



AFRICA
POLITICAL
OUTLOOK

2026

THE STATE OF AFRICAN GOVERNANCE



FORCES OF THE FUTURE

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FOREWORD



Viwanou Gnassounou

Chairman of the Steering Board, Africa Political Outlook

As we present the 2026 and maiden edition of the Africa Political Outlook Annual Report on the State of African Governance, we do so with a profound sense of both purpose and timeliness. This report arrives at a moment when the continent's political landscape is being reshaped by forces at once familiar and unprecedented – forces that demand our most honest assessment, our sharpest analytical tools, and our deepest commitment to the ideals of democratic governance, inclusive development, and lasting stability.

The past year has once again demonstrated the extraordinary resilience of African peoples in the face of complex political challenges but has also shown the creativity of the Continent at work and the acuteness of its soft power. From the Sahel to the Horn, from the Great Island in the Indian Ocean to the West African coasts, via the Great Lakes, communities have navigated transitions of power, managed the pressures of resource competition, confronted the destabilising consequences of violent-extremism and engaged – often at great personal cost – in the pursuit of accountable governance. The current year comes with its own interrogation on the continent aptness to combine stability, inclusive and sustainable growth and freedom of expression and information.

The 2026 APO Report on the State of African Governance provides an evidence-based assessment of political developments across all five of the continent's regions and includes a perspective from the 6th Region, the diaspora, as well as from the partners with whom the Continent and its people interact.

The report is fundamentally forward-looking – a deliberate and rigorous attempt to chart the political terrain that lies ahead for a continent of 1.4 billion people whose decisions, institutions, and leadership choices in the coming months will carry consequences that extend far beyond its borders. **The question that animates this report is not simply where Africa has been, but where it is going – and crucially, what choices, structures, and commitments will determine whether that destination reflects the aspirations of its peoples.**

2026 is shaping up to be another politically significant years. A notable number of electoral cycles are scheduled across the continent, from presidential contests in major economies to legislative renewals in fragile transitional states. Each of these exercises represents far more than a procedural event. They are tests of institutional integrity, barometers of public trust, and, in several cases, critical inflection points that will determine whether democratic, social and economic trajectories are strengthened or reversed.

The APO Report is not a document of pessimism. Alongside its critical assessments, readers will find compelling evidence of democratic progress, institutional innovation, reformative vision and civic courage. They will find examples of African-led solutions to African challenges – precisely the kind of agency and ownership that must define the continent’s political future.

We are deeply grateful to the private sector leaders, civil society voices, political analysts, government officials, and ordinary citizens across the continent whose knowledge and testimony have enriched this report. We also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our partner institutions, regional organisations, and international collaborators who share our conviction that rigorous, independent political analysis is a public good essential to the health of democracy. Their intellectual honesty and their passion for Africa’s future are reflected on every page.

It is my sincere hope that the 2026 Africa Political Outlook Report will serve as a trusted resource for policymakers, scholars, practitioners, and advocates – and that it will contribute, in however modest way, to the cause of a more peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Africa. **The continent’s future remains, as it has always been, in African hands. This report is offered in service of that future.**

Vivianou Gnassounou





FOREWORD



Adebissi DJOGAN

Founder & Executive Director, Africa Political Outlook

There is a reality that African finance ministers are only now beginning to state openly: the continent's development needs and the scale of international aid have been drifting apart for over a decade; and the gap has become a chasm. In 2023, official development assistance (ODA) to Africa reached \$67 billion. Yet, according to the African Development Bank, the continent's annual infrastructure financing gap alone is estimated at \$108 billion. Once you factor in climate adaptation, digital transformation, public health, and education, the total investment required exceeds \$300 billion per year. **Aid, as it has been structured since Bretton Woods, cannot bridge this divide. It was never meant to.**

And yet, for decades, a system built on pledges, conditionalities, and partnership frameworks has absorbed both the political energy of African leaders and the institutional capacity of their governments. That era is now coming to a close end, not by Africa's choice alone, but through the irreversible convergence of four structural forces that are rendering the old model obsolete.

The Donors Have Changed Their Minds.

The first force is brutally simple traditional donors are looking elsewhere. The United States, historically the world's largest bilateral aid provider, has undergone the most dramatic reorientation. Since 2024, Washington has shifted its foreign assistance priorities toward Indo-Pacific competition and domestic infrastructure investment, with USAID's core development mandate squeezed by successive budget pressures. Between 2020 and 2024, U.S. bilateral development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa fell by over 18% in real terms.

Europe is no exception. Germany, the European Union's anchor economy and its most consequential development actor, recorded its sharpest single-year ODA cut in 2024, a reduction of €2.3 billion from its federal budget, citing fiscal consolidation under its constitutional debt brake. France, whose post-colonial influence has long been structured through development aid's architecture (*aide au développement*), is withdrawing from several Sahelian partnerships while quietly redefining the terms of its engagement.

The signal is unmistakable: for Western governments facing their own fiscal constraints, demographic ageing, and domestic political pressures, Africa is no longer a moral priority, it is a strategic calculation.

The New Age of Transactionalism

The second force is transactionalism; the explicit replacement of solidarity with exchange. Where aid once arrived wrapped in the language of rights, values, solidarity and development, today's engagement comes with visible price tags. China's Belt and Road Initiative, now covering 40 African countries, has recast infrastructure financing as a largely bilateral, commercial arrangement. Russia's security partnerships in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger are transactional to the bone: military presence in exchange for resource access and diplomatic support at the United Nations. The Gulf states, meanwhile, are advancing investment corridors tied directly to agricultural land, port concessions, and energy infrastructure. None of this is inherently malign, but it signals something profound: the fiction of disinterested partnership has given way to a far more explicit logic of exchange.. What replaced it is not necessarily more honest – it is more naked. And African governments, long accustomed to navigating the conditionalities of the World Bank and the IMF, must now navigate a more complex web of competing transactional interests, each with its own leverage points.

The danger is not that Africa is being courted by too many suitors. The danger is that the terms being offered : sovereign debt, resource extraction, security dependence - replicate the structural asymmetries of the aid era in a new vocabulary.

African Emergence Needs is Outgrowing the Model

The third force is demographic and structural. Africa is the world's youngest continent: its median age is 19 years, compared with 43 in Europe and 38 in North America. By 2050, one in four human beings will be African. To keep pace, the continent will need to create 20 million new formal jobs per year simply to absorb its working-age population. It will need to double its electricity generation capacity, build the equivalent of a city the size of Cairo every three months, and triple its agricultural productivity – all while adapting to a climate crisis it did not create. The arithmetic is straightforward. The total volume of official development assistance to Africa over the past 30 years, approximately \$1.2 trillion, is roughly equivalent to a single year of U.S. federal spending, or less than three years of European Union agricultural subsidies. As a structural transformation tool, aid has been a trickle aimed at a rising tide.

More fundamentally, aid was never designed to deliver transformation. It is designed for relief, stabilization, and incremental capacity-building. It addresses symptoms, not the root causes. What Africa requires and what no aid architecture has ever delivered is the sovereign capacity to industrialize, to formalize its economies, to capture value from its resources, and to build institutions that outlast the project cycles of donor agencies.

A New Economy Built Without Africa in Mind

The fourth and perhaps most consequential force is the architecture of the new global economy itself. The twenty-first century is being shaped by three commanding technologies: artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and the critical raw materials supply chains that power them both. Africa sits at the intersection of all three – and yet is positioned to benefit from almost none of them under current arrangements. The continent holds 60% of the world's cobalt reserves, 80% of

manganese, 40% of tantalum. The minerals without which no electric vehicle, no data center, no smartphone, and no AI chip can be manufactured. And yet, in 2023, less than 5% of the lithium-ion batteries manufactured globally incorporated value added from African processing. Africa extracts; others manufacture; others capture the rents.

This is not a development challenge addressable by aid. It is a geopolitical contest over the architecture of global production chains, one that requires industrial policy, trade leverage, continental market integration, and digital sovereignty. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), if fully implemented, would create a \$3.4 trillion market and reposition Africa as a manufacturing hub. But no amount of technical assistance grants will substitute for the political will and regulatory infrastructure required to make that vision a reality.

Similarly, Africa's digital economy is growing at 23% annually, yet 60% of Africans remain without reliable internet access, and fewer than 3% of global AI research originates from the continent. The data economy – the foundational architecture of 21st-century wealth – is being built without African data, trained without African voices, and governed without African law. Aid-funded digital literacy programs will not close that gap.

A New Compact, or Nothing

None of this is an argument against solidarity between nations. It is an argument against the illusion that solidarity can be structured as dependence. The aid era produced genuine gains in child mortality reduction, primary education enrollment, the containment of pandemic diseases. Those achievements should be acknowledged, but not romanticized

But the next chapter requires a fundamentally different architecture. African governments must build the fiscal capacity through domestic revenue mobilization, not ODA substitution – to invest in their own structural transformation. The \$100 billion annual losses that Africa incurs through illicit financial flows, transfer pricing, and tax base erosion – a figure that dwarfs the ODA envelope – must become the political frontier that development discourse addresses with the same urgency it once applied to debt cancellation. International institutions – from the IMF to the WTO to the UN Security Council – must be reformed to reflect a world in which Africa is not a recipient but a central stakeholder. Special Drawing Rights, climate finance, and the digital trade architecture all require African agency at the design table, not the implementation desk.

Africa's own leadership class must resist the seduction of the new transactionalism – the temptation to swap one set of dependencies for another, shinier one. The goal is not better donors. The goal is no donors at all.

The aid era is over. What comes next will be determined not by what the world offers Africa, but by what Africa demands of itself – and the forces capable of shaping its futures.

Adébissi Djogan





I. ELECTIONS IN AFRICA IN 2026

Elections are a defining moment in the political life of a country. They provide citizens with an opportunity to shape the trajectory of their nation and serve as key indicators of political stability, institutional resilience, and the legitimacy of governing authorities. The ability to organize credible elections and ensure peaceful political transitions remains a fundamental test of democratic institutions. Across Africa, however, electoral periods have often been politically sensitive. Contestation of electoral outcomes is not uncommon and, in some cases, has escalated into civil unrest or large-scale violence. **These tensions often reflect deeper structural challenges, including weak institutional checks and balances, limited trust in electoral management bodies, and political systems where access to state power carries high stakes.**

The year 2025 was particularly eventful, with several presidential elections taking place across the continent¹. In Gabon and Guinea, in April and December, respectively, interim leaders Brice Oligui Nguema and Mamady Doumbouya were elected president after having taken power through military coups. In September 2025, Malawi and Seychelles experienced peaceful transitions of power following the defeat of incumbent presidents by opposition candidates. Towards the end of the year, the incumbent presidents of Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Central African Republic were re-elected. **These elections were not without controversy, particularly regarding the decisions of the incumbents to seek additional terms in office: Paul Biya for an eighth term in Cameroon, Alassane Ouattara for a fourth term in Côte d'Ivoire, and Faustin-Archange Touadéra for a third term in the Central African Republic.**

In Tanzania, incumbent President Samia Suluhu Hassan was also re-elected following a contested electoral process that led to the deaths of many protesters. The year was further marked by political instability, including military coups in Madagascar and Guinea-Bissau, as well as a foiled attempted coup in Benin.

Against the backdrop of a turbulent 2025, elections scheduled for 2026 will be an important test of whether African countries can advance toward more credible, peaceful, and inclusive electoral processes. The integrity of these elections will have implications beyond national borders, shaping regional stability and influencing international perceptions of governance across the continent. At a time when democratic norms are increasingly challenged globally, addressing the crises of legitimacy affecting electoral processes has become an urgent priority for many African states.

¹ Stewart Maclean, "Coups, elections and protests - a difficult year for democracy in Africa", BBC, 30 December 2025.

The 2026 Electoral Calendar : What Is at Stake?

The year 2026 will be marked by a dense electoral calendar, with presidential and legislative elections scheduled in at least fifteen African countries. Following the Ugandan presidential election held in January, several presidential elections are expected to take place between April and December 2026, including in Benin, Cabo Verde, Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Libya, Ethiopia, Somalia, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Sudan, Zambia, and The Gambia².

Africa's 2026 Electoral Calendar

Country	Type of Election	Date
Uganda	Presidential & Legislative	January
Congo	Presidential	March
Benin	Legislative & Presidential	January and April
Cabo Verde	Legislative & Presidential	April and October
Djibouti	Presidential	April
Libya	Presidential & Legislative	April
Ethiopia	Presidential & Legislative	June
Somalia	Presidential & Legislative	June
Algeria	Legislative	June
Sao Tome and Principe	Presidential & Legislative	July and September
Zambia	Presidential & Legislative	August
Morocco	Legislative	September
Gambia	Presidential	December
Cameroon	Legislative	December
South Sudan	Presidential & Legislative	December

Source : compiled from data provided by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

² Joseph Siegle and Hany Wahila, "Africa's 2026 Elections: Navigating Complexity to Deliver for Citizens", Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 10 February 2026.

Key Elections to Watch in 2026

Benin

In Benin, the end of 2025 was marked by uncertainty following an attempted coup involving a limited number of military elements. The situation was quickly brought under control, and the country proceeded with legislative elections in January 2026, following which the ruling alliance of President Patrice Talon secured full control of the National Assembly.

Ahead of the presidential election scheduled for April 2026, incumbent President Patrice Talon stepped down in accordance with the constitutional term limit and designated Finance Minister Romuald Wadagni as his preferred successor. Wadagni will face Paul Hounkpè, leader of the Forces Cauris pour un Bénin Émergent (FCBE) party, after the Constitutional Court approved only two candidates to contest the election. The main opposition party, Les Démocrates, was barred from participating by the Constitutional Court on the grounds that it failed to secure the required number of endorsements from members of parliament.

Benin's challenge in 2026 is not only to conduct a credible vote, but to demonstrate that its institutional architecture can accommodate genuine political contestation without recourse to exclusionary legal mechanisms. Additionally, the country must consolidate political stability while sustaining its economic development trajectory. At the same time, security concerns persist in the northern regions, linked to the broader terrorist threat emanating from the Sahel region. The extent to which the next government will strengthen diplomatic engagement with its Sahelian neighbours to address these security challenges remains uncertain.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia's political trajectory ahead of the 2026 electoral cycle remains shaped by the aftermath of recent internal conflicts and ongoing efforts to consolidate political stability. The country has undergone significant political transformations in recent years under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, whose administration initially launched ambitious political reforms aimed at opening the political space and strengthening democratic governance. However, the outbreak of armed conflict in the Tigray region in 2020 and subsequent tensions in other parts of the country have complicated the reform agenda and raised concerns about national cohesion and institutional resilience.

The upcoming electoral processes will take place in a highly complex political environment marked by unresolved security challenges and ongoing debate about the structure of the Ethiopian federal system. While the peace

agreement signed in 2022 brought an end to the large-scale conflict in Tigray, sporadic violence and tensions persist in several regions, including Amhara and Oromia. These security dynamics may affect the ability to conduct fully inclusive and peaceful elections across the country.

Against this backdrop, the stakes of the next electoral cycle extend beyond the selection of political leadership. The elections will represent an important test of Ethiopia's capacity to restore public confidence in democratic institutions and manage political competition within a fragile post-conflict environment. Ensuring the credibility and inclusiveness of the electoral process will be essential for consolidating political stability, advancing national reconciliation, and maintaining Ethiopia's role as a key political and economic actor in the Horn of Africa.

Zambia

Zambia could serve as a model for peaceful and competitive political transitions, although economic challenges weigh heavily on the country's political discourse. The Zambian government faces significant public debt, and the upcoming elections will likely focus on candidates' ability to negotiate debt restructuring and revive the economy. Zambia's 2021 transition, in which President Hakainde Hichilema defeated the incumbent through a credible electoral process, demonstrated that democratic alternation remains possible even under difficult economic conditions.

However, the 2026 elections will test whether this democratic resilience can be sustained as the current government faces pressure to deliver tangible economic improvements while managing complex structural adjustment programs and debt negotiations with international creditors. The Zambian experience offers important lessons regarding the conditions necessary for credible elections, including the independence of electoral commissions, the role of civil society observers, and the willingness of incumbents to accept electoral defeat.

Somalia

In Somalia, security and political fragility remain major constraints to the organization of credible elections. Persistent insecurity linked to the activities of Al-Shabaab, combined with the country's complex federal political arrangements, raises questions about the feasibility of conducting nationwide electoral processes that are both inclusive and credible.

South Sudan

In South Sudan, delays in the political transition and tensions between key political actors continue to cast uncertainty over the country's electoral timetable. In both contexts, the electoral stakes of elections extend beyond the procedural act of voting and relate to broader challenges of state-building, political legitimacy, and conflict management. Whether elections can contribute to political stabilization and inclusive governance, rather than exacerbate existing tensions, will depend largely on the willingness of political elites to pursue compromise and on the capacity of institutions to operate in highly fragile environments.

Africa's 2026 electoral calendar is likely to have implications that extend beyond national political arenas, influencing regional stability, economic prospects, and the credibility of democratic institutions across the continent.

In **North Africa**, where the 2026 electoral calendar will be relatively limited, political developments will largely depend on governments' ability to manage economic pressures and governance challenges while addressing the persistent institutional and security uncertainties surrounding Libya's political transition.

In **West Africa**, where democratic backsliding and military coups have reshaped the political landscape in recent years, credible elections will be critical to restoring confidence in civilian governance.

In **East Africa**, electoral processes will unfold against a backdrop of persistent security challenges and unresolved political tensions, raising questions about the ability of governments to organize inclusive and peaceful political competition.

In **Southern Africa**, elections will test the resilience of relatively well-established democratic systems while also reflecting growing public concerns over economic performance and governance.

In **Central Africa**, political developments will be shaped less by electoral competition than by the need to address ongoing governance challenges, security concerns, and questions of political succession that continue to influence the region's stability.

Across the continent, the conducting of credible elections in 2026 will therefore play an important role in shaping perceptions of democratic legitimacy and political stability in the years ahead.

APO's Take

The credibility of the 2026 electoral cycle will depend largely on the ability of electoral institutions to strengthen **transparency and public trust**.

One of the most persistent sources of electoral crises across the continent has been the perceived lack of independence and technical capacity of electoral management bodies.

Strengthening the autonomy of electoral commissions, improving electoral logistics, and deploying appropriate technologies, such as biometric voter verification and parallel vote tabulation, can play an important role in enhancing confidence in electoral outcomes. When effectively utilized, these mechanisms help reduce opportunities for fraud and increase transparency in the management and publication of results.



However, technical improvements alone will not fully resolve the **deeper legitimacy challenges** facing elections in many African countries. Political trust ultimately depends on the extent to which governance systems are perceived as inclusive, responsive, and representative.

Deliberative mechanisms as **citizens' assemblies, national conferences**, structured consultations, have a credible track record in contexts where rule of law is functional, civil society is independent, and the outcomes of deliberation are legally or politically binding. Where these preconditions are absent, such mechanisms risk becoming instruments of legitimization for decisions already taken. African governments exploring participatory approaches should therefore be explicit about design: who controls the agenda, who selects participants, what institutional pathway exists between

deliberation and policy, and what happens when the output challenges executive preferences. The value of these instruments lies not only in their form but in their enforceability.

Incorporating **more participatory approaches** into political and institutional processes could help **bridge the gap between citizens and state institutions** and **strengthen the legitimacy of electoral processes over the long term.**



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II. DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Africa enters 2026 at a pivotal moment: it remains one of the world's fastest-growing regions, and current forecasts place a large share of the fifteen fastest-expanding economies over the next few years on the continent. By mid-century, Africa's population is projected to approach 2.5 billion people, accounting for more than a quarter of humanity, while its urban population is expected to double to around 1.4 billion, making Africa the second-largest urban region after Asia. Combined with a young, increasingly connected consumer base, these shifts underpin multi-trillion-dollar consumer and business markets that are already worth roughly 4 trillion dollars annually and are set to grow substantially in the decades ahead. The scale of the opportunity is genuinely transformative but it is unfolding under increasingly unfavourable financing conditions.

This “decade of opportunity” is unfolding under a tightening financial vise. After five consecutive years of growth, official development assistance (ODA) from OECD DAC members declined by about 7 percent in 2024 compared with 2023, and further cuts are already budgeted or projected in key donor countries for 2025, with Africa and least developed countries among the most exposed. At the same time, African governments face a debt-servicing burden that is eroding fiscal space: in sub-Saharan Africa, a typical government now spends roughly one-seventh of its revenue on interest payments alone, while in many countries interest outlays already exceed spending on health or education.

The cost of capital is structurally higher than in any other region. Between 2020 and 2024, average sovereign bond yields for African issuers hovered around 9.8 percent—several times the borrowing costs of advanced economies—and recent bond indices still show yields above 9.5 percent for African sovereigns. This makes it much harder to finance the infrastructure, energy systems, and industrial capacity that any credible development model requires.

Against this backdrop, the central question is no longer which ideological model wins on paper. It is which combination of policies and institutions can deliver tangible improvements in citizens' lives, restore political legitimacy in the face of rising discontent, and position African states as agents—rather than objects—of global structural change.

1. Policy Pragmatism: Models Without Dogma



A decade ago, debates about African development were often framed in ideological terms: state-led versus market-led, Washington Consensus versus developmental state, liberalisation versus protectionism. Now, in 2026 that framing has largely collapsed, not because the debates were resolved but because the failures on all sides have been too visible to ignore.

It has been replaced by a growing recognition that no development model is universally superior. Context matters. Botswana, long cited as a positive outlier, used diamond revenues to build reserves, maintain macroeconomic prudence, and establish the Pula Fund, and is now creating a new sovereign wealth fund to push diversification and manage state-owned enterprises more actively. Many other resource-rich economies had similar endowments but did not replicate Botswana's trajectory; the determining variable was governance, not geology.

Morocco illustrates a different path: a deliberate bet on export-oriented manufacturing and green industrialisation. By combining targeted industrial policy, logistics investments such as the Tangier Med port, and aggressive expansion of renewables, Morocco has become a leading vehicle exporter to Europe and is positioning itself as an electric-vehicle and battery hub powered increasingly by solar and wind. Benin, by contrast, has focused on turning geography into a logistics asset—modernising the Port of Cotonou, which channels roughly 90 percent of its foreign trade and generates a large share of customs revenues, and investing in inland dry-port and “backbone” projects to better connect to Niger and other Sahelian markets. Ethiopia has pursued yet another model, using industrial parks, export-oriented light manufacturing, and digital platforms such as Zemen GEBEYA—integrated into the telebirr SuperApp—to link export-grade production more directly to domestic consumers and support a broader digital economy strategy.

Rwanda's services- and branding-led strategy—anchored in tourism, conferences, and a push into knowledge-intensive activities—remains a reminder that institutional signaling and intentional model-building can be as important as sectoral choice. None of these national approaches is replicable wholesale, and each contains its own vulnerabilities. However, together, they underscore a core lesson for 2026: states that are clear about the economy they are trying to build, and disciplined in aligning institutions and incentives with that vision, fare better than those which simply inherit or import a model.

In this environment, the old dichotomy between “market-oriented” and “state-led” models is of decreasing analytical use. Market-friendly reforms around macro-stability, competition, and investment climate remain essential, but so do capable public institutions that can coordinate infrastructure, manage natural resources, reduce inequalities and provide social protection at scale.

One structural variable conspicuously absent from most comparative development model discussions is monetary architecture. The development options available to the fifteen countries of the UEMOA and CEMAC zones, accounting for a large share of francophone Africa, are materially conditioned by their membership in the CFA franc system: a fixed peg to the euro, a French Treasury guarantee, and monetary policy set in a framework that prioritises external stability over counter-cyclical flexibility. The ongoing debate over a potential transition to the ECO, and broader questions about monetary sovereignty in West Africa, are not merely technical matters. They determine the exchange rate tools, the inflation management options, and the external financing constraints available to governments pursuing industrial policy. A continent-wide development model conversation that does not engage with monetary architecture is, by design, incomplete.

2. The AfCFTA as an Industrial Transformation Project



The African Continental Free Trade Area is often described in technical trade language, like tariff schedules, rules of origin, and non-tariff barriers. Yet, at its most ambitious, the AfCFTA is a project for continental industrial transformation, designed to break the pattern in which Africa exports raw materials and imports manufactured goods.

The AfCFTA creates a single market of 1.4 billion people, rising to 1.7 billion with projected consumer and business spending of \$6.7 trillion by 2030³. At that scale, African manufacturers and processors can achieve the economies of scale that have historically required access to foreign markets. This single market means regional value chains become viable. Intra-African trade is projected to increase by more than 50 percent by 2030, and the agreement has been estimated to lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035⁴. These are upper-bound estimates conditional on full implementation, and they should be read as such. As of early 2026, only 19 countries are actively trading under AfCFTA rules, Phase II services negotiations remain stalled, and customs harmonisation is incomplete in most regional corridors. The gap between treaty ambition and operational reality is not a reason for pessimism, but it is a reason for precision: the AfCFTA's transformative potential is real and the institutional pathway to realising it is the central governance challenge of the decade.

Morocco's automotive and EV clusters, Tunisia's and Ethiopia's textile and apparel parks, and South Africa's and Rwanda's growing pharmaceutical and services niches all point to the types of regional value chains that the AfCFTA could scale if rules of origin, infrastructure, and regulatory regimes align. Benin's logistics upgrades and its role as a gateway for Sahelian trade, including cotton transformation and corridor development, illustrate how smaller economies can position themselves as indispensable nodes in those chains rather than peripheral suppliers of raw materials.

However, these projections are not self-executing. The AfCFTA's design presupposes levels of physical and digital connectivity that much of the continent does not yet possess. Road, rail, energy, and port systems remain fragmented, and the countries that already have the most advanced infrastructure and industrial capabilities are best placed to capture early gains, potentially widening disparities if lagging regions do not receive targeted support.

³ Signé Landry, "Unlocking Africa's Business Potential: Trends, Opportunities, Risks, and Strategies", Brookings Institution Press, 2020.

⁴ World Bank, "Making the Most of the African Continental Free Trade Area", 2022.

The infrastructure gap is not simply a technical problem. As noted earlier, African governments spend far more servicing debt than investing in infrastructure. Doubling annual investment from \$83 billion to \$155 billion could double Africa's GDP before 2040 and accelerate growth by 4.5 percentage points annually, exceeding the African Union's own Agenda 2063 target of 7 percent growth⁵. This scale of investment requires a combination of domestic resource mobilisation, reformed public-private partnerships, and international finance on terms that African governments can actually sustain. Financial support and technical assistance will be essential if the AfCFTA's benefits are to be widely shared rather than captured by the continent's most developed economies.

Closely related is the cost of capital problem. African sovereigns borrowing from international capital markets face yields that have averaged around 9.8 percent between 2020 and 2024, compared to concessional multilateral rates typically ranging from 1 to 3 percent. An absolute spread of 700 to 900 basis points that translates into structurally higher debt-service burdens (30 African countries spend more on interest payments than on public health), compressed fiscal space, and a chronic underinvestment in the productive assets that would, over time, reduce that very risk premium. This differential is not primarily a reflection of objective credit risk: it also embeds structural biases in rating methodologies, thin secondary markets, currency mismatch penalties, and the absence of sufficiently large and patient institutional investors in African sovereign debt. The AU-approved Africa Credit Rating Agency (AfCRA), is a deliberate attempt to create a more context-sensitive counterweight to existing rating oligopolies. But AfCRA will only make a difference if its assessments are seen as independent and credible by investors and if they feed into broader reforms of the global financial architecture, including how regulatory frameworks treat African exposure.

⁵ OECD, "Africa Development Dynamics", 2025.

⁷ UNCTAD, "A world of debt report", 2025.

3. Beyond Manufacturing: Services, Digitalisation, and “Industries Without Smokestacks”

For most of the post-independence era, the implicit assumption in African development policy was that industrialisation meant manufacturing. That assumption has now been substantially revised. A framework now described as “industries without smokestacks” identifies tourism, business services, agro-processing, horticulture, ICT, and modern transport as viable and often superior growth pathways. Research shows these sectors collectively carry average productivity several multiples of traditional agriculture, and an estimated employment elasticity of 1.2, higher than both the overall economy and manufacturing sector. Between 2005 and 2022, Africa’s services exports grew more than 1.5 times faster than merchandise exports, and services now account for roughly a quarter of Africa’s total export earnings⁸. Taken together, these trends underline the tangible benefits of broader economic diversification.



Digital transformation accelerates this shift. The language of e-government has become nearly universal among African policymakers, and for understandable reasons. Digital platforms allow citizens to access services, submit applications, make payments, and interact with the government at far lower cost than traditional delivery systems. Kenya’s M-Pesa remains the most cited global model of mobile money and financial inclusion, demonstrating that Africa doesn’t need to follow existing technology trajectories but can leapfrog them entirely. The mobile money ecosystem has brought financial services to populations that traditional banking never reached, and the model has proven replicable across multiple African markets.

⁸ Brookings Institution, “Foresight Africa 2026 report”, 2026.

Research on “industries without smokestacks” indicates that, in many African countries, these sectors exhibit employment elasticities higher than the economy-wide average, making them powerful potential engines for youth job creation if constraints around skills, logistics, and regulation are addressed.



There are two structural risks that enthusiasm for digital governance frequently underplays. The first is authoritarian capture. Without robust legal frameworks protecting data, digital infrastructure can strengthen state surveillance capacities rather than enhance services and accountability. The collection of citizen data at scale, the monitoring of financial transactions through mobile money systems, and the integration of digital identity with government databases all create tools that can be turned against the populations they were designed to serve. Regulatory frameworks to govern these risks remain nascent in most African countries.

The second risk is the digital divide. Access to digital government services is not evenly distributed. Rural populations, older citizens, the less educated, and women in societies with lower female digital literacy rates are systematically less likely to benefit from e-government initiatives and more likely to be excluded by them. A development model that accelerates services for connected urban populations while leaving others further behind is not a solution to Africa’s governance challenges.

A forward-looking development model for 2026 cannot treat digitalisation as a purely technocratic add-on. It must deliberately design around these risks through data-protection regimes, competition policy, targeted investments in rural connectivity and basic digital skills—if the celebrated “leapfrog” is not to become a new form of stratification.

4. A New Financial Architecture and African Ownership in Its Emergence



Beneath these sectoral models lies a quieter but consequential shift in how African governments finance development and position themselves in the global system. The post-independence decades were marked by aid-centric partnerships in which access to finance, trade, and security guarantees was largely mediated through externally designed frameworks. At present that landscape is more crowded and more contested: concessional aid is declining in relative importance even as debt-service pressures rise; China, the Gulf States, India, and Turkey have become major players; and African institutions themselves are experimenting with new instruments.

Green finance presents both an opportunity and a test. Africa's natural assets, from the carbon sequestration of the Congo Basin outward, represent genuine global value that has historically been underpriced. Green bonds, carbon markets, and debt-for-nature swaps are now being deployed as development financing instruments. They will only deliver commensurate benefit if African governments can negotiate from institutional strength rather than fiscal desperation.

Strategic autonomy, in this context, is not simply the ability to choose between partners. It is the capacity to enforce the terms of the choice.

The same discipline applies to resource-backed financing arrangements with external partners, including China, the Gulf States, and others whose engagement with the continent has grown substantially. These partnerships can deliver infrastructure and investment that would otherwise be unavailable. They can also constrain future policy space in ways that are not fully understood at the point of agreement. The institutional capacity to structure these deals well is itself a development priority.

External financing discussions, indispensable as they are, risk crowding out the more fundamental domestic revenue question. Africa's average tax-to-GDP ratio stands at approximately 15 to 17 percent, compared to 33 to 35 percent in OECD economies. This structural gap is not primarily a technical problem: it reflects political economy constraints on taxing elites, large informal sectors, commodity revenue volatility, and transfer pricing in extractive industries that systematically undervalues taxable output at source. Every percentage point of additional domestic revenue mobilised is a percentage point less structural dependence on external creditors, and a percentage point more policy autonomy. Reforms to tax administration, property taxation, digital economy taxation, and the curtailment of illicit financial flows, estimated at \$88 billion annually by the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows, are therefore not complementary to the development model debate: they are its fiscal foundation.

APO's Take

In 2026, Africa's development models remain plural, experimental, and contested. Their success will depend less on adherence to any imported doctrine than on concrete capabilities: the quality of institutions, the credibility of fiscal and monetary frameworks, the depth of regional integration, and the ability to mobilise and allocate capital at the scale that demographic and urban transitions demand.



The AfCFTA offers a realistic framework for industrial and services-led transformation, but only if infrastructure gaps and cost-of-capital constraints are tackled head-on and if policy deliberately prevents gains from being concentrated solely in a handful of relatively advanced economies. Digital governance can improve state capacity and service delivery, but only if data-rights, competition, and inclusion are treated as first-order design questions rather than after-thoughts. Emerging financial instruments and institutions—from green bonds to AfCRA—can reduce dependence on traditional aid, but without domestic reforms they risk adding new layers of complexity to an already fragile debt landscape.

The central challenge for African governance in this decade is therefore not to choose a single “model” but to ensure coherence: that trade, industrial, digital, and financial strategies reinforce rather than undercut one another, and that the benefits of growth reach the citizens whose expectations especially those of a young, restless generation are rapidly and visibly rising by the extent to which they expand people’s real freedoms under the hard constraints of the current global order.





III. AFRICA ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

For decades, Africa's relationship with the rest of the world was defined by asymmetry: aid-dependent governance, extractive trade patterns, and structural exclusion from the institutions that wrote the rules of the international order. The continent was spoken about, negotiated over, or mobilised as a theatre for proxy competition, but rarely treated as a sovereign agenda-setter. That architecture is now fracturing.

In 2026, Africa is more consequential to global decision-making than at any point since independence, but consequential is not the same as influential. AU membership in the G20 has provided formal entry into one of the principal steering committees of the global economy. In practice, however, African positions on debt architecture, capital regulation, climate finance, and trade rules have yet to shift outcomes in these forums in ways commensurate with the continent's demographic weight or its centrality to the green transition's supply chains. The distinction between being an object of great-power competition and being an agent of structural rule-setting is precisely the governance challenge that African institutions must bridge over this decade.

Africa now sits at the epicentre of competition over critical minerals, trade corridors, energy-transition supply chains, digital infrastructure, and geopolitical alignment. Sub-Saharan Africa holds around 30 percent of the world's proven critical mineral reserves, with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) alone providing over 70 percent of global cobalt output and South Africa, Gabon and Ghana jointly producing over 60 percent of global manganese. Yet most of these resources are still exported in raw or minimally processed form, reinforcing old dependency patterns even as new opportunities emerge.

Three structural shifts define Africa's external landscape in 2026 :



A sharp contraction and politicisation of external finance and development assistance, forcing a re-think of fiscal planning and social compacts across multiple states.



Intensifying competition for strategic assets and minerals, where African governments can in principle negotiate better terms but face heightened risks of elite capture, regulatory failure, and external backlash.



A fragmented mediation and security architecture, in which new brokers—Gulf States, BRICS members, private military actors—are increasingly influential while continental and regional organisations struggle with mandate, resources, and cohesion.

The strategic question for 2026 is no longer whether Africa is included in global decision-making—it is. The question is whether it is included on terms that preserve institutional legitimacy, fiscal sovereignty, and long-term development autonomy.

1. The U.S.–Africa Relationship: from Assistance Shock to Transactionalism

The Trump administration's 2025–2026 restructuring of US development assistance has effectively gutted the traditional USAID model, even if the agency has not been formally abolished. Washington has terminated roughly 90 percent of USAID's multiyear foreign assistance contracts, cutting around 54–60 billion dollars in planned aid and placing thousands of staff on forced leave while programmes are frozen or folded into the State Department. This comes on top of a broader tightening of Western aid budgets: France reduced its 2024–2025 official development assistance (ODA) by more than 1 billion dollars and the United Kingdom has cut nearly 1 billion dollars, even as African countries face rising humanitarian and climate-related needs.

For African governments which had integrated donor flows into core state functions—health procurement, HIV and TB programmes, sub-national service delivery, and civil-society ecosystems—the shock has been immediate and structural rather than cyclical. Modelling by African Futures and partners suggests that a 20 percent reduction in aid flows, consistent with the scale of cuts currently under way, could push an additional 5.7 million Africans below the international extreme-poverty line within a year. This is occurring in a context where nearly three-in-five persons on the continent already live in countries that spend more on interest payments than on health or education.

In 2026, Washington's Africa posture is shaped less by governance conditionality and more by strategic competition with China, supply-chain security, and domestic political signalling. US engagement on critical minerals illustrates this shift. Sub-Saharan Africa holds about 30 percent of global critical mineral reserves; the DRC, Zambia, Guinea and others have become central to US efforts to diversify away from China's dominance in cobalt and copper refining, mainly through offtake agreements and state-backed trade finance rather than traditional project ownership.

Trade policy reflects the same transactional turn. After expiring in September 2025, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was only restored



in early 2026 through a short one-year extension to December 31, 2026, retroactive to the lapse. The brief legal gap, and the short horizon of the renewal, created months of uncertainty for African exporters and signalled that trade preferences are now an instrument of leverage rather than a stable foundation for industrial planning.

Against this backdrop, US diplomacy has become deeply entangled with security and minerals in the Great Lakes. A US- and Qatar-backed peace track contributed to a framework agreement between the DRC government and Rwanda-backed M23 rebels, signed in Doha and Washington, with implementation monitored by the United States, Qatar, the African Union and Togo. These agreements unfold in parallel with US efforts to secure cobalt and copper offtake from the DRC, underlining the degree to which conflict resolution and supply-chain politics are now fused.

2. China–Africa: From Infrastructure Expansion to Industrialisation, Minerals and Normative Power

China remains Africa’s most consequential economic partner. It is the continent’s largest bilateral trading partner, with China–Africa trade reaching around 280 billion dollars in 2023. But the relationship is entering a qualitatively different phase. The 2024 Beijing FOCAC summit and the 2025–2027 FOCAC Action Plan mark a pivot away from large, state-backed sovereign infrastructure loans towards more diversified support for industrial parks, green energy, digital infrastructure and critical minerals value chains. Beijing has pledged tens of billions of dollars for clean-energy projects, electric-vehicle supply chains and digital connectivity, positioning itself as a partner for Africa’s energy transition as well as its industrialisation.

At the same time, the composition of Chinese capital in Africa has shifted. Private and quasi-private firms now account for around 70 percent of Chinese companies and investment on the continent, moving the relationship from purely state-to-state financing towards commercially-driven engagement that is harder for African regulators to monitor and govern. This creates new opportunities—jobs, manufacturing capacity, integration into global value chains—but also new challenges around labour standards, local-content enforcement, tax compliance, and dispute resolution.



Debt is at the centre of this transition. Several African countries are simultaneously restructuring bilateral debts to China and grappling with the limitations of the G20 Common Framework, under which countries such as Zambia, Chad, Ethiopia and Ghana have faced slow, complex and often incomplete restructurings. While opacity and elite capture remain serious risks in bilateral renegotiations, these moments also create openings to institutionalise transparency norms—publishing loan terms, standardising contracts, embedding parliamentary scrutiny—that can outlast individual deals.

The deeper shift is normative. Through its Global Development, Global Security and Global Civilization Initiatives, China is advancing a governance model explicitly presented as an alternative to Western conditionality. These initiatives are now woven into FOCAC platforms through party-to-party exchanges, governance-training programmes and security cooperation, including commitments to bring 1,000 African political party officials to China for governance exchanges and to build China–Africa governance and knowledge networks. African elites are thus socialised into Chinese policy frames at scale, even as African publics often remain more ambivalent.

China's dominance in refining and processing critical minerals further shapes Africa's development options. Sub-Saharan Africa holds around 30 percent of proven critical mineral reserves, while the DRC alone accounts for more than 70 percent of global cobalt output and a large share of reserves. Chinese companies are central players in these supply chains, from mining in the DRC and Zambia to processing and cathode production in China, and are expected to control an even larger share of global cobalt supply by 2030. Whether African states can leverage this position to secure local processing, technology transfer and employment, rather than simply exporting raw ore, will help determine if the green transition becomes an engine of African industrialisation or a new iteration of enclave extraction.

Assessment

The strategic test vis-à-vis China is not whether African governments “choose sides”, but whether they move from being resource exporters to contract enforcers. What China offers is substantial; what African states derive from those offers depends on the quality of their negotiating capacity, regulatory institutions, and enforcement mechanisms—and on their willingness to publish, scrutinise and, when necessary, litigate.

3. Gulf States, Proxy Dynamics, and the Fracture of Africa's Security Architecture



Gulf States engagement in Africa has evolved from opportunistic investment into a strategic, long-horizon presence across ports, logistics corridors, agribusiness, energy and emerging technologies along the Red Sea, the Horn Africa and the Sahel. This brings liquidity, infrastructure acceleration and new mediation venues, but also governance concerns: contract opacity, concentrated control of critical assets, and exposure to rivalries projected onto African soil.

Qatar's role in the Great Lakes region illustrates both the opportunity and the risk. In 2025, Doha hosted multiple rounds of talks that, alongside US facilitation, culminated in a framework peace agreement between the DRC government and the M23 rebel movement, with implementation jointly supported by Qatar, the United States, the African Union and Togo. These tracks moved faster and convened more senior principals than the African Union and some sub-regional initiatives, demonstrating the convening power of new mediators but also sidelining existing AU and regional processes in the short term.

Sudan embodies the starkest warning about the consequences of ungoverned external competition on African territory. By early 2025, the United Nations was describing Sudan as the world's largest and fastest-growing displacement crisis, with over 9 million people uprooted internally and more than 4 million having fled across borders. Around 21–25 million Sudanese—roughly half the population—are facing acute food insecurity, and famine has been reported in parts of Darfur and Kordofan. A range of regional and extra-regional actors provide support to rival armed groups, turning Sudan's territory into a battleground for influence while civilians bear the cost.



In West Africa, the Alliance of Sahel States—Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger—has formalised its withdrawal from ECOWAS and created its own security and economic bloc, after years of sanctions and disputes with the regional body. The alliance's deepening security ties with Russia's rebranded Africa Corps provide immediate hard-security benefits, but the long-term impact on governance, economic integration and civilian protection remains uncertain. The formalised exit from ECOWAS is simultaneously a rupture in West Africa's regional economic integration architecture, a challenge to the UEMOA monetary framework, and a potential fracture in the AfCFTA's contiguous market logic across the Sahel corridor. Trade flows between alliance members and coastal ECOWAS economies, including critical agricultural, livestock, and transit trade, face growing uncertainty. The long-term implications for UEMOA membership, for CFA franc zone cohesion, and for the viability of the Abidjan-Lagos and Dakar-Bamako-Niamey corridors as AfCFTA trade axes are not yet fully assessed .

Assessment

External mediation and security partnerships are not inherently damaging; they can be necessary and productive. The governance imperative is to ensure that they reinforce, rather than replace, continental and regional frameworks—through clear institutional liaison with the AU and RECs, predictable financing for African-led missions, and performance metrics and sunset clauses that make accountability possible.

4. Debt, Capital Costs, and the Multilateral Governance Agenda

Africa's global agenda in 2026 is increasingly centred on the cost of capital and on reforming the international debt architecture. This is because fiscal space has become a first-order governance and security issue, not a technocratic macroeconomic variable. More than a third of African countries now spend more on external debt service than on health, and in 2024 African governments were projected to allocate about 104 billion dollars to external debt payments—up from 85 billion in 2023. Globally, nearly three-in-five Africans live in countries that spend more on interest payments than on health or education. These trade-offs shape social stability, electoral risk, security-sector financing, and public trust in institutions. Leaders who treat debt as a technical matter separate from governance and legitimacy are misreading its political weight.

The G20 Common Framework, conceived as the main multilateral mechanism for resolving debt distress, has largely failed to deliver timely, predictable outcomes for African countries. Zambia, Chad, Ethiopia and Ghana have all entered the Framework, but restructurings has been slow, complex and partial, undermining confidence in the instrument. This is one reason why African leaders and experts increasingly argue that debt sustainability cannot be solved through the Common Framework alone.

At the first African Union Debt Conference in Lomé in May 2025, governments adopted a Lomé Declaration that calls for a profound revision of global debt rules. The declaration demands greater transparency in restructuring processes, coordinated participation by all creditor classes (including private bondholders), automatic suspension of debt service during negotiations, and recognition of partial or full cancellation as legitimate tools of economic justice rather than exceptional acts of charity. It also anchors external demands in domestic reforms—stronger debt management offices, full disclosure of liabilities (including state-owned enterprises), and a serious effort to curb illicit financial flows estimated at tens of billions of dollars annually.

On global governance reform, Africa's long-standing Ezulwini Consensus—demanding at least two permanent UN Security Council seats with veto power for Africa—has gained renewed salience as the AU enters the G20 and the **UN system prepares for its eightieth anniversary cycle**. Africa hosts nearly three quarters of all personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations, yet has no permanent representation on the body that authorises those missions. The unanimous adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2719 in December 2023, which opened the door for up to 75 percent of AU-led peace support

operations' budgets to be funded from UN assessed contributions, is the most significant structural advance in AU–UN burden-sharing in decades. Its operationalisation—how quickly and under what conditions African-led missions actually receive predictable funding—is a concrete near-term test of whether multilateral reform can align with African realities.

These agendas—debt architecture, cost of capital, and UNSC representation—share a common logic: Africa's structural under-representation in global institutions is not incidental; it is what allows extractive engagement and risk premiums to persist. Multilateral reform is sovereignty work. Africa's strongest long-term strategy remains internal scale: full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), infrastructure integration, and governance reforms that convert demographic and resource weight into genuine market power. As of early 2025, 48 countries had ratified AfCFTA and 19 were already trading under its rules; consolidating this momentum would create a 1.4-billion-person market with a combined GDP of about 3.4 trillion dollars. Reducing fragmentation is what will ultimately diminish the leverage that external partners currently derive from dealing with Africa as 54 separate markets.

APO's Take



Africa in 2026 is neither marginal nor passive. It is contested, courted and consequential. The continent lies at the intersection of some of the world's most urgent strategic contests—for critical minerals, for demographic and consumer markets, for geopolitical alignment, and for the narrative of what development and modernity will look like in the 21st century. Yet, increased centrality does not automatically translate into structural advantage.

Africa's leverage will depend less on how intensely external powers compete for access and more on the internal quality of African governance, contract enforcement, fiscal transparency, institutional coherence, and regional coordination. A continent that negotiates as fifty-four fragmented sovereignties will almost always concede more than it captures. A continent that builds the institutional infrastructure to act collectively—through the African Union in the G20 and the UN, through effective regional economic communities, through AfCFTA, and through coordinated debt diplomacy—commands a qualitatively different kind of power.

In a tougher global era, bargaining space exists. The decisive variable is whether African states convert that space into durable institutional strength, and whether the leaders gathered here are prepared to make the political choices that imply: investing in regulators and courts as seriously as in roads and ports; treating debt and security partnerships as constitutional questions; and insisting that every external engagement leaves behind stronger African institutions than previously existed.



V.

**GLOBAL LEADERS'
CONTRIBUTIONS
IN ENGLISH**



1. Reducing Africa's Cost of Capital: Moving from Bankability to Investability



Author



Eric Kouevi, Founder of Dzifa & Co

Africa's development debate still suffers from a familiar distortion. When infrastructure fails to materialise, when industrialisation stalls, or when strategic sectors remain underfinanced, the explanation defaults to a financing gap. The implication is simple : Africa needs more capital. However, that diagnosis is incomplete.

The continent does need more long-term capital. But it also needs something more demanding and more political : a financial environment in which capital can be deployed at the right price, over the right tenor, and under conditions that make productive assets genuinely investable. Africa does not only pay for risk. It pays for uncertainty that has never been properly allocated. The more consequential question is therefore not how to mobilise more capital, but why so much capital still fails to reach productive infrastructure and industrial assets on terms compatible with long-term transformation.

This is where the cost of capital becomes central. It is not a technical afterthought. It is one of the main variables determining whether infrastructure is delivered, whether industrial policy becomes operational, and whether the continent's economic sovereignty can move from ambition to execution.

Beyond the Financing Gap

The usual explanation for underperformance points to weak project preparation. There is truth in that. Many projects remain underprepared, poorly sequenced, or misaligned with the requirements of long-term finance. But project preparation has become an overly convenient diagnosis. A growing number of projects now achieve technical viability that should attract institutional capital: they have political backing, contractual structure, credible economic rationale, and support from development finance institutions. They are, in a narrow sense, bankable. Yet many still struggle to attract capital at a sustainable price.

This is where a more useful distinction emerges. Bankability is not the same as investability. A project may be bankable in the sense that it can be financed under certain conditions. It becomes investable only when long-term capital can commit with confidence in the visibility of returns, the enforceability of the structure, the treatment of foreign-exchange constraints, and the plausibility of eventual exit. A project can pass technical screening and still fail the only test that matters to long-term capital: whether investors can enter, stay, and exit on terms they can defend internally. Much of Africa's cost-of-capital problem lies precisely in the distance between these two categories. That gap remains one of the most consequential and still insufficiently addressed barriers to transformation.

Why the Premium Persists

The distance between bankability and investability is produced by the way risk is currently priced. In many African markets, project-level risk is still heavily contaminated by sovereign and macro-financial uncertainty. What is being priced is not only project risk, but a layered premium combining sovereign risk spillover, convertibility and transfer risk, market fragmentation, and exit uncertainty. Too many African assets are still treated as synthetic sovereign exposures, regardless of how robust the project structure may be.

The consequences are tangible. High cost of capital means shorter maturities, wider spreads, heavier covenants, higher return thresholds, and slower financial close. It reduces both the volume of viable transactions and the range of investors willing to participate. Recent IMF analysis suggests that,

once fundamentals are taken into account, the additional Africa risk premium is modest in normal times but rises materially in periods of stress, precisely when liquidity constraints and broad risk aversion dominate differentiation. Africa's Development Dynamics 2025 similarly notes that the weighted average cost of capital for infrastructure projects is materially higher in Africa than in developing Asia and OECD economies, even though the productivity payoff of well-chosen infrastructure can be substantial.

The result is not merely fewer transactions. Expensive capital means infrastructure is more costly to build, more costly to operate, and harder to scale, translating into higher logistics costs, slower digital expansion, weaker energy reliability, thinner industrial ecosystems, and greater dependence on imported inputs. The cost of capital is therefore not only a financial variable. It is one of the channels through which macroeconomic vulnerability reproduces itself over time.

A question of Sovereignty

This is also, fundamentally, a question of sovereignty. Economic sovereignty is often framed in terms of political decision-making, resource control, or national development strategy. Those dimensions matter, but they are incomplete without financial executability. A country does not become economically sovereign because it announces an industrial strategy or adopts a local content policy. Sovereignty becomes substantive when it can finance the infrastructure, industrial capacity, and productive systems that make those strategies real. If productive assets remain trapped behind structurally high risk premia, sovereignty remains constrained by external pricing frameworks that do not reflect domestic development priorities or differentiated fundamentals.

This is particularly visible in the critical minerals debate. Africa's strategic relevance to the global energy transition is now widely acknowledged. But resource endowment does not automatically produce economic gain. If the continent cannot finance the energy systems, logistics corridors, processing facilities, and supplier ecosystems that translate mineral extraction into value addition, the bulk of the upside will continue to be captured elsewhere. Resource sovereignty without financial executability yields extraction, not transformation.

Four Shifts are now Required

Reducing Africa's cost of capital requires a shift from a narrow bankability agenda to a broader investability architecture. Four elements are required.



Project Preparation Must become Execution Discipline.

There is still substantial room to improve project screening, feasibility work, procurement credibility, contract standardisation, and implementation readiness. Investors fund execution, not declarations. A pipeline that is politically endorsed but operationally weak will continue to carry a heavy premium regardless of headline economics. New Africa-led coordination platforms can help narrow this gap in two complementary ways : by improving the link between political approval and financial execution, as the recent Africa Infrastructure Financing Facility established under the AUDA-NEPAD and AAMFI cooperation framework is designed to do for projects aligned with Agenda 2063 ; and by improving investment transparency and pipeline comparability, as the AU-OECD Africa Virtual Investment Platform (AVIP) aims to provide. Such platforms are necessary, but they address one part of the problem. Preparation alone cannot solve the wider investability question if the surrounding financial environment remains too uncertain.



FX and Transfer Risk must Become more Predictable.

This is where the largest share of the current premium sits. Private capital does not require the elimination of risk. It requires that risk be legible, governable, and priceable. The problem in many African markets is less the existence of FX stress than the uncertainty surrounding how it will be managed when it arrives. Where investors cannot trust that convertibility, transfer, and tariff treatment will survive a change of government, a balance-of-payments shock, or administrative pressure, they revert to the sovereign lens, however robust the project may look on paper.

Benin offers a useful illustration of how pricing credibility is built under stress rather than in comfort. During the Covid shock, the authorities chose not to participate in the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, explicitly citing concerns about investor perception and future market access. That decision did not remove sovereign risk. But it reinforced a signal of policy continuity at a moment when investors were closely watching sovereign

behaviour under pressure. Benin has since attracted strong international market demand and seen rating momentum improve, evidence that credibility built during stress carries durable pricing value over time.

What follows from this is a more rules-based approach: transparent eligibility criteria for strategically important infrastructure; clear ex ante treatment of convertibility and transfer in stress scenarios; explicit but capped contingent support mechanisms; reserve-linked triggers; governance rules that reduce arbitrary treatment. None of this removes risk. It makes risk measurable and therefore priceable, a distinction that is decisive for long-term investors whose challenge is not only project return, but return capture in hard currency.

African Institutional Capital must move from Observer to Participant.

The continent already holds large and growing pools of long-term savings. Yet pension funds and insurers remain under-allocated to infrastructure in many markets, not only because of prudential rules but because the product architecture (the available vehicles, reporting frameworks, and governance structures) is still too weak for fiduciary purposes. This is not only a financing problem. It is also an exit problem. Africa's infrastructure challenge is not only a pipeline problem; it is an exit architecture problem. A more investable infrastructure market requires natural long-term holders, particularly at the operational phase. Domestic and regional institutional investors should increasingly play that role through project bonds, infrastructure debt vehicles, listed structures, and regional allocation frameworks that permit prudent diversification. Without these exit pathways, international investors will continue to demand higher entry premia for assets that are fundamentally difficult to recycle, and the continent will remain too dependent on entry capital, too weak in capital recycling.

Infrastructure Finance must be Reconnected to Productive Transformation.

Infrastructure should not be financed as an isolated asset class detached from the real economy. Power, transport, logistics, digital systems, water, and industrial land are not neutral assets. They shape competitiveness, employment intensity, and the economy's capacity to absorb shocks. The cost of capital debate should therefore be tied explicitly to productivity, industrialisation, and job creation. Lowering the cost of capital for productive infrastructure is not merely about completing more transactions. It is about reducing the financing penalty attached to structural transformation. When infrastructure is linked to industrial clusters, local supplier development, and digital trade corridors, it creates a broader political constituency for continuity

and performance. Infrastructure finance is not external to governance. It is one of the ways governance becomes economically visible.

Conclusion

A more investable Africa would not be one in which risk disappears. It would be one in which risk is better distinguished, better governed, and more proportionately priced. Projects would be prepared to stronger standards. FX and transfer treatment would be more predictable. Exit routes would be clearer. Local and regional capital would play a larger role. And more projects would move from one-off financings to repeatable investment propositions, generating not merely more capital flow, but capital flow that transmits into productivity, employment, and long-term growth.

The central challenge is no longer simply to mobilise more capital. It is to reduce the premium attached to uncertainty still too often treated as inevitable, and to build the institutional and financial architecture through which productive assets move from bankability to investability. That is where governance, sovereignty, and finance now converge.

Bankability is necessary. It is no longer sufficient.

2. Beyond the Security Trap: Rethinking International Engagement in the Sahel Region



Author



Sibille de Cartier, Ambassador Special Envoy Sahel of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Sahel has a millennia-old history and a young, resilient, and dynamic population, which together represent tremendous assets. Today, it faces major, mutually reinforcing challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, terrorism, transnational organized crime or migration. Successive coups d'État, particularly in the central Sahel, have also impacted international cooperation. Moreover, the situation in Sudan—currently experiencing “the world’s largest humanitarian crisis,” as recently highlighted by Belgium’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maxime Prévot—further complicates the regional landscape, particularly for neighbouring Chad.

A stable and prosperous Sahel would benefit its population, the broader region stretching from the Gulf of Guinea to North Africa, as well as Europe. Today’s priority must be to work on the fundamentals that enable a coordinated response to these multifaceted challenges. Rebuilding the trust between all actors is both essential and urgent, just as is redesigning a regional architecture capable of responding to the region’s needs. With the adoption of its renewed approach last October, the European Union has equipped itself with a strategy integrating continued dialogue, human security, and socioeconomic resilience. However, this approach can only reach its full potential if it supports a concerted regional vision. In this context, the efforts undertaken by several regional actors—notably Ghana and the African Union—to overcome bilateral and regional tensions and to relaunch cooperation deserve to be supported.

Belgium, both bilaterally and as a member of the European Union, remains a committed partner to the populations of the region. Through our diplomatic engagement, we aim to maintain a dialogue. The goal is not to

agree on everything but to work together on shared goals. Through Enabel, our development agency, we support youth and social cohesion, climate adaptation, access to basic services, and food security, in close coordination with decentralised authorities. We ensure that technological innovations are mobilised in our response, for example in the context of climate adaptation or food security. It is clear that any effective response must address the deep structural root causes that currently fuel tensions between communities and facilitate the recruitment efforts of terrorist armed groups.

The sovereignist discourse in the region and beyond is rooted in a search for dignity and the reclaiming of one's future—an aspiration that is legitimate. Every crisis offers opportunities. In a Sahel that responds to the aspirations of its people, a virtuous circle can be rooted in a past whose traditions and history inspire the present, strengthened by a society rich in its diversity and youth, fueled by innovation placed at the service of development and by an inclusive and peaceful approach, strengthened by complementarity and cooperation between neighbouring countries, and by respectful, mutually beneficial international partnerships. As Mandela once said. "It always seems impossible, until it is done".

3. The Role of Political Foundations in Strengthening Democratic Governance in Africa



Author



Olaf Wientzek, Director of the Multinational Development Policy Dialogue, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)

Democracy is more than just a properly conducted, free and fair election day. The strengthening of democratic structures, a democratic political culture, democratic consciousness, and an inclusive political dialogue between election dates are equally and probably even more important. Political foundations, such as the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), are called upon to address exactly these aspects of the democratic process. Therefore, they have a decisive role to play in the enhancement of democratic governance on a global level, but notably also in Africa via various programmes. Supporting the establishment and consolidation of functioning democratic structures and processes is a key objective of KAS, focusing on key areas of democratic development: cooperation with political parties, strengthening representative political institutions, the promotion of sustainable economic development, the enhancement of rule-of-law institutions, support for independent media, and the facilitation of political and interreligious dialogue, but equally the support of Social Market Economy. The long-term commitment to democracy, the rule of law, civil society, and the principles of social market economy form a comprehensive field of action. The foundation – present on the African continent since the 1960s - pursues this goal primarily through its current network of 18 offices in the region which cover various dimensions of enhancement of democratic governance and involves political decision-makers, party officials, civil society actors, entrepreneurs, media professionals, think tanks, and religious leaders. KAS is supporting democracy and democratic governance in various ways:

Support of Free and Independent Media

Given that freedom of the press and the freedom of expression are central pillars of democracy, KAS – i.a. through its Media Programme Sub-Sahara Africa - aims at enhancing the role of free and independent media and improve the framework under which journalists work. This includes the support of education of journalism students and the professional development of journalists, the strengthening of media law, a strong commitment to a free and independent press and the professionalization of political communication. In this work, however, KAS sees itself as a facilitator and enabler, supporting journalists in covering the topics they consider important, while not becoming involved in the content of the journalistic work.

Supporting Rule of Law and Accountability

The KAS Rule of Law Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa strengthens legal/judicial systems, promotes judicial independence, and supports democracy through tailored dialogue, conferences, and capacity-building. Its work focuses primarily on promoting and protecting the independence of the judiciary, constitutionalism, human rights, and regional integration which we consider essential for political stability, economic development, and social cohesion. In addition, KAS has supported the enhancement of human rights monitoring and evidence-based advocacy, i.a. in Uganda in the context of the EU-funded project «Human Rights – Our Concern».

Strengthening Societal Resilience in Fragile and Conflict-prone Contexts

Institutions and democracy can also be undermined by a lack of trust between citizens, local authorities and security actors. Therefore, i.a., through its security policy programmes in East and West Africa, KAS promotes dialogue between parliamentarians, security forces and experts. Since 2023, KAS also promotes trust-building measures between citizens, local authorities and security in the framework of an EU-funded project in the Senegalese region of Kédougou. Equally, KAS has supported reconciliation processes after protracted conflicts, for example via an EU-funded project “Great Lakes Youth Network for Dialogue and Peace” KAS strengthened youth initiatives as drivers of dialogue and peace in the Great Lakes region.

Working with Political Parties

A key distinguishing feature of political foundations are their close ties to political parties, both governing as well as opposition parties. Firstly, political foundations can make an important contribution by fostering networks among like-minded political parties across the African continent. This is

why the Regional Programme for Political Dialogue in Sub-Saharan Africa of KAS regularly co-organizes the Democracy Union of Africa (DUA) Forum which brings together centre-right political parties and provides a platform for democratic consolidation in Africa. KAS equally engages with the youth movement, the Young Democratic Union of Africa (YDUA). Secondly, KAS contributes to the empowerment of youth and women in political parties in Africa in order to promote their inclusion in the democratic processes of their home countries: For example, a two-year training course in the context of the KAS School for Young Politicians (KASYP) aims to motivate and qualify young political professionals in their political engagement. In the framework of the EU-funded “Women and Youth Democratic Engagement” (WYDE) political parties project, under the coordination of the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP), KAS, together with four other political foundations from Germany and Sweden, aims at fostering women's and youth leadership in political parties across East and West Africa. Thirdly, KAS supports the capacity of political parties in the area of political communication, with a particular focus on strengthening their campaign capabilities.

Political foundations can also enable dialogue between the two continents not only on diplomatic, economic, and civil society levels, but also among like-minded actors who share fundamental political convictions. Strengthening the democracy dialogue between African countries and the EU, including its institutions and its member states is one of the key missions of the Multinational Development Policy Dialogue (MDPD) of KAS in Brussels: With the help of dialogue programmes, workshops, publications and briefings, KAS acts as bridge-builder between parliamentarians, politicians, civil society representatives, media and other relevant multipliers and decision-makers in the EU-institutions in order to promote mutual understanding and dialogue on key challenges for democratic governance. In addition, the MDPD of KAS regularly works with representatives in the EU institutions, particularly the European Parliament, to keep questions of governance in Africa high on the EU's agenda.

In the future, political foundations will continue to have a crucial role to play in supporting democracy and political dialogue but will have to face a number of different challenges. These will include:



Countering the increasing assertiveness of authoritarian actors and countries to undermine democratic processes.



Addressing the challenges through AI but also through disinformation campaigns – particularly by authoritarian powers - and their influence on trust in political institutions, the electoral process, media and its influence on the political discourse and societal trust as such.



Strengthening the ability of political parties and representative political institutions to address and effectively channel the demands and aspirations of an ambitious younger generation, which is calling for political change.



Responding to a continuously evolving political landscape within the European Union and globally, marked by shifting geopolitical dynamics, new alliances, and institutional frameworks.

Despite many differences, these challenges are common for both sides, African countries as well as the EU and its member states. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung – including the Multinational Development Policy Dialogue in Brussels – will therefore further enhance the exchange and support increased cooperation between African and European policy makers on these questions, on the levels of political institutions, civil society, academia, religious actors and most importantly political party representatives.

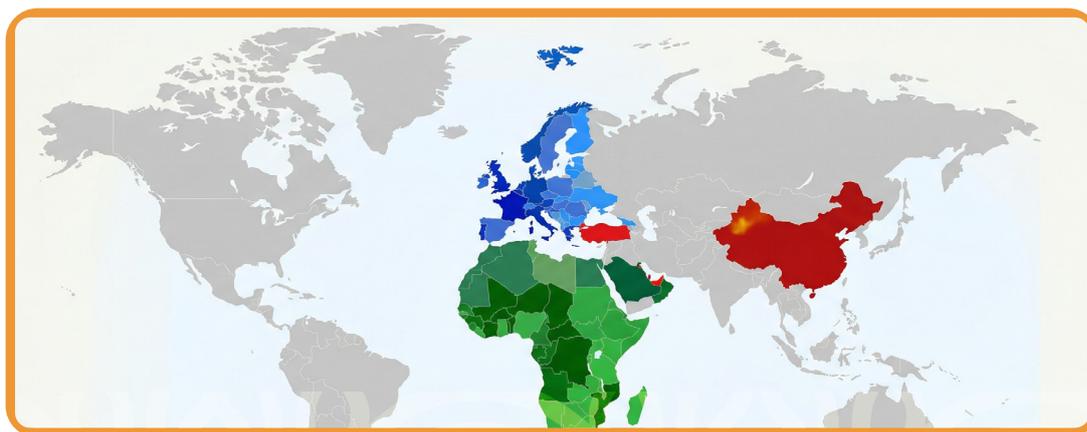
4 . Europe and Africa in 2026: Towards a New Geo-economic and Partnership Paradigm?



Author



Sylvie Matelly, Director of the Jacques Delors Institute



The relationship between Europe and Africa is currently undergoing a decisive shift. Long structured by development aid and economic asymmetries rooted in history, it is now entering a phase of redefinition driven by profound geo-economic transformations.

On the one hand, the rise of new actors—China, Turkey, and the Gulf countries—has significantly reshaped the balance of influence on the African continent. On the other hand, digital, energy, and demographic transitions are placing Africa at the heart of 21st-century growth dynamics. In this context, Europe can no longer position itself solely as a donor but must embrace the role of a strategic partner.

The Global Gateway initiative represents an important attempt to respond to

this evolution. By emphasizing sustainable infrastructure, local value chains, and long-term investment, it reflects Europe's ambition to offer a credible and more balanced alternative for relations between Europe and Africa. However, its success will depend on its ability to move beyond a supply-driven approach and engage in genuine co-construction with African partners.

This new Euro-African paradigm must therefore rest on three key conditions. First, full recognition of African interests, particularly in terms of industrialization, economic sovereignty, and job creation. Second, greater coherence between European trade, industrial, and development policies. Finally, renewed political commitment, grounded in trust, reciprocity, and a shared vision of global transitions.

At a time when geopolitical rivalries are intensifying, Europe and Africa have a unique opportunity: to make their relationship a driver of stability, shared prosperity, and influence in the reshaping of the global economic order. At a time when international law and the global order are increasingly challenged from all sides—threatening progress, stability, and peace on both continents—this partnership also carries a heightened responsibility.

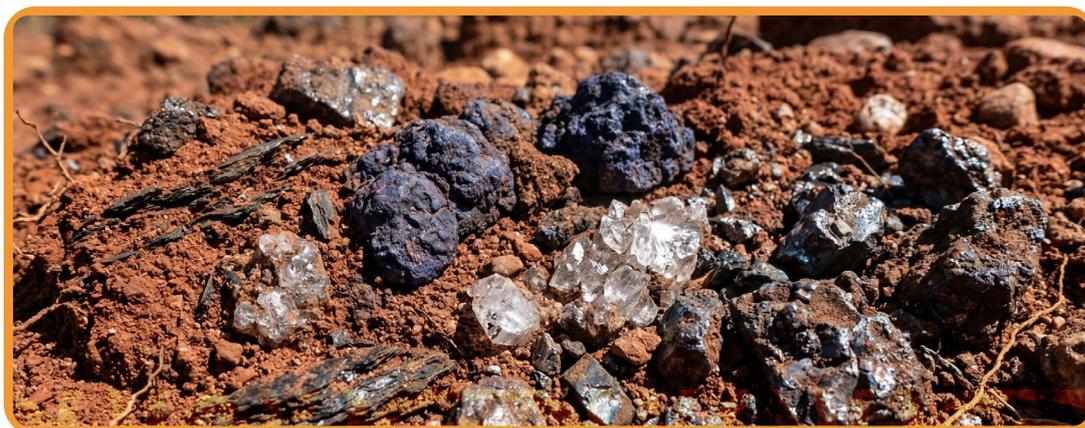
5. The Congolese Battery Council, Architect of Industrial Sovereignty in the Service of the Congolese People



Author



Denis Lecouturier, Director General, Congolese Battery Council



A Resource, A Responsibility: The Turning Point

There is something profoundly paradoxical about the situation of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Beneath its soil, this country holds more than 70% of the world's cobalt reserves, along with colossal quantities of lithium, manganese, nickel, and graphite – minerals that the entire world is frantically competing to secure in order to fuel the electric vehicle revolution and the global energy transition. Yet the vast majority of its inhabitants remain among the poorest on the planet, with a per capita income of less than \$600 per year.

This paradox – which development economists call the «paradox of abundance» or the «resource curse» – is not inevitable. It is explained by an accumulation of institutional failures over several decades, the conclusion of unbalanced contracts, and a mining sector organization that concentrated almost all added value outside the national territory.

It is precisely to break this curse that the Democratic Republic of Congo created the Congolese Battery Council (CBC). This institution, whose role is still insufficiently understood by the general public, very likely represents one of the most ambitious and structurally significant initiatives the country has ever undertaken. In a context where industrial powers and multinationals are waging a relentless economic war to secure their supply of critical minerals, the CBC positions itself as the armed wing of Congolese mining sovereignty, the guarantor of fair negotiation, and the master architect of the national economy's structural transformation.

What the CBC Is, and Why It Changes Everything

Created in 2022 at the initiative of the Congolese government, the Congolese Battery Council is a public body tasked with steering the value chain of strategic minerals related to energy storage technologies – foremost among them cobalt and lithium. Its fundamental mission is twofold:



On one hand, to support the implementation of mining agreements concluded with foreign partners, ensuring they generate tangible and lasting value for the Congolese population;



On the other hand, to create the conditions for local industrialization that will allow the DRC to stop exporting only raw materials and instead export higher value-added products.

This positioning is revolutionary. For decades, the DRC signed mining contracts under conditions of radical asymmetry. The result was predictable – agreements that handed over natural resources at derisory terms, leaving the country with minimal royalties, low-skilled jobs, and considerable environmental damage.

Local Added Value: The Heart of the Congolese Project

The CBC's deepest calling is to transform the Congolese economic model by driving industrial upgrading. The logic is simple, but its implications are revolutionary: if the DRC were to export not raw cobalt or copper concentrate, but refined battery chemicals or even battery components, the value captured on national territory would be multiplied by a factor of five to twenty

The difference between exporting a ton of raw cobalt and exporting a ton of cobalt sulfate — used directly in battery manufacturing — represents hundreds of millions of dollars in added value that would remain in Congo, creating skilled jobs, additional tax revenues, and ripple effects throughout the local economy.

To achieve this goal, the CBC is working on several levers simultaneously:



It **negotiates and supervises local content clauses** inserted into mining agreements, which require foreign partners to use local suppliers, train Congolese workers, and transfer technologies.



It **supports the development of specialized industrial zones**, particularly in the Greater Katanga region, where proximity to deposits offers obvious logistical advantages for mineral processing.



It **facilitates access to financing** for Congolese companies seeking to move up the industrial value chain, acting as an intermediary with development banks and institutional investors.

As an example, the framework agreement concluded as part of the strategic initiative between the DRC, Zambia, and various industrial partners to develop a regional battery value chain perfectly illustrates the stakes involved. This agreement provides not only for the extraction of minerals, but for their progressive transformation on African soil — all the way to the manufacture of cathode precursors and even battery cells. The success of this ambitious project depends entirely on the CBC's ability to coordinate stakeholders, structure financing, and create the conditions for a viable industrial ecosystem on the continent.

A Battery Diplomacy: Collaborating with Global Councils

One of the CBC's most strategic and least publicized assets lies in its ability to integrate into a global network of peer institutions sharing the same ambitions for industrial structuring around energy storage technologies. Around the world, several countries and regions have created their own bodies dedicated to the battery value chain and have made the battery industry a central pillar of their industrial policy.

In relation to these institutions, the CBC has made the strategic choice of active international cooperation. This approach rests on a fundamental conviction: in a sector as complex and capital-intensive as batteries, no single actor can succeed alone. Value chains are global, technical standards are international, and end markets are located mostly outside the African continent. For the DRC to capture a significant share of the value created in this industry, it must integrate intelligently into global networks while preserving and asserting its own interests.

In practical terms, the CBC's collaboration with its global counterparts takes several forms:



With the **European Battery Alliance**, the Council works to align the traceability and sustainability standards of Congolese minerals with the requirements of the European market – an indispensable prerequisite for accessing this premier market.



With **American institutions**, the CBC participates in discussions around the Minerals Security Partnership, which aims to diversify Western economies' supplies of critical minerals.



With **Asian structures**, particularly Korean and Japanese ones, technical exchanges are conducted to identify opportunities for technology transfer in the processing of cobalt and lithium.

This battery diplomacy involves exchanges of best practices in industrial governance, cross-training of technicians and engineers, study missions to countries that have successfully transitioned to a high-value-added mining industry, and collaborations in research and development.

The CBC thus positions itself as a **strategic node in a global network** – bringing what no one else can offer (access to the planet’s most critical resources) and receiving in return the knowledge, technologies, and capital that the DRC needs to industrialize its value chain.

It is this combination of **asserted sovereignty and strategic openness** that distinguishes the CBC from Congo’s mining institutions of the past.

Identifying and Promoting Investment Partnerships: A Vital Mission

If collaboration with global Councils constitutes the diplomatic dimension of the CBC’s strategy, the identification and promotion of investment partnerships constitutes its operational economic dimension. The industrial transformation of the Congolese mining value chain will not happen without massive investments – totaling tens of billions of dollars – in refining infrastructure, chemical processing, energy, and logistics.



The CBC plays here the role of a **specialized investment promotion agency**, unique of its kind, capable of presenting to potential investors a coherent, structured, and well-documented vision of the opportunities the DRC offers within the battery value chain.

This mission is of paramount importance, as international investors – whether sovereign wealth funds, private equity funds, automakers, or battery manufacturers – require certainty, reliable data, and credible institutional counterparts to make long-term investment decisions in environments perceived as high risk.

To fulfil this mission, the CCB has developed several complementary approaches. The first is the creation of **a precise and up-to-date map of investment opportunities**: which local transformation projects are

technically and economically viable? What infrastructure is required and at what cost? What returns can be expected based on different scenarios for mineral prices and developments in the battery market? This analytical database is an indispensable tool for engaging with sophisticated investors.

The second approach involves active participation in **major international investment and energy forums**: the World Economic Forum in Davos, the Africa CEO Forum summits, the Africa Political Outlook Summit, the Global Battery Alliance conferences, and events organised by development finance institutions such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank or the International Finance Corporation. In these arenas, the CCB acts as the DRC's voice, presents Congolese opportunities and forges the relationships that lead to investment partnerships

The third approach involves structuring **investment risk mitigation mechanisms** in collaboration with international financial institutions. Investing in the DRC entails real risks—political risks, infrastructure risks, regulatory risks—which private investors cannot absorb on their own. The CCB works to establish investment guarantees, political risk insurance, and public-private financing structures that make projects bankable whilst safeguarding Congolese interests. Institutions such as MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency) or the export credit agencies of partner countries are natural allies in this endeavour.

Finally, the CCB plays a crucial role in **promoting domestic and regional investment**. For whilst international capital is indispensable, the development of a sovereign industry also depends on the emergence of a network of Congolese entrepreneurs and investors capable of taking stakes in industrial projects, setting up service companies for the mining industry, and gradually forming a national industrial bourgeoisie. The Council supports this development by facilitating access to finance, structuring programmes to develop local suppliers, and creating opportunities for national investors and industrial project promoters to meet.

The geopolitical Lever: Negotiating from a Position of Strength

One of the CCB's least visible but most significant contributions is its ability to transform the **DRC's geopolitical position** in international negotiations. For a long time, the Congo negotiated alone, without consolidated data on its own resources, without specialised legal expertise, and without a long-term strategic vision. The result: every potential partner, wherever they came from, could dictate their own terms.

Today, the CCB is changing this equation. By aggregating data on reserves and developing in-house technical and legal expertise, the Council is

transforming the DRC into a **strategic player** capable of securing the best possible terms. This dynamic has been clearly demonstrated in discussions with the European Union as part of the strategic partnership on critical raw materials, as well as in negotiations with the United States regarding the Minerals Security Partnership. In both cases, the DRC has been able to assert its indispensable centrality in the global battery supply chain, and in return demand concrete commitments regarding industrial investment on its soil.

The message is now clear: the DRC no longer simply sells minerals. It negotiates **integrated industrial partnerships** designed to create sustainable value within its territory and for the benefit of its people.

The Challenges Ahead: Transparency as an Essential Prerequisite

It would, however, be intellectually dishonest to portray the CCB as a perfect institution operating in an ideal environment. The challenges are considerable. The first is that of **governance and transparency**. For the CCB to avoid the fate of institutions hijacked by private interests, it must operate according to high standards of accountability: regular publication of agreements, independent audits, and civil society participation in monitoring its mission.

The second challenge is that of **human and technical capacity**. Overseeing complex mining agreements, negotiating with seasoned multinationals, and steering a coherent industrialisation strategy requires rare skills: metallurgical engineers, lawyers specialising in international mining law, industrial economists, and experts in global value chains. Training and retaining such talent within the CCB is a major strategic challenge.

The third challenge is that of **inter-institutional coordination**. The CCB cannot succeed in its mission in isolation. It must work in concert with the relevant ministries, Gécamines, and provincial authorities, whilst building this coordination within a historically fragmented institutional context.

A Historic Window of Opportunity that must not be Missed

The global energy transition is creating unprecedented demand for the critical minerals held by the DRC. This demand will grow exponentially over the coming decades. For the DRC, this is a **historic window of opportunity** to transform its development trajectory. But windows of opportunity close: technologies evolve, alternative supply routes multiply, and competition intensifies. If the DRC does not capture the value of its resources now, this opportunity could be irretrievably lost.

This is where the CCB plays its most decisive role: **accelerating the implementation** of local transformation projects, deepening existing industrial partnerships, and creating the conditions for future agreements to be even more favourable to the DRC. Every month of delay in implementing industrial projects is a month of lost added value for the Congolese people.

Conclusion: an Institution Serving the Congolese People

Ultimately, the question raised by the existence of the Congolese Battery Council is simple: to whom do the riches of the Congolese subsoil belong, and who benefits from them? For too long, the de facto answer has been: foreign multinationals, elites disconnected from the realities of ordinary people, and distant lands. The CCB is the institutional instrument through which the DRC is attempting to provide a radically different answer to this fundamental question: this wealth belongs to the Congolese people, and it is the Congolese people who must benefit from it.

By collaborating with battery councils around the world, identifying and structuring ambitious investment partnerships, and driving the local industrialisation of the critical minerals value chain, the CCB is patiently laying the foundations for a transformed Congolese economy – an economy that creates skilled jobs, generates substantial tax revenue, and offers every Congolese citizen a fair share of their land's wealth.

If the CCB succeeds in its mission – transforming mineral resources into drivers of industrial, technological and human development – it is not only the DRC that will benefit. The entire African continent will see, once and for all, that it is possible to escape the trap of raw extraction and enter an era of economic sovereignty and shared prosperity.

The Congo has the resources. It now has the institution. All that remains is to maintain the collective determination – of its leaders, its citizens and its partners – to succeed in this historic endeavour.

6. The Strategic Imperative



Author



Pascal Agboyibor, CEO of Asafo & Co

Africa is entering a defining phase in its economic development. Long viewed primarily as a source of raw materials for global markets, the continent is increasingly shaping its own trajectory—seeking to translate resource wealth into long-term, sustainable growth.

At the heart of the global energy transition, Africa holds approximately 30% of the world's critical mineral reserves, including lithium, cobalt, copper, and rare earths—resources that are essential to decarbonization efforts worldwide. This creates a significant opportunity, estimated at up to \$16 trillion over the next two decades. At the same time, it brings familiar risks, particularly the challenge of ensuring that resource wealth leads to broad-based economic development.

We believe this moment calls for a shift in how these resources are governed: from models focused primarily on extraction to frameworks that support value creation, industrial development, and long-term national benefit. The conversation is evolving—from how Africa is supported, to how Africa engages as a strategic partner in shaping the global energy future.

As an international law firm dedicated to Africa-focused work that drives change and impact, ASAFO & CO. is committed to supporting governments, institutions, and investors in structuring arrangements that enable African countries to capture greater value from their natural resources.

Our Integrated Advisory Approach

The evolving landscape of critical minerals is defined not only by geology, but by geopolitics, regulation, and market transformation. Traditional approaches to mining are no longer sufficient on their own.

ASAFO & CO. has developed an integrated advisory approach that brings together mining law, international trade, public policy and energy transition considerations. This allows us to support clients on complex, cross-border matters and sovereign negotiations where legal, commercial, and strategic interests intersect.

Our work often involves assisting with the review, renegotiation, and modernization of existing mining frameworks—ensuring that agreements remain aligned with current economic priorities and market conditions. The objective is not disruption, but alignment: creating legal structures that are stable, investable, and reflective of today's realities.

A Measured Evolution in Regulatory Frameworks

Across the continent, governments are reassessing how best to manage their natural resources. This includes updates to mining codes, adjustments to fiscal terms, and, in some cases, policies aimed at encouraging local processing and value addition.

While these developments can raise questions for investors, they also reflect a broader effort to ensure that resource development contributes more directly to national economies. When carefully designed and implemented, such measures can provide greater clarity, improve long-term stability, and support more balanced partnerships.

We work with stakeholders on both sides to help navigate these changes—supporting regulatory frameworks that are transparent, predictable, and capable of attracting sustainable investment while delivering tangible benefits locally.

Beyond fiscal and regulatory considerations, mining also plays a critical catalytic role in broader economic development. As an inherently energy-intensive and logistics-driven industry, mining investment often drives the expansion of power generation capacity, the development of transport corridors, and the emergence of local supplier ecosystems.

In this respect, the sector can contribute directly to addressing several of the continent's structural challenges: expanding access to reliable energy, strengthening transport infrastructure and regional connectivity, and supporting the growth of local and regional SMEs. These dynamics are essential to building more diversified economies and fostering the next generation of African industrial champions.

Navigating a Multipolar Landscape

The global competition for access to critical minerals—particularly among the United States, China, the Middle East and the European Union—has reshaped the strategic environment. For African countries, this presents an opportunity to engage with a wider range of partners and to structure agreements that support broader economic objectives. In addition, regional integration frameworks, including the AFCFTA, OHADA and the Africa Union, are pushing African Governments towards greater cooperation and defining cross-border and pan African ecosystems.

In this context, we are seeing increased interest in models that combine resource access with infrastructure development, local capacity building, and technology transfer. When approached thoughtfully, these arrangements can help align the interests of governments and investors, while contributing to the development of domestic industrial ecosystems.

ASAFO & CO. supports clients in structuring such partnerships in a way that is commercially viable, legally robust, and responsive to long-term development goals.

Moving Up the Value Chain

A key question for the coming decade is how resource wealth can support greater economic diversification. Beyond extraction and initial processing, there is growing focus on advancing further along the value chain—whether through refining, manufacturing, or integration into global supply chains.

In practice, this transition is unlikely to occur uniformly across all jurisdictions. Instead, differentiated roles are likely to emerge, with certain countries positioning themselves as regional hubs for processing, transformation, or manufacturing, while others focus on extraction and upstream activities.

This dynamic highlights the importance of regional integration as a practical enabler of industrial development. Efficient value chains will depend on cross-border infrastructure, coordinated regulatory frameworks, and trade facilitation mechanisms that allow minerals to be processed and transformed across multiple jurisdictions. When structured effectively, this approach supports the emergence of regional industrial ecosystems rather than isolated national industries.

Achieving this will require coordinated efforts across legal, financial, and industrial policy frameworks, as well as sustained collaboration between governments and international partners.

We see our role as helping to facilitate these transitions—ensuring that legal and contractual structures support not only immediate investment, but also the development of integrated and commercially viable regional value chains.

Capturing and Managing Long-Term Value

Beyond extraction and industrial development, a central question is how the value generated from critical minerals is captured, managed, and redeployed over time.

This applies both to financial flows—through mechanisms such as sovereign wealth funds—and to the strategic management of physical resources, including the potential development of national or regional mineral reserves. Well-designed frameworks in this area can help address several structural challenges. First, they can mitigate the effects of price volatility by smoothing revenue cycles and enabling countercyclical investment. Second, they allow for a more accurate reflection of the strategic value of certain minerals, beyond purely market-based pricing dynamics. Third, they provide a pathway to reduce economic dependence by channeling resource revenues into broader economic diversification.

In our experience, these mechanisms are most effective when embedded within clear governance structures, supported by transparency, and aligned with long-term national development strategies. The objective is not only to capture value, but to preserve and multiply it—ensuring that resource wealth contributes to economic resilience over time.

Conclusion

At ASAFO & CO, we are privileged to operate at the forefront of Africa's resource governance transformation. Through our work advising governments, multilateral institutions, and private investors, we are helping to construct the legal and regulatory frameworks necessary for this generational opportunity to deliver lasting prosperity. The continent's critical minerals must serve as the foundation for industrial emergence, technological sovereignty, and sustainable development—a new paradigm of partnership that generates lasting value for all stakeholders.



IV.

GLOBAL LEADERS' CONTRIBUTIONS IN FRENCH



1. Le Conseil Congolais de la Batterie, architecte d'une souveraineté industrielle au service du peuple congolais



Author



Denis Lecouturier, Directeur général, Conseil congolais de la batterie



Une ressource, une responsabilité : l'heure du basculement

Il y a quelque chose de profondément paradoxal dans la situation de la République Démocratique du Congo. Ce pays abrite, sous ses sols, plus de 70 % des réserves mondiales de cobalt, des quantités colossales de lithium, de manganèse, de nickel et de graphite – autant de minerais que le monde entier se dispute frénétiquement pour alimenter la révolution des véhicules électriques et la transition énergétique globale. Pourtant, la grande majorité de ses habitants demeure parmi les plus pauvres de la planète, avec un revenu par habitant inférieur à 600 dollars par an. Ce paradoxe – que les économistes du développement appellent le « paradoxe de l'abondance » ou la « malédiction des ressources » – n'est pas une fatalité. Ce phénomène s'explique par une accumulation de déficiences institutionnelles sur plusieurs décennies, la conclusion de contrats déséquilibrés ainsi que par une organisation de la filière minière qui concentrait la quasi-totalité de la valeur ajoutée hors du territoire national.

C'est précisément pour briser cette malédiction que la République Démocratique du Congo a créé le Conseil Congolais de la Batterie (CCB). Cette institution, dont le rôle est encore insuffisamment compris par le grand public, représente très probablement l'une des initiatives les plus ambitieuses et les plus structurantes que le pays ait jamais entreprises. Dans un contexte où les puissances industrielles et les multinationales se livrent une guerre économique sans merci pour sécuriser leur approvisionnement en minéraux critiques, le CCB se positionne comme le bras armé de la souveraineté minière congolaise, le garant d'une négociation équitable, et le maître d'œuvre de la transformation structurelle de l'économie nationale.

Ce que le CCB est, et pourquoi cela change tout

Créé en 2022 sous l'impulsion du gouvernement congolais, le Conseil Congolais de la Batterie est une structure publique chargée de piloter la chaîne de valeur des minéraux stratégiques liés aux technologies de stockage d'énergie, au premier rang desquels le cobalt et le lithium. Sa mission fondamentale est double : d'une part, accompagner la mise en œuvre des accords miniers conclus avec les partenaires étrangers en veillant à ce qu'ils génèrent une valeur tangible et durable pour la population congolaise ; d'autre part, créer les conditions d'une industrialisation locale qui permette à la RDC de ne plus exporter uniquement des matières premières brutes, mais des produits à plus haute valeur ajoutée.

Ce positionnement est révolutionnaire. Pendant des décennies, la RDC a signé des contrats miniers dans des conditions d'asymétrie radicale. Le résultat était prévisible – des accords qui livraient les ressources naturelles à des conditions dérisoires, laissant au pays des redevances minimales, des emplois peu qualifiés et des dégâts environnementaux considérables.



La valeur ajoutée locale : le cœur du projet congolais

La vocation la plus profonde du CCB est de transformer le modèle économique congolais en poussant à la montée en gamme industrielle. La logique est simple, mais ses implications sont révolutionnaires : si la RDC exportait non plus du cobalt brut ou du concentré de cuivre, mais des produits chimiques de batterie raffinés, voire des composants de batteries, la valeur capturée sur le territoire national serait multipliée par un facteur de cinq à vingt. La différence entre exporter une tonne de cobalt brut et exporter une tonne de sulfate de cobalt – utilisé directement dans la fabrication de batteries – représente des centaines de millions de dollars de valeur ajoutée qui resteraient au Congo, créant des emplois qualifiés, des recettes fiscales supplémentaires, et des effets d'entraînement dans l'économie locale.

Pour atteindre cet objectif, le CCB travaille sur plusieurs leviers simultanément. Il négocie et supervise les clauses de contenu local insérées dans les accords miniers, qui obligent les partenaires étrangers à utiliser des fournisseurs locaux, à former des travailleurs congolais, et à transférer des technologies. Il accompagne la structuration de zones industrielles spécialisées, notamment dans la région du Grand Katanga, où la proximité des gisements offre des avantages logistiques évidents pour la transformation des minerais. Il facilite également l'accès des entreprises congolaises aux financements nécessaires pour monter en gamme industrielle, en servant d'intermédiaire avec les banques de développement et les investisseurs institutionnels.

À titre d'exemple, l'accord-cadre conclu dans le cadre de l'initiative stratégique entre la RDC, la Zambie et divers partenaires industriels pour développer une chaîne de valeur régionale des batteries illustre parfaitement les enjeux. Cet accord prévoit non seulement l'extraction de minerais, mais leur transformation progressive sur le sol africain, jusqu'à la fabrication de précurseurs de cathodes, voire de cellules de batteries. La réussite de ce projet ambitieux dépend entièrement de la capacité du CCB à coordonner les acteurs, à structurer les financements et à créer les conditions d'un écosystème industriel viable sur le continent.

Une diplomatie des batteries : collaborer avec les Conseils mondiaux

L'un des atouts les plus stratégiques et les moins médiatisés du Conseil Congolais de la Batterie réside dans sa capacité à s'inscrire dans un réseau mondial d'institutions homologues, partageant les mêmes ambitions de structuration industrielle autour des technologies de stockage d'énergie. À travers le monde, plusieurs pays et régions ont en effet créé leurs propres structures dédiées à la chaîne de valeur des batteries qui ont fait de l'industrie des batteries un pilier central de leur politique industrielle.



Par rapport à ces institutions, le CCB a fait le choix stratégique de la coopération internationale active. Cette approche repose sur une conviction fondamentale : dans un secteur aussi complexe et capital-intensif que celui des batteries, aucun acteur ne peut réussir seul. Les chaînes de valeur sont globales, les standards techniques sont internationaux, et les marchés finaux se trouvent majoritairement en dehors du continent africain. Pour que la RDC capte une part significative de la valeur créée dans cette industrie, elle doit s'intégrer intelligemment dans les réseaux mondiaux, tout en préservant et affirmant ses intérêts propres.

Concrètement, la collaboration du CCB avec ses homologues mondiaux prend plusieurs formes. Avec l'European Battery Alliance, le Conseil travaille à l'harmonisation des standards de traçabilité et de durabilité des minerais congolais avec les exigences du marché européen – un prérequis indispensable pour accéder à ce marché de premier plan. Avec les institutions américaines, le CCB s'inscrit dans les discussions autour du Minerals Security Partnership, qui vise à diversifier les approvisionnements des économies occidentales en minéraux critiques. Avec les structures asiatiques, notamment coréennes et japonaises, des échanges techniques sont conduits pour identifier les opportunités de transfert de technologie dans la transformation du cobalt et du lithium.

Cette diplomatie des batteries implique des échanges de bonnes pratiques en matière de gouvernance industrielle, des formations croisées de techniciens et d'ingénieurs, des missions d'étude dans des pays qui ont réussi leur transition vers une industrie minière à haute valeur ajoutée, et des collaborations dans le domaine de la recherche et du développement. Le CCB se positionne ainsi comme un nœud stratégique d'un réseau global, apportant ce que personne d'autre ne peut apporter – l'accès aux ressources les plus critiques de la planète – et recevant en échange les savoirs, les technologies et les capitaux dont la RDC a besoin pour industrialiser sa chaîne de valeur. C'est donc cette combinaison de souveraineté affirmée et d'ouverture stratégique qui distingue le CCB des institutions minières congolaises du passé.

Identifier et promouvoir les partenariats d'investissement : une mission vitale

Si la collaboration avec les Conseils mondiaux constitue le volet diplomatique de la stratégie du CCB, l'identification et la promotion des partenariats d'investissement en constituent le volet économique opérationnel. Car la transformation industrielle de la chaîne de valeur minière congolaise ne se



fera pas sans des investissements massifs, chiffrés en dizaines de milliards de dollars, dans les infrastructures de raffinage, de transformation chimique, d'énergie et de logistique.

Le CCB joue ici un rôle d'agence de promotion de l'investissement spécialisée, unique en son genre, capable de présenter aux investisseurs potentiels une vision cohérente, structurée et documentée des opportunités qu'offre la RDC dans la chaîne de valeur des batteries. Cette mission est d'une importance capitale, car les investisseurs internationaux – qu'il s'agisse de fonds souverains, de fonds de capital-investissement, de constructeurs automobiles ou de fabricants de batteries – ont besoin de certitudes, de données fiables et d'interlocuteurs institutionnels crédibles pour prendre des décisions d'investissement de long terme dans des environnements perçus comme à risque élevé.

Pour remplir cette mission, le CCB a développé plusieurs approches complémentaires. La première est la constitution d'une cartographie précise et actualisée des opportunités d'investissement : quels projets de transformation locale sont techniquement et économiquement viables ? Quelles infrastructures sont nécessaires et à quel coût ? Quels rendements peuvent être attendus selon différentes hypothèses de prix des minerais et d'évolution du marché des batteries ? Cette base de données analytique est un outil indispensable pour dialoguer avec des investisseurs sophistiqués. La deuxième approche est la participation active aux grands forums internationaux de l'investissement et de l'énergie : le Forum Économique Mondial de Davos, les sommets Africa CEO Forum, les conférences de la

Global Battery Alliance, les événements organisés par les institutions de financement du développement comme la Banque Mondiale, la Banque Africaine de Développement ou la Société Financière Internationale. Dans ces arènes, le CCB porte la voix de la RDC, présente les opportunités congolaises et tisse les relations qui conduisent aux partenariats d'investissement.

La troisième approche est la structuration de mécanismes de dérisquement de l'investissement en collaboration avec les institutions financières internationales. Investir en RDC comporte des risques réels – risques politiques, risques d'infrastructure, risques réglementaires – que les investisseurs privés ne peuvent absorber seuls. Le CCB travaille à la mise en place de garanties d'investissement, d'assurances contre les risques politiques, et de structures de financement mixte public-privé qui permettent de rendre les projets bancables tout en préservant les intérêts congolais. Des institutions comme MIGA (Agence Multilatérale de Garantie des Investissements) ou les agences de crédit export des pays partenaires sont des alliées naturelles dans cette démarche.

Enfin, le CCB joue un rôle crucial dans la promotion de l'investissement domestique et régional. Car si les capitaux internationaux sont indispensables, la construction d'une industrie souveraine passe aussi par l'émergence d'un tissu d'entrepreneurs et d'investisseurs congolais capables de prendre des participations dans les projets industriels, de créer des entreprises de services à l'industrie minière, et de former progressivement une bourgeoisie industrielle nationale. Le Conseil accompagne cette émergence en facilitant l'accès au financement, en structurant des programmes de développement des fournisseurs locaux, et en créant des espaces de rencontre entre investisseurs nationaux et porteurs de projets industriels.

Le levier géopolitique : négociateur d'une position de force

L'un des apports les moins visibles mais les plus importants du CCB est sa capacité à transformer la position géopolitique de la RDC dans les négociations internationales. Pendant longtemps, le Congo négociait seul, sans données consolidées sur ses propres ressources, sans expertise juridique spécialisée, sans vision stratégique de long terme. Résultat : chaque partenaire potentiel, d'où qu'il vienne, pouvait dicter ses conditions.

Aujourd'hui, le CCB change cette équation. En agréant les données sur les réserves, en développant une expertise technique et juridique interne, le Conseil transforme la RDC en un acteur stratégique pour obtenir les meilleures conditions possibles. Cette dynamique s'est manifestée concrètement dans les discussions avec l'Union européenne dans le cadre du partenariat stratégique sur les matières premières critiques, ainsi que dans les négociations avec les États-Unis autour du Minerals Security Partnership.

Dans les deux cas, la RDC a pu faire valoir sa centralité indispensable dans la chaîne d'approvisionnement mondiale des batteries, et exiger en contrepartie des engagements concrets en matière d'investissements industriels sur son sol.

Le message est désormais clair : la RDC ne vend plus simplement des minerais. Elle négocie des partenariats industriels intégrés qui doivent créer de la valeur durable sur son territoire et au bénéfice de sa population.

Les défis à surmonter : la transparence comme condition sine qua non

Il serait cependant intellectuellement malhonnête de présenter le CCB comme une institution parfaite opérant dans un environnement idéal. Les défis sont considérables. Le premier est celui de la gouvernance et de la transparence. Pour que le CCB échappe au destin des institutions captées par des intérêts privés, il doit fonctionner selon des standards élevés de redevabilité : publication régulière des accords, audits indépendants, participation de la société civile au suivi de sa mission.

Le deuxième défi est celui des capacités humaines et techniques. Superviser des accords miniers complexes, négocier avec des multinationales aguerries, piloter une stratégie d'industrialisation cohérente requiert des compétences rares : ingénieurs métallurgistes, juristes spécialisés en droit minier international, économistes industriels, experts en chaînes de valeur mondiales. La formation et la rétention de ces talents au sein du CCB constituent un enjeu stratégique majeur.

Le troisième défi est celui de la coordination interinstitutionnelle. Le CCB ne peut réussir sa mission de manière isolée. Il doit travailler en cohérence avec les Ministères pertinents, la Gécamines, et les autorités provinciales, tout en construisant cette coordination dans un contexte institutionnel historiquement fragmenté.

Une **fenêtre d'opportunité historique** qu'il ne faut pas laisser passer la transition énergétique mondiale crée une demande sans précédent pour les minerais critiques que détient la RDC. Cette demande va croître exponentiellement au cours des prochaines décennies. Pour la RDC, c'est une fenêtre d'opportunité historique pour transformer sa trajectoire de développement. Mais les fenêtres d'opportunité se ferment : les technologies évoluent, les routes d'approvisionnement alternatives se multiplient, et la concurrence s'intensifie. Si la RDC ne capte pas la valeur de ses ressources maintenant, cette opportunité pourrait s'éroder irrémédiablement.

C'est là que le CCB joue son rôle le plus décisif : accélérer la mise en œuvre des projets de transformation locale, approfondir les partenariats industriels existants, et créer les conditions pour que les prochains accords soient

encore plus favorables à la RDC. Chaque mois de retard dans la mise en œuvre des projets industriels est un mois de valeur ajoutée perdue pour le peuple congolais.

Conclusion : une institution au service du peuple congolais

En dernière analyse, la question que pose l'existence du Conseil Congolais de la Batterie est simple : à qui appartient la richesse du sous-sol congolais, et qui en bénéficie ? Pendant trop longtemps, la réponse de facto était : des multinationales étrangères, des élites déconnectées des réalités populaires, et des géographies lointaines. Le CCB est l'instrument institutionnel par lequel la RDC tente d'apporter une réponse radicalement différente à cette question fondamentale : cette richesse appartient au peuple congolais, et



c'est au peuple congolais qu'elle doit profiter.

En collaborant avec les Conseils des batteries du monde entier, en identifiant et en structurant des partenariats d'investissement ambitieux, en poussant à l'industrialisation locale de la chaîne de valeur des minerais critiques, le CCB construit patiemment les fondations d'une économie congolaise transformée – une économie qui crée des emplois qualifiés, génère des recettes fiscales substantielles, et offre à chaque Congolais une part équitable des richesses de sa terre.

Si le CCB réussit sa mission – transformer les ressources minières en moteurs de développement industriel, technologique et humain – ce n'est pas seulement la RDC qui gagnera. C'est l'ensemble du continent africain qui verra se démontrer, une fois pour toutes, qu'il est possible de sortir du piège de l'extraction brute pour entrer dans l'ère de la souveraineté économique et de la prospérité partagée.

Le Congo a les ressources. Il a maintenant l'institution. Il lui reste à maintenir la détermination collective – de ses dirigeants, de ses citoyens et de ses partenaires – pour réussir ce pari historique.

2. Au-delà du piège sécuritaire : repenser l'engagement international au Sahel



Author



**Sibille de Cartier, Ambassadeur, Envoyé spécial
du Royaume de Belgique pour le Saheal**

Le Sahel a une histoire millénaire et une population jeune, résiliente et dynamique qui forment des atouts incroyables. Aujourd'hui, elle fait face à des défis importants qui se renforcent mutuellement tels que les changements climatiques, l'insécurité alimentaire, le terrorisme, la criminalité transnationale organisée et les mouvements migratoires. Les coups d'État successifs, en particulier au Sahel central, ont aussi affecté la coopération internationale. De plus, la situation au Soudan, qui traverse "la plus grande crise humanitaire au monde", comme le soulignait récemment le Vice-Premier Ministre et Ministre des Affaires étrangères belge, Maxime Prévot, complexifie encore un peu plus la situation régionale, affectant particulièrement le Tchad voisin.

Un Sahel stable et prospère bénéficiera à sa population et à la région qui l'entoure, du Golfe de Guinée au Nord de l'Afrique, mais aussi à l'Europe. La priorité doit être de travailler sur les fondamentaux qui permettent une réponse coordonnée aux défis multiformes. Faire progresser la confiance entre tous les acteurs est essentiel et urgent, de même que redessiner une architecture régionale à même de répondre aux besoins de la région. Avec l'adoption de son approche renouvelée en octobre dernier, l'Union européenne s'est dotée d'une stratégie, intégrant dialogue politique, sécurité humaine et résilience socio-économique. Celle-ci ne pourra cependant donner pleinement son potentiel qu'en soutien à une approche régionale concertée. Dans ce contexte, les efforts déployés par une série d'acteurs régionaux, en particulier le Ghana ou l'Union africaine, afin de dépasser les tensions bilatérales et régionales et de relancer la coopération méritent d'être soutenus.

La Belgique, bilatéralement et comme membre de l'Union européenne, reste un partenaire engagé en faveur des populations de la région. Grâce à notre

engagement diplomatique, nous voulons maintenir le dialogue. Il ne s'agit pas de s'accorder sur tout mais bien de travailler ensemble sur ce qui nous rassemble. Avec Enabel, notre agence de coopération, nous soutenons, via nos programmes de développement, la jeunesse et la cohésion sociale, et favorisons l'adaptation au climat, l'accès aux services de base, et la sécurité alimentaire, en étroite concertation avec les autorités décentralisées. Nous veillons à mobiliser les innovations technologiques dans notre réponse, par exemple dans le cadre de l'adaptation climatique ou de la sécurité alimentaire. Il est évident que la réponse se doit d'adresser les causes profondes structurelles qui nourrissent les tensions entre les communautés et favorisent le recrutement des groupes armés terroristes.

Le discours souverainiste dans la région et ailleurs puise ses racines dans une recherche de dignité et de réappropriation de son avenir qui est légitime. Chaque crise offre des opportunités. Dans un Sahel répondant aux aspirations de sa population, le cercle vertueux peut se nourrir d'un passé qui par ses traditions et son histoire millénaire alimente le présent, d'une société riche de sa diversité et sa jeunesse, de l'innovation mise au service du développement, d'une approche inclusive et pacifique, de complémentarité renforcée entre pays voisins et de partenariats internationaux respectueux et mutuellement bénéfiques. « It always seems impossible, until it is done », disait Mandela.

3. « Élections sans choix » : l'Afrique et la victoire avant le vote



Author



Arnauld A. Akodjenou, Senior Adviser pour l'Afrique à la Fondation Kofi Annan



Dans de nombreux pays africains, les élections demeurent un rituel institutionnel : un calendrier, un bulletin, une commission électorale, parfois des observateurs. Mais, de plus en plus, le cœur démocratique du vote — **la possibilité effective de choisir** — se réduit.

La nouveauté n'est pas la disparition totale du pluralisme, ni le retour mécanique de la fraude « classique ». Elle est ailleurs, plus préoccupante : **la victoire se fabrique avant le vote**, par l'architecture des règles, la sélection des candidats, la capture des arbitres et l'asphyxie de l'espace civique. L'élection demeure, mais elle sert davantage à **valider** un rapport de force déjà verrouillé qu'à **arbitrer**.

Cette dynamique, visible tout au long de 2025 et confirmée par plusieurs séquences de fin 2025 et de début 2026, mérite d'être nommée pour ce qu'elle est : les **« élections sans choix »**.

2025–début 2026 : une séquence unique de verrouillage électoral en Afrique

L'année 2025 a condensé, en quelques mois, des situations auparavant perçues comme exceptionnelles ou ponctuelles :



Cameroun (12 octobre 2025)

La candidature de M. Maurice Kamto a été rejetée en amont ; l'élection s'est ensuite conclue par la proclamation d'une victoire du Pdt Paul Biya à 53,66 %, immédiatement contestée, sur fond de tensions et d'arrestations.



Côte d'Ivoire (25 octobre 2025)

Le processus a été marqué par l'invalidation de candidatures majeures (dont M. Laurent Gbagbo, Tidjane Thiam, M. Guillaume Soro) ; le scrutin s'est conclu par une victoire du Pdt Alassane Ouattara annoncée à **89,77 %**, dans un contexte de contestation et de restrictions de mobilisation.



Tanzanie (29 octobre 2025)

L'Union Africaine a publié une déclaration préliminaire mettant en cause la conformité du processus électoral avec les principes et cadres normatifs africains (irrégularités et entraves), tandis que des organisations de défense des droits ont documenté une répression post-électorale sans précédent et un durcissement du climat politique.



Guinée-Bissau (23–26 novembre 2025)

Avant la publication des résultats d'un scrutin disputé, des hommes armés ont saisi du matériel électoral ; l'armée a annoncé la prise de pouvoir le 26 novembre 2025, et la commission électorale a déclaré être dans l'incapacité de finaliser le processus.



Bénin (7 décembre 2025)

Des soldats sont apparus à la télévision nationale annonçant un renversement du pouvoir ; le gouvernement a déjoué la tentative. Au cours des dernières années, des réformes ont profondément modifié le système partisan ainsi que les règles d'organisation et de participation aux élections, entraînant des crispations entre acteurs politiques et une absence significative de l'opposition, à l'approche des échéances électorales de **janvier et avril 2026**.



Guinée (28 décembre 2025)

Une présidentielle censée clore la transition a abouti, selon des résultats provisoires puis validés, à une victoire annoncée du Général Mamady Doumbouya (**86,72 %**), dans un contexte où des figures majeures de l'opposition ont été écartées (ou ont appelé au boycott) et où l'environnement de campagne a été jugé restrictif par divers observateurs.



République centrafricaine (28 décembre 2025)

Des élections "groupées" se sont tenues dans un climat de participation fragmentée : une partie significative de l'opposition a boycotté en dénonçant des conditions inéquitables, tandis que des organisations de défense des droits de l'homme ont alerté sur des risques d'irrégularités et de pressions sécuritaires affectant l'inclusivité et la crédibilité du vote. Le Pdt Faustin-Archange Touadéra a été déclaré vainqueur avec **76,15 %**, ce qui a été aussitôt contesté par les autres candidats et les opposants.



Ouganda (15–17 janvier 2026)

L'élection générale s'est tenue sous coupure d'internet et une forte présence sécuritaire ; l'opposition a dénoncé des irrégularités, des dysfonctionnements logistiques et des entraves visant ses agents. Les résultats annoncés le **17 janvier 2026** ont donné le Pdt Yoweri Museveni vainqueur avec **environ 72 %**, résultat rejeté par son principal adversaire, Bobi Wine, qui a dénoncé une "victoire fabriquée" et fait état d'actions coercitives autour de son domicile après le scrutin. Une mission d'observation **UA-COMESA-IGAD** a été déployée sur le champ électoral.

Ces huit cas ne sont pas identiques et ne racontent pas la même histoire nationale. Ils illustrent pourtant une logique convergente : **le droit, l'administration et l'institution électorale deviennent des instruments de présélection politique.**

2026, un autre cycle électoral tout aussi exposé

La séquence 2025–début 2026 décrite plus haut ne s'achève pas avec les premiers scrutins de janvier : elle inaugure, au contraire, un cycle 2026 particulièrement dense, où la tentation de « fabriquer la victoire avant le vote » peut se déplacer d'un pays à l'autre. L'enjeu n'est pas seulement le respect formel des dates et des procédures, mais aussi la capacité des systèmes politiques à préserver, sur l'ensemble du cycle électoral, un minimum de compétition loyale, d'accès équitable à l'espace civique et de crédibilité des arbitres. Dans plusieurs contextes, le droit, l'administration, l'argument sécuritaire ou le contrôle informationnel risquent de rester des variables d'ingénierie politique plutôt que des garanties de pluralisme.

À date (janvier 2026), les calendriers de référence disponibles sur les scrutins nationaux (présidentiels et/ou législatifs) dessinent un cycle 2026 fortement concentré : en janvier, le Bénin (législatives le 11 janvier) et l'Ouganda (présidentielle et législatives le 15 janvier) ; en février, la République centrafricaine (séquences législatives et contentieux) ; en mars, la République du Congo (présidentielle) et le Cameroun (législatives) ; en avril, le Bénin (présidentielle le 12 avril), Cabo Verde (législatives), Djibouti (présidentielle) et la Libye (échéance annoncée mais sujette à reprogrammation) ; en juin, l'Éthiopie (législatives le 1er juin), l'Algérie (législatives et élections locales, d'ici juin), la Somalie (échéances fédérales) et le Somaliland (législatives) ; entre juillet et septembre, Sao Tomé-et-Principe (présidentielle puis législatives) et le Maroc (législatives) ; en août, la Zambie (générales le 13 août) ; en octobre, Cabo Verde (présidentielle) ; en décembre, la Gambie (présidentielle le 5 décembre), la Guinée-Bissau (présidentielle et législatives le 6 décembre), le Soudan du Sud (générales le 22 décembre) et le Sahara occidental/RASD (échéance annoncée). En parallèle, plusieurs pays tiendront des scrutins locaux, dont le Ghana. Plusieurs dates restent indicatives et susceptibles d'être ajustées, mais l'alignement des échéances concentre automatiquement les risques et accroît les effets de contagion régionale.

La dernière séquence de l'Union africaine à Addis-Abeba renforce précisément cette grille de lecture : le risque continental ne se résume plus aux seules ruptures brutales de l'ordre constitutionnel, mais inclut de plus en plus des formes de fermeture politique opérées en apparence dans la légalité. Autrement dit, la question n'est plus seulement de savoir si un scrutin aura lieu à la date prévue, mais si une compétition réelle demeure possible lorsque les candidatures, les arbitrages institutionnels, l'espace civique et l'environnement

informationnel ont été préalablement filtrés. Cette inflexion est importante, car elle rapproche enfin le débat continental d'un problème que de nombreux acteurs observent déjà sur le terrain : des élections formellement tenues, mais substantiellement vidées de leur fonction d'alternance.

À l'échelle du cycle 2026, cela implique un déplacement du centre de gravité de la prévention : moins de focalisation sur la seule "journée du vote", davantage d'attention aux signaux précoces qui, cumulés, annoncent une élection sans choix. Les points de vigilance sont désormais bien identifiés : judiciarisation sélective des rivaux, durcissement opportuniste des règles de candidature, capture des institutions d'arbitrage, restrictions ciblées de l'espace civique, pressions sur les médias et gestion coercitive de l'espace informationnel. Lorsque ces mécanismes se combinent dans un calendrier électoral déjà dense, les risques ne s'additionnent pas seulement au niveau national ; ils circulent d'un contexte à l'autre par mimétisme politique, apprentissage répressif et banalisation régionale des procédés.

La conséquence stratégique, pour l'UA, les organisations régionales et les partenaires internationaux, est claire : il faut traiter l'intégrité électorale comme un **processus complet** et non comme un événement ponctuel. Cela suppose des dispositifs d'alerte et de médiation déclenchés en amont (sélection des candidatures, contentieux, accès à l'espace civique, garanties minimales de pluralisme), ainsi qu'une doctrine plus explicite selon laquelle une élection peut être techniquement "régulière" tout en demeurant politiquement non compétitive. Sans cette clarification, le continent risque de préserver la procédure tout en perdant en légitimité – et d'alimenter, chez une jeunesse déjà désillusionnée, l'idée que les voies institutionnelles ne permettent plus de produire un véritable choix politique.

De la fraude à l'«élection sans choix» : une mutation du contrôle politique

Sous nos yeux s'opère le passage d'un modèle de fraude électorale (agir sur le résultat) à un modèle de **contrôle électoral** (agir sur l'offre politique).

L'«élection sans choix» se caractérise notamment par un renversement du moment décisif :



Hier

l'incertitude existait et se réglait parfois par des irrégularités le jour du vote.



Aujourd'hui

l'incertitude est réduite **en amont**, par des mécanismes présentés comme techniques, juridiques, administratifs ou sécuritaires.

Le régime n'a plus besoin d'être ouvertement illégal : il peut être **formellement conforme**, tout en rendant l'alternance impraticable. C'est précisément là que se niche la fragilité : **la légalité devient le langage d'une illégitimité politique**. L'élection demeure, mais le contrat démocratique – compétition loyale, égalité minimale des chances, possibilité réelle d'alternance – se dissout.

Quatre mécanismes récurrents de la «victoire avant le vote»



Judiciarisation sélective : le «lawfare» électoral

Poursuites, condamnations, dossiers de corruption, infractions sécuritaires, «trahison», «atteinte à la sûreté de l'État» : la palette est large, et elle a un avantage décisif pour les pouvoirs en place. Même lorsque le fond est contesté, la **procédure suffit** à produire l'effet politique : rendre l'adversaire inéligible, l'épuiser, l'intimider, le contraindre à l'exil.

La difficulté, ici, n'est pas de défendre l'impunité : un État de droit doit sanctionner les infractions. La question est celle de la **sélectivité** et du **calendrier** : quand les poursuites se concentrent sur les rivaux crédibles à l'approche du scrutin, et que les garanties d'un procès équitable deviennent incertaines, le judiciaire cesse d'être arbitre ; il devient acteur.

Manipulation des règles électorales et administratives

Parrainages, signatures, délais, dépôt de dossiers, conformité documentaire, listes électorales : le formalisme peut devenir une barrière infranchissable si les règles sont durcies à la dernière minute, interprétées de manière opportuniste, ou appliquées de façon asymétrique. Il n'est plus nécessaire de "tricher" sur le décompte : on **reconfigure le marché politique**.

Capture des institutions d'arbitrage

Lorsque les commissions électorales, les cours constitutionnelles et les régulateurs des médias sont structurellement dominés par l'exécutif (ou par le parti dominant), l'arbitrage devient prévisible. L'institution conserve le vernis, mais perd la fonction.

Le danger est systémique : si l'arbitre est perçu comme aligné, la contestation sort du droit – et cherche ailleurs ses voies.

Asphyxie de l'espace civique et informationnel

Restrictions de réunions, interdictions de manifestations, arrestations de militants, harcèlement de journalistes, pression sur les ONG, coupures d'internet, campagnes de désinformation : même sans exclusion formelle, l'opposition peut être rendue inopérante si elle ne peut ni s'organiser ni se rendre visible, ni financer une campagne, ni sécuriser ses réunions.

L'« élection sans choix » devient alors une conséquence mécanique : si l'adversaire ne peut pas exister publiquement, il ne peut pas gagner – voire ne pas concourir.

Ces mécanismes se repèrent souvent assez tôt : lorsqu'ils se cumulent, ils signalent un basculement vers une élection sans choix (voir l'**encadré 1**).



Encadré 1

Sept signaux d'alerte d'une "élection sans choix"

Un processus bascule généralement lorsque plusieurs des facteurs suivants se cumulent :

-  **Disqualification ou inéligibilité de figures centrales à quelques mois du scrutin**

-  **Durcissement tardif des règles de candidature (parrainage, signatures, pièces)**

-  **Décisions d'arbitrage systématiquement favorables à l'exécutif**

-  **Restrictions persistantes de réunions, médias, ou financement politique**

-  **Criminalisation d'organisations de la société civile et du monitoring électoral**

-  **Escalade des arrestations "préventives" et du contentieux pénal contre l'opposition**

-  **Dégradation de l'environnement informationnel (coupures d'internet, intimidation, désinformation)**

Trois trajectoires de crise

Lorsque deux ou plusieurs signaux de l'encadré 1 sont réunis, trois trajectoires de crise deviennent probables.

À court terme : l'abstention, la résignation, la rupture du lien civique

Quand l'offre électorale est perçue comme filtrée, le citoyen n'abandonne pas toujours la politique – il abandonne **le vote**. La participation devient un indicateur de désaffiliation, l'opposition se radicalise et la confiance dans l'État de droit s'érode.

À moyen terme : la consolidation d'un autoritarisme électoral

Le système s'institutionnalise : chaque cycle électoral devient la répétition d'un scénario où l'incertitude est méthodiquement réduite. Les alternances deviennent improbables ; les révisions constitutionnelles deviennent tentantes ; l'arbitre devient un instrument.

À haut risque : la tentation des "corrections" par la force

Lorsque les voies pacifiques d'alternance paraissent structurellement verrouillées, des acteurs armés – ou des factions au sein des forces de sécurité – peuvent se présenter comme arbitres ultimes. Dans certains contextes, la narration du "coup correctif" prospère précisément sur le discrédit de l'élection.

La Guinée-Bissau, fin 2025, illustre cette articulation toxique entre un processus électoral contesté, la capture du matériel électoral, puis la suspension brutale de l'ordre constitutionnel. Le Bénin, avec une tentative avortée, a montré que le risque n'est pas théorique : un choc peut survenir lorsque les tensions politiques et le stress sécuritaire convergent.

L'Afrique a pourtant des normes – elles peuvent être mises à l'épreuve

L'Afrique ne manque pas d'instruments. Elle a produit, au contraire, un corpus normatif substantiel :



La Charte africaine de la démocratie, des élections et de la gouvernance (CADEG) ;



Le Protocole additionnel de la CEDEAO sur la démocratie et la bonne gouvernance (2001) ;



Des réaffirmations politiques de l'Union africaine sur la tolérance zéro à l'égard des changements anticonstitutionnels, dont la Déclaration d'Accra (2022).

L'argument heureux est que ces normes existent déjà ; l'enjeu est d'en étendre l'effectivité aux fermetures politiques opérées par le droit et la procédure. Les repères ci-dessous en constituent la charpente (voir l'**encadré 2**)



Encadré 2

Repères normatifs africains (rappel)

Repères normatifs utiles (rappel synthétique) :



CADEG (Union africaine)

Principes de démocratie, élections et gouvernance ; obligations des États ; rejet des changements anticonstitutionnels.



CEDEAO (Protocole 2001)

Cadre régional de démocratie et bonne gouvernance ; standards politiques et institutionnels.



Union Africaine (Déclaration d'Accra, 2022)

Réaffirmation de l'architecture continentale contre les changements anticonstitutionnels.

Le problème n'est pas l'absence de texte. La préoccupation se niche dans **l'angle mort opérationnel** : ces instruments ont d'abord été mobilisés contre les putschs militaires et certaines modifications constitutionnelles. Ils le sont beaucoup moins face à la stratégie contemporaine : **la fermeture politique par le droit et la procédure**, qui produit des élections formelles mais non compétitives.

L'enjeu central, désormais, est d'établir une doctrine simple et praticable : **une élection peut être "légale" au sens strict et pourtant contraire aux engagements africains si la compétition a été rendue impossible par l'exclusion arbitraire, la capture institutionnelle et la répression systématique**

Rendre la dissuasion crédible : une stratégie avec trois niveaux

Continental et régional : prévenir avant de sanctionner, mais sanctionner si nécessaire

 Reconnaître explicitement l'« élection sans choix » comme violation majeure des engagements démocratiques, et non comme simple « contentieux interne ».

 Mettre en place un suivi du cycle électoral complet, avec des alertes précoces dès la phase de sélection des candidatures et de régulation de l'espace civique.

 Définir une gradation des mesures : de la médiation préventive aux conséquences politiques (suspension de certains droits, restrictions de participation à des instances régionales) et, dans les cas graves, des sanctions ciblées sur les responsables directement impliqués dans la manipulation, plutôt que des sanctions frappant les populations.

Partenaires internationaux : cohérence et “cycle complet”

 Sortir d'une observation centrée sur la seule journée du vote ; conditionner l'appui politique et l'observation à une compétition réelle dès l'amont du processus.

 Aligner la coopération sécuritaire et économique sur des exigences minimales de pluralisme (sans naïveté, mais sans complaisance).

 Protéger l'espace civique : soutien au monitoring, à la sécurité numérique, à l'assistance juridique et à des mécanismes rapides de documentation.

Niveau national : refonder le contrat électoral

 Indépendance et pluralisme effectifs dans la nomination des arbitres (commission électorale, juge électoral, régulateur des médias).

 Interdiction des normes ad hominem (lois et décisions calibrées contre une personne ou un groupe).

 Transparencedesdécisions,voiesderecourseffectives,etpublication des données essentielles (listes, contentieux, motivations).

 Soutien aux coalitions citoyennes d'intégrité électorale (jeunesse, femmes, syndicats, médias, confessions), capables d'alerter et de saisir les mécanismes régionaux.

Conclusion – Une génération sans le luxe de l'illusion

L'Afrique est le continent le plus jeune du monde. Une génération entière observe ces temps-ci un paradoxe : une multiplication de textes, de protocoles, de chartes — et, simultanément, des pratiques qui vident ces textes de leur substance.

Le danger est stratégique : si cette génération conclut que l'élection n'est qu'un décor, elle cherchera d'autres voies de régulation politique — plus brutales,

plus coûteuses, moins prévisibles.

Refuser l'« élection sans choix » ne signifie pas exiger une démocratie idéale du jour au lendemain. C'est défendre une ligne minimale, non négociable : **le droit ne doit pas servir à supprimer l'alternance**, et l'élection ne doit pas devenir une procédure de confirmation.

Si l'Afrique normalise les "élections sans choix", elle normalise aussi, mécaniquement, la contestation extra-institutionnelle — et alimente, tôt ou tard, la tentation des ruptures de l'ordre constitutionnel.

Cette génération-ci, comme la prochaine, n'a plus ce luxe.

4. Diasporas et gouvernance : du mythe à la politique publique



Serge Eric Menye, Essayiste et Consultant en intelligence de marché en Afrique

Author

La diaspora africaine est souvent invoquée comme une solution miracle au développement du continent. Les chiffres pourraient lui donner raison. En effet, selon la Banque mondiale, les transferts de fonds vers l'Afrique ont dépassé 100 milliards de dollars en 2023, soit davantage que l'aide publique au développement. Mais ces chiffres sont trompeurs tant ils sont faibles au regard des enjeux et de l'efficacité, et en plus mal répartis, et destinés aux besoins primaires des personnes connectés avec les diasporas.

L'idée serait donc en priorité de sortir du mythe. Plus concrètement il faut envisager une manne supplémentaire en dehors de celle dédiée à la survie des familles, pour financer le développement - ce qui suppose un effort budgétaire des diasporas qui ont des poches de ressources dans une consommation plus saine et structurée qui pourra alimenter leur épargne, par exemple, ou encore une partie de leur avoirs bancaires qu'elles pourraient déposer dans des établissements africains. Toutefois, sans cadre institutionnel solide pour la confiance, ses contributions auront du mal à rencontrer un enthousiasme. L'expérience internationale est éclairante. Des pays comme l'Inde ou la Chine ont su mobiliser leur diaspora grâce à des instruments précis : obligations diasporiques, agences dédiées, sécurité juridique renforcée. En Afrique, ces outils restent embryonnaires, on trouve quelques exceptions encourageantes en Ethiopie, au Rwanda, au Maroc, ou encore récemment au Sénégal. Selon la Banque africaine de développement, le potentiel d'investissement de la diaspora africaine est estimé à plusieurs dizaines de milliards de dollars par an, mais il est justement freiné par l'instabilité réglementaire, la corruption et le manque de projets bancables.

La question centrale est donc celle de la gouvernance. Sans institutions crédibles, sans transparence, sans État de droit, la confiance — condition première de l'investissement — ne peut émerger. La diaspora n'investit pas

dans des discours, mais dans des environnements sécurisés. Dès lors, la priorité est claire : transformer l'engouement diasporique en politique publique. Cela suppose de structurer des véhicules d'investissement, de sécuriser les cadres juridiques et de créer des écosystèmes économiques attractifs. La diaspora peut être un accélérateur, mais elle ne remplacera jamais des institutions défaillantes.

5 . Conformité et intégrité : le secteur privé au service de la gouvernance africaine ?



Leon Charles Ciss, Directeur de l'Éthique, Chief Compliance Officer, Orange Middle East & Africa chez Orange

Author

Quel rôle les fonctions éthique et compliance jouent-elles dans la transformation des pratiques de gouvernance, au sein des entreprises et dans leurs interactions avec les institutions publiques ?

Les sanctions spectaculaires [plusieurs milliards de dollars] infligées, dans les années 2010, à des groupes industriels de premier plan dans les domaines bancaires, énergétiques, aéronautiques, agro-alimentaires, télécom... par des organismes de régulation, pour manquements aux règles éthiques et compliance [corruption, blanchiment, contournement d'embargo...], avec de lourdes conséquences [renvoi de dirigeants, démantèlement d'organisations, restructuration de marchés, ...] ont provoqué un électrochoc et sorti les fonctions éthique et compliance de leur léthargie.

On ne peut évidemment pas dire que, avant l'épisode des sanctions, éthique, compliance, conformité, intégrité étaient des notions insignifiantes dans les entreprises, mais on peut dire que leur importance était le plus souvent fonction des valeurs individuelles portées et promues par les dirigeants.

Or la multiplication des scandales de corruption, de manquements à l'éthique et à l'intégrité, montre que les valeurs portées individuellement ne suffisent pas à transformer durablement les entreprises.

L' Afrique notamment, est malheureusement perçue comme « un terrain propice à la corruption » non pas que la corruption concerne seulement l'Afrique et les Africains, mais par ce que, profitant de la fragilité des structures de gouvernance et de l'état de droit, de la jeunesse des contre-pouvoirs, de la faiblesse des pouvoirs judiciaires, de l'inexistence de presse d'investigation

indépendante, des corrupteurs et corrompus de tout continent et de tout pays se donnent la main pour réaliser en Afrique ce qu'ils ne peuvent faire dans les continents ou pays où coexistent pouvoirs politiques légitimes, justice indépendante, contrepouvoirs organisés, presse d'investigation libre et outillée.

Les observateurs de la vie des entreprises ont pu noter que les fonctions Ethique, Compliance, Conformité et Intégrité sont devenues beaucoup plus visibles dans les entreprises au lendemain des sanctions et plus écoutées ; Les réglementations internationales sanctionnant la corruption, le blanchiment, les manquements à l'éthique, les atteintes aux droits humains et à l'environnement, qu'elles proviennent des organisations internationales [ONU, OIT], des traités et ou des lois extraterritoriales ont l'avantage essentiel d'obliger les entreprises à donner de la visibilité et à opérationnaliser les politiques éthique, compliance, conformité et vigilance par :



La promotion de la compliance, éthique et vigilance et l'allocation de ressources crédibles.



L'élaboration de cartographies pertinentes des risques de corruption, de blanchiment et des risques d'impacts négatifs sur les humains et sur l'environnement.



L'évaluation crédible des fournisseurs et de la chaîne de valeur de l'entreprise au regard des risques identifiés.



L'opérationnalisation des politiques : code de conduite, gestion des situations de conflit d'intérêt, politique de cadeaux, ...



La mise en œuvre des actions de prévention ou de mitigation des risques identifiés.



La communication, sensibilisation et éducation des employés sur les enjeux et en fonction de leur exposition aux risques.



Le contrôle des processus de l'entreprise.



L'engagement des comités de Direction sur la mise en œuvre des politiques décidées.



L'implication des organes de Gouvernance.



L'adoption d'un régime de sanctions approprié et dissuasif.



L'archivage organisé de toutes décisions.

Le respect de ces obligations impacte et transforme l'ensemble des structures et notamment celles en charge de la gestion des audits et des risques, des achats, des ventes, du juridique et des ressources humaines, de la communication interne et externe, du contrôle interne et des finances, des opérations. Ces obligations impactent les comités de direction et les organes de gouvernance pour l'extrême nécessité de justifier toute décision aux regards des risques encourus.

La nécessité de respecter les exigences d'éthique, de compliance et de vigilance impacte également et profondément nos interactions avec les autorités publiques dans la mesure où elle nous amène à encadrer toute décision, à afficher les sanctions encourues en cas de déviation, ce qui constitue un antidote aux sollicitations inappropriées.

Comment allier stratégies commerciales et intégrité dans des marchés africains à forte croissance ?

Dans notre logique, stratégies commerciales et intégrité ne s'opposent absolument pas. Elles ne se concurrencent pas, elles se complètent .

Le groupe Orange, pour installer sa politique de promotion de l'éthique, de l'intégrité et de la compliance dans toutes les géographies où il opère, par conviction et pour respecter les exigences réglementaires, a élaboré une stratégie dite «Tolérance Zéro». Ce qui signifie qu'aucune compromission, aucun

écart de conduite, aucune faille, aucun défaut d'intégrité ou de compliance ne peut être toléré, encore moins accepté et ceci quoi qu'il en coûte. Quitte à perdre définitivement un appel d'offres, quitte à perdre définitivement un client, quitte à perdre définitivement un marché, quitte même à quitter un pays !

L'éthique, l'intégrité, la compliance, la vigilance ne s'accommodent pas de variation !

Nous considérons que c'est la seule manière de construire sur des bases saines, de protéger son entreprise et ses employés.

Cette politique peut paraître surprenante, avec à court terme des effets négatifs. Un commercial ne renonce pas facilement à une opportunité commerciale pour des raisons éthiques. Une entreprise ne renonce pas facilement à des perspectives de croissance pour des doutes sur l'intégrité de l'opération.

A long terme, elle apporte des avantages compétitifs essentiels d'être perçu comme un acteur intègre, respectueux des aspirations de ses clients, soucieux de respecter strictement les règles nationales et internationales qui régissent ses activités, soucieux de respecter les droits humains et l'environnement; soucieux d'être performant techniquement, financièrement, socialement et globalement. La transparence d'une telle entreprise permet à moyen et long terme de gagner la confiance de ses partenaires et la confiance des Autorités publiques. La notion de confiance est essentielle pour un opérateur numérique et devient un avantage compétitif majeur pour les stratégies commerciales.

Quelles leçons le secteur privé peut-il offrir aux institutions publiques africaines en matière de gouvernance?

De nombreux pays souffrent des négatifs de la corruption et des manques d'intégrité, malgré l'existence d'organisations en charge de la lutte contre la corruption et de la moralisation de la vie économique. Cette situation montre clairement que les grands discours ne suffisent pas seuls à corriger de mauvaises tendances.

Les lois et règlements internationaux et extraterritoriaux qui régissent les activités économiques sont finalement, non plus des contraintes, mais une heureuse obligation de lutter contre la corruption, contre l'atteinte aux droits humains et environnementaux, de développer l'éthique à visage découvert sous le parapluie règles imposées aux entités économiques.

Les politiques pertinentes de prévention de la corruption, de préservation des droits humains et environnementaux autour des démarches d'identification concrète des risques, de communication et sensibilisation des acteurs sur les enjeux, de réalisation et de suivi des plans de mitigation, de contrôles et

de sanctions permettent de réduire les actes de corruption , de renforcer la vigilance.

Ainsi la démarche des entreprises peut inspirer les institutions publiques.

Comment un groupe international tel qu'Orange articule-t-il la gouvernance entre son siège et ses hubs africains ? Quels enseignements cette double présence offre-t-elle en matière de prise de décision ?

La diversité des environnements et des cultures(d'Egypte au Sénégal , de la Tunisie à Madagascar, du Maroc à la RDC) montre qu'un tel groupe, a de toute évidence, besoin d'agilité et de souplesse de souplesse. Nul ne peut penser qu'on peut adresser ces différents publics avec les mêmes mots, les mêmes postures.

En revanche, il faut mettre chacun devant ses responsabilités.

Appliquer le principe de subsidiarité pour qu'aucune action ne soit réalisée au niveau central si elle peut être réalisée mieux au niveau local. Et ceci s'applique encore plus dans les domaines éthique, compliance et vigilance. C'est pourquoi nous avons eu à cœur de travailler étroitement avec les conseils de direction de toutes les entités dans le monde pour positionner les enjeux d'éthique, de compliance et de vigilance dans le contexte de chaque pays et amener chaque pays, en fonction justement de ces réalités d'articuler ses programmes de formation, de communication interne et externe, de mise en œuvre.

6. Le modèle marocain de coopération Sud-Sud : enseignements de l'engagement continental du Royaume du Maroc en matière de gouvernance



Author



Mohamed Methqal, Ambassadeur et Directeur Général de l'Agence Marocaine pour la Coopération Internationale

Le Royaume du Maroc occupe aujourd'hui une place importante dans le paysage de la coopération internationale, en particulier dans le domaine de la coopération Sud-Sud. Cette dynamique structurante s'inscrit dans le cadre de la vision de Sa Majesté le Roi Mohammed VI, qui a fait de la coopération Sud-Sud un des piliers majeurs de la politique étrangère du Royaume où l'Afrique est une priorité, en plaçant l'élément humain au centre des actions, projets et programmes. Cette vision est portée par un engagement personnel de Sa **Majesté Le Roi Mohammed VI**.

La coopération sud-sud du Royaume du Maroc repose principalement sur les principes de solidarité, de respect mutuel, de partage et d'échange d'expertise, de co-développement et de partenariat gagnant-gagnant. Elle se distingue par son approche pragmatique et orientée vers les résultats, privilégiant le partage d'expertise, le transfert de savoir-faire et le renforcement des capacités humaines et institutionnelles. Le Maroc met ainsi à la disposition de ses partenaires son expérience, et transfère son expertise à l'occasion des nombreux programmes de renforcement de capacités et échanges d'expertise organisés chaque année dans des secteurs clés tels que l'agriculture, la gestion de l'eau, la gouvernance, les énergies renouvelables, la formation professionnelle, la santé, la finance inclusive et la sécurité alimentaire.

Cet engagement du Royaume se traduit également par la mise en œuvre de projets de développement concrets, l'accueil de milliers d'étudiants internationaux dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur marocains,

ainsi que par la conclusion de nombreux accords bilatéraux et multilatéraux. Le Royaume s'affirme également comme un acteur majeur de la coopération triangulaire, facilitant des partenariats entre pays africains et partenaires techniques et financiers internationaux, dans une logique de complémentarité et d'efficacité.

Dans ce cadre, l'Agence Marocaine de Coopération Internationale (AMCI) qui agit en coordination avec le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, de la Coopération Africaine et des Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger, est au cœur de l'écosystème national de coopération en charge de la mise en œuvre et l'opérationnalisation de projets et programmes dans le cadre de la coopération sud-sud et triangulaire. L'Agence œuvre en collaboration avec les départements ministériels, les établissements publics, les universités, les centres de formation, la société civile et les entreprises marocaines, ainsi qu'avec des organisations internationales et des partenaires techniques et financiers internationaux pour développer et renforcer la coopération sud-sud du Royaume et particulièrement en Afrique.

Grâce à son réseau de partenaires nationaux et internationaux, l'AMCI contribue activement à la conception et à la réalisation de projets de coopération Sud-Sud et triangulaire à fort impact, favorisant l'émergence de solutions adaptées aux réalités locales. Dans ce sens, la coopération triangulaire constitue aujourd'hui un instrument important de la politique de coopération sud-sud du Royaume du Maroc pour échanger son expertise et soutenir le développement durable du Continent. A cet effet, l'Agence Marocaine de Coopération Internationale (AMCI) a développé un large réseau de partenaires techniques nationaux (Plus de 35) disposant d'une expertise spécifique, pour accompagner l'Agence dans la mise en œuvre de ses programmes de coopération dans différents domaines tels que l'agriculture, la pêche, la santé, la sécurité alimentaire, la gouvernance, le changement climatique, l'autonomisation des femmes, le tourisme, entre autres.

Ainsi, le Royaume du Maroc, grâce à la Vision de Sa Majesté Le Roi Mohammed VI, est devenu un partenaire privilégié des principaux acteurs de la coopération et du développement dans la mise en œuvre des projets de coopération triangulaire pour les pays du Sud et notamment en Afrique.



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