

## ‘Too Little, Too Late’: US Not ‘Flexible Enough’ to Compete With China in Africa

### Description

*“I’m not sure the US is flexible enough to play the kind of game the Chinese are playing. [...] I think that the Chinese have been much more creative and shown much more foresight in what they want to do in Africa. And I don’t think western powers are going to be able to catch up with them,” says Dr. Frederick Golooba-Mutebi, Ugandan independent researcher and political scientist with a special interest in political economics.”*



by Petr Baryshnikov via [Sputnik](#)

The 2022 US–Africa Leaders Summit, which took place from 13 to 15 December in Washington DC, was the second such event in history. It has been widely seen as part of an American attempt to counter growing Chinese influence in Africa. Sputnik asked various experts to assess Washington’s chances of success.

America’s intensified efforts to compete with China in cooperating with Africa face several obstacles, with the Chinese development model being more attractive to the developing nations than the US model, **Dr Ezzat Saad, director of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs**, said in an interview with Sputnik.

“It is remarkable that China does not seek to impose its development model or governance system on other countries, but through a flexible Chinese policy that is compatible with the changing conditions [...] in Africa, and is based on a development pattern that meets the needs of the continent away from competition or any ideological considerations, in contrast to the American approach in this regard,” he underlines.

Saad also notes that Washington treats Africa “as a bloc without states with their own interests and concerns”, which “undoubtedly reflects the strength of the relationship between Washington and Africa”. The American strategy on the continent, which is characterized by a high level of politicization of

relations, is connected to the US global political interests, says **Ovigwe Eguegu, a Nigerian policy adviser at consultancy Development Reimagined, specializing in geopolitics – with particular reference to Africa in the changing global order.**

“I think the US, of course, would continue to increase its pressure campaign on China and try to recruit African countries to take part in western-sponsored UN resolutions and proposals also in the United Nations, the Human Rights Commission, to try to use the UN system to exert pressure on China. And that is likely to increase both. There’s a concern that African countries are not going to play along,” he notes.

There are all sorts of fields of competition among foreign powers in Africa. One of the most important is investment, as the continent is still “in dire need” of funding, mainly to develop infrastructure and human capital, says **Nicholas Dweh Nimley, a writer and research scholar on China-Africa Cooperation who is also chief editor of Liberia’s NEWCOM Television.** According to him, if the US was serious about wanting to compete with the East Asian giant, it could provide low-interest loans to Africa or write off infrastructural loans as China does – but it is uncertain whether such measures would be approved by Congress, “because it is the US taxpayers’ money”. For his part, Saad believes that the announcements made at the Washington summit – such as plans to invest at least \$55Bln in Africa over the next three years, to allocate \$2.5Bln for food aid and to lend up to \$21Bln through the International Monetary Fund to low and middle-income countries – are too paltry to eclipse Chinese influence.

The bottom line is that the aforementioned western initiatives are ‘too little, too late’, even according to some western experts, and that inflation and domestic policies in major western countries will limit the funding that governments will provide, and the private sector in these countries will be very reluctant to invest in an environment of instability,” Saad said.

China, in contrast, sees insecurity in Africa as a consequence of insufficient sustainable development, believing that economic and technical assistance as well as investments in infrastructure projects are necessary to achieve “stability, security, social peace and good governance in the countries of the continent”, he underlines.

China is Africa’s [main](#) direct backer, with its investment roughly double that of the US.