



FRONTLINE AFRICA
— ADVISORY —



AFRICA POLITICAL RISK FORECAST

2026

Summary

As of January 2026, Africa faces a complex convergence of security, political, economic, and digital risks. Key considerations for corporates and investors include:

- **Security-first due diligence:** in conflict-prone regions – the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Mozambique (Cabo Delgado), and the Sahel – is essential; military stability does not guarantee civilian safety or operational continuity.
- **Political risk monitoring:** U.S., China, and Russia transactional interventions in African issues can abruptly shift market access and regulatory conditions. Agile response is critical in minerals, energy, and transport sectors.
- **Economic engagement:** The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and regional integration present intra-African trade opportunities, but sector-specific risk assessment is required to balance growth against potential conflict disruption.
- **Digital risk:** Internet shutdowns, restrictive cybersecurity regulations, and election-related interventions threaten fintech, e-commerce, and mobile money platforms across Nigeria, Tanzania, and other East African nations.
- **Strategic integration:** Security, political, economic, and digital risks must be assessed holistically; siloed evaluations risk misjudging exposure.
- **Engagement strategy:** Prioritise regional partnerships, local stakeholder consultation, and adaptive operational planning to mitigate unpredictable transactional diplomacy and insurgency dynamics.

Introduction

- Africa enters 2026 amid converging crises and cautious openings. The continent faces deepening security fractures driven by protracted conflicts, governance erosion, and intensifying great-power rivalries, alongside nascent economic momentum through continental integration.
- Persistent violence in the eastern DRC, Sudan, and northern Mozambique continues to displace millions, fuel humanitarian crises, and erode state authority. External actors exploit strategic vacuums: Russia secures concessions in junta-led states, China expands its Belt and Road presence, and the U.S. prioritises transactional mineral access and counterterrorism under an “America First” doctrine, often at the expense of addressing root causes.
- Great-power competition overlays local disputes, weakening African-led institutions such as the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) and regional economic communities (RECs) mechanisms. Yet AfCFTA progress demonstrates potential for self-reliance: South Africa’s preferential exports under AfCFTA, by way of an example, reached R820 million in 2025, an 8-10% increase in intra-African trade, spanning mining equipment, appliances, and processed foods. Full rollout could boost trade over 50% by 2035, creating jobs, GDP growth, and poverty reduction, potentially buffering against security-driven vulnerabilities if supported by domestic reforms.

Security Dynamics and Forecast

Security Architecture



- Africa’s security architecture faces unprecedented strains from entrenched conflicts, great-power rivalries, and governance failures. AU PSC, RECs, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and international partnerships remain patchworks of inspiration and inadequacy, undermined by uneven implementation, resource constraints, and diverging national interests.
- Key risks include militant Islamist expansion in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, ethnic and resource-driven conflicts in the Great Lakes, and insurgencies in Cabo Delgado. Proxy wars fuelled by Russia, China, and the U.S. exacerbate local insecurity.

- **Forward-looking scenario:** Africa’s security frameworks must strengthen coordination, early warning, and enforcement capacities to prevent escalation and protect civilian and corporate interests.

Hotspot Updates

DRC and MONUSCO Limitations

- Proxy wars persist in the eastern DRC, displacing 2-3 million civilians. The United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s (MONUSCO) rigid mandate, limited resources, and fragmented regional coordination constrain civilian protection and stabilisation. Regional tensions in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa—supporting proxies exacerbate challenges.



- **Forward-looking scenario:** MONUSCO requires flexible mandates, regional coordination, enhanced intelligence, and a civil-military early-warning system. Without adaptation, armed groups may exploit gaps, prolonging displacement and operational disruption for corporates.

Mozambique (Cabo Delgado)



- Military containment has reduced large-scale attacks, but insurgents adapt and fragment. Dialogue addressing local grievances –youth unemployment, marginalisation, displacement – is critical. Inclusive community and political engagement is necessary to prevent perpetuating instability.

Sudan

- Civil war threatens *de facto* partition, Red Sea shipping, and energy corridors. Humanitarian crises are likely to intensify, complicating logistics and investment.

Nigeria

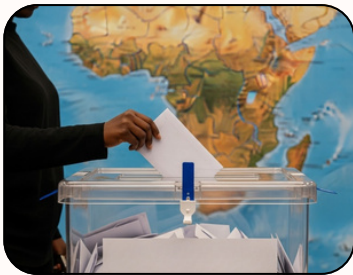
- Counterterrorism strikes may reduce immediate attacks but carry risk of sectarian backlash. Localised operational disruptions are likely despite broader urban stability.
- **Forward-looking scenario:** Military measures alone are insufficient; integrated political, social, and security engagement is required to stabilise hotspots and protect commercial operations.

U.S. Transactional Approach and Implications

- The U.S. transactional strategy prioritises short-term strategic and economic gains over long-term stability or democratic principles. Bilateral deals, preferential mineral access, and conditional aid create opportunities for some countries but expose others to sudden shifts and competitive pressures from China.
- **Forward-looking scenario:** Corporates face heightened operational, regulatory, and compliance risks in resource, logistics, and energy sectors, requiring agile monitoring, scenario planning, and adaptive engagement strategies.



Governance and Electoral Outlook

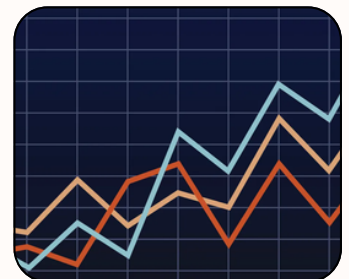


- Africa's 2026 electoral calendar highlights tensions between authoritarian consolidation and pockets of democratic resilience. Competitive elections in Cape Verde and Zambia contrast with managed or entrenched outcomes in Uganda (January), Republic of Congo (March), Benin, and Djibouti. Elections serve as both stabilisers and flashpoints, directly influencing investor confidence and market predictability.
- Institutional weaknesses in AU PSC, RECs risk leaving security gaps unaddressed. Targeted reforms, assessed contributions, harmonised REC protocols, and rapid-response funding, are critical for stabilisation and corporate confidence.

- **Forward-looking scenario:** Corporates must adopt integrated strategies to manage security, political, and governance risks amid persistent uncertainty.

Economic Forecast

- According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA) *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026 (WESP 2026) report*, Africa's GDP growth for 2026 is projected at 4.0-4.6%, supported by moderating inflation, resilient consumption, commodity price buoyancy, and anchor-economy reforms. AfCFTA could increase intra-African trade by 15-20%, unlocking infrastructure investments, jobs, and GDP gains. AGOA renewal sustains \$10-15B in annual trade benefits for 32 countries.
- The African Development Bank (AfDB) also forecasts improved growth for Africa, driven by buoyant private consumption spending, accommodative monetary policy and a weaker US dollar.
- **Forward-looking scenario:** Security and governance failures could reduce growth by 0.5-1% if conflicts disrupt supply chains, deter FDI, or exacerbate humanitarian crises.



Digital Landscape

- Digital repression – internet shutdowns and restrictive cybersecurity laws – are rising, limiting civic participation, stifling entrepreneurship, and disrupting mobile money transfers and trade. Shutdowns cost sub-Saharan Africa over \$1.6B in 2024, and corporates reliant on digital infrastructure face operational, reputational, and compliance risks.
- **Forward-looking scenario:** Protecting digital access is critical for sustaining economic growth, governance transparency, and business resilience.

Africa 2026 Corporate Risk Dashboard

Region / Country	Security Risks	Political Risks	Economic Risks	Digital Risks	Key Notes
DRC (North/South Kivu, Ituri)	Critical	High	High	Moderate	Proxy wars, M23 advance, weak MONUSCO mandate; US/China competition; operational disruption likely.
Sudan	Critical	Critical	High	Moderate	Civil war, RSF-UAE backing; supply chains vulnerable; humanitarian crisis ongoing.
Mozambique (Cabo Delgado, Niassa)	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Military operations reduce attacks but insurgents adapt; dialogue needed for long-term stability.
Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad)	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Military operations reduce attacks but insurgents adapt; dialogue needed for long-term stability.
West Africa (Nigeria, Benin, Ghana)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	Boko Haram, herder-farmer conflicts; election tensions; digital repression risks.
East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda)	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	US transactional diplomacy affects trade; risk of economic disruption.
Southern Africa (South Africa, Eswatini, Zambia, Mozambique outside Cabo Delgado)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	AfCFTA integration boosts trade; political fragility; infrastructure and mining moderately exposed.
North Africa (Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia)	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Stable governance; exposure to global energy/food markets; digital growth strong.

END

