

THE LEADERS

June 2026

**Africa's Youth
Dividend:
A Catalyst for Global
Growth**

**Trade Before Aid:
Africa's New
Diplomatic Strategy**



Luxury Travel

**The Continent's Rising Elite
Tourism Destinations**



Aerial View of Islamabad Interchange Pakistan

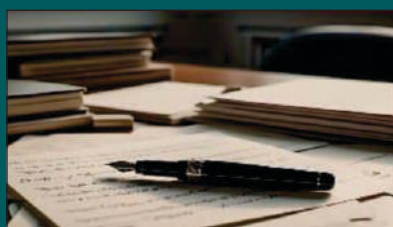
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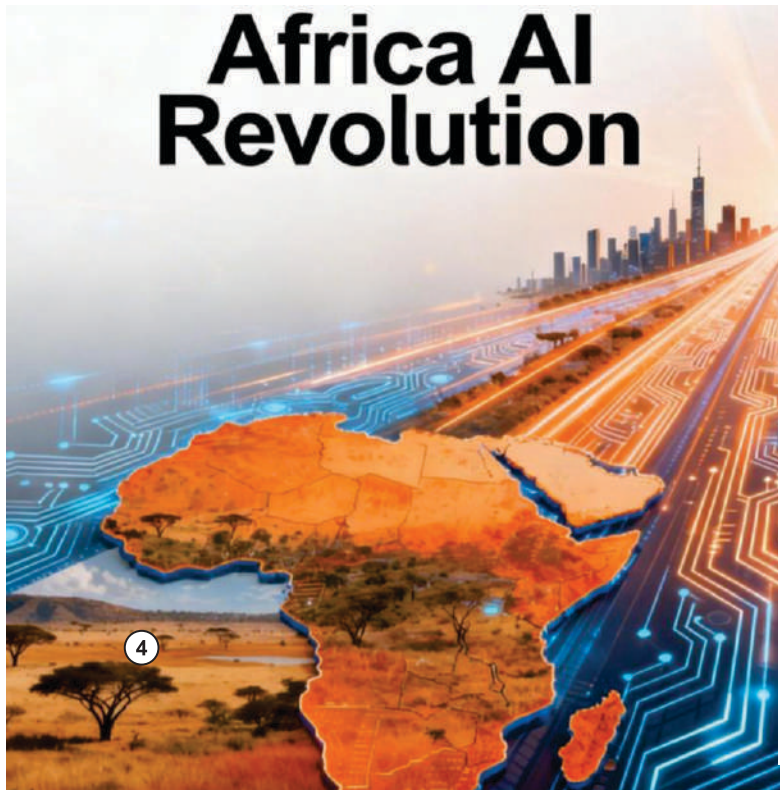
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06

Brazil Expands Humanitarian Push for Sudan Amid Crisis

08

South Africa Strengthens Regional Leadership Through SADC Chairship

12

Cover Story: Luxury Africa: The Continent's Rising Elite Tourism Destinations

17

Presenting The Leaders Magazine to Key Stakeholders

28

Pakistan's New Diplomatic Balancing Act Reshapes Global Alliances



Director: Prince Shahbaz

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From the Director

Welcome to the June 2026 Issue of The Leaders

As we present this latest edition of The Leaders, we do so at a time when the world continues to undergo profound transformation politically, economically, technologically and diplomatically.

In this issue, we focus on the evolving role of diplomacy, leadership and global cooperation in shaping a rapidly changing international landscape. From Africa's growing influence in economic diplomacy to the expanding conversations around artificial intelligence, trade partnerships, geopolitical shifts and international governance, this edition reflects the importance of strategic dialogue and visionary leadership in today's interconnected world.

South Africa continues to occupy a unique position globally — balancing relationships across East and West while championing multilateralism, peace, development and African unity. As the country strengthens its role within BRICS, the African Union and the G20 framework, its diplomatic voice remains increasingly significant on matters affecting both the continent and the Global South.

This issue also highlights Africa's rising profile in tourism, innovation, infrastructure and cultural diplomacy, showcasing a continent that is not only rich in resources and heritage, but equally rich in ambition, resilience and opportunity.

At The Leaders, our mission remains to build bridges between nations, institutions, diplomats, business leaders and communities through meaningful storytelling and constructive engagement. We are honoured to continue presenting conversations that inspire leadership, collaboration and global understanding.

I would like to extend sincere appreciation to our diplomatic partners, contributors, readers and supporters who continue to believe in the vision of this publication. Your encouragement and partnership continue to drive our work forward.

We trust that this edition will inform, inspire and contribute positively to ongoing conversations about Africa's place in the future of global affairs.

Yours in leadership,

Director's Note

Brazil Expands Humanitarian Push for Sudan Amid Crisis



In a significant diplomatic step, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva announced that Brazil will intensify its humanitarian and diplomatic engagement in Sudan during upcoming discussions at the United Nations, positioning the country as a stronger advocate for peace efforts in Africa. The initiative, aimed at supporting mediation and civilian protection, has been welcomed by humanitarian organizations and regional leaders, while drawing skepticism from some Western analysts over its potential impact. Lula cited the worsening humanitarian catastrophe in Sudan, where millions have been displaced since fighting erupted in April 2023 between rival military factions, as a key reason for Brazil's increased involvement. "The international community cannot remain indifferent while innocent civilians continue to suffer," Lula stated during a press briefing in Brasília, calling for an immediate ceasefire, expanded humanitarian corridors, and renewed negotiations between the warring parties. Sudanese civil society groups praised Brazil's stance, describing it as an important show of solidarity from the Global South and a commitment to multilateral diplomacy. Brazil has also pledged additional humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies, food aid, and technical support for refugee relief programmes operating in neighbouring countries. However, analysts warn that ongoing instability and competing international interests may complicate efforts to secure lasting peace. As discussions continue ahead of the next UN peace summit, Brazil's diplomatic push reflects growing pressure on global powers to address one of Africa's most devastating humanitarian crises, even as challenges on the ground remain severe.



Africa's Youth Dividend: A Catalyst for Global Growth

Africa's rapidly growing youth population presents one of the greatest opportunities for global economic and social transformation in the 21st century. With more than 60 percent of the continent's population under the age of 25, the urgency to invest in education, innovation, and job creation has never been greater. Across the continent, young Africans are driving change through entrepreneurship, technology, and creative industries. From fintech startups in Lagos to innovation hubs in Nairobi and expanding digital economies in Johannesburg, Africa's youth are reshaping perceptions of the continent's future. Yet unemployment, inequality, and limited access to quality education continue to threaten this immense potential. Governments and the private sector must work together to create sustainable opportunities for young people. Investment in skills development, infrastructure, and technology could unlock unprecedented economic growth while reducing poverty and instability. Empowering youth participation in

governance and decision-making is equally essential to building inclusive societies. The international community also has a significant role to play. Strategic partnerships, increased investment, and fair trade policies can help accelerate Africa's development trajectory while contributing to global prosperity.

Grassroots movements and community initiatives continue to inspire hope. Young leaders across Africa are championing social change, climate action, and innovation, proving that the continent's future lies in the hands of its energetic youth population.

As African leaders confront economic pressures and global uncertainty, the world watches with optimism and expectation.

Africa's youth dividend is not merely a continental opportunity—it is a catalyst for global growth. The moment to invest in Africa's future is now.



Pakistan Accelerates Economic Recovery Through New Partnerships

The government of Pakistan is continuing to strengthen its economic recovery efforts through new international partnerships, financial reforms, and digital development initiatives that are drawing growing global attention. This week, Pakistan marked a historic milestone with the launch of its first-ever Panda Bond initiative in China, giving the country access to Chinese capital markets for the first time. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb described the move as an important step toward broadening Pakistan's investment opportunities and strengthening financial stability. The development comes as Pakistan continues to record encouraging economic indicators, including easing inflation, improved investor confidence, and stronger foreign exchange support. The International Monetary Fund recently approved access to more than \$1.3 billion in funding support for Pakistan, backing the country's ongoing reform

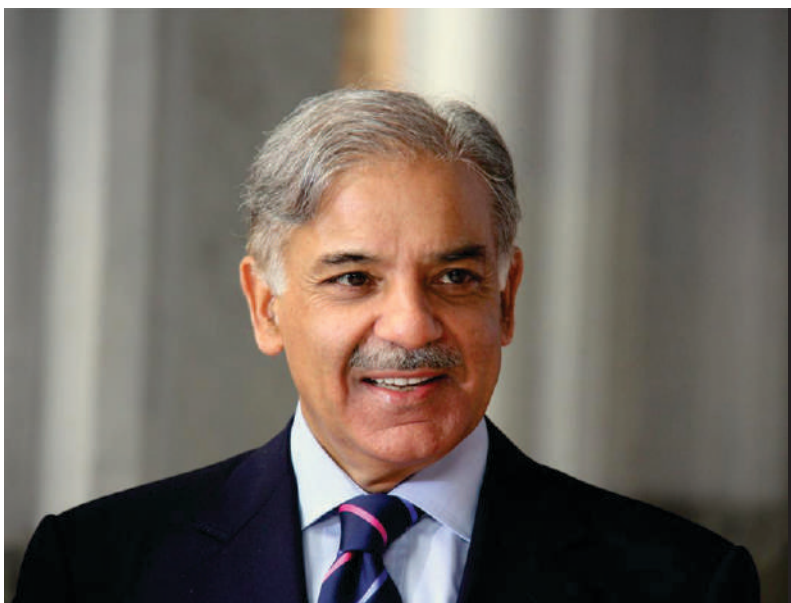


programme and macroeconomic stability measures.

At the same time, the administration of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is placing major focus on digital transformation and regional connectivity. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar recently highlighted Pakistan's ambition to become a regional hub for innovation, technology, and smart infrastructure under the expanding China-Pakistan cooperation framework.

Government-backed initiatives such as "Uraan Pakistan," the country's long-term economic transformation plan, are also supporting reforms in infrastructure, digital finance, trade, and investment. Analysts say these efforts are helping position Pakistan as an emerging market with renewed regional importance and stronger economic prospects.

With continued international engagement, investment-focused diplomacy, and economic reforms, Pakistan is aiming to build a more resilient and modern economy while strengthening its role in regional development and global trade.



Pakistan Expands Regional Cooperation and Investment Opportunities

The government of Pakistan is continuing efforts to strengthen regional cooperation and attract international investment as part of its broader economic recovery strategy. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently emphasised the importance of trade partnerships, infrastructure development, and digital innovation in creating new opportunities for economic growth and job creation across the country. Pakistan has also been working closely with regional partners to improve energy cooperation, transport connectivity, and foreign investment. Officials say these initiatives are designed to boost economic stability while enhancing Pakistan's position as an important trade link between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

South Africa SADC

South Africa Strengthens Regional Leadership Through SADC Chairship



The Republic of South Africa is increasingly taking centre stage in regional diplomacy and development following its assumption of the interim chairship of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The regional bloc appointed South Africa to lead SADC until August 2026 after Madagascar stepped down from the position due to internal political developments. In accordance with SADC treaty provisions, South Africa, as the incoming deputy chair, assumed interim

leadership responsibilities under President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Since taking over the chairship, South Africa has intensified preparations for the 46th SADC Summit while hosting a series of strategic regional meetings and ministerial engagements. The country has already convened sessions focusing on trade, industrialisation, energy transition, public health coordination, and agricultural transformation as part of SADC's broader regional development agenda.

South Africa's leadership is unfolding under the regional theme: "Advancing Industrialisation, Agricultural Transformation, and Energy Transition for a Resilient SADC." The theme reflects growing efforts by member states to strengthen economic resilience, improve food security, modernise infrastructure, and accelerate sustainable energy development across Southern Africa.

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) has also begun coordinating interdepartmental workshops and sectoral consultations to ensure South Africa's tenure delivers practical outcomes for the region. Government officials have highlighted the importance of strengthening regional institutions, enhancing infrastructure connectivity, and fostering inclusive economic growth that benefits citizens across Southern Africa.

South Africa Eyes Stronger Regional Trade During SADC Chairship



South Africa's leadership of the Southern African Development Community is expected to place renewed emphasis on regional trade integration and economic cooperation as Southern African countries seek to unlock growth opportunities across the continent. As interim chair of SADC, President Cyril Ramaphosa has reiterated the importance of strengthening regional value chains, boosting infrastructure development, and accelerating industrialisation among member states. Analysts believe South Africa's tenure could help create stronger

partnerships in sectors such as mining, agriculture, manufacturing, transport, and renewable energy.

The chairship comes at a time when African countries are increasingly looking toward regional markets to drive economic expansion under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). SADC leaders have stressed the need for improved border management systems, expanded rail and port infrastructure, and greater investment in energy security to support trade across the region.

South Africa is also expected to use its chairship to promote youth empowerment, digital innovation, and skills development as part of broader efforts to build inclusive economies within Southern Africa. Government officials say regional cooperation remains critical in responding to global economic uncertainty and ensuring long-term development for member states.

The upcoming SADC Summit in eThekweni is anticipated to provide further direction on regional priorities and strengthen collaboration among Southern African nations on economic and diplomatic matters.



China Strengthens Global Trade and Diplomatic Relations

China has intensified its global diplomatic and economic engagements this week following high-level talks between Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Donald Trump in Beijing. The discussions focused on trade cooperation, artificial intelligence, regional security, and maintaining stability in the Strait of Hormuz amid ongoing Middle East tensions. China also reaffirmed its commitment to stronger economic partnerships with African countries through expanded tariff-free trade policies.

Global Leaders Push for Faster Climate Action Amid Rising Temperatures

Countries around the world have renewed calls for urgent climate action following reports that 2026 could become one of the hottest years ever recorded. Scientists warned that rising temperatures are accelerating droughts, floods, and wildfires across several regions. Environmental groups also urged governments to increase investments in renewable energy and strengthen protections for forests and endangered ecosystems during ongoing international climate discussions.



Sudan Peace Talks Face Renewed Pressure Amid Escalating Violence



Sudan's ongoing conflict continues to deepen as international mediators intensify efforts to push rival factions toward a ceasefire agreement amid worsening humanitarian conditions across the country. According to recent United Nations assessments, millions of civilians remain displaced, while growing insecurity and economic collapse are driving urgent calls for stronger diplomatic intervention. Clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces have persisted in several regions, particularly in Darfur and Khartoum, where civilians continue to face airstrikes, shortages of food and medicine, and widespread destruction of infrastructure. Aid organizations warn that hospitals are overwhelmed, schools remain closed, and many communities are inaccessible due to ongoing fighting. Regional and international leaders have renewed appeals for dialogue, stressing that continued instability threatens not only Sudan's future but also the wider Horn of Africa region. The African Union and United Nations have urged both sides to commit to humanitarian corridors and respect international law to allow relief efforts to reach vulnerable populations. Humanitarian agencies say funding shortages are hampering emergency operations as the number of people requiring assistance rises sharply. Refugee flows into neighbouring countries have also placed additional pressure on already strained resources and support systems. Civil society groups and peace advocates insist that lasting stability can only be achieved through inclusive negotiations and accountability measures. "Sudan's people deserve peace, dignity, and security," said activist Mariam Idris during a regional peace forum. "The international community must remain engaged until a sustainable solution is found." Observers warn that without urgent progress toward peace and expanded humanitarian support, Sudan's crisis could further destabilize the region and prolong the suffering of millions caught in the conflict.



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Luxury Africa: The Continent's Rising Elite Tourism Destinations

Africa is entering a new era of luxury tourism. Once viewed primarily through the lens of safari adventures and backpacking routes, the continent is now redefining global luxury travel with exclusive resorts, private island retreats, world-class hospitality, cultural authenticity, and breathtaking natural beauty.

From the white-sand beaches of Zanzibar to the deserts of Namibia and the cosmopolitan elegance of Cape Town, Africa has become a preferred destination for affluent travellers seeking experiences that combine privacy, sustainability, and exclusivity.

Industry analysts report that high-net-worth travellers are increasingly turning toward destinations that offer more than five-star accommodation. Today's luxury traveller seeks meaning, culture, wellness, and unforgettable experiences. Africa delivers all of these in abundance. The continent's appeal lies not only in its landscapes but also in its ability to offer deeply personalised travel experiences that remain largely untouched by mass tourism.

1. RWANDA

Luxury Conservation Tourism

Rwanda has emerged as one of Africa's most sophisticated luxury destinations. Known globally for its mountain gorilla experiences, the country attracts high-net-worth travellers seeking exclusive, meaningful journeys.

High-end lodges near Volcanoes National Park offer once-in-a-lifetime experiences that blend sustainability, community impact and impeccable service. Kigali's modern luxury hotels and serene retreats by Lake Kivu complete Rwanda's premium travel offering.



Must Do: Gorilla trekking, Volcanoes National Park, luxury retreats, cultural experiences.



**EXCLUSIVE
EXPERIENCES**



**WORLD-CLASS
HOSPITALITY**



**AUTHENTIC
CULTURE**



**SUSTAINABLE
LUXURY**

2. ZANZIBAR

The Indian Ocean's Exotic Escape

Zanzibar is synonymous with tropical luxury. White-sand beaches, turquoise waters and rich Swahili heritage make it a favourite among elite travellers.

From private villas and overwater bungalows to historic Stone Town experiences, Zanzibar offers barefeet luxury with world-class comfort. The island's exclusive resorts focus on privacy, wellness and bespoke experiences.



Must Do: Private beach dinners, dhow cruises, spice tours, luxury island retreats.



3. CAPE TOWN

Africa's Luxury Capital

Framed by Table Mountain and the Atlantic Ocean, Cape Town is a cosmopolitan gem offering natural beauty, fine dining, art, fashion and world-class hospitality.

Luxury travellers are drawn to its boutique hotels, private wine estates, yacht experiences and vibrant culture. The nearby Winelands and coastal routes add even more prestige to this world-class destination.



Must Do: Private wine tastings, yacht charters, Table Mountain experiences, fine dining.



4. NAMIBIA

Desert Luxury and Untouched Wilderness

Namibia offers one of Africa's most unique luxury travel experiences. Vast deserts, dramatic dunes and remote landscapes create a sense of exclusivity like no other.

Ultra-luxury eco-lodges provide private experiences in breathtaking locations such as Sossusvlei and the Skeleton Coast. Sustainability and conservation are at the heart of Namibia's luxury tourism.



Must Do: Scenic flights, desert safaris, Sossusvlei dunes, coastal adventures.



5. BOTSWANA

The Gold Standard of Safari Luxury

Botswana sets the benchmark for luxury safari experiences. The Okavango Delta, private reserves and abundant wildlife make it a top choice for discerning travellers.

Exclusive camps and lodges offer unparalleled privacy, personalised service and unforgettable wildlife encounters.



Must Do: Okavango Delta safaris, helicopter tours, luxury tented camps.



6. MOROCCO

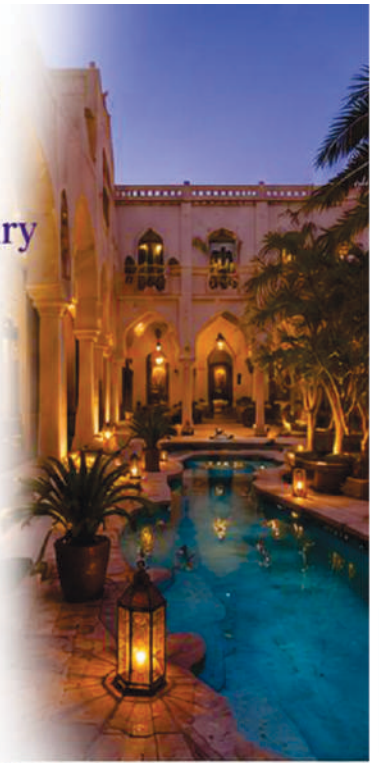
Timeless Elegance Meets Modern Luxury

Morocco blends centuries-old culture with modern sophistication. From the vibrant souks of Marrakech to the serene Atlas Mountains and Sahara Desert, Morocco offers diverse luxury experiences.

Lavish riads, designer hotels, spa retreats and private desert camps attract travellers seeking culture, elegance and adventure.



Must Do: Private desert experiences, riad stays, fine dining, shopping in Marrakech.



WHY THE WEALTHY ARE CHOOSING AFRICA

Today's luxury traveller seeks more than comfort — they seek meaning, authenticity and impact. Africa offers rare beauty, rich culture, privacy and sustainable luxury experiences that leave a lasting legacy.



EXCLUSIVITY

Low-volume, high-value experiences in pristine locations.



AUTHENTICITY

Rich cultures, warm hospitality and transformative journeys.



SUSTAINABILITY

Luxury that supports conservation and local communities.



DIVERSITY

From beaches and deserts to mountains and cities — Africa has it all.



CONNECTION

Deep, meaningful experiences that stay with you forever.

“Africa is no longer just a destination. It is an experience of a lifetime.”



The Glory of Bhong,
Architecture, Leadership, and Progress
By
Zahid Nisaar



Ex.Federal Minister
Sardar Rais Munir Ahmed advocate

Bhong, a historic town in the last tehsil of Sadiqabad, Punjab, lies along the serene banks of the Indus River. Known for its fertile lands, green fields, and orchards, the town's true identity is the magnificent Bhong Mosque.

The Bhong Mosque is a remarkable architectural masterpiece, admired for its intricate artwork, beautiful tilework, vibrant colors, and fine wood craftsmanship. Its peaceful and spiritual atmosphere offers a sense of tranquility to visitors. The mosque has attracted not only locals but also national leaders and international dignitaries, and it has been honored with the prestigious Aga Khan Award for its magnificence. In the political landscape of Bhong, a prominent name is that of former Federal Minister Sardar Rais Munir Ahmed Advocate, who is a renowned political leader of the region and also the custodian of the Grand Bhong Mosque. During his tenure in office, and even beyond, he has taken revolutionary steps for the development of this once neglected region. Under his leadership, eighteen major development projects were completed, playing a significant role in transforming the area. A particularly noteworthy aspect is that the land required for all these mega projects was generously provided free of cost from his personal property, an example rarely seen across Punjab. His contributions extend beyond the local level to the national arena, where he demonstrated his capabilities by simultaneously holding seven ministerial portfolios, including tourism, culture, and youth affairs.

As part of continued efforts to promote tourism, the Bhong Interchange project stands as a major milestone and is now nearing completion. This development will ensure faster access to the Bhong Mosque, boosting tourism, supporting business growth, and strengthening the region's economy.



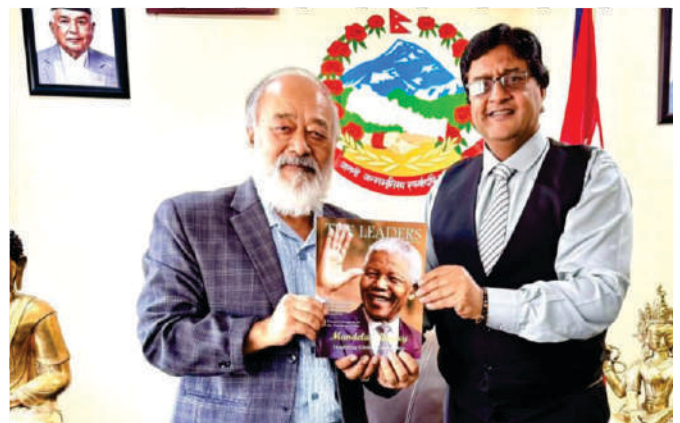
Presenting The Leaders Magazine

Prince Shahbaz, Director of The Leaders Magazine, presented copies of the magazine to Ambassadors (Embassy Representatives) of: Pakistan, Algeria, Cyprus, Mauritius, The Gambia, Nicaragua, Venezuela, United Arab Emirates, Eswatini, Palestine, Nepal, Romania, Somalia, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Mauritania, Dominican Republic, Haiti



Presenting The Leaders Magazine

Prince Shahbaz, Director of The Leaders Magazine, presented copies to various Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Mission Representatives in a move aimed at strengthening relations

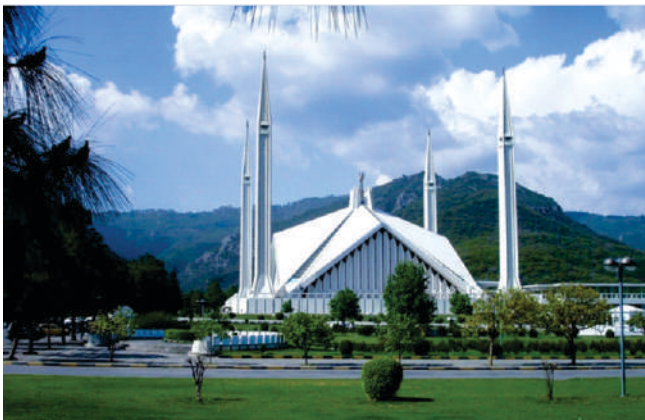




Parliament House Islamabad Pakistan



Supreme Court Islamabad Pakistan



Faisal Mosque Islamabad Pakistan



The Centaurs Islamabad Pakistan



Africa Caught in the Middle: The Global Ripple Effects of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

More than two years after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, the conflict continues to reshape the global economy, diplomacy and international security landscape. While the fighting remains centred in Eastern Europe, its consequences have extended far beyond the battlefield — with Africa emerging as one of the regions most deeply affected by the global ripple effects. From rising food prices and fertiliser shortages to fuel inflation and shifting geopolitical alliances, African economies and governments have been forced to navigate an increasingly complex international environment.

Food Security Under Pressure

One of the war's most immediate impacts on Africa has been the disruption of global food supply chains. Russia and Ukraine are among the world's largest exporters of wheat, sunflower oil and grain products. Many African countries rely heavily on imports from the Black Sea region to meet domestic food demands. The interruption of shipping routes, sanctions and instability in agricultural exports caused global food prices to surge, placing enormous pressure on African economies already struggling with inflation and climate-related challenges. Countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Somalia and Nigeria experienced increased food insecurity as bread, cooking oil and grain prices rose.

Fertiliser and Agricultural Challenges.

The conflict has also disrupted fertiliser supply chains critical to African agriculture. Russia is a major global supplier of fertilisers and agricultural chemicals, and restrictions on exports contributed to shortages and rising costs across the continent. Higher fertiliser prices have directly affected African farmers, reducing agricultural productivity and increasing food production costs. For many governments, this has reinforced the urgent need to strengthen local agricultural industries, improve regional food systems and reduce dependence on imported commodities. Several African nations are now investing more heavily in domestic fertiliser production, agricultural innovation and food security strategies aimed at long-term resilience.

Rising Energy Costs

Global energy markets were also significantly affected by the war. Oil and gas prices rose sharply during the early stages of the conflict, creating economic strain for African countries dependent on imported fuel. Transport costs, electricity generation and industrial production became more expensive, contributing to inflation across multiple sectors. In countries already facing economic challenges, the rising cost of fuel placed additional pressure on households and businesses.

At the same time, some African energy-producing nations benefited from increased global demand for alternative suppliers. Countries rich in natural gas and oil resources have attracted growing international interest as Europe and other regions seek to diversify energy partnerships away from Russia.

Africa's Non-Aligned Diplomatic Position

Diplomatically, the Russia-Ukraine conflict exposed Africa's increasingly independent foreign policy approach. Rather than fully aligning with either Western powers or Russia, many African governments adopted non-aligned positions focused on dialogue, peace and strategic neutrality. At the United Nations, voting patterns among African states reflected diverse national interests and diplomatic calculations. Several governments argued that Africa should avoid becoming entangled in geopolitical rivalries between major powers. South Africa, in particular, faced international scrutiny over its neutral stance and continued engagement with both Russia and Western nations. Pretoria maintained that peaceful negotiation and diplomacy remain the best path toward resolving the conflict.

Many African leaders have also criticised what they perceive as unequal international attention toward global conflicts, arguing that crises affecting Africa often receive far less urgency from the international community.

BRICS and Shifting Global Power Dynamics.

The war has also accelerated discussions around the role of BRICS — the bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — in shaping a more multipolar world order. As geopolitical tensions between Russia and Western countries intensified, BRICS gained increased visibility as an alternative platform for economic and political cooperation. For Africa, the expansion of BRICS partnerships presents both opportunities and challenges. Supporters argue that stronger South-South cooperation could increase investment, infrastructure development and trade opportunities across the continent. Critics, however, caution that Africa must carefully balance relations with all global powers while protecting its strategic interests. The conflict has ultimately highlighted Africa's growing diplomatic significance in global affairs. As international alliances evolve, African nations are increasingly asserting independent voices on issues of security, trade and global governance.

A Turning Point for African Strategy

The Russia-Ukraine war has demonstrated how interconnected the modern world has become. A conflict thousands of kilometres away has directly influenced African food systems, energy markets, diplomacy and economic stability. For many African policymakers, the crisis has reinforced the importance of self-sufficiency, regional integration and diversified global partnerships.



The Middle East Recalibrates: Diplomacy, Conflict and New Alliances



The Middle East in 2026 stands at a critical diplomatic crossroads. Longstanding conflicts, shifting alliances and growing geopolitical competition are reshaping the region's political landscape at an extraordinary pace. From renewed tensions surrounding Iran to evolving Gulf diplomacy and the ongoing Palestine-Israel crisis, regional powers are recalibrating their strategies in an increasingly uncertain global environment. At the same time, the Middle East's relationship with Africa is deepening through trade, energy cooperation, infrastructure investment and strategic diplomacy — creating new opportunities and challenges for both regions.

Palestine-Israel: Diplomacy Under Pressure

The Palestine-Israel conflict remains one of the most defining issues shaping Middle Eastern diplomacy in 2026. International pressure for renewed peace negotiations has intensified amid continued humanitarian concerns in Gaza and ongoing tensions in the West Bank. The United Nations Security Council continues to debate pathways toward de-escalation and a two-state framework. Several Arab nations have attempted to balance support for Palestinian statehood while also maintaining strategic economic and security partnerships with Western

countries and Israel. Gulf states, particularly those involved in the Abraham Accords, continue navigating delicate domestic and regional sensitivities surrounding relations with Israel. Analysts suggest that future regional normalisation efforts may increasingly depend on meaningful progress toward Palestinian statehood and broader regional stability.

Gulf Diplomacy and Regional Repositioning

The Gulf states are undergoing a major strategic transformation. Countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are increasingly asserting independent foreign policies focused on economic diversification, security partnerships and geopolitical influence. Recent regional tensions involving Iran have accelerated security cooperation among Gulf nations while simultaneously exposing divisions over how to respond to escalating conflict. Gulf governments have sought to avoid being drawn into direct confrontation while strengthening defensive capabilities and diplomatic channels.

The United Arab Emirates, in particular, has emerged as a highly influential regional actor pursuing economic liberalisation, technological investment and expanded international partnerships.

Reports of growing security coordination between the UAE and Israel reflect broader shifts in Middle Eastern alliances. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia continues positioning itself as a regional diplomatic heavyweight through mediation efforts, energy diplomacy and Vision 2030 economic reforms aimed at transforming the kingdom into a global investment hub.

Iran and the Region's Security Balance

Iran remains central to the region's geopolitical calculations. Tensions involving Iran, Israel and Western powers have significantly influenced diplomatic relations throughout the Middle East in 2026. Concerns over maritime security, missile activity and regional proxy dynamics continue to shape international negotiations. The Gulf states remain cautious about the possibility of broader regional instability and potential disruption to vital shipping routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategically important energy corridors. Despite heightened tensions, diplomatic efforts continue behind the scenes as regional and international actors seek to prevent wider conflict. Countries including Qatar, Türkiye and Oman have maintained active mediation roles aimed at reducing escalation and preserving regional stability.



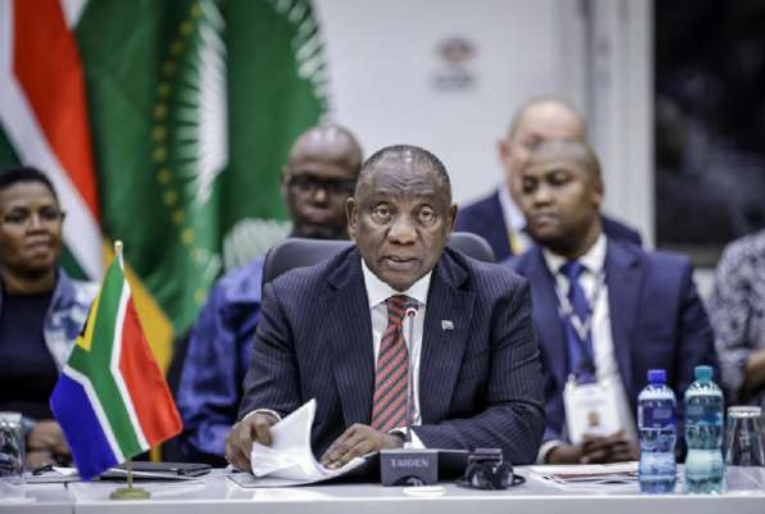
Africa and the Middle East: A Growing Strategic Partnership.

Beyond conflict and security, Africa-Middle East cooperation is rapidly expanding. Gulf states are increasingly investing across Africa in sectors such as renewable energy, agriculture, logistics, infrastructure, mining and digital technology. African governments view Middle Eastern partnerships as important sources of investment and trade diversification, while Gulf countries see Africa as a strategic frontier for economic expansion and food security cooperation. The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Türkiye have significantly increased diplomatic and commercial engagement across the African continent over the past decade. Ports, logistics corridors and energy projects have become central pillars of this relationship. South Africa, Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia and Nigeria are among the African countries playing increasingly important roles in Middle Eastern diplomacy and trade cooperation. At the same time, BRICS expansion — which now includes several Middle Eastern states — is creating new platforms for South-South engagement and geopolitical collaboration.

A Region in Transition:

The Middle East of 2026 is defined not only by conflict, but also by recalibration. Old alliances are shifting, new partnerships are emerging and diplomacy is becoming increasingly tied to economics, technology, energy and strategic security. For Africa, these changes present both opportunities and responsibilities. As cooperation with the Middle East deepens, African nations are becoming more influential participants in a rapidly evolving global diplomatic landscape. The coming years may determine whether the region moves toward greater stability and economic integration — or enters a new era of geopolitical fragmentation. One reality, however, is increasingly clear: the Middle East's diplomatic transformation will continue shaping global politics far beyond the region itself.





Balancing East and West: South Africa's Delicate Foreign Policy Path

In an increasingly divided global environment marked by geopolitical rivalry, economic uncertainty and shifting alliances, South Africa continues to navigate a complex diplomatic path. Positioned as one of Africa's most influential political and economic powers, the country is balancing relations with major global actors while attempting to preserve its longstanding principles of sovereignty, multilateralism and non-alignment.

As tensions deepen between Western powers, China and Russia, South Africa's foreign policy choices are attracting growing international attention. Pretoria's approach reflects both its strategic interests and its broader ambition to strengthen Africa's voice within global governance structures.

Navigating Relations with the United States, China and the European Union

South Africa maintains important diplomatic and economic relationships with the United States, China and the European Union — each representing critical partners in trade, investment and development cooperation.

The United States remains a major trading partner and strategic collaborator in areas such as health, education, energy and security. However, relations between Pretoria and Washington have occasionally experienced strain over differing positions on global conflicts, sanctions and geopolitical alignment. At the same time, China has become South Africa's largest bilateral trading partner.

Cooperation between the two countries continues to expand through infrastructure development, renewable energy projects, technology partnerships and BRICS collaboration. Beijing's growing economic presence in South Africa reflects broader Chinese engagement across the African continent. The European Union also remains a key partner, particularly in climate finance, green industrialisation and trade cooperation.

South Africa's Just Energy Transition Partnership with several European countries has positioned the country as an important player in global climate diplomacy. Rather than choosing between competing global powers, South Africa has consistently advocated for strategic balance and independent decision-making. Government officials continue emphasising that the country's foreign policy is guided by national interests rather than geopolitical pressure.

BRICS and the Push for a Multipolar World.

South Africa's participation in BRICS has become increasingly significant as the bloc expands its global influence. Alongside Brazil, Russia, India and China, South Africa has supported calls for reform of international financial institutions and greater representation for developing countries in global decision-making structures.

BRICS cooperation has also opened new opportunities in trade, investment, development financing and technology partnerships. South Africa views the grouping as an important platform for advancing the interests of the Global South and reducing dependence on traditional Western-dominated systems.

South Africa and ICJ Diplomacy

One of the most internationally visible aspects of South Africa's foreign policy in recent years has been its legal and diplomatic engagement at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). South Africa's decision to bring legal proceedings concerning the humanitarian situation in Gaza elevated the country's profile within global diplomacy. The move was praised by supporters as a demonstration of South Africa's commitment to international law, human rights and historical justice.

The government has defended its position as consistent with the country's constitutional values and anti-apartheid legacy. Critics, however, argued that the decision risked creating diplomatic tensions with some Western partners.

Regardless of differing opinions, South Africa's ICJ diplomacy demonstrated Pretoria's willingness to use international legal institutions as instruments of foreign policy and moral advocacy.

Leadership within the African Union

South Africa continues to play a major leadership role within the African Union (AU), supporting initiatives focused on peacebuilding, economic integration, governance reform and continental development.

Pretoria remains a strong advocate for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), viewing regional integration as essential for Africa's long-term economic growth and competitiveness.

The country has also contributed to peacekeeping, mediation and conflict resolution efforts across various parts of the continent. South African diplomacy frequently emphasises African solutions to African challenges, particularly regarding security and political stability.

As global competition for influence in Africa intensifies, South Africa's leadership within the AU carries increasing strategic importance.

G20 Responsibilities and Global Expectations

South Africa's growing diplomatic influence is also reflected in its responsibilities within the G20 framework. As Africa seeks stronger representation in global economic governance, South Africa continues advocating for issues affecting developing economies including debt sustainability, food security, climate financing and equitable development. The country's participation in G20 discussions has positioned it as a bridge between developed and developing economies. Pretoria has consistently called for reforms to international financial institutions to better reflect the realities of emerging markets and African economies. South Africa's diplomatic challenge lies in balancing domestic economic pressures with growing international expectations. High unemployment, energy instability and slow economic growth continue to shape the country's foreign policy priorities.

A Foreign Policy Under Pressure

South Africa's foreign policy is increasingly being tested by global rivalries, economic competition and shifting alliances. Yet Pretoria continues attempting to maintain an independent diplomatic course rooted in dialogue, multilateral cooperation and African solidarity.

The country's leaders argue that neutrality should not be mistaken for weakness or indecision. Instead, South Africa presents its approach as a commitment to diplomacy over confrontation and engagement over division.

As the international system becomes more fragmented, South Africa's ability to balance relationships across East and West while protecting its national interests may ultimately define its role in the future global order.

Whether navigating BRICS expansion, climate diplomacy, African integration or geopolitical tensions, South Africa remains one of the continent's most influential diplomatic voices — operating under increasing pressure, but also increasing relevance.



Why Africa Deserves Permanent Representation at the UN Security Council

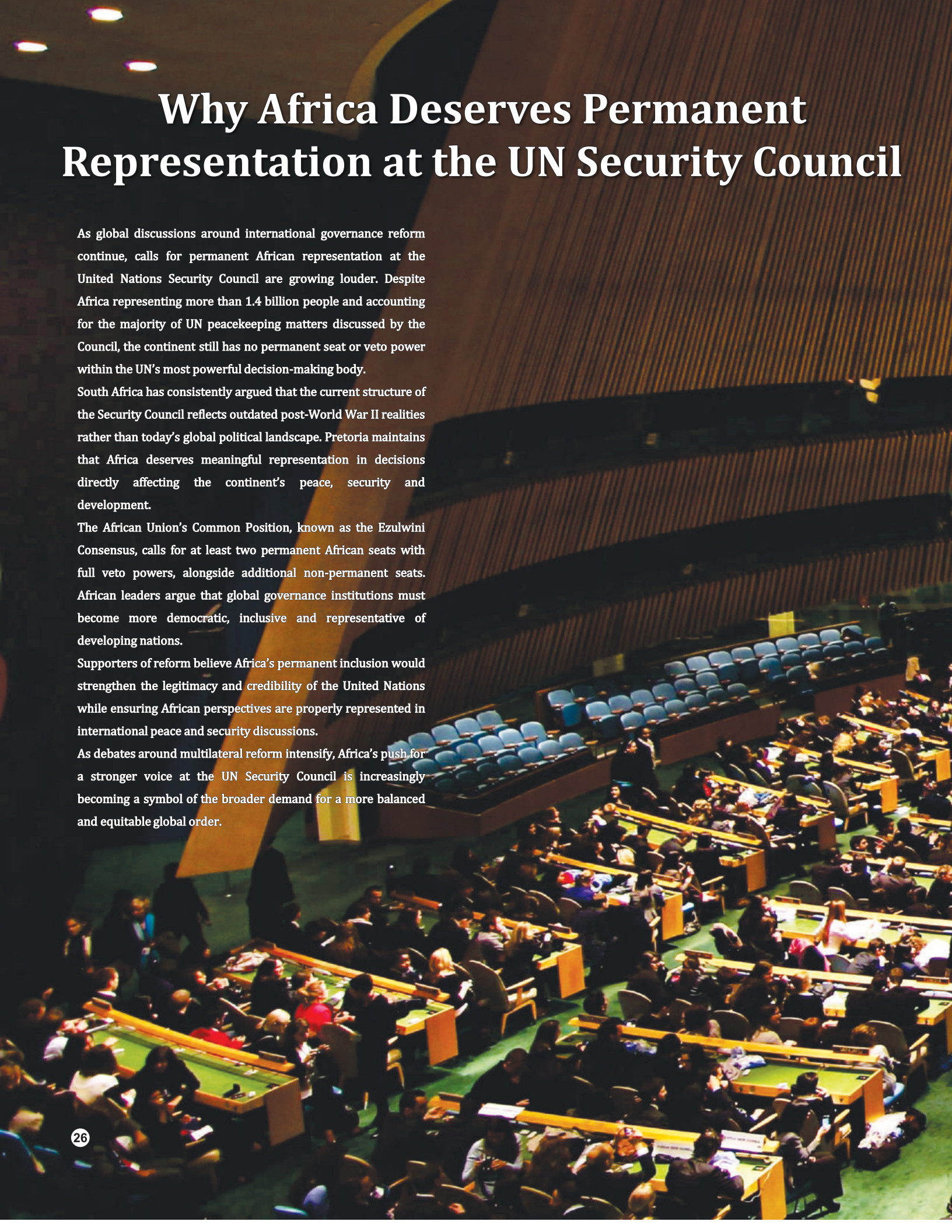
As global discussions around international governance reform continue, calls for permanent African representation at the United Nations Security Council are growing louder. Despite Africa representing more than 1.4 billion people and accounting for the majority of UN peacekeeping matters discussed by the Council, the continent still has no permanent seat or veto power within the UN's most powerful decision-making body.

South Africa has consistently argued that the current structure of the Security Council reflects outdated post-World War II realities rather than today's global political landscape. Pretoria maintains that Africa deserves meaningful representation in decisions directly affecting the continent's peace, security and development.

The African Union's Common Position, known as the Ezulwini Consensus, calls for at least two permanent African seats with full veto powers, alongside additional non-permanent seats. African leaders argue that global governance institutions must become more democratic, inclusive and representative of developing nations.

Supporters of reform believe Africa's permanent inclusion would strengthen the legitimacy and credibility of the United Nations while ensuring African perspectives are properly represented in international peace and security discussions.

As debates around multilateral reform intensify, Africa's push for a stronger voice at the UN Security Council is increasingly becoming a symbol of the broader demand for a more balanced and equitable global order.





Pakistan's New Diplomatic Balancing Act Reshapes Global Alliances



As geopolitical tensions continue to redefine global diplomacy in 2026, Pakistan has emerged as an increasingly influential player in Middle Eastern and international affairs. Once viewed primarily through the lens of regional security challenges, Islamabad is now positioning itself as a diplomatic bridge between competing global powers.

Pakistan's growing engagement with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, China, the United States and Iran reflects a broader strategy aimed at strengthening its international standing while navigating an increasingly fragmented global order.

Recent diplomatic initiatives involving Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt have highlighted Islamabad's expanding role in regional mediation efforts linked to the ongoing tensions between the United States and Iran. Reports indicate that Pakistan has hosted high-level discussions focused on de-escalation, energy security and regional stability. Analysts describe Pakistan's approach as "hedging diplomacy" — maintaining relations with rival powers simultaneously while avoiding full alignment with any single bloc.

Islamabad has continued to deepen defence and economic ties with Gulf states while also maintaining strategic cooperation with China and improving dialogue with Western partners.

The country's diplomatic importance has also grown due to its geographic position near the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical energy corridors. Regional instability has intensified concerns over energy supply routes, food security and global inflation, placing Pakistan at the centre of broader geopolitical calculations. At the same time, Pakistan's relations with Saudi Arabia and Turkey are evolving into deeper strategic partnerships. Discussions around expanded defence cooperation and regional security coordination suggest a possible shift toward new power alignments within the Muslim world.

Global powers are carefully watching these developments. Russia and China continue advocating multipolar diplomacy and alternative economic partnerships, while the United States remains focused on maintaining influence across the Middle East and South Asia. The growing interaction between BRICS countries and emerging regional alliances further illustrates how international diplomacy is entering a period of significant transformation.

The New Titans of Africa:

BILLIONAIRES RESHAPING THE CONTINENT

Africa's billionaire class is driving industrial growth, innovation and investment across key sectors. From manufacturing and mining to telecommunications and finance, these business leaders are building enterprises that are transforming economies and creating opportunities for millions across the continent.



Africa's billionaires now hold a combined wealth of over **\$126 BILLION** (Forbes Africa 2026)



ALIKO DANGOTE



Founder, Dangote Group
Net Worth: \$23.9 Billion*

Africa's richest man and industrial magnate with interests in cement, sugar, fertiliser, oil refining and real estate.

- Building the world's largest single-train refinery in Lagos, Nigeria.
- Expanding refinery investments into East Africa.
- A major driver of industrialisation and energy security in Africa.



PATRICE MOTSEPE



Chairman, African Rainbow Minerals (ARM)
Net Worth: \$3 Billion*

South Africa's first Black billionaire and champion of entrepreneurship, investment and economic empowerment.

- Interests in mining, finance, telecoms, and renewable energy.
- Founder of the Motsepe Foundation, supporting education, health and social development.
- President of CAF, driving football development across Africa.



MOHAMMED DEWJI



Founder, MeTL Group
Net Worth: \$1.5 Billion*

Tanzania's leading industrialist with a diversified empire spanning agriculture, manufacturing, logistics and consumer goods.

- Committed to youth empowerment and job creation.
- Investing in Africa's industrial capacity and value addition.
- Strong advocate for education, entrepreneurship and innovation.



STRIVE MASIYIWA



Founder, Econet Wireless
Net Worth: \$1.2 Billion*

Telecoms pioneer and digital innovator who revolutionised connectivity in Africa.

- Founded Econet Wireless, one of Africa's largest telecom companies.
- Investing in digital infrastructure, fintech, education and health.
- A strong voice for digital inclusion and African innovation.

“

Africa's leading billionaires are not just building businesses — they are building industries, creating jobs and shaping the continent's economic future.

THE IMPACT OF AFRICA'S BILLIONAIRES



Create jobs and economic opportunities



Drive industrialisation and infrastructure development



Promote innovation, technology and digital transformation



Strengthen Africa's competitiveness on the global stage



CHALLENGES REMAIN

Despite their impact, inequality and wealth concentration remain major concerns. Oxfam reports that Africa's four richest individuals collectively hold more wealth than half of the continent's population.



A NEW ERA OF AFRICAN ENTERPRISE
VISION. INVESTMENT. INNOVATION. TRANSFORMATION.

*Source: Forbes Africa Billionaires List 2026

Climate vs Food Security: Africa's Agricultural Emergency

Climate change is threatening Africa's ability to feed itself. Rising temperatures, extreme weather and unpredictable rainfall are driving up food prices, reducing yields and deepening hunger across the continent.



Up to **65 MILLION** more people in Africa could face hunger by 2030 due to climate change. (FAO, 2024)



DROUGHTS

Droughts are becoming more frequent and severe, destroying crops, drying up water sources and devastating livelihoods.

- Over 40% of Africans are highly vulnerable to climate shocks.
- Prolonged droughts in the Horn of Africa have displaced millions and caused massive crop losses.
- Rainfall variability is reducing planting seasons and productivity.



FOOD PRICES

Extreme weather and supply disruptions are pushing up food prices, making nutritious food unaffordable for millions.

- Food prices in Africa were 30% higher in 2024 compared to the pre-pandemic average.
- High costs hit the poorest households the hardest, worsening hunger and poverty.
- Import-dependent countries are especially at risk.



FARMER RESILIENCE

Across Africa, farmers are showing incredible resilience despite the growing climate challenges.

- Smallholder farmers produce up to 80% of Africa's food.
- Many are adopting climate-smart practices to protect their harvests and communities.
- Traditional knowledge and innovation are key strengths in the fight for food security.



CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Investing in climate adaptation is critical to building a food-secure and resilient Africa.

- Climate-smart agriculture can boost yields and reduce losses.
- Improved irrigation, drought-resistant seeds and early warning systems save lives and crops.
- Stronger policies and finance are needed to scale solutions.



1 IN 5 PEOPLE IN AFRICA ARE UNDERNOURISHED

Climate change could push millions more into hunger without urgent action.

(FAO, 2024)

BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE



Invest in sustainable farming practices and soil health



Improve climate information and early warning systems



Expand access to water and climate-smart technologies



Increase financing for smallholder farmers and rural communities

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

- ✓ More investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure
- ✓ Stronger social protection for vulnerable households
- ✓ Support for innovation, research and extension services
- ✓ Bold climate action to secure Africa's food future

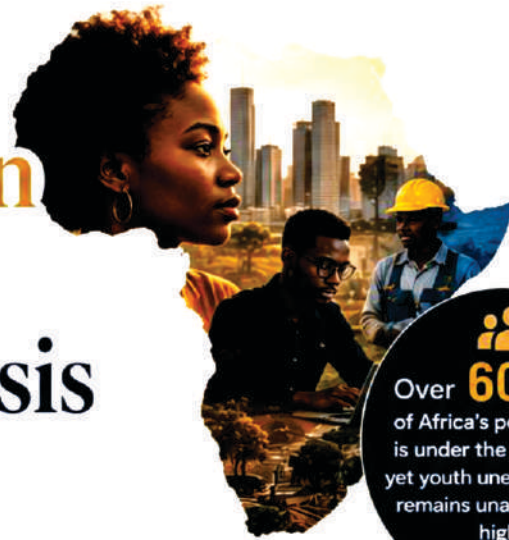


OUR CLIMATE. OUR FOOD. OUR FUTURE.

Resilient agriculture today for a food-secure Africa tomorrow.

Africa's Young Generation Faces an Employment Crisis

Africa is home to the world's youngest population, yet millions of young people are unable to find decent and sustainable jobs. High unemployment threatens economic growth, social stability and the continent's future potential.



Over **60%** of Africa's population is under the age of 25, yet youth unemployment remains unacceptably high.
(World Bank, 2024)



AI IMPACT

Artificial intelligence is transforming industries and changing the nature of work across the globe.

- AI and automation could disrupt up to 85 million jobs in Africa by 2030, but also create 97 million new ones.
- Young people need digital literacy and AI skills to stay relevant in the future workforce.
- Bridging the digital divide is critical to ensure inclusive opportunities.



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Many young Africans lack the skills needed for today's job market.

- Around 90% of young people in Africa are not in employment, education or training.
- Investing in technical, vocational and digital skills is essential.
- Stronger public-private partnerships can help align training with industry needs.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is a powerful tool for job creation and innovation.

- Over 22% of Africa's working-age population is engaged in entrepreneurial activities.
- Startups and SMEs create millions of jobs and drive local economies.
- Access to finance, mentorship and markets is key to youth-led business growth.



GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

Governments across Africa are stepping up efforts to tackle youth unemployment.

- Policies focused on job creation, industrialization and economic diversification are gaining traction.
- Youth empowerment programs and innovation hubs are expanding.
- Stronger governance and investment are needed to deliver sustainable results.



THE CHALLENGE IN NUMBERS



20.5%

Youth unemployment rate in Africa (ILO, 2024)



42.5%

Of young people are not in employment, education or training (NEET)



\$2.5 TRILLION

Potential economic loss due to youth unemployment by 2030 (AfDB, 2023)

INVESTING IN YOUTH, INVESTING IN AFRICA



Quality education and relevant skills for the future



Digital access and emerging technologies



Access to finance and business support



Mentorship, networks and market linkages



When young people succeed, Africa succeeds.

Empower. Educate. Employ.

THE WAY FORWARD

- ✓ Expand quality education and skills training
- ✓ Promote innovation, research and technology adoption
- ✓ Support youth entrepreneurship and SME growth
- ✓ Create more decent jobs through inclusive economic policies
- ✓ Strengthen data, monitoring and accountability

A SKILLED, EMPOWERED AND EMPLOYED YOUTH IS THE FOUNDATION OF AFRICA'S FUTURE.

Rwanda's Transformation: Africa's Development Blueprint

Over the past two decades, Rwanda has emerged as one of Africa's most discussed development success stories. Once devastated by the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the country has transformed itself into a fast-growing economy known for stability, infrastructure development, technological innovation and efficient governance.

Today, Rwanda is increasingly viewed as a model for African development, attracting international investors, diplomats and development agencies eager to understand how the country achieved such rapid progress.

Under President Paul Kagame's leadership, Rwanda prioritised long-term national planning, anti-corruption policies and institutional efficiency. Kigali, the capital city, has become one of Africa's cleanest and most organised urban centres, often praised for its modern infrastructure, public safety and digital innovation. Economic growth has been driven by investment in tourism, technology, aviation, finance and agriculture. Rwanda has also positioned itself as a continental hub for conferences and diplomacy, hosting major African Union meetings, investment summits and international sporting events.



The country's digital transformation strategy has received global attention. Rwanda invested heavily in broadband infrastructure, digital services, e-government systems and innovation hubs aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs and technology startups. Kigali Innovation City and smart city projects are central to Rwanda's ambition of becoming Africa's technology gateway.

Healthcare and education reforms have also contributed significantly to Rwanda's development narrative. The country expanded community healthcare programmes, improved maternal health services and increased access to primary education. International institutions frequently cite Rwanda as an example of effective public-sector coordination.

Women's representation in leadership has become another defining feature of Rwanda's governance model. Rwanda consistently ranks among the top countries globally for female

parliamentary representation, reflecting deliberate policies aimed at gender inclusion and social transformation. However, Rwanda's development model has also generated debate. Critics argue that political freedoms, media independence and opposition activities remain restricted. Human rights organisations continue to raise concerns about democratic space and civil liberties within the country.

Despite these criticisms, Rwanda's economic and governance achievements continue to influence policy discussions across Africa. Many African governments are increasingly studying Rwanda's focus on accountability, technology, infrastructure and state-led development planning.

As Africa seeks new pathways for economic transformation, Rwanda's experience presents both inspiration and important lessons about leadership, governance and sustainable development in the 21st century.



Ethiopia's Economic Ambitions and the Road Ahead

Ethiopia is positioning itself as one of Africa's most ambitious emerging economies, pursuing wide-ranging reforms to transform the country into a regional industrial and investment powerhouse.

With a population exceeding 120 million people and a strategic location in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia remains central to Africa's economic future despite ongoing political and security challenges.

Over the past decade, Ethiopia experienced some of the fastest economic growth rates on the continent, driven largely by infrastructure expansion, manufacturing, agriculture and public investment. Massive projects such as roads, railways, industrial parks and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) became symbols of the country's developmental ambitions.

In recent years, the Ethiopian government introduced significant economic reforms designed to modernise key sectors and attract foreign investment. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's administration accelerated plans to liberalise parts of the economy, including telecommunications, banking, aviation and logistics.

One of the most notable reforms was the partial opening of Ethiopia's telecom sector, ending decades of state monopoly. International investors increasingly view Ethiopia as a major untapped market with enormous potential in digital services, manufacturing and infrastructure development.

The government has also prioritised industrialisation through special economic zones and export-focused manufacturing. Ethiopia aims to become a leading African production hub for textiles, agro-processing and light manufacturing, leveraging its large labour force and expanding transport networks.

Agriculture remains the backbone of Ethiopia's economy, employing millions of citizens. However, climate change, drought and food insecurity continue to place pressure on rural communities and agricultural productivity. Economic planners are therefore focusing on modern farming methods, irrigation systems and food security strategies. Ethiopia's economic ambitions are also closely linked to regional diplomacy and trade integration. The country plays an important role within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), seeking greater regional connectivity.



China's Expanding Footprint in Africa: Partnership or Dependence?

China's relationship with Africa has entered a new and increasingly influential phase in 2026. What began largely as trade and infrastructure cooperation two decades ago has evolved into a broad strategic partnership spanning energy, technology, manufacturing, mining, telecommunications and diplomacy. Across the African continent, Chinese-funded railways, highways, ports, industrial zones and energy projects have become visible symbols of Beijing's expanding global reach. While many African governments view China as a critical development partner, others continue debating whether the growing relationship risks creating long-term economic dependence. As Africa positions itself for accelerated industrialisation and digital transformation, China remains one of the continent's most important strategic partners.

South Africa and China: A Strategic Relationship.

South Africa remains one of China's most important partners on the African continent. The relationship extends beyond trade into diplomacy, investment, BRICS cooperation and global governance reform. As members of BRICS, both countries continue advocating for a more multipolar international system and greater representation for developing economies within global institutions.

China is one of South Africa's largest trading partners, with cooperation spanning mining, automotive manufacturing, renewable energy and infrastructure development.

Partnership or Dependence?

The central question surrounding China's role in Africa remains unresolved: is the relationship empowering Africa's development or creating new forms of dependency? For many African governments, China represents opportunity — infrastructure financing, industrial investment, technological advancement and alternative global partnerships. For critics, concerns persist around debt exposure, strategic influence and economic imbalance. The reality is likely more complex. Africa is not a passive participant in the relationship. Increasingly, African states are negotiating from stronger positions, demanding technology transfer, local job creation and more sustainable partnerships. As global power dynamics continue shifting, China-Africa relations are expected to remain one of the most influential geopolitical partnerships shaping the future of the Global South. The coming decade may ultimately determine whether this relationship evolves into a balanced strategic partnership — or a new era of economic dependency.



Africa's Women of Influence: Dr Naledi Pandor and Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma

Across South Africa and the African continent, few women leaders have left as profound a mark on diplomacy, governance and continental development as Naledi Pandor and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Their careers have become symbols of principled leadership, African unity and women's empowerment in public service.

Dr Naledi Pandor is widely respected for her calm, intellectual and diplomatic leadership style. Throughout her career, she served in several senior ministerial portfolios including Education, Science and Technology, Higher Education and International Relations. As South Africa's former Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, she became one of Africa's most recognisable diplomatic voices on global affairs, particularly on African development, peacebuilding and international justice. Pandor consistently advocated for stronger African cooperation, equitable global governance and the empowerment of developing nations within international institutions. Today, Dr Naledi Pandor continues to contribute to education and leadership development as Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and Chancellor of Nelson Mandela University, a role she officially assumed in 2026.

Meanwhile, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma remains one of the most influential women in African political history. A medical doctor by training, anti-apartheid activist and seasoned stateswoman, she became the first woman to serve as Chairperson of the African Union Commission, breaking barriers in continental leadership.

Throughout her distinguished career, Dlamini Zuma held key ministerial positions in Health, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Cooperative Governance. Her leadership focused strongly on African integration, women's empowerment, public health and institutional reform. As Chairperson of the African Union Commission, she championed Agenda 2063, infrastructure development and African self-reliance. Dr Dlamini Zuma also became a powerful symbol of women's representation in leadership, proving that African women can lead at the highest levels of continental governance and diplomacy. Following her retirement from Parliament after the 2024 elections, she continues to be recognised as a respected elder stateswoman and advocate for African development and women's advancement.

Both Dr Pandor and Dr Dlamini Zuma have demonstrated that leadership is not only about authority, but also about service.





Trade Before Aid: Africa's New Diplomatic Strategy

For decades, Africa's international relationships were largely shaped by foreign aid, development assistance and humanitarian support. Today, however, a significant transformation is taking place across the continent. African governments are increasingly shifting toward economic diplomacy — prioritising trade, investment, infrastructure development and strategic business partnerships as key pillars of foreign policy. From Addis Ababa to Pretoria, Nairobi to Kigali, African leaders are redefining diplomacy not simply as political engagement, but as a tool for economic growth, industrialisation and long-term self-reliance.

A Shift from Dependency to Partnership

The new diplomatic strategy reflects growing confidence among African nations seeking to move beyond traditional aid dependency models. Governments are now pursuing partnerships that focus on mutual economic benefit rather than donor-recipient relationships. This transformation is visible in major infrastructure agreements, trade missions and investment forums taking place across the continent. African diplomats are increasingly acting as economic ambassadors, tasked with attracting foreign direct investment and promoting exports.



The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), regarded as one of the most ambitious economic projects in modern African history, has further accelerated this shift. By creating a single African market, the agreement aims to strengthen intra-African trade, industrial cooperation and regional economic integration.

Infrastructure at the Centre of Diplomacy

Infrastructure development has become central to Africa's economic diplomacy agenda. Railways, ports, roads, energy projects and digital connectivity are now major topics in diplomatic negotiations. Countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Egypt, Rwanda and Ethiopia are positioning themselves as regional investment hubs by improving transport networks and creating business-friendly environments.

International partnerships with countries including China, the United Arab Emirates, India, Türkiye and members of the European Union are increasingly focused on logistics, renewable energy and industrial development. African governments argue that sustainable economic growth requires infrastructure capable of supporting manufacturing, trade and digital economies.

South Africa's Strategic Economic Diplomacy

South Africa continues to play a prominent role in advancing economic diplomacy across the continent. As one of Africa's most industrialised economies, the country actively promotes regional trade cooperation, investment partnerships and multilateral economic engagement. South African diplomats and trade agencies have intensified efforts to strengthen commercial ties with African markets while also expanding partnerships with Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Latin America. The country has also emerged as a key voice in global discussions on economic reform, supply chains, energy transition and development financing — advocating for greater African representation in international economic institutions.

The Rise of Investment Diplomacy

Investment diplomacy is now becoming one of Africa's fastest-growing diplomatic trends. Governments are competing to attract investors in sectors such as renewable energy, mining, agriculture, tourism, fintech, artificial intelligence and manufacturing. Special economic zones, technology hubs and industrial corridors are being developed across the continent to encourage entrepreneurship and foreign investment. African embassies abroad are also evolving. Many diplomatic missions now actively facilitate business matchmaking, trade exhibitions and investment conferences rather than focusing solely on political relations.

Youth, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Africa's youthful population is another driving force behind this diplomatic evolution. Young entrepreneurs are building startups that are attracting global investors and changing perceptions about Africa's economic potential. Innovation ecosystems in Lagos, Nairobi, Cape Town and Kigali are gaining international recognition for fintech, e-commerce, AI and renewable energy solutions tailored to African realities. Governments increasingly recognise that economic diplomacy must also support skills development, youth employment and entrepreneurship.

Africa's AI Revolution: Can the Continent Lead the Future?

Across Africa, a quiet technological revolution is unfolding. From innovation hubs in Kigali and Nairobi to policy discussions in Pretoria and Cairo, artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming one of the continent's most transformative forces. Governments, universities, startups, and diplomatic institutions are now racing to position Africa not merely as a consumer of AI technologies, but as a global contributor to the future digital economy.



As the world enters an era shaped by automation, machine learning and data-driven governance, Africa's youthful population, growing digital infrastructure and entrepreneurial energy present a unique opportunity. Analysts increasingly believe that Africa could become one of the most dynamic AI growth regions over the next decade.

South Africa's Growing Leadership Role

South Africa has emerged as one of the continent's leading voices on AI governance and digital diplomacy. Policymakers are developing frameworks aimed at ensuring ethical AI deployment while encouraging innovation and investment. Universities such as the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University and Wits University are expanding AI research programmes focused on healthcare, cybersecurity, mining technologies and financial systems.

Pretoria has also become increasingly active in international discussions around AI regulation, cybersecurity cooperation and digital sovereignty. Diplomats are recognising that technology policy is now inseparable from foreign policy, trade and global security. As cyber threats grow globally, African governments are prioritising digital resilience and cyber diplomacy as strategic priorities.

African Startups Driving Innovation

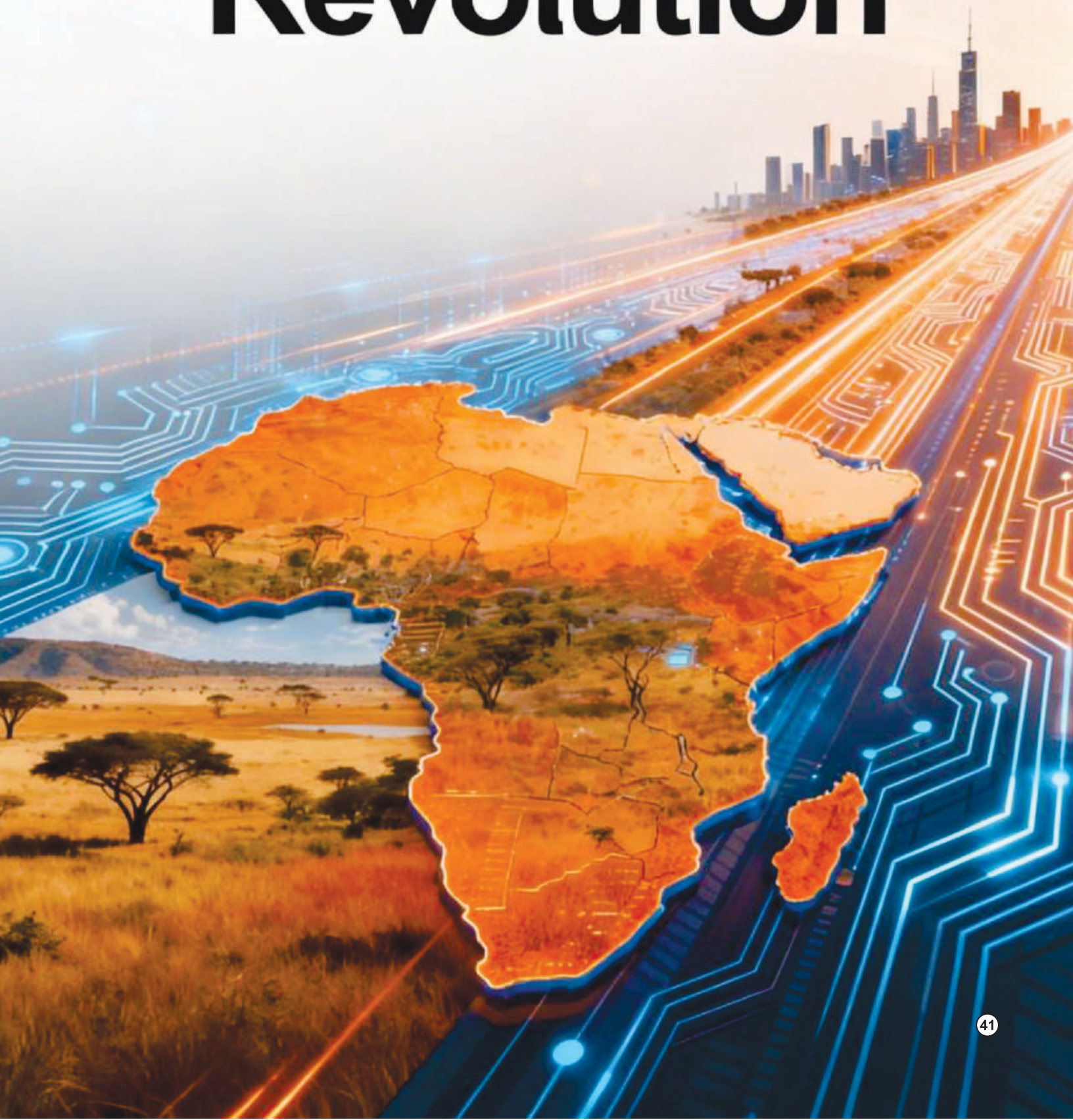
African startups are proving that innovation on the continent is not limited by geography. In Nigeria, Kenya, Rwanda, Egypt and South Africa, AI-driven companies are developing solutions tailored specifically to African realities.

Startups are using AI to improve healthcare diagnostics, agricultural productivity, mobile banking, language translation and education access. In agriculture, AI tools help farmers predict weather patterns, detect crop diseases and optimise irrigation. In healthcare, machine learning platforms are assisting with early disease detection in remote communities where medical specialists are scarce.

African fintech firms are also leveraging AI to expand financial inclusion, enabling millions of previously unbanked citizens to access credit, insurance, and digital payment systems through mobile technology.

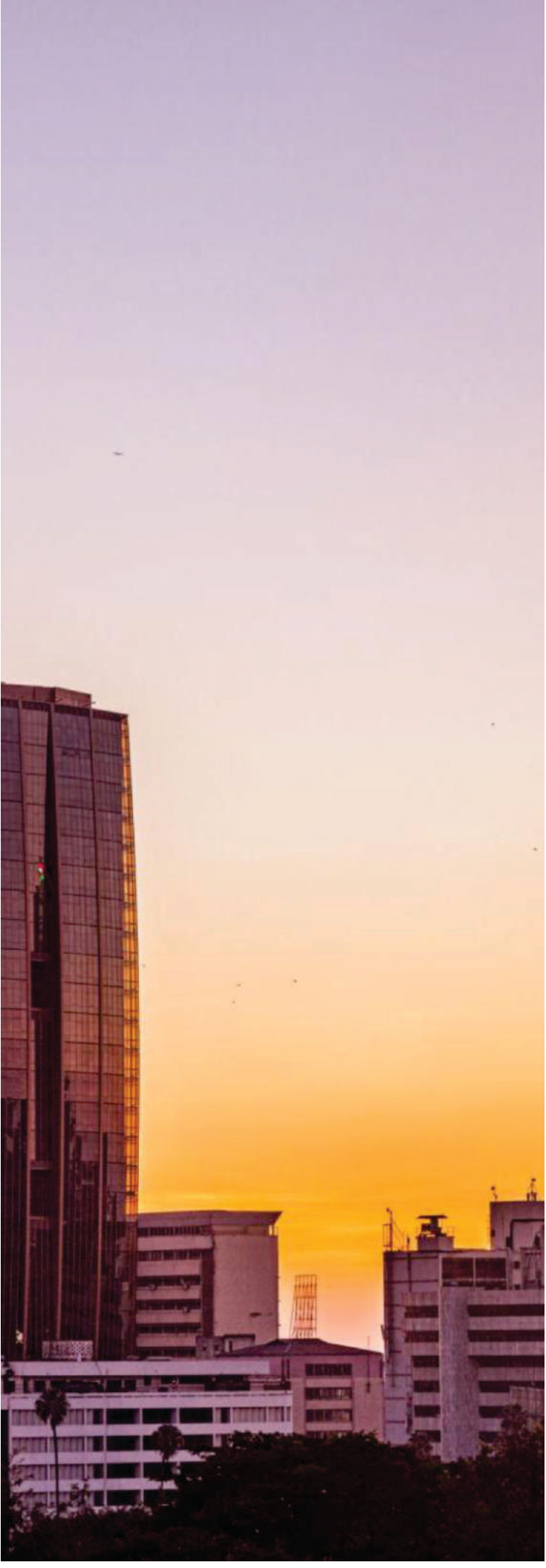


Africa AI Revolution



The Future African City: Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive?

Africa's cities are expanding at one of the fastest rates in the world. By 2050, the continent's urban population is expected to double, creating both enormous opportunities and serious challenges for governments, planners and investors. Across Africa, cities are increasingly embracing smart technologies, sustainable infrastructure and modern urban planning in an effort to create more liveable, connected and economically competitive environments.



From Johannesburg to Kigali, Nairobi and Cairo, a new vision of the African city is beginning to emerge — one driven by innovation, digital transformation and inclusive growth.

Johannesburg

Johannesburg remains Africa's leading financial hub, with growing investment in mixed-use developments, smart infrastructure and urban regeneration projects. Areas such as Sandton and Waterfall City reflect the city's push toward a more modern and connected future.

Kigali

Kigali has gained international recognition for its clean environment, digital governance and sustainable urban planning. Rwanda continues positioning the capital as one of Africa's leading smart-city models.

Nairobi

Known as the "Silicon Savannah," Nairobi is becoming a major technology and innovation hub. Projects such as Konza Technopolis highlight Kenya's ambitions to lead Africa's digital economy.

Cairo

Egypt's New Administrative Capital represents one of Africa's most ambitious urban projects, featuring smart infrastructure, modern transport systems and large-scale commercial development.

Smart Cities and the Future of Urban Africa

Smart-city projects are becoming increasingly important across Africa as governments seek solutions to population growth, climate change and economic transformation. These projects often combine technology, renewable energy, digital governance and sustainable infrastructure to improve urban efficiency and quality of life.

However, experts warn that technology alone cannot solve Africa's urban challenges. Inclusive development, affordable housing, reliable public transport and social equity remain essential to building cities that serve all residents rather than only wealthy urban elites.

The future African city will likely be defined not only by skyscrapers and digital systems, but by how effectively it balances growth, sustainability and inclusion.

As Africa urbanises rapidly over the coming decades, the continent's cities may ultimately become some of the world's most important centres of innovation, commerce and cultural influence.



Africa's Green Gold Rush: The Race for Renewable Energy Investment

Africa is rapidly emerging as one of the world's most attractive destinations for renewable energy investment. With abundant sunlight, vast natural resources and growing energy demands, the continent is increasingly positioning itself at the centre of the global green energy transition.

Governments, international investors and private companies are now racing to develop large-scale solar, wind and green hydrogen projects across Africa, creating what many analysts describe as a new "green gold rush."

Solar Power Leading the Transition

Solar energy continues to dominate Africa's renewable energy expansion. Countries including South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Kenya and Namibia are investing heavily in solar infrastructure to improve electricity access and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Africa possesses some of the world's highest solar potential, making the continent particularly attractive for international energy investors. Large-scale solar farms are now becoming increasingly common across both urban and rural regions. For millions of Africans still lacking reliable electricity access, renewable energy also offers opportunities for economic development, industrial growth and improved living standards.

The Rise of Green Hydrogen

Green hydrogen is emerging as one of Africa's most promising future industries. Produced using renewable energy, green hydrogen is viewed globally as a key solution for decarbonising heavy industries and transport systems. Countries such as South Africa, Namibia and Morocco are positioning themselves as future leaders in green hydrogen production due to their renewable energy potential and strategic export locations.

International investors from Europe, the Middle East and Asia are already supporting large-scale hydrogen projects aimed at supplying global clean energy markets. Analysts believe Africa could become one of the world's major exporters of green hydrogen over the next two decades.

South Africa's Energy Transition

South Africa's transition away from coal remains one of the continent's most closely watched energy transformations. Facing electricity shortages, ageing infrastructure and growing climate pressures, the country is accelerating investment into renewable energy projects.

Solar, wind and battery storage developments are becoming increasingly important within South Africa's long-term energy strategy. International partnerships under the Just Energy Transition framework are also helping mobilise billions in climate financing and green infrastructure investment.

While challenges remain, including grid capacity and economic adjustment, South Africa's renewable energy sector is increasingly viewed as a major investment opportunity.

International Investment Opportunities

Global demand for clean energy has intensified interest in African renewable projects. International development banks, sovereign wealth funds and private investors are actively financing energy infrastructure across the continent.

Renewable energy investment is not only creating electricity solutions, but also generating employment, technology transfer and industrial development opportunities.

Experts believe Africa's success in the green economy will depend on strong governance, modern infrastructure, regional cooperation and policies that ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

As the world accelerates toward a low-carbon future, Africa's renewable energy sector may become one of the continent's most important economic frontiers — transforming natural resources into long-term green prosperity.



From Tension to Truce: Pakistan's Role in Middle East De-escalation

The Iran–U.S.–Israel conflict that began in February 2026 significantly heightened tensions across the Middle East, raising concerns about regional stability, global energy supplies, and the broader international economy. The escalation led to substantial damage in affected areas and prompted urgent diplomatic efforts to prevent further deterioration. Amid the crisis, Pakistan positioned itself as an active but neutral diplomatic actor. Officials in Islamabad maintained a policy of non-alignment while engaging in quiet and open channels of communication with all sides. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief Asim Munir, Pakistani authorities pursued mediation efforts aimed at de-escalation. Diplomatic sources indicate that Pakistan leveraged its longstanding ties with Iran, as well as its relations with Gulf states and ongoing engagement with the United States, to facilitate dialogue. These efforts included a series of high level and behind the scenes meetings designed to build confidence among the parties involved.

A notable development during this period was the visit of U.S. Vice President JD Vance to Islamabad. The visit was widely interpreted as a signal of Pakistan's relevance in ongoing diplomatic efforts. According to official statements, discussions focused on regional stability and pathways toward a ceasefire. Iranian delegations also made multiple visits to Pakistan as part of the broader diplomatic engagement. Statements from Iranian officials described Pakistan as a constructive interlocutor in efforts to reduce tensions. These exchanges contributed to momentum toward a ceasefire agreement. In April 2026, a ceasefire was announced, marking a pause in hostilities. International observers noted Pakistan's role among several countries involved in diplomatic outreach during the conflict. Analysts suggest that Pakistan's geographic position, military standing, and diplomatic channels enabled it to contribute to ongoing de-escalation efforts. While challenges to long term stability in the region remain, recent developments indicate a shift toward dialogue. Pakistan's involvement reflects its continued interest in promoting regional stability through diplomatic means.



U.S. Vice President JD Vance Leads U.S. Delegation In Peace Talks With Iran In Pakistan
US Vice President JD Vance (2R) talks with Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshall Asim Munir (L), Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi (C), and Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar after arriving for talks with Iranian officials



Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (R) meets with Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, ahead of U.S.-Iran peace talks, Islamabad, Pakistan,



Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir meet US President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington, DC



Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif Field Marshal Asim Munir
With American President Donald Trump



Table Mountain Cape Town



Cape Point

