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Africa

# USA in Africa: the return

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**The war in Ukraine has revealed the growing rift between Western and African countries. The US is trying to overcome the consequences of its two-decade-long political apathy on the continent.**

From 13 to 15 December 2022, the Biden administration organized a US-Africa summit. All the leaders of the African Union (AU) member countries were invited. Missing were the presidents of Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea-Conakry, whose countries are suspended from the AU because of a coup. The leaders of Eritrea and Western Sahara were not invited as they do not have diplomatic relations with the US. The last such summit was held during the Obama era. It was therefore a matter of the White House making up for lost time.

## Being in the race

While Joe Biden denied that the summit was intended to compete with other imperialist powers in Africa, especially those considered adversaries - Russia and China - this does not fool anyone. Washington is paying for its disinterest in Africa since 2000, highlighted by Trump's diplomatic finesse in considering some African states as "shithole countries".

In the military sphere, the US has only furnished minimum service, notably in Somalia, by helping the Somali and Kenyan armies with drone strikes against the Shebabs. In West Africa, it willingly lets the French army try to secure the region against the various jihadist groups.

As for economic exchanges with Africa, they are at half mast. From 142 billion dollars in 2009, it will only be 64 billion in 2021.

At the same time, Russia is advancing its position thanks to its exports, which are considered strategic for the African powers. These include wheat and fertilisers, as well as arms, which are often accompanied by military treaties. China, on the other hand, is pursuing its "Silk Road" project with trade that has reached \$254 billion, four times more than the US.

## A catch-up summit

Well aware of these economic gaps, but also of the distancing of many African countries from the West, the US has put new proposals on the table. Firstly, a commitment to renovate the AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act), which allows African products to be exempt from taxes. In reality, this law dating from 2000 has only favoured less than 10% of trade with the continent. On the other hand, Biden is very interested in the African Free Trade Area (AFTA), which will open up a market of more than one billion people. 2.5 billion dollars will be made available to fight food insecurity. This spending is part of the \$55 billion provisioning over three years.

This money is supposed to help with the four items outlined in the Biden administration's roadmap: fostering open societies capable of "countering the damaging activities of the People's Republic of China, Russia, and other actors"; improving security and democracy; fostering economic opportunity; and helping with the climate transition. Like all

Western leaders for years, Joe Biden said at the summit that he would work to ensure that the African Union is a member of key international structures, including the G20 and the UN Permanent Security Council.

A lot of promises, then, which even if fulfilled would have little positive impact on the people.

5 January 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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