V — SOCIETY, DEMOGRAPHICS & CULTURE

Volume VI — *Technology, Digital Transformation & Future Systems* — continues the reference in the next installment.

A SYSTEMS-LEVEL ATLAS

AFRICA

VOLUME VI

Technology, Digital Transformation & Future Systems

The Mobile & Fintech Revolution · Connectivity & Digital Infrastructure · Innovation Ecosystems & the Startup Economy · Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Tech & Data Sovereignty

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

About This Volume

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

Volume VI of an eight-volume reference work compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

Volume V described Africa's people; **Volume VI describes the technologies reshaping how they live, bank, connect, and build.** It opens with the continent's genuine world-leading success — mobile money — then turns to the infrastructure beneath it, the startup economy growing atop it, and the artificial-intelligence future now being contested. A single tension runs through all four chapters and echoes Volume IV's argument about minerals: Africa repeatedly generates the raw ingredients of the digital economy — users, data, talent, demand — while the infrastructure, the refining, and much of the value remain owned elsewhere. The recurring question is therefore one of *digital sovereignty*.

A NOTE ON FIGURES AND CITATION INTEGRITY

Technology data move quickly and vary by methodology — startup-funding totals in particular differ depending on whether debt and undisclosed rounds are counted. Where reputable trackers disagree, the text gives the figure with its source and notes the range rather than presenting a single number as settled. All data was verified against an identifiable public source in June 2026; nothing is reproduced verbatim. Monetary values are in US dollars unless stated.

Series architecture:

I — FOUNDATIONS · II — CIVILIZATION LAYERS · III — MODERN STATES · IV — ECONOMIC & RESOURCE SYSTEMS · V — SOCIETY, DEMOGRAPHICS & CULTURE (*PUBLISHED*)

VI — TECHNOLOGY, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & FUTURE SYSTEMS (*THIS INSTALLMENT*)

22. The Mobile and Fintech Revolution · 23. Connectivity and Digital Infrastructure · 24. Innovation Ecosystems and the Startup Economy · 25. Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Tech, and Data Sovereignty

VII — GEOPOLITICS AND GLOBAL POSITIONING · VIII — FUTURE TRAJECTORIES · APPENDICES A-E

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VOLUME SIX

Technology, Digital Transformation & Future Systems

Africa did not catch up to the rich world's banking system — it leapfrogged it, moving US\$1.4 trillion a year through mobile phones. Yet the cables that carry its internet, the data centres that would store its information, and the AI models that will shape its economy are largely owned by others. This volume maps both the leap and its limits.

1. The Mobile and Fintech Revolution
2. Connectivity and Digital Infrastructure

3. Innovation Ecosystems and the Startup Economy

4. Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Tech, and Data Sovereignty

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Mobile and Fintech Revolution

Africa did not catch up to the rich world's banking system — it leapfrogged it. Mobile money turned an ordinary phone into a bank account for hundreds of millions of people, and the continent now leads the entire world in the technology.

The single most important technology story in modern Africa is also the clearest example of the continent solving its own problem in its own way. Faced with a population the formal banking system never reached — the cash-based, largely unbanked majority described in Volume IV — Africa skipped the bank branch entirely and built a financial system on the mobile phone. The result is not merely catching up; in this domain, Africa is ahead of the world.

The Leapfrog

The breakthrough was M-Pesa, launched in Kenya by the operator Safaricom in 2007 as a simple way to send money by text message. It became the template for the continent. By the financial year ending March 2025, M-Pesa had around 35.8 million monthly active users in Kenya alone, and Safaricom's group total — including Ethiopia, Mozambique, and other markets — reached 62.3 million customers, with the service moving on the order of a billion dollars a day.^{[5][6]} The genius of the model was its physical simplicity: instead of bank branches, a network of around 7.2 million human agents across Africa handles cash-in and cash-out, making mobile money roughly seven times more accessible than ATMs and ten times more than bank branches.^[6]

The Scale of It

The numbers are now staggering, and they are global records. According to the GSMA's 2026 industry report, some US\$1.4 trillion flowed through mobile-money systems in sub-Saharan Africa in 2025 — the majority of the roughly US\$2.1 trillion transacted worldwide.^{[1][3]} Sub-Saharan Africa now accounts for around two-thirds of global mobile-money transaction value, and the region's growth continues to outpace every other: transaction values rose 26 percent in 2025, and the average active user made 269 transactions in the year, far more than peers in South or East Asia.^[2]

MOBILE MONEY BY THE NUMBERS (2025)

- Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa together held about 1.2 billion registered mobile-money accounts — more than half the global total of 2.3 billion.^[1]
- The continent counted roughly 347 million active users; East Africa alone processed around US\$806 billion.^[3]
- It took the industry twenty years to pass US\$1 trillion in annual transaction value worldwide — and just four years to double it, between 2021 and 2025.^[1]
- Mobile money contributed an estimated US\$190 billion to sub-Saharan Africa's GDP in 2023, and around 80 percent of providers now operate profitably.^{[4][3]}

Beyond Payments

What began as person-to-person transfer has matured into a full financial ecosystem. Mobile-money platforms now offer savings, credit, insurance, and merchant payments — the last of these the fastest-growing use case — and in Kenya have even drawn ordinary users into the securities market.^{[1][3]} This deepening matters because it extends genuine financial inclusion, not just payments, to populations that traditional finance wrote off as unprofitable. The remaining frontier is cross-border: Africa receives roughly US\$100 billion in remittances a year, yet only about 4 percent of global remittances travel on mobile-money rails, even though mobile money cuts the cost of sending money to the region to around 3.5 percent against more than 7 percent through traditional channels.^[5]

Mobile money is, in short, the single clearest case of African technological leapfrogging — a homegrown solution to a homegrown problem that the rest of the world now studies and imitates. It is the foundation on which the startup economy of Chapter 24 is built, and the proof, returned to throughout this volume, that Africa can lead and not merely follow when the infrastructure is its own.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Connectivity and Digital Infrastructure

Beneath the mobile-money miracle lies a harder truth. Africa remains the least-connected continent on Earth, and the physical infrastructure carrying its internet is owned largely by others. The leapfrog has limits — and they are made of fibre and concrete.

If mobile money shows what Africa can do when the technology is its own, connectivity shows what happens when it is not. Beneath every app, payment, and AI ambition lies a physical layer of undersea cables, fibre networks, and data centres — and it is at this layer that the continent's digital dependency is most visible, and most consequential.

The Connectivity Gap

Africa is the least-connected continent: as of 2024, only about 38 percent of its population had internet access.^[7] That access is overwhelmingly mobile rather than fixed-line, and it is unevenly distributed, with deep divides by geography, gender, and income that mirror the inequalities described in Volume V. Costs have fallen — the price of a gigabyte of mobile data dropped to about US\$1.85 in 2023, a 42 percent reduction from 2020 — which has helped pull more of the population online, but affordability remains a barrier for hundreds of millions.^[7]

The Undersea Backbone

Africa's connection to the global internet runs through undersea cables, and here the build-out has been dramatic. At the start of 2025, 77 cable systems were active or under construction around the continent, and total international bandwidth had reached roughly 1,835 terabits per second — a four-year compound growth rate of 24 percent, the fastest of any world region.^[8] Two projects dominate: Google's Equiano, switched on in 2023 along the Atlantic coast with capacity roughly twenty times the previous regional average, and Meta's 2Africa, whose core was completed in November 2025 — at 45,000 kilometres, a system longer than the Earth's circumference, linking 33 countries across Africa, Europe, and Asia and reaching more than three billion people.^{[9][10]} Egypt and South Africa host the largest clusters of landings, with 19 and 11 systems respectively.^[8]

The Shoreline Problem and Digital Sovereignty

This abundance conceals a dependency. The major cables are owned and financed not by African states but by foreign technology giants — Google and Meta foremost — whose infrastructure carries close to 90 percent of the continent’s internet traffic, and which lease capacity to local operators rather than the reverse.^[7] Critics note that these cables encircle Africa rather than interconnecting it internally, echoing colonial trade routes, and that the boom in international bandwidth has not been matched by domestic and urban networks — so that, in one apt phrase, the internet boom “stops at the shoreline.”^[8] The same value-capture problem identified in the minerals chapter recurs here: Africa hosts less than one percent of the world’s data centres, meaning much of its data is stored, processed, and monetised abroad.^[21]

VULNERABILITY AND NEW ENTRANTS

- Concentration brings fragility: cable cuts in the Red Sea in September 2025 disrupted internet services across parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.^[12]
- Low-Earth-orbit satellite services such as Starlink are entering African markets, beginning with Nigeria and others, extending reach into hard-to-serve areas.^[12]
- New routes are multiplying: Google has announced Umoja, a first direct fibre link between Africa and Australia, while China’s PEACE cable reflects intensifying geopolitical competition over African connectivity.^{[12][8]}
- 2Africa’s consortium itself spans Meta, MTN’s Bayobab, Saudi Arabia’s center3, China Mobile, Orange, Telecom Egypt, Vodafone, and WIOCC — a map of who now wires the continent.^[9]

Connectivity, then, is rising fast but remains externally controlled and unevenly shared — the infrastructure layer on which every other digital ambition in this volume, from startups to artificial intelligence, ultimately rests. Who owns that layer is a question of sovereignty as much as of engineering, and it is taken up again in the geopolitics of Volume VII.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Innovation Ecosystems and the Startup Economy

A generation of African founders is building companies to solve distinctly African problems — and drawing global capital to do it. The ecosystem is maturing and concentrating at once, having just weathered a hard funding correction.

The youthful, connected population of the previous volumes has produced a wave of entrepreneurship, as African founders build technology businesses tailored to local realities — payments for the unbanked, logistics for informal markets, off-grid power, e-commerce for cash economies. Concentrated in a handful of hubs and increasingly visible to global investors, this startup economy is where the continent's demographic and digital potential is being turned into companies.

Hubs and the Funding Cycle

Innovation clusters have formed around a few major cities — Lagos, Nairobi (long dubbed the “Silicon Savannah”), Cape Town, and Cairo — supported by hundreds of tech hubs, accelerators, and a digital economy that the UN Economic Commission for Africa projects to reach around US\$360 billion by 2025.^[26] Funding has followed a boom-and-bust arc. After peaking near US\$6.5 billion in 2022, venture investment fell sharply during the global “funding winter,” bottoming around US\$2.9 billion in 2024 by one widely used tracker.^[14] In 2025 the market rebounded: by the authoritative Partech count, African tech start-ups raised US\$4.1 billion, up 25 percent and the strongest year since 2022, split between US\$2.4 billion of equity and a record US\$1.6 billion of debt — the rising role of debt being itself a sign of a maturing, more asset-backed ecosystem.^[13]

THE SHAPE OF AFRICAN VENTURE CAPITAL

- Four countries — Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, and South Africa, the “Big Four” — consistently capture on the order of 72 to 83 percent of all funding.^{[13][15]}
- In 2025 Kenya led the continent with about US\$1.04 billion raised, while South Africa ranked first in equity funding and deal count for the first time since 2017.^[13]
- Fintech remains dominant, drawing more than 40 percent of all capital — over US\$1 billion by September 2025.^[16]
- The number of active investors has fallen to around 330, down from 987 at the 2022 peak — a market that is leaner but stabilising.^[18]

Unicorns and the Concentration Problem

The ecosystem has produced billion-dollar companies — “unicorns” — concentrated in financial technology, the field that builds directly on the mobile-money revolution of Chapter 22. Nigeria’s Moniepoint crossed a one-billion-dollar valuation in late 2024, and South Africa’s Tyme Group reached unicorn status the same year, joining established names such as Flutterwave.^[16] Yet the same data reveal real structural weaknesses. Capital is heavily concentrated — both geographically, in the Big Four, and sectorally, in fintech — raising concerns about smaller ecosystems being starved even as Francophone markets such as Senegal and Benin show early promise.^[15] The gender gap is starker still: startups led by women have received only around 2 percent of total funding, a figure that falls to well under 1 percent once grants are excluded.^[17]

The African startup story is therefore one of genuine maturation shadowed by narrowness. The talent and demographic energy documented in Volume V are being converted into companies and, increasingly, into globally competitive firms — but whether that dynamism can broaden beyond fintech and beyond four countries is the open question that will determine whether the ecosystem fulfils its promise.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Tech, and Data Sovereignty

As artificial intelligence reshapes the global economy, Africa faces a defining choice: to build its own AI capacity, or to become once again a consumer of technology designed elsewhere. On paper, the continent has chosen to build.

The arrival of artificial intelligence presents Africa with the central dilemma of this entire volume in its sharpest form. AI runs on exactly the inputs the continent has in abundance — data and young talent — and exactly the infrastructure it largely lacks: computing power, data centres, and capital. Whether Africa ends the decade as a producer or a consumer of AI is, in effect, the twenty-first-century version of whether it refines its own cobalt or ships it raw.

The Policy Surge

Africa has moved with unusual speed at the level of strategy. The African Union adopted a Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy in July 2024, and in April 2025 the African Declaration on Artificial Intelligence was adopted in Kigali, jointly endorsed by the AU, the Smart Africa alliance, and the governments of all 54 states — the most ambitious unified AI framework the continent has produced, accompanied by the announcement of an Africa AI Fund.^{[19][20]} National strategies have cascaded behind it: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Libya, Zambia, and Mauritania published frameworks in 2024, followed by Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Namibia, Lesotho, and Tanzania in 2025, alongside Egypt's earlier strategy.^[21] The animating slogan, voiced repeatedly by African leaders, is that AI must be “built with Africa, by Africa, and for Africa.”^[21]

The Opportunity and the Gap

The stakes are large. UNESCO cites estimates that AI could add as much as US\$2.9 trillion to African output by 2030.^[22] Yet the structural gap between ambition and capacity is stark. Africa currently captures only about 2.5 percent of the global AI market and a mere 0.3 percent of worldwide AI investment; it hosts less than one percent of the world's data centres and is home to only around 3 percent of global AI talent.^{[22][21]} Implementation lags the strategies: an analysis of the AU strategy's first eighteen months found roughly 83 percent of associated funding concentrated in just four countries, against continental needs measured in the hundreds of billions.^[23] There are bright spots — Nigeria has launched a National Centre for AI and Robotics and a government-backed multilin-

gual large language model, while South Africa reached a target of training one million people in AI skills — but the risk, as analysts repeatedly warn, is of the continent becoming a consumer rather than a creator of AI.^{[23][21]}

Digital Identity and Data Sovereignty

Underlying both the opportunity and the risk is the question of data — who holds it, where it is stored, and who profits from it. The foundation is identity: an estimated 500 million people in sub-Saharan Africa lack any form of foundational legal identification, roughly half the global total, and 47 percent of them are children never registered at birth.^[24] The African Union has made digital identity central to its Digital Transformation Strategy for 2020–2030, aiming to give every African a unique digital identity by 2030, and large national systems are rolling out — Kenya’s Maisha Namba, Nigeria’s National Identification Number, Ghana’s card, and Ethiopia’s Fayda, which had registered more than 15.5 million people by May 2025.^{[25][26]}

THE DATA-SOVEREIGNTY QUESTION

- The AU’s Data Policy Framework and its Malabo Convention on cybersecurity and personal-data protection provide a continental governance scaffold — but enforcement and independent regulation remain weak in many states.^[20]
- Civil-society groups warn that digital-ID systems, built without strong safeguards, risk entrenching surveillance and excluding the very people they aim to include.^[25]
- With most data stored and processed on infrastructure owned abroad (Chapter 23), the value generated from African data largely accrues outside the continent.^[21]
- Data sovereignty — ownership and control of African data — is thus the digital echo of the resource-sovereignty struggle of Volume IV.^[20]

The pattern that closes this volume is the one that opened it, inverted. Mobile money showed that when Africa owns the system, it can lead the world; connectivity, AI, and data show that when it does not, it risks repeating the extractive logic of its economic history in digital form. Which path prevails — building sovereign digital capacity or importing it — is among the decisive choices of the coming decade, and it is carried directly into the geopolitical and future-facing volumes that follow.

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END OF VOLUME VI — TECHNOLOGY, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & FUTURE SYSTEMS

Volume VII — *Geopolitics and Global Positioning* — continues the reference in the next installment.

A SYSTEMS-LEVEL ATLAS

AFRICA

VOLUME VII

Geopolitics and Global Positioning

The New Scramble: External Powers in Africa · African Agency &
Multi-Alignment · Africa in the Global Order

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

About This Volume

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

Volume VII of an eight-volume reference work compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

The first six volumes built the case from the ground up: the land and its resources, the deep history, the modern state, the economy, the people, and the technology. **Volume VII turns outward** — to Africa's place in a contested, multipolar world. It maps the external powers competing for influence on the continent, the rediscovered diplomatic strategy with which African states are exploiting that competition, and the larger bid for a genuine voice in the institutions that govern the planet. The argument that has run through the whole work — engineered dependency giving way to contested sovereignty — reaches its geopolitical expression here.

A NOTE ON A FAST-MOVING SUBJECT AND CITATION INTEGRITY

Geopolitics changes by the week, and this volume is unusually exposed to events — trade figures, troop deployments, summit outcomes, and reform negotiations were all current as of June 2026 and are keyed to the numbered *References*. Readers consulting it later should treat alliance dynamics and negotiation states as a snapshot and re-verify against the cited sources. As throughout the series, no source is reproduced verbatim, and contested or rapidly shifting figures are given with their source rather than as settled fact.

Series architecture:

I-VI — FOUNDATIONS, HISTORY, POLITICS, ECONOMY, SOCIETY, TECHNOLOGY (*PUBLISHED*)

VII — GEOPOLITICS AND GLOBAL POSITIONING (*THIS INSTALLMENT*)

26. The New Scramble: External Powers in Africa · 27. African Agency and Multi-Alignment · 28. Africa in the Global Order

VIII — FUTURE TRAJECTORIES 2026-2100 · APPENDICES A-E (INCLUDING PROFILES OF ALL 54 COUNTRIES)

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VOLUME SEVEN

Geopolitics and Global Positioning

A century after the colonial partition, a new scramble for Africa is under way — but this time there are many suitors and no cartel, and African states hold more cards than at any moment since independence. This volume maps the competition, the strategy of multi-alignment with which Africa exploits it, and the continent's bid for a real seat at the global table.

1. The New Scramble: External Powers in Africa
2. African Agency and Multi-Alignment
3. Africa in the Global Order

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The New Scramble: External Powers in Africa

A century after the colonial “Scramble for Africa,” a new one is under way. But this time there is no European cartel carving up a map — there are many competing suitors, and African states have more freedom to choose among them than at any time since independence.

The intensity of external interest in Africa has not been higher in a hundred years. China, the United States, Russia, the Gulf monarchies, Turkey, and the European Union are all competing for access to the continent’s resources, markets, strategic locations, and diplomatic support — each with a distinct strategy and a distinct offer. Understanding what each wants, and what each provides, is the necessary first step to understanding the African agency examined in the chapters that follow.

China: The Established Power

China is, by a wide margin, Africa’s most important external partner. It has been the continent’s largest trading partner for sixteen consecutive years, and bilateral trade reached a record US\$295.6 billion in 2024 before climbing a further 17.7 percent in 2025 to about US\$348 billion — more than three times the United States’ roughly US\$105 billion in trade with Africa.^{[1][2]} The relationship is institutionalised through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), founded in 2000, whose 2024 Beijing summit produced pledges of some US\$50 billion in loans, aid, and investment and, strikingly, the removal of customs duties on goods from all 53 African countries with diplomatic ties to Beijing.^[3] China’s model is also evolving: after years as the continent’s great infrastructure lender under the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing is shifting toward trade, investment, and blended finance, positioning itself to benefit from the African single market even as its large-scale lending has declined.^[4]

The United States: Narrowing to Minerals

American engagement has contracted and sharpened. Under the “trade, not aid” posture adopted in 2025, the US dismantled its main aid agency, allowed the African Growth and Opportunity Act — the duty-free trade programme that anchored US-Africa commerce since 2000 — to lapse at the end of September 2025, and imposed tariffs that hit African exporters.^[5] What remains is a concentrated focus on critical minerals and on countering

Chinese influence. The flagship is the Lobito Corridor, a rail route designed to carry copper and cobalt from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia westward to the Atlantic — backed by a US\$553 million US development-finance loan — in direct competition with China’s rehabilitation of the eastward Tanzania-Zambia railway.^[6] The transformation is stark: where Washington once led on development, its African policy is now largely an instrument of mineral security.

Russia: The Security Broker

Russia offers something none of the others will: regime security, with no questions asked. Its instrument has shifted from the nominally private Wagner Group to the state-controlled Africa Corps, created in late 2023 and consolidated after Wagner’s formal withdrawal from Mali in June 2025.^[5] Russian forces now operate in the Central African Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Libya, and Equatorial Guinea, with new agreements reaching toward Togo and beyond — President Putin having claimed military-cooperation deals with more than forty African states.^{[6][8]} The Russian playbook intertwines security assistance, regime protection, resource concessions such as gold and uranium, and the cultivation of anti-Western, anti-French sentiment.^[7] Its limits are real, however: in the Sahel, Russia has proven unable to defeat the jihadist insurgency it inherited from departed French and UN forces, repeating many of the West’s mistakes.^[7]

The Gulf and Turkey: The New Investors

Among the fastest-rising players are the Gulf states, the United Arab Emirates above all. The UAE has become one of Africa’s leading sources of foreign investment, channelling an estimated US\$130 billion into the continent between 2019 and 2023, much of it through “infrastructure diplomacy” — the ports, logistics corridors, and energy projects of firms such as DP World and AD Ports.^[9] Emirati operators now run or are building terminals from Berbera in Somaliland to Dar es Salaam, Dakar, and Sokhna, and are financing rail links to connect landlocked economies to the sea.^{[9][10]} Saudi Arabia has pledged major energy investments, and Turkey has built a distinctive niche combining trade, drones, and security partnerships across much of East Africa.^{[10][12]} For these diversifying economies, Africa is at once a market, a supply base, and a theatre for projecting influence.

Europe: Defending Old Ground

The European Union, Africa’s former colonial metropole and still a major trade and aid partner, is attempting to defend its position through the Global Gateway, an infrastructure-investment strategy launched in 2021 under which Team Europe has mobilised some €300 billion globally, with an Africa-Europe package of roughly €150 billion at its centre.^{[13][14]} Explicitly conceived as a values-based rival to China’s Belt and Road, it prioritises transport corridors, renewable energy and green hydrogen, and critical-mineral value chains.

[14] Yet European engagement is shadowed by the politics of migration: much of the EU's practical effort goes into border control, returns, and managing irregular movement across the Mediterranean, a preoccupation that often overshadows the partnership's developmental ambitions.**[15]**

The common thread is unmistakable, and it is the thread of this entire work: each external power courts Africa primarily for what it possesses — minerals, markets, locations, votes — in a pattern that echoes the extractive logic of the colonial era. What has changed, decisively, is that there are now many suitors rather than one, and that multiplicity is itself the foundation of a new African leverage.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

African Agency and Multi-Alignment

The most important fact about the new scramble is not who is competing — it is that Africa is no longer merely the prize. With more partners than ever, African states have rediscovered the art of non-alignment, and begun to demand a seat at the tables where the world is run.

For decades, accounts of Africa's place in the world cast the continent as an object — of colonisation, of Cold War rivalry, of aid and intervention. That framing is now badly out of date. The defining geopolitical development of the present era is the assertion of African agency: the conscious use of a multipolar world's competition to extract better terms, and a coordinated push for representation in the institutions of global governance.

Multi-Alignment as Strategy

The strategy at the heart of this shift is multi-alignment — a deliberate refusal to choose sides, and a willingness to partner with rival powers simultaneously. African states increasingly court China and the United States, Russia and the Gulf, all at once, playing suitors against one another to maximise their own advantage. The pattern was visible in the divided African response to the war in Ukraine, where many states declined to align with the Western position, and in the Sahel's pivot from French to Russian security partners. This is not the passive non-alignment of the Cold War but an active hedging that the end of the unipolar moment has made newly viable — and newly profitable.

A Seat at the Table: The G20 and BRICS

Africa's demand for representation has produced real institutional gains. In September 2023 the African Union was admitted as a permanent member of the G20, joining the European Union as one of only two bloc members and giving the continent a standing voice in the premier forum of the world's major economies; South Africa, long the only individual African member, went on to hold the G20's rotating presidency, the first African nation to do so.^{[17][20]} In parallel, the BRICS grouping has expanded into Africa: South Africa, a member since 2010, was joined in January 2024 by Egypt and Ethiopia (alongside Iran and the UAE), turning the bloc into a Global South platform that now represents close to 46 percent of the world's population and around 36 percent of its GDP.^{[16][18]}

THE FIGHT FOR THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

- When the UN was founded in 1945, only four of its members were African — South Africa, Liberia, Egypt, and Ethiopia — and the continent has never held a permanent Security Council seat, despite comprising 54 states and dominating the Council's agenda. ^[17]
- Africa's common position, the Ezulwini Consensus of 2005, demands two permanent seats (with veto, if the veto survives) and two additional non-permanent seats, with the AU choosing the occupants. ^[21]
- In 2024 the United States became the first permanent member to publicly back permanent African seats — though without veto power — and the UN's 80th anniversary in 2025 renewed pressure for reform. ^[16]
- Unity is fragile: a BRICS foreign-ministers' meeting in Rio in April 2025 failed to issue a communiqué after Egypt and Ethiopia objected to language favouring South Africa for a seat, insisting the choice belongs to the continent collectively. ^{[18][19]}

The Diaspora and Migration

Africa's global positioning has a human dimension as well as an institutional one. The African Union formally recognises the global African diaspora as the continent's "Sixth Region," and the financial weight of that diaspora is now enormous: remittances reached an estimated US\$104.6 billion in 2025, the single largest source of external finance flowing into the continent — larger than foreign investment or aid — and a far more stable one. ^[27] Migration is therefore both a development engine, through remittances and returning skills, and a point of leverage and friction with Europe, as Chapter 26 described. Contrary to common perception, the majority of African migration is intra-African rather than directed toward Europe — a fact that reframes the continent's mobility as primarily a regional, integrative phenomenon.

Taken together, these developments mark a genuine transition from object to actor. Africa is converting its demographic, economic, and resource weight into diplomatic voice — haltingly, and not always with one voice, as the Security Council fault line shows. But the direction of travel is clear, and it sets up the larger question of the final chapter: whether that voice can be turned into real power in the global order.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Africa in the Global Order

From climate negotiations to the supply chains of the energy transition, Africa is testing whether it can convert what it possesses — people, resources, and moral standing — into genuine power in a multipolar world. The shift from victim to player is the defining diplomatic project of the era.

The institutional gains of the previous chapter raise a harder question: can representation be turned into influence? The answer is being worked out across several arenas at once — in climate diplomacy, in the politics of critical minerals, and in the slow, contested reform of global economic governance — and it is here that the cumulative argument of this entire reference work comes to a point.

The Climate Paradox and Africa's Common Position

Nowhere is Africa's moral and strategic case clearer than on climate. The continent contributes less than four percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions yet suffers among the most severe consequences — the injustice on which its entire climate diplomacy rests.^[26] Through the African Group of Negotiators and a common position refined at the Second Africa Climate Summit in Addis Ababa in September 2025, the continent went into the COP30 conference in Belém demanding a new global climate-finance goal of US\$1.3 trillion a year by 2030, the full operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund, a just energy transition that closes rather than freezes the continent's energy-access gap, and fair access to carbon markets.^{[22][23]}

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND ITS SHORTFALL

- African negotiators frame the issue through Common but Differentiated Responsibilities: those least responsible for warming should not bear its costs alone.^[22]
- The Loss and Damage Fund remains tiny relative to need — roughly US\$789 million pledged globally and only a fraction actually paid by mid-2025, against climate losses measured in the trillions.^[25]
- COP30 tripled the global adaptation-finance goal from US\$40 billion to US\$120 billion a year — but only by 2035, a delay that frontline communities called inadequate.^[25]
- Africa increasingly presents itself “not as a victim but as a partner,” offering renewable potential, vast carbon sinks, and critical minerals as assets to bargain with.^[24]

Minerals and Markets as Leverage

The continent's strongest cards are the ones identified in Volume IV. The global energy transition depends on minerals — cobalt, lithium, copper, manganese — that Africa holds in abundance, and a growing number of governments are now wielding that fact deliberately, through export controls and demands that refining and value-addition move onshore. ^[24] The African Continental Free Trade Area (Volume III) compounds this leverage by presenting external partners with a single market of 1.3 billion people rather than 54 fragmented economies. The strategic logic uniting climate, minerals, and trade is the same: to stop selling raw potential cheaply and start extracting value, terms, and recognition in return — the precise inversion of the engineered dependency traced through this work.

The Limits and the Project

The obstacles are formidable and should not be minimised. Africa's 54 states rarely speak with a single voice — the Security Council fault line of Chapter 27 is one example among many — and disunity repeatedly dilutes the continent's bargaining power. The debt dependence documented in Volume IV constrains freedom of action; institutional capacity is uneven; and reform of the global order is glacial, leading some to dismiss even the G20 seat as a largely symbolic gesture. ^[20] Against these constraints stands the one trend that compounds in Africa's favour with every passing year: the demographic weight of Volume V, which will make the continent home to a quarter of humanity, and an ever-larger share of its workers and consumers, by 2100.

Africa's position in the global order is, in the end, the sum of every system examined in this reference — the land and its resources, the long history of extraction, the architecture of the modern state, the surging population, and the digital transformation — now being marshalled into a coordinated bid for agency. Whether that bid succeeds, and what kind of continent emerges if it does, is the question to which the final volume turns: the trajectories of Africa's future to the year 2100.

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END OF VOLUME VII — GEOPOLITICS AND GLOBAL POSITIONING

Volume VIII — *Future Trajectories 2026-2100* — concludes the main reference in the next installment.

A SYSTEMS-LEVEL ATLAS

AFRICA

VOLUME VIII

Future Trajectories, 2026-2100

Demographic Destiny & the Human-Capital Question · Economic Futures & Development Scenarios · Climate, Resource & Environmental Trajectories · The Africa We Want: Integration, Technology & the 2100 Horizon

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LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

About This Volume

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

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The preceding seven volumes built a portrait of Africa system by system: the land and its resources, the deep human history, the modern state, the economy, the people, the technology, and the geopolitics. **This final volume turns that portrait toward the future.** It examines what can be projected with confidence to the year 2100 — above all the demographic certainties — and what remains genuinely open: the economic, climatic, technological, and political trajectories that will decide whether Africa's century becomes one of shared prosperity or of squandered potential. Its final chapter draws the entire reference to a close.

A NOTE ON FORECASTING AND CITATION INTEGRITY

This volume deals in projections, and projections are not facts. Long-range demographic figures are robust because population momentum is slow-moving; economic, climatic, and political futures are scenarios, contingent on choices not yet made, and are presented as such throughout — as ranges, alternatives, and explicitly labelled scenarios rather than predictions. Every quantitative claim is keyed to the numbered *References* and was verified against an identifiable public source in June 2026. Where this volume synthesises the earlier seven, it cross-references them rather than re-citing established material; nothing is reproduced verbatim.

Series architecture:

I-VII — FOUNDATIONS, HISTORY, POLITICS, ECONOMY, SOCIETY, TECHNOLOGY, GEOPOLITICS (PUBLISHED)

VIII — FUTURE TRAJECTORIES, 2026-2100 (THIS INSTALLMENT — CONCLUDES THE MAIN REFERENCE)

29. Demographic Destiny & the Human-Capital Question · 30. Economic Futures & Development Scenarios · 31. Climate, Resource & Environmental Trajectories · 32. The Africa We Want

STILL TO COME: APPENDICES A-E, INCLUDING REFERENCE PROFILES OF ALL 54 AFRICAN COUNTRIES (TO BE ISSUED AS A SEPARATE SERIES).

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VOLUME EIGHT

Future Trajectories, 2026-2100

One fact about the century is close to certain: by 2100, roughly two of every five human beings will be African. Almost everything else — whether those billions are prosperous or poor, employed or idle, integrated or fragmented — remains open, and depends on choices being made now. This concluding volume maps the certainties, the scenarios, and the single argument that has run through all eight.

1. Demographic Destiny and the Human-Capital Question
2. Economic Futures and Development Scenarios
3. Climate, Resource, and Environmental Trajectories

4. The Africa We Want: Integration, Technology, and the 2100 Horizon

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Demographic Destiny and the Human-Capital Question

Africa's future begins with a near-certainty. The demographic wave described in Volume V is, in its broad shape, already locked in; the only real question is whether the continent turns its coming billions into a dividend or a crisis.

For everything in this volume, the demography is the most predictable. Because population change is driven by the slow momentum of people already born, the broad contours of Africa's mid-century population are among the most reliable forecasts in all of social science. They are also the foundation on which every other trajectory in this volume rests — the economic, the climatic, the political — because all of them must ultimately serve, or fail, the same rising tide of people.

The Locked-In Future

The numbers were set out in Volume V and bear restating as the premise of the future. Africa's population, around 1.55 billion in 2025, is projected on the UN's medium variant to reach roughly 2.5 billion by 2050 and somewhere between 3.8 and 4.5 billion by 2100, when the continent will be home to around 40 percent of humanity, up from 19 percent today.^{[3][4]} It will remain the youngest region on Earth throughout, with a median age that only slowly rises from about 19 toward 35 over the century.^[3] These are not aspirations or targets; they are the demographic weather of the coming decades, and they will arrive almost regardless of policy.

The Workforce Tsunami

The economically decisive consequence is the surge in working-age population. Over the next three decades Africa will experience the fastest growth in working-age population of any world region — a net increase of roughly 740 million people of working age by 2050.^[1] This is the raw material of the “demographic dividend.” But the same figures contain the central warning: up to 12 million young Africans already enter the labour market every year, while the continent's economies currently create only about 3 million new formal wage jobs annually.^[1] That gap — between the young people arriving and the jobs awaiting them — is arguably the single most important number in this entire work.

DIVIDEND OR CRISIS: THE FORK IN THE ROAD

- The demographic dividend is conditional, not automatic: it is captured only when a society educates, keeps healthy, and above all *employs* its young population — the human-capital agenda of Volume V.^[1]
- Captured, the dividend can power decades of rapid growth, as it did in East Asia; squandered, a youth bulge becomes a driver of unemployment, instability, and migration pressure.
- By 2050 Africa will hold about a quarter of the world's people and an ever-larger share of its young workers and consumers — a fact of growing weight in every global market and forum.^[2]
- The constraint is human capital: the learning crisis of Volume V, in which most children cannot read by age ten, must be reversed for the dividend to materialise.

The Human-Capital Question

The demography therefore reframes every other question in this volume as a question about people. Whether Africa's economy grows fast enough (Chapter 30), whether it can adapt to climate stress (Chapter 31), and whether it can realise its political vision (Chapter 32) all reduce, in the end, to whether the continent invests in the health, education, and employment of the largest and youngest generation in human history. The numbers are set; the outcome is a choice. That tension — between a destiny that is fixed and a result that is not — is the frame for everything that follows.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Economic Futures and Development Scenarios

Will this be the “African Century”? The honest answer is that it could be one of significant, even transformative, growth — but the triumphalist forecasts oversell it, and the persistent gap between potential and delivery remains the continent’s defining economic risk.

No question about Africa’s future attracts more breathless optimism, or more weary cynicism, than the economic one. The truth lies between the “Africa Rising” euphoria and the older Afro-pessimism, and it depends less on forces beyond the continent’s control than on a set of structural choices that this reference has traced throughout. The future economy is best understood not as a forecast but as a set of scenarios.

The Growth Outlook

The baseline is genuinely positive. Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to post some of the fastest economic growth rates of any world region — on the order of 4 to 5 percent — through to 2050, such that by mid-century the region’s combined output is likely to be larger than that of any single economy except the United States, China, and India.^[7] Yet the same analysis delivers a sobering qualifier: slow productivity gains will probably prevent Africa from achieving the 8-percent-plus growth that powered East Asia’s transformation, so the continent will not reshape the global economy the way China did.^[7] The African Development Bank is blunter still: growth has remained below the roughly 7 percent threshold widely held necessary for rapid poverty reduction, and on current paths extreme poverty — which peaked near 43.9 percent of the population in 2025 — will decline only slowly.^{[5][6]}

The Scenarios

Because the future is a matter of choices, it is best modelled as alternative paths. Long-range scenario work by the Institute for Security Studies finds that the single most powerful lever available to the continent is deeper integration — the African Continental Free Trade Area — followed closely by improved governance, with a manufacturing push capable of lifting industrial value-added above 18 percent of GDP by the 2040s.^[8] Crucially, a “combined” scenario that pulls all these levers at once produces dramatically better outcomes — in growth, poverty reduction, and income distribution — than the “current

path.”^[8] The difference between a future in which the average African earns a few thousand dollars a year and one in which they earn several times that is not predetermined; it is the cumulative result of decisions about trade, industry, governance, and value capture.^[9]

The Make-or-Break Variables

The levers are precisely those identified across this work. The AfCFTA (Volumes III and VII) can convert 54 fragmented economies into a single market large enough to support industrialisation and bargaining power. Solving the energy bottleneck and moving up the value chains in minerals and agriculture (Volume IV) can break the export-of-raw-potential trap that has defined the continent’s economic history. Debt sustainability (Volume IV) determines fiscal freedom; governance quality (Volume III) determines whether growth is broad or captured; and digital leapfrogging (Volume VI) can compress decades of development. None of these is guaranteed, and each is contested — which is exactly why the economic future remains open.

The realistic verdict, then, avoids both caricatures. The most probable path is one of solid but uneven growth — lifting hundreds of millions toward prosperity while leaving hundreds of millions behind — unless the structural levers are deliberately and simultaneously pulled. “Africa Rising” is a genuine possibility, not a prophecy; the African Century is available, but it must be built.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Climate, Resource, and Environmental Trajectories

Africa faces the century's cruelest paradox: it is the region least responsible for climate change, the most exposed to its effects, and the least resourced to adapt — even as it holds many of the assets the rest of the world needs to solve the problem.

Climate change is the trajectory with the greatest power to derail all the others. A continent whose population, economy, and cities are all expanding rapidly is doing so on the planet's most climate-vulnerable land, and the interaction between demographic growth and environmental stress will shape African life through 2100 more profoundly than any single policy. Yet the same story contains an extraordinary opportunity.

The Threat

The injustice is stark and quantifiable. Africa will account for no more than about 4 percent of cumulative global energy-related carbon emissions by 2050, yet under current global policies the climate damage it suffers could reduce African GDP by around 8 percent by mid-century — with losses in some regions, such as East Africa, reaching roughly 15 percent.^[10] The continent is warming faster than the global average, the Sahel faces intensifying stress on water and arable land, and the finance required to adapt — estimated at US\$30–50 billion a year by 2030, rising toward US\$50 billion annually by 2050 — dwarfs what has actually been delivered.^{[10][11]} For the continent's oil and gas exporters, a further risk looms: fossil-fuel revenues could fall by more than 40 percent this decade, raising the spectre of stranded assets.^[11]

THE ENERGY-TRANSITION OPPORTUNITY

- Africa receives the highest solar irradiance on Earth, with a theoretical technical potential exceeding 10 terawatts — yet it hosts less than 2 percent of global solar capacity.^[12]
- This is the chance to leapfrog directly to clean energy, building on the off-grid solar and mini-grid surge and the Mission 300 electrification drive of Volume VI.
- The tension is real: a larger African economy needs more energy, so the continent's share of global emissions is projected to rise toward 10 percent by 2050 even as its per-capita emissions stay low.^[13]
- A modelled “Sustainable Africa” scenario suggests rapid growth and lower emissions can coexist — but only with adequate climate finance and a fair global framework.^{[13][14]}

Resource Futures and the Carbon-Sink Opportunity

The continent's resource endowment cuts both ways in the climate story. The critical minerals of Volume IV — cobalt, lithium, copper, manganese — are the physical backbone of the global energy transition, giving Africa a once-in-a-century chance to move up the value chain rather than merely supplying raw ore. Its forests and land, above all the Congo Basin, represent a vast carbon sink that, properly valued, could become both a climate asset for the planet and a revenue stream for the continent through reforestation and improved land management.^[13] At the same time, food and water security (Volume IV) will come under mounting pressure as warming reduces agricultural productivity on a continent that already imports much of its food.

The Just-Transition Question

The defining environmental question of the century, then, is whether Africa can industrialise and electrify without locking in either poverty or dangerous emissions — a genuinely “just” transition. The modelling suggests it is possible: that the continent can grow strongly while contributing to, rather than undermining, global climate goals, and can position itself as indispensable to the energy transition rather than a victim of it. But that outcome is conditional on exactly the finance and fairness that the climate diplomacy of Volume VII is still struggling to secure. Climate is thus both the gravest threat to Africa's future and, potentially, the arena in which its resources and its youth make it central to the planet's.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The Africa We Want: Integration, Technology, and the 2100 Horizon

Africa has already written down the future it wants. Agenda 2063 — “The Africa We Want” — is the continent’s own answer to the question this volume has been asking. Whether the gap between that aspiration and its delivery can be closed is the story of the century — and the note on which this reference ends.

It is fitting to close not with an outside forecast but with Africa’s own stated intention. In 2015 the African Union adopted Agenda 2063, a fifty-year vision framed as a single collective ambition: “The Africa We Want.” It is operationalised through five successive ten-year plans, and in 2024 the continent launched the second of them — explicitly titled the Decade of Acceleration — setting the terms in which Africa itself proposes to meet the future this volume has mapped.^{[15][16]}

Agenda 2063 and the Decade of Acceleration

The Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan, covering 2024 to 2033, organises the continent’s ambitions around seven “Moonshots”: by 2033, Africa intends to be prosperous, integrated, democratic, peaceful, cultured, people-driven, and influential.^[15] Its flagship projects are the concrete expression of that vision — the African Continental Free Trade Area, an African Passport enabling free movement, the Grand Inga hydropower dam, a Single African Air Transport Market, and pan-continental digital and educational networks.^[16] The plan’s own framing is candid: the first decade was about *convergence*, the second must be about *acceleration* — an admission that delivery has lagged the vision.^[16] The gap is measurable: assessments of the first decade found that for many continental goals the data to even track progress was missing, with only about a third of the relevant development indicators covering all African countries.^[17]

The Integration Imperative

If a single thread runs through all eight volumes of this reference, it is the centrality of integration. Africa’s defining structural weakness, inherited from the colonial partition (Volumes II and III), is fragmentation — 54 states, many small, divided by borders they did not draw and by infrastructure that still points outward. Its single most powerful lever, correspondingly, is unity: a continent that trades, bargains, and builds as one (Volumes III, IV, and VII) can capture value and command respect that 54 separate economies never

could, while a divided continent is, as the geopolitics of Volume VII showed, picked off piece by piece. The AfCFTA, free movement, and a single market are not merely economic policies; they are the precondition for African agency in the world.

The Technological Wildcard

Layered over this is the accelerant of technology. The digital and artificial-intelligence trajectories of Volume VI could compress decades of development — or entrench a new dependency if the continent remains a consumer rather than a creator and surrenders its data and infrastructure to others. Africa's youngest-on-Earth, increasingly connected population (Volumes V and VI) is the asset that makes the optimistic version plausible; data sovereignty and homegrown capacity are the conditions that make it safe.

SYNTHESIS — EIGHT VOLUMES, ONE ARGUMENT

Read as a whole, this reference tells a single story. The **land and its resources** (Volumes I and IV) gave Africa planetary importance — the cradle of humanity and the storehouse of the minerals the future runs on. Its **deep history** (Volume II) was ruptured by an externally engineered dependency that redrew the continent for extraction. The **modern state** (Volume III) inherited that fragmentation; the **economy** (Volume IV) remains caught in the value-capture traps it created; the **people** (Volume V) are the rising force now reshaping the equation; **technology** (Volume VI) offers a path to leapfrog the old constraints; and the **geopolitics** (Volume VII) is shifting, unevenly but unmistakably, toward African agency. The arc of the whole work is the movement from **engineered dependency toward contested — and potentially achieved — sovereignty**.

The 2100 Horizon

Two Africas are visible at the end of the century, and the truth will contain both. In the optimistic trajectory, the demographic dividend is captured, the continent integrates and industrialises, it captures the value of its resources and its data, and a population of some four billion makes Africa a planetary centre of economic and cultural gravity. In the pessimistic one, the jobs gap goes unfilled, climate damage compounds, debt and disunity persist, and the same vast population becomes a source of instability and unrealised potential. As a wise observer of the continent once noted, no single statement about Africa is ever wholly true — its variation is too great — and the real 2100 will be plural and uneven, brilliant in some places and tragic in others.

But the direction is not yet fixed, and that is the point on which an encyclopedia of the present must end. Africa in 2100 will, with near-certainty, be the largest and youngest hu-

man story on Earth. Whether it is also a story of shared prosperity depends on whether the continent can do the one thing this entire reference has shown it is capable of: turn what it *has* — the land, the resources, the history, the people, the ingenuity — into what it has said it *wants*. That work belongs to the present, and to Africans. This reference has tried only to map the ground on which it will be done.

References — Volume VIII

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END OF VOLUME VIII — FUTURE TRAJECTORIES, 2026–2100

This concludes the eight-volume main reference of *Africa: An Encyclopedic Reference (2026 Edition)*. The Appendices — including reference profiles of all 54 African countries — will be issued as a separate companion series.

COMPANION TO THE EIGHT-VOLUME REFERENCE

AFRICA

APPENDIX A

Country Profiles — North Africa

Algeria · Egypt · Libya · Mauritania · Morocco · Sudan · Tunisia

With a contextual note on Western Sahara

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

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About These Profiles

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

This is the first of five regional installments of the **Country Profiles**, the companion series to the eight-volume main reference compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

The eight-volume reference (Volumes I-VIII) is complete. This companion series profiles all 54 African states, grouped by the African Union's regional framework into five appendices — **A: North Africa, B: West Africa, C: Central Africa, D: East Africa, and E: Southern Africa**. Each profile gives a country's essential data at a glance — capital, population, area, languages, currency, head of state or government, independence, GDP, and key economic sectors — followed by a short narrative placing it in context. This appendix covers the seven states of North Africa.

A NOTE ON DATA, CURRENCY, AND CITATION INTEGRITY

Country data is a snapshot taken in **June 2026**. Two categories of fact are treated differently. *Volatile figures* — current heads of state, latest population, and latest GDP — were individually verified against identifiable public sources (national statistics, the World Bank, the IMF, the UN, and reputable news and reference works) and are keyed to the numbered *References*; these will drift over time and should be re-checked. *Stable facts* — capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, and official languages — are drawn from established reference knowledge.

Population and GDP figures are the most recent available estimates and may carry a one-to-two-year lag; GDP is nominal and in US dollars unless stated. For states in conflict — here, **Libya** and **Sudan** — governance and economic figures are inherently contested and are presented as such. Nothing is reproduced verbatim from any source.

Companion series:

A — NORTH AFRICA (THIS INSTALLMENT)

Algeria · Egypt · Libya · Mauritania · Morocco · Sudan · Tunisia

B — WEST AFRICA · C — CENTRAL AFRICA · D — EAST AFRICA · E — SOUTHERN AFRICA (TO FOLLOW)

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APPENDIX A

North Africa

The Mediterranean and Saharan rim of the continent — ancient civilisations and oil-and-gas economies, the Maghreb and the Nile, stability and fracture side by side. Seven states stretching from the Atlantic coast of Mauritania to the Red Sea shores of Sudan.

1. Algeria
2. Egypt
3. Libya
4. Mauritania
5. Morocco
6. Sudan
7. Tunisia

North Africa: The Seven States

North Africa is the continent's Arab-Berber and Saharan band, bound to the Mediterranean and the Middle East as much as to sub-Saharan Africa. Its economies lean heavily on hydrocarbons (Algeria, Libya) and minerals (Morocco's phosphates, Mauritania's iron ore), with Egypt's vast population and the Suez Canal at its eastern anchor. It is also the region of the 2011 uprisings, whose legacies range from Tunisia's contested democratic experiment to Libya's fracture and Egypt's restored strongman rule. The seven profiles below follow in alphabetical order; a note on the disputed territory of Western Sahara closes the appendix.

NORTH AFRICA · PROFILE 1 OF 7

Algeria

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Algiers
POPULATION	~ 47 million (2025–26 est.) ^[6]
AREA	2,381,741 km ² — the largest country in Africa
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Arabic, Tamazight (Amazigh); French widely used
CURRENCY	Algerian dinar (DZD)
HEAD OF STATE	President Abdelmadjid Tebboune (since 2019; re-elected 2024) ^[5]
GOVERNMENT	Semi-presidential republic
INDEPENDENCE	5 July 1962 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$260 billion (2024); per-capita ~US\$5,700 ^[6]
KEY SECTORS	Hydrocarbons (oil & gas, ~95% of exports); OPEC member; major gas supplier to Europe

Africa's largest country by area, Algeria won independence in 1962 after a brutal eight-year war against France that remains central to its national identity. Its economy is heavily dependent on oil and natural gas, and its political life has long been shaped by the National Liberation Front (FLN) and a powerful military establishment. Since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Algeria's importance as a gas supplier to southern Europe has grown sharply, even as its rivalry with neighbouring Morocco — over Western Sahara and regional leadership — keeps the Maghreb divided.

NORTH AFRICA · PROFILE 2 OF 7

Egypt

Arab Republic of Egypt

CAPITAL	Cairo (a New Administrative Capital, inaugurated 2024, lies ~40 km east) ^[2]
LARGEST CITY	Cairo (Greater Cairo metro ~22 million — Africa's largest)
POPULATION	~ 120 million (2026) — the most populous Arab nation ^[2]
AREA	~1,001,450 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	Arabic
CURRENCY	Egyptian pound (EGP)
HEAD OF STATE	President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (since 2014; third term 2024) ^[2]
INDEPENDENCE	1922 (from the UK); republic declared 1953
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$380 billion — Africa's second-largest economy; per-capita ~US\$3,000 ^[2]
KEY SECTORS	Suez Canal, tourism, remittances, natural gas, agriculture, construction megaprojects

Home to one of the world's oldest civilisations and the life-giving Nile, Egypt anchors the eastern edge of North Africa and straddles Africa and Asia at the Suez Canal — one of global trade's critical chokepoints. It is the most populous Arab country and the Arab world's political heavyweight. Under President el-Sisi, who took power in 2014, the state and military play a dominant economic role, channelling resources into vast infrastructure projects including an entirely new administrative capital, even as heavy external debt, currency devaluation, and widespread poverty strain the economy.

NORTH AFRICA · PROFILE 3 OF 7

Libya

State of Libya

CAPITAL	Tripoli (seat of the internationally recognised government)
POPULATION	~7 million
AREA	~1,759,540 km ² — the fourth-largest in Africa
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	Arabic
CURRENCY	Libyan dinar (LYD)
GOVERNMENT	Divided. UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU) in Tripoli under PM Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, with a Presidential Council chaired by Mohamed al-Menfi; a rival eastern Government of National Stability under PM Osama Hammad, backed by the House of Representatives and Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army ^[1]
INDEPENDENCE	24 December 1951 (from Italian rule / UN trusteeship)
GDP (NOMINAL)	Oil-dependent and volatile (~US\$40-50 billion); holds Africa's largest proven oil reserves
KEY SECTORS	Oil and natural gas (the overwhelming majority of revenue)

Ruled by Muammar Gaddafi from 1969 until his overthrow in a 2011 NATO-backed uprising, Libya has since fractured into rival administrations and has had no unified government since planned national elections were postponed in December 2021.^[1] The country is effectively split between a western government in Tripoli and an eastern one in Benghazi backed by Field Marshal Haftar's forces, which control much of the east, south, and the key oil infrastructure. Despite Africa's largest oil reserves, Libya's wealth is hostage to political division and foreign intervention, with Turkey backing the west and Russia active in the east.

NORTH AFRICA · PROFILE 4 OF 7

Mauritania

Islamic Republic of Mauritania

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Nouakchott
POPULATION	~ 5.3 million (2026) — among the world’s least densely populated states ^[7]
AREA	~1,030,700 km ²
LANGUAGES	Arabic (official); Pulaar, Soninke, and Wolof (national)
CURRENCY	Ouguiya (MRU)
HEAD OF STATE	President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani (since 2019; re-elected 2024); PM Mokhtar Ould Djay ^[7]
GOVERNMENT	Semi-presidential Islamic republic
INDEPENDENCE	28 November 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$11 billion ; per-capita ~US\$2,500 ^[7]
KEY SECTORS	Iron ore (over half of exports), gold, copper, fisheries, and emerging natural gas (the GTA field, shared with Senegal)

A vast desert nation bridging the Arab Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa, Mauritania pairs an enormous territory with a small, heavily urbanising population. Its economy rests on iron-ore mining and Atlantic fisheries, and is being reshaped by the offshore Greater Tortue Ahmeyim gas project developed jointly with Senegal. Re-elected in 2024 for a final term, President Ghazouani has given the country relative stability in a turbulent Sahel, though deep ethnic and caste divisions persist in a society that was among the last in the world to formally abolish slavery, in 1981.

NORTH AFRICA · PROFILE 5 OF 7

Morocco

Kingdom of Morocco

CAPITAL	Rabat
LARGEST CITY	Casablanca
POPULATION	~ 37–38 million (2026) ^[5]
AREA	~446,550 km ² (excluding Western Sahara)
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Arabic, Tamazight (Amazigh); French widely used
CURRENCY	Moroccan dirham (MAD)
HEAD OF STATE	King Mohammed VI (since 1999); PM Aziz Akhannouch (since 2021) ^[5]
GOVERNMENT	Constitutional monarchy
INDEPENDENCE	1956 (from France and Spain)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$155 billion (2024) — Africa's fifth-largest economy; per-capita ~US\$3,800 ^[5]
KEY SECTORS	Automotive manufacturing (a leading export), phosphates (the world's largest reserves), tourism, aerospace, agriculture, renewable energy

A constitutional monarchy under King Mohammed VI, Morocco is one of North Africa's most politically stable and economically diversified states, having built a leading automotive- and aerospace-export industry alongside its dominance of global phosphate reserves. Its foreign policy is anchored in its claim to Western Sahara, which it largely administers; in October 2025 a UN Security Council resolution centred Morocco's autonomy plan as the basis for resolving the dispute, a significant diplomatic gain for Rabat.^[5] Morocco is also investing heavily in renewable energy and will co-host the 2030 football World Cup.

NORTH AFRICA · PROFILE 6 OF 7

Sudan

Republic of the Sudan

CAPITAL	Khartoum (heavily damaged in the war; Port Sudan served as the wartime seat of government) ^[4]
POPULATION	~48 million ^[4]
AREA	~1,886,068 km ² — the third-largest in Africa
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Arabic, English
CURRENCY	Sudanese pound (SDG)
GOVERNMENT	At civil war since April 2023. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan chairs the Transitional Sovereignty Council (de facto head of state), with a transitional prime minister, Kamil Idris; the army (SAF) is at war with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) under Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo ^{[3][4]}
INDEPENDENCE	1 January 1956 (from joint British-Egyptian rule)
GDP (NOMINAL)	Devastated by war (pre-war ~US\$35 billion); the economy has collapsed ^[3]
KEY SECTORS	Agriculture (the world’s leading producer of gum arabic), gold, livestock; oil revenue largely lost with South Sudan’s 2011 secession

Once Africa’s largest country before South Sudan seceded in 2011, Sudan has been consumed since April 2023 by a catastrophic civil war between the army and the Rapid Support Forces — the world’s largest displacement crisis, with roughly 14 million people forced from their homes and tens of thousands killed.^{[3][4]} The army holds the centre and east, including a recaptured Khartoum, while the RSF controls much of the western Darfur region. The war erupted from a power struggle between two generals who had jointly seized power in 2021, two years after the fall of long-time ruler Omar al-Bashir.

NORTH AFRICA · PROFILE 7 OF 7

Tunisia

Republic of Tunisia

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Tunis
POPULATION	~12 million
AREA	~163,610 km ² — the smallest North African state
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	Arabic; French widely used
CURRENCY	Tunisian dinar (TND)
HEAD OF STATE	President Kais Saied (since 2019; re-elected 2024) ^[5]
GOVERNMENT	Presidential republic (presidential powers greatly expanded since 2021)
INDEPENDENCE	20 March 1956 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$50 billion ; per-capita ~US\$3,900
KEY SECTORS	Tourism, manufacturing (textiles, automotive components), phosphates, agriculture (olive oil)

Tunisia was the birthplace of the 2011 Arab Spring, whose wave of uprisings began when a street vendor's self-immolation toppled a decades-old dictatorship, and for a decade it was held up as the revolution's only surviving democracy. That trajectory shifted after President Kais Saied suspended parliament and consolidated power from 2021, governing under a new constitution that concentrates authority in the presidency. The economy — built on tourism, light manufacturing for European markets, and agriculture — remains under strain, leaving the country dependent on external financing and, increasingly, on closer alignment with Algeria.

A NOTE ON WESTERN SAHARA

Western Sahara is a disputed territory on the Atlantic coast, not counted among the 54 sovereign states profiled in this series. Most of it — the area west of a long defensive sand wall — is administered by Morocco, which claims sovereignty; the Polisario Front proclaims it the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which is a member of the African Union but not of the United Nations. In October 2025, UN Security Council Resolution 2797 endorsed Morocco's autonomy plan as the leading basis for a settlement, though a final political resolution remains unsettled.^[5]

References — Appendix A

All sources accessed June 2026. Listed in order of first citation. Volatile figures (leaders, latest population, latest GDP) are verified to these sources and are June 2026 snapshots; stable facts (capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, languages) are from established reference knowledge.

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END OF APPENDIX A — NORTH AFRICA

Appendix B — *Country Profiles: West Africa* (15 states, from Benin to Togo) — follows in the next installment.

COMPANION TO THE EIGHT-VOLUME REFERENCE

AFRICA

APPENDIX B

Country Profiles — West Africa

Benin · Burkina Faso · Cabo Verde · Côte d'Ivoire · The Gambia · Ghana ·
Guinea · Guinea-Bissau · Liberia · Mali · Niger · Nigeria · Senegal · Sierra
Leone · Togo

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

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About These Profiles

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

This is the second of five regional installments of the **Country Profiles**, the companion series to the eight-volume main reference compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

The eight-volume reference (Volumes I-VIII) is complete, and the companion series profiles all 54 African states across five appendices — A: North Africa, B: West Africa, C: Central Africa, D: East Africa, and E: Southern Africa. **This appendix covers the fifteen states of West Africa**, the continent's most populous region. Each profile gives a country's essential data at a glance — capital, population, area, languages, currency, head of state or government, independence, GDP, and key sectors — followed by a short narrative.

A NOTE ON DATA, CURRENCY, AND CITATION INTEGRITY

Country data is a snapshot taken in **June 2026**. West Africa has been the continent's most politically volatile region, and several states changed leadership in 2025-26: the military governments of **Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger** (which left ECOWAS in January 2025); **Guinea** (whose junta leader was elected president in December 2025); **Guinea-Bissau** (a November 2025 coup); and **Benin** (a new president inaugurated in May 2026). All current heads of state and latest population and GDP figures were individually verified against identifiable public sources and are keyed to the numbered *References*.

Stable facts — capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, and official languages — are from established reference knowledge. GDP is nominal and in US dollars; figures are the latest available estimates and may carry a short lag. Nigeria's GDP in particular has been volatile following major currency reforms. Nothing is reproduced verbatim.

Companion series:

A — NORTH AFRICA (**PUBLISHED**)

B — WEST AFRICA (**THIS INSTALLMENT**)

Benin · Burkina Faso · Cabo Verde · Côte d'Ivoire · The Gambia · Ghana · Guinea · Guinea-Bissau · Liberia · Mali · Niger · Nigeria · Senegal · Sierra Leone · Togo

C — CENTRAL AFRICA · D — EAST AFRICA · E — SOUTHERN AFRICA (**TO FOLLOW**)

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APPENDIX B

West Africa

The continent's demographic heartland — anchored by Nigeria, home to roughly half the region's people — and its most turbulent. A belt of cocoa, gold, oil, and bauxite economies stretching from the Sahel to the Atlantic, now split between the ECOWAS bloc and the breakaway Alliance of Sahel States.

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Benin | 9. Liberia |
| 2. Burkina Faso | 10. Mali |
| 3. Cabo Verde | 11. Niger |
| 4. Côte d'Ivoire | 12. Nigeria |
| 5. The Gambia | 13. Senegal |
| 6. Ghana | 14. Sierra Leone |
| 7. Guinea | 15. Togo |
| 8. Guinea-Bissau | |

West Africa: The Fifteen States

West Africa stretches from the arid Sahel to the humid Atlantic coast and contains both the continent's demographic giant, Nigeria, and several of its smallest states. Eight of the fifteen — Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo — share a common currency, the West African CFA franc, while the others keep their own. The region is bound together by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), but that bloc fractured in January 2025 when the military-led Sahel states of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger formally withdrew to form their own Alliance of Sahel States. The profiles below follow in alphabetical order.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 1 OF 15

Benin

Republic of Benin

CAPITAL	Porto-Novo (official); Cotonou (seat of government & largest city)
POPULATION	~14 million
AREA	114,763 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	French
CURRENCY	West African CFA franc (XOF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Romuald Wadagni (since May 2026, succeeding Patrice Talon) ^[7]
INDEPENDENCE	1 August 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$23 billion; per-capita ~US\$1,600 ^[7]
KEY SECTORS	Cotton (a leading export), the Port of Cotonou, agriculture, re-export trade with Nigeria

The birthplace of the Vodun (voodoo) religion and heir to the historic Kingdom of Dahomey, Benin is a slender coastal state whose economy turns on cotton, the busy Port of Cotonou, and trade with neighbouring Nigeria. After two terms under businessman-president Patrice Talon — a period of steady growth but a narrowing political space — the April 2026 election brought his former finance minister, Romuald Wadagni, to the presidency.^[7] Benin also faces a growing spillover of jihadist violence from the Sahel along its northern border.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 2 OF 15

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Ouagadougou
POPULATION	~23 million
AREA	272,967 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	French and national languages (Mooré, Dioula, others)
CURRENCY	West African CFA franc (XOF)
HEAD OF STATE	Capt. Ibrahim Traoré , transitional leader (seized power September 2022) ^[1]
GOVERNMENT	Military transitional government; member of the Alliance of Sahel States; left ECOWAS January 2025
INDEPENDENCE	5 August 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$20 billion ; per-capita ~US\$850
KEY SECTORS	Gold (the leading export), cotton, livestock

A landlocked Sahelian state once known as Upper Volta, Burkina Faso has been gripped since the mid-2010s by a jihadist insurgency that has displaced millions and now contests large parts of its territory. Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who seized power in a September 2022 coup, has become the most prominent face of the region's anti-French, sovereignty-first military wave, expelling French forces and turning toward Russia.^[1] Burkina Faso is a major gold producer, though much of that wealth is overshadowed by the cost and insecurity of the war.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 3 OF 15

Cabo Verde

Republic of Cabo Verde

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Praia (on Santiago island)
POPULATION	~525,000
AREA	4,033 km ² (an archipelago of ten islands)
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	Portuguese (Cape Verdean Creole widely spoken)
CURRENCY	Cape Verdean escudo (CVE)
HEAD OF STATE	President José Maria Neves (since 2021); PM Ulisses Correia e Silva
INDEPENDENCE	5 July 1975 (from Portugal)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$2.5 billion ; per-capita ~US\$4,700 — among the region's highest ^[8]
KEY SECTORS	Tourism, services, fisheries, remittances

An Atlantic archipelago off the West African coast, Cabo Verde is one of the continent's most stable and best-governed democracies, with the lowest poverty rate in the ECOWAS region and one of its highest incomes per head.^[8] Lacking significant natural resources, it has built a service economy centred on tourism and leverages a large diaspora — more Cape Verdeans live abroad than on the islands — whose remittances are a pillar of national income. Its mid-Atlantic location also makes it a strategic node for maritime security.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 4 OF 15

Côte d'Ivoire

Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

CAPITAL	Yamoussoukro (official); Abidjan (economic capital & largest city)
POPULATION	~31 million
AREA	322,463 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	French
CURRENCY	West African CFA franc (XOF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Alassane Ouattara (since 2011; re-elected to a fourth term in October 2025) ^[4]
INDEPENDENCE	7 August 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$87 billion — among the region's largest; growth ~6% a year ^[4]
KEY SECTORS	Cocoa (the world's largest producer), cashews, oil and gas, rubber, gold

The economic powerhouse of Francophone West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire is the world's largest cocoa producer and one of the continent's fastest-growing economies, with Abidjan a major regional financial hub. Having recovered from civil wars in the 2000s and post-election violence in 2010-11, the country has enjoyed a long boom under President Alassane Ouattara, who won a contested fourth term in October 2025 after his main rivals were barred from the ballot.^[4] In February 2025 France handed over its last military base in the country, part of a broader Sahelian and coastal retreat of French forces.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 5 OF 15

The Gambia

Republic of The Gambia

CAPITAL	Banjul (Serrekunda is the largest urban area)
POPULATION	~2.5 million ^[7]
AREA	11,300 km ² — the smallest country on mainland Africa
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English
CURRENCY	Gambian dalasi (GMD)
HEAD OF STATE	President Adama Barrow (since 2017; re-elected 2021) ^[7]
INDEPENDENCE	18 February 1965 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$2.7 billion ; per-capita ~US\$900 ^[7]
KEY SECTORS	Tourism, agriculture (groundnuts), remittances, re-export trade

A narrow sliver of land enclosing the Gambia River and surrounded on three sides by Senegal, The Gambia is mainland Africa's smallest state. It emerged in 2017 from 22 years of autocratic rule under Yahya Jammeh when Adama Barrow won a surprise election, beginning a fragile democratic transition that continues to grapple with stalled constitutional reform.^[7] The economy leans heavily on tourism along its Atlantic beaches, groundnut farming, and remittances from a large diaspora.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 6 OF 15

Ghana

Republic of Ghana

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Accra
POPULATION	~34 million
AREA	238,535 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English
CURRENCY	Ghanaian cedi (GHS)
HEAD OF STATE	President John Dramani Mahama (returned to office January 2025) ^[4]
INDEPENDENCE	6 March 1957 (from the UK) — the first sub-Saharan colony to gain independence
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$76 billion ; per-capita ~US\$2,200
KEY SECTORS	Gold (a leading African producer), cocoa, oil, services

In 1957 Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African colony to win independence, under Kwame Nkrumah, and it remains one of the region's most established democracies, with regular peaceful transfers of power. After a severe debt crisis and an IMF bailout, voters returned former president John Mahama to office in the December 2024 election, and he was inaugurated in January 2025.^[4] A leading producer of gold and cocoa and an oil exporter since 2010, Ghana is working to recover macroeconomic stability after its 2022 default.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 7 OF 15

Guinea

Republic of Guinea

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Conakry
POPULATION	~14 million
AREA	245,857 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	French
CURRENCY	Guinean franc (GNF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Mamadi Doumbouya (seized power 2021; elected president December 2025, sworn in January 2026) ^[2]
INDEPENDENCE	2 October 1958 (from France) — the first French colony to gain independence
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$24 billion ; per-capita ~US\$1,700
KEY SECTORS	Bauxite (the world's largest reserves), gold, iron ore (the giant Simandou deposit), diamonds

Guinea holds the world's largest reserves of bauxite, the ore of aluminium, and is developing Simandou, one of the planet's richest untapped iron-ore deposits — resources that have drawn heavy Chinese investment. Politically, it followed the Sahel pattern: Colonel Mamadi Doumbouya seized power in a 2021 coup, then, under a new constitution, won the December 2025 presidential election in a landslide and was sworn in as elected president in January 2026, a transition critics call a military grip dressed in civilian clothes.^[2] Despite its mineral wealth, much of the population remains poor.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 8 OF 15

Guinea-Bissau

Republic of Guinea-Bissau

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Bissau
POPULATION	~2.1 million
AREA	36,125 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	Portuguese (Crioulo widely spoken)
CURRENCY	West African CFA franc (XOF)
GOVERNMENT	Military transitional government. A November 2025 coup deposed President Umaro Sissoco Embaló; Gen. Horta Inta-A was sworn in as transitional president ^[3]
INDEPENDENCE	24 September 1973 (declared) / 1974 (from Portugal)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$2 billion; per-capita ~US\$900
KEY SECTORS	Cashew nuts (the dominant export), fisheries, agriculture

One of the world's most coup-prone states, Guinea-Bissau has endured chronic instability since independence from Portugal in the 1970s, with the military repeatedly intervening in politics and the country serving as a notorious transit point for Latin American cocaine bound for Europe. In November 2025 — amid a disputed presidential election — soldiers seized power once again, deposing President Embaló and installing a transitional military command, the ninth successful or attempted coup since independence.^[3] The economy depends overwhelmingly on cashew exports.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 9 OF 15

Liberia

Republic of Liberia

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Monrovia
POPULATION	~5.5 million
AREA	111,369 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English
CURRENCY	Liberian dollar (LRD); the US dollar also circulates
HEAD OF STATE	President Joseph Boakai (since January 2024)
INDEPENDENCE	26 July 1847 — Africa's oldest republic; never formally colonised
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$4.4 billion ; per-capita ~US\$800
KEY SECTORS	Iron ore, rubber, gold, timber, shipping (a major flag-of-convenience registry)

Founded in 1822 as a settlement for freed American slaves and declared a republic in 1847, Liberia is Africa's oldest republic and was never formally colonised. Its modern history was scarred by back-to-back civil wars (1989–2003) and the 2014–16 Ebola epidemic, from which it has slowly rebuilt. Joseph Boakai won the presidency in a closely contested 2023 election and took office in January 2024. The economy rests on iron ore, rubber, and one of the world's largest ship registries.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 10 OF 15

Mali

Republic of Mali

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Bamako
POPULATION	~23 million
AREA	1,240,192 km ² — one of West Africa's largest
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	French and national languages (Bambara and others)
CURRENCY	West African CFA franc (XOF)
HEAD OF STATE	Col. Assimi Goïta , transitional president (took power 2020–21); also chairs the Alliance of Sahel States ^[1]
GOVERNMENT	Military transitional government; left ECOWAS January 2025
INDEPENDENCE	22 September 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$21 billion ; per-capita ~US\$900
KEY SECTORS	Gold (a leading African producer), cotton, livestock

Heir to the medieval Mali Empire and the fabled trading city of Timbuktu, modern Mali has been destabilised since 2012 by a Tuareg rebellion and a jihadist insurgency that spread across the Sahel. Two coups in 2020–21 brought Colonel Assimi Goïta to power; his government expelled French troops and the UN peacekeeping mission, turned to Russian security support, and joined Burkina Faso and Niger in leaving ECOWAS in 2025.^[1] A major gold producer, Mali nonetheless remains one of the world's poorest and most fragile states.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 11 OF 15

Niger

Republic of the Niger

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Niamey
POPULATION	~ 27 million (one of the world's fastest-growing populations)
AREA	1,267,000 km ² — the largest country in West Africa
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	French
CURRENCY	West African CFA franc (XOF)
HEAD OF STATE	Gen. Abdourahamane Tchiani , transitional leader (coup July 2023) ^[1]
GOVERNMENT	Military transitional government; member of the Alliance of Sahel States; left ECOWAS January 2025
INDEPENDENCE	3 August 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$17 billion ; per-capita ~US\$600
KEY SECTORS	Uranium (a major world supplier), oil, gold, livestock

A vast, largely desert country with the world's highest birth rate, Niger is a leading supplier of uranium to the global nuclear industry, long tied especially to France. In July 2023 General Abdourahamane Tchiani's presidential guard overthrew the elected president, Mohamed Bazoum; the junta expelled French and later American forces, pivoted toward Russia, and joined the Sahel alliance that quit ECOWAS.^[1] Niger faces jihadist violence on multiple borders and ranks near the bottom of global human-development measures despite its mineral wealth.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 12 OF 15

Nigeria

Federal Republic of Nigeria

CAPITAL	Abuja; largest city Lagos (a megacity of ~17 million)
POPULATION	~230-240 million — the most populous country in Africa ^[5]
AREA	923,769 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English (with Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and 250+ others)
CURRENCY	Nigerian naira (NGN)
HEAD OF STATE	President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (since May 2023) ^[5]
INDEPENDENCE	1 October 1960 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$250 billion (volatile after currency reforms) — one of Africa's largest economies ^[5]
KEY SECTORS	Oil and gas (Africa's largest exporter and gas reserves), agriculture, the Nollywood film industry, fintech, telecoms

Nigeria is Africa's demographic colossus — home to roughly one in five Africans — and one of its largest economies, the continent's biggest oil exporter, and the seat of the globally influential Nollywood film industry and a vibrant tech scene. Since taking office in 2023, President Bola Tinubu has pushed painful reforms, scrapping a costly fuel subsidy and unifying the exchange rate, which sharply devalued the naira and stoked inflation.^[5] The federation contends with deep regional divides and serious security challenges, including the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east, banditry, and separatist pressures.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 13 OF 15

Senegal

Republic of Senegal

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Dakar
POPULATION	~18-19 million ^[6]
AREA	196,712 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	French (Wolof widely spoken)
CURRENCY	West African CFA franc (XOF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Bassirou Diomaye Faye (since April 2024); PM Ousmane Sonko ^[6]
INDEPENDENCE	1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$35 billion; per-capita ~US\$1,800; growth ~8% in 2025 ^[6]
KEY SECTORS	New offshore oil and gas, fishing, phosphates, gold, agriculture, services

Long regarded as one of West Africa's most stable democracies — never having suffered a coup — Senegal entered a new era in 2024 when Bassirou Diomaye Faye, released from prison weeks earlier, won the presidency on an anti-establishment, pan-Africanist platform alongside his ally, Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko.^[6] The economy is being transformed by the start of offshore oil and gas production, driving growth above 8 percent in 2025, though the new government has also revealed far larger public debts than previously disclosed. Dakar is a major Atlantic port and cultural capital.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 14 OF 15

Sierra Leone

Republic of Sierra Leone

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Freetown
POPULATION	~8.5 million
AREA	71,740 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English (Krio widely spoken)
CURRENCY	Sierra Leonean leone (SLE)
HEAD OF STATE	President Julius Maada Bio (since 2018; re-elected 2023)
INDEPENDENCE	27 April 1961 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$4 billion ; per-capita ~US\$500 — among the region's lowest ^[8]
KEY SECTORS	Diamonds, mining (rutile, iron ore), agriculture, fisheries

Founded around a settlement for freed slaves — its capital named Freetown — Sierra Leone is still recovering from a brutal 1991–2002 civil war fuelled by “blood diamonds” and from the 2014–16 Ebola epidemic that struck it hard. It remains one of the world’s poorest countries despite significant diamond and mineral wealth. President Julius Maada Bio, re-elected in 2023, has prioritised education and food security, while the country works to strengthen fragile democratic institutions.

WEST AFRICA · PROFILE 15 OF 15

Togo

Togolese Republic

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Lomé
POPULATION	~9 million
AREA	56,785 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	French
CURRENCY	West African CFA franc (XOF)
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT	Faure Gnassingbé , President of the Council of Ministers (head of government since May 2025); ceremonial President Jean-Lucien Savi de Tové ^[4]
INDEPENDENCE	27 April 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$10 billion ; per-capita ~US\$1,050
KEY SECTORS	The Port of Lomé (a major regional transshipment hub), phosphates, cotton, agriculture

A narrow strip running inland from the Gulf of Guinea, Togo has been governed by the Gnassingbé family since 1967 — first Gnassingbé Eyadéma, then his son Faure since 2005. A 2024 constitutional change converted the country to a parliamentary system, and in May 2025 Faure Gnassingbé assumed a newly created, powerful post of President of the Council of Ministers, a move critics view as a device to extend his rule indefinitely.^[4] The deep-water Port of Lomé is a key regional gateway, and phosphates anchor the export economy.

References — Appendix B

All sources accessed June 2026. Listed in order of first citation. Volatile figures (leaders, latest population, latest GDP) are verified to these sources and are June 2026 snapshots; stable facts (capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, languages) are from established reference knowledge. Population and GDP estimates may carry a short lag and, for Nigeria, reflect post-currency-reform volatility.

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END OF APPENDIX B — WEST AFRICA

Appendix C — *Country Profiles: Central Africa* (9 states, from Angola to São Tomé and Príncipe) — follows in the next installment.

COMPANION TO THE EIGHT-VOLUME REFERENCE

AFRICA

APPENDIX C

Country Profiles — Central Africa

Angola · Cameroon · Central African Republic · Chad · Republic of the
Congo · DR Congo · Equatorial Guinea · Gabon · São Tomé and Príncipe

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

LANDRY INDUSTRIES · MARIE LANDRY'S SPY SHOP

About These Profiles

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

This is the third of five regional installments of the **Country Profiles**, the companion series to the eight-volume main reference compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

The eight-volume reference (Volumes I-VIII) is complete, and the companion series profiles all 54 African states across five appendices — A: North Africa, B: West Africa, C: Central Africa, D: East Africa, and E: Southern Africa. **This appendix covers the nine states of Central Africa** — the Congo Basin and Gulf of Guinea heartland, defined by vast oil, mineral, and rainforest wealth and by some of the world's longest-serving leaders. Each profile gives a country's essential data at a glance, followed by a short narrative.

A NOTE ON DATA, CURRENCY, AND CITATION INTEGRITY

Country data is a snapshot taken in **June 2026**. Central Africa saw an unusually busy electoral cycle, and several results were verified for this appendix: **Gabon** (coup leader Oligui Nguema elected president, May 2025); **Cameroon** (Paul Biya's disputed eighth term, October 2025); the **Central African Republic** (Touadéra's third term, December 2025); and the **Republic of the Congo** (Sassou Nguesso's fifth term, March 2026). The **DR Congo's** eastern conflict and its fragile peace process were also verified as of early 2026. All current heads of state and latest population and GDP figures are keyed to the numbered *References*.

Stable facts — capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, and official languages — are from established reference knowledge. GDP is nominal and in US dollars; figures are the latest available estimates and may carry a short lag. Nothing is reproduced verbatim.

Companion series:

A — NORTH AFRICA · B — WEST AFRICA (*PUBLISHED*)

C — CENTRAL AFRICA (*THIS INSTALLMENT*)

Angola · Cameroon · Central African Republic · Chad · Republic of the Congo · DR Congo · Equatorial Guinea · Gabon · São Tomé and Príncipe

D — EAST AFRICA · E — SOUTHERN AFRICA (*TO FOLLOW*)

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APPENDIX C

Central Africa

The green heart of the continent — the Congo Basin rainforest, the world's second-largest, and a belt of oil and mineral states along the Gulf of Guinea. A region of staggering natural wealth and staggering inequality, governed in large part by Africa's most entrenched leaders.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Angola | 6. DR Congo |
| 2. Cameroon | 7. Equatorial Guinea |
| 3. Central African Republic | 8. Gabon |
| 4. Chad | 9. São Tomé & Príncipe |
| 5. Republic of the Congo | |

Central Africa: The Nine States

Central Africa is dominated by the basin of the Congo River and its rainforest — the planet’s second-largest after the Amazon and a globally vital carbon sink — and by the oil of the Gulf of Guinea. Six of the nine states (Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon) share the Central African CFA franc within the CEMAC monetary union, while Angola, the DR Congo, and São Tomé and Príncipe keep their own currencies. It is also the region of Africa’s most durable rulers — Equatorial Guinea’s Obiang, in power since 1979, is the world’s longest-serving head of state — and of the resource curse in its starkest form, where immense wealth coexists with widespread poverty. The profiles follow in alphabetical order.

CENTRAL AFRICA · PROFILE 1 OF 9

Angola

Republic of Angola

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Luanda
POPULATION	~ 37 million
AREA	1,246,700 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	Portuguese
CURRENCY	Angolan kwanza (AOA)
HEAD OF STATE	President João Lourenço (since 2017; re-elected 2022); 2025 chairperson of the African Union ^[6]
INDEPENDENCE	11 November 1975 (from Portugal)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$95 billion — among Africa’s larger economies; per-capita ~US\$2,600
KEY SECTORS	Oil (Africa’s second-largest producer), diamonds, gas, agriculture

Angola endured one of the Cold War’s longest proxy conflicts — a civil war from independence in 1975 until 2002 — before oil wealth powered a dramatic, if deeply unequal, postwar boom. The second-largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa, it remains heavily dependent on crude and is working to diversify under President João Lourenço, who has pursued anti-corruption measures since succeeding the long-ruling José Eduardo dos Santos in 2017. Lourenço held the rotating chairmanship of the African Union in 2025, raising Angola’s diplomatic profile, including in mediation over the neighbouring DR Congo.^[6]

CENTRAL AFRICA · PROFILE 2 OF 9

Cameroon

Republic of Cameroon

CAPITAL	Yaoundé; largest city Douala (the economic capital)
POPULATION	~29 million
AREA	475,442 km²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	French and English
CURRENCY	Central African CFA franc (XAF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Paul Biya (since 1982; re-elected to an eighth term in October 2025, at age 92 — the world’s oldest head of state) ^[3]
INDEPENDENCE	1960 (from France); the British Southern Cameroons joined in 1961
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$50 billion; per-capita ~US\$1,700
KEY SECTORS	Oil and gas, cocoa, coffee, timber, agriculture; the Port of Douala

Often called “Africa in miniature” for its geographic and cultural diversity, Cameroon has been ruled by Paul Biya since 1982, making him among the world’s longest-serving leaders. His disputed re-election to an eighth term in October 2025, at the age of 92, triggered deadly protests after the opposition candidate also claimed victory.^[3] The country is bilingual — a legacy of French and British rule — and that divide underlies the Anglophone separatist conflict that has gripped its two English-speaking regions since 2017, while Boko Haram militancy afflicts the far north.

CENTRAL AFRICA · PROFILE 3 OF 9

Central African Republic

Central African Republic (CAR)

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Bangui
POPULATION	~5.5 million
AREA	622,984 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	French and Sango
CURRENCY	Central African CFA franc (XAF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Faustin-Archange Touadéra (since 2016; re-elected to a third term in December 2025 after term limits were removed) ^[4]
INDEPENDENCE	13 August 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$2.5 billion; per-capita ~US\$450 — among the world's lowest
KEY SECTORS	Diamonds, gold, timber, uranium, subsistence agriculture

One of the world's poorest and least stable countries despite rich deposits of diamonds, gold, and uranium, the Central African Republic has suffered recurring coups and civil conflict since independence. President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, re-elected to a third term in December 2025 after a 2023 referendum abolished term limits, has leaned heavily on Russian paramilitary support — first Wagner, now its successor forces — to secure his government and the capital in exchange for access to mineral concessions.^[4] Much of the territory lies outside effective state control.

CENTRAL AFRICA · PROFILE 4 OF 9

Chad

Republic of Chad

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	N'Djamena
POPULATION	~19 million
AREA	1,284,000 km ² — one of Africa's largest
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	French and Arabic
CURRENCY	Central African CFA franc (XAF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno (took power 2021 on his father's death; elected president May 2024) ^[1]
INDEPENDENCE	11 August 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$13 billion ; per-capita ~US\$700
KEY SECTORS	Oil (the dominant export), livestock, cotton, gold

A vast, arid, landlocked country straddling the Sahara and the Sahel, Chad is an oil producer that nonetheless ranks among the world's least developed nations and hosts large refugee populations, including many fleeing the war in neighbouring Sudan. When long-ruling president Idriss Déby was killed on the battlefield in 2021, his son Mahamat Idriss Déby took power at the head of a transitional council, then won a contested presidential election in May 2024, continuing the family's rule.^[1] Once a close Western counter-terrorism partner, Chad has more recently distanced itself from France.

CENTRAL AFRICA · PROFILE 5 OF 9

Republic of the Congo

Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville)

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Brazzaville
POPULATION	~5.7 million
AREA	342,000 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	French
CURRENCY	Central African CFA franc (XAF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Denis Sassou Nguesso (in power since 1979, with a break in 1992-97; re-elected to a fifth term in March 2026) ^[5]
INDEPENDENCE	15 August 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$15 billion; per-capita ~US\$2,600 ^[5]
KEY SECTORS	Oil (Africa's third-largest exporter), timber, agriculture

Not to be confused with its much larger neighbour across the Congo River, the Republic of the Congo is a major oil exporter ruled for more than four decades by Denis Sassou Nguesso, one of Africa's longest-serving leaders. He won a fifth term in March 2026 with nearly 95 percent of the vote, in an election boycotted by the main opposition and accompanied by a nationwide internet shutdown.^[5] Despite oil revenues and one of sub-Saharan Africa's larger reserves, the country carries a heavy debt burden and more than half its people live in poverty.

CENTRAL AFRICA · PROFILE 6 OF 9

DR Congo

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Kinshasa (a megacity of ~17 million)
POPULATION	~110 million — among Africa's most populous
AREA	2,344,858 km ² — the second-largest country in Africa
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	French (with Lingala, Swahili, Kikongo, Tshiluba)
CURRENCY	Congolese franc (CDF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Félix Tshisekedi (since 2019; re-elected 2023) ^[2]
INDEPENDENCE	30 June 1960 (from Belgium)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$70 billion ; per-capita ~US\$650 despite vast mineral wealth
KEY SECTORS	Cobalt (~70% of world supply), copper, coltan, gold, diamonds, tin

The DR Congo is the geographic giant of central Africa and the indispensable supplier of the cobalt and copper that power the global energy transition — yet it remains one of the world's poorest countries, a textbook case of the resource curse. Its mineral-rich east has been wracked for decades by armed conflict; in early 2025 the Rwandan-backed M23 rebellion escalated sharply, seizing the major cities of Goma and Bukavu and displacing millions.^[2] A fragile, US- and Qatar-brokered peace process — the Washington accord between the DRC and Rwanda and the Doha track with M23 — was under way but far from fully implemented as of 2026.^[2]

CENTRAL AFRICA · PROFILE 7 OF 9

Equatorial Guinea

Republic of Equatorial Guinea

CAPITAL	Malabo (on Bioko island); a new capital, Ciudad de la Paz (Djibloho), is under construction
POPULATION	~1.7 million
AREA	28,051 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Spanish, French, and Portuguese
CURRENCY	Central African CFA franc (XAF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (since 1979 — the world's longest-serving head of state) ^[6]
INDEPENDENCE	12 October 1968 (from Spain)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$12 billion; a high per-capita figure masked by extreme inequality
KEY SECTORS	Oil and natural gas (the overwhelming majority of revenue), timber

The only African state with Spanish as an official language, Equatorial Guinea has been ruled by Teodoro Obiang Nguema since he seized power from his uncle in 1979, making him the world's longest-serving head of state.^[6] An oil boom from the 1990s gave the small nation one of Africa's highest average incomes on paper, but the wealth is concentrated among the ruling family while much of the population remains poor, and the country is routinely cited for corruption and repression. Declining oil output has prompted a search for new revenue.

CENTRAL AFRICA · PROFILE 8 OF 9

Gabon

Gabonese Republic

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Libreville
POPULATION	~2.3 million
AREA	267,668 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	French
CURRENCY	Central African CFA franc (XAF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Brice Oligui Nguema (led the 2023 coup; elected president April 2025, sworn in May 2025) ^[1]
INDEPENDENCE	17 August 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$20 billion; per-capita the highest in mainland Africa ^[1]
KEY SECTORS	Oil, manganese (a leading world producer), timber from its vast rain-forest

A heavily forested, oil-rich country with the highest income per head in mainland Africa — though a third of its people live in poverty — Gabon was governed by the Bongo family for 56 years until General Brice Oligui Nguema, a cousin of the ousted president, led a coup in August 2023.^[1] After a transition and a new constitution, Oligui won the April 2025 presidential election in a landslide and was inaugurated in May, opening Gabon’s “Fifth Republic.” The country retains some of the last large tracts of intact Central African rainforest.

CENTRAL AFRICA · PROFILE 9 OF 9

São Tomé and Príncipe

Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	São Tomé
POPULATION	~230,000 — the smallest population of any African state
AREA	964 km ² (two main islands in the Gulf of Guinea)
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	Portuguese
CURRENCY	São Tomé and Príncipe dobra (STN)
HEAD OF STATE	President Carlos Vila Nova (since 2021)
INDEPENDENCE	12 July 1975 (from Portugal)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$0.6 billion ; per-capita ~US\$2,500
KEY SECTORS	Cocoa, tourism, fisheries; prospective offshore oil

An archipelago of two main volcanic islands off the coast of Central Africa, São Tomé and Príncipe is the continent's smallest country by population and second-smallest by area. A former Portuguese cocoa colony, it is one of Africa's more stable democracies, with regular changes of government, though its small, aid-reliant economy is vulnerable to external shocks. Long-anticipated offshore oil has yet to materialise at scale, leaving cocoa, fishing, and a nascent eco-tourism sector as the mainstays.

References — Appendix C

All sources accessed June 2026. Listed in order of first citation. Volatile figures (leaders, latest population, latest GDP) are verified to these sources and are June 2026 snapshots; stable facts (capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, languages) are from established reference knowledge. Population and GDP estimates may carry a short lag.

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END OF APPENDIX C — CENTRAL AFRICA

Appendix D — *Country Profiles: East Africa* (14 states, from Burundi to Uganda) — follows in the next installment.

COMPANION TO THE EIGHT-VOLUME REFERENCE

AFRICA

APPENDIX D

Country Profiles — East Africa

Burundi · Comoros · Djibouti · Eritrea · Ethiopia · Kenya · Madagascar · Mauritius · Rwanda · Seychelles · Somalia · South Sudan · Tanzania · Uganda

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

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The eight-volume reference (Volumes I-VIII) is complete, and the companion series profiles all 54 African states across five appendices — A: North Africa, B: West Africa, C: Central Africa, D: East Africa, and E: Southern Africa. **This appendix covers the fourteen states of East Africa** — the Horn, the Great Lakes, the Rift Valley, and the western Indian Ocean — the continent's most internally diverse region, spanning Africa's second-most-populous country and its very smallest. Each profile gives a country's essential data at a glance, followed by a short narrative.

A NOTE ON DATA, CURRENCY, AND CITATION INTEGRITY

Country data is a snapshot taken in **June 2026**. East Africa saw exceptional turbulence in 2025–26, and the following were verified for this appendix: **Uganda** (Museveni's seventh term, January 2026); **Tanzania** (Samia Suluhu Hassan's contested re-election and deadly protests, October 2025); **Madagascar** (a Gen Z uprising and October 2025 military takeover); **Djibouti** (Guelleh's sixth term, April 2026); **Seychelles** (a new president, October 2025); and the conflict situations in **Somalia**, **South Sudan**, and **Ethiopia**. All current heads of state and latest population and GDP figures are keyed to the numbered *References*.

Stable facts — capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, and official languages — are from established reference knowledge. GDP is nominal and in US dollars; figures are the latest available estimates and may carry a short lag (Ethiopia's in particular reflect a 2024 currency float). Nothing is reproduced verbatim.

Companion series:

A — NORTH AFRICA · B — WEST AFRICA · C — CENTRAL AFRICA (PUBLISHED)

D — EAST AFRICA (THIS INSTALLMENT)

Burundi · Comoros · Djibouti · Eritrea · Ethiopia · Kenya · Madagascar · Mauritius · Rwanda · Seychelles · Somalia · South Sudan · Tanzania · Uganda

E — SOUTHERN AFRICA (TO FOLLOW)

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APPENDIX D

East Africa

The continent's most varied region — the cradle of humanity in the Rift Valley, the conflict-scarred Horn, the Great Lakes, and the high-income island democracies of the Indian Ocean. Home to Africa's second-largest nation, Ethiopia, and its smallest, Seychelles.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. Burundi | 8. Mauritius |
| 2. Comoros | 9. Rwanda |
| 3. Djibouti | 10. Seychelles |
| 4. Eritrea | 11. Somalia |
| 5. Ethiopia | 12. South Sudan |
| 6. Kenya | 13. Tanzania |
| 7. Madagascar | 14. Uganda |

East Africa: The Fourteen States

East Africa is the continent's most internally diverse region, defended by no single defining feature. It includes the Horn of Africa, where Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan grapple with conflict and fragile statehood; the Great Lakes and Rift Valley, where Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi anchor the East African Community; and the western Indian Ocean, where the island states of Mauritius and Seychelles enjoy the highest incomes per head on the continent. Unlike West and Central Africa, the region shares no common currency. It is also the cradle of humanity, the source of the Nile, and — in 2025-26 — the epicentre of a wave of contested elections and youth-led uprisings. The profiles follow in alphabetical order.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 1 OF 14

Burundi

Republic of Burundi

CAPITAL	Gitega (political); Bujumbura (largest city & economic capital)
POPULATION	~13 million
AREA	27,834 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Kirundi, French, and English
CURRENCY	Burundian franc (BIF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Évariste Ndayishimiye (since 2020)
INDEPENDENCE	1 July 1962 (from Belgium)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$3 billion ; per-capita ~US\$230 — among the world's lowest
KEY SECTORS	Coffee and tea (the main exports), subsistence agriculture, nickel reserves

A small, densely populated Great Lakes country, Burundi is consistently ranked among the world's poorest nations, its economy overwhelmingly agricultural and its development held back by decades of ethnic conflict that paralleled neighbouring Rwanda's. President Évariste Ndayishimiye took office in 2020 after the sudden death of the authoritarian Pierre Nkurunziza, easing some of the country's international isolation. Burundi shares the Hutu-Tutsi cleavage of the region and remains heavily dependent on coffee and tea exports and on external aid.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 2 OF 14

Comoros

Union of the Comoros

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Moroni (on Grande Comore)
POPULATION	~850,000
AREA	1,861 km ² (three main islands)
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Comorian, Arabic, and French
CURRENCY	Comorian franc (KMF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Azali Assoumani (since 2016; re-elected 2024; first took power in a 1999 coup)
INDEPENDENCE	6 July 1975 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$1.3 billion ; per-capita ~US\$1,500
KEY SECTORS	Vanilla, cloves, ylang-ylang (perfume essence), fishing, remittances

A volcanic archipelago between Mozambique and Madagascar, the Comoros is one of Africa's smallest and most coup-prone states, having experienced some twenty coups or attempts since independence from France in 1975. A fourth island, Mayotte, voted to remain French and is administered by Paris. President Azali Assoumani, who first seized power in 1999 and returned via the ballot box, has dominated politics for years. The economy relies on agricultural exports of vanilla and perfume essences and on remittances from a large diaspora in France.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 3 OF 14

Djibouti

Republic of Djibouti

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Djibouti City
POPULATION	~1.1 million
AREA	23,200 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	French and Arabic
CURRENCY	Djiboutian franc (DJF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh (since 1999; re-elected to a sixth term in April 2026) ^[5]
INDEPENDENCE	27 June 1977 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$4.5 billion ; per-capita ~US\$4,000
KEY SECTORS	Ports and logistics, foreign military bases, transit trade (the gateway for landlocked Ethiopia)

Tiny but strategically priceless, Djibouti sits at the mouth of the Red Sea on the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, and hosts military bases for the United States, France, China, Japan, and others — “our geography is our oil,” as its officials put it. Its economy is built on ports and logistics, serving as the principal trade outlet for landlocked Ethiopia next door. President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, in power since 1999, won a sixth term in April 2026 after a constitutional amendment lifted the age limit that would have barred him.^[5]

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 4 OF 14

Eritrea

State of Eritrea

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Asmara
POPULATION	~ 3.5 million
AREA	117,600 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Tigrinya, Arabic, and English (in practice)
CURRENCY	Eritrean nakfa (ERN)
HEAD OF STATE	President Isaias Afwerki (since independence in 1993; no national elections have ever been held)
INDEPENDENCE	24 May 1993 (from Ethiopia, after a 30-year war)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$2.5 billion (estimates are unreliable)
KEY SECTORS	Mining (gold, copper, potash), subsistence agriculture, remittances

One of the world's most closed and repressive states, Eritrea has been ruled by Isaias Afwerki since it won independence from Ethiopia in 1993 following a three-decade liberation war. No national elections have ever been held, no independent press is permitted, and an open-ended system of national conscription drives a steady outflow of refugees. Often likened to North Korea, Eritrea maintains a tightly controlled, militarised economy, with mining as the main source of formal revenue and a fraught relationship with Ethiopia that has flared again in recent years.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 5 OF 14

Ethiopia

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Addis Ababa (seat of the African Union)
POPULATION	~ 130 million — the second-most populous in Africa
AREA	1,104,300 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Amharic (federal working language; many others, incl. Oromo)
CURRENCY	Ethiopian birr (ETB)
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT	Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (since 2018); ceremonial President Taye Atske Selassie ^[4]
INDEPENDENCE	Never colonised (briefly occupied by Italy, 1936–41)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$120 billion (following a 2024 currency float); per-capita ~US\$1,000
KEY SECTORS	Agriculture (the world's fifth-largest coffee producer), manufacturing, the GERD hydropower dam, Ethiopian Airlines

Africa's oldest independent nation and never formally colonised, Ethiopia is the continent's second-most-populous country and the diplomatic seat of the African Union. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019, has overseen an era of both reform and turmoil: the devastating Tigray war (2020–22) ended with the Pretoria agreement, but conflicts in the Amhara and Oromia regions persist, and tensions with Eritrea have resurfaced over Ethiopia's push for sea access. ^[4] The vast Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, a symbol of national ambition, was completed and inaugurated in 2025.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 6 OF 14

Kenya

Republic of Kenya

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Nairobi
POPULATION	~56 million
AREA	580,367 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Swahili and English
CURRENCY	Kenyan shilling (KES)
HEAD OF STATE	President William Ruto (since 2022)
INDEPENDENCE	12 December 1963 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$115 billion — East Africa's largest economy; per-capita ~US\$2,000
KEY SECTORS	Services and finance, agriculture (tea, horticulture), tourism, technology ("Silicon Savannah"), the M-Pesa mobile-money system

The commercial and technological hub of East Africa, Kenya hosts the regional headquarters of countless multinationals in Nairobi and pioneered the mobile-money revolution through M-Pesa. President William Ruto, elected in 2022, has faced significant unrest, most notably the youth-led "Gen Z" protests of 2024 against tax rises and corruption that forced him to withdraw a finance bill. A relatively diversified economy built on services, agriculture, and tourism makes Kenya one of the region's anchors, though high public debt and inequality remain pressing challenges.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 7 OF 14

Madagascar

Republic of Madagascar

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Antananarivo
POPULATION	~ 32 million
AREA	587,041 km ² — the world's fourth-largest island
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Malagasy and French
CURRENCY	Malagasy ariary (MGA)
HEAD OF STATE	Col. Michael Randrianirina , transitional president (took power in the October 2025 military takeover) ^[2]
INDEPENDENCE	26 June 1960 (from France)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$16 billion ; per-capita ~US\$500 — among the world's lowest
KEY SECTORS	Vanilla (the world's largest producer), cloves, nickel and cobalt, textiles, tourism

The world's fourth-largest island and a biodiversity treasure-house found nowhere else on Earth, Madagascar is also one of its poorest countries, repeatedly destabilised by political crises and battered by cyclones and drought. In late 2025, a Gen Z protest movement ignited by chronic power and water shortages culminated in the military's CAPSAT unit switching sides; President Andry Rajoelina fled and was impeached, and Colonel Michael Randrianirina was sworn in as transitional president in October 2025, pledging elections within about two years.^[2] Vanilla and a fragile tourism sector remain economic mainstays.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 8 OF 14

Mauritius

Republic of Mauritius

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Port Louis
POPULATION	~1.3 million
AREA	2,040 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English (French and Mauritian Creole widely used)
CURRENCY	Mauritian rupee (MUR)
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT	Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam (returned to office after a landslide November 2024 election); ceremonial President Dharam Gokhool ^[6]
INDEPENDENCE	12 March 1968 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$16 billion; per-capita ~US\$12,000 — among Africa's highest
KEY SECTORS	Financial services, tourism, textiles, sugar, information technology

Widely regarded as Africa's strongest democracy and one of its few high-income economies, Mauritius has transformed from a sugar monoculture into a diversified hub for finance, tourism, and textiles, achieving among the continent's highest living standards and human-development scores. A multi-ethnic island society of Indian, African, Chinese, and European heritage, it saw a peaceful, decisive change of government when Navin Ramgoolam's alliance won a landslide in November 2024. ^[6] A 2024 agreement with the United Kingdom is set to transfer sovereignty of the contested Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 9 OF 14

Rwanda

Republic of Rwanda

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Kigali
POPULATION	~14 million
AREA	26,338 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Kinyarwanda, English, French, and Swahili
CURRENCY	Rwandan franc (RWF)
HEAD OF STATE	President Paul Kagame (de facto since 1994, president since 2000; re-elected 2024)
INDEPENDENCE	1 July 1962 (from Belgium)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$14 billion ; per-capita ~US\$1,000
KEY SECTORS	Services, tourism (mountain gorillas), tea and coffee, conference hosting, light manufacturing

Thirty years after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, in which some 800,000 people were killed, Rwanda has become one of Africa's most striking development stories — clean, orderly, and a magnet for investment and tourism under President Paul Kagame, who was re-elected in 2024 with nearly 99 percent of the vote. Critics counter that this progress rests on tight political control and the suppression of dissent. Rwanda is also a central actor in the crisis next door, widely accused of backing the M23 rebellion in the eastern DR Congo.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 10 OF 14

Seychelles

Republic of Seychelles

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Victoria (on Mahé)
POPULATION	~130,000 — the smallest of any African state
AREA	459 km ² (115 islands) — Africa's smallest country
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Seychellois Creole, English, and French
CURRENCY	Seychellois rupee (SCR)
HEAD OF STATE	President Patrick Herminie (elected and sworn in October 2025) ^[6]
INDEPENDENCE	29 June 1976 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$2 billion ; per-capita the highest in Africa (~US\$17,000+)
KEY SECTORS	High-end tourism, tuna fishing and processing, offshore financial services

An Indian Ocean archipelago of 115 islands, Seychelles is Africa's smallest country by both population and area, and its richest by income per head — a high-income economy built on luxury tourism and tuna. After decades dominated by one party, it has settled into competitive multiparty democracy; in the October 2025 election, Patrick Herminie of the United Seychelles party defeated the incumbent and was sworn in as president.^[6] The nation is a prominent voice on ocean conservation and the threat that rising seas pose to small island states.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 11 OF 14

Somalia

Federal Republic of Somalia

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Mogadishu
POPULATION	~18 million
AREA	637,657 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Somali and Arabic
CURRENCY	Somali shilling (SOS)
HEAD OF STATE	President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud (since 2022; his mandate, due to end in 2026, is contested amid disputes over extending it) ^[3]
INDEPENDENCE	1960 (union of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$12 billion ; per-capita ~US\$650
KEY SECTORS	Livestock, remittances, telecommunications, fishing, agriculture

After the collapse of central government in 1991, Somalia endured decades of state failure and is only gradually rebuilding federal institutions. The government controls only part of the country and remains locked in a grinding war against the al-Qaeda-linked insurgent group al-Shabaab, backed by an African Union stabilisation mission.^[3] President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's push to centralise power and revise the constitution has strained relations with federal member states as his term nears its end. The self-declared republic of Somaliland, in the north-west, governs itself but is not internationally recognised.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 12 OF 14

South Sudan

Republic of South Sudan

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Juba
POPULATION	~11 million
AREA	619,745 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English
CURRENCY	South Sudanese pound (SSP)
HEAD OF STATE	President Salva Kiir (since independence in 2011); the power-sharing deal with First Vice President Riek Machar collapsed after Machar's detention in 2025 ^[4]
INDEPENDENCE	9 July 2011 (from Sudan) — the world's youngest country
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$6 billion (oil-dependent and volatile)
KEY SECTORS	Oil (almost the entire economy), subsistence agriculture, livestock

The world's youngest nation, South Sudan won independence from Sudan in 2011 but plunged into civil war two years later, a conflict between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and his rival Riek Machar that killed an estimated 400,000 people before a 2018 peace deal. That deal effectively collapsed in 2025 when Machar was placed under house arrest on treason charges, and UN monitors have since warned of a slide back toward full-scale war, with long-delayed elections now slated for late 2026.^[4] Almost wholly dependent on oil exported through Sudan, the country remains one of the poorest and most fragile on earth.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 13 OF 14

Tanzania

United Republic of Tanzania

CAPITAL	Dodoma (official); Dar es Salaam (largest city & commercial capital)
POPULATION	~67 million
AREA	947,303 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Swahili and English
CURRENCY	Tanzanian shilling (TZS)
HEAD OF STATE	President Samia Suluhu Hassan (since 2021; re-elected to a full term in October 2025) ^[1]
INDEPENDENCE	1961 (Tanganyika) and 1963 (Zanzibar); union formed 1964
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$80 billion ; per-capita ~US\$1,200
KEY SECTORS	Gold and minerals, tourism (the Serengeti, Kilimanjaro, Zanzibar), agriculture, natural gas

A large, resource-rich country uniting mainland Tanganyika with the islands of Zanzibar, Tanzania is home to the Serengeti, Mount Kilimanjaro, and a long-stable single-party tradition under the ruling CCM. Samia Suluhu Hassan became the country's first female president in 2021 and was re-elected to a full term in October 2025 — but the vote, with opposition leaders barred or jailed, was widely condemned as fraudulent and was followed by an unprecedented and violent crackdown on protesters.^[1] The economy is among East Africa's largest, driven by gold, tourism, and emerging natural gas.

EAST AFRICA · PROFILE 14 OF 14

Uganda

Republic of Uganda

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Kampala
POPULATION	~48 million
AREA	241,550 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	English and Swahili
CURRENCY	Ugandan shilling (UGX)
HEAD OF STATE	President Yoweri Museveni (since 1986; re-elected to a seventh term in January 2026) ^[1]
INDEPENDENCE	9 October 1962 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$50 billion ; per-capita ~US\$1,000
KEY SECTORS	Agriculture (coffee a leading export), services; oil production beginning via the Lake Albert fields and the EACOP pipeline

Once synonymous with the chaos of Idi Amin's 1970s dictatorship, Uganda has been ruled since 1986 by Yoweri Museveni, who brought early stability and growth but has held power for four decades, removing term and age limits along the way. He won a seventh term in the January 2026 election, which — like its predecessors — was marred by the detention and intimidation of opposition figures, including the pop-star-turned-politician Bobi Wine.^[1] Uganda hosts one of the world's largest refugee populations and is preparing to become an oil producer through the contested East African Crude Oil Pipeline.

References — Appendix D

All sources accessed June 2026. Listed in order of first citation. Volatile figures (leaders, latest population, latest GDP) are verified to these sources and are June 2026 snapshots; stable facts (capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, languages) are from established reference knowledge. Population and GDP estimates may carry a short lag; Ethiopia's reflect a 2024 currency float.

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END OF APPENDIX D — EAST AFRICA

Appendix E — *Country Profiles: Southern Africa* (9 states, from Botswana to Zimbabwe) — concludes the companion series in the final installment.

COMPANION TO THE EIGHT-VOLUME REFERENCE · FINALE

AFRICA

APPENDIX E

Country Profiles — Southern Africa

Botswana · Eswatini · Lesotho · Malawi · Mozambique · Namibia · South
Africa · Zambia · Zimbabwe

Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

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About These Profiles

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

This is the fifth and final installment of the **Country Profiles**, the companion series to the eight-volume main reference compiled and edited by Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry and published by Landry Industries Inc. under the Marie Landry's Spy Shop imprint, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

With this appendix, the companion series is complete: across five regional installments — A: North Africa, B: West Africa, C: Central Africa, D: East Africa, and E: Southern Africa — it profiles all 54 of Africa's sovereign states. **This appendix covers the nine states of Southern Africa**, the continent's industrial and mineral heartland, anchored by its most developed economy, South Africa. Each profile gives a country's essential data at a glance, followed by a short narrative.

A NOTE ON DATA, CURRENCY, AND CITATION INTEGRITY

Country data is a snapshot taken in **June 2026**. Southern Africa saw a remarkable run of democratic turnover in 2024–26, and the following were verified for this appendix: **Botswana** (the 2024 vote that ended the BDP's 58-year rule); **Namibia** (its first female president, sworn in March 2025); **Mozambique** (a disputed election and deadly unrest, with a new president inaugurated January 2025); **Malawi** (the return of Peter Mutharika, September 2025); **South Africa** (the coalition Government of National Unity); and **Zimbabwe** (the contested push to extend the president's term to 2030). All current heads of state and latest population and GDP figures are keyed to the numbered *References*.

Stable facts — capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, and official languages — are from established reference knowledge. GDP is nominal and in US dollars; figures are the latest available estimates and may carry a short lag. Nothing is reproduced verbatim.

Companion series (now complete):

A — NORTH AFRICA · B — WEST AFRICA · C — CENTRAL AFRICA · D — EAST AFRICA (*PUBLISHED*)

E — SOUTHERN AFRICA (*THIS INSTALLMENT — CONCLUDES THE SERIES*)

Botswana · Eswatini · Lesotho · Malawi · Mozambique · Namibia · South Africa · Zambia · Zimbabwe

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APPENDIX E

Southern Africa

The continent's industrial and mineral engine — platinum, diamonds, copper, gold, and lithium — anchored by South Africa, its most developed economy. A region of stable democracies and recent peaceful turnovers, but also of the world's deepest inequality and its last absolute monarchy.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. Botswana | 6. Namibia |
| 2. Eswatini | 7. South Africa |
| 3. Lesotho | 8. Zambia |
| 4. Malawi | 9. Zimbabwe |
| 5. Mozambique | |

Southern Africa: The Nine States

Southern Africa is the continent’s most industrialised and mineral-rich region, anchored by South Africa — its largest or second-largest economy and the gravitational centre of the Southern African Development Community. Four of these states — South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, and Eswatini — share the Common Monetary Area, linking their currencies to the South African rand, which circulates throughout. The region carries the legacies of settler colonialism and apartheid in some of the world’s highest levels of inequality, yet it is also home to several of Africa’s most durable democracies and, in 2024–26, a striking wave of peaceful electoral turnovers. It spans the diamond wealth of Botswana, the platinum and gold of South Africa, the copper of Zambia, and the continent’s last absolute monarchy in Eswatini. The profiles follow in alphabetical order.

SOUTHERN AFRICA · PROFILE 1 OF 9

Botswana

Republic of Botswana

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Gaborone
POPULATION	~2.5 million
AREA	581,730 km²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	English and Setswana
CURRENCY	Botswana pula (BWP)
HEAD OF STATE	President Duma Boko (since November 2024, ending the BDP’s 58-year rule) ^[1]
INDEPENDENCE	30 September 1966 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$20 billion; per-capita ~US\$7,500 — among Africa’s highest
KEY SECTORS	Diamonds (one of the world’s top producers), tourism (the Okavango Delta), beef, minerals

Long held up as one of Africa’s great success stories, Botswana turned its diamond wealth into decades of stability, sound governance, and upper-middle-income prosperity after independence in 1966. In a landmark 2024 election, voters ended the Botswana Democratic Party’s 58-year grip on power — the country’s first transfer of power between parties — bringing the opposition coalition’s Duma Boko to the presidency.^[1] The economy remains heavily dependent on diamonds, leaving it exposed to the global gem market, and the country is working to diversify and tackle high unemployment.

SOUTHERN AFRICA · PROFILE 2 OF 9

Eswatini

Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)

CAPITAL	Mbabane (administrative); Lobamba (royal & legislative)
POPULATION	~1.2 million
AREA	17,364 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	English and Swazi (siSwati)
CURRENCY	Swazi lilangeni (SZL), at par with the South African rand
HEAD OF STATE	King Mswati III (since 1986); PM Russell Dlamini (since 2023)
INDEPENDENCE	6 September 1968 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$5 billion ; per-capita ~US\$4,000
KEY SECTORS	Sugar, soft-drink concentrate, textiles, forestry; closely tied to South Africa

A small, landlocked kingdom between South Africa and Mozambique, Eswatini — renamed from Swaziland in 2018 — is Africa's last absolute monarchy, ruled by King Mswati III since 1986. Political parties are effectively barred from the legislature, and pro-democracy protests in 2021 were violently suppressed. The economy is closely bound to South Africa through the Common Monetary Area and a customs union, relying on sugar and manufactured exports. Eswatini has one of the world's highest HIV-prevalence rates, a burden that continues to shape its public health and demographics.

SOUTHERN AFRICA · PROFILE 3 OF 9

Lesotho

Kingdom of Lesotho

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Maseru
POPULATION	~2.3 million
AREA	30,355 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	Sesotho and English
CURRENCY	Lesotho loti (LSL), at par with the South African rand
HEAD OF STATE	King Letsie III (ceremonial monarch, since 1996); PM Sam Matekane (since 2022)
INDEPENDENCE	4 October 1966 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$2 billion ; per-capita ~US\$900
KEY SECTORS	Water exports to South Africa, textiles and garments, diamonds, remittances

A mountainous kingdom entirely surrounded by South Africa — the only independent state to lie wholly above 1,000 metres — Lesotho is often called “the Kingdom in the Sky.” Its most valuable asset is water, which it sells to its giant neighbour through the vast Lesotho Highlands Water Project, alongside a garment industry that exports to the United States and diamonds from high-altitude mines. A constitutional monarchy under King Letsie III with Prime Minister Sam Matekane as head of government, the country contends with deep poverty, a very high HIV burden, and a long history of political instability.

SOUTHERN AFRICA · PROFILE 4 OF 9

Malawi

Republic of Malawi

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Lilongwe (Blantyre is the commercial hub)
POPULATION	~21 million
AREA	118,484 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	English and Chichewa
CURRENCY	Malawian kwacha (MWK)
HEAD OF STATE	President Peter Mutharika (returned to office after the September 2025 election, defeating Lazarus Chakwera) ^[3]
INDEPENDENCE	6 July 1964 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$13 billion ; per-capita ~US\$600 — among the world's lowest
KEY SECTORS	Agriculture (tobacco, tea, sugar), fishing (Lake Malawi)

A small, densely populated and overwhelmingly rural country dominated by the great freshwater expanse of Lake Malawi, Malawi is one of the world's least developed nations, heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture and tobacco exports. In a notable comeback, 85-year-old former president Peter Mutharika — who had lost a court-ordered re-run in 2020 — defeated the incumbent Lazarus Chakwera in the September 2025 election, which was fought largely over a cost-of-living crisis marked by high inflation and fuel and food shortages.^[3]

SOUTHERN AFRICA · PROFILE 5 OF 9

Mozambique

Republic of Mozambique

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Maputo
POPULATION	~ 34 million
AREA	801,590 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	Portuguese
CURRENCY	Mozambican metical (MZN)
HEAD OF STATE	President Daniel Chapo (since January 2025, after a disputed election and deadly unrest) ^[2]
INDEPENDENCE	25 June 1975 (from Portugal)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$22 billion ; per-capita ~US\$650
KEY SECTORS	Liquefied natural gas (vast offshore reserves), coal, aluminium, agriculture, hydropower

Stretching along a long Indian Ocean coastline, Mozambique holds some of the world's largest untapped natural-gas reserves off its northern Cabo Delgado province, though their development has been disrupted by an ISIS-linked insurgency since 2017. The ruling FRELIMO party, in power since independence in 1975, extended its rule when Daniel Chapo was declared winner of the October 2024 election; the disputed result, rejected by the opposition and international observers, triggered the worst post-election violence in the country's history, leaving hundreds dead before his January 2025 inauguration.^[2]

SOUTHERN AFRICA · PROFILE 6 OF 9

Namibia

Republic of Namibia

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Windhoek
POPULATION	~ 3 million — one of the world's least densely populated countries
AREA	825,615 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English
CURRENCY	Namibian dollar (NAD), at par with the South African rand
HEAD OF STATE	President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah (sworn in March 2025 — Namibia's first female president) ^[1]
INDEPENDENCE	21 March 1990 (from South Africa)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~ US\$13 billion ; per-capita ~US\$4,200
KEY SECTORS	Mining (diamonds, uranium — a top world producer, gold), fishing, tourism; emerging oil and green hydrogen

A vast, arid, sparsely populated country defined by the ancient Namib Desert, Namibia won independence from apartheid South Africa only in 1990 after a long liberation war. The ruling SWAPO party has governed ever since, and in 2024 its candidate Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah won the presidency, taking office in March 2025 as the country's first female head of state.^[1] An upper-middle-income economy built on diamonds, uranium, and fishing, Namibia is now drawing major international interest for newly discovered offshore oil and ambitious green-hydrogen projects, even as it remains among the world's most unequal societies.

SOUTHERN AFRICA · PROFILE 7 OF 9

South Africa

Republic of South Africa

CAPITALS	Pretoria (executive), Cape Town (legislative), Bloemfontein (judicial); largest city Johannesburg
POPULATION	~63 million
AREA	1,221,037 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	12 official languages (incl. Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, English)
CURRENCY	South African rand (ZAR)
HEAD OF STATE	President Cyril Ramaphosa (since 2018; re-elected 2024, leading a Government of National Unity coalition) ^[4]
INDEPENDENCE	Union 1910; republic 1961; first democratic election 1994 (end of apartheid)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$400 billion — among Africa's largest; per-capita ~US\$6,300 ^[4]
KEY SECTORS	Mining (platinum, gold, coal, manganese), finance, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism

The continent's most industrialised economy and a member of the G20 and BRICS, South Africa is a sophisticated, diversified nation still working to overcome the legacy of apartheid, which ended with the first democratic election in 1994. In a historic shift, the long-dominant African National Congress lost its parliamentary majority for the first time in 2024 and formed a multi-party Government of National Unity, with Cyril Ramaphosa continuing as president.^[4] Despite its wealth and institutions, the country struggles with the world's highest measured inequality, very high unemployment, crime, and a long-running electricity crisis.

SOUTHERN AFRICA · PROFILE 8 OF 9

Zambia

Republic of Zambia

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Lusaka
POPULATION	~21 million
AREA	752,618 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	English
CURRENCY	Zambian kwacha (ZMW)
HEAD OF STATE	President Hakainde Hichilema (since 2021; seeking a second term in the 2026 election) ^[6]
INDEPENDENCE	24 October 1964 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$28 billion ; per-capita ~US\$1,300
KEY SECTORS	Copper (Africa's second-largest producer, the bulk of exports), cobalt, agriculture, tourism (Victoria Falls)

A landlocked country whose economy rises and falls with the price of copper — of which it is one of the world's leading producers — Zambia has lately become a focus of competition over the minerals essential to the global energy transition. Businessman Hakainde Hichilema won the presidency in 2021 after years in opposition, pledging economic reform, and steered the country through a landmark restructuring of the debt on which it had defaulted in 2020.^[6] A long-stable multiparty democracy by regional standards, Zambia heads toward a general election in 2026 with Hichilema seeking a second term.

SOUTHERN AFRICA · PROFILE 9 OF 9

Zimbabwe

Republic of Zimbabwe

CAPITAL & LARGEST CITY	Harare
POPULATION	~16 million
AREA	390,757 km ²
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	16 official languages (incl. Shona, Ndebele, English)
CURRENCY	Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG), introduced 2024; the US dollar also circulates
HEAD OF STATE	President Emmerson Mnangagwa (since 2017; re-elected 2023; his party is seeking to extend his term to 2030) ^[5]
INDEPENDENCE	18 April 1980 (from the UK)
GDP (NOMINAL)	~US\$35 billion; per-capita ~US\$2,200
KEY SECTORS	Mining (platinum, gold, lithium, diamonds), agriculture (tobacco), with a large informal economy

Once a relatively prosperous agricultural economy, Zimbabwe was hollowed out by the chaotic land reforms and record hyperinflation of the later Robert Mugabe years, and it is still rebuilding amid a currency repeatedly remade — most recently as the gold-backed ZiG in 2024. Emmerson Mnangagwa, who took power when the military ousted Mugabe in 2017 and won a disputed re-election in 2023, now presides over a contested ruling-party drive to amend the constitution and extend his term to 2030.^[5] The country holds the world's largest known lithium reserves in Africa, a potential prize in the battery age.

References — Appendix E

All sources accessed June 2026. Listed in order of first citation. Volatile figures (leaders, latest population, latest GDP) are verified to these sources and are June 2026 snapshots; stable facts (capitals, areas, independence dates, currencies, languages) are from established reference knowledge. Population and GDP estimates may carry a short lag.

1. Freedom House; Journal of Democracy; Britannica; Associated Press. *Botswana and Namibia* (Botswana's Duma Boko of the UDC won the 30 October 2024 election, ending the BDP's 58-year rule since 1966, and was sworn in on 8 November 2024; Namibia's Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah of SWAPO won the November 2024 election with ~57% and was sworn in on 21 March 2025 as the country's first female president). freedomhouse.org · britannica.com
2. France 24; Reuters; Al Jazeera; BBC. *Mozambique's 2024–25 crisis* (Daniel Chapo of FRELIMO was confirmed winner of the 9 October 2024 election with ~65% and inaugurated on 15 January 2025, extending the party's 50-year rule; the disputed result, rejected by opposition leader Venâncio Mondlane and international observers, sparked the worst post-election violence in the country's history, with hundreds killed). france24.com
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5. Al Jazeera; International Crisis Group; Wikipedia (Emmerson Mnangagwa). *Zimbabwe's term-extension push* (President Emmerson Mnangagwa, in power since the 2017 coup and re-elected in the disputed 2023 vote, is constitutionally due to step down in 2028; in 2025–26 his ZANU-PF party advanced a contested constitutional amendment to extend his term to 2030, opposed by churches, war veterans, and the opposition). aljazeera.com
6. Africa Center for Strategic Studies; Wikipedia (Hakainde Hichilema). *Zambia* (President Hakainde Hichilema of the UPND, in office since 24 August 2021 after winning ~59% of the vote, oversaw a restructuring of the debt on which Zambia defaulted in 2020 and is seeking a second term in the 2026 election; copper is the bulk of exports). africacenter.org

END OF APPENDIX E — SOUTHERN AFRICA

THE WORK COMPLETE

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Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

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