

GUIDELINES

General Assembly



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Introduction

The general assembly, also known as UNGA is one of the most essential organs of the United Nations, which makes it also the most mediatized one, where almost all the delegations in the world attend. Many issues are discussed in it, issues that concern stability, peace and security on a global scale.

The role of such an assembly is more of an advisory one. Its conclusions are only recommendatory; in the end, it is the Security Council that will decide. The purpose here is going to be to find a resolution that encourages countries to cooperate and take nationwide and worldwide initiatives to deal with the issues that may result from both of the topics discussed.

The purpose of these guidelines is to introduce you to the topics of our committee and to help you navigate through your individual research. We hope this Guide will be of good assistance and we look forward to hearing you negotiate for your country's best interest.

Topic 1 : How to tackle the threat of a conflictual return of international borders ?

What is a border?

A border is not an abstract line but an institution, enshrined in law and structuring, resulting from conflicts and treaties, negotiations and decisions. To abolish borders is to make states disappear. Borders allow states to exercise their sovereignty, and promote the creation of the "nation". They are therefore symbolic markers where each inhabitant becomes a citizen.

Context

- *The "creation" of borders*

Borders as we know them were born with the treaties of Westphalia in 1648. In their time, these treaties were a turning point in geopolitics. For the first time in history, the states of Europe set their borders by recognizing the sovereignty of their neighbours over their territories. This notion was then generalized to the whole world, until the recognition of the intangibility of the borders of Africa in 1964 by the Organization of African Unity.

- *The erasure of borders*

While borders were created as limits of a territory, they have gradually become interfaces for exchange. The process of regional integration, which began in Europe after the Second World War (constitution of the OECE in 1948, then of the ECSC in 1952), aims to go beyond borders in order to overcome historical rivalries between European countries. Internal borders were abolished in favour of a common border, the Schengen area (which came into being in 1995).

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This dynamic is reinforced on a global scale with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Numerous free trade areas were formed or strengthened (NAFTA, ASEAN, MERCOSUR, etc.) as well as intergovernmental organizations (African Union, CARICOM, etc.). Finally, technical progress is contributing to the supposed end of borders (transport revolution, advent of the Internet). Borders have become places of commercial and human exchanges.

The return of borders

If borders are overcome, they do not disappear. On the contrary, the opposite movement is taking place. Since the end of the Cold War, they have multiplied (from 159 to 197 countries recognized by the UN, not to mention those that are not). Maritime spaces are also subject to this dynamic since the Montego Bay Convention of 1982. Thus, the battle to enlarge one's EEZ (and to seize new resources) rages on between States. It gives rise to real conflicts, as in the case of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, a string of islands measuring two square kilometres that are disputed by China and the Philippines, among others.

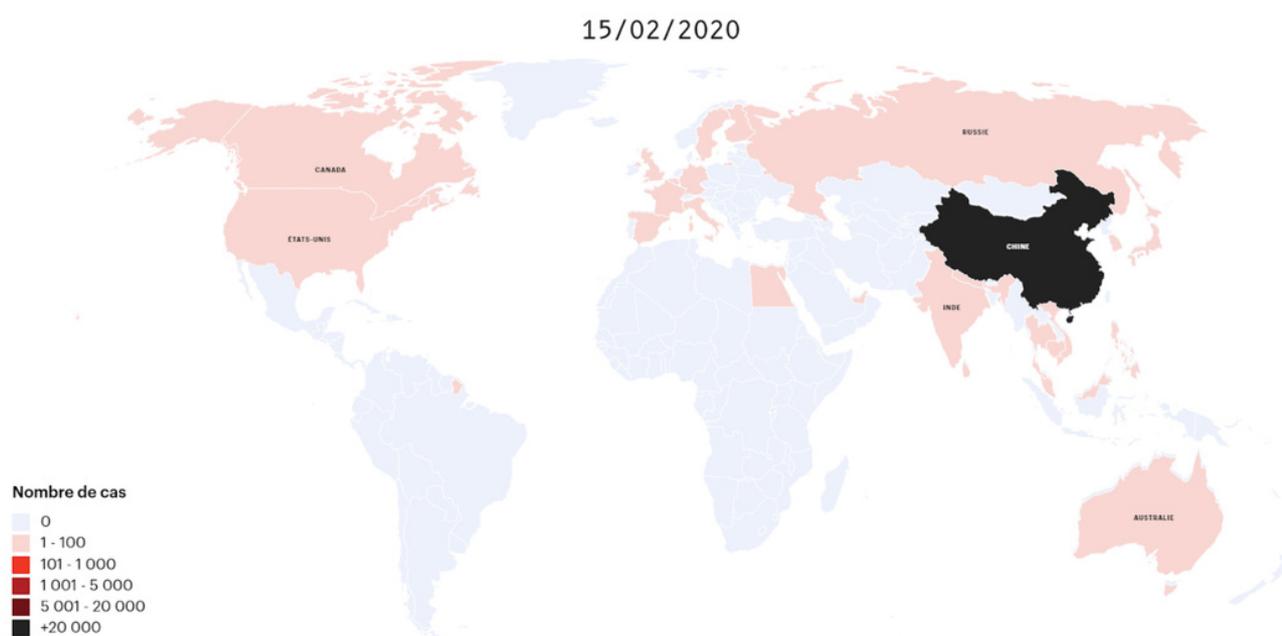
Despite (or because of) globalization, borders are once again becoming dividing lines. Borders of all kinds are once again materializing: walls are multiplying on the surface of the globe and customs barriers are becoming harder (for example, with the trade war between the United States and China). According to estimates, border barriers (barbed wire, fences, walls) potentially extend over 18,000 to 25,000 km, i.e. 7 to 10% of the world's international borders.

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The Covid-19 crisis: the State and its borders in the face of globalization, its flows and its dangers

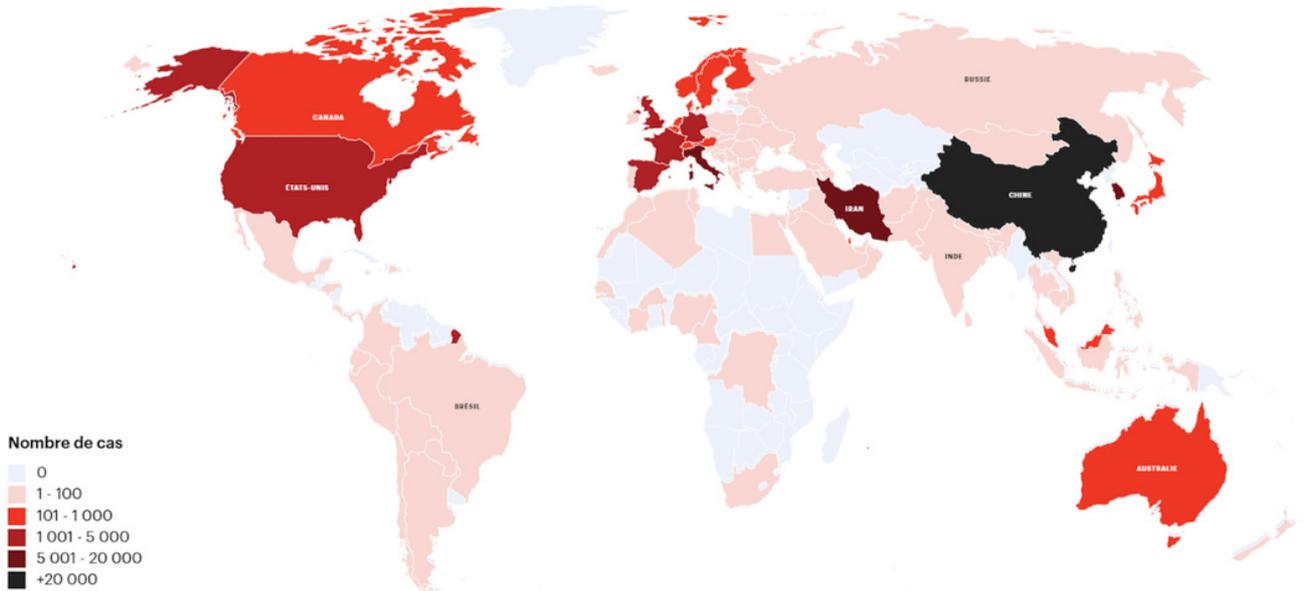
The return of borders is more than ever a reality since the coronavirus crisis. While the virus was declared in China, in a few months it spread on all the continents. The globalization and with it the very important migratory flows that take place every day have propagated the virus at a speed that has never been seen before: the virus has not stopped at the borders.

To face this virulent spread of the virus and thus protect themselves from an external threat, many states have decided to close their borders to migratory flows. These decisions to close borders were taken unilaterally, even within the European Union. If people could no longer cross borders, goods could. Thus, the borders were closed to people but not to goods.

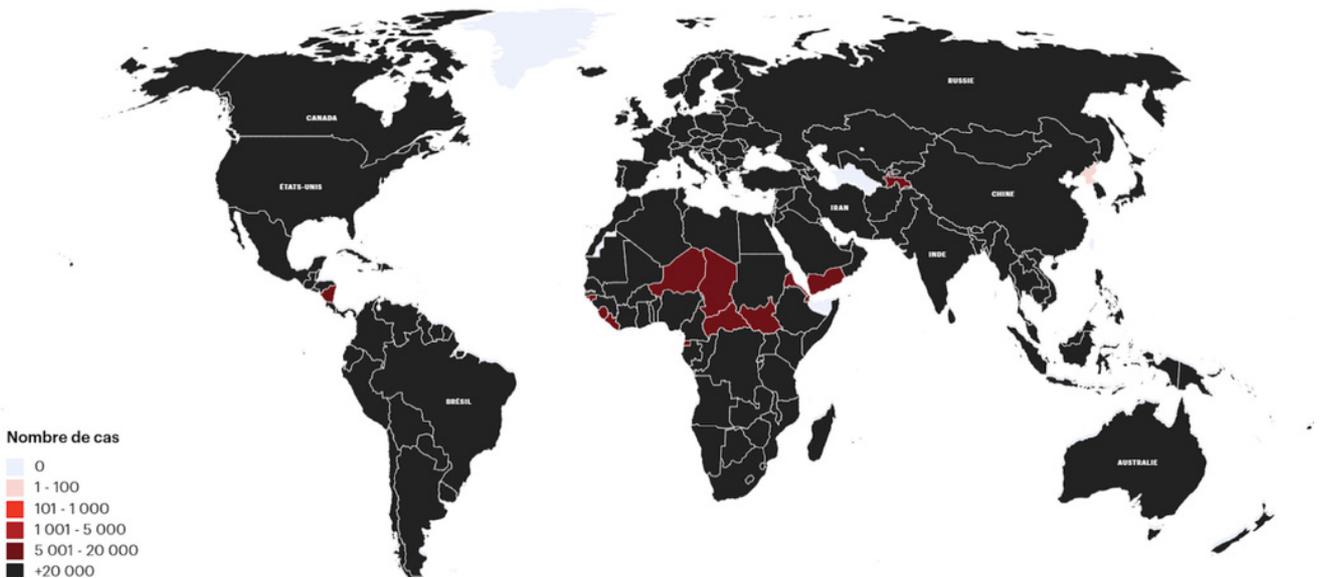


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Delimitation of borders

Time inscribed in space, borders are the traces of a long history; the issues brought before the International Court of Justice today often date back to ancient times (the Pacific War of 1879 for Bolivia) and many territorial claims are based on "historical rights": Eastern Ukraine is presented as "New Russia" by the Kremlin, a concept borrowed from the eighteenth century; the South China Sea groups together "historical waters" for two millennia where China has "unquestionable" rights. Today, many barriers are erected on disputed territories to put an end to a territorial dispute. We can think of the case of the Western Sahara claimed by Morocco or the Indian Line of Control in western Kashmir. A new area to be delimited is also emerging as shown by the attempts to share the Arctic Ocean between the members of the Arctic Council (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia and Sweden).

What are borders for?

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, borders, in the form of barriers, are part of a discourse of defence of the State or reinforcement of internal security:

- As instruments for fixing demarcation lines, military barriers are often presented as a temporary solution, a form of securing the territory that should impede a perceived existential threat. Nevertheless, many of them persist. We can think of the border between India and Pakistan or that between North and South Korea.

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- New types of barriers are also appearing. Their main objective is to respond to the fear of a diffuse threat, represented by individuals who, if they crossed the border, would be likely to endanger national security from within the territory. These are deterritorialized, global threats, organized in networks (terrorism, trafficking, illegal immigration) but whose response refers to the most classic territorial figure in the construction of States : the national border. Barriers do not close the territory to traffic, but rather serve to filter and channel flows towards border crossing points where the control of the State authority can be exercised.

Be careful, however, not to confuse walled borders with conflicts ! Indeed, barriers do not necessarily respond to conflictual relations between States, or to conflicts of sovereignty. States separated by barriers are often linked by trade agreements involving the facilitation of the flow of goods, as shown by the case of the border between the United States and Mexico.

Borders are not only a protection, they are also an economic resource. Thanks to the customs duties they imply, borders allow importing states to get richer. Moreover, they are very attractive and dynamic zones, especially in Africa where borders are subverted by all traders. Indeed, they are places of exchange where markets are established

New borders and secessionist movements

If the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was marked by the creation of borders in Africa, many new borders were created at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, especially following the collapse of the USSR.

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Le tracé des frontières dans le monde



Sources : d'après Michel Foucher, *Fronts et frontières*, Fayard, 1988 ;
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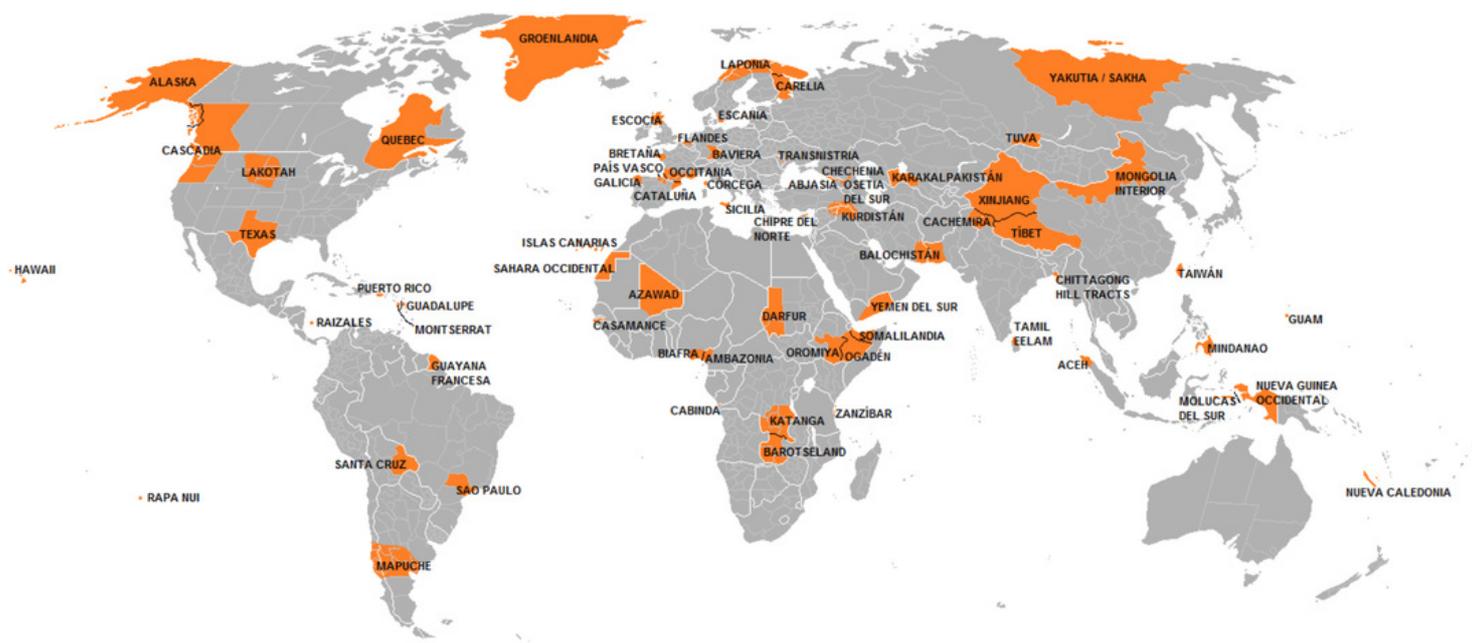
Réalisation : Sciences Po - Atelier de cartographie, © Dilia, Paris, 2016

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Many secessionist movements have also emerged since 1990. If some of them succeeded like the dislocation of Yugoslavia or more recently the creation of Eritrea and South Sudan, many countries are still facing many secessionist movements.

The secessionist movements are present on all continents, they are more or less marked and are more or less repressed by the country. If the Chinese state's repression of the Tibetans is very violent, the Scottish secessionist movement is much less virulent and sanctioned, even if it is very present. These secessionist movements accompany the resurgence of nationalism. They mark a desire for independence, freedom, sovereignty and sometimes security that their country and the current world do not offer them. They are looking for new frontiers.

Secessionist movements in the world in 2015



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Key questions

In order to guide you in the framework of your position paper, you can use the following questions to guide your research.

- When and how was your country created ?
- Is your country hardening its borders or opening them ?
- Is your country currently experiencing secessionist movements? If so, are they being repressed ?
- Does your country belong to a free trade zone ?
- Does your country try to limit migration by sending aid to the countries where the migrants come from or does it favour strengthening its borders ?

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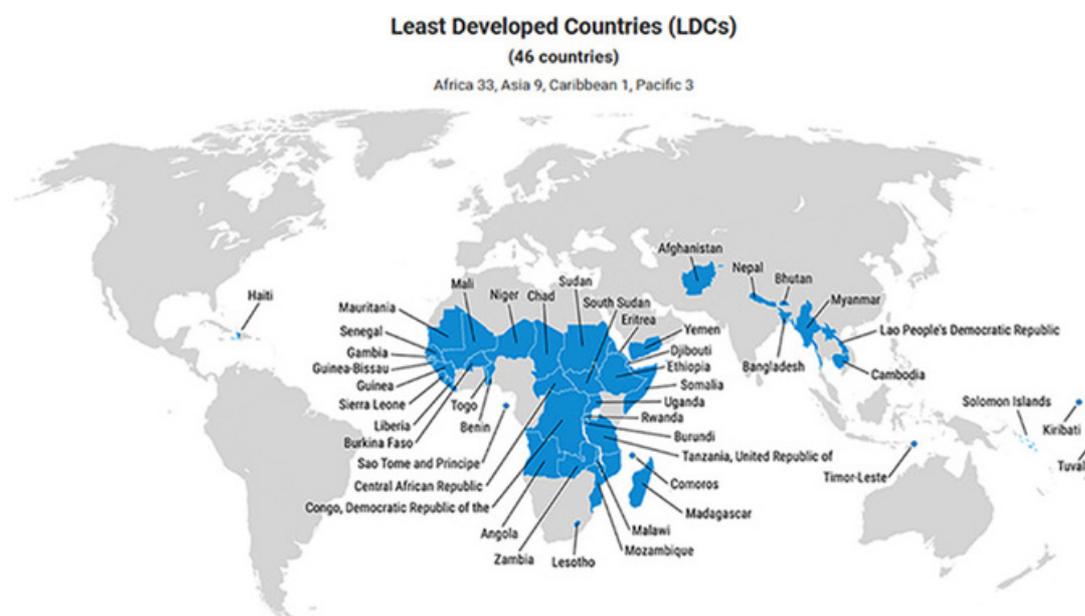
Global Forced Displacement :

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Topic 2 : Helping the African least developed countries to manage their resources sustainably.

Sub-Saharan Africa is struggling to turn its wealth into wealth for its people. Lesotho is a case in point: this "kingdom in the sky" with its wonderful landscapes may produce the world's largest diamonds, but more than half of its population lives below the poverty line. The large share of mineral or agricultural raw materials in exports makes the economy of the "rentier countries" vulnerable. This vulnerability weakens the states.

The United Nations recognizes the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as the "poorest and weakest segment" of the international community. Their low level of socio-economic development is characterized by weak human and institutional capacities, low and unequally distributed income and scarcity of domestic financial resources. The Least Developed Countries regroup 48 countries, of which about two-thirds are in Africa (33). The remaining countries listed in this group are located in Asia and the Pacific (12) and Latin America (1).



Note: The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations
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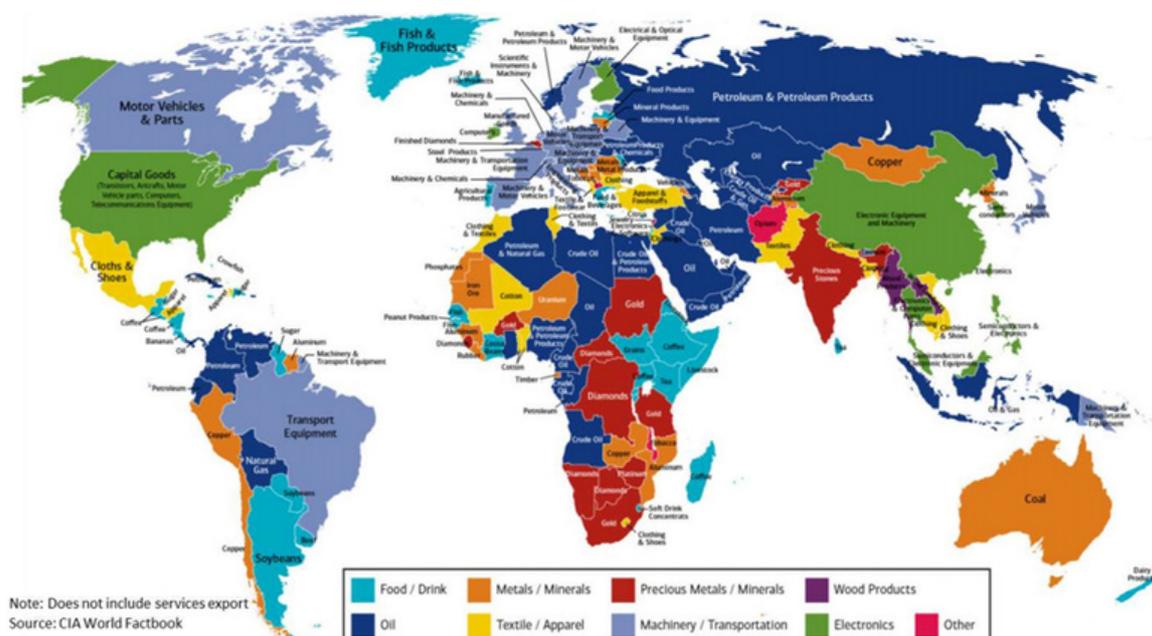
Poor resource management

Too much dependence

Since 2000, high commodity prices, supported by demand from emerging countries, have led to a boom in extractive activities in sub-Saharan Africa. The fall in prices from 2014 heralds "the end of the mirage", as in Chad, where the collapse of oil revenues has given way to an economic, social, political and humanitarian crisis.

The role played by commodities in the economies of Sub-Saharan African countries has been steadily increasing over the past 30 years. Commodity exports accounted for almost half of the region's total exports between 2010 and 2014. The favourable economic climate of the 2000s led to a production boom in the old mineral resource extraction basins (oil in the Gulf of Guinea, metals and minerals in South Africa, etc.); it also led to the opening of new basins (oil in Sudan, Chad and Uganda, gold in Mali and Burkina Faso, etc.). This weight of extractive activities makes growth uncertain.

Most exported resource by country



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The conflicts of the 1990s (Liberia, Angola, etc.), those that persist today in the DRC and Sudan, the lack of economic diversification and poverty, all contribute to the idea of a "resource curse". The use of rents to redistribute wealth within society through a system of networks creates corruption, inequality and conflict.

Has Africa missed out on industrialization ? It accounted for less than 1% of global manufactured exports in 2016, concentrated in two heavyweights (Nigeria, South Africa). In the dock : poor infrastructure, insufficient energy production, small domestic markets, and a poorly trained workforce. However, industrial projects are multiplying, stimulated by foreign investment. China has already created and financed seven large "special economic zones" (SEZ) in Zambia, Mauritius, Nigeria and Ethiopia. Chinese and Turkish investors are attracted by tax advantages and lower wages than in China.

An underperforming agriculture

While more than 60% of the sub-Saharan population is still rural, agriculture contributes only a quarter of the countries' GDP on average. Expectations of agriculture are multiple : it must feed a growing population, provide employment and export revenues, and preserve the environment while its means are limited and the future effects of global warming are uncertain.

Africa has 65% of the world's undeveloped arable land. While Africa has great agricultural diversity, average productivity is much lower than in high-yielding countries. Production losses are also significant when infrastructure does not allow for processing or transport to consumer markets.

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Food imports are increasing both because demand is rising and because eating habits are changing with urbanization (high quality cereals, dairy products, poultry, beef, etc.).

Arable land in Africa



Africa still largely exports raw products, although processing these products would add value. For example, it produces 73% of the world's cocoa beans, but only 20% of the ground cocoa, which is worth two to three times more. The AfDB's 2015-2016 program has made "feeding Africa" the second of its five top priorities : 24 billion dollars of investments to improve the processing capacities of agricultural products to increase their value. To this end, it plans to develop agro-industrial zones hosting businesses in rural areas, mobilizing young people in the agricultural sector, capable of popularizing more productive techniques.

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Attempts to break away from dependency : African businesses

The project is to have a break with the rent economy and with this other form of exploitation of resources that constitutes the low cost work of foreign firms : the idea that a sustainable growth will not be based on exports of raw materials with random prices, but on the satisfaction of a growing domestic demand. Let's take Bioessence Laboratories as an example. They were founded in Dakar (Senegal) in 2005. They use the traditional know-how of women in rural areas to develop an organic African cosmetology that enhances the value of flora. This Made in Africa product is exported all over the world. Bioessence works with marginalized communities to ensure their self-sufficiency and economic security.

Coveted resources

A continent full of resources

A continent coveted for its resources, where the interests of foreign powers mingle with those of economic actors in a network of links that are not very beneficial to development and democracy. An Africa whose wealth in labour force, energy, minerals or land is hidden by poverty and underdevelopment. For example, in Liberia, 67% of the country's agricultural land is in the hands of international companies... two solutions are offered to the peasants who lose their land: either go to the city (often in shanty towns), or become a poorly paid agricultural worker: cheap nature and cheap labour...

The exploitation of resources in the face of ecological challenges

The emergence of issues related to the environment and sustainable development is prompting African states to multiply and expand protected areas: 15% of the continent's surface.

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The international REDD initiative, launched in 2008, aims to fight global warming by allowing African states to obtain funds for the conservation of vast forest areas and the sustainable management of forest resources.

These policies raise questions: how to fight against deforestation in the absence of alternative energy sources for wood ? How to meet the food challenge without increasing deforestation ? The predation of Africa's resources is much more destructive than traditional agriculture or livestock, as evidenced by the deforestation and pollution caused by the monoculture of agribusiness or the ransacking of the Niger Delta by oil exploitation.

Conflicts of interest

The management of natural resources is at the heart of power issues in Africa: the plundering of wealth (DRC), the capture of rents by the family clan (Gabon, Equatorial Guinea) or the rigorous management of resources (Botswana). It is not so much the scarcity of resources that is at the root of conflicts as its abundance. The control of fighting groups over mining resources causes a change in the scale of the violence by increasing their resources in men and weapons, by encouraging the capture of rents and the weakening of the state, which amplifies popular discontent. For example, in the eastern DRC, multiple armed groups and the country's own armed forces (FARDC) have a stranglehold on the mineral trade. Neighbouring countries (Rwanda, Uganda) export these illegally exploited resources. Large Western and Asian companies that covet coltan are involved in its illegal exploitation.

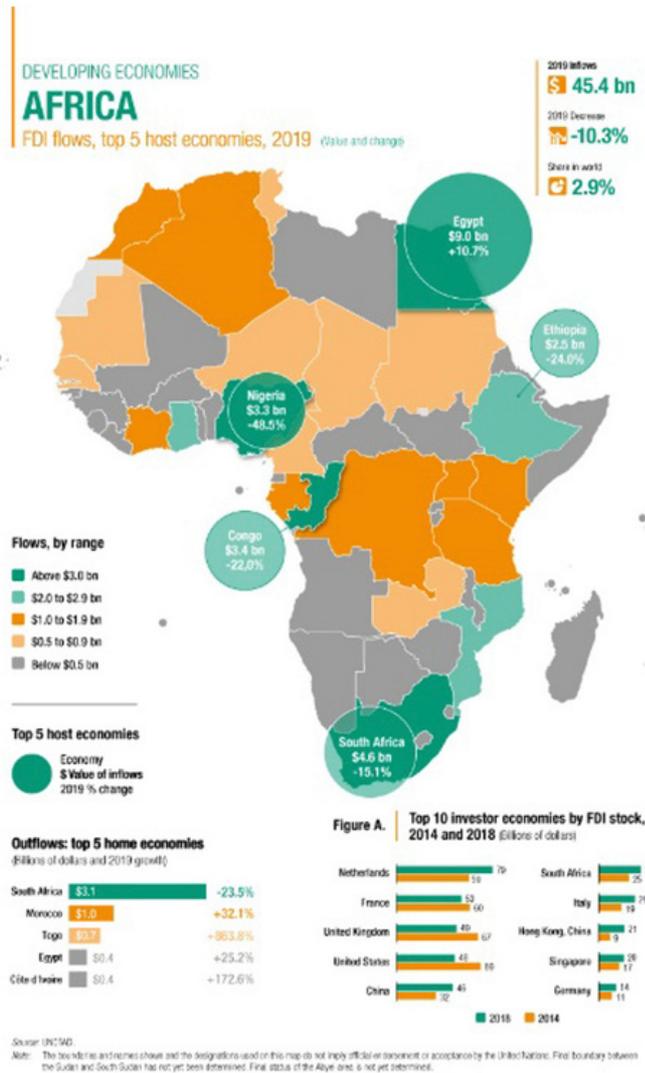
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Actions have been taken to promote the traceability of minerals and the transparency of the mining industry by the UN, by Western countries (Dodd-Frank Act of 2010 in the United States) and by producer or exporter countries (Rwanda). However, the relationship between the states that have raw materials and the companies that exploit them remains strong. Let's take the example of the Chadian state and Glencore. The state, which has granted the Swiss giant Glencore 90% of the rights to export its oil since 2013, is bound by the multinational, which has granted it loans against oil worth 2 billion dollars.

New partnerships

Emerging countries (China, India, Brazil and Turkey) but also more developed countries (Qatar, Saudi Arabia) are developing competing strategies in Africa. Without a colonial past, they appear as an alternative to traditional partnerships. Moreover, these emerging countries are increasingly dependent on African resources to feed their populations, develop industries, and continue to grow. Today, China is the dominant emerging player on the continent through its investments and trade flows. In the extractive industries, China is taking the place of European, American or Australian companies. It presents itself as a friend of African countries: it invests in infrastructure without interfering in the affairs of States; it deals with the least reputable countries (Sudan, DRC). It seeks access to the raw materials it needs : oil, metals and minerals, wood and food products.

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However, the attractiveness of sub-Saharan Africa in terms of investments must be put into perspective. Indeed, it receives only 2.5% of global investments, and these are concentrated in only a few countries.

Remark

Be careful, you are the representatives of your country, so you must put yourself in the place of the State that you embody. In this last subject, the role of the State (of the least developed countries) is often questioned, so you must defend your State and not accuse it !

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Key questions

African countries:

- What resources does your country have?
- Is there much trafficking in your country?
- Does your country succeed in making its populations benefit from the resources it owns ?
- What relations does your country have with European, American and Asian countries ?
- Which countries invest in your country ?

Other countries:

- What resources does your country have ?
- How does your country invest in Africa and in what way ?
- Is your country very dependent on African resources ?
And if so, which ones ?
- How is your country perceived by African countries ?

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