

International Web Seminar

Africa

within the Transforming Global Order and Trends
28 July 2026



Conversations



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Africa within the Transforming Global Order and Trends

International Web Seminar

28 July 2026

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DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS



Mr. Mushahid Hussain Syed
Founder Pakistan- Africa Institute
for Development & Research



Amb Hamid Asghar Khan
Additional Secretary Africa
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Mr. Eghosa Osaghae
Perspective from Western Africa



Ms. Imen Chaanbi
Perspective from Northern Africa



Mr. Amare K. Aweke
Perspective from Eastern Africa



Mr. Christian Geraud Byamungu
Perspective from Central Africa



Professor Everesto Benyara
Perspective from Southern Africa



Amb ® Raza Bashir Tarar
Perspective from Pakistan



Ms. Ayesha Afgun
Research Associate, ISSRA

Introduction

Africa is emerging as an increasingly important centre of global geopolitical and geo-economic competition, driven by its critical minerals, natural resources, demographic potential, expanding markets, strategic maritime location and growing political influence. As major and middle powers including the US, China, Russia, the EU, Türkiye and Gulf states deepen their engagement with the continent, Africa is also seeking greater strategic autonomy and regional integration. For Pakistan, these developments present opportunities for greater engagement in trade, defence, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, education, maritime cooperation and multilateral diplomacy.

Against this backdrop, the Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA), National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, organised an International Web Seminar on “Africa within the Transforming Global Order and Trends” on 28 July 2026. The session brought together members of the African diplomatic corps, Pakistani ambassadors serving in African countries, academics, practitioners, policymakers and students, providing a diverse platform for discussion and exchange. Senator Mushahid Hussain was the Chief Guest, while Ambassador Hamid Asghar delivered the keynote address, and Ms. Ayesha Afgun moderated the session.

The distinguished panel featured experts representing all five African regions - Northern, Eastern, Western, Central and Southern Africa - alongside a speaker from Pakistan. Through expert presentations and an interactive discussion, speakers offered regional perspectives on Africa's evolving position within the global order, highlighting security challenges, geopolitical shifts, economic developments and strategic partnerships shaping the continent's global role.



Key Takeaways

- The global order is becoming increasingly fragmented, with declining multilateralism and intensified competition among global and regional powers, placing Africa at the centre of geopolitical and economic contestation.
- African agency is expanding through multi-alignment, as states are increasingly diversifying partnerships according to their national interests rather than aligning exclusively with any single power.
- Africa's political weight extends well beyond its economic potential: its 54 countries constitute 28% of United Nations (UN) membership and significant shares of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), G77 and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), giving the continent substantial collective influence in multilateral diplomacy.
- The African continent is moving from resource extraction towards beneficiation and industrialisation, with growing emphasis on resource sovereignty, local value addition, technology transfer and employment generation.
- External partnerships are increasingly being assessed based on reciprocity and developmental value, with African countries seeking investment, technology and practical solutions rather than aid-dependent or extractive relationships.
- Africa's security challenges are increasingly interconnected, with conflict, terrorism, migration, trafficking and maritime insecurity creating cross-regional security implications.



- Northern Africa's strategic location between Africa, Europe and the Middle East, together with its energy resources and maritime routes, makes it a critical hub for global trade, energy security and geopolitical competition.
- Western Africa combines significant demographic, economic and resource potential with persistent security challenges, reinforcing the importance of employment, industrialisation and regional integration.
- Eastern Africa is emerging as a key geopolitical and maritime space, where the interconnected Red Sea, Horn of Africa and Indian Ocean increasingly form a single strategic environment shaped by competing external interests.
- Central Africa combines persistent insecurity with major opportunities in critical minerals and regional connectivity, particularly through the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) potential to link Central, Eastern and Southern African markets.
- Southern Africa is witnessing political realignments alongside stronger assertions of resource sovereignty, with countries increasingly pursuing local processing and greater control over their mineral wealth.
- Pakistan's longstanding goodwill in Africa provides a foundation for deeper engagement, but limited diplomatic presence and infrequent high-level visits, with the last taking place in 2014, coupled with weak air connectivity and an information deficit, have constrained its strategic value.
- Pakistan's engagement with Africa remains limited in comparison with other major external partners, reflected in its 20 diplomatic missions and \$5.45 billion in trade, compared with the substantially larger footprints of China, India and Türkiye.
- Pakistan should translate goodwill into sustained, region- and country-specific partnerships, centred on economic diplomacy, joint ventures, local investment, technology transfer, connectivity and cost-effective cooperation across priority sectors.

Summary of Proceedings

- The discussion opened by noting that the international system is undergoing rapid transformation, marked by weakening multilateralism, the erosion of uncontested American leadership, strategic uncertainty in Europe and the resurgence of hard-power politics.
- Within the evolving order, Africa is no longer a peripheral actor or merely a recipient of aid. Its 54 independent countries, large and youthful population, expanding markets, agricultural potential and abundant energy and mineral resources have made it increasingly important to global economic and strategic competition, including its potential to serve as the “breadbasket of the world.”
- Africa's geographical position further enhances its strategic significance. The Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, Suez Canal, Mediterranean coastline and Cape of Good Hope form critical links in global maritime trade, energy flows and transportation.
- A central theme of the proceedings was the growing assertion of African agency, with African states increasingly engaging multiple powers according to their national interests rather than fixed political or ideological blocs.
- Experts opined that this shift is also reflected in changing partnership priorities, with African countries seeking to move beyond aid and raw-material extraction towards local value addition, industrialisation, technology transfer, employment generation and long-term investment.
- Great and middle power competition in Africa is intensifying. US-China competition is particularly visible in infrastructure, connectivity and critical-mineral supply chains, including through the Lobito Corridor and Belt and Road Initiative.
- The discussion cautioned against viewing Africans through stereotypes or patronising assumptions. African states and societies should be engaged with respect as informed and equal interlocutors.
- It was pointed out that, despite Africa's vast natural-resource wealth, many African countries receive only a limited share of the profits generated from their resources. Hence, strengthening demands for greater national ownership and local value addition.
- Northern Africa was presented as a strategic bridge linking Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, with its coastlines and the Suez Canal giving it exceptional importance for maritime trade and energy flows.
- Its substantial energy and mineral resources have also made Northern Africa a focal point of engagement and competition involving the EU, China, Russia and the Gulf states.
- The region faces interconnected security pressures from instability in Libya, Sahelian spillovers, arms trafficking, irregular migration, organised crime, extremist networks and maritime insecurity.
- For Pakistan, Northern Africa offers opportunities for country-specific partnerships in maritime security, defence, energy, technology, trade, infrastructure and connectivity.

- The West African perspective highlighted the region's considerable demographic and economic importance, underpinned by Nigeria's regional weight and supported by institutional frameworks such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Commonwealth and the OIC.
- Terrorism and instability in the Sahel continue to exert regional pressure, reinforcing the view that security cannot be separated from employment, investment and industrial development. The region's resources should therefore support local processing, employment generation and industrialisation rather than extraction alone.
- Pakistan's engagement with West Africa should focus on long-term investment, industrial partnerships, technology transfer, joint ventures and capacity-building, including military training, counterterrorism and security cooperation.
- Eastern Africa has emerged as a critical geopolitical region shaped by the interests of global and regional powers. The Horn of Africa and the Middle East are also becoming increasingly interconnected as a regional security complex.
- East Africa's strategic importance is reinforced by the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, Red Sea and Indian Ocean corridor, where insecurity can directly affect global shipping, energy supplies and trade.
- Eastern African states are increasingly pursuing flexible alignment strategies, while opportunities for Pakistan exist in trade, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, textiles, education, tourism and connectivity.
- Central Africa combines political and security instability with exceptional strategic value, particularly through the DRC's critical minerals, the Congo Basin and its linkages with Eastern and Southern Africa.
- The DRC's cobalt and other strategic minerals have made Central Africa increasingly important to critical-mineral supply chains, attracting established Chinese engagement and renewed US interest.
- The resource-producing countries are increasingly seeking domestic processing, value addition and manufacturing to secure a greater share of global value chains.
- Pakistan's longstanding contribution to UN peacekeeping in the DRC provides important goodwill, but broader engagement with Central Africa remains limited and requires a stronger diplomatic presence.
- Southern Africa was described as undergoing political and economic realignment, alongside continuing security challenges in eastern DRC and Cabo Delgado and growing tensions surrounding migration, citizenship, belonging, xenophobia and Afrophobia.
- The region also reflects growing African collective agency, with states engaging multiple powers through Africa-US, Africa-China, Africa-Russia, Africa-Saudi Arabia and Africa-Türkiye platforms.



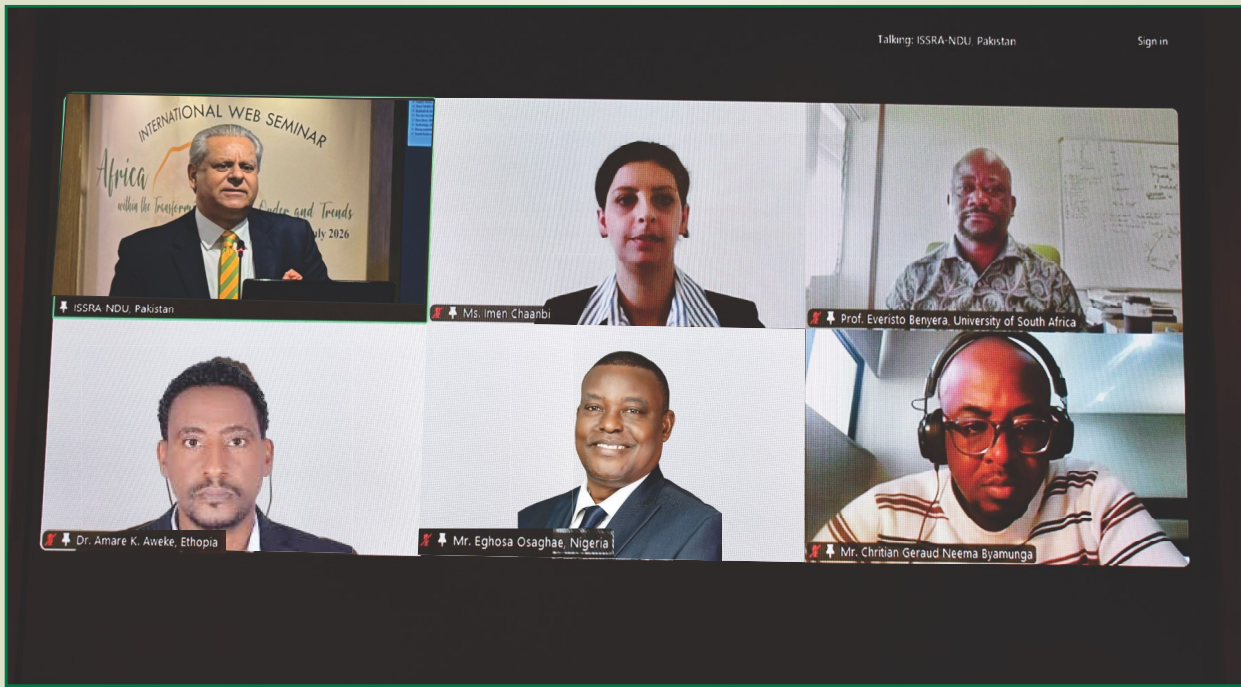
- Southern Africa offers Pakistan opportunities in investment, mineral processing, defence cooperation and broader industrial partnerships.
- Pakistan retains historical goodwill across Africa because of its support for liberation movements, diplomatic assistance during decolonisation, peacekeeping contributions and defence cooperation.
- Recent initiatives, including the Ministry of Commerce's Look Africa Policy (2017), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Engage Africa Initiative (2019), opening of new diplomatic missions and trade offices, country-specific exhibitions and the adoption of Africa Day Resolution in the Senate in 2025, were recognised as positive developments.
- Africa represents a combined economic market of approximately US\$3.4 trillion under the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), while Pakistan's total trade with the continent stood at only US\$5.45 billion in 2023-24, reflecting the considerable gap between Africa's economic potential and the current scale of Pakistan-Africa commercial engagement.
- This commercial gap is accompanied by limited political and diplomatic engagement. Pakistan maintains 19 diplomatic missions across Africa's 54 countries, while the last identified bilateral visit by a Pakistani President or Prime Minister was President Mamnoon Hussain's visit to Nigeria in 2014. Limited diplomatic coverage and the prolonged gap in top-level political engagement have constrained the development of sustained partnerships.
- The discussion reiterated the need for more frequent high-level political engagement with Africa, contrasting Pakistan's limited leadership-level visits with the sustained senior-level attention given to the continent by countries such as India and Türkiye.
- An information and perception gap also persists between Pakistan and African countries, reinforced by limited media coverage, socio-cultural stereotypes and language barriers. People-to-people and commercial ties remain constrained by limited direct air connectivity and a relatively small Pakistani diaspora across much of the continent.
- Pakistan should not approach Africa as a single market. Country-specific strategies should be combined with a shift from export-led engagement towards joint ventures, local manufacturing, investment and technology transfer, particularly in agriculture, pharmaceuticals, textiles, education, healthcare, logistics, renewable energy and mineral processing.
- Pakistan's comparative advantages include defence and security cooperation as well as affordable, practical solutions suited to local requirements, including agricultural equipment, pharmaceuticals, education and small-scale manufacturing. These strengths would need to be supported by stronger institutional coordination and sustained engagement on the ground.
- The proceedings concluded that Pakistan should engage Africa as an equal partner rather than as a recipient, building sustained relationships around reciprocity, mutual respect, local value creation and practical cooperation, reinforced through media, tourism, educational exchanges and grassroots linkages.

Programme

1100-1130	Registration / Online Assembling
1130-1135	Recitation of Holy Quran
1135-1140	Welcome Remarks by Brig Riaz Ahmed (Retd), Director G&RS, ISSRA-NDU
1140-1150	Keynote Address by Amb Hamid Asghar Khan , Additional Foreign Secretary Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad
1150-1250	Experts' talk on: "Africa within the Transforming Global Order and Trends" Distinguished Speakers Perspective from Western Africa Mr. Eghosa Osaghae, Director General Nigerian Institute of International Affairs Perspective from Northern Africa Ms. Imen Chaanbi, Expert Geopolitics and Strategic Intelligence of Africa Perspective from Eastern Africa Dr. Amare K. Aweke, Director General Institute of Foreign Affairs, Addis Ababa Perspective from Central Africa Mr. Christian Geraud Neema Byamungu, Geopolitical Analyst, Scholar Africa Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Editor China Global South Project Perspective from Southern Africa Dr. Everesto Benyara, Professor of International Relations, University of South Africa Perspective from Pakistan Amb ® Raza Bashir Tarar, Former High Commissioner to Kenya Moderator: Ms. Ayesha Afgun, Research Associate Global & Regional Studies, ISSRA
1250-1340	Interactive Session
1340-1350	Remarks by Chief Guest Mr. Mushahid Hussain Syed , Former Senator, Founder Pakistan-Africa Institute for Development & Research (PAIDAR)
1350-1355	Vote of Thanks by Major General Muhammad Raza Aizad, HI (M), DG ISSRA
1355 onwards	Group Photo Hi Tea Dispersal

Picture Gallery







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