

Asserting Sovereignty: A Strategic Agenda for Africa in the Global Energy Transition

Authors

Eugene N Nforngwa

Augustine B Njamnshi

Summary

Africa's role in the global energy transition is no longer peripheral, but increasingly decisive—yet its agency remains contested. The continent possesses the solar, wind, and mineral resources the world needs—but lacks the structural power to shape the terms of this transition. Without deliberate intervention, Africa risks being locked into new forms of dependency, echoing colonial patterns under a green guise. This policy paper calls for a shift in posture: from passive participation to strategic sovereignty. Drawing on evidence from across the continent, it outlines how African states can reclaim control over energy governance, finance, and value chains, ensuring the transition delivers not just decarbonisation, but development, equity, and self-determination.

Key messages

- ❖ **The global energy transition is deeply geopolitical:** It is reshaping global power dynamics, not just reducing emissions, and is often driven by the strategic interests of the Global North.
- ❖ **Africa is essential but sidelined:** Despite its abundant solar, wind, and mineral resources, Africa receives only 2–3% of global renewable energy investment and is largely excluded from decision-making platforms shaping the global transition.
- ❖ **Policy and resource sovereignty are essential:** African nations must reclaim the ability to independently shape policies aligned with their development priorities, resisting externally imposed benchmarks that often ignore local realities.
- ❖ **Strategic statecraft is possible—and necessary:** Examples from Senegal, Zambia, Morocco, Kenya, and Botswana show that African governments can renegotiate energy, finance, and trade terms in ways that assert sovereignty and national interest.
- ❖ **Africa must transition on its own terms:** By asserting resource and policy sovereignty, building collective bargaining power, and reshaping climate finance, Africa can turn its participation in the energy transition from a site of extraction to a platform for equity and industrial transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global energy transition, driven by the urgency to phase out fossil fuels and embrace renewable energies and technologies, is reshaping economies, supply chains, and geopolitical alliances. For Africa, this shift presents both historic opportunity and profound risk. While the continent holds vast renewable potential and critical raw materials central to the global transition, it remains structurally marginalised in climate and energy agenda-setting.

This policy paper contends that Africa must not passively adapt to the energy transition as defined by others; it must assert policy sovereignty to ensure the transition is just, equitable, and aligned with the continent's development ambitions. Grounded in civil society dialogues, case studies, and political economy analysis, this brief outlines a roadmap for reclaiming agency and transforming Africa's role from a resource frontier to a strategic rule-maker.

2. THE ENERGY TRANSITION IS GEOPOLITICAL BY DESIGN

Northern governments frame the energy transition—the “gradual” but profound shift away from fossil fuels toward decarbonised energy systems ([Giuli, 2023: 41](#))—around innovation and net-zero targets. With energy production and use accounting for over 75% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, decarbonisation must begin with abandoning carbon-intensive fossil fuels in favour of cleaner and renewable alternatives. The estimate the International Energy Agency (IEA) provides in its Net Zero by 2050 Roadmap for reduction in fossil-fuel-related emissions is more than 95% ([IEA, 2021](#)). But the deeper reality is one of strategic repositioning, the dawn of a new geopolitical race.

Giuli (2023) argues that energy transformation is not just about decarbonisation—it is a struggle over who will dominate the emerging clean economy. As fossil fuels decline, new empires are forming around critical minerals, technology standards, and clean energy infrastructure. For example, the shift from resource security to technological dominance now underway

introduces new arenas of competition in areas such as standards-setting for hydrogen and smart grids, control over intellectual property and infrastructure and competition for market leadership in wind, electric vehicles (EVs) or green hydrogen. The global energy transition is thus fundamentally about power: who holds it, who exerts it and who benefits from it.

It is also unlikely that the energy transition will be fair. Geopolitical winners and losers will emerge, leading Global South countries to demand compensation and equitable participation ([Palle et al., 2021](#); [Yang et al., 2023](#)). While the transition reduces dependence on fossil fuels, it introduces new vulnerabilities. For example, a “new resource curse”, if mineral wealth is poorly managed ([Bradshaw et al., 2020](#); [Blondeel et al., 2021](#)) or “failed transitions” resulting from the geopolitical irrelevance of those unable to assert control and influence.

The implications of this shift for African economies, which remain poorly diversified and heavily reliant on primary sectors such as extractives and agriculture, are not yet fully understood, neither domestically nor internationally. Recent research highlights that without strategic intervention, African countries could face further setbacks, including heightened indebtedness, unfavourable trade conditions, and prohibitively high capital costs ([Puyo et al., 2024](#)). The structural risks are particularly severe because countries that rely narrowly on fossil fuels or mineral exports may experience stranded assets and diminishing fiscal revenues as global demand shifts ([Puyo et al., 2024](#)).

Moreover, the cost of capital for renewable energy investments in Africa remains up to three times higher than in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries due to perceived investment risks and limited access to diversified financial instruments ([Sweerts, Dalla Longa, & Van Der Zwaan, 2019](#); [Calcaterra et al., 2024](#)). This cost premium exacerbates the investment gap and threatens to trap African economies in a cycle of dependency and underdevelopment, sometimes referred to as a “climate investment trap” ([Ameli et al., 2021](#)). Without deliberate strategies to manage



diversification, fiscal stability, and risk de-risking, the energy transition could replicate the inequalities of past global shifts, leaving African nations even more vulnerable in the emerging global green economy.

This raises several urgent questions that African leaders, institutions, and allies must answer before the region fully participates in the transition race: Whose transition is this, and for what purpose? Who decides what energy future is desirable—and for whom? What strategic interests are driving the transition agenda? What role is Africa playing in the power dynamics shaping (or taking shape due to) the transition?

3. AFRICA'S CRITICAL ROLE, PERIPHERAL POWER: UNPACKING A NEW GREEN ASYMMETRY

Africa is a significant enabler of the global energy transition, rich in renewable resources and critical minerals. The continent's renewable energy potential is vast. It receives the highest solar irradiation on Earth, with the technical potential for over 10 terawatts (TW) of solar capacity (International Renewable Energy Agency [IRENA], 2022). Wind corridors in Morocco, Kenya, and South Africa offer commercially viable opportunities exceeding 110 gigawatts (GW) (African Development Bank [AfDB], 2021). Additionally, Sub-Saharan Africa utilises less than 11% of its hydroelectric capacity, and the East African Rift System could yield up to 15 GW of geothermal power (IRENA, 2022). Biomass resources remain abundant, offering over 20% of the world's sustainable biomass potential (Quedraogo & Kilolo, 2024).

Beyond renewables, Africa holds critical mineral wealth essential for the clean energy transition: over 70% of global cobalt production is based in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Africa accounts for nearly 90% of the world's Platinum Group Metals (PGMs), and large deposits of manganese, bauxite, graphite, and rare earth elements span West and Southern Africa (Andreoni & Roberts, 2022). These resources are indispensable for manufacturing

batteries, solar panels, wind turbines, and hydrogen fuel cells.

Yet, Africa's participation in the transition remains peripheral. (See Table 1 for the structural imbalances that limit Africa's agency.) In 2022, Africa captured just 2% of the \$632 billion invested globally in renewable energy (Ddamba, 2024). Over 95% of solar panels deployed in Africa are imported, predominantly from China, further entrenching technological dependency (Palle, 2021; Scholten, 2023). In parallel, initiatives like the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) have often been negotiated with minimal African leadership involvement, privileging donor interests over local priorities (Steadman, Colenbrander, & Simpson, 2024).

This reflects a broader systemic trend. As Blondeel et al. (2021) warn, while the fossil fuel order is collapsing, new asymmetries are emerging—ones shaped not by oil pipelines but by control over minerals, technology patents, and renewable supply chains. In this emerging order, African countries are positioned more as suppliers of raw materials than as architects of the transition. In other words, Africa's integration into global value chains remains extractive and low-value, undermining opportunities for genuine industrialisation (Acheampong and Menyeh, 2023).

In essence, the strategic interests of northern and emerging powers like China drive the transition agenda, not Africa's development needs. The major decisions about what constitutes a “just” or “orderly” energy transition are rarely made in African capitals. Instead, they are shaped by international financial institutions, development banks, climate funds, geopolitical power blocs—G7, European Union (EU), the OECD, and northern civil society.

For example, Net-zero by 2050 is now a globally accepted benchmark. The Net-Zero benchmark was primarily spearheaded by the Global North, particularly the EU, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), and allied members of the G7 and OECD. The EU was one of the first major political entities to formalise this target with its European Green Deal in 2019, followed by similar commitments



from the UK and the U.S. ([European Commission](#), 2019; [UK Government](#), 2019; [The White House](#), 2021; IEA, 2021). These blocs positioned Net-Zero 2050 as the gold standard for climate ambition, influencing multilateral forums like the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), and the IEA Net Zero Roadmap ([Climate Action Tracker](#), 2021)—often without fully accounting for the differentiated capacities and priorities of countries in the Global South, including Africa.

Table 1. *Structural Imbalances That Undermine Africa’s Agency*

Domain	Current Pattern	Key Insight
Resource Control	Critical minerals like cobalt and lithium are exported raw; no beneficiation	Bradshaw et al. (2020) : warn of new “stranded geopolitical assets” if Africa remains an extraction zone
Technological Dependence	Clean tech is imported; little local IP or R&D	Siddi (2023) : clean energy leadership now hinges on control over standards and innovation, not just resources
Finance Flows	Climate finance favors mitigation over adaptation or energy access	Yang et al. (2023) : Africa’s security requires control over finance mechanisms
Decision-Making	G7, IEA, COP forums shape policy frameworks with little to no African input	Scholten (2023) : transition governance is dominated by powerful blocs and donors

Similarly, global finance is directed by risk perceptions and return expectations set by Western rating agencies and capital markets ([Donovan & Corbishley](#), 2016). As a result, Africa receives less than 3% of global renewable energy investment, despite its abundant resources and massive need ([Osiolo](#), 2021). The cost of capital for energy projects in Africa, which is up to three times higher than in OECD countries,

makes clean energy deployment slow, expensive and externally dependent (Sweerts et al, 2019).

Unless African nations assert greater control over their resources, they risk remaining locked in subordinate positions within the so-called green economy, replicating the injustices of previous industrial revolutions ([Müller](#), 2023; [Kohnert](#), 2023). The challenge for African policymakers and allies now is not simply to recognise Africa’s centrality to the global energy transition, but to transform that recognition into real agency, ensuring African states shape, govern, and benefit from the transition on their terms rather than repeating historical patterns of dependency.

4. RECLAIMING AGENCY: FROM BEGGING BOWL TO BARGAINING CHIP

Too often, African governments approach global negotiations—whether on climate, trade, finance, or security—with limited bargaining leverage, shaped by structural inequalities and historical dependencies.

According to Vickers (2013), Africa's negotiating power remains fragmented and reactive, with many states relying on external support and global civil society networks to offset their inherent bargaining weakness (Vickers, 2013). Similarly, Page (2004) notes that in key multilateral forums, African states frequently operate from a position of dependency, with negotiation strategies shaped more by external donor pressures than by sovereign development agendas (Page, 2004).

Ultimately, African negotiators often find themselves with a "begging bowl" rather than a "bargaining chip," a situation exacerbated by fragmentation, external dependencies, and under-resourced negotiation teams (Roger & Belliethathan, 2016). Majekolagbe (2020) further observes that while Africa has sometimes framed moral arguments around historical responsibility in climate negotiations, these strategies have rarely translated into binding financial or technological commitments from the Global North (Majekolagbe, 2020). Instead, African voices are often



marginalised in the outcomes, reinforcing a cycle where participation is high but influence is low.

Africa's persistent overdependence on external aid is also deeply rooted in structural economic vulnerabilities, particularly weak domestic revenue systems, widespread capital flight, and elite complicity in offshoring national wealth and corruption. Weak tax collection mechanisms and narrow revenue bases leave many African states unable to mobilize sufficient domestic resources, perpetuating reliance on foreign assistance (Otusanya & Adeyeye, 2022). At the same time, large-scale capital flight—often facilitated by political and business elites—bleeds critical financial resources from African economies, undermining investment, growth, and fiscal stability (Ajayi, 1997; Weeks, 2015).

Research highlights that African elites are not just passive victims of a predatory global financial system; they actively participate in offshoring practices, reinforcing cycles of dependency and weakening sovereignty (Moyo, 2024; De Oliveira, 2022). As a result, even as Africa is framed as a site for development and investment, systemic extraction continues—now through legal and illicit financial flows—further entrenching aid dependency and impeding sustainable, autonomous growth (Zandile & Phiri, 2022).

While structural barriers remain significant (see Table 1), a growing number of African states are beginning to challenge the traditional dynamics of dependency and external control. Across sectors—from energy and finance to digital infrastructure and trade—examples of countries asserting greater sovereignty in their engagements with global actors are emerging. These cases highlight that, with strategic leadership, disciplined negotiation, and a clear development vision, African governments can shift from passive recipients to active shapers of global partnerships. Though still isolated examples, they offer critical lessons for how Africa might reframe its participation in the global energy transition and beyond, anchoring sovereignty and national interest at the heart of external engagement.

In 2023, for example, Senegal renegotiated gas contracts with BP and Kosmos Energy to secure a larger national stake and influence over project terms, demonstrating a willingness to challenge structural imbalances in energy partnerships in favour of national interest ([Reuters](#), 2023). Similarly, Zambia, under President Hakainde Hichilema, asserted greater control over its sovereign debt restructuring process, resisting the paternalism often embedded in International Monetary Fund (IMF)-backed mechanisms and insisting on transparency and equal treatment across creditors ([IMF](#), 2023; [Financial Times](#), 2023).

In North Africa, Morocco has aligned its renewable energy strategy with European decarbonisation needs and its domestic industrial agenda. Morocco is exporting energy while retaining policy autonomy and industrial benefits through projects such as Noor Ouarzazate and its emerging green hydrogen diplomacy ([IEA](#), 2022; [ECDPM](#), 2023). In East Africa, Kenya has pushed for digital sovereignty, limiting the dominance of global tech firms and promoting homegrown platforms such as M-Pesa, effectively extracting value from data and digital infrastructure rather than merely hosting it ([Brookings Institute](#), 2022).

Other examples reinforce this strategic posture. Rwanda and Ethiopia have shown that disciplined statecraft can engage global capital and partnerships on terms that prioritise national development over donor-driven agendas ([ODI](#), 2022). Botswana's diamond diplomacy, forged in the 1970s, remains a case study in how national control over resource rents, through equitable contracts with De Beers, can underpin sovereignty and stability ([World Bank](#), 2020).

But these cases remain exceptions rather than the rule. Without strategic intervention, the global energy transition risks becoming another force of marginalisation for African economies, compounding historical patterns of dependency even within a supposedly just and sustainable future.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFRICAN SOVEREIGNTY AND STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

To break through, Africa must reimagine its external engagements through the prism of strategic interest, not sentiment or survival. The continent's position in the global order—whether in climate negotiations, trade, debt restructuring, or digital governance—must be shaped by clear goals, firm red lines, and a commitment to negotiating from a position of collective strength, rather than fragmented dependency.

African states must understand that the energy transition is being used as a tool to realign global power and wealth—not to achieve universal energy justice. They must thus aim not to join the global green economy on its current terms, but to reshape those terms in service of African development, equity, and resilience. That means asserting resource sovereignty and, more significantly, policy sovereignty.

We define policy sovereignty as:

A nation's ability to independently determine, design, implement, and enforce policies that reflect its development priorities and interests, free from external imposition or undue influence.

Rooted in the continent's historical struggle against colonial domination and external control, policy sovereignty embodies:

- The assertion of self-determined priorities over externally imposed models. Beyond formal independence, sovereignty implies freedom from indirect forms of domination (e.g. debt and technological dependency, technical conditionality, greenwashing).
- The recognition that historical injustices (colonialism, resource extraction, climate debt) must inform contemporary governance frameworks. It insists that development frameworks reckon with the structural legacies of colonial exploitation and modern economic marginalisation.

- The reclamation of agency in setting terms of engagement with global systems—whether in trade, finance, climate action, or technology. This implies actively reshaping global norms—not passive resistance but a proactive construction of alternative global futures grounded in African realities.
- The right to pursue diverse development pathways, including transition models that centre African resilience, prosperity, and dignity. This demands that African states shape the rules, not merely comply with transition trajectories designed in foreign capitals, and embed justice, equity, and industrial empowerment at the core of their strategies.

In practice, African policy sovereignty can take many forms in the context of the current transition race:

Establishing and Maintaining Political and Decision-making Control

- Renegotiate mineral contracts to ensure beneficiation, fair revenue sharing, infrastructure, and local employment.
- Develop national just transition plans that reflect African states' resource and development priorities, not donor agendas.
- Reject unequal fossil fuel phaseout demands, especially when they ignore energy poverty; call out the double standard where Europe expands gas while Africa is told to leapfrog ([Giuli, 2023](#)).
- Push for technology transfer and co-ownership in clean tech investments ([Bricout et al., 2022](#)).

Building Collective Institutions and Narrative Power

- Use the African Union, other regional institutions and the African Common Position on Energy to coordinate policy
- Frame Africa as a strategic enabler of the global transition, not a vulnerability



- Pursue a “transition for development” agenda that is people-centred, industry-building and sovereignty-driven.
- Partner with other regions to reform climate finance architecture (e.g., Global South bloc at GCF).
- Oppose carbon market mechanisms that commodify African forests and lands without fair compensation or consent ([Blondeel et al., 2021](#)).

Reshaping Finance and Investment Logic

- Demand adaptation and access-focused finance, not just mitigation metrics
- Establish African green finance vehicles to reduce reliance on donor frameworks
- Challenge global norms that prioritise bankable returns over developmental equity

Investing in Value Chains and Innovation

- Build hubs for processing critical minerals, solar tech, and EV battery assembly.
- Create an African Clean Technology Innovation Fund to seed local Research and Development (R&D).
- Mandate technology transfer in all investment deals.

6. CONCLUSION: TOWARD A TRANSITION ON AFRICA’S TERMS

This policy paper has demonstrated that the global energy transition is fundamentally a geopolitical project that risks entrenching new asymmetries unless African states intervene strategically. Africa’s vast renewable energy potential and critical mineral wealth are indispensable to the global transition, yet the frameworks governing this shift are designed mainly elsewhere.

To secure an equitable future, African countries must reject peripheral participation and move beyond rhetorical inclusion to active rulemaking by asserting policy sovereignty, reshaping global norms, and building continental value chains and technological

capacity. The goal is not to merely integrate into a green economy defined by others, but to redefine the terms of that economy in ways that centre African agency, dignity, and prosperity.

REFERENCES

- Acheampong, T., & Menyeh, B. O. (2023). *The energy transition, critical minerals and industrialisation in Sub-Saharan Africa: Needs, opportunities, and strategies*. Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003284437-3>
- African Development Bank (AfDB). (2021). *African energy outlook 2021: The continent’s electricity access and transition pathways*. African Development Bank Group.
<https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-energy-outlook-2021>
- Ajayi, S. I. (1997). *An analysis of external debt and capital flight in the severely indebted low income countries in sub-Saharan Africa*. African Economic Research Consortium.
<https://books.google.com/books?id=iI0YEAAAQBAJ>
- Ameli, N., Dessens, O., Winning, M., & Cronin, J. (2021). *Higher cost of finance exacerbates a climate investment trap in developing economies*. Nature Communications. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-24305-3>
- Andreoni, A., & Roberts, S. (2022). *Geopolitics of critical minerals in renewable energy supply chains: Implications for Africa*. SOAS University of London.
<https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/38583/>
- Blondeel, M., Bradshaw, M. J., Bridge, G., & Kuzemko, C. (2021). *The geopolitics of energy system transformation: A review*. *Geography Compass*, 15(8), e12580. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12580>
- Bradshaw, M. J., Bridge, G., Kuzemko, C., & Goldthau, A. (2020). *Four scenarios of the energy transition: Drivers, consequences, and implications for geopolitics*. *WIREs Climate Change*, 11(6), e625. <https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/133545/1/WRAP->

[four-scenarios-energy-transition-Bradshaw-2019.pdf](#)

Bricout, J., Keohane, R. O., & Scholten, D. (2022). *From the geopolitics of oil and gas to the geopolitics of the energy transition*. Energy Research & Social Science, 92, 102750.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214629622001384>

Brookings Institution. (2022). *Digital sovereignty in Africa: Kenya's emerging model*. Brookings.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/digital-sovereignty-in-africa-kenyas-emerging-model/>

Calcaterra, M., Aleluia Reis, L., Fragkos, P., & Brieria, T. (2024). *Reducing the cost of capital to finance the energy transition in developing countries*. Nature Energy. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-024-01606-7>

Climate Action Tracker. (2021). *Glasgow's 2030 credibility gap: net zero's lip service to climate action*.
<https://climateactiontracker.org/publications/glasgows-2030-credibility-gap-net-zeros-lip-service-to-climate-action/>

Ddamba, L. S. (2024). *Barriers to energy transitions in Sub-Saharan Africa*. University of British Columbia.
<https://open.library.ubc.ca/media/download/pdf/24/1.0442265/3>

De Oliveira, R. S. (2022). *Researching Africa and the offshore world*. The Journal of Modern African Studies, 60(3), 357-381.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X22000210>

Donovan, C., & Corbishley, C. (2016). *The cost of capital and how it affects climate change mitigation investment*. Grantham Institute, Imperial College London.
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/grantham-institute/public/publications/briefing-papers/the-cost-of-capital-and-how-it-affects->

[climate-change-mitigation-investment-v3-Grantham-BP-15.pdf](#)

ECDPM. (2023). *The geopolitics of hydrogen and Africa's emerging role*. European Centre for Development Policy Management.
<https://ecdpm.org/work/geopolitics-hydrogen-africa-emerging-role>

European Commission. (2019). *The European Green Deal*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0640>

Financial Times. (2023, October 4). *Zambia shows it's possible to resist IMF-style debt paternalism*. Financial Times.
<https://www.ft.com/content/zambia-debt-imf-resistance>

Giuli, M. (2023). *Geopolitics of the energy transition*. In *The Geopolitics of the Energy Transition* (pp. 45–56).
https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/93630/1/9781003315353_10.1201_9781003315353-4.pdf

International Energy Agency (IEA). (2021). *Net Zero by 2050: A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector*. Available at: <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>

International Energy Agency. (2022). *Morocco 2022: Energy policy review*.
<https://www.iea.org/reports/morocco-2022>

International Monetary Fund. (2023). *Zambia reaches agreement with official bilateral creditors under G20 Common Framework*. IMF.
<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/06/22/pr23231-zambia-agreement-under-g20-common-framework>

International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). (2022). *Renewable Energy Market Analysis: Africa and its Regions*.

Kohnert, D. (2023). *Prospects and challenges for the export of rare earths from Sub-Saharan Africa to the*



EU. SSRN.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4687731

Majekolagbe, A. (2020). *Africa's sustainability transition in a post-fossil world: Posture, negotiation, and agreements*. Michigan Journal of International Law, 41(2), 385–412.

<https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjil/vol41/iss2/5>

Moyo, G. (2024). *African elites as clients of the offshore world*. In Multinational Corporations and the Shadow Financial System. Springer.

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-51000-7_8

Müller, M. (2023). *The 'new geopolitics' of mineral supply chains: A window of opportunity for African countries*. African Journal of Economic Policy.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10220461.2023.2226108>

ODI. (2022). *Rwanda's strategic state: Foreign aid and national agency*. Overseas Development Institute.

<https://odi.org/en/publications/rwanda-strategic-state-foreign-aid-national-agency/>

Osiolo, H. H. (2021). *Impact of cost, returns and investments: Towards renewable energy generation in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Renewable Energy.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0960148121012507>

Otusanya, O. J., & Adeyeye, G. B. (2022). *The dark side of tax havens in money laundering, capital flight and corruption in developing countries: Some evidence from Nigeria*. Journal of Financial Crime, 29(4), 1122–1141. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jfc-02-2021-0044>

Ouedraogo, N. S., & Kilolo, J. M. M. (2024). *Africa's critical minerals can power the global low-carbon transition*. Environmental Research: Energy. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/2516-1083/ad46da>

Page, S. (2004). *Developing countries in international negotiations: How they influence trade and climate*

change negotiations. IDS Bulletin, 35(2), 82–87.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2004.tb00110.x>

Palle, A. (2021). *Bringing geopolitics to energy transition research*. Energy Research & Social Science, 79, 102163. <https://u-paris.hal.science/hal-03477551/file/ERSS-2021-Postprint.pdf>

Puyo, D. M., Panton, A. J., Sridhar, T., Stuermer, M., & Ungerer, C. (2024). *Key challenges faced by fossil fuel exporters during the energy transition* (IMF Working Paper No. WP/24/29). International Monetary Fund. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2024/02/09/Key-Challenges-Faced-by-Fossil-Fuel-Exporters-During-the-Energy-Transition-539099>

Reuters. (2023, June 20). *Senegal secures better terms in BP and Kosmos gas deal renegotiation*. Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/senegal-renegotiates-gas-deal-bp-kosmos-2023-06-20/>

Roger, C., & Belliethathan, S. (2016). *Africa in the global climate change negotiations*. International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics, 16(1), 91–108.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-014-9244-7>

World Bank. (2020). *Botswana's diamond model: Lessons in managing mineral wealth*. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/02/27/botswana-diamond-model-lessons>

Scholten, D. (2023). *Introduction: The geopolitics of the energy transition*. In Handbook on the Geopolitics of the Energy Transition (pp. 1–12).

<https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap/book/9781800370432/book-part-9781800370432-5.xml>

Steadman, S., Colenbrander, S., & Simpson, N. (2024). *Putting the 'just' in Just Energy Transition Partnerships: What role for MDBs?* ODI.

https://odi.org/documents/8984/Putting_the_just_in_Just_Energy_Transition_Partnerships-what_role_for_the_MDBs.pdf

Sweerts, B., Dalla Longa, F., & Van Der Zwaan, B. (2019). *Financial de-risking to unlock Africa's renewable energy potential*. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 102, 323–334. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2018.12.038>

The White House. (2021). *Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/27/>

UK Government. (2019). *UK becomes first major economy to pass net zero emissions law*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law>

Vickers, B. (2013). *Africa and the rising powers: bargaining for the 'marginalized many'*. *International Affairs*, 89(3), 673–693. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12038>

Weeks, J. (2015). *Macroeconomic impact of capital flight in Sub-Saharan Africa*. African Economic Research Consortium. <https://publication.aercafricalibrary.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/243/wp-cf-01.pdf>

World Bank. (2020). *Republic of Botswana: Country Economic Memorandum – Botswana's growth path*. World Bank Group. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/905061600876248867>

Yang, Y., Zhang, X., & Chen, Y. (2023). *Geopolitics of the energy transition*. *Journal of Geographical Sciences*, 33(3), 455–471. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11442-023-2101-2>

Zandile, Z., & Phiri, A. (2022). *Capital flight and corruption: Impact on economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa*. CORE. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/568400732.pdf>



AUTHORS

Eugene N. Nforngwa is a Climate and Energy Policy Analyst focusing on the power dynamics shaping global and regional climate, development, and energy policies and actions. He is the Just Transition and Energy Access Lead at the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA).

+237 675114397 | nforngwa@gmail.com | eugene.nforngwa@pacja.org

Augustine B. Njamnshi is an Expert in International Climate Law and a Climate Justice Advocate. He is the Executive Director of the African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access and Co-Founder/Chair of the Political and Technical Affairs Committee of PACJA.

+237 677 765230 | abnjamnshi@yahoo.com | augustine@acsea54.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy paper is the result of a collaborative effort between the Rainforest Centre for Climate and Energy Policy (RCCEP), the African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access (ACSEA), and the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA). It draws on insights from two years of multi-stakeholder dialogues held across the continent as part of the project “Ensuring a People-Centred Energy Transition in Africa Through Civil Society Engagement,” supported by the International Climate Initiative (IKI).

We are especially grateful to Prof. Chinedum Nwajiuba of the Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team (NEST) and his team for their expert review and thoughtful contributions, which helped sharpen this paper's strategic focus. We also extend our deep appreciation to the civil society actors, policymakers, and community leaders across Africa whose voices, perspectives, and commitments have shaped this collective agenda for sovereignty and justice in Africa's energy future.

DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in this policy paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the supporting institutions or project partners.

LICENSING & COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Rainforest Centre for Climate and Energy Policy (RCCEP), African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access (ACSEA), and Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA).

This publication is available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license. You are free to share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially) under the following conditions:

- When citing or reusing, please credit the original authors and institutions as follows: Nforngwa & Njamnshi (2025), RCCEP, ACSEA, PACJA.
- Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner but not in any way that suggests the licensors endorse you or your use.
- To view a copy of this license, visit creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0
- For permissions beyond the scope of this license, please contact: info@rainforestcenter.org

SUGGESTED CITATION

Nforngwa, E. N., & Njamnshi, A. B. (2025). *Asserting sovereignty: A strategic agenda for Africa in the global energy transition*. Rainforest Centre for Climate and Energy Policy, African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access (ACSEA), & Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA). [https://\[insert-source-link-or-doi\]](https://[insert-source-link-or-doi])