



NATO Foundation
Defense College

CHINA September 2018

China increasing Africa influence spurs Europe

At the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in early September, President Xi Jinping announced that [China will be providing \\$60 billion in financial support to Africa](#). Chinese investments in Africa are largely concentrated in transport and energy. The investments in energy, though mainly targeted at oil and gas, also encompass clean energy such as hydropower. Worldwide, China is one of the leading investors in renewable energy. Last year, China invested 3:1 dollars in renewable energy compared to the USA.

China's growing interest in Africa is hardly surprising. The stakes are high due to the continent's rich abundance in raw materials. Africa is estimated to contain 90% of the entire world supply of [platinum](#) and cobalt, 50% of the world's gold supply, 66% of world manganese and 35% of the world's uranium. It also accounts for nearly 75% of the world's coltan (columbite–tantallites mineral to extract niobium and tantalum), an important mineral used in electronic devices, including cell phones. China has also been expanding its military [presence in Africa](#) and vying with the United States on investment and military activities.

While generally Western strategy analysts are weary of China's interest in Africa, even describing it as neo-colonialism, [some African leaders are refuting this claim](#), as President Cyril Ramaphosa, co-chair of the FOCAC summit stated: *"In the values that it promotes, in the manner that it operates, and in the impact that it has on African countries, FOCAC refutes the view that a new colonialism is taking hold in Africa, as our detractors would have us believe."*

As far as the European Union is concerned, for many years its Africa policy has been all talk and little action, good intentions, several conditionalities and unfulfilled promises. However, since the refugee crisis, a new strategy for co-operation with the continent has been making headway.

The Europeans have stood by and watched as China established itself in Africa, [investing billions in the continent](#). EU states fear they will find themselves relegated to the second or third league. This is why, in his speech in mid-September on the state of the EU, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker

announced “*a new pact with Africa*”. In the next budget period the EU plans to increase funding to Africa to €40 billion (\$46,5 billion). The hope is that this money will then be multiplied by private investors.

The emphasis is on education and jobs. Over the next five years the Alliance for Africa wants to create 10 million jobs; 750.000 people are to receive vocational training, with a further 100.000 students benefiting from the Erasmus exchange program. The European Commission also plans big investments in transport, road infrastructure and energy.

The EU, already saddled with the Brexit and populism political crises and other possible debt problems, is trying to catch up an 18-year delay. Only if very coherent and determined policies will be enacted, EU will begin to balance China’s influence in half a decade.

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