



# Africa in the World

## Scenarios

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## Scenarios

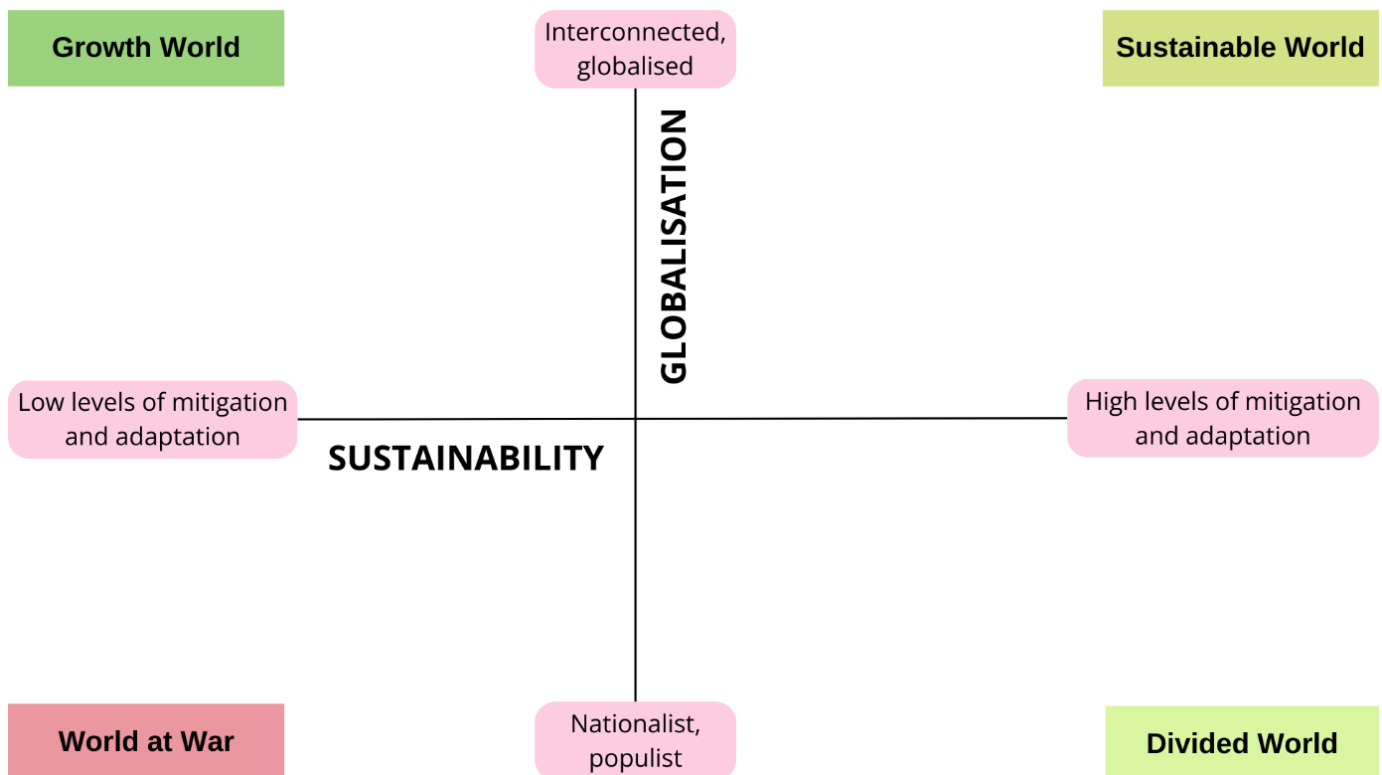
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## Logic and modelling

We frame Africa's development within four alternative global scenarios based on the above-mentioned trends and measurements. We use two key dimensions that represent fundamental and highly uncertain forces shaping the international system, each with significant implications for development, geopolitics, and environmental resilience, depicted in Chart 4. The extent of globalisation (vertical axis) captures the degree to which countries and regions remain interconnected through trade, technology, and cooperation—or shift towards fragmentation and regionalism. The pursuit of sustainability (horizontal axis) reflects the prioritisation of equitable growth, environmental stewardship, and long-term resource management versus unchecked exploitation and short-term gains.

These dimensions form a framework with four quadrants, each representing a possible future scenario based on how these uncertainties might unfold: a Sustainable World, a Divided World, a World at War and a Growth World.

Chart 4: Scenario framework



No scenario seeks to present the current global trajectory, which would inevitably be somewhere between these ideal types but currently most akin to the Divided World scenario.

The first scenario, a **Sustainable World** scenario, prioritises sustainability, equity, and pursuing the objectives set out in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Rapid and ambitious regional integration lies at the heart of this scenario, successively translating into an African continental free trade area, then a customs union and eventually a common market that allows the free movement of capital, labour, and services amongst most countries. In this world, Africa can achieve the development outcomes modelled as the combined scenario on this website, which is associated with steady progress in accountability, democracy, and stability. The Sustainable World maximises economic growth with a 2043 global economy of US\$170 trillion (compared to US\$94 trillion in 2023), improves income, and reduces poverty. However, it is the most difficult to attain given its focus on multilateralism, environmental sustainability and equity.

In a second **Growth World** scenario, countries focus on the rapid improvements in income and returns on investment, eschewing environmental concerns, and do so within the context of a grand bargain between the US and China. Commercial and trade interests dominate, and by 2043, the world economy will be similar in size to the forecast in the Sustainable World scenario. Still, the Growth World will release 11% less CO<sub>2</sub> from fossil fuels, one indicator of the differences between these two futures. The Growth World leads to excellent economic results but to the detriment of equality and efforts to contain global greenhouse gases, resulting in negative climate change impacts, slow reductions in extreme poverty and an increase in inequality.

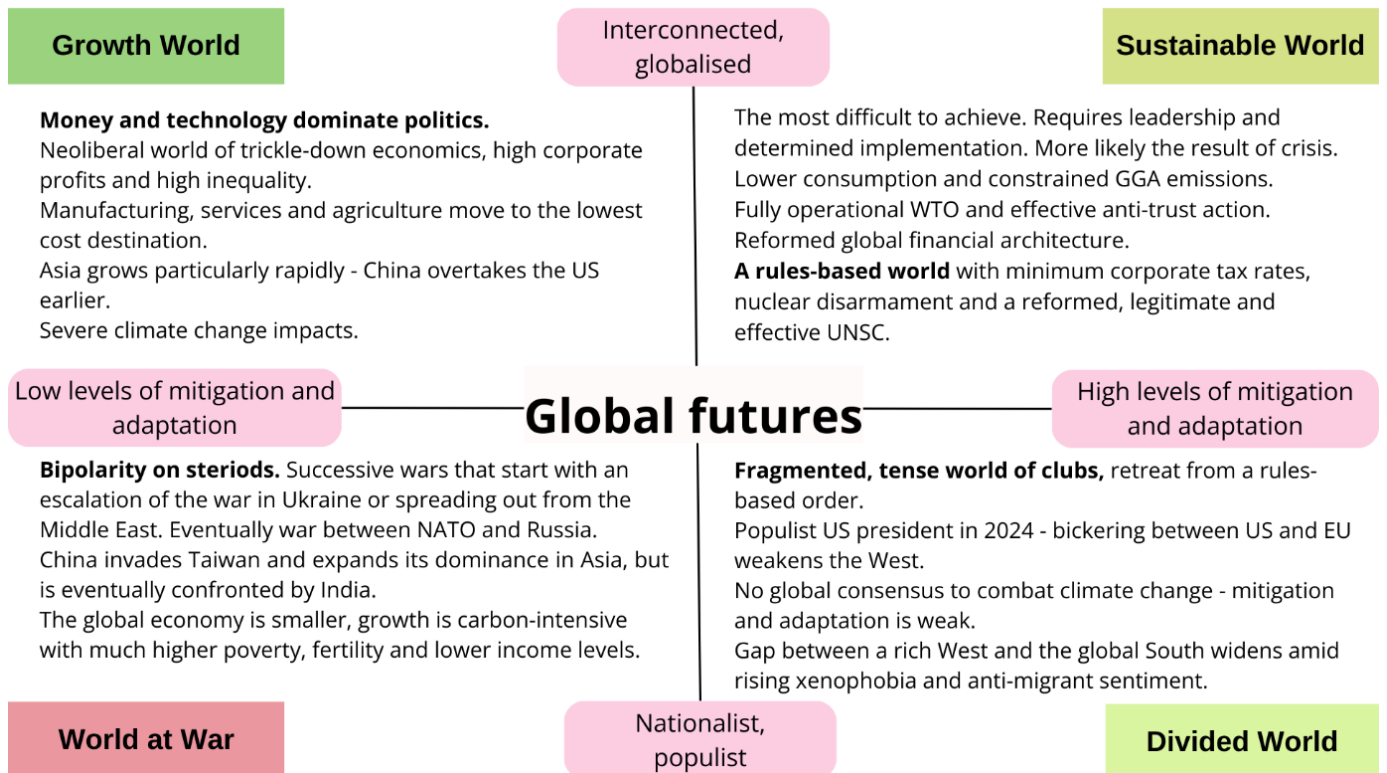
Instead of the continental integration characteristic of the Sustainable World, in the Growth World, African countries and regions link up with Europe, the Persian Gulf, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and China, signing preferential agreements with external partners. This is still, nominally, a rules-based context, although considerations regarding human rights and democracy play a relatively minor role. The AU is eventually marginal with countries and groups of countries pursuing the advantages of partnering with Europe (North Africa), the Persian Gulf (the Horn), the US (West Africa) and China (Southern, East and Central Africa). More importantly, the Growth World will have 192 million more extremely poor people than the Sustainable World, most of whom will be in sub-Saharan Africa.

The third indicative scenario is of a **Divided World** with a future characterised by a sense of global fracturing, populism, nationalism and a retreat from globalisation — effectively, the fraying of the rules-based system as we know it, with its complex lattice of norms and institutions. Everyone seems to be angry, selfish and unhappy and xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiment increase as rates of migration accelerate. National and competitive interests dominate in Africa as bickering and beggar thy neighbour policies escalate, although there is limited trade integration at the sub-regional level. Economic growth is tepid, and poverty reduction is slow. In addition to constant interference in the domestic affairs of their neighbours and domestic oppression, Africans again allow themselves to be instrumentalised by external partners.

The fourth scenario is a **World at War**, where competition within and between the US and China dominates all aspects of the global economy, politics and relations with violent outcomes. In addition to fragmentation in Libya, Sudan and the Sahel, more African states threaten to fracture as competing armed groups vie for power, including large countries such as the DR Congo. Shut out of the prospects for more rapid development, Africans suffer. Poverty increases as economic growth is insufficient to improve incomes, given more rapid population growth typically associated with instability. The World at War scenario is the worst case for everyone, as overall gains are below any other with successive wars between major powers. Autocracy increases everywhere, and those African countries that avoid fracturing grow slowly based on their small domestic market without the advantages of trade integration. The World at War scenario results in a much smaller world economy at US\$132 trillion in 2043, with Africa growing particularly slowly despite its much larger population.

Chart 5 summarises the key characteristics of the four scenarios.

Chart 5: Summary feature of four global scenarios



The scenario currently closest to the global trajectory is the Divided World scenario, with 724 million extremely poor people in 2043, significantly more than in the Sustainable (385 million) or Growth World scenarios (563 million). Extreme poverty in the World at War scenario will be 695 million, most of which will be in sub-Saharan Africa.

Because it includes determined efforts at an energy transition to renewables, a global carbon tax and carbon sequestration through the protection and regeneration of forests, the Sustainable World scenario has the lowest carbon emissions from fossil fuels. By contrast, economic growth in the Growth World, which is marginally higher than in the Sustainable World scenario, comes at a huge cost: carbon emissions from fossil fuels peak in 2039 (at 37.7 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent), six years later and much higher than in the Divided World scenario which has the second highest carbon emissions from fossil fuels. The result is more severe global warming associated with the Growth World than any other scenario.

Because of slow economic growth, the growth of carbon emissions from fossil fuels in the World at War scenario is lower than in other scenarios. Still, in the long term (beyond 2044), carbon emissions in the Sustainable World scenario are the lowest.

## Divided World

The Divided World scenario reflects the acceleration of current trends towards a more fragmented global order, an associated retreat from the Western rules-based system, and China's rapid rise to become globally dominant towards the end of the forecast horizon.

Populist party successes in Germany, France, Italy, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Austria followed the election of Donald Trump as US president in November 2024. Instead of pulling together, pursuing its narrow national interests rather than a common approach to China and on matters such as support to Ukraine is to the detriment of the

West. Nationalist populism eventually undermines the Western rules-based system, which is, by 2040, hardly recognisable from its current form with the US and the EU constantly bickering and pulling in different directions, providing the opportunity for others, most prominently China and Russia, to exploit these differences to their advantage.

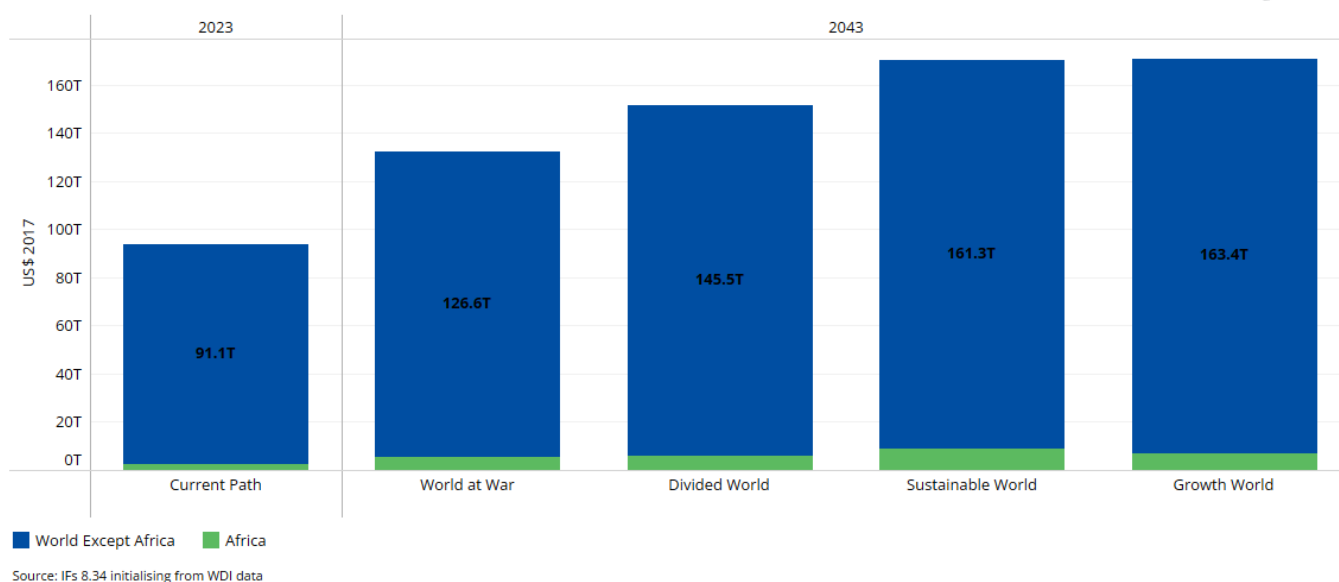
Having been driven closer due to European sanctions on Russian oil and gas, the rapprochement between China and Russia proceeded apace. The latter eventually becomes entirely dependent upon China for oil and gas exports, in addition to its exports of agriculture and minerals to countries in the Global South.

Although the EU avoids another Brexit moment, it is consumed by bickering in the wake of the end of the war in Ukraine in 2027 with the ceding of Crimea and some eastern provinces to Russia. Since the US and the EU do not act as one in this scenario, China overtakes the EU in 2024 and the US in 2038, using the Global Power Index, although not using DiME, which applies heavier weightings to technological sophistication.

On this trajectory, the steady loss in legitimacy, influence and salience of the UN proceeds apace. Non-permanent members eventually do not attend Security Council sessions in protest against the right to veto still held by permanent members and the lack of structural reform. Local solutions, including industrial subsidies and hard border control, dominate. The free movement of labour, knowledge and eventually capital is restricted. Uncertainty and insecurity mean that the number of nuclear-armed states increases as efforts to contain proliferation have long collapsed.

Nominally, three clubs dominate and jockey for influence: an expanded G7, an expanded BRICS, and a group of countries trying to stay out of the fight, mainly consisting of the bulk of African countries, India and others from South America and Asia. The clubs can only partially cloak the differences in approaches among their members; however, with the regular appearance of new clubs and alliances as countries seek the best partners to pursue their interests, but none last.

Chart 6: GDP (MER) per scenario, 2023 and 2043



India pursues its interests and alliances, including with Africa, while continuing to challenge China in Asia. Still, it struggles to gain traction for its traditional independent stance, given its worsening relations with Pakistan after New Delhi's unilateral decision in 2019 to alter Kashmir's constitutional status. In this scenario, armed confrontation along their shared borders becomes endemic.

The Asian region is particularly tense, with the Chinese invasion of Taiwan more likely given public pronouncements by US

President Trump in 2025 that US soldiers would not die in defence of the island. As a result, China's subsequent occupation of Taiwan proceeds relatively quickly and with relatively limited damage, although extensive financial and other sanctions follow.

The degree to which Russia disregarded the UN Charter with its invasion of Ukraine and Israeli defiance of the UN Security Council in 2024/5 in its war on Gaza emboldens others. In addition to the US, countries such as Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, Myanmar, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Malaysia, Rwanda, Egypt and others regularly violate previously sacrosanct international norms of behaviour. Domestic priorities regularly trump the global good, including the fraying of humanitarian practices, regressive legislation and practices in respect of the widespread reintroduction of the death penalty, rolling back of progress with women's rights and even the reintroduction of practices such as female genital mutilation in Africa. The Gambia first proposed a bill to this effect in 2024, subsequently also legislated in Uganda, Somalia, and several other countries.

Perceptions in this scenario reinforce long-standing caricatures of Africa (corrupt, poor, suffering) and the West (unequal, selfish, exploitative). Chinese efforts towards an alternative global order (non-interference, mutual respect, and social order based on domestic surveillance and control) have gained traction. Rather than pulling together, the African Union is divided, and an African voice is generally absent from discussions about global futures. Some countries try to remain non-aligned; others align with the West or China. There is no solid African voice or position on crucial issues ranging from peace and security to climate change and development, and more countries pivot away from democracy to pursue their version of an autocratic development future. A lack of coherence in decision-making on crucial development policies means that Africa falls further behind average development indicators in the rest of the world.

Attitudes harden. This world is more crowded, angry and fearful, with slow growth in the Global South propelling a substantial illegal migrant movement that drives populist politics and xenophobia in Europe and North America, reducing the ability of these countries and regions to play a positive role in international politics. Africa's colonial legacy transforms into a decidedly anti-Western sentiment, and the continent is again a theatre for proxy wars between Russia and the West. By 2026, France, the UK, and the US have effectively been ejected from Africa, losing access to all their previous military bases and some embassies. Whereas the US had [29 military bases](#) in 15 African countries in 2019, by 2026, it is down to five, and by 2030, only Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti remained. Illegal migration to the EU becomes a big problem and regularly overwhelms border arrangements with violent clashes and many deaths.

In the Divided World, relations between most African and European countries deteriorate significantly, and the once close partnership between the EU and the AU is eventually a distant memory. China gains the most in this scenario with the determined pursuit of the [ambitions of Xi Jinping](#) and his vision to 'make China great again', a globally respected leader in high technology manufacturing, particularly as regards the green economy.

There is little appetite for follow-on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a Divided World. Sustainable development solutions are regional and scattered. Efforts to contain carbon emissions and combat climate change proceed apace, but they are weaker and less effective than the Sustainable World scenario, given the lack of coordinated international action. China powers ahead, however, and within a decade, it emerges as the undisputed global leader in sustainable economic space, cementing its role as the dominant supplier of batteries, wind and solar solutions, and associated technologies.

However, African countries are adept at playing China, Europe, and the US off against one another, as they have done for several decades. African subregions, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), deepen existing levels of economic integration, but progress with the AfCFTA stalls. Conflicts are complex, with the number of actors involved constantly increasing, frustrating African efforts at mediation. The effects of climate change are evident across Africa but most visible in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. With its large, youthful and poor population, instability in Africa increases.

In summary, the Divided World scenario predicts a future marked by global fragmentation, where rising populism and geopolitical tensions diminish Western influence and pave the way for China's dominance. This division undermines global cooperation and international norms, leading to a world where regional interests trump collective efforts, exacerbating geopolitical tensions, particularly in Asia, and increasing nuclear proliferation. As a result, sustainable development is sidelined, global governance weakens, and Africa faces heightened instability and challenges in economic integration, reflecting the broader global shift towards prioritising national over collective interests.

## World at War

Hard power competition dominates in the **World at War** scenario, which consists of successive large-scale wars that eventually engulf all leading economies and include nuclear weapon exchanges. Efforts to review the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) collapsed and, in 2026, the New START treaty finally lapsed in 2026, having been on life-support since the February 2023 State of the Nation address by Russian President Vladimir Putin that his country would suspend participation.

The first large-scale conflict is the escalation of Russia's war on Ukraine into a broader military confrontation with NATO. To stave off a Ukrainian defeat and to counter the deployment of more significant numbers of troops from North Korea, France and the UK deployed combat troops into the country. Russian retaliation included attacks on logistic bases in Poland and elsewhere, setting the scene for the geographic expansion of the conflict. The war in Ukraine has already pushed Russia closer to China as the primary destination for its oil and gas exports. In April 2024, the two countries **pledged** to cooperate more closely to maintain international industrial supply chain stability. 'China and Russia will be more active in pursuing the convergence of their interests... and work together to maintain international industrial supply chain stability,' a ministry statement quoted Chinese Foreign Ministry Wang Yi as saying. Under full sanctions from the West, Russia has no other outlet for its fossil fuel exports upon which its economy depends.

Others that extend the China–Russia military cooperation include Iran (which has a long-standing grievance with the West), North Korea, Pakistan, and eventually Vietnam and Cambodia. For China, importing gas and oil from Russia bolsters its efforts to reduce its reliance on strategic resources from Western suppliers. Still, it remains dependent on oil and gas from the Middle East. Russia and China do not enter a formal military alliance to oppose NATO. Still, military cooperation is close, building on the statement by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin in February 2022 that their partnership has 'no limits' as the two vowed to deepen cooperation on various fronts. Already, in 2022, NATO added China to its perceived threat environment.

China bides its time and then uses the distraction provided by the war between NATO and Russia to invade Taiwan, with only nominal military intervention from the US and Japan, given the threat of a strategic nuclear exchange.

A second trigger for the World at War scenario could come from the Middle East. Following the horrific terror attacks by Hamas on Israel on 7 October 2023, the Jewish state lashed out in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and eventually Iran. The US, which had tried to resist the growing regional conflagration, going so far as to support UN Security Council decisions that sought to constrain and eventually condemn Israel, is drawn into military support for its ally, alienating long-standing partners such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt where popular sentiment force both countries to abandon their efforts at moderation.

The first indication of what is to come is the collapse of the Abraham Accords of 2020, which briefly normalised relations between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. Eventually, it is separate deadly attacks by Houthis and the Islamic State in the region, including clear evidence of the extent of military support to Iran from Russia, that tip the scales into a bloody confrontation - opening up a front extending from Ukraine to the Middle East with the US too stretched to ensure Israel's security. After a decade of war and with a weakened US, Israel eventually agreed to a two-state solution along the lines of the **1967 delimitations**.



A third trigger (or successive regional war) is border conflict, which eventually leads to a war between India and China. Although India will continue to have significantly fewer power capabilities than China across the forecast horizon, the two are increasingly regional and global power competitors with a shared long border. The significant disparities in their material power capabilities make this only likely towards the end of our forecast horizon.

In addition to direct conflict, the often violent rivalry between Chinese-supported, nuclear-armed Pakistan and India over Kashmir could also trigger conflict between China and India, particularly if the two look to balance their relations with Washington and Beijing. India already fought a brief war with China in 1962, and India and Pakistan have had numerous border skirmishes and military stand-offs.

In this world, India's alarm at Chinese assertion and aggression, particularly in the South China Sea, sees it align itself more closely with the West to balance Islamabad's close relations with Beijing. In a starkly bipolar world, there would be less space for India's traditional non-aligned orientation.

Complicating matters is New Delhi's cordial but guarded relations with Russia, from which it buys most of its weapons.

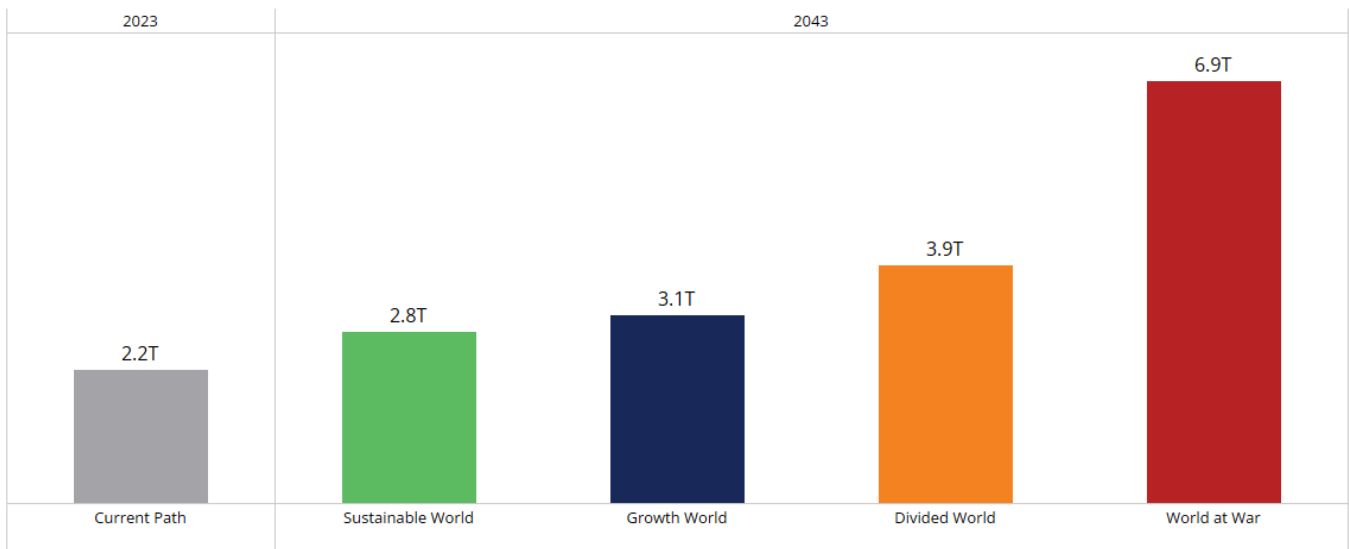
The defining characteristic of the World at War scenario is the division of the globe into two poles with little space for others — a return of global relations to a bipolar era reminiscent of the height of the Cold War but on steroids. The US House of Representatives passed the Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act on 27 April 2022 as a clear sign of where things could go. After approval by the Senate, it was signed into law by President Trump in 2025, placing African countries that trade with Russia and are perceived to have close relations with it, such as South Africa, under sanctions. China is in a different league from the former USSR, however. In 2024, China was already the **largest trading partner** for more than 120 countries and regions, including the US and the EU. Its economy is already more significant than the US's, using purchasing power parity, and the Chinese economy will surpass the US in 2037 at market exchange rates. By 2043, the Chinese economy will be 7% larger than the US economy in market exchange rates and nearly 31% larger in terms of purchasing power parity.

The intense competition and even conflict between a declining US and rising China in this scenario will affect every country and region in the world, even as struggles for self-determination and independence intensify, such as efforts by the Kurds to establish their homeland, the ongoing struggle of the Palestinians to escape the yoke of Israeli repression and occupation, and in regions such as the Sahel in Africa.

Africa becomes a key area of strategic and sometimes violent competition for control of its strategic mineral resources in the World at War scenario. Still, it remains unable to benefit from its beneficiation. China has been a first mover in securing a supply of the strategic minerals required to transition to a renewables-based future, including lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese and palladium. Chinese companies were the only ones willing to invest in a country like the DR Congo for years. As a result, by 2021, Chinese companies controlled 60% of global cobalt reserves and 80% of the world's cobalt refining capacity, which helped China secure a significant lead as an electronic vehicle battery maker to the extent that a single Chinese company, Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Limited (CATL), controls one-third of the entire **global battery market**.

Chart 7 depicts world military expenditure. Whereas it averaged 2.3% of GDP in 2023, by 2043, it will have increased to 5.3% in the World at War scenario and 2.6% in the Divided World scenario. Instead of spending US\$2.8 trillion on the military in 2043 (in the Sustainable World scenario), the world will spend more than double that amount at US\$7 trillion. From a low base military expenditure in Africa increases more than fivefold from US\$53 billion in 2023 to US\$264 billion by 2043.

Chart 7: Military expenditure per scenario, 2043



Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from SIPRI data

As arms purchases and the number of arms increase, Africa is again flooded by surplus weaponry, older stocks are replaced with more modern armaments, and countries upgrade and replace their systems, as happened at the end of the Cold War. The ready supply of weapons threatens the rupture of several additional African countries on top of the divisions in Libya, Sudan, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Cameroon.

Democracy declines globally and Africans are pressured to choose sides to the extent that problems emerge in the interoperability of the Internet, which is now segmented into regional fiefdoms. The momentum towards the AfCFTA and trade integration at the subregional level fails. Each country does the best that it can, on its own.

Instead of African states being able to secure their territories and borders, in the World at War scenario, the Islamic State further spreads its influence to establish the caliphate's future after being defeated and driven out of Syria and Iraq. Already, in 2022, at least 20 countries directly experienced the group's activities, with more than 20 others used for logistics and to mobilise funds and other resources. In this scenario, Iran and Russia play an important role in funding, supporting and expanding terror in Western-aligned African countries.

In summary, the World at War scenario predicts a future defined by intensified global military conflicts, including significant wars among major economies and nuclear exchanges. The breakdown of nuclear non-proliferation treaties and escalating tensions, particularly between NATO and Russia and between China and India, underscores a shift towards a bipolar global division reminiscent of the Cold War but much more intense. This era of hard power competition sees the US and China as central figures, with Africa becoming a strategic battleground for mineral resources and military influence, leading to a dramatic increase in military expenditures and armament. The scenario highlights the dire consequences of global divisions, emphasizing the need for strategic alliances and the significant impact of leadership decisions on global stability and regional conflicts.

## Growth World

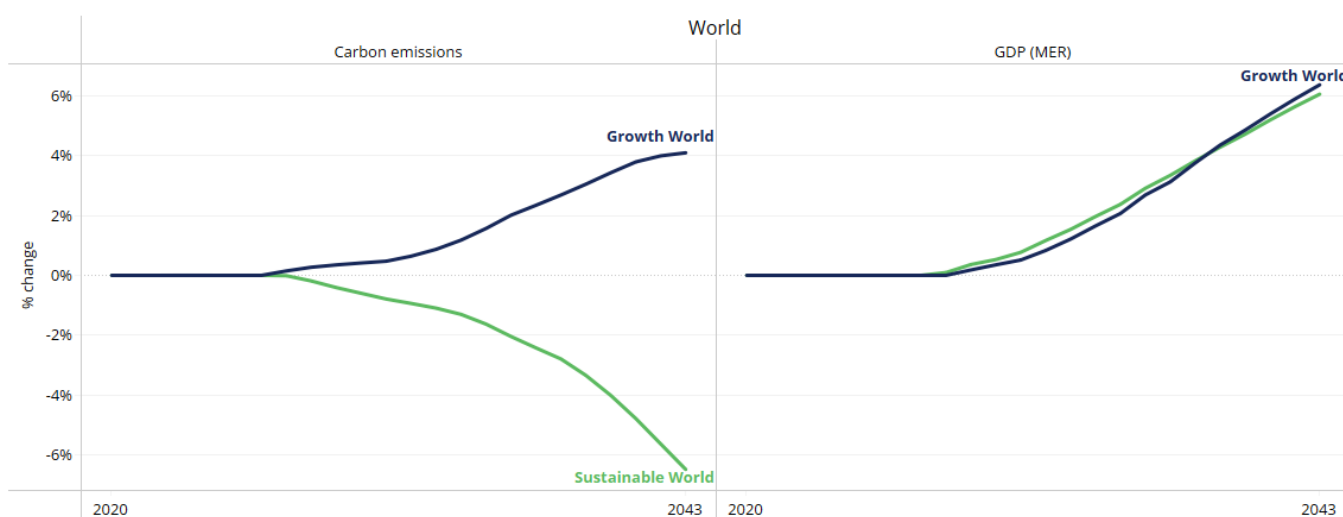
Neoliberal, trickle-down economics and increased corporate concentration characterise the **Growth World** with little care for the environment. This high-growth, unequal world would see slow reductions in extreme poverty and a rise of the power and influence of private capital. The rich get richer and the poor suffer. Efforts to introduce minimum tax rates for

corporations, which started in 2021 when 136 countries agreed to implement a 15% global minimum rate, do not get off the ground. Instead, large corporations, originally particularly characteristic of the US, increase their power and profits everywhere including in the EU that was previously a bastion of anti-trust legislation. All profits flow back to the corporate head offices of a handful of global behemoths.

The US and the EU both step away from anti-trust efforts that could reign in anticompetitive behaviour and through mergers, major industries consolidate their presence in the services, finance and manufacturing sectors. Lack of competitiveness lets companies lower wages, increase prices and dilute the quality of their products. The practice of tax avoidance through profit shifting to low-tax jurisdictions effectively leads to a race to the bottom as countries compete to attract foreign direct investment. Developing countries suffer in the process as monies are drained away to tax havens and least-cost locations. Unemployment reaches unprecedented high levels in poor countries with large pools of low-skilled labour.

Chart 8 shows the rapid growth in world GDP in the Growth World scenario, passing US\$170 trillion by 2043 and the simultaneous rise of carbon emissions to the end of the forecast horizon. In contrast to the Sustainable World scenario, income growth comes at the cost of a rapidly deteriorating environment and growing inequality.

**Chart 8: GDP and carbon emissions per scenario, 2020-2043**  
% change vs the Current Path



Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from Appalachian State University and WDI data

Competition between China, the US and Europe changes. The unexpected death of Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2026 reverses the tightening of central social, political and economic control from Beijing, and his successor relaxes the harsh clampdown on economic and political freedoms that had come to characterise Xi Jinping's third five-year term as the nation's president. China is rewarded by massive inward investment when the US enters into a Grand Bargain with its former foe in the final year of the second Trump presidency. The restrictions on ownership and investment in Western countries disappear almost overnight as business leaders scramble to cash in on the largest global market. Instead of contracting, global value chains expand, and the period of reshoring and friendshoring manufacturing in 2022/5 is, by 2030, a distant memory. The lowest-cost considerations again drive the location of factories and manufacturing. Instead of moving from China to surrounding countries with lower labour costs, the extent of state subsidies, excellent infrastructure, and numerous incentives see China strengthen its position as the world's high-technology factory, most prominently regarding generative artificial intelligence.

Skilled migration to China resumes, and other countries that provide quality of life, security for investment, and the

required information technology attract the best and brightest. Companies now compete in an unregulated global market to provide high-end services without establishing a legal presence or paying taxes elsewhere. The Chinese economy grows more rapidly in the Growth World than in any other scenario. However, as incomes rise, domestic pressure for more freedom and growing inequality make China's future more unpredictable.

With a focus on maximising profit and the extraction of rents, the saliency of the United Nations, its Security Council and various agencies decline in this scenario. Rich countries adapt to the impact of climate change, but the developing world suffers. Instead of the AfCFTA, African subregions link up externally, such as North Africa with the EU, several West African countries enter into agreements with the US, countries in the Horn of Africa with the Middle East, and those in East and Southern Africa with China. Central Africa trails behind. More significant migration flows inevitably follow. Peacekeeping is a lucrative business in this world, now outsourced to private companies and developing countries with large populations funded for their efforts through bilateral arrangements with richer countries keen to secure their investments in unstable areas.

In summary, the Growth World scenario illustrates a future dominated by neoliberal economics and corporate power, leading to significant global GDP growth and environmental degradation, with large corporations bypassing efforts to implement global minimum tax rates and anti-trust legislation, further exacerbating inequality and unemployment. This world sees China's economic and political landscape transform following Xi Jinping's unexpected death, resulting in massive inward investment and a shift towards less regulated global markets. In contrast, the developing world, particularly Africa, faces the increased effects of rapid climate change and external economic dependencies.

## Sustainable World

In the **Sustainable World** scenario, the international community balances growth and distribution by reducing overall consumption and constraining greenhouse gas emissions through, amongst others, a differentiated global carbon tax that funds Africa's energy transition. Collaboration and norm development extend across multiple sectors, including a resurgence in the World Trade Organization (WTO) role, the introduction and steady increase of a global minimum corporate tax rate, which stands at 20% by 2043.

This future is most likely to emerge from a crisis, such as the impact of the World at War scenario, the rapid acceleration of the effects of climate change and repeat global pandemics that forces a reluctant world to adopt a collective response. In June 2023, UN Secretary-General Guterres **warned** that the world would hit 1.5 degrees Celsius warming above preindustrial levels by early 2030 and that the Earth was on a trajectory towards two to three degrees Celsius by 2100.

A Sustainable World could even originate in the US due to the corporate profiteering and excesses evident during the second Trump presidency. In this scenario, US politics swing violently against the corrosive power of money during the 2029 presidential elections with the election of a progressive independent who restores democracy. In subsequent years, the US pursued aggressive antitrust policies to increase competition and rein in the damaging effect of private monies on domestic politics.

In terms of great power competition, a Sustainable World scenario is likely associated with an expanded and more influential EU in addition to constraints on the role of money in US politics. Different from the US and China, the EU has limited hard power and prioritises its role as an advocate of a global rules-based system, reflected in its approach to digital sovereignty, harmonised rules on fair access and use of data that protects individual rights and democratic freedoms, amongst others.

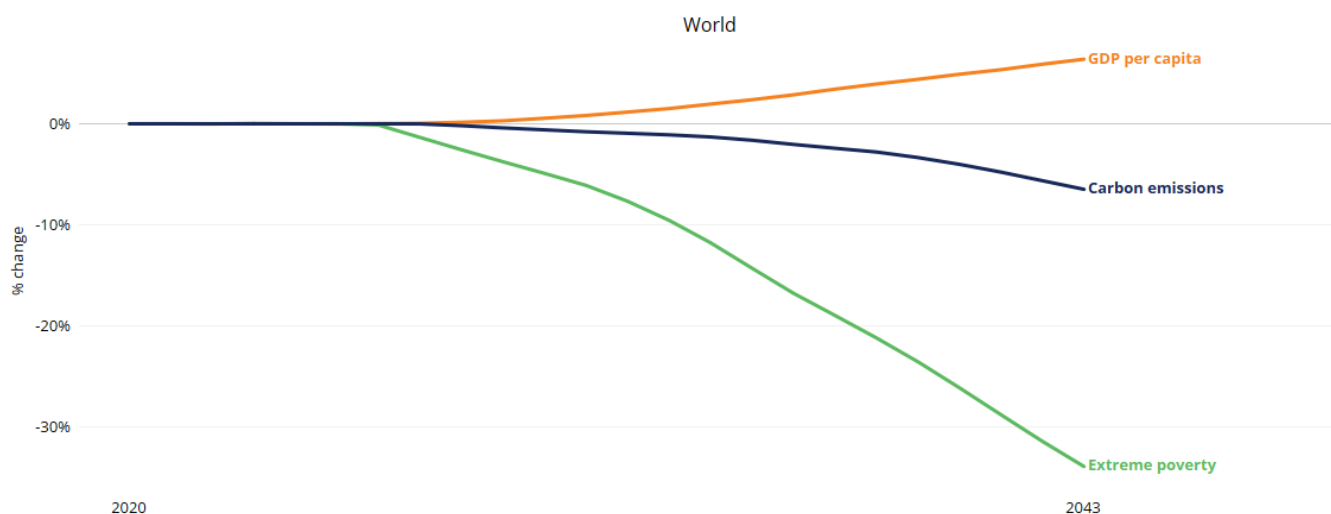
The Sustainable World scenario is the most difficult to achieve. Unlike the other three scenarios, leaders with little in common must take bold steps to realise a better world that will inevitably run into significant domestic resistance. It is only

possible with the realisation amongst key Western leaders, working with countries such as China and India, that a future rules-based system will eventually require rethinking all aspects of global collaboration and governance, including the role and decisions at the International Financial Institutions and an overhaul of the UN Charter including the composition and workings of the [UN Security Council](#).

Under the auspices of the UN, this scenario would see countries craft and agree on an ambitious set of follow-on Sustainable Development Goals beyond 2030 to eliminate extreme poverty in the most affected region, sub-Saharan Africa, which is also under significant threat from climate change. These follow-on goals and targets merge climate mitigation and adaptation ambitions into an overarching and comprehensive Global Sustainability Framework (GSF). Part and parcel of the GSF is a new push for aid to low and low-middle-income African countries. Whereas aid to Africa amounted to US\$64 billion in 2023 (2.4% of Africa's GDP), by 2043, it has increased to US\$104 billion, although now accounting for only 1.2% of Africa's much larger GDP.

Commitments of this nature mean the world can sustainably pursue poverty alleviation, reduce carbon emissions and advance environmental protection. Chart 9 shows the dual impact of the Sustainable World scenario on global poverty and carbon emissions. Extreme poverty in Africa falls from 437 million (29% of the population) in 2023 to 225 million (10%) in 2043. Globally, carbon emissions from fossil fuels peak in 2032 at 10 billion tons of carbon (36.6 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) and, by 2043, have declined to 9.1 billion tons (33.4 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent).

Chart 9: Carbon emissions, GDP per capita and extreme poverty in the Sustainable World scenario, 2020-2043  
% change vs the Current Path



Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from Appalachian State University and PovcalNet data

In this world, an expanded G20 has eclipsed the G7 and the BRICS and coordinates responses to global turbulence, such as recurring pandemics that are a feature of a 2043 world with 9.3 billion people. This is a rules-based future that eventually includes a revision of voting rights in both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and an end to permanent membership and the veto within the UN Security Council. By 2043, a [reformed Council](#) consists of powerful countries with increased voting rights, groups like the EU, and a rotational system of other members. However, it remains a council of states that does not include non-state actors such as civil society or business.

Nuclear disarmament also proceeds apace. In July 2022, 122 countries adopted an international treaty banning nuclear weapons. The treaty makes it illegal for signatories to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess, stockpile,

transfer, use or threaten nuclear weapon use or to encourage anyone to engage in these activities. In the Sustainable World scenario, the UK and France, then the US, China, Russia, India and Pakistan eventually signed and ratified the treaty, followed by others, including Israel and Korea, the latter shortly after unification.

The momentum for the nuclear-armed states to join started in 2022 with the review conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It followed the extension of the New START treaty between the US and Russia, initially set to expire in 2026.

The AfCFTA is fully implemented in Africa by 2033 and discussions on deeper economic and political integration follow. By 2043, Africa has progressed significantly towards establishing a continental customs union, with subregions such as the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) having even found a common market. All countries are democratic, and regular elections see a steady turnover of leadership as Africans hold their leadership to account.

In summary, the Sustainable World scenario envisions a future where global cooperation leads to balanced growth, reduced consumption, and significant progress towards environmental sustainability, including a strengthened role for the WTO and an increased global minimum corporate tax rate. This scenario, emerging from crises like climate change and global pandemics, would necessitate ambitious global governance reforms, including the implementation of a new compact aimed at eliminating extreme poverty and significantly reducing carbon emissions. It foresees an era of enhanced global cooperation, with the EU playing a pivotal role in advocating for a rules-based system, and a fully implemented AfCFTA that propels Africa towards greater economic and political integration, supported by increased aid and a commitment to nuclear disarmament.

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## About the authors

Dr Jakkie Cilliers is the ISS's founder and former executive director. He currently serves as chair of the ISS Board of Trustees and head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria office of the Institute. His 2017 best-seller *Fate of the Nation* addresses South Africa's futures from political, economic and social perspectives. His three most recent books, *Africa First! Igniting a Growth Revolution* (March 2020), *The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities* (April 2021), and *Africa Tomorrow: Pathways to Prosperity* (June 2022) take a rigorous look at the continent as a whole.

## About African Futures & Innovation

Scenarios and forecasting can help Africa identify and respond to opportunities and threats. The work of the African Futures & Innovation (AFI) program at the Institute for Security Studies aims to understand and address a widening gap between indices of wellbeing in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The AFI helps stakeholders understand likely future developments. Research findings and their policy implications are widely disseminated, often in collaboration with in-country partners. Forecasting tools inspire debate and provide insights into possible trajectories that inform planning, prioritisation and effective resource allocation. Africa's future depends on today's choices and actions by governments and their non-governmental and international partners. The AFI provides empirical data that informs short- and medium-term decisions with long-term implications. The AFI enhances Africa's capacity to prepare for and respond to future challenges. The program is headed by Dr Jakkie Cilliers.