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# Global partnerships: Bolstering Africa's impact on the world stage



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# Expanding global partnerships to advance Africa's agency and aspirations

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**Africa's demographic weight gives it a unique and increasingly influential voice in political institutions where one country, one vote is the norm, such as the United Nations.**

The renewed global scramble for markets, partnerships, and influence presents a unique opportunity for Africa. How Africa manages these battles will impact its economic growth trajectory and political stability over the next decade.

On the floor of the House of Commons in 1848, Lord Palmerston stated that Britain has “no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.”<sup>2</sup> Unlike Britain and the rest of the developed G7, African nations need permanent friends and have permanent interests, but they may need to work on how they moderate partnerships to achieve their objectives in a constantly changing economic and political landscape.

Africa's economic footprint remains modest on the global stage. With a GDP of about \$2.8 trillion in 2024, Africa contributes less than 3% to the world's GDP and accounts for about 2% of global trade.<sup>3</sup> However, politically, Africa's voice is strong. The continent plays an increasingly pivotal role in global diplomacy, with 54 countries totaling almost 1.5 billion people.<sup>4</sup> By 2050, one in four people will be African, with the continent housing the largest number of youths across the globe.<sup>5</sup>

Africa's demographic weight gives it a unique and increasingly influential voice in political institutions where one country, one vote is the norm, such as the United Nations. Africa's voice was clearly heard, for example, when several African nations chose to abstain from a vote on a resolution placing sanctions on Russia at the UN General Assembly. These abstentions have continued on subsequent votes on the matter, showing a growing willingness for African

1 We extend our gratitude to Nichole Grossman, Research Analyst at Brookings Africa Growth Initiative, for her outstanding research and editorial support.

2 “Lord Palmerston,” Oxford Reference, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780191826719.001.0001/q-oro-ed4-00008130>.

3 “GDP, current prices | World Economic Outlook (October 2024),” *International Monetary Fund*, October 2024; “African Trade Report 2024: Climate Implications of the AfCFTA Implementation” (Cairo: Afreximbank, 2024), [https://media.afreximbank.com/afrexim/African-Trade-Report\\_2024.pdf](https://media.afreximbank.com/afrexim/African-Trade-Report_2024.pdf).

4 Saurabh Sinha and Melat Getachew, “As Africa's Population Crosses 1.5 Billion, The Demographic Window Is Opening; Getting The Dividend Requires More Time And Stronger Effort,” *United Nations Economic Commission for Africa* (blog), July 12, 2024, <https://www.uneca.org/stories/%28blog%29-as-africa%E2%80%99s-population-crosses-1.5-billion%2C-the-demographic-window-is-opening-getting>.

5 Declan Walsh, “How the Youth Boom in Africa Will Change the World,” *New York Times*, October 28, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/10/28/world/africa/africa-youth-population.html>.



countries to assert their own interests and perspectives on global and continental policy, even when at odds with those of Western powers.<sup>6</sup>

Against this backdrop, advanced economies have begun to re-evaluate their bilateral collaborations and redefine their partnerships with Africa based on how African countries view issues that matter to them.<sup>7</sup> As the continent seeks to increase its voice on the political stage, it must pay even closer attention to shifting political alliances among the G7, G20, and even the BRICS countries. Upcoming changes in leadership in the United States, the political uncertainty in France and Germany, and Italy emerging as a powerhouse in Europe must all be taken into account. Africa must develop policies to manage the changing geopolitical landscape with the singular objective to ensure that partnerships foster sustainable development and empower the African people.

As relationships shift, Africa's trade partners are diverging from its aid providers. Africa has diversified its trading and financing partners substantially, while it has continued to depend largely on the U.S. and European countries with traditional colonial ties for foreign aid.<sup>8</sup> Historically, bilateral partnerships with these Western countries have delivered improved human development gains facilitated by the multilateral development banks (MDBs). In recent years, however, Africa has built new trade partners in emerging economies such as China, Turkey, India, and various Gulf states where the partnerships have focused on infrastructure.<sup>9</sup> Middle powers such as these have thus risen in influence on the continent, making substantial investments in mining, military preparedness, and more.<sup>10</sup> Europe accounted for only 26.8% of Africa's merchandise exports between 2014-2023, for example, displaying a sharp decline from the 1990's, where Europe made up 47.8%. China and India's share of African merchandise exports has grown from the 1990s—when it was roughly 8%—to 23% in 2023.<sup>11</sup>

6 Elias Götz, Jonas Gejl Kaas, and Kevin Patrick Knudsen, "How African States Voted on Russia's War in Ukraine at the United Nations – and What It Means for the West," *Danish Institute for International Studies* (blog), November 15, 2023, <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/how-african-states-voted-on-russias-war-in-ukraine-the-united-nations-and-what-it-means>; Hannah Ryder and Etsehiwot Kebret, "Why African Countries Had Different Views on the UNGA Ukraine Resolution, and Why This Matters," *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (blog), March 15, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-african-countries-had-different-views-unga-ukraine-resolution-and-why-matters>.

7 John J. Chin and Haleigh Bartos, "Rethinking U.S. Africa Policy Amid Changing Geopolitical Realities," *Texas National Security Review*, Foreign Policy Africa, 7, no. 2 (May 21, 2024): 114–32, <https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/52237>.

8 Swetha Ramachandran, "From Empire to Aid Analysing Persistence of Colonial Legacies in Foreign Aid to Africa," *Wider Working Paper* (Geneva, Switzerland: UNU Wider, August 2024), <https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2024/509-7>.

9 Chido Munyati, "Africa and the Gulf States: A New Economic Partnership," *World Economic Forum* (blog), April 28, 2024, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/04/africa-gcc-gulf-economy-partnership-emerging/>; Chido Munyati, "Understanding Evolving China-Africa Economic Relations," *World Economic Forum* (blog), June 25, 2024, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/06/why-strong-regional-value-chains-will-be-vital-to-the-next-chapter-of-china-and-africas-economic-relationship/>.

10 Grace Jones and Nils Olsen, "The New Influencers: A Primer on the Expanding Role of Middle Powers in Africa | The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs," The Africa Futures Project (Cambridge, Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center, August 5, 2024), <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/new-influencers-middle-powers-africa>; Theodore Murphy, "Middle Powers, Big Impact: Africa's 'Coup Belt,' Russia, and the Waning Global Order," *ECFR* (blog), September 6, 2023, <https://ecfr.eu/article/middle-powers-big-impact-africas-coup-belt-russia-and-the-waning-global-order/>.

11 "African Trade Report 2024: Climate Implications of the AfCFTA Implementation."

**FIGURE 39****AFRICA'S SHIFTING TRADE PARTNERHIPS**

Between 2014 and 2022, African trade with the United States and European Union has grown slightly. However, trade between Middle Eastern, Asian, and South American countries has experienced significant shifts with China's influence diminishing, while that of the United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Malaysia, India, and the Republic of Korea has skyrocketed. Conversely, trade with Peru has become almost non-existent. Importantly, trade within the continent has grown substantially over this time period thanks to the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement.

| COUNTRIES                      | CHANGE<br>IN<br>EXPORTS<br>(2014-<br>2022) | TOTAL<br>VALUE OF<br>EXPORTS<br>IN 2022<br>(IN<br>MILLIONS<br>OF USD) | SHARE<br>OF TOTAL<br>EXPORTS<br>IN 2022<br>(%) | CHANGE<br>IN<br>IMPORTS<br>(2014-<br>2022) | TOTAL<br>VALUE OF<br>IMPORTS<br>IN 2022<br>(IN<br>MILLIONS<br>OF USD) | SHARE<br>OF TOTAL<br>IMPORTS<br>IN 2022<br>(%) |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| Peru                           | -912.71%                                   | 135.53  | 0.03%  | 26.60%                                     | 282.93  | 0.06%  |
| Brazil                         | 28.98%                                     | 5129.36   | 1.10%  | -13.79%                                    | 5246.42   | 1.18%  |
| India                          | 9.21%                                      | 32617.69  | 7.02%  | 35.73%                                     | 32372.29  | 7.26%  |
| Malaysia                       | 31.52%                                     | 3306.98   | 0.71%  | 31.71%                                     | 6286.93   | 1.41%  |
| United Arab Emirates           | 49.38%                                     | 14345.69  | 3.09%  | 30.78%                                     | 22728.58  | 5.10%  |
| Russian Federation             | 4.27%                                      | 583.26  | 0.13%  | -33.25%                                    | 5480.00   | 1.23%  |
| China, P.R.: Mainland          | 8.25%                                      | 71013.00  | 15.30%   | 23.30%                                     | 115227.50   | 25.83%   |
| Korea, Republic of             | 74.37%                                     | 359.46  | 0.08%  | 74.37%                                     | 14833.24  | 3.33%  |
| Africa                         | 4.51%                                      | 106021.55   | 22.83%   | 13.81%                                     | 71688.04  | 16.07%   |
| Emerging and Developing Europe | 35.86%                                     | 8245.22   | 1.78%  | 25.85%                                     | 20422.53  | 4.58%  |
| Australia                      | -67.23%                                    | 1911.12   | 0.41%  | 27.10%                                     | 2627.97   | 0.59%  |
| Japan                          | 24.85%                                     | 11220.82  | 2.42%  | 7.74%                                      | 8600.12   | 1.93%  |
| Germany                        | 42.98%                                     | 14181.80  | 3.05%  | 27.18%                                     | 14556.95  | 3.26%  |
| United States                  | 4.40%                                      | 20421.58  | 4.40%  | 29.75%                                     | 21063.30  | 4.72%  |
| European Union                 | 15.18%                                     | 106107.65   | 22.85%   | 27.23%                                     | 90571.59  | 20.31%   |
| World                          | 11.19%                                     | 464420.39   | 100.00%  | 23.92%                                     | 446026.33   | 100.00%  |

Note: Trade between Africa and Hong Kong has experienced a 34.15% increase in exports, and a 7.44% decrease in imports. Mainland China and Hong Kong collectively represent 16.11% of exports from Africa and 26.05% of imports to Africa.  
Source: IMF Direction of Trade Statistics, 2024.

Despite this shift towards non-Western trade relationships, Africa continues to receive substantial aid from its traditional Western partners. Programs like the African Growth and Opportunity Act remain important for many African countries to promote trade with the United States, for example.<sup>12</sup> The G7 countries have also remained the largest donors to Africa's MDB system, as evidenced by the International Development Association (IDA) commitment to send 70% of their contributions to African countries to meet their development needs.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, Africa is facing a unique tension where trade and aid are now increasingly becoming decoupled. Increasingly, trade partners are demanding political alignment from each other, resulting in friendshoring—the act of moving production and supply chain to allied countries—becoming more commonplace.<sup>14</sup> This creates a new partnership dynamic that African nations must negotiate carefully to avoid conflicts between their economic interests and their political ones. This balancing act has become increasingly noticeable on the world stage, as seen with current debt negotiations.<sup>15</sup> The G20 common framework is designed to ensure that all creditors have equal share of the debt and that debtor countries participate in the debt restructuring in a comparable manner.<sup>16</sup> However, the new common framework built on the traditional Paris Club agreements does not reflect the positions of China and other new donors.<sup>17</sup> This has led to delays in the process.<sup>18</sup>

The key to Africa's ability to navigate this new landscape lies in regional integration. Africa must continue to leverage its political importance to build more beneficial and stable economic partnerships. Africa can increase its economic attractiveness by deepening regional cooperation to create larger markets and more economies of scale and, ultimately, increase Africa's share of the global GDP. There are several areas where Africa can take full advantage of global shifts to reposition itself. These include leveraging its comparative

12 Witney Schneidman and Natalie Dicharry, "AGOA Forum 2024: Insights, Economic Benefits for Africa, and the Road Ahead," *Brookings Institution* (blog), September 5, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/agoa-forum-2024-insights-economic-benefits-for-africa-and-the-road-ahead/>.

13 Vera Songwe and Rakan Aboneaaj, "An Ambitious IDA for a Decade of Crisis" (Center for Global Development, 2023), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep58228>; "IDA Impact in Africa," World Bank, accessed January 3, 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/brief/ida-impact>.

14 Beata Javorcik et al., *Goeconomic Fragmentation: The Economic Risks from a Fractured World Economy* (Paris: CEPR Press, 2023), <https://cepr.org/publications/books-and-reports/geoeconomic-fragmentation-economic-risks-fractured-world-economy>.

15 Rafael Romeu, "The Emerging Global Debt Crisis and the Role of International Aid," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, April 18, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/emerging-global-debt-crisis-and-role-international-aid>.

16 Kristalina Georgieva and Ceyla Pazarbasioglu, "The G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments Must Be Stepped Up," *IMF* (blog), December 2, 2021, <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2021/12/02/blog120221the-g20-common-framework-for-debt-treatments-must-be-stepped-up>; Ceyla Pazarbasioglu, "Sovereign Debt Restructuring Process Is Improving Amid Cooperation and Reform," *IMF* (blog), June 26, 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2024/06/26/sovereign-debt-restructuring-process-is-improving-amid-cooperation-and-reform>.

17 Abedin et al., "Reforms for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Financial Architecture: Independent Expert Reflections on the United Nations 'Our Common Agenda,'" *Brookings Institution*, April 8, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/reforms-for-a-21st-century-global-financial-architecture/>.

18 See Kristalina Georgieva and Ceyla Pazarbasioglu, "The G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments Must be Stepped Up," *International Monetary Fund* (blog), December 2, 2021, <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2021/12/02/blog120221the-g20-common-framework-for-debt-treatments-must-be-stepped-up>.

advantage in the green economy,<sup>19</sup> the shifting demographic trends across regions,<sup>20</sup> and the changing influences within the multilateral development system.<sup>21</sup>

## The green economy

Africa has significant potential in untapped carbon markets and renewable energy.<sup>22</sup> The climate crisis provides Africa with the opportunity to build new partnerships around economic transformation based on a sustainable net zero investment agenda. By leveraging its natural resources, the continent can create a sustainable economic future while capitalizing on global demand for green technologies and carbon credits. Rich in rare minerals like lithium and cobalt,<sup>23</sup> Africa should be a key player in climate policy discussions, enhancing its role in the global green tech industry if it builds the right partnerships. By gaining more control over resource extraction and value chains, Africa can secure better trade terms, ensuring it benefits beyond raw material exports. Africa needs to deepen ties with countries leading in this field such as South Korea, China, and the United States.<sup>24</sup>

## Demographic advantage

With a young, growing population, Africa holds a significant demographic advantage. The increasing youth workforce provides an opportunity for Africa to take control of various markets beyond those related to mineral extraction. Inter-African migration is one way to build comparative advantages across African countries, allowing each region to specialize in economic activities that provide them the best economic outcomes. Several agreements have been put in place to allow the free movement of labor across the continent, including the African Union Passport and Free Movement of People,<sup>25</sup> the East African Community Common Market Protocol,<sup>26</sup> the Southern Africa Development Community Treaty,<sup>27</sup> and the

19 Bruce Bylers, Alfonso Medinilla, and Karim Karaki, "Navigating Green Economy and Development Objectives: Opportunities and Risks for African Countries" (Maastricht: The Centre for Africa-Europe relations, March 2023), [efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://ecdpm.org/application/files/7116/7930/5470/Navigating-Green-Economy-Development-Objectives-Opportunities-Risks-African-Countries-ECDPM-Discussion-Paper-339-2023.pdf](https://ecdpm.org/application/files/7116/7930/5470/Navigating-Green-Economy-Development-Objectives-Opportunities-Risks-African-Countries-ECDPM-Discussion-Paper-339-2023.pdf).

20 "Shifting Demographics," United Nations, accessed January 3, 2025, <https://www.un.org/en/un75/shifting-demographics>.

21 Daniel F. Runde and Austin Hardman, "Great Power Competition in the Multilateral System," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, October 23, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/great-power-competition-multilateral-system>.

22 "Through Its Renewable Energy and Resources Africa Can Export High-Quality Carbon Credits to Generate New Revenue Streams," *United Nations Economic Commission for Africa*, May 9, 2024, <https://www.uneca.org/stories/through-its-renewable-energy-and-resources-africa-can-export-high-quality-carbon-credits-to>.

23 Gracelin Baskaran, "Could Africa Replace China as the World's Source of Rare Earth Elements?," *Brookings Institution* (blog), 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/could-africa-replace-china-as-the-worlds-source-of-rare-earth-elements/>.

24 McCartney, "US and South Korea Take Steps to Reduce China's Grip on Critical Minerals," *Newsweek*, November 8, 2024, <https://www.newsweek.com/america-south-korea-step-reduce-china-news-grip-critical-minerals-1974152>.

25 "Visa Free Africa," African Union, accessed January 3, 2025, <https://au.int/en/visa-free-africa>.

26 "Working in East Africa," East African Community, accessed January 3, 2025, <https://www.eac.int/working-in-east-africa>.

27 "SADC - Free Movement of Persons," United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, accessed January 3, 2025, <https://archive.uneca.org/pages/sadc-free-movement-persons>.

Economic Community of West Africa States Free Movement of Persons Protocol,<sup>28</sup> among others. In the long run, migration is a source of economic growth for both the recipient and the exporting countries only when it is managed effectively.<sup>29</sup>

While many regional agreements regarding migration and the free movement of people have been developed across the continent, Africa has yet to develop an effective migration policy with nations outside of Africa similar to those between Philippines and the Gulf states or India and the United States.<sup>30</sup> The shifting global demographic landscape in Africa and Europe, and to some extent in Asia, requires that Africa actively manage the migration debate in a way that provides mutual economic benefits.

## Changing global dynamics and influences

There are also many opportunities to embrace new technologies and Artificial Intelligence to accelerate Africa's integration into the global economy, but only if African nations are able to set up a policy environment for the effective and efficient deployment of these technologies. Today Africa has cost, access, and bandwidth issues which severely handicap the development of these technologies.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Africa is faced with both political and economic decisions regarding which technologies it adopts. It must also agree on the appropriate regulations to deploy across the continent for data usage, storage, and privacy.<sup>32</sup> Once again, learning from the experience of countries like India,<sup>33</sup> China,<sup>34</sup> South Africa,<sup>35</sup> and South Korea<sup>36</sup> could present Africa with options that allow it to optimize available technology while continuing to build stable global partnerships and strong economies.

Despite the challenging global polycrisis of the last five years, intra-African trade has remained resilient, growing at a rate of 7.2% year-over-year. This growth accounted for 15% of total African trade, totaling \$192 billion in 2023—a miraculous increase from 13.6% in

28 "ECOWAS - Free Movement of Persons," United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, accessed January 3, 2025, <https://archive.uneca.org/pages/ecowas-free-movement-persons>.

29 "Leveraging Economic Migration for Development: A Briefing for the World Bank Board" (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2019), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/461021574155945177/pdf/Leveraging-Economic-Migration-for-Development-A-Briefing-for-the-World-Bank-Board.pdf>.

30 For more on the Philippine's labor export policy, see Jeremiaah Opiniano and Alvin Ang, "The Philippines' Landmark Labor Export and Development Policy Enters the Next Generation," *Migration Policy Institute*, January 3, 2024, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/philippines-migration-next-generation-ofws>.

31 "Internet Access and Connectivity in Africa," *Diplo Resource* (blog), January 18, 2023, <https://www.diplomacy.edu/resource/report-stronger-digital-voices-from-africa/internet-access-connectivity-africa/>.

32 "Africa Technology Policy Tracker," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed January 3, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/features/africa-digital-regulations?lang=en>.

33 "The United States, Japan, and South Korea Collaborate to Strengthen India's Digital Infrastructure," Digital Watch Observatory, October 29, 2024, <https://dig.watch/updates/the-united-states-japan-and-south-korea-collaborate-to-strengthen-indias-digital-infrastructure>.

34 Rah Pandey, "China Is Dominating the Race for Generative AI Patents," *The Diplomat* (blog), December 31, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2025/01/china-is-dominating-the-race-for-generative-ai-patents/>.

35 "South Africa - Digital Economy," International Trade Association, September 19, 2024, <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/south-africa-digital-economy>.

36 Chevas Balloun, "Inside South Korea's Thriving Tech Hub: Startups and Success Stories," *Nucamp* (blog), December 24, 2024, <https://www.nucamp.co/blog/coding-bootcamp-south-korea-kor-inside-south-koreas-thriving-tech-hub-startups-and-success-stories>.



**As Africa seeks to redefine its global partnerships, it must be able to do so without compromising its access to cheaper, long-term, concessional capital from MDBs.**

2022.<sup>37</sup> Resilience built during the COVID-19 crisis could serve as a launch pad for faster and more accelerated integration into global supply chains. These trends should be protected and policies developed to leverage them. The ratification by more countries of the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods, and Enterprises and the Open Skies legislation are important steps in this direction.<sup>38</sup>

However, as Africa seeks to redefine its global partnerships, it must be able to do so without compromising its access to cheaper, long-term, concessional capital from MDBs. This will require successfully changing the partnership structures of the Bretton Woods institutions. The voting rights systems in these institutions continue to mirror old political alliances and economic realities, with many European countries having an outsized voice compared to those from the Global South. Efforts at the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group to change the system have been slow and not yet yielded the intended results because of the complex external environment.<sup>39</sup>

Strategic global partnerships can help Africa meet the key priorities of building up the private sector and accelerating sustainable and inclusive growth. A growing number of regional partnerships provides a promising avenue for African countries to leverage their comparative advantages, creating strong economic growth and development. Traditional intergovernmental organizations and multilateral partnerships must adapt to the needs and maturing influence of Africa for the betterment of the world.

37 Isaac Khisa, "Intra-African Trade Values Hit US\$192 Billion," *The Independent*, June 18, 2024, <https://www.independent.co.ug/intra-african-trade-values-hit-us192-billion/>.

38 "Visa Free Africa"; "Open Skies Agreements," United States Department of State, accessed January 3, 2025, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/eb/tra/ata/index.htm>.

39 Amin Mohseni-Cheraghloo, "Inequality Starts at the Top: Voting Reforms in Bretton Woods Institutions," *Atlantic Council* (blog), April 12, 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/inequality-starts-at-the-top-voting-reforms-in-bretton-woods-institutions/>.

# Upskilling UN capacities and breaking the cycle of dependence

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**The main challenge in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is the outdated business model of international development structures.**

Five years ahead of the target set for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we are not yet on track. At the SDG Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General called for “a global rescue plan.”<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, he started putting forward specific proposals to address the bottlenecks preventing progress in implementation. However, the necessary measures to bring about transformative change are yet to be adopted.

As the United Nations Secretary-General has underscored before, the main challenge in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is the outdated business model of international development structures.<sup>2</sup> From the configuration of the international financial architecture to the approach to development cooperation, the world continues to operate as it did 80 years ago. The current challenges in implementing Agenda 2030 are a direct result of this mismatch.<sup>3</sup> If the world is to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the set deadline, urgent action is needed at three different levels to make this business model fit for purpose.

First, international frameworks need to be restructured to recognize the changes of the past 80 years. When the United Nations and the international financial institutions were established, after World War II, Africa was still subject to colonial rule. As a result, it was denied representation. Even if African countries gained independence more than 50 years ago, international institutions continue to function as if they were still colonies.<sup>4</sup> They have been given testimonial seats at the table, but no real distribution of power has been undertaken to acknowledge their entitlement to a voice in the geopolitical arena as any sovereign state.<sup>5</sup> This is indispensable to ensure that African countries don't have to approach international financial institutions as “beggars” looking for charity, but rather they are able to leverage them as one of the tools that sovereign governments have to address their financial needs.<sup>6</sup> The SDG Stimulus provides a clear roadmap on how to address the short-term financing needs of African countries while at the same time addressing long-term structural issues of the financial architecture.<sup>7</sup>

1 “UN Secretary-General’s Report Outlines Rescue Plan for People and Planet,” *SDG Knowledge Hub* (blog), accessed December 11, 2024, <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-secretary-generals-report-outlines-rescue-plan-for-people-and-planet/>.

2 Felipe Antunes de Oliveira, “Development for Whom? Beyond the Developed/Underdeveloped Dichotomy,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23, no. 4 (December 1, 2020): 924–46, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-019-00173-9>.

3 “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” United Nations (New York: United Nations, 2015), <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

4 Imrana Alhaji Buba, “Aid, Intervention, and Neocolonial ‘Development’ in Africa,” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 13, no. 1 (January 2019): 131–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2018.1470136>.

5 Rama Yade, “What Would It Mean for Africa to Have Two Permanent UN Security Council Seats?,” *Atlantic Council* (blog), September 23, 2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/what-would-it-mean-for-africa-to-have-two-permanent-un-security-council-seats/>.

6 “IMF Expands Executive Board with Addition of 25th Chair,” *IMF*, November 1, 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2024/11/01/pr-24403-imf-expands-executive-board-with-addition-of-25th-chair>.

7 “SDG Stimulus,” United Nations, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/sdg-stimulus>.

Second, development cooperation cannot continue to be approached as an economic market in which African countries need to find partners who are interested in investing in their development priorities. Respecting African countries' ownership over their national development paths implies shifting from a zero-sum approach to a win-win approach where a middle ground is built based on all parties' interests and aspirations. It also involves defining a joint agenda to build strong institutions and country systems so that African countries cannot only lead national development efforts, but actually break their dependence on international support. The last three reports of the United Nations Secretary-General on Africa's development propose a clear strategy to address this challenge building on the primacy of domestic resource mobilization and national institutions.<sup>8</sup>

Third, we must move from a project approach and a short-term focus to a policy approach that maximizes the potential of the United Nations as the greatest knowledge hub in the world. The United Nations has the opportunity to increase the efficiency of official development assistance by promoting its utilization for long-term impact actions such as the strengthening of institutional capacities and the development of strategic policy frameworks. The United Nations 2.0 proposed by the Secretary-General is an ambitious but necessary plan to upskill the United Nations' capacity and ensure we can provide such support and break the cycle of dependence.<sup>9</sup>

Let us rally together behind this transformative agenda.

8 "Unpacking Africa's Debt: Towards a Lasting and Durable Solution" (New York: United Nations, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789211069655>; "Solving Pradoxes of Africa's Development: Financing, Energy and Food Systems" (New York: United Nations, 2023), <https://www.un.org/osaa/content/solving-paradoxes-africas-development-financing-energy-and-food-systems>; "Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19: The Primacy of Domestic Resource Mobilization," New Partnership for Africa's Development: Nineteenth Consolidated Progress Report on Implementation and International Support (New York: United Nations, 2022), <https://www.un.org/osaa/content/financing-development-era-covid-19-primacy-domestic-resources-mobilization>.

9 "United Nations | UN 2.0," United Nations, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://www.un.org/two-zero/en>.

# South Africa's G20 presidency: A vital opportunity for global unity and sustainable progress

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As South Africa chairs the first G20 meeting on African soil, we stand at a pivotal crossroads. The current global landscape, marked by multifaceted challenges—from crippling poverty and economic instability to the existential threat of climate change—demands a united front.<sup>2</sup> South Africa's presidency provides a unique opportunity for African voices to be heard and their ideas implemented. To achieve this, it is imperative that the continent aligns its priorities and provides innovative solutions to global challenges.

In his first address to the G20 as president, in November of last year, President Cyril Ramaphosa spoke on the need for collaboration between the public and private sectors across the globe, as these global challenges cannot be faced alone. Public-private partnerships are necessary in our interconnected world. They provide opportunities to improve upon research, innovation, and implementation across a vast array of sectors.<sup>3</sup> Global interconnectedness, when leveraged properly, can lift all nations. South Africa has long emphasized the need for multilateralism<sup>4</sup>—strong multilateral institutions are better equipped to address global challenges than any one nation.<sup>5</sup>

In the spirit of exercising international cooperation to solve global issues, three new G20 task forces have been proposed by South Africa—focused on inclusive economic growth, food security, as well as artificial intelligence, data governance, and innovation for sustainable development.<sup>6</sup> These three issues are integral to diminishing inequalities and protecting the world's citizens while creating resiliency across economies. These three task forces will be entrusted with finding actionable initiatives that can foster sustainable development.

1 We extend our gratitude to Nichole Grossman, Research Analyst at Brookings Africa Growth Initiative, for her outstanding research and editorial support.

2 "Poverty: Overview," World Bank, accessed December 16, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>; Indermit Gill and Ayhan Kose, "5 Major Risks Confronting the Global Economy in 2024," *Brookings Institution* (blog), January 17, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/5-risks-global-economy-2024/>; "Climate Change," United Nations, accessed December 16, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/climate-change>.

3 Nimesha Sahani Jayasena et al., "Applicability of Public-Private Partnerships in Smart Infrastructure Development: The Case of Hong Kong," *International Journal of Construction Management* 23, no. 11 (August 18, 2023): 1932–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15623599.2022.2027076>; Stuart J. Smyth, Steven R. Webb, and Peter W.B. Phillips, "The Role of Public-Private Partnerships in Improving Global Food Security," *Global Food Security* 31 (December 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2021.100588>.

4 Eduard Jordaán, "South Africa, Multilateralism and the Global Politics of Development," *The European Journal of Development Research* 24 (February 23, 2012): 283–99, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2012.4>.

5 Cyril Ramaphosa, "Remarks by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the G20 Closing and Handover Ceremony of the G20 Leaders' Summit, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil" (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, November 19, 2024), <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/remarks-president-cyril-ramaphosa-g20-closing-and-handover-ceremony-g20-leaders-summit-rio-de>.

6 "G20 Presidency to Establish Three Dedicated Task Forces – G20 South Africa," *G20*, December 3, 2024, <https://g20.org/news/g20-presidency-to-establish-three-dedicated-task-forces/>.

Brazil's successful G20 presidency has served as an inspiration for South Africa's leadership.<sup>7</sup> As we reflect on the G20's achievements over the past 20 years, this is our opportunity to repurpose past lessons into concrete strategies for the future. One such lesson is the need for improved resolutions to the burden of debt on economic growth.<sup>8</sup> As a representative of the African continent, South Africa is acutely aware of the economic depression that has resulted from the enormous debt held by countries across the Global South.<sup>9</sup> To address this concern, South Africa has proposed a Cost of Capital Commission to "deliver a comprehensive expert review on the issues impacting the cost of capital for developing economies which could help address future debt sustainability issues and related fiscal space challenges."<sup>10</sup>

A substantial proportion of debt held by African countries, and those across the Global South more generally, is held by private institutions and multilateral organizations.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, any proposed solution to the debt burden will require institutional reform to be successful.<sup>12</sup> The economic shocks of the last five years continue to reverberate in African economies. COVID-19,<sup>13</sup> increased insecurity,<sup>14</sup> and inflation have left many African countries struggling to support their citizens.<sup>15</sup> Institutional reform that incorporates the needs and concerns of those most affected by debt and including civil society groups, is necessary to address global inequalities effectively with the potential for long-term positive impact. In our G20 presidency, South Africa will seek to elevate marginalized voices through the G20 Social Forum and encourage these voices to be incorporated into any future policy decisions.

**By prioritizing economic empowerment and sustainability, we hope South Africa can set a precedent for future G20 meetings, ultimately reinforcing a narrative of hope, resilience, and collective action.**

Finally, we see South Africa's presidency as an opportunity to amplify the African Union's Agenda 2063.<sup>16</sup> As with Agenda 2063, the G20 must bring together diverse stakeholders—public officials, civil society groups, academics, private for-profit businesses, and citizens—to create institutional priorities and policies that benefit us all. By prioritizing economic empowerment and sustainability, we hope South Africa can set a precedent for future G20 meetings, ultimately reinforcing a narrative of hope, resilience, and collective action.

7 Hung Tran, "Brazil's Approach to the G20: Leading by Example," *Atlantic Council* (blog), April 12, 2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/brazils-approach-to-the-g20-leading-by-example/>.

8 "South Africa: Managing Africa's Debt Burden to Spur Development," *MENA Report*, November 4, 2022, sec. Banking And Finance, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2732407417/citation/82488F56B8FE43E7PQ/1>.

9 "Africa's Debt Burden Eroding Funds for Sustainable Development in LDCs," *AllAfrica.Com*, December 23, 2024, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/3148674257/citation/A3DBF5BCB134319PQ/1>.

10 "G20 Presidency," G20 South Africa 2025, accessed January 7, 2025, <https://g20.org/g20-south-africa/g20-presidency/>.

11 David McNair, "How South Africa Can Use Its G20 Presidency to Reduce the Cost of Developing Countries' Debt," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (blog), December 13, 2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2024/12/debt-cost-of-capital-commission-south-africa-g20?lang=en>.

12 Ramaphosa, "Remarks by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the G20 Closing and Handover Ceremony of the G20 Leaders' Summit, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil."

13 C. Anyanwu and Adeleke O. Salami, "The Impact of COVID-19 on African Economies: An Introduction," *African Development Review* 33, no. Suppl 1 (April 2021): S1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8268.12531>.

14 John Adams Williams, Mabel Chioma Onyedinefu, and Ajala Ebenezer Olorunsogo, "The Impact of Insecurity on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria," *Arts and Social Science Research* 13, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 223–46, <https://fassjassr.com.ng/index.php/assr/article/view/115>.

15 Shelter Thelile Nene, Kehinde Damilola Ilesanmi, and Mashapa Sekome, "The Effect of Inflation Targeting (IT) Policy on the Inflation Uncertainty and Economic Growth in Selected African and European Countries," *Economies* 10, no. 2 (February 2022): 37, <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies10020037>; Anh D.M. Nguyen et al., "On the Drivers of Inflation in sub-Saharan Africa," *International Economics* 151 (October 2017): 71–84, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.inteco.2017.04.002>.

16 "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want," a African Union, ccessed December 10, 2024, <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>.



# The Atlantic Ocean: A new frontier for global cooperation and African growth

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In an increasingly fragmented world grappling with common challenges such as the global climate crisis, the Atlantic Ocean can be leveraged for Africa's climate action, continental integration, contribution to the provision of global public goods, development, improved participation to the global economy, international cooperation, and peace and security.

The global context in which this opportunity should be seized is two-pronged.

On the one hand, in recent years, geopolitical conflict has blocked multilateral institutions,<sup>1</sup> fueled military expenditures,<sup>2</sup> increased barriers to investment and trade restrictions,<sup>3</sup> and led to a surge in violent deaths and forced displacement.<sup>4</sup> It is against this backdrop that internationalized civil wars in the Great Lakes,<sup>5</sup> Horn,<sup>6</sup> and Sahel regions,<sup>7</sup> the effects of which have often been compounded by climate change, have claimed hundreds of thousands of African lives and displaced millions.<sup>8</sup> Geo-economic fragmentation driven by heightened competition over global influence, technology, and manufacturing jobs and value added adds another layer of complexity.<sup>9</sup> For instance, the disruption of global value chains triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war increased the number of people

- 1 "There Are 'Alarming Signs Multilateralism Has Run Out of Steam', First Committee Hears as General Debate Enters Second Week" (New York: United Nations, October 14, 2024), <https://press.un.org/en/2024/gadis3740.doc.htm>.
- 2 "Global Military Spending Surges amid War, Rising Tensions and Insecurity," *SIPRI*, April 22, 2024, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/global-military-spending-surges-amid-war-rising-tensions-and-insecurity>.
- 3 Pinelopi K. Goldberg and Tristan Reed, "Growing Threats to Global Trade," *IMF* (blog), June 2023, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2023/06/growing-threats-to-global-trade-goldberg-reed>.
- 4 "A Year of Turmoil: Conflicts, Crises and Displacement in 2024," UNHCR, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/year-turmoil-conflicts-crises-and-displacement-2024>; Abbey Steele, Stephanie Schwartz, and Adam Lichtenheld, "The Politics of Forced Displacement and How States Respond," *Researching Internal Displacement*, April 11, 2024, [https://researchinginternaldisplacement.org/short\\_pieces/the-politics-of-forced-displacement-and-how-states-respond/](https://researchinginternaldisplacement.org/short_pieces/the-politics-of-forced-displacement-and-how-states-respond/).
- 5 "Conflict Watchlist 2025: Great Lakes," *ACLEDA* (blog), accessed January 2, 2025, <https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2025/great-lakes/>.
- 6 James Goddard, "Tensions in the Horn of Africa," *House of Lords Library*, October 24, 2024, <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/tensions-in-the-horn-of-africa/>.
- 7 "Conflict Watchlist 2025: Sahel and Coastal West Africa," *ACLEDA* (blog), accessed January 2, 2025, <https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2025/sahel-and-coastal-west-africa/>.
- 8 Marwan Safar Jalani, "Watchlist Insight: Climate and Humanitarian Crisis in the Central Sahel" (New York: International Rescue Committee, June 5, 2023), <https://www.rescue.org/report/watchlist-insight-climate-and-humanitarian-crisis-central-sahel>; "Unprecedented Crisis in West Africa: Nearly 9 Million Displaced by Conflict and Climate Change, Warns IRC on World Refugee Day," *International Rescue Committee*, June 20, 2024, <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/unprecedented-crisis-west-africa-nearly-9-million-displaced-conflict-and-climate>.
- 9 Brian Sostak, "Strategic Foresight Analysis Topics: Geoeconomic Trends Shaping the Future Global Landscape," *NATO's ACT* (blog), January 5, 2024, <https://www.act.nato.int/article/sfa-topics-geoeconomic-trends-shaping-future-global-landscape/>.

suffering from acute food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa by 40 million in 2020-22 alone,<sup>10</sup> giving an indication of Africa's vulnerability to trade imbalances.

On the other hand, nations have also demonstrated increased appetites for entering agreements with each other. Minilateralism and multi-alignment are becoming commonplace.<sup>11</sup> New international coalitions, groupings, fora, and organizations have blossomed on topics such as biodiversity,<sup>12</sup> clean energy,<sup>13</sup> economic cooperation,<sup>14</sup> food security,<sup>15</sup> and technology.<sup>16</sup> In the face of global challenges, the contribution of nations to global initiatives aiming at the delivery of global public goods is an increasingly important aspect of policymaking and smart power.<sup>17</sup>

Oceans provide a fertile ground for global cooperation. [They] are the main conduit of global trade—90% of traded goods worldwide are shipped by sea.

In this context, oceans provide a fertile ground for global cooperation. Oceans are the main conduit of global trade—90% of traded goods worldwide are shipped by sea.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, oceans remain a largely untapped source of climate action, as they serve as “our planet’s largest carbon sink, absorbing 25% of all carbon dioxide emissions and a staggering 90% of the excess heat generated by a warming atmosphere.”<sup>19</sup>

10 Marijn A. Bolhuis et al., “How Vulnerable Is sub-Saharan Africa to Geoeconomic Fragmentation?,” Working Paper, No. 2024/083 (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, April 5, 2024), <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2024/04/05/How-Vulnerable-is-Sub-Saharan-Africa-to-Geoeconomic-Fragmentation-546346>.

11 Yirga Abebe Damtie, “From Multilateralism to Minilateralism: Regional Cooperation Trends in the Horn of Africa,” *Africa Up Close - Wilson Center* (blog), January 14, 2025, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/multilateralism-minilateralism-regional-cooperation-trends-horn-africa>; Chris Humphrey, “Minilateral’ Development Banks: What the Rise of Africa’s Trade and Development Bank Says about Multilateral Governance,” *Development and Change* 50, no. 1 (2019): 164–90, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12467>.

12 “About,” Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG), accessed January 2, 2025, <https://abcg.org/about/>; “International Biodiversity Coalition,” Climate Chance, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://www.climate-chance.org/en/get-involved/international-biodiversity-coalition/>; “About.”

13 “Africa,” International Renewable Energy Agency, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://www.irena.org/How-we-work/Africa>.

14 “Ideas for a Prosperous Africa,” accessed January 2, 2025, UNECA, <https://www.uneca.org/>; “Cooperation with Subregional, Regional and International Organizations,” United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://unoca.unmissions.org/en/cooperation-subregional-regional-and-international-organizations>.

15 “Africa - Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: Statistics and Trends” (Accra, Ghana: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2023), <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/0db03746-74e1-4b78-9508-70b9f661859c>.

16 “Science and Technology Division,” African Union, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://au.int/en/st-division>; “African Technology Foundation,” African Technology Foundation, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://africantechnologyfoundation.org/>; “Coalition on Science, Technology, and Innovation for Africa’s Development,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://sdgs.un.org/tfm/Africa>.

17 What has been called the “New South” is composed of nations of the Global South that are in the process of developing, or have demonstrated, the ability to astutely and pragmatically navigate the challenges, constraints and pressures of an increasingly complex world system. See Karim El Aynaoui and Hinh T. Dinh. “Economic Development of the New South After the Washington Consensus,” *Groupe d’études géopolitiques*, December 2024, <https://geopolitique.eu/en/2024/12/18/navigating-todays-complex-economic-policy-triangle-a-view-from-the-south-en/>

18 Spencer Feingold and Andrea Willige, “These Are the World’s Most Vital Waterways for Global Trade,” *World Economic Forum*, February 15, 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/02/worlds-busiest-ocean-shipping-routes-trade/>

19 Ilana Seid, “The World Needs Ocean-Based Climate Solutions,” *Project Syndicate*, December 19, 2024, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ocean-based-solutions-should-be-central-to-ndcs-and-climate-finance-by-ilana-seid-2024-12>

For nations bordering the Atlantic, the Ocean offers immense opportunities. Unlike the competitive Indo-Pacific, the Atlantic remains relatively peaceful, preserved from competition over hegemony, and primed for cooperative ventures among its coastal states.<sup>20</sup> Benefiting from the presence of the U.S. and of its main partner, Europe, the Atlantic can be leveraged to advance an agenda focused on sustainable development through pacified dialogue between all states bordering the Ocean. It could provide the basis for partnerships aiming at integration through investment and trade between all these nations, thus taming and partially reversing the fragmentation witnessed globally.

The Atlantic is already home to multiple frameworks that can be mobilized. In 1986 and under Brazil's leadership, the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS) was established, creating a nuclear weapon-free zone of dialogue, peace, and security between its 24 member states in Africa and South America.<sup>21</sup> More recently, the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation was launched in September 2023 at the initiative of the U.S.<sup>22</sup> As of September 2024, the Partnership had 42 member states across Africa, Europe, North America, South America, and the Caribbean.<sup>23</sup> It lies on three pillars, namely: "1) a sustainable blue economy, 2) science capacity building and exchange, and 3) ocean-based food security."<sup>24</sup> The Atlantic Centre, a multilateral center of excellence supported by 23 countries which seeks to produce knowledge, foster political dialogue, and build maritime security-related capacity among Atlantic states, provides another example of all-Atlantic cooperation.<sup>25</sup>

A number of Atlantic-related initiatives have also emerged in Africa. The Atlantic region is "home to 46% of Africa's population, 55% of Africa's GDP and 57% of continental trade."<sup>26</sup> To harness the ocean's potential, the Atlantic African States Process was launched in Rabat in 2009 and has held a number of ministerial meetings since 2022.<sup>27</sup> In another example, in 2016, the heads of state of Morocco and Nigeria officially announced the construction

20 Youssef Tobi, "The New Security Dynamics of the Atlantic Basin and the Way Forward for a Pan-Atlantic Approach," *Policy Center for the New South*, October 6, 2022, <https://www.policycenter.ma/publications/new-security-dynamics-atlantic-basin-and-way-forward-pan-atlantic-approach>.

21 Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, "ZOPACAS", Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (Brasília: ABC).

22 "FACT SHEET: 32 Countries Launch the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation", (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2023), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/09/18/fact-sheet-32-countries-launch-the-partnership-for-atlantic-cooperation/>

23 "Atlantic Cooperation," *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed January 2, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/atlantic-cooperation/>.

24 "FACT SHEET: Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation Ministerial", (Washington, D.C. The White House, 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/09/23/fact-sheet-partnership-for-atlantic-cooperation-ministerial/>

25 Like Spain and France, Portugal offers a good example of a (Southern) European country with a deeply rooted and long-standing vision directed toward Africa and the Atlantic (ocean waters and cooperation with the U.S. and Latin America and the Caribbean). The three countries have been particularly active in global initiatives aiming at strengthening global cooperation in topics such as the development/security nexus, financing for development, and ocean governance, among others.

26 "Rabat Process Member States Laud Morocco's Initiative, Leadership." *Atlantic*, September 25, 2024, <https://www.mapnews.ma/en/actualites/world/atlantic-rabat-process-member-states-laud-morocco%E2%80%99s-initiative-leadership>

27 "Statement: Rabat Hosts the 3rd Ministerial Meeting of the Atlantic African States Process," *African Business*, July 12, 2023, <https://african.business/2023/07/apo-newsfeed/statement-rabat-hosts-the-3rd-ministerial-meeting-of-the-atlantic-african-states-process>.

of a Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline,<sup>28</sup> a planned \$25-billion, 7,000 km pipeline that would connect 13 states in Northwest Africa and reach Europe.<sup>29</sup> Cross-continental initiatives connecting non-riparian African nations to the Atlantic have also been recently undertaken. These include the Zambia-DRC-Angola Lobito Corridor, which was officially endorsed by the European Union and the U.S. on the margins of the G20 Summit in September 2023 as part of the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment.<sup>30</sup> In November 2023, King Mohammed VI of Morocco announced an international initiative to “enable the Sahel countries to have access to the Atlantic Ocean” by making Morocco’s infrastructure available to landlocked countries including ports, roads, and railways.<sup>31</sup> The Atlantic can thus serve as a platform to foster connectivity and solidarity between coastal, hinterland, and landlocked areas in Africa.<sup>32</sup> Investments in economic corridors, energy linkages, and logistical hubs could enhance continental integration, enabling dialogue to ultimately build resilient continental and regional ecosystems and contribute to the successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area through deepened cooperation across the African Union’s Regional Economic Communities.<sup>33</sup>

Beyond Africa and around the Atlantic Basin, a series of flagship initiatives and projects could be supported in different sectors:

- In academia, exchange programs for scientists and students (including in economics and social sciences) and between academic and research institutions across the Atlantic Basin could be encouraged.
- In agriculture, the sharing of good practices, technical cooperation, and increased technology flows can boost tropical agriculture output and strengthen food security.
- In the blue economy, working on the creation of a joint blue finance facility for riparian states could foster ocean-based food security, finance ocean science, improve ocean governance, preserve ecosystems and livelihoods, protect the environment, and provide a suitable response to climate-related challenges, particularly in developing nations.

28 Also called the African Atlantic Pipeline Project; “Visite officielle de Sa Majesté le Roi Mohammed VI au Nigeria,” (Rabat: Royaume du Maroc, 2016), <https://www.maroc.ma/fr/actualites/visite-officielle-de-sa-majeste-le-roi-mohammed-vi-au-nigeria>

29 In Northwest Atlantic Africa, promising discoveries of oil and gas have notably been made in recent years in Côte d’Ivoire, Mauritania, and Senegal. See Francis Perrin. “Afrique : Trois Grands Projets Pétroliers Progressent en Vue d’une Mise en Production dans les Prochaines Années.” (Rabat: Policy Center for the New South, December 24, 2021), <https://www.policycenter.ma/opinion/afrique-trois-grands-projets-petroliers-progressent-en-vue-d-une-mise-en-production-dans-les>

30 European Commission, “Connecting the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Angola to Global Markets through the Lobito Corridor”, (Brussels: European Commission, 2023), [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/connecting-democratic-republic-congo-zambia-and-angola-global-markets-through-lobito-corridor\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/connecting-democratic-republic-congo-zambia-and-angola-global-markets-through-lobito-corridor_en)

31 Abdelhak Bassou and Rama Yade. “Behind Morocco’s bid to unlock the Sahel”, (Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Council, 2024), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/behind-moroccos-bid-to-unlock-the-sahel/>

32 As noted by Amine Ghouli and Rida Lyammouri, “[The] vast expanse of landlocked nations, including Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad, faces significant barriers to global market integration. Geographic isolation, with distances spanning hundreds of kilometers from the nearest seaports, drives logistics costs to 30-40% of import values, severely undermining economic competitiveness and stifling development prospects”; Amine Ghouli and Rida Lyammouri, “Morocco’s Atlantic Initiative: A Catalyst for Sahel-Saharan Integration.” (Rabat: Policy Center for the New South, December 10, 2024), <https://www.policycenter.ma/publications/moroccos-atlantic-initiative-catalyst-sahel-saharan-integration>

33 Seven out of the eight Regional Economic Communities recognized by the African Union border the Atlantic Ocean.

- In network infrastructure, projects such as the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline, underwritten by numerous nations, can boost regional integration through commonly managed physical networks and have positive, dynamic effects on development.
- In manufacturing, a stronger policy dialogue could take place between African and Latin American countries, which should jointly explore ways to leverage complementary strengths in commodity production and foster cross-Atlantic value chains in value-added industries, thus enabling industrial transformation and allowing countries to move up the global value chain by leveraging their own human and mineral capital and the natural, open, and vast infrastructure provided by the Ocean.
- Overall, measures should be taken to stimulate investment, and reforms should be pursued to ensure a level playing field that jointly improves the business climate for private sector companies operating or wishing to expand their activities on all shores of the Atlantic.

Irrespective of protective measures adopted by advanced economies, the Atlantic will remain a major source of livelihood for Africa and a space to be leveraged to build bridges with all Atlantic continents.<sup>34</sup>

The Atlantic should receive more collective attention in Africa. It can transform into a shared, strategic space of cooperation, prosperity, and security benefitting all riparian states and beyond, with the active involvement of the civil societies, governments, and private sectors of a quadri-continental Atlantic community in the making.<sup>35</sup>

34 These notably include South America and Europe, where the European Union and the Mercosur trading block have recently signed a free trade agreement. See Federico Steinberg, "What Are the Implications of the EU–Mercosur Free Trade Agreement? Critical Questions," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, December 6, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-are-implications-eu-mercotur-free-trade-agreement>

35 In association with its many partners amid global think tanks, and through the Atlantic Dialogues annual conference, the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders Program, the Atlantic Currents annual report, and the Atlantic Strategy Group bi-annual meetings, the Policy Center for the New South has been active in supporting cooperation in the Wider Atlantic. It will strive to maintain its efforts to continue to build an analytical infrastructure and a policymaking community that can support better and closer cooperation in the Wider Atlantic.



# Congress, Africa, and Trump: What does the future hold?

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**The African Growth and Opportunity Act... helped to forge a bipartisan consensus in Congress based on the foreign policy rationale that the U.S. has interests in Africa that were worth investing in.**

When the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was passed into law under President Bill Clinton in 2000, it did more than elevate trade and investment on the U.S.-Africa policy agenda. It also helped to forge a bipartisan consensus in Congress based on the foreign policy rationale that the U.S. has interests in Africa that were worth investing in. This consensus has endured over the last 24 years and has led to the creation of landmark initiatives such as the George W. Bush administration's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the passage of the BUILD Act, which President Donald Trump signed into law, creating the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC). This consensus has also supported approximately \$8 billion in development assistance administered in Africa by the U.S. State Department and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) between FY2012 and FY2022, in annual inflation-adjusted dollars.<sup>1</sup>

The question is whether the bipartisan consensus will be sustained when the 119th Congress is sworn in and the Trump administration assumes office in January 2025. More immediately, a few pieces of legislation will be key to watch in 2025.

There appears to be broad support for the reauthorization of the Development Finance Corporation (DFC), set to expire on October 6, 2025, as the DFC Modernization and Reauthorization Act of 2024 passed through House Committee on Foreign Affairs in July with a vote of 43-2.<sup>2</sup> In reauthorizing the DFC under the House bill, the agency would be able to operate for another seven years, its contingency liability would be doubled to \$120 billion, and the number of countries where the DFC can invest would be increased.<sup>3</sup> Already in FY2024, the DFC committed a record \$12 billion of investments across 181 deals in 44 countries.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the DFC reauthorization was not attached to the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, as some had hoped it would be, and will have to be taken up when Congress reconvenes in 2025.<sup>5</sup>

The DFC is likely to play an important role in a Trump administration Africa policy that analysts expect to be transactional and pro-business.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in the first Trump administration,

1 Tomás F Husted et al., "Sub-Saharan Africa: Overview and U.S. Engagement," *Congressional Research Service*, July 21, 2023, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R45428.pdf>.

2 "Meeks Celebrates Committee Passage of H.R. 8926 Reauthorizing the DFC," *House Foreign Affairs Committee*, July 11, 2024, sec. Press Releases, <https://democrats-foreignaffairs.house.gov/2024/7/meeks-celebrates-committee-passage-of-h-r-8926-to-modify-and-reauthorize-the-better-utilization-of-investments-leading-to-development-act-of-2018>.

3 Adva Saldinger, "House Committee Approves Bill Extending, Enhancing US DFC," *Devex* (blog), July 12, 2024, <https://www.devex.com/news/sponsored/house-committee-approves-bill-extending-enhancing-us-dfc-107938>.

4 Adva Saldinger, "DFC Has Record Year Following Reorganization, but Needs Reauthorization," *Devex* (blog), October 29, 2024, <https://www.devex.com/news/sponsored/dfc-has-record-year-following-reorganization-but-needs-reauthorization-108628>.

5 Mark Kennedy, "Reauthorizing DFC in Lame Duck Period Avoids Disrupting an Important Foreign Policy Tool," *Wilson Center* (blog), November 20, 2024, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/reauthorizing-dfc-lame-duck-period-avoids-disrupting-important-foreign-policy-tool>.

6 Yinka Adegoke, "Trump's MAGA Insiders Want 'Anti-Woke' Deal-Driven Africa Policies," *SEMAFOR*, November 19, 2024, sec. Africa, <https://www.semafor.com/article/11/19/2024/trumps-maga-insiders-want-anti-woke-africa-policies-deals>.

then-DFC CEO Adam Boehler sought to invest \$5 billion in Morocco (which coincided with Morocco's recognition of Israel as part of the Abraham Accords) and another \$5 billion in Ethiopia.<sup>7</sup> While both targets were unmet, it reflects a strong private sector approach that is likely to reemerge in the incoming administration, which views investments by American entrepreneurs and businesses as drivers of development, job creation, and wealth generation in Africa and the U.S.<sup>8</sup>

Under the second Trump administration, critical minerals are poised to be a key priority, given that President Trump signed the Energy Act of 2020. The act directed the secretary of energy to develop a comprehensive forecast of projected critical mineral requirements for U.S. national security.<sup>9</sup> In December of 2024, U.S. Senators Chris Coons (D-Del) and Todd Young (R-Ind) introduced bipartisan legislation that would strengthen critical minerals supply chains in Africa and elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> As Africa is estimated to hold about 30% of the world's critical minerals, and with the Democratic Republic of the Congo producing 70% of the world's cobalt, initiatives such as the Lobito Corridor project could also receive ongoing support.<sup>11</sup>

A concerted effort was made in December to renew the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which is set to expire in September 2025. In April, Senators James Risch (R-Idaho) and Coons introduced a bipartisan bill that would renew the trade pact for 16 years until 2041.<sup>12</sup> In December, Representative John James (R-Mich) introduced legislation that would extend AGOA for 12 years.<sup>13</sup> Apart from differences over the time frames, the two bills were aligned in their support for an enhanced AGOA. Nevertheless, AGOA was not included in the continuing resolution (CR) which Congressional leaders reached on December 17<sup>14</sup> (and which President-elect Donald Trump opposed), and the African trade legislation will have to be taken up anew in the next Congress.

7 "DFC Visits Morocco to Explore Private Sector Investment," *U.S. International Development Finance Corporation*, January 7, 2021, <https://www.dfc.gov/media/press-releases/dfc-visits-morocco-explore-private-sector-investment>; Alexander Richter, "U.S. International Development Finance Corp. Funding for Ethiopia Could Benefit Geothermal Projects," *ThinkGeoEnergy - Geothermal Energy News*, April 4, 2020, <https://www.thinkgeoenergy.com/u-s-intl-development-finance-corp-funding-for-ethiopia-could-benefit-geothermal-projects/>.

8 Pham, "Africa in the Second Trump Administration," *The Jerusalem Strategic Tribune* (blog), November 2024, <https://jstribune.com/pham-africa-in-the-second-trump-administration/>.

9 "Energy Act of 2020 (Critical Minerals Provisions) – Policies," *IEA*, November 3, 2022, <https://www.iea.org/policies/16065-energy-act-of-2020-critical-minerals-provisions>.

10 "Senators Coons, Young Introduce Legislation to Strengthen Critical Minerals Supply Chains, U.S. Senator Christopher Coons of Delaware," *Chris Coons*, December 10, 2024, <https://www.coons.senate.gov/news/press-releases/senators-coons-young-introduce-legislation-to-strengthen-critical-minerals-supply-chains>.

11 Wenjie Chen, Athene Laws, and Nico Valckx, "Harnessing sub-Saharan Africa's Critical Mineral Wealth," *IMF* (blog), April 29, 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2024/04/29/cf-harnessing-sub-saharan-africas-critical-mineral-wealth>; "Cobalt Facts," Government of Canada (Natural Resources Canada, March 9, 2023), <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/minerals-mining/mining-data-statistics-and-analysis/minerals-metals-facts/cobalt-facts/24981>.

12 Makini Brice, "US Senators Introduce Bill to Renew Africa Trade Pact through 2041," *Reuters*, April 11, 2024, <https://agoa.info/news/article/16451-us-senators-will-introduce-bill-to-renew-africa-trade-pact-through-2041.html>.

13 "Rep. James Introduces the AGOA Extension and Enhancement Act of 2024," *Congressman John James*, December 11, 2024, sec. Press Releases, <https://james.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=223>.

14 Jacob Bogage, "Leaders in Congress reach deal to avert government shutdown," *The Washington Post*, December 17, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2024/12/17/government-shutdown-baltimore-bridge-farms/?ref=biztoc.com>.

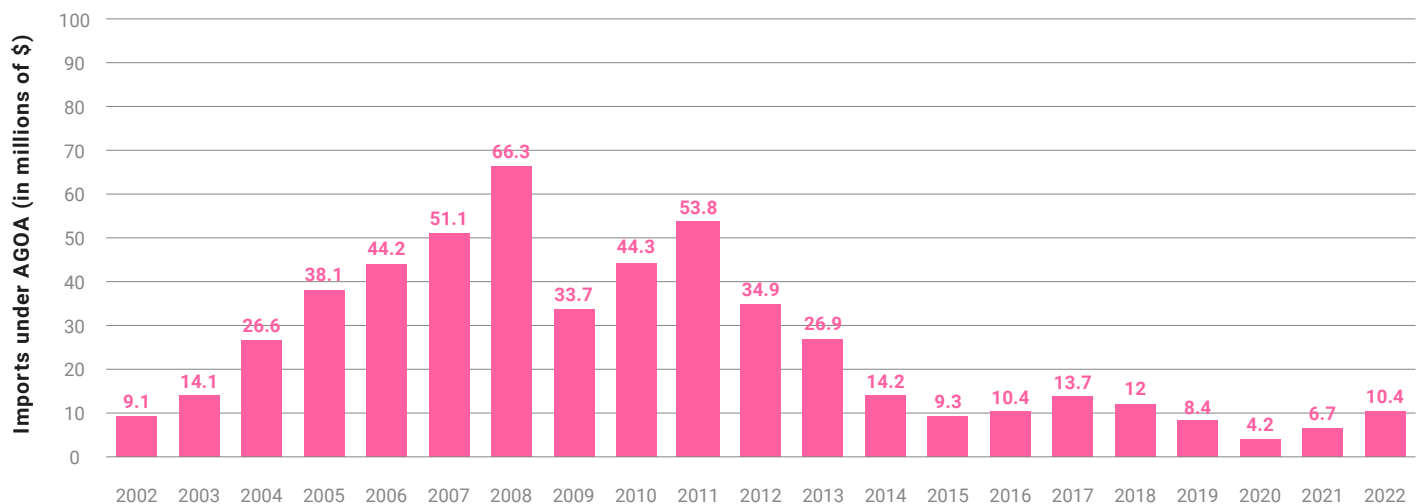
One issue likely to complicate the reauthorization process is South Africa's continued eligibility. Senator Risch, ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has criticized South Africa's "continued actions that subvert U.S. national security and foreign policy interests."<sup>15</sup> Key members of President-elect Trump's nominated national security team, including Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla) and Representatives Michael Walz (R-Fla), and Elise Stefanik (R-NY) have expressed similar concerns.<sup>16</sup> Members of Congress will have to weigh South Africa's foreign policy actions against the fact that the country is the continent's strongest democracy and most industrial economy, the incoming chair of the G20, and provides nearly 100% of the chromium that the U.S. imports and more than 25% of U.S. requirements for manganese, titanium, and platinum.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the South Africa issue, organized labor has voiced concerns about the need for stronger labor and environmental protections in a renewed AGOA.<sup>18</sup> Labor's concerns were a factor in AGOA not being included in the December CR.

**FIGURE 40**

### AGOA IMPORTS (2001-2022)

*Imports have continued to decline over the past decade both in real dollars and percent of total imports*



Note: Includes AGOA and GSP goods from AGOA-eligible countries.  
Source: United States Trade Representative Office.

15 "Risch: Biden Admin Is Wrong to Host AGOA Summit in South Africa," *United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations*, November 2, 2023, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/rep/release/risch-biden-admin-is-wrong-to-host-agoa-summit-in-south-africa>.

16 Pham, "Africa in the Second Trump Administration."

17 Gracelin Baskaran, "Quantifying the Impact of a Loss of South Africa's AGOA Benefits," *Brookings Institution* (blog), January 17, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/quantifying-the-impact-of-a-loss-of-south-africas-agoa-benefits/>.

18 Marc L. Busch, "Shifting Focus on Labor and Environmental Standards to Companies Instead of Countries Would Supercharge AGOA," *The Wilson Center*, July 30, 2024, [Shifting Focus on Labor and Environmental Standards to Companies Instead of Countries Would Supercharge AGOA | Wilson Center](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/shifting-focus-on-labor-and-environmental-standards-to-companies-instead-of-countries-would-supercharge-agoa)

**Without effective tools to support U.S. companies, the U.S. risks losing out commercially in the African market to China and the emerging “middle powers.”**

Another challenge for AGOA is whether the preference program is sufficient to enable the U.S. to compete effectively with China in Africa. In 2023, two-way trade between the U.S. and Africa was \$67.5 billion, while China's two-way trade was more than four times as large at \$282.1 billion.<sup>19</sup> Non-oil imports under AGOA have averaged \$4.3 billion between 2018 and 2022, which is just over one-tenth of total U.S. imports from the region.<sup>20</sup>

To bolster the U.S. presence in the African market, Congress could provide tax incentives for U.S. companies to invest in value-added projects, especially in critical minerals, as it did in Section 30D of the Inflation Reduction Act.<sup>21</sup> This would lower the risk and provide incentives for U.S. companies to make the long-term investments required for the U.S. to become competitive in this vital sector.

When AGOA was passed in 2000 and renewed in 2015, key constituencies, including the private sector, governors, mayors, state legislators, and civil society organizations, voiced their support. It is likely that a similar effort will be necessary for AGOA to be renewed in a timely manner. Given that one-quarter of the world's population will be domiciled in Africa in 25 years, and without effective tools to support U.S. companies, the U.S. risks losing out commercially in the African market to China and the emerging “middle powers” that include the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.<sup>22</sup>

An existing tool to support U.S. companies is Prosper Africa. Created in the first Trump administration, the initiative has helped to close 1,852 deals valued at \$86 billion over the last four years in 49 countries.<sup>23</sup> However, a prospective problem for Prosper Africa is that it is housed in the U.S. Agency for International Development, and, like all government agencies, is a potential target for budget cuts by the newly announced Department of Government Efficiency led by Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy. Indeed, the Trump administration sought to cut \$4 billion in foreign aid in 2019, but President Trump ultimately sided with the many bipartisan voices in Congress who opposed the cuts.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, in its budget for FY2021, the Trump administration announced a 22% cut to critical foreign assistance programs, which was rejected by the incoming Biden administration.<sup>25</sup>

19 “Trade in Goods with Africa,” accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c0013.html>; Nyabiage, “China-Africa Trade Hit US\$282 Billion in 2023 but Africa's Trade Deficit Widens,” *South China Morning Post*, February 1, 2024, sec. News, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3250552/china-africa-trade-hit-282-billion-2023-africas-trade-deficit-widens-commodity-prices-key-factor>.

20 “Goods Trade between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. International Trade Commission and U.S. Department of Commerce, December 7, 2022), [https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/US%20Trade%20with%20sub-Saharan%20Africa%2012072022\\_0.pdf](https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/US%20Trade%20with%20sub-Saharan%20Africa%2012072022_0.pdf).

21 “Credits for New Clean Vehicles Purchased in 2023 or after,” IRS, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/credits-for-new-clean-vehicles-purchased-in-2023-or-after>.

22 “Middle Power Politics in the Middle East,” Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University Qatar, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://cirs.qatar.georgetown.edu/research/research-initiatives/middle-power-politics-middle-east/>.

23 “Prosper Africa,” Prosper Africa, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.prosperafrika.gov/>.

24 Edward Wong, Annie Karni, and Emily Cochrane, “Trump Administration Drops Proposal to Cut Foreign Aid After Intense Debate,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 2019, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/22/us/politics/trump-foreign-aid.html>.

25 “Trump Administration Announces Devastating Cuts to Foreign Aid,” CARE, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.care.org/media-and-press/trump-administration-announces-devastating-cuts-to-u-s-foreign-assistance/>.

To safeguard this increasingly important instrument that promotes U.S. investment on the continent, Congress could reconsider the Prosper Africa Act that was introduced by Representative Michael McCaul in 2022.<sup>26</sup>

PEPFAR is another program that has enjoyed strong bipartisan support since it was first authorized in 2003. It is also one of the most impactful programs the U.S. has ever implemented, providing life-saving medicines to more than 25 million Africans. Nevertheless, there has been a sharp erosion of support among Republicans who claim the program funds “abortion on demand.”<sup>27</sup> There is also a view that PEPFAR has transcended its original intent and that HIV is no longer an emergency, in part because science is on the brink of producing vaccines that will provide total protection against the virus to young women.<sup>28</sup> While the program has been reauthorized for one year through March 25, 2025, uncertainty persists as to whether Congress will vote to refund PEPFAR and, if so, for how long.<sup>29</sup> In leaving PEPFAR unfunded, the U.S. would lose an invaluable instrument of soft power that continues to make a transformative difference in the lives of millions of people on the continent.

As President-elect Trump assumes office once again in January 2025, the decisions made around the reauthorization of the DFC, the extension of AGOA, and whether to fund PEPFAR will serve as important indicators of the Trump administration’s approach to U.S.-Africa relations.

26 Michael T. McCaul, “Prosper Africa Act,” Pub. L. No. H.R.6455, § house - Foreign Affairs; Ways and Means (2022), <https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/6455>.

27 Dan Diamond, “Lifesaving HIV Program Faces a New Threat: U.S. Abortion Politics,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2023/07/29/pepfar-aids-hiv-abortion-congress/>.

28 Stephanie Nolen, “New Drug Provides Total Protection From H.I.V. in Trial of Young African Women,” *The New York Times*, June 21, 2024, sec. Health, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/21/health/lenacapavir-hiv-prevention-africa.html>.

29 Kellie Moss and Jennifer Kates, “PEPFAR’s Short-Term Reauthorization Sets an Uncertain Course for Its Long-Term Future,” *KFF* (blog), March 27, 2024, <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/pepfars-short-term-reauthorization-sets-an-uncertain-course-for-its-long-term-future/>.



# U.S.-China engagement in Africa: A crossroads

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Since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, China has gradually but steadfastly resumed its economic engagement with Africa.<sup>1</sup> However, this reengagement has taken on new features, the most distinct being the prominence of Chinese investment in acquiring mining and critical mineral assets in Africa. In 2023 alone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was the site of copper-related projects worth almost \$1 billion,<sup>2</sup> a copper mine in Botswana was purchased for nearly \$2 billion,<sup>3</sup> and other large projects related to metals and mining across the continent totaled \$7.9 billion (including lithium mining in Mali and Zimbabwe).<sup>4</sup> Despite these substantial investments, China continues to evaluate areas in Africa where it could further develop its involvement in the mineral sector. During the 2024 China International Mining Conference, experts discussed new opportunities in Madagascar, Guinea, and Mozambique, where mineral resources including graphite, titanium, nickel, cobalt, and tin reserves are relatively underdeveloped and untapped.<sup>5</sup>

China is increasing the procurement of critical minerals for its own economic green transition, which includes the production of batteries, electric vehicles, and the development of renewable energy systems.<sup>6</sup> As a result, clean energy projects in individual African countries are also being pursued by China, in parallel with its growing mining and critical mineral assets. In 2023, \$290 million worth of Chinese loans were used for green-energy projects in Africa—including a hydropower plant in Madagascar, a solar power plant in Burkina Faso, and the electrification of an industrial park in Uganda.<sup>7</sup>

Looking ahead to 2025, the most significant change in China's external geopolitical environment will undoubtedly be the second Trump administration's China policy. While Africa has traditionally not been a priority for the U.S.'s grand strategy, countering China's

1 Laurie Chen and Joe Cash, "China Offers Africa \$51 Billion in Fresh Funding, Promises a Million Jobs," *Reuters*, September 5, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-deepen-industrial-agricultural-trade-investment-ties-with-africa-2024-09-05/>.

2 "Chinese Companies to Invest up to \$7 Billion in Congo Mining Infrastructure," *Reuters*, January 27, 2024, sec. Commodities, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/chinese-invest-up-7-bln-congo-mining-infrastructure-statement-2024-01-27/>.

3 "China's MMG Seals \$1.9 Bln Deal to Buy Khoemacau Copper Mine in Botswana," *Reuters*, November 20, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/deals/chinas-mm-19-bln-deal-buy-khoemacau-copper-mine-botswana-2023-11-21/>.

4 Rachel Savage and Duncan Miriri, "Post-COVID, China Is Back in Africa and Doubling down on Minerals," *Reuters*, May 28, 2024, sec. Commodities, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/post-covid-china-is-back-africa-doubling-down-minerals-2024-05-28/>; Christoph Nedopil, "China Belt Road Initiative BRI Investment Report 2023" (Brisbane: Griffith University, February 5, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.25904/1912/5140>.

5 霍星羽 [Huo Xingyu], "非洲矿业投资机遇值得关注 [African Mining Investment Opportunities are Worth Paying Attention To]," *上海证券报 [Shanghai Securities News]*, October 22, 2024, <https://www.cnstock.com/commonDetail/285460>.

6 Weishen Zeng, "Towards Growth-Driven Environmentalism: The Green Energy Transition and Local State in China," *Energy Research & Social Science* 117 (November 1, 2024): 103726, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2024.103726>.

7 Tom Baxter, "Roundtable: What the China-Africa Forum Means for Clean Energy in Africa," *Dialogue Earth*, October 2, 2024, <https://dialogue.earth/en/energy/roundtable-what-the-china-africa-forum-means-for-clean-energy-in-africa/#:~:text=In%202023%2C%20there%20was%20USD,green%20projects%20to%20take%20shape>.

**FIGURE 41****TRADE BETWEEN AFRICA AND THE U.S. (2010-2024)**

*Trade between the US and Africa has slowed considerably between 2010 and 2024 resulting in African countries creating trade opportunities with other countries*



Note: In millions of dollars. 2024 data does not include the months of November and December.  
Source: The United States Census Bureau.

influence in Africa, especially on strategic and critical mineral supply chains, could emerge as one of Washington's new priorities. If the Trump administration shifts toward the dealmaking approach that China has prioritized in the Global South, it could potentially increase U.S. effectiveness in its competition with China in Africa. President Joe Biden's December trip to Angola in support of the Lobito railway project and potential future U.S. investment in critical minerals points to this direction,<sup>8</sup> though it remains to be seen whether the Trump administration will continue this trend.

If that is indeed the next phase, the U.S.-China great power competition in Africa could ramp up at an unprecedented pace. As China sees Africa as a critical source of raw materials to fuel its new productivity industries, Beijing is likely to enhance its effort to cut deals and protect the resources indispensable for China's economic transition and future.

**While Africa could benefit from the geopolitical competition between U.S. and China, it will require African countries to be particularly diligent and vigilant.**

For Africa, this could be an opportunity that carries significant geopolitical risks. While Africa could benefit from the geopolitical competition between U.S. and China, it will require African countries to be particularly diligent and vigilant over the calculus, risks, and potential retaliations in the event that one of the great powers adopts a punitive approach toward African countries viewed to be working with the other side. There are many countries outside of Africa that are already engaging in this type of decisionmaking process. Singapore is one example of a smaller state maximizing their agency by calculating the pros and cons, costs and benefits of every policy that concerns the great powers. However, even they have found it difficult to continue to hedge their policies, as domestic politics rarely appreciates

8 Shola Lawal, "Biden in Angola: What's behind the Last-Ditch Africa Trip?," *Al Jazeera*, accessed December 19, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/2/biden-in-angola-whats-behind-the-last-ditch-africa-trip>.

continually-shifting foreign policy stances.<sup>9</sup> African countries and their domestic situations could be vulnerable in these rapidly shifting global geopolitics, particularly if they already hold significant debt or receive substantial development aid from either of these countries, offering them less flexibility in their foreign policy options.<sup>10</sup> There is also the possibility that proxy wars between U.S. and China could make their way to Africa, especially if the U.S. and China articulate their support for different political camps.

The diversification of other external partners and the strengthening of collective bargaining powers between like-minded African countries could be key for Africa to maximize its own gains. The European Union has proven to be a steadfast partner across Africa, while India, Turkey, and even Japan and South Korea have also all demonstrated growing interest in working more closely with the continent.<sup>11</sup>

While China has historically chosen not to prioritize influencing domestic politics, human rights, or governance issues in African countries, the U.S. has attempted to leverage its influence on such issues in the past. However, it is expected that the second Trump administration will put little weight on these issues. In the short term, this approach may mitigate the pressures on some African governments by minimizing the conditions placed on U.S. foreign aid or trade with the continent, but in the long run, this could undermine African countries' political and economic futures. As the impact of the U.S.'s changing approach to Africa during the Trump administration's second term is as yet unknown, it is important to consider how China may react to U.S. involvement in Africa. It is expected that African countries will leverage engagement with the great powers for economic gains, but they must also be cautious of how their actions can affect their future stability.

9 Wen Zha, "Leader Security and Hedging in the Era of Great Power Rivalry: Responses of the Philippines and Singapore," *China International Strategy Review* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 2022): 305–19, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-022-00111-4>.

10 Tomás F Husted et al., "U.S. Assistance for sub-Saharan Africa: An Overview," (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, November 7, 2023), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R46368.pdf>; Zainab Usman and Tang Xiaoyang, "How Is China's Economic Transition Affecting Its Relations With Africa?" (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2024), [https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/Usman%20Xiaoyang\\_Africa%20China.pdf](https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/Usman%20Xiaoyang_Africa%20China.pdf).

11 Paul Nantulya, "Africa-India Cooperation Sets Benchmark for Partnership," *Africa Center* (blog), accessed December 27, 2024, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-india-cooperation-benchmark-partnership/>; "Global Gateway: European Commission and African Development Bank Group Unlock New Funding for African Infrastructure Projects," *African Development Bank Group*, January 28, 2024, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/global-gateway-european-commission-and-african-development-bank-group-unlock-new-funding-african-infrastructure-projects-68243>; Shirato Keiichi, "Japan's Strategic Interests in the Global South: Africa," May 21, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japans-strategic-interests-global-south-africa>; "Turkey Is Gaining Ground in Africa," April 9, 2024, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/turkey-influence-africa/>; Tae Yeon Eom, "Why Africa Matters to South Korea's Indo-Pacific Strategy," *Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada* (blog), accessed December 27, 2024, <https://www.asiapacific.ca/publication/why-africa-matters-south-koreas-indo-pacific-strategy>.



## Who we are

For Africa to achieve transformative progress, solutions and policies must come from local sources. Since its launch 15 years ago, AGI has established itself as the preeminent center on African development policy from an African perspective.

Housed within the Global Economy and Development program, AGI scholars partner with a broad network of African think tanks to provide impactful, high-quality, and nonpartisan research and policy guidance on pressing issues impacting the Africa region. AGI focuses its research on five key areas: (1) development financing, (2) trade and regional integration, (3) technology and innovation, (4) jobs and structural transformation, and (5) climate change. Underscoring these five main pillars are three cross-cutting themes that are inter-connected and relevant to all our research: governance, gender, and youth.

## Our work & approach

We work with African policymakers, regional leaders, U.S. policymakers, multilateral institutions, civil society, and other key stakeholders to help inform new policies and models for inclusive and sustainable growth in Africa. Our approach has three main themes:

- Focus on rigorous economic research. We provide high-quality, independent research to inform policy. Our interdisciplinary team of experts and scholars draws on the core strengths of Brookings—authoritative and nonpartisan research as well as a depth of practical expertise—to establish long-term strategies for economic growth and innovative policies for development in Africa.
- Elevate African voices. We bring together African scholars, policymakers, and subject matter experts to offer insights into the unique and diverse challenges faced by African countries and propose new pathways for development. We see the elevation of African voices in global policy debate and U.S.-Africa relations as a key element to creating effective and transformative policies that will enable Africa to sustainably and inclusively converge with the rest of the world, particularly in terms of standards of living, opportunity, and GDP per capita income.
- Strengthen partner capacity. We collaborate and co-generate research with a broad network of African scholars and more than 24 leading think tanks across Africa. Our collaboration seeks to raise the profile of African think tanks as independent and credible research centers capable of providing robust and rigorous academic evidence to inform policy decisions. AGI leverages this network to disseminate research findings for maximum policy uptake and to ensure its research priorities are demand-driven and informed by the needs of in-country decisionmakers.

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