



Since the end of “Françafrique” and the rise of Russian and Chinese influence, is Africa better off?

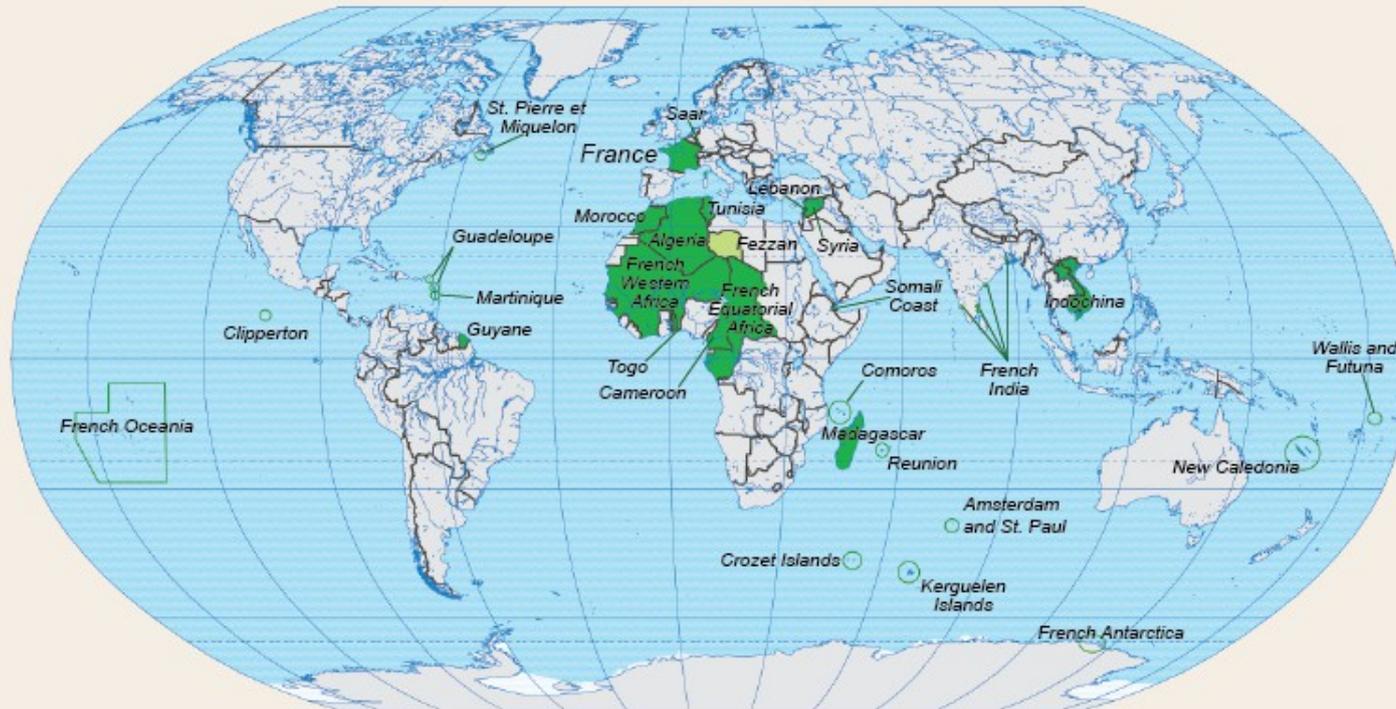
*Dr David Rees. February 2026*

# Françafrique

After deconolisation in the 1960s, France wanted to maintain a degree of political control

- France guaranteed regime survival of friendly presidents
- French troops intervened when leaders were threatened
- Elites were educated in France and linked to Paris networks
- The CFA franc monetary zone tied several West & Central African currencies to the French Treasury
- In exchange: France secured uranium, oil, strategic influence, and diplomatic allies

# The French Colonial Empire in 1945



## Protectorates:

Cameroon  
 Fezzan  
 Lebanon  
 Morocco  
 Saar  
 Syria  
 Togo  
 Tunisia  
 Wallis and Futuna

## Colonies:

French Oceania  
 Guadeloupe  
 Guyane  
 Madagascar  
 Martinique  
 New Caledonia  
 Reunion  
 Somali Coast  
 St Pierre & Miquelon

## French Western Africa:

Dahomey  
 Guinea  
 Ivory Coast  
 Mauritania  
 Niger  
 Senegal  
 Sudan  
 Upper Volta

## French Equatorial Africa:

Chad  
 Gabon  
 Middle Congo  
 Ubangui-Chari

## French Indochina:

Annam  
 Cambodia  
 Cochinchina  
 Laos  
 Tonkin

## French India:

Chandernagor  
 Karekal  
 Mahe  
 Pondicherry  
 Yanaon

## Other Dependencies:

Amsterdam & St Paul  
 Clipperton  
 Crozet Islands  
 French Antarctica  
 Kerguelen Islands

<b>Country</b>	<b>Colonial status</b>	<b>Independence</b>
Morocco	French Protectorate	1956 (2 March)
Tunisia	French Protectorate	1956 (20 March)
Algeria	Settler colony (integrated into France)	1962 (5 July)

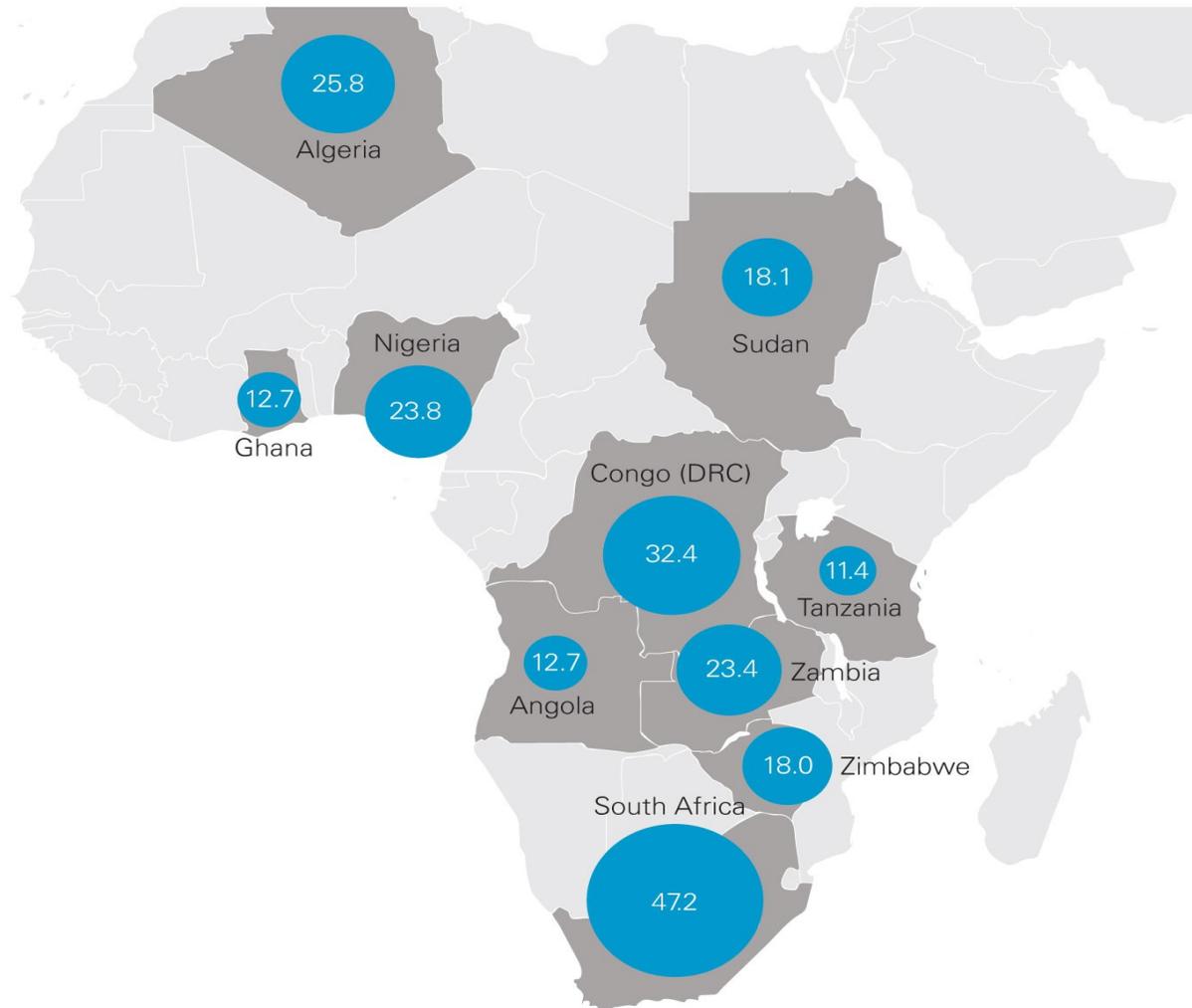
<b>Country</b>	<b>Independence date</b>
Benin (Dahomey)	1 Aug 1960
Burkina Faso (Upper Volta)	5 Aug 1960
Côte d'Ivoire	7 Aug 1960
Niger	3 Aug 1960
Mali (from Mali Federation)	22 Sep 1960
Senegal	20 Aug 1960
Mauritania	28 Nov 1960
Guinea	2 Oct 1958

<b>Country</b>	<b>Independence date</b>
Cameroon (French-administered part)	1 Jan 1960
Central African Republic	13 Aug 1960
Chad	11 Aug 1960
Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville)	15 Aug 1960
Gabon	17 Aug 1960
<b>Country</b>	<b>Independence date</b>
Madagascar	26 Jun 1960
Comoros	6 Jul 1975
Djibouti (French Somaliland / Afars & Issas)	27 Jun 1977

The “Françafrique” system largely applied to the 1960 independence wave states listed above. In practice, political independence occurred in 1960 — but military, monetary, and elite networks often remained deeply tied to Paris for decades afterward, which is exactly the structure that has been breaking down since roughly the 2010s

# China

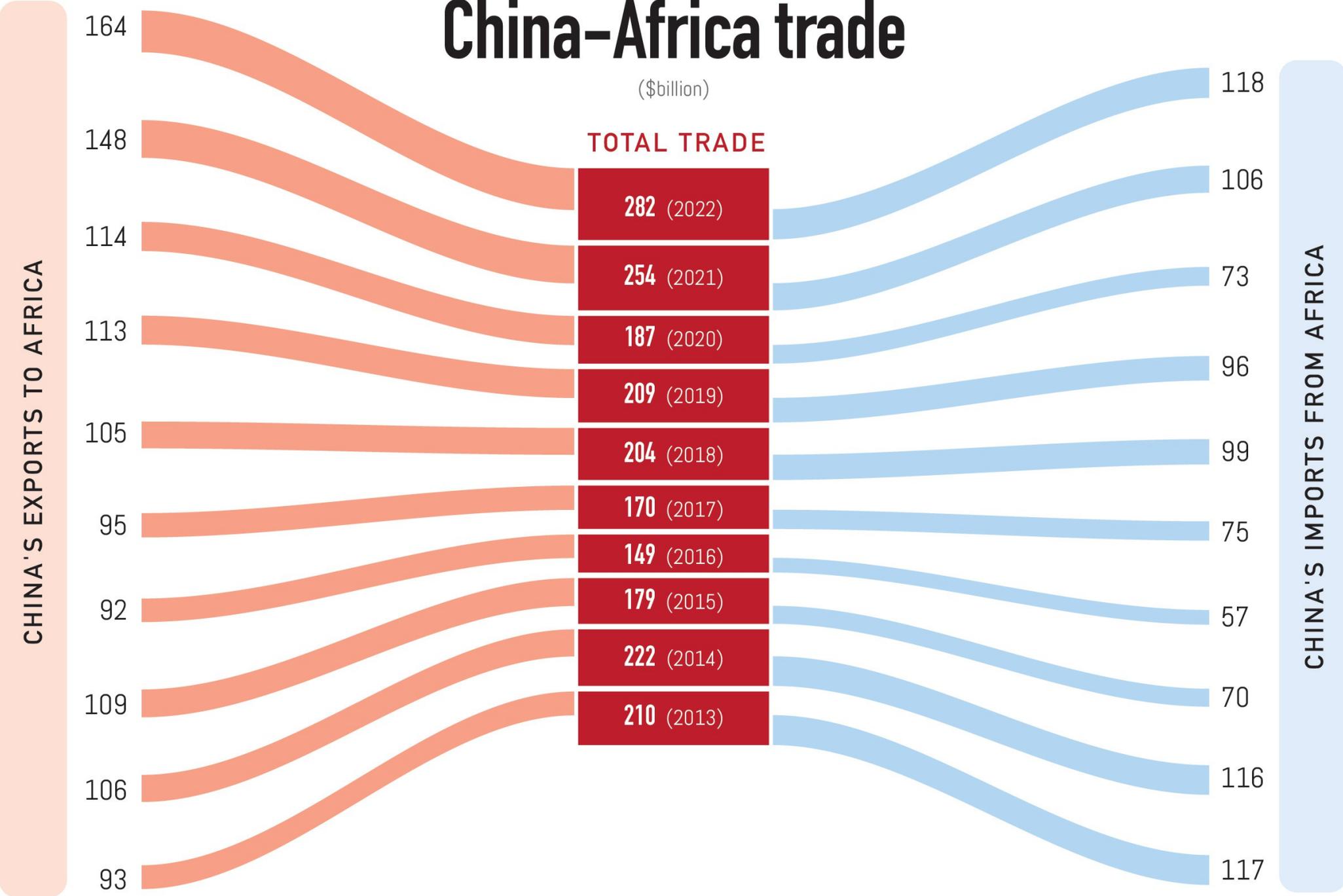
**Figure 4: Top 10 countries and regions in China's direct investment in Africa (2015)**  
(US\$ million)



Source: Ministry of Commerce, National Bureau of Statistics and State Administration of Foreign Exchange, "Statistical Communique on China's Outward FDI in 2015"

# China-Africa trade

(\$billion)



Source: China's General Administration of Customs

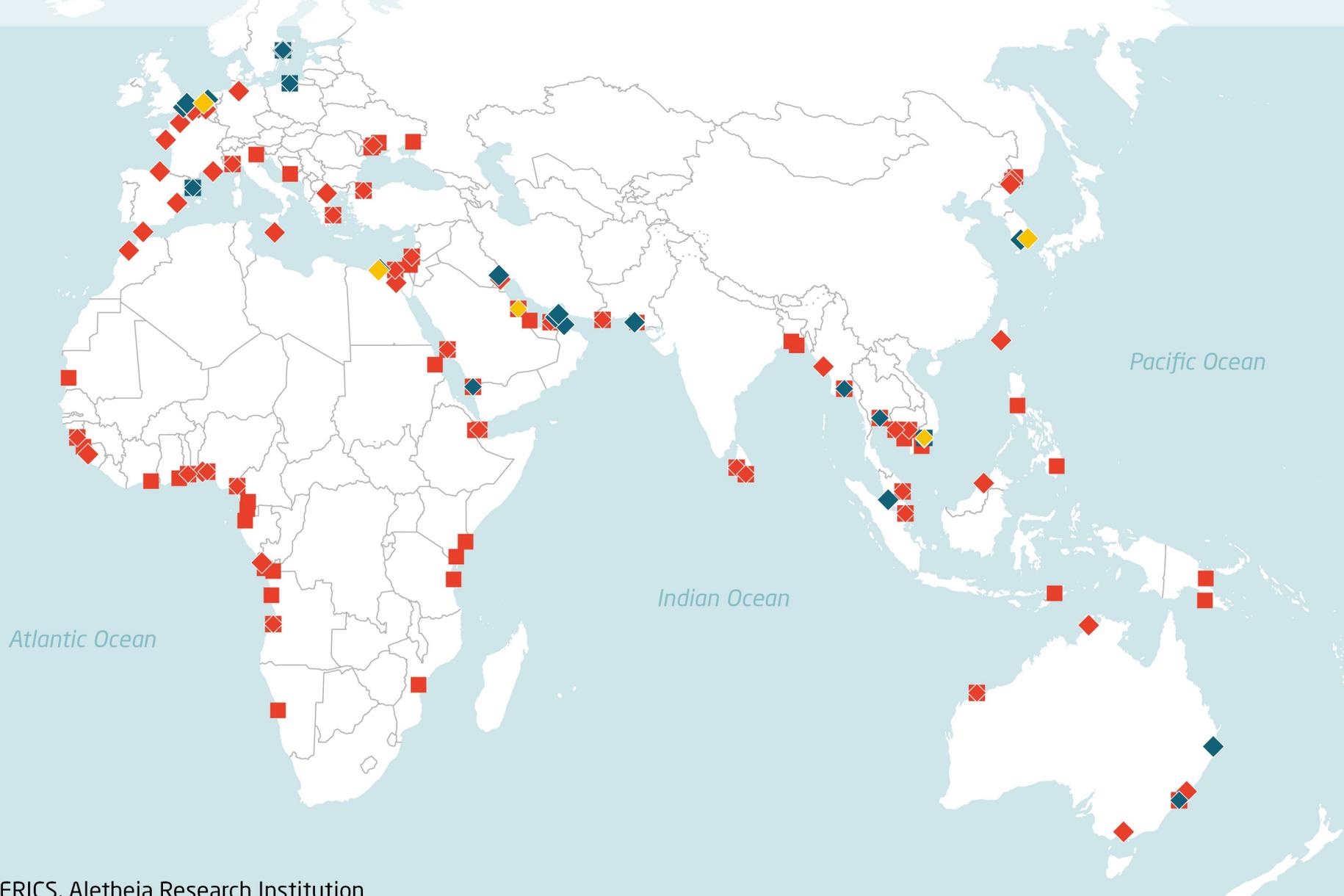
# China's footprint and influence across global ports is extensive



Port projects and ownership/operation by Chinese companies in the Eastern Hemisphere

Color codes: ■ Mainland China state-owned enterprises ■ Hutchinson Ports ■ Both

Shapes: ■ Completed project ◆ Has ownership and/or operating contract ◆ Both



# China

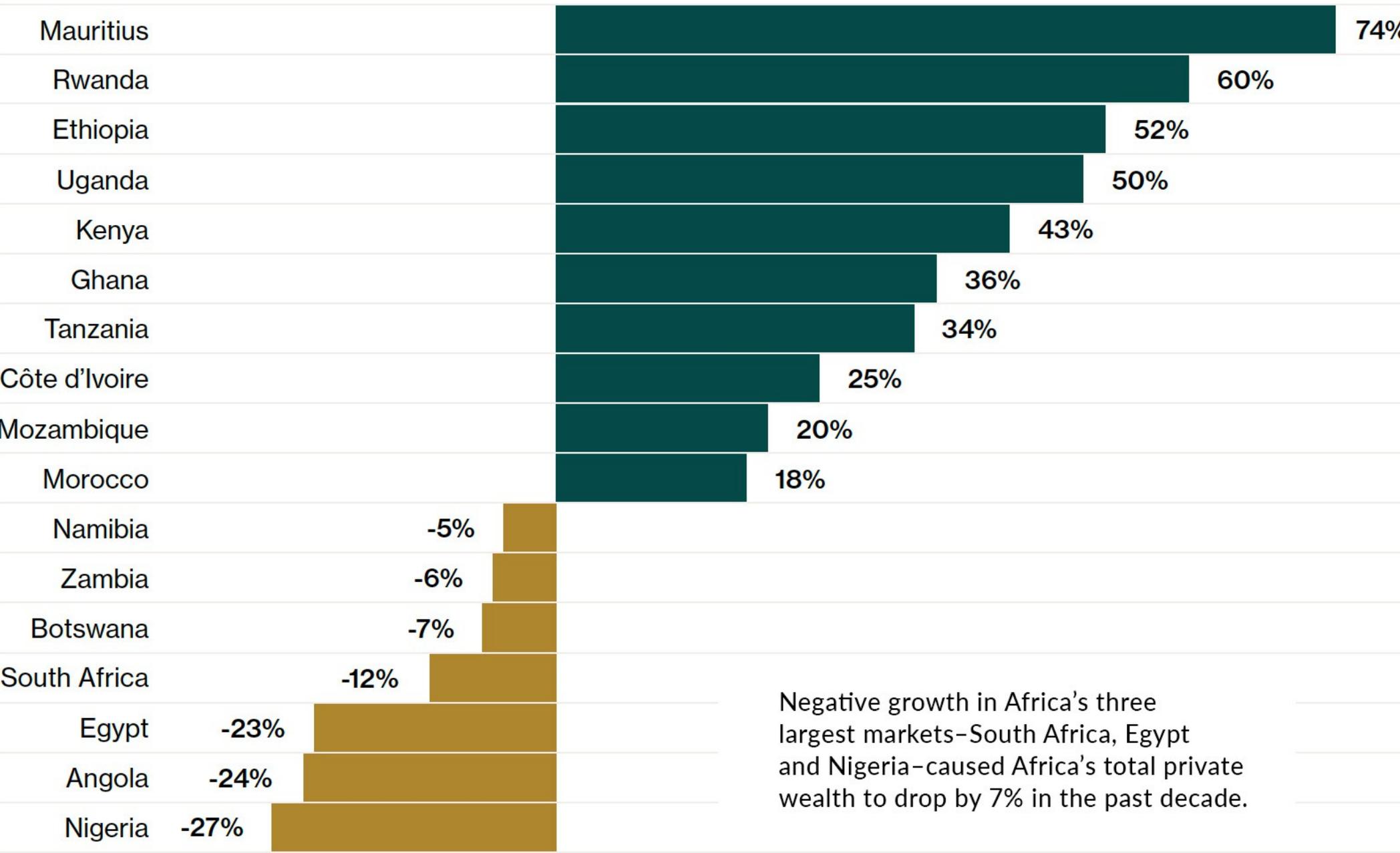
## Positive

- Investment in infrastructure
- Investment in energy production

## Negative

- Loans – increase sovereign debt
- Projects tied to Chinese contractors
- Economies still export raw materials

# 10-year growth rate of total wealth in Africa



Negative growth in Africa's three largest markets—South Africa, Egypt and Nigeria—caused Africa's total private wealth to drop by 7% in the past decade.

Source: New World Wealth.

# Russia

Concentrates on fragile states

- Mali
- Central African Republic
- Burkina Faso
- Niger

Regime protection (liked by non-democratic states)

Military training

Anti ex-colonialists (France)

# Better off?

- Yes – in terms of sovereignty
- Not tied to a single partner / supplier
- Negotiate between China, Russia and France
- Economically – better infrastructure
- New sources of financing
- Debt pressure rising (move from dollar to renminbi)
- Debt servicing risk due to currency rate changes

# Questions / Comments