



1/26 Africa and the Iran War: Geopolitics, Economy, Energy, and Security

Guest contributions by Dr Daniel Bekele, Rim Berahab, Prof Carlos Lopes, Cheta Nwanze, Moses Chrispus Okello, Prof Al Chukwuma Okoli, Dr Wafula Okumu, Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi, and James Shikwati

Despite ongoing negotiations between the United States and Iran, the conflict remains marked by high volatility and uncertainty. Even in its early weeks, the Iran war has already had tangible global repercussions – not least through tensions affecting key trade routes and energy markets. The African continent, too, is affected in multiple ways, yet this has so far received insufficient attention in European policy debates.

This issue of *Afrikapost aktuell* brings together contributions from nine experts from across the African continent. They examine the implications of the Iran war for geopolitics (I), economy (II), energy (III), and security (IV), both within Africa and in the context of Africa–Europe relations, and derive concrete policy recommendations for decision-makers in Germany.

(I) Geopolitics

Europe's Blind Spot: The African Costs of the US-Israeli War on Iran

Dr Wafula Okumu

The US-Israeli military attacks on Iran that began in late February 2026 may seem geographically distant, but for the African continent, they constitute an immediate security and economic crisis. From an African perspective, this war exposes not only the fragility of global supply chains but also the West's glaring double standards regarding international law. For European decision-makers, it is high time to take the African perspective seriously.

First, Africa is bearing massive economic collateral damage. The escalation has destabilised global energy markets and driven oil prices drastically higher. For African net importers, this means acute inflation, extreme currency pressure, and a direct threat to food security due to disrupted transport routes in the Persian Gulf. While European taxpayers lament

their own energy prices, Africa is being forced, through no fault of its own, to become the economic frontline of a conflict it did not choose.

Second, African sovereignty is coming under pressure. While European states such as Spain, Germany, France, and Belgium have rightly expressed their opposition or deep reservations regarding the legality and strategic wisdom of the war, the broader Western response is still often perceived in Africa as hypocritical. Furthermore, there is growing concern among African states that host foreign military bases – particularly in the Horn of Africa – about being unwittingly dragged into proxy wars.

Consequently, Germany, Spain, France, and Belgium must translate their opposition to the war into a united European push to defend universal legal norms. If Europe wants to retain the African Union (AU) as a strategic partner, it must consistently condemn violations of territorial integrity, even when committed by its allies.

Third, Europe must abandon the binary logic that forces African states to choose sides in geopolitical conflicts. Africa's pursuit of strategic autonomy and "multi-alignment" must be respected as a legitimate foreign policy stance. Lastly, to cushion the blow of imported inflation, African countries should be assisted to strengthen their economic resilience, particularly in energy and food security.

Africa's apparent silence on this war is not an endorsement, but rather an expression of deep disappointment. Those European nations that oppose the war must now actively listen and ally themselves with the AU's principled stance before this disappointment turns into permanent alienation.

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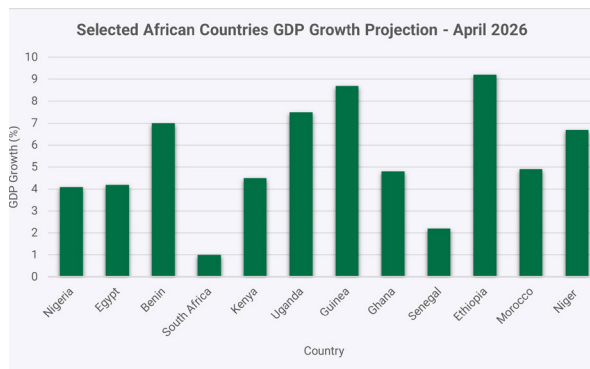
AU-EU Relations Under Strain: A Changing Global Context

Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi

The Iran war will have profound and long-lasting consequences for Africa, a continent already under stress from mounting debt, the lingering fallout from the pandemic and the last commodity shock triggered by Russian-Ukraine war.

Against the odds, Africa's growth forecast for 2026 had been looking bright. But even if the fragile ceasefire holds, the African Development Bank has warned that the impact of the war is likely to shave 0.2 percentage points from Africa's growth. A prolonged conflict of up to six months could cause a 1.5 percent decline.

The immediate effects are visible and spreading. Net oil importers like Zambia, Kenya, and Senegal are already navigating record fuel costs. Countries without strategic reserves – and there are many – are facing imminent shortages if supplies do not resume quickly.



Own illustration based on [International Monetary Fund](#), April 2026

Africa is heavily import-dependent for fertilisers, and a significant share comes directly from the Gulf: over half for Sudan, around 30% for Tanzania and Malawi, and a quarter for Kenya. Producers will absorb the pain first, but the full impact on food prices is expected to play out over six to twelve months, deepening food insecurity across the Sahel and East Africa – regions already on the edge.

Gulf investment flows, which have become a meaningful source of liquidity for African economies in recent years, may dry up as Gulf

Cooperation Council (GCC) countries turn inward. African exports to the Gulf, such as Kenyan tea, are also at risk.

A familiar chain of consequences is now unfolding. Rising import bills squeeze currencies; inflation erodes household purchasing power; governments are forced to borrow to stabilise, narrowing fiscal space and raising the risk of debt distress. Social pressure will intensify as living costs rise and governments lose the room to respond.

Africa's vulnerability to external shocks is structural. The continent is in the middle of a genuine transformation, which this crisis puts at risk. Until that transformation is complete, Africa remains too dependent on imports and external finance.

Strengthening AU-EU relations will be key to the long-term security and economic resilience of both regions. The focus must shift from extractive to genuinely transformational partnerships that help Africa build the resilience Europe's own interests depend on. African integration is deepening, and Europe must meet that reality, moving away from the fragmented, state-by-state approach that has too often served European convenience more than African transformation.

Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi is President and CEO of the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) in Accra, Ghana.



(II) Economy

Africa's Interdependence with the Gulf Under Pressure

Prof Carlos Lopes

The US–Israel war with Iran has erupted at a time of mounting strain on the international system. While diplomatic channels remain open, their capacity to prevent escalation has weakened, allowing shocks to spread rapidly through global markets. Given the Middle East's central role in energy, finance, and trade, instability there has far-reaching economic consequences.

For Africa, the exposure is unusually direct. Over the past two decades, the continent has become deeply connected with the Gulf through investment, finance, labour migration, and trade logistics. Gulf states have become some of the most active external investors in Africa, while financial centres such as Dubai increasingly serve as platforms for African firms and capital flows. Key shipping routes linking the Gulf to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean remain vital for African trade, and millions of African workers across Gulf economies send remittances back home.

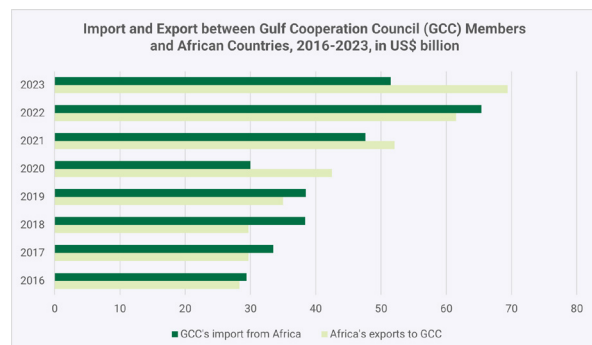
This dense web of connections means that the Iran war is not a distant geopolitical event for African economies, but a shock that transmits almost immediately through energy prices, trade flows, shipping, and financial channels.

Gulf countries' [foreign direct investment into Africa](#) reached about \$97-billion in 2024, a 75 % increase from the previous year, with a significant share driven by projects in north Africa and Gulf-backed development finance in Egypt. The surge reflected a wider trend: Gulf sovereign wealth funds, logistics companies and energy investors are increasingly viewing Africa as a key frontier for capital deployment.

The shock also reaches Africa through commodities. Many African minerals and precious metals are traded or refined through Gulf hubs. Gold provides a striking example. [The United Arab Emirates imported about 748 tonnes of gold](#) from African countries in 2024, representing more than half of its total gold

imports worth more than \$105-billion. Dubai's role as a refining and trading hub means that disruptions to Gulf logistics or financial systems can affect the flow of African gold exports to global markets.

Aviation is another critical channel. Gulf hubs such as Dubai and Doha have become key nodes connecting African cities to global markets. When airspace closures and security restrictions spread across the region, African airlines and passengers are quickly impacted. Recent disruptions have already [led to flight diversions and cancellations across African routes](#), demonstrating how reliant the continent has become on Gulf-based transit networks.



Own illustration based on [Afreximbank Research](#), December 2024

The result is a structural vulnerability: instability in the Gulf echoes through the interconnected networks supporting African trade, finance, and production.

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Iran War Accelerates Africa's Multi-Alignment: Implications for German Policy

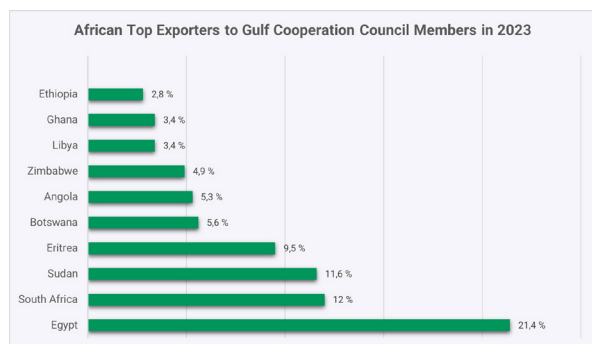
James Shikwati

The US-Israel war with Iran though largely analysed through a Middle Eastern lens joins the Ukraine war in accelerating the transition to a multipolar world order. It is rewriting the post-World War II rules that shaped 54 African states. The impact on Africa remains under-explored in German political discourse.

Africa is adopting an assertive multi-alignment strategy by engaging the West, BRICS+ and Gulf actors without necessarily having formal bloc allegiances reminiscent of its participation in the Non-Aligned Movement of 1961. South Africa, Egypt and Ethiopia are full BRICS members while Nigeria, Uganda and Algeria are partners. The economic fallout of the Iran war will accelerate interest in this formation.



Multipolarity is positioning new trade, energy and finance architecture that is likely to transform Africa into an economic powerhouse. Germany must make a strategic pivot to the continent. It should reframe its trade and investment narratives, provide clear Africa policy guidelines and a concrete engagement platform. Pragmatic measures are needed on migration with deliberate skills and talent exchanges such as the one piloted with Kenya. Germany should leverage European Union influence to offer financial guarantees, lowering borrowing costs for African nations during the Iran war crisis. The war on Iran is a real-time stress test of Africa's economic aspirations. Germany cannot afford to ignore this moment.



Own illustration based on [Afreximbank Research](#), December 2024

The continent has become a secondary theatre of risk, impacting its youth, stability and cyber security. The fuel price hikes of 7-10 % cascade into food and transport inflation. The African Development Bank indicates that a 10 % increase in oil prices pushes inflation by 2%, devastating low-income households. Income in terms of salaries remains stagnant as costs shoot up. In Kenya, remittances from over 400,000 people working in the Gulf, an estimated 10% of annual inflows have fallen, destabilising families and enterprises. Higher fertiliser costs, occasioned by restricted access to the Strait of Hormuz worsen the food security situation. Sub-Saharan Africa imports an estimated 90 % of its fertiliser. The industrial slowdown due to energy costs and logistical stress threaten the African Continental Free Trade Area aspirations.

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(III) Energy

North Africa's Energy Systems: Asymmetric Exposure and Limited Adjustment Capacity

Rim Berahab

The February 2026 US-Israel military campaign against Iran has triggered a supply-side shock centred on the Strait of Hormuz, through which around 20 % of global oil and a significant share of LNG trade transit ([EIA 2025](#); [IEA 2025](#)). Disruptions to tanker traffic and LNG loading have tightened physical markets and increased price volatility, with Brent rising above \$100/bbl in March 2026 ([World Bank 2026](#)). The transmission of the shock to Africa operates through three channels. First, the price channel affects all countries through higher oil, gas and fertiliser prices. Second, the supply channel reflects physical constraints: LNG-importing countries are likely to face procurement risks, while exporters may benefit from tighter markets. Third, the financial channel affects macroeconomic balances through inflation, exchange rate pressure, and fiscal costs linked to subsidies and energy imports.



North Africa illustrates differentiated exposure. Morocco, a full net energy importer, faces a deterioration in its trade balance through a higher energy import bill, which approached double-digit levels as a share of GDP in previous shock episodes. Its dependence on imported petroleum products and external gas sourcing makes it highly sensitive to both price and supply shocks. While higher global fertiliser prices could support export revenues, net gains depend on production costs, particularly ammonia and energy inputs, whose adjustment to market conditions is not immediate. Authorities have activated buffering mechanisms to limit pass-through to domestic prices, notably through continued support to butane and measures to contain electricity cost increases. These interventions mitigate short-term social and

inflationary pressures but increase fiscal exposure and vulnerability to prolonged shocks.

Egypt faces a dual constraint. Declining domestic gas output and rising demand have already turned it into a net LNG importer since 2023 ([S&P Global 2025](#)). Disruptions to Qatari LNG flows and tighter global markets increase procurement costs and expose the power system to shortages, prompting demand-side adjustments. Meanwhile, Algeria might benefit from higher gas prices and increased European demand for pipeline supply. However, its ability to expand exports remains constrained by upstream capacity, infrastructure limits, and growing domestic consumption, leaving modest incremental supply relative to global shortfalls.

At the system level, the shock feeds into electricity pricing and public finances. Fuel-dependent power systems transmit higher costs either to tariffs or subsidies, depending on domestic pricing structures, while energy-intensive industries face declining margins. For North Africa, the shock does not create a new energy equilibrium but exposes the limits of existing systems under stress.

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The Iran War and Africa's Energy Vulnerability

Cheta Nwanze

The military confrontation that began on 28 February 2026 did not remain confined to the Middle East. Within four weeks, Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer, saw petrol prices nearly double, transport fares triple in some corridors, and more than four in five market traders **reported price increases** they directly attributed to the war. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 % of global oil passes, turned a distant supply threat into an immediate price earthquake for a continent that exports crude but imports most of its refined products. For German and European policymakers, three lessons stand out.

First, domestic refining capacity does not equal energy security. Nigeria's Dangote Refinery, even at partial capacity, tracks global crude benchmarks because its feedstock is priced internationally. Africa will remain exposed to Gulf volatility as long as its refineries depend on imported crude priced in dollars. European development finance should prioritise integrated refinery feedstock strategies that break this link.



Second, strategic fuel reserves are not optional. Nigeria had no buffer against the price shock. Diesel surged from ₦1,100 to ₦1,550 per litre, breaking supply chains for food, spare parts and pharmaceuticals. Germany should work with G7 partners to promote a pan-African strategic fuel reserve mechanism, funded by a blend of multilateral and private capital, with reserves physically located in multiple regions.

Third, market intelligence is a public good. Traders relied on WhatsApp rumours, not official data. A low-cost, multilingual alert system for wholesale fuel prices, freight rates and security conditions along major corridors would reduce speculation and stabilise expectations.



The ceasefire that reopened the Strait of Hormuz is a diplomatic window, not a structural fix. The next Gulf crisis will come. Europe's choice is clear: help Africa build buffers, or absorb the next shock together.

Cheta Nwanze is CEO at SBM Intelligence, a risk advisory firm based in Lagos, Nigeria.



(IV) Security

Spillover Risks to Africa's Security and Implications for Europe

Dr Daniel Bekele

The US-Israeli campaign against Iran, and Iran's retaliation, is reshaping Africa's security environment despite the continent not being a direct battlefield. The spillover compounds existing fragilities – jihadist insurgencies, recurrent coups in the Sahel, Sudan's civil war, and rivalries in the Horn of Africa – by driving economic shocks (higher energy costs and inflation, food and fertiliser disruption, and Red Sea/Suez-linked trade and port pressures) and by increasing geopolitical and security risks (reduced Gulf mediation bandwidth, heightened Horn/Red Sea flashpoints around ports and foreign bases, and stronger proxy narratives or linkages that can fuel recruitment and anti-Western messaging). Together, these dynamics can weaken governance and state capacity, raise unrest and coup risk, and expand space for armed groups.

combine de-escalation diplomacy including support for AU and A3 (the three African non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, currently the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Somalia) engagement and coordination with Gulf partners with sustained maritime security in the Red Sea and targeted economic resilience measures (energy diversification and fertiliser/food system support).

Europe should also help limit proxy escalation – especially around Sudan – strengthen AU-led mediation, and integrate Africa early warning, debt coordination, and border/intelligence cooperation to reduce the chance that a Middle East conflict triggers secondary crises across Africa.

Dr Daniel Bekele is a former Chief Commissioner of Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and former Africa Director at Human Rights Watch, and the winner of the 2021 German Africa Award.



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For Europe, the likely knock-on effects include renewed inflationary pressure, potential migration increases if instability worsens, and elevated terrorism risk. Policymakers should



Can the Horn of Africa Survive the Conflict in the Middle East?

Moses Chrispus Okello

The current escalation in the Middle East conflict is markedly shaping economic patterns in the Horn of Africa, worsening ongoing crises in Sudan and South Sudan, accelerating Somaliland's efforts to gain independence from Somalia, and revealing deep-seated political instability in Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia. Although primarily concentrated on the Eastern Red Sea, the conflict's boundaries are now less clear, blurring the distinction between the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. The conflict is gradually shifting away from its epicentre, the Strait of Hormuz, and, with Ansar Allah's (the Houthi movement based in Yemen) involvement, moving towards the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which might also draw in Djibouti and Eritrea. The scope of the conflict has therefore expanded, reaching as far as Sudan in Africa, and reflects the extent to which Africa as a whole is systemically linked to geopolitical events elsewhere.

As import-dependent countries, African economies are already feeling the effects of conflict-driven shortages of oil and gas, as well as disruptions to logistics networks. Diesel prices have risen by 15-16 % on average in Ethiopia (26 %), Kenya (nearly 24 %) and Uganda (9 %), leading to inflation and fluctuations in foreign exchange rates that, in turn, affect fertiliser availability and food security. In Kenya, where politics is sensitive to price fluctuations, continued conflict will influence the 2027 elections. Export levels for meat from Ethiopia and Somalia, and tea from Kenya, to the Middle East have declined.

Meanwhile, in Sudan – now in its third year of conflict and where famine has been weaponised – shortages of medicines and food, combined with the cost of rerouting supplies, are worsening the humanitarian crisis. The two main sides in the Sudan conflict – the Rapid Support Forces and the UAE on one side, and Sudan's Armed Forces, with support from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan on the other – are also entangled in conflicts in the Middle East, each to

varying extents. Their focus on the Iran conflict might divert attention from the Sudan crisis or even worsen it by supplying more weapons and funding to the involved parties, in an attempt to expand their influence over Port Sudan's growing geopolitical significance. In any case, the QUAD's function as a mediation body now appears fragmented.



The most effective way to reduce this conflict's impact on the Horn of Africa is to bring an end to the war. If immediate resolution isn't possible, the long-term goal for Horn of Africa countries should be to reduce their reliance on chokehold commodities, such as oil, by exploring more energy-efficient alternatives. The safest strategy, however, is for Horn countries to develop the recently discovered energy sources in Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Furthermore, enhancing economic and diplomatic integration through organisations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the East African Community is essential to reducing infiltration by external influences.

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Deteriorating Security Conditions and Terrorism Risks in West Africa

Prof Al Chukwuma Okoli

The war in Iran is not an isolated international occurrence. It is a globally relevant incident whose ripples have been reverberating across the world. Although the theatre of the crisis is many miles away from Africa, its impact has already been amply felt on the continent.

Despite the fact that oil-rich African countries, such as Angola, Algeria, and Nigeria, have benefited from the soaring prices of crude oil and gas following the war, they have, nonetheless, suffered major energy shocks as a consequence. Being gross energy importers and consumers, these and other countries of the region have faced higher fuel costs, triggering swift situational inflationary trends and currency pressures. This outcome has the tendency to exacerbate the volatile economic and security situations on the continent.

In West Africa and the wider Sahel, it is feared that the crisis may escalate the already dire security situation, including terrorism and allied criminalities. Extremist groups linked to Iranian terror franchises and proxies may capitalise on the opportunity to orchestrate attacks on Western/European targets in strategic solidarity with their embattled benefactors (Iran and its allies).

In Nigeria, the Iran-linked Shia sect (otherwise formerly known as the Islamic Movement of Nigeria – IMN) has staged a series of pro-Iran protests in some parts of the country's North, endangering further the tense and fragile security situation in that context. This development has the potential to precipitate religious or sectarian violence in the fractured country.

While the tension lasts, Western/European countries such as Germany need to work closely with national authorities to safeguard their strategic interests, assets, and investments in the sub-region. This would entail partnering with national governments to reinforce their capabilities for territorial security, including border control and surveillance in order to

proactively deter and prevent the eventuality of proxy attacks.

Partnering Africa's endeavors to prevent and contain terrorism by the West has become more exigent, given the rising geo-strategic importance of the continent as an evolving frontier of global geopolitics of oil, gas, and other strategic resources.

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