



President Trump's United States of American Trade Wars and African Countries

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Abstract

This study examines the long-run consequences of the America First trade agenda by President Trump to the United States Africa trade nexus and questions the ways that African states can attune their strategies in the face of an increasingly competitive and transactional world economy to reap the accruing benefits of good economic performance. The paper attempts to assess the impact of reduced U.S involvement on the trade relations of Africa as it plots feasible course of action towards strategic change. The analysis is anchored in the theoretical perspective of International Political Economy (IPE) in that it preempts the intersection of political power relations, general economic policies, and the Africa position in the world trades fabric. A qualitative methodology was used, and a corpus of secondary sources was used as a basis of the research, including peer-reviewed academic literature, policy documents, and authentic international news reports, which were later subjected to a systematic content-analysis perspective. The empirical evidence shows that the safety nets established during the Trump regime created an air of uncertainty, reduced foreign aid, and broke the chain of investments into Africa. African countries, in turn, have been increasing their interaction with the newcomers in the economic arena, including China and Russia, but have also been strengthening their regional integration strategies, perhaps most notably with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The paper reiterates the need of African states to strengthen intra-regional cooperation, upgrade infrastructure, and diversify economic base and increased export drive to ensure sustainable economic development. To conclude, the need to adapt to a more competitive global trade environment requires the establishment of sound trade policies, the enhanced industrialisation processes, and the development of strategic relationships with partners beyond the traditional Western partners. In line with these findings, the paper recommends economic reforms, fortification of the AfCFTA to increase intra-African trade, investment in infrastructure and in Information and Communications Technology in order to increase ease of trade and global competitiveness, diversification of the exports as well as prioritization of industrialisation in order to reduce reliance on the export of the raw materials and vulnerability to the global economy. Best practices, due processes and anticorruption should be prioritized.

Keywords: U.S.-Africa Trade Relations, America First, African Continental Free Trade Area, Global Trade Environment, Economic Diversification

1. Introduction

President Donald Trump has made such a sharp turn and major policy shift towards a protectionist approach that has radically changed the United States trade policy with Africa. In the past, trade relationships between U.S and Africa had been shaped through agreements like the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) which aimed to boost trade by allowing the African countries to access the U.S. market with duty free incentives. The Trump government, though, changed its priorities to pursuing the renegotiation of the global trade dealings, focusing more on bilateral agreements rather than multilateral arrangements, thus modifying the way the United States handled African countries [1].

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This strategic change brought up valid issues regarding the future economic relationship of Africa with the United States especially in the face of the growing presence of China and other budding economies in Africa. The policy orientation of Trump was inclined to direct and transactional trade contracts that failed to conform to the long-term development agenda of Africa [2].

The protectionist policies of Trump were to reduce the trade deficit of the United States and bring back American jobs through imposing tariff and canceling multilateral trade agreements. This shift started trade wars, particularly with China, and, in general, led to a decrease in U.S trade activity in various regions such as Africa. The implementation of tariffs on Chinese and other products had huge ramification to the African economies which were becoming more a part of the global supply chain [3]. Though the role of Africa in this larger trade war was relatively peripheral, the new markets of the continent faced a two-fold problem that is U.S. protectionism and the advancing power of other powers like China. Although some African nations achieved new direct deals with the United States, such as the U.S.Kenya trade agreement, the overall impact of Trump policies was damaging the hopes of the region to attain sustainable economic growth and development [4].

The presidency of Trump was a significantly different experience of the African affairs of his predecessors. His America First policy stressed on less U.S. participation in foreign wars and diversion of resources to the domestic economy. This orientation took a form of low levels of diplomatic interaction with African leaders and aversion to continue with big humanitarian and development programs [5]. Even though the administration continued to be involved in countering terrorism with the military approach, it reduced significantly the diplomatic and trade campaigns that were the key aspects of U.S. relations with Africa during the Obama administration. Other distancing measures were the travel bans to a number of countries in Africa, such as Nigeria, and the verbal statements of the United States having no strategic interest in the continent other than its economic potential [6]. These policies were largely viewed as menace to the African countries which wanted to have strong economic relations with the U.S.

African reactions to the U.S trade wars under Trump have been multiple. On the one hand, some African governments sought to use enhanced bilateral trade agreements with the United States, such as Kenya seeking the free-trade agreement (FTA), a sign of abandoning the multilateral framework of AGOA [7]. Conversely, the proliferation of Trump tariffs and trade ban coupled with decline in U.S. foreign aid, especially in the health and education sectors, posed threats to derail the development goals in the continent. There were critics who opined that the policies of the Trump administration undermined the attempts of the African countries to become more self-reliant and less dependent on foreign aid [8]. As a result, a significant number of African states enhanced economic and political relations with China and Russia, considering the relationships as the way to obtain infrastructure development and trade opportunities that the U S had abandoned [9]. This should not have been so as Trump's policies should have accelerated Africa's quest for self-reliance and less dependence on Exogenous Economic variables.

The total impact of the Trump trade wars and protectionist policies on Africa is yet to be actualized. Although there are African countries that have diversified their trade reflected through taking a more Chinese-aligned, and other emerging economies, the reduced presence of the U.S. can provide permanent impacts on the diversification of African economies. Historically, the United States has contributed to Africa significantly in terms of foreign direct investment and technology transfer; the policies by Trump had the potential of reducing the same. Additionally, he has focused on military operations and counter-terrorism, instead of economic diplomacy, which has increased the anxieties about the security and stability of the continent [10]. Currently, African nations are navigating these considerable dynamic changes, and the development of the U.S. relations with Africa under Trump gives a valuable study case to examine the impact of the global trade wars on the development of emerging economies as well as the fallouts and direct impacts on African economy.

Under the Trump administration, the US implemented protectionist policies that aimed at reducing trade imbalances especially by imposing tariffs on China and other trade partners. These actions transformed the nature of global trade and put Africa, which is a major player in the global economy, in a precarious situation. The African economies that had enjoyed the frameworks like the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) were faced with a more unstable and unfavorable trade environment. The America First agenda weakened multilateral trade agreements and created economic upheavals that affected the growth opportunities in the region. As the United States continued to be a key trading and investment partner, the changed dynamics posed a major threat to the economic growth of Africa, which could not find its way through the changed trade relations and a more competitive global market [11].

Moreover, the immediate effect of the trade wars was felt in the slackening of American investment in African industries and the re-prioritization of the U.S. foreign-policy. During the regime of Trump, financial aid, especially in areas where African development is crucial, including health, education, and infrastructure, significantly decreased. Trying to protect the domestic economic interests, the United States shifted towards more transactional relations, focusing on bilateral arrangements that tended to exclude African countries or offered less favourable conditions. This was a radical change of the past administrations which had focused on the cooperation with African states to foster their development by means of trade, aid, and diplomatic missions. The policy of the Trump administration thus provoked the relevant questions on the sustainability of the relations between Africa and the United States. Will these changes be used to their benefit by African countries or will they be at the mercy of international trade politics? What can African nations do to protect their interests in a world where the U.S. policies seem to be more influenced by the short-term domestic interests than the long-term strategic partnerships [12].

The changing world of global trade also raised some critical questions concerning the ability of African states to define their own destinies. Although other African leaders tried to strengthen their relationships with the United States by new agreements, like the U.S.-Kenya Free Trade Agreement, the general opinion about the long-term advantages of bilateral agreements between the countries was rather sceptical. The Trump policy of reducing trade deficits and limiting imports seemed to be incompatible with the African dreams of growth through industrialisation and increased trade integration. So, where will the trade relations between Africa and the United States go in case the continent is still bound by the protectionist policies of the great powers? Will Africa be able to meet its economic goals by depending on these disjointed relationships, or will there be a need to shift towards emerging economies that focus on long-term strategic relationships? It is against this background that this study was conducted to look into security administration and good governance in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria and provide an empirical study of democracy and citizen trust.

The aim of the study is to examine the impact of President Trump of the United States of American Trade Wars on Africa Countries. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- 1) **investigate the effect of President Trump's "America First" trade policies on the stability and growth of African economies**, focusing on how the U.S.'s shift to protectionism and unilateral trade policies has altered Africa's trade dynamics and economic prospects.
- 2) examine the potential of alternative trade partnerships for African countries, particularly with emerging economies such as China and Russia, in light of reduced engagement with the United States under the Trump administration.

assess the long-term implications of the U.S.-Africa trade relationship post-Trump, and how African nations can adapt to a more transactional and competitive global trade environment, and identify strategies to secure favorable economic outcomes in future engagements with major global powers.

Based on the new specific objectives, the following research questions can be formulated:

1. How have President Trump's "America First" trade policies impacted the stability and growth of African economies, particularly in terms of trade imbalances, foreign aid, and investment flows?
2. What role can alternative trade partnerships with emerging economies such as China and Russia play in strengthening Africa's economic development, especially in the context of reduced U.S. engagement during the Trump administration?

What are the long-term implications of the U.S.-Africa trade relationship following Trump's presidency, and how can African nations adapt to a more competitive and transactional global trade environment to secure favorable economic outcomes?

Trade wars, which is often used as a term when referring to international economic conflict, is a phenomenon that is becoming more and more prevalent in the modern world of global economy. Such conflicts are characterized by the introduction of tariffs, quotas, and other restrictive trade tools, which are usually met with counter measures by the aggrieved states. The consequences of trade wars go far beyond the issue of trade imbalances; they are affecting bigger geopolitical battles and the changing balance of world power. With countries becoming increasingly interdependent and interconnected, the possibility of trade wars looms on the horizon of international collaboration and the liberal market order. The current section will provide a methodological analysis of the concept of trade wars by examining definitions that have been put forward by prominent scholars. Through a critical assessment of these frameworks, we will seek to clarify conceptual gaps that should be further explained and an inquiry made as to the complexity of trade wars.

According to Baikushikova trade wars are severe international conflicts with the focus on trade behavior, which are characterized by the use of tariffs, trade barriers, and retaliatory tools. The authors argue that trade wars are an inherent aspect of international relations that are often driven by the rivalry over the access to international markets. The phenomenon has historically shifted into less protectionist overtures to more advanced types of economic warfare where the strategic goals of a particular nation escalate the intensity of the conflicts. Although this typology provides a clear conceptual framework, it fails to capture the subtle impact of technological advancement, digital economies and non-tariff barriers that dominate modern trade wars. As a result, there is an urgent need to have a contemporary and broad-based interpretation, especially with the advent of digital tariffs and weaponization of technology in international trade.

Sheng and Nascimento use the historical approach, describing trade wars as interstate conflicts that are expressed through the use of economic tools like tariffs and trade barriers, aimed at protecting local industries or responding to perceived unfair trading methods. Their discussion highlights how the conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century, most prominently the Smoot Hawley Tariff Act, informed the development of trade wars. However, they are somewhat limited in their conception, because they do not take into consideration the mitigating effect of international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). In addition, it does not discuss the growing power of global supply chains and the downstream implications on the emerging economies. With market interconnectedness at the current level, trade wars now have a much more far-reaching effect, not only on the directly affected countries, but also on global value chains and the overall picture of their influence. This gap is an indication that there is need to revise the definition to include these global dimensions.

According to Zadorozhko and Kolesov trade wars are long-term economic conflicts between the leading powers, the cause of which is a strategic necessity to dominate the market and redistribute the world resources. They claim that modern trade wars, in particular, between the leading economies like the United States and China, are more influenced by technological and geopolitical factors in addition to the classic economic interests. The version expands on previous descriptions, emphasizing the intersection of trade policy and general geopolitical plans. However, it is imprecise when it comes to how states use trade wars as a tool of domestic economic restructuring, and it does not include the role of internal politics, including populist movements, that drive conflict. The lack of these domestic factors means that a more inclusive taxonomy is necessary, which incorporates the political and societal context of the trade disputes into the analysis.

According to Karmakar and Jana trade wars refer to the conflicts that are instigated by the application of trade barriers, which are usually a response to the perceived economic injustices whereby countries use tariffs and quotas to establish dominance over the international markets. Their account follows the history of trade wars back to the nineteenth century and follows their development in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Though they give a strong historical context, their definition heavily prefigures tariffs and quotas as the most common instruments of trade warfare. This narrow focus is insufficient to reflect modern processes, which include today digital tariffs, intellectual property conflicts, and currency manipulation. The gap that has emerged justifies a broader strategy that includes these new economic strategies.

Frolova conceptualizes trade wars as economic conflicts in which states strategically implement trade barriers to respond to a perceived economic advantage on the part of another actor, which often leads to destabilization of world supply chains in the long term. She highlights the role of such conflicts in increasing the systemic instability of the global economy by distorting the trade flows and creating inefficiencies in production and distribution. Although this description predicts the disruptive consequences of trade wars, it overlooks the contribution of multinational corporations to the intensification of trade wars and the impact of trade limitations on the digital market. The lack of focus on these actors and forces highlights the urgency of the new definitional model that takes into account the new realities of international trade and the dynamics of corporate international behavior.

According to Singh trade wars refer to economic conflicts between countries that emerge due to retaliatory actions, such as tariffs and sanctions, which are usually a consequence of the unfairness in trade relations and the redistribution of wealth on a global scale. He highlights the connection between domestic inequalities and trade wars, in which trade wars are often a reflection of the larger socioeconomic inequalities within and between countries. This presentation introduces a very important economic and social angle but does not address the technological aspects of contemporary trade wars,

especially in the areas of digital services and intellectual property. The exclusion of these technological features demands a broader definition, which includes the digital aspects of modern trade conflicts.

Rohatgi defines trade wars as long-lasting conflicts between nation-states where fiscal tools such as tariffs, trade restrictions, and quotas are used to put pressure or gain a strategic advantage. His description foreshadows the permanence of such disputes and places economic indicators as the main instruments of conflict. Although this definition is clear and concise, it does not capture the growing geopolitical and technological variables that are currently having an enormous influence on modern trade hostilities.

Continuing on the list of the academic descriptions of a trade war provided above, I would describe trade wars as the prolonged economic conflicts between independent states that are characterized by the introduction of tariffs, trade barriers, and mutual retaliatory measures, frequently triggered by geopolitical, economic and technological factors. These conflicts are usually brought to the fore when governments feel that there is an imbalance in trade, caused by either perceived unfairness, technological pre-eminence or manipulative market behavior and use fiscal instruments to correct the perceived inequities.

The modern form of trade wars, especially in the U.S. China rivalry, goes beyond the conventional tariffs and quotas to include the technological aspect of trade wars, including intellectual property theft, data security issues, and domination of digital infrastructure. The latter aspects are conspicuously missing in the first framework by Rohatgi, which highlights the need to have a broader conceptualisation that captures the entire range of contemporary trade hostilities. Trade wars in the contemporary global environment are not limited to traditional forms, but states are increasingly using non-tariff barriers, such as intellectual property laws, data protection laws, and export-control regimes, to exercise power. This diversification makes global supply chains and digital ecosystems dynamics more complex, increasing the ripple effects of trade conflicts in the global economy and disrupting a broad range of sectors.

In addition, trade wars are closely intertwined with local politics. These conflicts are often fuelled by nationalist feelings, populist politics, and domestic economic demands, as governments react to domestic demands of protectionism against economic injustice or external competition. One cannot underestimate the role of multinational corporations, technology companies, and transnational flows of investments; these players, skilled in negotiating changing regulatory landscapes, exercise significant influence in the trade policy and, in fact, determine the course of trade conflicts. Overall, modern trade wars are complex phenomena, which combine economic, technological, geopolitical, and domestic political aspects, and a subtle sense of these interactions is necessary to evaluate their actual influence on the world economy.

The America First policy, popularly supported by the President Donald Trump, became one of the characteristics of his rule. This policy based on nationalist and protectionism rhetoric attempted to put the interests of the United States first above all other concerns in foreign policy and economic affairs. Trump's ideology of America First, with its emphasis on withdrawalism and unilateralism, marked a shift in the international relations of the 21st century, as it shifted the concept of global cooperation to a more transactional model of international relations. As a result, this policy has received a lot of scholarly concern owing to the implications of the policy on international diplomacy, trade and world governing.

Gostin outlines the America First policy as a nationalistic agenda prioritizing both the economic and political interests of the United States of America over the international cooperation at the expense of global cooperation at the international level, with myriads of effects on international health, trade, and diplomatic relations. In his critical review, Gostin argues that the policy by Trump severely weakened international organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the international law where international cooperation is the law. He points out the fact that America First encouraged isolationist policies, such as dropping treaties such as the Paris Climate Accord and implementing travel bans, thus not only isolating the United States but also limiting its influence in the formulation of global policies. Although this approach connected with a domestic base, which had grown disenchanted with globalization, it created tension with foreign partners, even allies, and triggered the shrinkage of global health security and diplomatic influence. The definition, though, does not include the economic consequences especially in the field of trade thereby requiring a more detailed evaluation of the policy on the effect on world trade and investment.

According to Mills and Payne America First can be described as a populist, transactional foreign policy that aims to re-balance U.S. power to focus on short-term domestic benefit instead of long-term multilateral relations. They argue that this is based on hyper-competitiveness and sovereigntyism

through which the United States strives to get out of bilateral agreements at the expense of ignoring the norms of international collaboration. The policy has been widely criticized as helping to undermine international human-rights regimes and institutions, including the United Nations, and in the same breath promoting anti-immigrant and anti-refugee feelings. However, this definition does not consider the overall economic implications of unravelling the international trade agreements such as the destruction of the rules-based trading system and its long-term effect on the U.S. and the global economies.

According to Payne America First is considered an agenda of foreign-policy that puts the economic and security interests of the U.S. ahead of international cooperation and the liberal international system. This policy, he says, has given rise to a turn of bilateral deals which are, to the greater part, favourable to the United States including the renegotiation of NAFTA and the trade war between the United States and China. The viewpoint highlights the economic nationalism of the policy where the United States aims to decrease its trade deficits and rejuvenate the domestic industries through tariffs and concessions to its trading partners. But, this definition does not consider the overall diplomatic implications, especially concerning the U.S. allies and the diminishing of its global leadership position which has received considerable scholarly anxiety.

According to Ziv the America First policy is defined as an international policy that prioritizes the American interest over others in all its unilateral practices aimed at achieving economic and political gains usually at the expense of trade wars and diplomatic isolation. The authors claim that the hostile attitude of Trump in trade conflicts, including the U.S.China trade war as well as his protectionist speech, has fostered global unease and tension. The definition however fails to break down the domestic political implications of the policy such as how it affected the American workforce and long term implications of the policy as far as world power relations is concerned with the U.S. standing isolated by the emerging powerhouses like China.

Dufour and Ducasse have argued that America First is a denial of multi-lateralism and a manifestation of isolationism based on the urge to preserve the U.S. economic dominance via trade restriction and a more aggressive approach to international negotiations. The bilateralism and protectionist focus of the policy is viewed as threat to globalization and backlash to the globalist policy historically supported by the United States. This definition emphasizes the economic isolationism of the Trump way but does not focus on the long-term outcomes of the policy on international trade law and how the world would transform its trade institutions.

According to the above definitions, I can describe the America First policy as a nationalist and protectionist policy toward foreign policy and trade that places the economic and political interests of the U.S. first, which can be achieved by unilateral means, such as trade wars, tariffs, and withdrawals under multilateral agreements. This policy aims at reviving the American industries by cutting trade deficits and foreign competition and weakening the international cooperation and leadership ability of the U.S. in the international relations. Accordingly, the America First strategy alters world order by redefining it in terms of globalization.

This research is based on the International Political Economy (IPE) paradigm, which is a field of study that questions the complex interaction between political systems and economic practices at the international arena. The IPE framework, which is crystallized as an academic discipline in the mid-twentieth century by theorists like Robert Cox attempts to deconstruct the manner in which global economic relations are constructed by political institutions, power asymmetries and economic forces. It investigates the functions of the state and non-state actors in the international economy, and especially how policy tools, such as trade wars, tariffs, and sanctions, are shaped by both economic and geopolitical imperatives. In this respect, IPE is particularly relevant to the evaluation of the effects of the trade wars of President Trump on Africa: it allows conducting a strict analysis of how trade policy in the United States, driven by domestic interests and power struggles, will spread to African economies, developmental patterns, and relations with other countries in the world such as China [13]. The framework is based on the following assumptions: economic activities are rarely generated in a vacuum, and are always tinged with political interests, and the global market is constantly preconditioned by systemic power asymmetries [14].

Considering its applicability to this paper, the IPE framework provides a prism through which one can analyze the unequal power dynamics that characterize the relationship between the United States and African states. The framework facilitates an investigative enquiry into the way trade wars, especially those launched by the United States under the Trump administration, transform the role of Africa in the

global economic system. It sheds light on the outcast position that African countries find themselves in when negotiating trade deals and defines the possible consequences of choosing one of the great powers at the cost of another [15]. As an example, the U.S. China trade war has not only upset the global supply chains, but it has also put African states in a very difficult situation, where they have to walk the fine line between two giant competitors, both keen on capturing African resources and markets. This paper therefore uses the IPE framework to unpack these dynamics and find out how U.S. protectionist policies and bilateral trade agreements influence African trade policy and economic strategy.

The introduction of IPE in this study also highlights the belief that global trade is inherently political and is prone to the dynamics of power relations. The trade wars of President Trump are a continuation of a larger trend based on economic nationalism where countries put their own interests before the interests of the entire world. This fact is central to the way African states, which traditionally depended on foreign aid and bilateral agreements, are forced to re-evaluate their economic policies in the face of changing geopolitical trends. The premise that Africa has to adjust to these tensions by seeking diversified, strategically oriented trade relationships is the focus of the inquiry, which allows exploring the long-term effects of U.S. trade wars on African economic development in an ever-changing global power environment.

2. Research Method

The research design used in the paper is qualitative research design as it aims to examine the effects of trade wars initiated by President Trump on African countries. The sources of data were limited to secondary sources that are already existing, such as textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, governmental reports, newspapers, and international news sources. These sources provide an in-depth view of the impact of the trade conflicts of the Trump administration on the world trade and, by extension, the African economies. Focusing on secondary data, the research explored the range of views and developed analyses, including the economical, political, and social impacts of U.S. protectionist policies on Africa. The narratives that were analyzed using content analysis were used to slice the narratives of the U.S. Africa trade relations in this period, thus providing more insight into the overall geopolitical impacts of trade wars on African states, especially in their relationship with the United States and other world powers.

3. Result

President Trump's "America First" trade policies, marked by protectionist measures and a shift toward economic nationalism, have had far-reaching consequences for global trade dynamics, including in Africa. Under this policy, the U.S. sought to prioritize domestic industries, reduce trade deficits, and bring jobs back to the American economy. One of the core features of the policy was the imposition of tariffs on several countries, including key trading partners such as China, the European Union, and others.

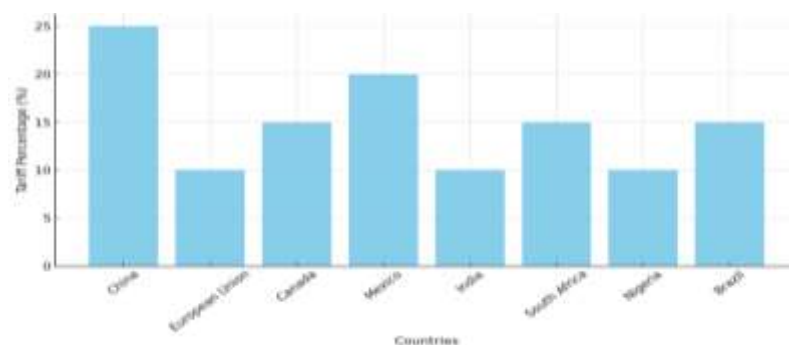


Figure 1. Tariffs Imposed by President Trump on Key Countries

Source: Author's compilation from; Poilly and Tripier, (2025); Laha, (2025).

The Figure 1 above represents the tariffs that the President Trump has put on the major world countries, ranging between the developed and emerging economies. The US applied different

percentages of tariff on countries like China, European Union among other partners like Canada, Mexico, India, South Africa, Nigeria, and Brazil. Particularly, tariffs on much of the Chinese-imported goods were increased to 25 per cent [16]. As the European Union received various forms of tariffs, they proposed between 10 and 20 percent of tariffs on importation of partners like the EU, or a blanket tariff of 10 percent on all other U imports [17]. In the case of other countries (Canada, Mexico, India, South Africa, Nigeria, and Brazil) tariffs were mostly within the range of 10 1/2 to 20 1/2, although there were particular examples such as higher duties on steel and aluminium imposed on countries including Canada [18].

This was the main focus in the Trump policy of America First as a way of minimizing the trade deficits as well as putting local industries first [19]. More recent studies of 2024 and 2025 still discuss the changing effects of the policy and possible ways it may develop in the future [20]. On September 13, 2024, the U S Trade Representative said the country will increase tariffs on certain Chinese imports, effective September 27, imposing duties of 100 per cent on electric vehicles and 50 per cent on solar panels [21]. These are targeted actions reminiscent of an ongoing trend towards economic protection and competitive advantage [22].

Scientific studies also question the general consequences of these tariffs. Research has found that, although some sectors of the domestic industry may receive positive impacts, the global economy tends to be adversely affected, such as the rising inflation, the instability of the market, and the inhibited economic development [23]. The debate on these tariffs continues to be salient, particularly in the focus of the 2024 presidential election and indicates a long-lasting change of the U S policy on trade towards a nationalistic and unilateral issue as opposed to multilateralism of the past [24]. This is even to speculations on a possible second Trump administration, which has been projecting a further overhaul of international trade through tariffs, including sectors of agriculture, automobiles, and manufacturing in the U and its principal trading partners [25]. It is always aimed at affecting the balance of trade and regulation of domestic sectors, but the method also presupposes the risk of retaliation and destruction of the global economy [26] [27].

Although these policies were designed to empower the U S economy, their effect on the world and in particular to the developing economies like Africa has been both positive and negative. Since most African countries rely heavily on trade with the Western powers, the uncertainty that these policies bring increased imbalances in the trade, which weakened the economies of most countries in the continent. The introduction of tariffs and renewal of trade agreements upset the stability of the African economies especially when African exports to the U S were hit by punitive actions. This was also worsened by the fact that in 2018, it started a trade war with the U S that is since then hurting the global economy [28]. The first wave of tariffs, which was on June 20, 2018, and became effective on July 6, involved a large number of Chinese products, followed by the use of announcements that increased the level of values subject to tariffs [29]. As a result of this unresolved trade conflict between the United States and China based on the U S trade deficit and intellectual property concerns this has greatly affected the world economic growth and the regional economies, especially the ones which are incorporated into complex supply chains [30].

The rising trade tension between these economic superpowers has caused significant economic insecurity and has triggered the urge to see the regions that are highly dependent on international trade actively protect the multilateral trading system [31]. This geopolitical contestation is usually in the form of resource contestation, and this may cause economic fluctuations and tension especially in areas with strategic fervor [32]. The fact that the cumulative GDP and population of the U S and China, respectively, contain over 40 and 30 percent of the global totals, respectively, increases the impact of their trade disputes on the global level, which distinguishes the conflict with the previously experienced trade wars [33].

This position of Trump resulted in a decline in foreign aid and changes to the flow of investments that also undermined the African growth course. The U S has traditionally been a primary foreign aid and investment source to a number of African countries. Nevertheless, by the America First strategy, the Trump administration indicated its withdrawal of the multilateral interactions and development aid, a policy called America First 2.0 that undermines the multilateral agreements and has effects on emerging economies [34]. The Foreign Aid budget was greatly cut and even halted and an executive order issued in January 2025 put all foreign aid on hold with a 90-day review [35]. It entailed stopping all funding of programmes like PEPFAR and USAID, and an unanticipated reduction in the budget of USAID through Executive Order [36] [37]. These reductions shook important health-related projects in South Africa and Nigeria and larger projects in the healthcare, education, economic development, and humanitarian sectors that are paramount in the socio-economic development of African nations [38] [39]. Also, the exit of the U S of the Paris Climate Agreement and a decrease in the use of the global trade institutions, such as the World Health Organization, established an uncertain atmosphere in

African countries that need this kind of international support [40]. This reduction of aid and diplomatic activity in the policies of Trump cast doubts on the future of African growth and economic freedom, becoming more dependent on new relations with China and other emerging economies as most African countries, relying on both aid and investment, started synchronizing their foreign policy with that of China [41]. Such a transformation highlights the fact that changing geopolitical forces have a significant effect on aid transfers and on diplomatic activities, and that African countries need to reconsider their strategic alliances. This situation puts African countries in a very dangerous situation, because they can be the geopolitical chess pieces in the growing competition between the U and China like it was in the Cold War [42]. The decrease in U foreign aid during the Trump administration, which is characterised by substantial declines in both the USAID and PEPFAR, is estimated to have disastrous effects on the global health outcomes, with low-income countries such as Malawi being among the victims, possibly resulting in millions of deaths and unwanted pregnancies which can be prevented between 2025 and 2040 [43]. Such a decrease in US aid, though leaving a considerable vacuum, has also left an opening to other world powers and specifically China to increase their power by providing more development aid and investment in Africa [44].

President Trump and his protectionist policies as well as his attitude towards trade imbalances directly influenced the ability of African countries to attract investment in terms of investment flows [45]. African economies had a hard time getting foreign direct investment and trade-related opportunities to access the necessary capital due to the crippling of trade with key African partners by tariffs and quotas [46]. Despite these limitations, some African countries have tried to seek new opportunities through treaties like the U.S. Kenya Trade Agreement; however, such talks were small scale and most of the time ineffective to offset the overall drop in U.S investment.

With African countries finding a way out of the harm caused by the U.S.China trade war, a noticeable change in diplomatic and trade relations of the Africa region became evident, and most of the countries started shifting towards China as an actor with more aggressive engagement and investment policy in the continent [47]. Nevertheless, that shift towards China also added the fear of over-reliance of Africa on one partner and an increase in the debt load, reflecting the problems generated by the new position of the U.S. in the new policy of the Trump administration, which was based on the slogan of America First [48] [49].

The changing trade relations during the Trump administration, which are marked by economic isolationism, deprived Africa of a wider variety of opportunities and forced a more difficult course towards the achievement of sustainable growth and economic stability [50]. The trend has only made competition on resources and power in Africa to be escalated with countries like China and Russia taking proactive measures to expand their influence in the continent by investing in resources and military activities. The shift away of the old alliances has led to a negative reassessment of the world balance of power with the growing power of China, which is seen by some as a threat to the status quo of the unipolar global system. This trend has sparked controversy on whether the growing involvement of china in the African continent is a kind of neocolonialism or it is an alternative to the influence of the west.

What role can alternative trade partnerships with emerging economies such as China and Russia play in strengthening Africa's economic development, especially in the context of reduced U.S. engagement during the Trump administration?

Over the past few years, African countries have diversified their diplomatic and economic portfolio, which gravitated toward emerging partners like China and Russia an evolution which represents the changing lines of the world power and an apparent withdrawal of traditional Western allies, led by the United States with its new America First policy in place [51]. The accelerating global economic environment, the sense of the declining Western role, and the instrumental desire to seek alternative approaches to development drive this strategic realignment [52]. The nationalist and protectionism agenda of Trump, combined with the withdrawal of the country of the multilateral institutions, caused the African governments to reevaluate their economic doctrine and consider new ways of commerce and investment [53].

Forming a partnership with China and Russia will be a great opportunity and the African states will be able to bypass trade barriers that currently exist and use the developmental opportunities presented by these rising forces to enhance growth, expansion of infrastructure, and even technological advancement [54]. China, specifically, has become a key player due to the massive outlays on infrastructure, transportation systems and energy investments, which are necessary to drive trade and improve connectivity at the continent [55]. The Belt and Road Initiative has incorporated African economies into the global supply chains and drawn in vast capital in major sectors like mining, agriculture, and the general infrastructure [56]. The interaction of China in this field goes beyond

extraction whereby capacity building is becoming the driving force of the interaction and hence provision of skills development and training opportunities to the local workforce, value chain cooperation, and cultural exchange [57]. This style which is marked by a non-interference policy is very different compared to Western models which have historically pegged economic aid to governance reform and this is appealing to many African nations seeking development without political conditionality [58]. However, such alliances also bring up some valid questions when it comes to the sustainability of debt, geopolitical leverage, and environmental effects [59].

On the same note, Russia has become more active in Africa which is seen in the form of greater political and military influence and economical collaboration. Military-technical collaboration such as security aid and the sale of weapons is a vivid aspect to this relationship, which expands the geopolitical sphere of Russia in the continent [60]. Another aim of the Russian state is to gain access to Africa natural resources and energy demands, by using these resources to balance the western domination [61]. Although African countries are forced to cooperate with Russia due to the pragmatic need (given the risk of being disengaged by the West), it is raising questions of the sustainability of these relationships over time and the mutual utility of these relationships [62]. Even the domestic economic difficulties faced by Russia and especially with international sanctions might have an indirect cost on its ability to maintain long-term economic relations [63]. However, the interaction with these rising powers is facilitating the diversification of the economic partnership between Africa and these powers balancing the traditional powers and placing Africa at the heart of a multipolar world [64].

The role of China specifically has become more central to the process of economic development of the continent, having a significant influence on the future direction of the continent in the context of new world trends and a pragmatic aspiration to find alternative ways of growth [65]. This involvement can be characterized by the massive strategic investments in infrastructure, roads, railways, and energy plants which are paramount in driving trade and increasing connectivity across the continent [66]. These are usually giant investments where the Chinese financiers invest a lot of capital in the African governments and state-owned businesses and hence, change the face of the continent [67].

Belt and Road Initiative is one of the pillars of this dynamic relationship that actively involves African economies in global supply chains and brings in billions of dollars of investments in major sectors, such as energy, mining, or agriculture [68]. The BRI has been welcomed with great eagerness by most African nations as a crucial tool to reduce the gap in infrastructure and promote economic development [69]. In addition to mining resources, China has become more diversified in its activities in Africa to include technology transfer, research and development, and well-organized skills development programs [70]. They can be seen, such as capacity building and training of local workers, value chain cooperation and cultural exchange- providing African countries with a chance to modernize their industry, and become more competitive [71]. The model of development practiced by China, namely a non-interference policy that does not attach political terms, and human rights, is the opposite of the Western approach that has long traditionally associated aid with governance reforms and human rights, and can therefore be close to the desires of African countries that seek to develop without the perceived political strings attached [72].

However, with all these large-scale alliances, there is also a range of considerations and issues. The issue of debt sustainability, geopolitical control, environmental effects, and possible political takeover and corruption are often raised [73]. In spite of such complexities, the involvement of China adds a lot of diversity to the economic partnerships of Africa and thus balances the traditional powers to position the continent strategically in a multipolar world [74]. The long-term orientation of China to export its model of development to foreign countries-based on massive infrastructure supports the idea of its seriousness in these relationships [75]. This is also supported by official Chinese white papers defining a partnership of equals focusing on mutual growth in the industrialization, digital transformation, and sustainable practices [76].

Likewise, the Russian involvement in Africa has escalated particularly in a world that is increasingly multipolar and challenges the orthodox Western supremacy. This escalation can be observed even under the circumstances of a Trump and Washington separation policy as an isolationist and transactional approach to Africa, which would harm the influence of Western powers. Russia is largely present in Africa as it is aimed at enhancing political and military relations, as these countries are interested in each other: African countries want reliable security support, whereas Moscow wants to establish its geopolitical presence on the continent. The military-technical cooperation, which includes the security assistance and the sale of armaments, is another important element of this relation. According to the recent studies, Russian mercenary and paramilitary forces hold an obvious presence in some African states, which acts as an important mechanism by Moscow to counter the increasing economic and political isolation in the world by increasing influence.

In addition to military ties, economic relations have also increased, with Russia pursuing the access to the large reserves of natural resources and energy demands in Africa, using these reserves as a source of economic benefits and diplomatic powers to offset the Western hegemony. The Russia-Africa summit and the growing bilateral agreements are some of the initiatives that have seen Russia provide economic assistance in some of the critical areas like defence, energy and infrastructure. The African states are not interested in Russia because of ideological similarity but because of practical necessity, i.e., they want to reduce the risks of possible Western disengagement, which is enhanced by the geopolitical changes and previous political turmoil in the United States and Europe.

However, as long as Russia is increasing its influence, there is still a concern about the long-term sustainability of such partnerships and the mutual benevolence. The economic issues that Russia faces, especially with the prolific Western sanctions after invading Ukraine, are likely to have an indirect impact on its ability to maintain long-term economic relationships. Such sanctions have made Moscow radically alter its engagements priorities towards the Global South, such as Africa, but the long-term economic implications of Russia being able to deliver on said commitments is a major factor to consider. However, the involvement of Russia enriches the variety of economic partnerships of Africa, offsetting the prevalence of the traditional powers and perfectly placing the continent at the center of a multipolar transformation.

In the current world order, therefore the importance of alternative trade partnership with China and Russia is central to the African economic strategy. Such new economies offer essential infrastructure investments and entry into new markets, as well as a kind of economic diplomacy that usually bypasses the political or ideological preconditions of Western African countries have to tread the waters of these relationships by balancing economic development with the geopolitical power, environmental responsibility, social justice, and debt addiction. The African countries have more chances to follow the global trends in trade since by diversifying the trading partners, the African countries can be ranked higher to establish their position in the new world order. In this regard, the strategic activities of China and Russia provide Africa with more growth and development opportunities, and react to the pragmatic search of alternative development models on the continent. This strategy will enable the African states to be more autonomous along their developmental paths and promote a multi-faceted approach to international relations that will exploit a wider array of global connections.

What Are the Long-term Implications of the U.S.-Africa Trade Relationship Following Trump's Presidency?

The U.S. Africa trade relationship has significant long-term consequences after the rule of President Trump, and significant changes in the African economic environment and representation in the global arena can be observed. The America First policies of Trump, which put economic nationalism and protectionism first, was a significant departure of the multilateral strategy of trade, which the previous administration of the United States tended to embrace during the time. Such policies directly and indirectly impacted the African economies especially on trade agreements like African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), foreign aid and investment flows. The Trump administration was less committed to upholding or even increasing AGOA, which is one of the main pillars of the U.S. relations with African countries since 2000, which exposed nations to the risk of being suspended out of the program in the context of political issues. This retreat of the multilateral systems made navigating an ever-changing global trading system difficult on the part of African countries, particularly as other world superpowers like China continued to occupy the vacuum left by the United States. Weakening of the U.S. activity in Africa and introducing tariffs on African exports, undermined the decades-old economic relationship between the two regions and created an economic vulnerability complex in the whole continent.

The America First policy brought a more pragmatic and unpredictable style of interaction with African countries, which affected the flow of foreign aid and investments. Although in the past periods, administrations focused on development aid, the Trump period redefined priorities, and it may reduce the general interest in African development. The trade war between the two global giants, U.S. and China, which started at this time introducing tariffs on several items, had far-reaching impact on the overall economy and implication to Sub-Saharan Africa, a region that has a vast trading relationship with the two giants. Though there might have been some small domestic industries in the United States that might have benefitted due to these new trade policies, the overall impacts of the economy were growth in inflation and market instability in the global marketplace.

Conversely, the more stable and larger-scale trade and investment in Africa, often at fewer conditions as compared to the Western models, emerged in China and gave the African nations a better and more predictable way to develop their infrastructure and grow economically, despite the fear of the debt-trap diplomacy. This difference in engagement policies led to an African geopolitical and economic rivalry, in which China is usually at the forefront in trade, investment, and infrastructure, whereas the U.S. is at the forefront in security and foreign aid. The protracted trend indicates that such a change may result in an increasingly diversified although potentially fractured economic environment of Africa in search of new partners and relationships that are not necessarily dependent on the conventional western powers. Another possible Trump term may bring another change in the world trade and geopolitical relations by focusing on nationalism and protectionism, which may have serious consequences on the emerging economies and global governance. The current U.S. China trade war with significant levies on the Chinese products still resonates with the world economy despite the initial trade accords, and therefore, it affects global trade policies and economic stability. The lack of resources only exacerbates this rivalry, placing a strain on the supply chain across the world and increasing the geopolitical tensions, especially in areas where the resources are abundant, like Africa and Latin America. Besides, the trade policies of different countries are systematically aimed at life-saving of national markets, improvement of trade balances, and promoting the internal economy. Such forms of protectionism, as well as more general anti-globalist views, are ironic in the context of China promoting the idea of globalization that, traditionally, was associated with the power of the American people.

Among the main long-term implications of Africa is the changing trend in foreign direct investment. The U.S. during the Trump administration was more inclined towards bilateral trade agreements at the expense of multilateral trade initiatives thus creating the more transactional and less predictable style of engagement with African countries. This policy change had an adverse effect on the inflow of investments into Africa, as the accelerated protectionist policies and tariffs of the Trump administration transformed global trade, which ended up creating an even more complicated and uncertain international trade environment of U.S. companies and investors. Contrastingly, the more stable and comparable trade and investment instrument by China in Africa, especially through the Belt and Road Initiative, provided African countries with a better and more successful route to infrastructure development and economic growth. Although the U.S. continued to have a military and diplomatic presence in Africa, their less commitment towards economic development was reflected by major reductions in the USAID budget and foreign aid being suspended under the Trump administration. As a result, African nations started to find other ways of trade and investment to keep growing along the same line. This move may lead over time to an even more diversified, but also arguably more decadent economic terrain of Africa, since it strategically pursues new partnerships and alliances, not necessarily anchored on the traditional Western powers.

The African countries can adjust to such developments in the long term by focusing on establishing strong intra-continental trade blocs and diversifying their economic relationships. The African Continental Free Trade Area, which has been in operation since 2021, is one of the most vital solutions to the lack of independence of Africa in the hands of other countries by bringing about increased trade integration within the continent. With a focus on regional integration, the African nations can overcome the impact of decreased involvement of the U.S. and transition to a more sustainable and self-reliant economic system. An alliance with emerging markets, like China and Russia, accompanied by the AfCFTA, is a chance that helps Africa to redefine its role in the international trading system. Nevertheless, in order to fully capitalize on these opportunities, the African countries will have to resolve such issues as lack of infrastructure, political instability, and governance that still hamper the economic potential of the continent. Through the exploitation of these new alliances and regional collaboration, Africa would be guaranteed of good economic results in a more competitive and transactional global trade environment and thus, prosperity in the long run despite the evolving U.S.-Africa trade relationship.

How Can African Nations Adapt to a More Competitive and Transactional Global Trade Environment to Secure Favorable Economic Outcomes?

With the global business environment becoming more competitive and transactional, African countries have to face significant challenges to achieve positive economic results. The rise of protectionism in trade (such as the America First policies of President Trump) has intensified the need of African states to reconsider their trade policies and seek more sustainable and diversified economic cooperation. Traditionally, Africa has been reliant on Western traditional powers, particularly, the United States and Europe, and this has influenced how it structures its trade policy. However, as it is changing towards bilateral agreements which tend to be controversial, the participation of the continent in the global economy is reorganized. African countries have to adjust to keep pace with people by

encouraging integration of the regions, improving trade infrastructure, and expanding their trade networks to include the rising economies like China, Russia, and India. The main path to success is found in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that will enlarge the intra-African trade, decrease the dependence on the foreign markets, and promote industrialisation throughout the continent.

In order to reap the full advantages of an increasingly competitive international trade, African countries need to invest heavily in the infrastructural facilities that can support efficient and cost-effective trade. Virtues of transport and logistics are still a major hindrance to the competitiveness of the continent. Abrego say that the only way to reduce the transactions costs and increase the efficiency of supply chains across Africa is to improve infrastructure. African countries can be more competitive by upgrading roads, ports, and communication networks, so they can lower the effect of their trade barriers disproportionately on smaller economies e.g. tariffs. In addition, the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in trade operations has the potential of transforming the trade in Africa by enhancing transparency, efficient trade and opening the global markets. Bankole argue that the presence of ICT infrastructural enhancements would enhance intra-African trade through the provision of better communication, lowering trade costs, and creating new markets themselves in the continent.

The other urgent measure that should be employed to adjust to a competitive and transactional trade environment is the adoption of appropriate trade policies that encourage the diversification of exports and value-added industries. Traditionally, African economies highly depended on the export of raw materials i.e., oil, minerals and agricultural products making them susceptible to changes in prices in the world market. The best way to address this weakness is industrialisation and the production of value-added products that compete in stronger markets in African countries. As a forum of further economic integration, the AfCFTA will provide an exceptional chance of developing regional value chains, expand the trade of manufactured products, and decrease reliance on primary commodity exports. The African countries can increase their levels of high-value exports and strengthen their economies by supporting industrialisation and value-added production.

In addition, the African countries need to reinforce institutional environments and governance systems to support trade and investment. One of the major challenges facing trade and economic development in Africa is the lack of proper institutions that would regulate the trade policies, enforce trade regulations and fight corruption. According to Abrego institutional quality is a critical factor of trade competitiveness. To foster a climate that is favorable to trade and investment, the African states will have to make an investment in strengthening institutions that will promote the rule of law, protect property rights, and reduce the transaction costs involved in doing business. Moreover, the simplification of the bureaucratic procedures, enhancement of transparency and political stability are the essential conditions that make African countries more attractive to investors and trade partners alike.

Finally, diversification of the trade partners of Africa, going beyond the traditional Western powers, is a necessary element of adjusting to the new global playing field. The increasing presence of China in Africa is a case of how new economies are able to offer good trade opportunities that reduce reliance on the West Development. What the African states will get by interacting with a wider range of countries is more favourable trade terms, influx of foreign direct investment and new market access. This attitude to South-South collaboration, which is demonstrated through such efforts as the China-Africa trade interaction, provides African nations with more adaptability and power in the globalized economic framework, thus enabling them to achieve higher economic results.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study highlights that President Trump's "America First" trade policies indeed significantly disrupted U.S.–Africa economic relations, cutting foreign aid, investment flows, and multilateral trade engagement and forcing African nations to re-adjust their policies towards regional integration and partnerships with budding economic powers like China and Russia. These results indicate that Africa needs to enhance intra-continental trade through AfCFTA, infrastructure and ICT, and export diversification toward value-added production in order to become more resilient to external shocks in a competitive global trade environment. Future research Need to be conducted on the sustainability of Africa's reorientation towards other partners with a particular focus on debt vulnerabilities, governance issues and what multipolar trade structures mean for Africa's development path.

The following recommendations were stated:

- 1) Boost Regional Integration by AfCFTA: African countries need to maximize the implementation and expansion of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to raise the economic competitiveness in Africa
- 2) Infrastructure and technology Investment in Infrastructure and Technology: African nations need to invest more in hard infrastructure that is critical especially education and ICT as well as transport and logistics.
- 3) Diversify the exports and emphasize industrialization: African countries are supposed to put in place policies that will ensure a shift in exportation, no longer depending on raw materials but instead depending on value added products.
- 4) The African governments have the responsibility to channel their energies towards improving the welfare and well-being of their constituencies by systematically restructuring the major internal economic variables to improve effectiveness, productivity, and quantifiable outputs.

Constructive dialogue and moral persuasion should be used to mitigate the negative impacts of America's First Policy.

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