
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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About This Volume

AFRICA: AN ENCYCLOPEDIC REFERENCE — 2026 EDITION

Volume VIII — the concluding volume of the main reference — of an eight-volume 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 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

All sources accessed June 2026. Listed in order of first citation. Economic, climatic, and political figures are scenarios or projections, not predictions; demographic projections follow the UN medium variant. This volume cross-references Volumes I-VII for established material rather than re-citing it.

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14. Clean Air Task Force. *Net-zero pathways for Africa* (achieving net-zero by 2050 would require a rapid renewables shift alongside carbon-removal technologies; NDC implementation constrained by finance, technology, and institutional capacity). catf.us
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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.