



# Africa

## Summary and Key Talking Points

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### Policy Proposals

1. Focus on governments with which the U.S. can expect to have a mutually beneficial relationship.
2. Foster good governance by assisting African civil society organizations that hold their governments accountable.
3. Help African governments achieve greater economic freedom and encourage U.S. private sector involvement in the region.
4. Demonstrate U.S. commitment by making the U.S.–Africa Leaders Summit a biennial event.

### Quick Facts

1. Africa possesses about 60 percent of the world's unused arable land, and projections indicate that Africans will make up one-third of the world's population by 2100.
2. Ernst & Young estimates that the African continent will constitute a \$3 trillion economy by 2030.
3. Africa possesses 22 of the 33 mineral commodities that the U.S. deems critical to its economy and national defense.

### Power Phrases

#### Partnership and Engagement

- Africa's physical location, natural resources, soaring population, and growing economies make it an increasingly important and promising area for U.S. partnership.
- U.S. competitors such as China and Russia are active in the area, making a strong strategy of engagement even more pressing.
- U.S. policy should encourage democracy and economic freedom through free trade and investment, property rights, and rule of law, which encourage healthier societies, cleaner environments, and greater prosperity.

## The Issue

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The African continent is rapidly growing in strategic importance. Its ongoing demographic boom is producing an immense working-age population and potential consumer class. Richly endowed with natural resources, including arable land, important mineral commodities, and abundant fishing stocks, a number of its economies are among the fastest growing in the world. It has a commanding position on maritime chokepoints and abuts two continents, and its countries comprise the world's largest voting bloc in the United Nations, giving them significant diplomatic influence. Many countries, including American competitors such as China and Russia, are rapidly building influence with African countries. Al-Qaeda and ISIS-aligned terrorist organizations have proliferated on the continent in the last decade, and many are currently strengthening.

Since the end of the Cold War, U.S. policy toward Africa has focused on delivering overseas development assistance and ameliorating the security problems emanating from the continent. This approach is outdated. It does not account for the continent's many economic opportunities for American companies, or the significant influence America's geopolitical competitors have built on the continent. Chinese activity especially may threaten American strategic access to Africa, is increasingly creating anticompetitive economic norms on the continent that disadvantage U.S. companies, and is modeling illiberal governance that harms American efforts to promote democracy on the continent.

Under the Trump Administration, U.S. policy is adjusting to account for the realities of today's Africa. Its under-construction Prosper Africa initiative intends to advance the critical task of facilitating more American private sector activity. The Administration continues important pre-existing initiatives such as PEPFAR and the Millennium Challenge Corporation as well. While rightly recognizing the paramount challenge of nation-state competitors, the Administration is also continuing important counterterrorism activities on the continent.

The U.S. still lacks a strategic messaging campaign for the continent, however—a matter of increasing urgency since a significant part of the competition with China is one of ideology. In addition, the Administration has not had enough engagement with African leaders at the most senior level. Finally, while Prosper Africa has the right focus, its implementation has been too slow thus far.

The U.S. government's engagement with Africa must protect its core strategic interests in the continent, namely retaining sufficient influence and positioning on the continent to protect American interests there, facilitating regulatory and normative environments that ensure U.S. companies can compete on an even footing in Africa, encouraging the growth of African democracy, and ensuring that terrorists cannot use the continent as a staging ground for attacks against the U.S.

## Recommendations

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**Focus on governments with which the U.S. can reasonably expect to have a mutually beneficial relationship.** Countries that are good candidates for a strategic partnership should receive the full suite of U.S. engagements, such as consideration for a free-trade agreement; fully staffed U.S. embassies, including a commercial attaché; U.S. government-facilitated visits by U.S. business delegations; high-level U.S. official visits and interventions on behalf of U.S. companies; and mobilization of that country's U.S. diaspora to invest and engage in other constructive ways.

**Encourage and assist U.S. private sector activity in Africa.** Prosperous American companies strengthen U.S. economic might and contribute to American soft power. More U.S. business involvement in Africa would also help resist the further institutionalization of anti-competitive economic norms on the continent that benefit competitors such as China.

**Help African governments achieve greater economic freedom.** Doing so would bring greater and more rapid prosperity to their people, and expand investment opportunities for American companies. The U.S. could provide the rationale for and help with the technical expertise to liberalize regulatory environments, privatize state-owned industries, and improve the rule of law.

**Foster good governance.** The U.S.'s most valuable allies are usually those that share its core values such as democracy, rule of law, and respect for the free market. Good governance also promotes human flourishing and ameliorates instability and terrorism. The U.S. should assist African civil society organizations that hold their governments accountable, focus on helping the fight against corruption, and deepen coordination and cooperation with allies working on the same issues.

**Launch a strategic messaging campaign in Africa.** All government agencies that engage on Africa should have a unified message that explains the benefits of partnering with the U.S.; touts the value of democracy, individual liberty, and the free market; and highlights the decades of positive U.S. engagement in Africa. The campaign should include messaging about China in Africa that is culturally appropriate, respectful of African states' sovereign prerogatives, and realistic about some African countries' need for Chinese engagement.

**Increase senior U.S. officials' engagement with African counterparts.** Meetings in the Oval Office with the President are low-cost investments in a relationship that can have an outsized impact. Cabinet members and congressional delegations visiting the continent can also enhance ties with important African countries.

**Make the U.S.–Africa Leaders Summit a biannual event.** Many countries, including some U.S. competitors, hold regular summits with African heads of state. The U.S. has only ever held one, in 2014. A summit is a very public way to demonstrate commitment to the U.S.–Africa relationship, facilitate linkages between U.S. companies and African governments, and remind African governments of the desirability of partnering with the U.S.

## Facts and Figures

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**FACT: Africa's physical location, natural resources, soaring population growth, and growing economies make it increasingly important to American interests.**

- Africa touches three of the world's eight maritime chokepoints, abuts Europe and Asia, and has thousands of miles of Atlantic and Indian Ocean coastline.
- In 2014, Africa had the largest or second-largest known reserves of ten important mineral resources. It possesses 22 of the 33 mineral commodities that the U.S. deems critical to its economy and national defense, and for which the U.S. is more than 50 percent import reliant.
- Africa possesses about 60 percent of the world's unused arable land.
- Africa's population will likely double by 2050 and quadruple by 2100, which would mean one-third of the world's population would be African.
- Ernst and Young estimates that 19 African economies will be growing by 5 percent or more per year by 2030, and that the continent will constitute a \$3 trillion economy. The African Development Bank predicts that consumer spending in Africa will grow to \$1.4 trillion by 2020. According to ExxonMobil, about 30 percent of the world's increase in energy demand will be in Africa between 2015 and 2040. Experts forecast the continent's mobile internet connections will double between 2017 and 2022.

**FACT: Other countries, including U.S. competitors, are rapidly increasing their engagements in Africa.**

- According to McKinsey, China's trade with Africa has grown by about 20 percent every year since 2000. In 2017, China–Africa trade was three times greater than U.S.–Africa trade. Chinese institutions issued loans worth \$5 billion to \$6 billion every year to African governments from 2013 to 2015, constituting an estimated one-third of all new debt in sub-Saharan Africa in 2015. Two-thirds of African countries use some Chinese military equipment.
- Roughly between 2005 and 2015, trade between Russia and Africa increased by a factor of more than 10. Since Russia's 2014 Crimea annexation, it has signed 19 military cooperation agreements with sub-Saharan African countries, according to Reuters. Russian mercenaries have operated in at least five African countries, and Africa receives 17 percent of all Russian arms exports.
- Turkey has 44 embassies in Africa, up from 12 in 2009. Its largest embassy and overseas military base are in Somalia. President Erdogan has visited Africa at least 40 times as president and prime minister. The stock of Turkish FDI in Africa grew from less than \$100 million in 2003 to more than \$6 billion in 2015. Turkey had 45 signed trade and economic agreements with African countries in 2017, up from 23 in 2003.

**FACT: Islamist terrorism is a potent and growing threat in parts of Africa.**

- According to the 2018 Global Terrorism Index, 12 of the world's 23 countries most affected by terrorism were in Africa.
- The African Center for Strategic Studies counts 27 discrete terror groups on the continent operating primarily in 11 countries. Reported Islamist-linked violent acts and related fatalities have doubled every year since 2016 in the Sahel region. Civilian fatalities grew by more than 7,000 percent in Burkina Faso at the beginning of 2019 compared to the same period in 2018, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.
- The Islamic State West Africa Province conquered hundreds of square miles in Nigeria, Chad, and Niger at the beginning of 2019 alone and overwhelmed a dozen military bases; it currently has an estimated 3,500 fighters. Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Musli-meen, an alliance of four terror groups that formed in 2017, was responsible for about half of all the terrorist-related violence in the Sahel in 2018.

**FACT: Poor governance is a critical impediment to development and security in Africa.**

- Sub-Saharan Africa is the world's worst performing region in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.
- Between 1970 and 2010, an estimated \$850 billion was misappropriated in Africa.
- Four of the six worst-ranked countries in the 2018 Fund for Peace Fragile States Index were African.

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## Additional Resources

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Joshua Meservey, "The Saudi-Qatari Dispute: Why the U.S. Must Prevent Spillover into East Africa," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 3268, November 29, 2017, <https://www.heritage.org/africa/report/the-saudi-qatari-dispute-why-the-us-must-prevent-spillover-east-africa>.

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Joshua Meservey, "South Sudan's Conflict and Famine," testimony before the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, July 26, 2017, [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/072617\\_Meservey\\_Testimony.pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/072617_Meservey_Testimony.pdf).