

A world in transition

The transition is changing the conditions under which political power operates.



CLIMATE

Rising temperatures, loss and damage



RESOURCES

Water, food, minerals and energy



TECHNOLOGY

AI, data and digital infrastructures



POWER

New dependencies and new alliances

Geopolitics shapes the path of sustainability transitions. Sustainability transitions reshape geopolitics.

GEOPOLITICAL FORCES

Territory
Resources
Trade and sanctions
Alliances
Security priorities

SUSTAINABILITY SHIFTS

Decarbonisation
Circular economy
Food and water governance
Climate finance
Planetary equity

The relationship is mutually constitutive

Why the transition becomes political

Every transformation creates winners, losers and new dependencies.

Old system

Fossil fuel incumbency
Established trade routes
Concentrated power

Transition

Renewables and electrification
New minerals and infrastructure
Faster technological change

Political effects

Resource competition
Distributional conflict
New forms of cooperation

Mitigation, adaptation, and resilience

are the three core pillars of global climate action. Together, they form a comprehensive framework to address the climate crisis: mitigation tackles the **root causes**, adaptation addresses the **immediate impacts**, and resilience prepares systems to **withstand and bounce back** from shocks.

MITIGATION

Attack the root cause by reducing or preventing the emission of greenhouse gases.

ADAPTATION

Adjust systems and behaviors to live with the current and future changes in the climate.

RESILIENCE

Build the overall capacity of a system to absorb shocks, minimize damage, and recover quickly.

Case studies across the world

The same transition looks different from different places.

The Arctic: a changing strategic space

Environmental change opens new routes and new security questions.

WHAT CHANGES

Sea-ice loss alters access, mobility and monitoring.

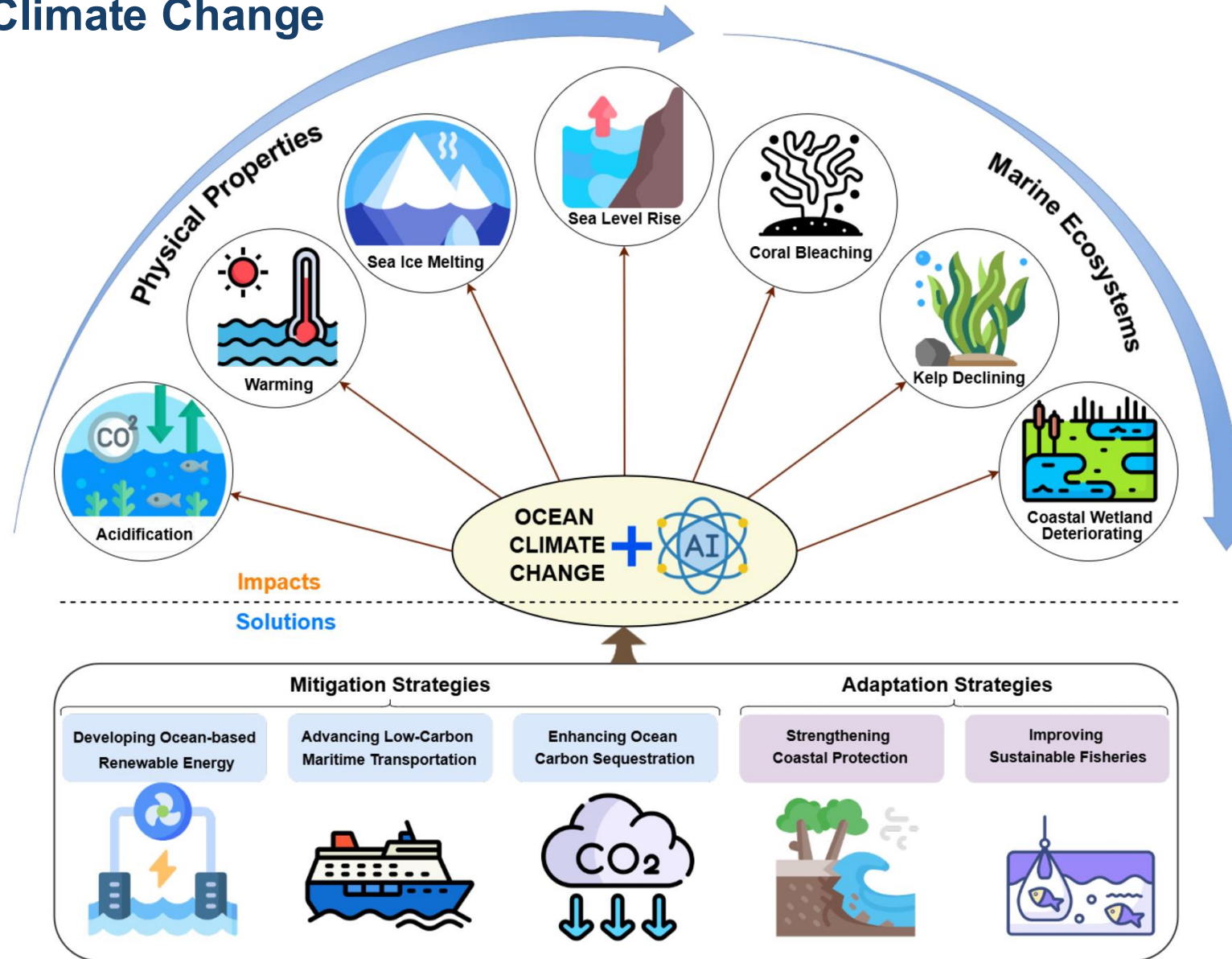
Offshore infrastructures become both economic assets and security concerns.

GEOPOLITICAL DILEMMA

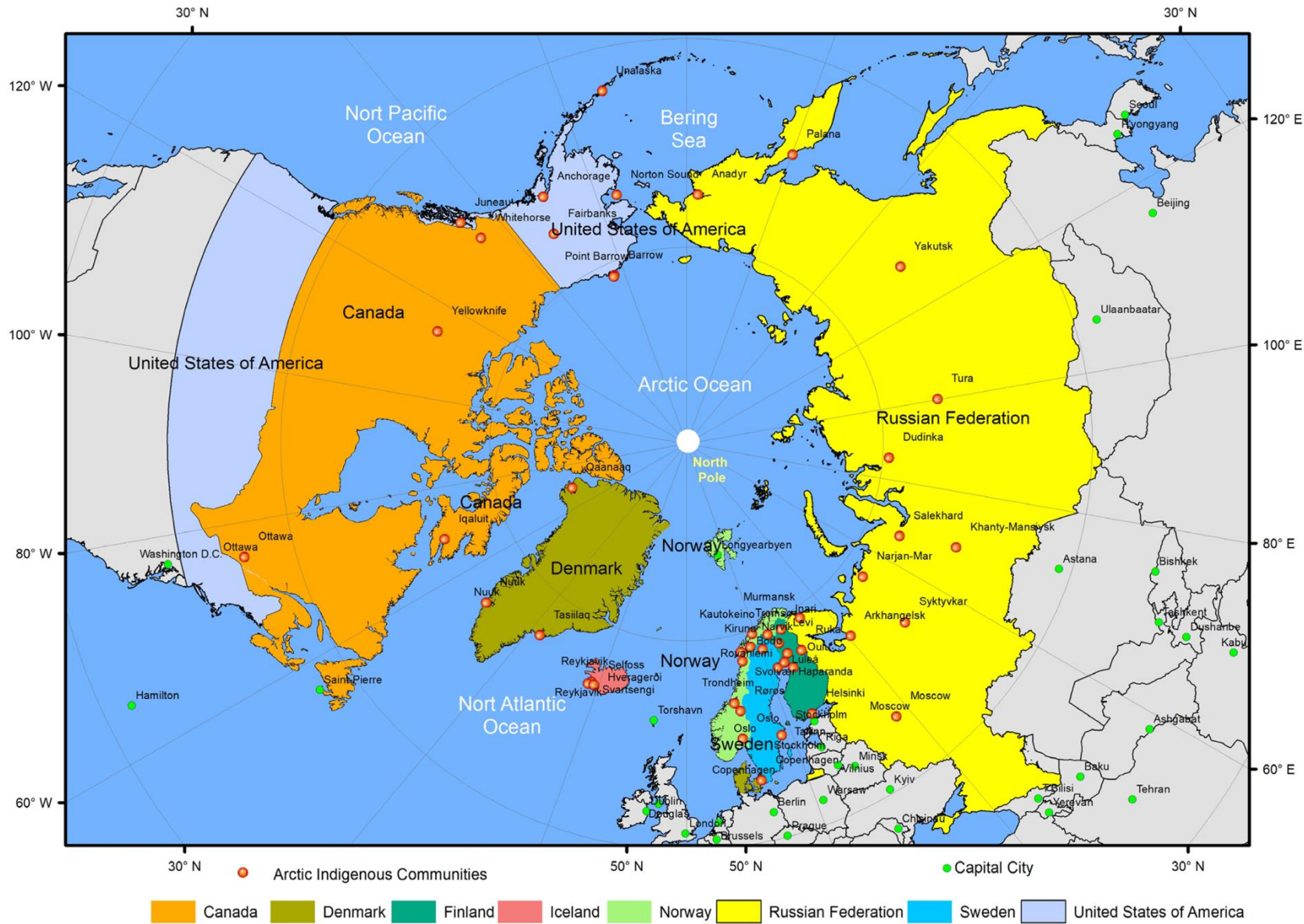
Digitisation can improve environmental observation while linking monitoring systems to intelligence and defence priorities.



Ocean Climate Change



<https://www.offshore-technology.com/features/feature-arctic-sea-ice-decline-climate-change-nersc/?cf-view>

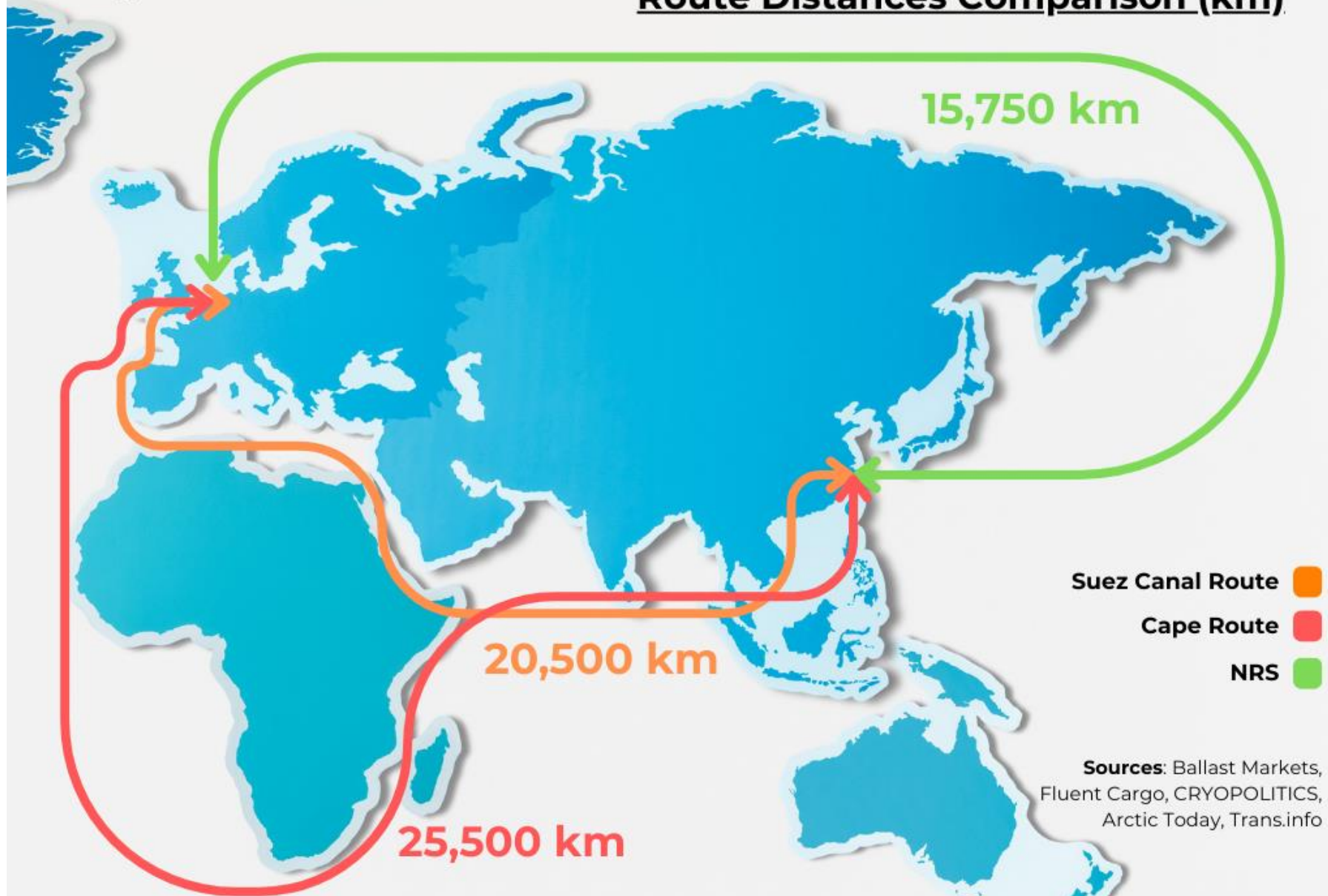


The Arctic: What about Indigenous communities?



INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT OBSERVATORY

Shanghai → Hamburg: Average Route Distances Comparison (km)



**The Arctic:
A better route?**

South America: the mineral frontier

Clean technologies can reproduce unequal resource relations.



The energy transition shifts dependency from fossil fuels to critical minerals and processing capacity.

South American Nations Deepen Cooperation on Strategic Minerals



Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Peru have signed a joint declaration aimed at deepening regional cooperation on strategic minerals, with copper and lithium at the centre of the agreement. The four South American nations are seeking to strengthen their collective position as reliable suppliers in global strategic-mineral supply chains.

<https://www.miningfrontier.com/news/south-american-nations-deepen-cooperation-on-strategic-minerals/>

Africa: climate mobility and development

Mobility can be both an adaptation strategy and a source of vulnerability.

OBSERVED TENSION

- Climate variability affects livelihoods
- Migration can diversify income and reduce exposure
- Policies often treat migration and sustainability separately

GOVERNANCE OPPORTUNITY

Integrating migration into adaptation and development planning can turn movement into a resource for resilience, instead of framing it only as a security risk.



**Africa Climate
Mobility Initiative**
Shaping the future of mobility



The Africa Climate Mobility Initiative (ACMI) is a collaboration between the African Union Commission, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the World Bank. It aims to generate political momentum and a common policy agenda on climate mobility in Africa, and to support implementation capacity and partnerships on the continent. Over a two-year period, the ACMI developed research and modelling studies, and conducted extensive consultations with African and international experts and practitioners to arrive at a shared analysis and recommendations for action for addressing climate-forced migration and displacement, and to form a Community of Practice dedicated to advancing solutions for harnessing climate mobility in the continent.



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South Asia: water across borders

Water agreements connect cooperation, conflict and justice.

RESOURCE

— Rivers cross political borders —

RISK

— Climate change raises uncertainty and exposure —

POWER

— Upstream and downstream positions are unequal —

PEACE

— Institutions can manage tensions when they include affected communities —

The key question is who gets to define security: states alone, or people and ecosystems as well?

South Asia shares vital transboundary river systems—such as the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra—that support over one billion people but face severe water stress from climate change, rapid population growth, and political tensions.

Major River Basins

- **Indus Basin:** Flows through China, Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan. It is governed in part by the historic [Indus Waters Treaty](#) of 1960.
- **Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) Basin:** Spans Nepal, Bhutan, India, China, and Bangladesh. Over 750 million people depend directly on these shared waters

Key Challenges

- **Climate Change:** Rapid glacial melt in the Himalayas causes extreme floods, shifting monsoons, and long-term water scarcity.
- **Geopolitical Rivalries:** Deep mistrust between riparian nations prevents inclusive, basin-wide agreements that include upstream powers like China.
- **Data Gaps:** Limited sharing of accurate hydrological data hinders disaster preparedness and fair water distribution



Small island states: exposure without leverage

Those most exposed to climate impacts often have the least influence over global emissions.

EXPOSURE

Sea-level rise
Storms
Urban and coastal risk

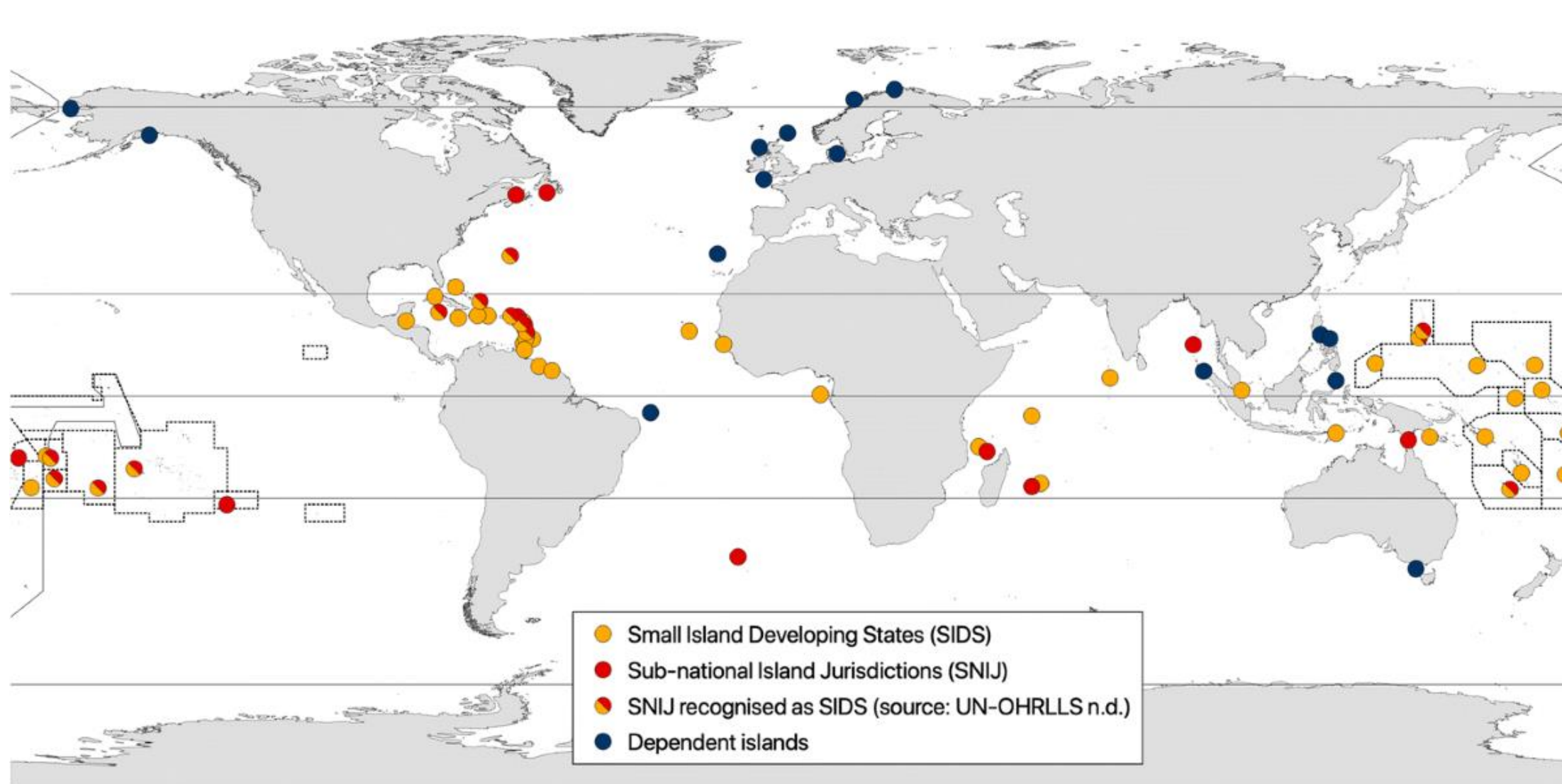
VOICE

Ocean governance
Climate diplomacy
Claims for equity

FINANCE

Adaptation costs
Loss and damage
Access to resources

Small island states: exposure without leverage



Europe after Russia's invasion of Ukraine

War changes the political space available for long-term climate action.

Defence

Higher spending and renewed focus on territorial security

Energy

Supply security accelerates diversification and transition

Climate

Risk of losing attention and resources for long-term agendas

Nexus

Security policy increasingly includes environmental change

Critical raw materials: a new map of dependence

The green transition does not eliminate geopolitics. It changes the geography of strategic resources.

Oil and gas

LEGACY DEPENDENCE

Pipelines, shipping, producer states

Lithium, cobalt, rare earths

EMERGING DEPENDENCE

Mining regions, refining and technology

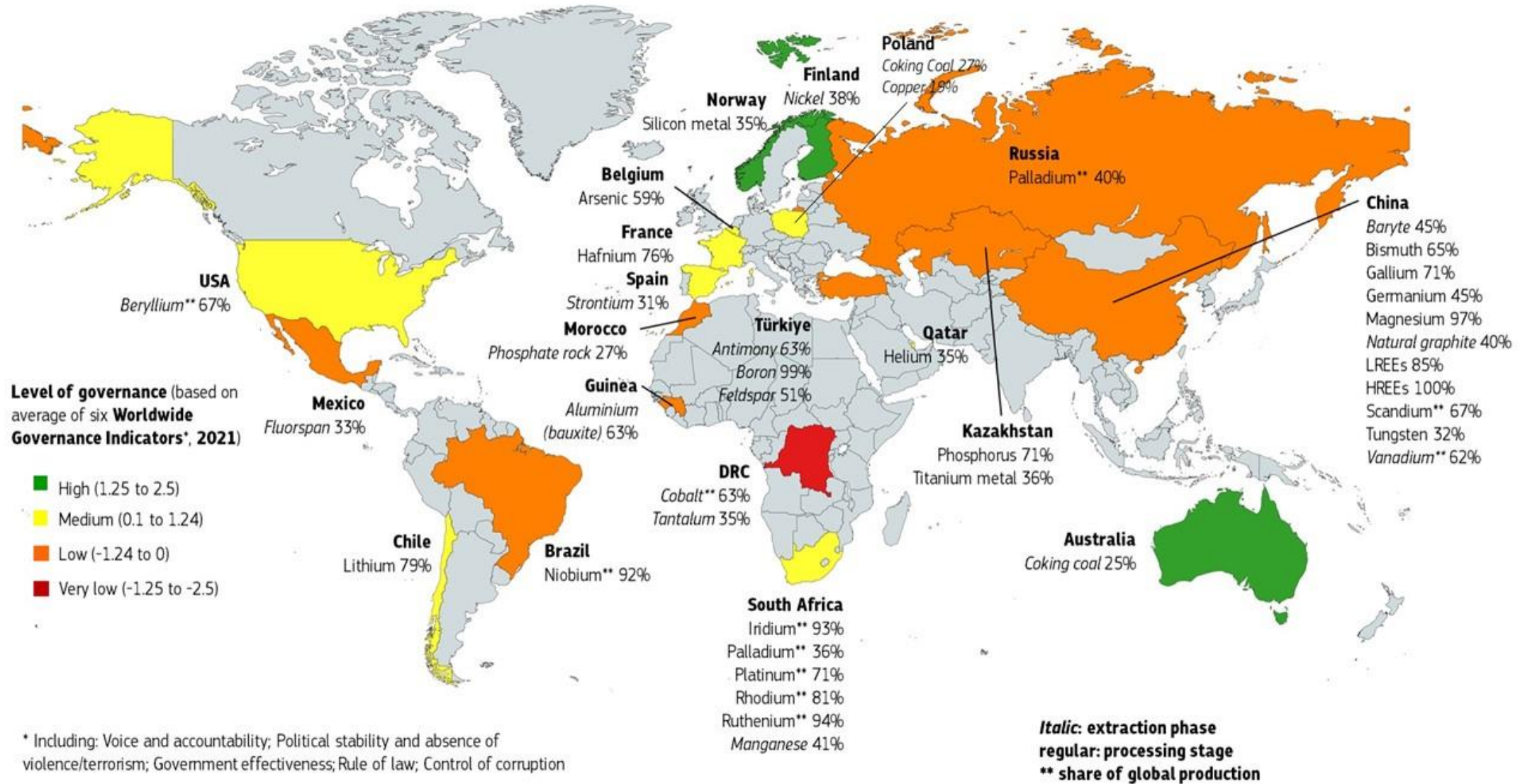
Renewables

INFRASTRUCTURE DEPENDENCE

Manufacturing, grids and storage

Strategic power moves along the supply chain, not only at the mine or well.

Major EU suppliers of CRMs Critical raw materials (2023) and their level of governance



Food security: competing priorities

Food systems sit at the intersection of human needs, trade and planetary limits.

Access

Affordability and availability

Production

Land, water and ecosystems

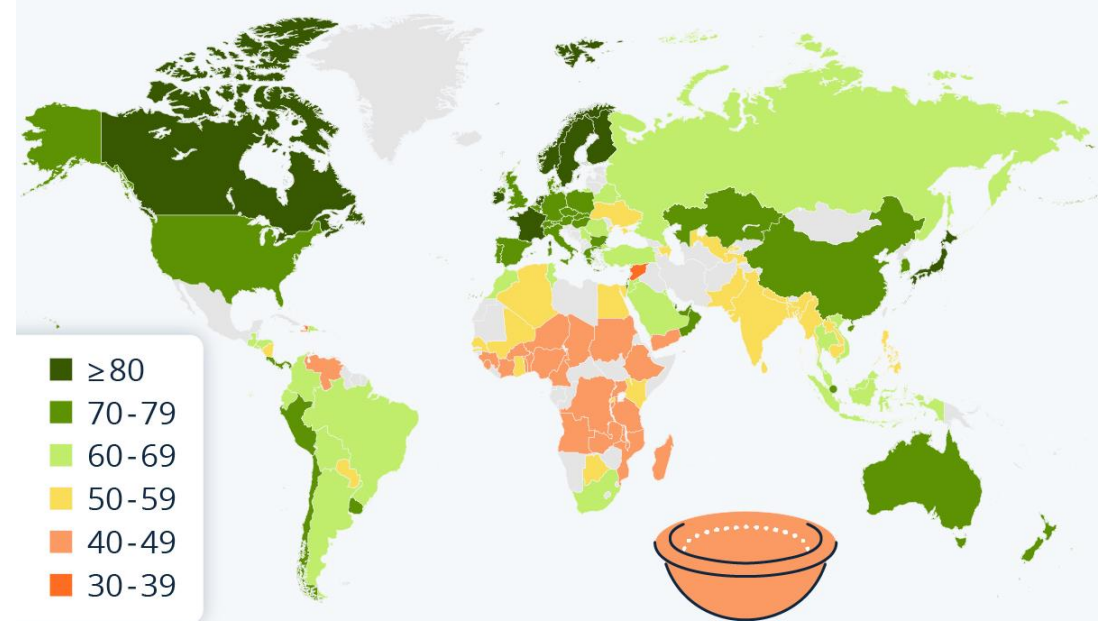
Security

Trade, conflict and strategic dependence

Policies that improve one dimension can create pressure in another. The challenge is to govern the system as a whole.

The Global State of Food Security

Index scores for the Global Food Security Index 2022*



* Index measures the affordability, availability, quality and safety, sustainability and adaptation of food based on 68 indicators across 113 countries.

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit



statista



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