

Megatrends Afrika: Research and Policy Advice on the Effects of Megatrends in Africa and their Implications for German and International Policy

Global Megatrends in Africa

African states and societies are undergoing profound transformations. In an increasing number of countries, ever-younger populations demand political change. External actors such as China or Russia intensify their engagement on the continent. The number and scale of armed conflicts are on the rise, particularly in the northern half of Africa.

These processes of transformation on the African continent are largely shaped by global megatrends. The term subsumes phenomena, which launch long-term structural changes that largely escape political control. They have profound effects on social, economic, and political orders. Examples include climate change, digitalisation, urbanisation, and shifts in global power relations.

The Project

In the project "*Megatrends Afrika: Implications and Options for German and International Policy*", we explore how megatrends affect African states and societies. We seek to develop ideas for German and European cooperation with African partners that help to make ongoing transformations fairer and more sustainable. This is all the more important as Africa is rising on the agenda of German and European policymakers, as does their need for evidence-based policy advice.

Megatrends Afrika is a joint project of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), the German Development Institute (DIE), and the Kiel Institute für World Economy (IfW). Our project cooperates with the Kiel Institute Africa Initiative.

Our Products

We produce policy-relevant research on major political, social, and economic trends in Africa. The Megatrends Afrika team brings together scholars from both continents and different disciplines. Our aim is to exchange, take on, and critically question different perspectives. We do so at workshops, through our publications, as well as on the blog of our website. This way, we wish to contribute to a more nuanced public debate on Africa. All project publications are subject to an internal peer review and fact-checking process.

Focus Areas

In the initial phase of the project in 2022, we focus on three themes:

Conflicts, statehood, and violent actors The number of conflicts in Africa is on the rise, as are their victims. On the one hand, this thematic area is concerned with new political orders that emerge as armed non-state actors proliferate. On the other hand, we look at the transformation of conflicts and warfare themselves, driven by megatrends such as technological innovation and the multipolarisation of the regional order. Our regional focus in this thematic area lies on the Sahel and northern Africa.

Megatrends and political authority For the foreseeable future, political authority in Africa will be increasingly intertwined with and shaped by the megatrends. African societies are becoming younger, larger, more digital, and more urban. They have to adapt to the consequences of climate change and thus make new demands on their states and governments. Social movements are putting pressure on established elites and political systems. These processes of change can promote democratic structures, but also autocratic tendencies. At the moment, the latter trend prevails in many states worldwide. The majority of African countries can be classified as electoral or closed autocracies. We investigate the conditions under which megatrends work in one direction or the other.

New external actors The global balance of power is shifting towards a multipolar, fragmented world order. This has a significant impact on Africa's international relations. States like China, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, or Turkey are increasing their political, economic, and military engagement on the continent. They offer African states new forms of cooperation and thus potentially more opportunities to shape their foreign relations themselves. But not all actors are equally interested in sustainable development on the continent. In this thematic area, we look at the impact of these developments on African states and their relations with Europe.

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