

THE 6TH EU-AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT: COVID, COUPS, AND CHINA

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From questions concerning intellectual property restrictions on COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, to the spread of jihadi militias and the growing Chinese presence in Africa, the current EU-AU summit is fraught with pressing issues.

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The 6th European Union-African Union summit took place on the 17th and 18th of February in Paris. [According to](#) Josep Borrell, the high representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU is bringing six work streams to the table. These concern the improving of health systems, education systems, stability; the present spread of jihadism; migration and mobility; multilateral actions; an investment package around climate change; and the present health crisis. In total, the EU will be marshaling [€150 billion](#) to stimulate African development.

The summit comes after a general straining of relations during the COVID-19 crisis, during which the South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa [lashed out](#) at Europe for imposing a travel ban to stem the spread of the Omicron variant. Concerning the vaccine rollout, African Union (AU) member states have linked issues of intellectual property to the refusal to share medical formulae and technological know-how, even in times of heightened need. This is a recurring issue in development studies whose continued relevance should not be overlooked.

The summit is marred by the absence of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan, due to their recent regime changes and consequent suspension from the AU. Also looming over proceedings were the recent withdrawal of the French presence in Mali, criticisms of the CFA Franc (a Central and West African currency pegged to the euro), the startling

proliferation of jihadi militias across the Sahel region and beyond (although these are often more ethnic than religious in character), and the growing prominence of China on the African continent.

The 8th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation ([FOCAC](#)) was held last year on November 29th, highlighting Chinese commitment to continued investment, without the kind of conditionality attached to EU money. It is possible that the coup in Burkina Faso bespeaks a political climate in which direct action against jihadism and distrust of European governance-related conditionality on investment become popular, even in the AU.