FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT : AS A TOOL OF POWER IN AFRICA

FMES
Fondation pour la Maîtrise des Enjeux Stratégiques

Since the early 2000s, the African continent has become a prime arena of competition between established and emerging powers. China, the United States, the European Union, Turkey, the UK and the Gulf monarchies have all multiplied their investment initiatives in infrastructure, mining, energy, telecommunications, and agriculture. Behind the rhetoric of "win-win" economic partnership lies a more complex reality. Foreign investment is not merely a tool for development. It is also a geopolitical lever, a means to project influence, secure strategic resources, and build lasting relationships of dependency.

African states are far from passive in this contest. They arbitrate rivalries between competing powers, diversify their partnerships, and turn great-power competition into leverage of their own. It becomes a site of negotiation, where playing foreign offers against each other can serve one purpose: gradually reinforcing the continent's room for maneuver. However, this strategy also has limits, such as the risk of debt traps. Resource-backed loans and opaque debt agreements can sometimes turn the leverage gained at the negotiating table into long-term dependency, quietly shifting the balance of power back toward the lender.

LEADING INVESTORS

China
- USD 45 billion in 2025
- +20% compared with 2024
- USD 21 billion in Nigeria

Objectives
- Natural resources
- Infrastructure
- Belt and Road Initiative

USA
- USD 49 billion in 2024
- 2025: Launch of a USD 500 million investment program

Objectives
- Securing critical mineral supply chains
- Critical minerals

EU
- Through Global Gateway, the European Union plans to mobilize €150 billion in investments across Africa by 2027

Objectives
- Infrastructures
- Technology
- Energy

France
- USD 58 billion in 2024
- Africa's leading European trading partner

Objectives
- Development
- Energy
- Trade

UAE
- USD 60 billion in 2024
- Top investor among Gulf countries

Objectives
- Ports
- Logistics
- Energy & Greenfield
- Trade

Netherlands
- USD 54 billion in 2022
- Key European partner

Objectives
- Agriculture
- Financial sector

UK
- USD 66 in 2023
- Total UK outward FDI fell from 4.0% to 2.6% over the decade

Objectives
- Resources
- Financial services

Turkey
- USD 50 billion in 2025
- North African countries are the top recipients of Turkish FDI

Objectives
- Infrastructure & construction
- Energy & Industry
- Defense & Technology

Record Levels of Investment

USD 70 billion in FDI (2025)

USD 97 billion in 2024.

This was an exceptional year, driven by the Ras El-Hekma project in Egypt and the substantial financing associated with it.

The 3rd level on record

Approximately 6% of global FDI.

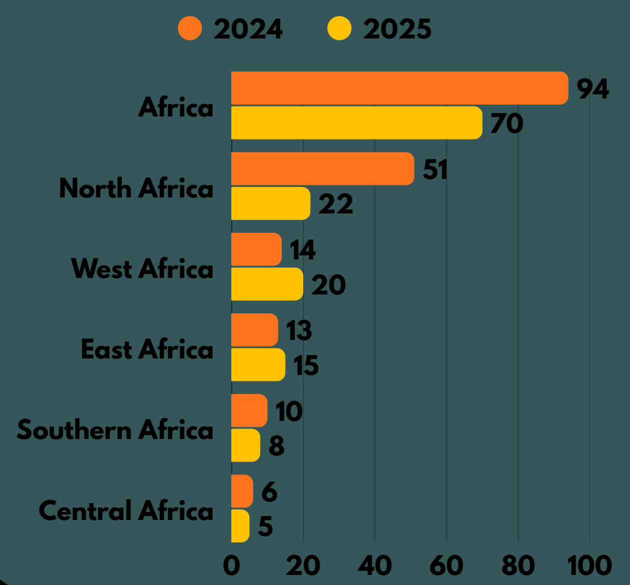
Leading Africa FDI Destinations (2024)

1	EGYPT	46,5 Mds USD
2	ETHIOPIA	3,98 Mds USD
3	CÔTE D'IVOIRE	3,80 Mds USD
4	MOZAMBIQUE	3,55 Mds USD
5	UGANDA	3,30 Mds USD

Egypt accounts for nearly half of the continent's FDI

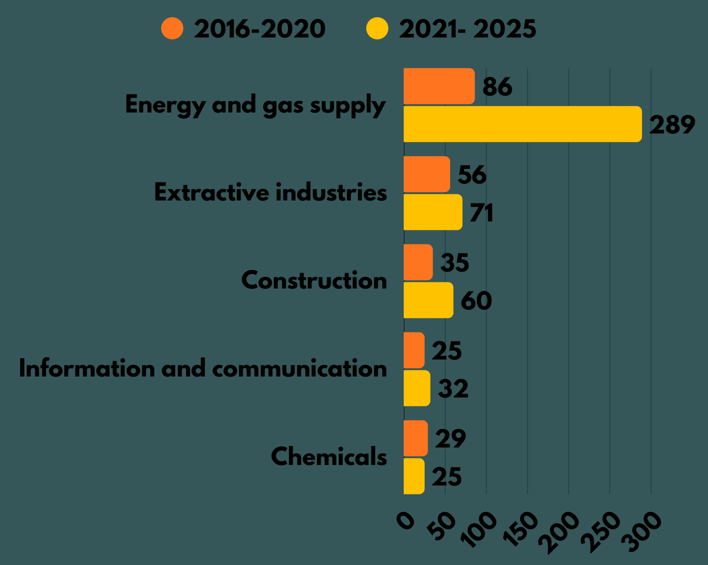
FDI inflows by subregion

Billions of dollars



Main investment sectors

Billions of dollars



How does investment become a tool of power?

Strategic Resources

Secure access to critical minerals and hydrocarbons.

Financial Leverage

Create long-term economic dependence through loans and infrastructure financing.

Diplomatic Influence

Gain political support in international organizations.

Security Cooperation

Expand military partnerships, bases, and security agreements.

Soft Power

Build influence through scholarships, media, and cultural institutions.

Sources: UNCTAD, FDI/MNE DATABASE , MEDEF, World Bank, Ministries of Economics, Banque africaine de développement, The Economist, Financial Times

Lisbon
Morocco
Tunisia
Algeria
Libya
Egypt
Mauritania
Sénégal
Mali
Niger
Chad
Sudan
Eritrea
Djibouti
Djibouti
Guinea Bissau
Guinea
Burkina Faso
Bénin
Nigeria
Sierra Leone
Ivoiry Coast
Ghana
Togo
Lomé
Liberia
Lagos
Cameroon
Centralfrican Republic
South Sudan
Ethiopia
Addis Ababa
Somalia
Equiano
Equatorial Guinea
Gabon
Congo
Uganda
Kenya
Rwanda
D.R. of Congo
Burundi
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania
Angola
Zambia
Lusaka
Zimbabwe
Mozambique
Madagascar
Namibia
Botswana
South Africa
Umoja
Australia
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Countries prioritized by
France and the EU
the USA
China
Türkiye
Transport and digital infrastructure
Cable (Google, Meta)
Data center (Google, Meta)
Railway financed and built by China
Key areas of interest
Construction
Hidrocarbons
Mines
Telecommunications
Construction of dams
Automobile
Aeronautic
Port management
Industry
Security situation
Area of armed conflict of high tension
Recent coup d'État
Separatist conflict
Ethnic conflict
Conflict linked to jihadist groups