
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

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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.