

CHAPTER 1

Introducing African Perspectives on Trump 2.0: United States Foreign Policy and the New World (Re)Order

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Welcome to Trump 2.0's world

After his defeat in the 2020 elections and the subsequent controversies that dogged his political prospects, President Donald Trump staged a historic comeback in American political history as he won the November 2024 elections and returned to the White House in January 2025. The second coming of Donald Trump was premised on his populist, right-wing, and nationalist agenda. He mobilised popular support around 'Making America Great Again' (MAGA), which is closely connected to the ideas, proposals, plans and promises of cutting the US government spending and debt, increasing government efficiency, reforming the law enforcement and judiciary and ensuring freedom of speech. The list also includes reversing LGBTQ+, climate and energy transition policies, enabling tax cuts for local industries, massive tariffs on importation and deportation of illegal immigrants. Other campaign promises are ensuring that NATO allies pay for their defences, stopping other countries from robbing Americans through aid and trade, resolving the Russian–Ukraine conflict and preventing World War III, ending the Gaza war and securing the hostages, stepping up the competition with China in high-tech and many more (Blackburn et al., 2024/2025; Farley, 2025; Jacobson and McKinney, 2024). As was evident in the first few weeks and months since Trump assumed office as the 47th US President, he has displayed a remarkable commitment to the implementation and realisation of some

Chapter 1

of these objectives, with an admixture of success, progress, setback and failure recorded so far (for some scorecards, see Elliott, 2025; Esomolu, Lodhi and Woodward, 2025; Sonnier and Shannon, 2025).

As a result of some of his actions, US foreign policy has taken a dramatic turn under Trump 2.0 with implications for world order. On many occasions, Trump has announced the US's intention to acquire Greenland from Denmark, reclaim the Panama Canal from Panama and buy the associated Chinese stakes, take over the Israeli occupied Palestinian territory of Gaza and convert it to a real estate, and make Canada the 51st state of the federation (Davies and Wendling, 2025; The Nation, 2025; Walsh, 2025). Trump justified the expansionist desire for new territory as national security interests, especially in the case of Greenland and the Panama Canal. Accordingly, the US under Trump has used diplomatic and economic pressure, and sometimes threatens military action, to advance its objectives. These desires and policy moves have brought the US President Trump's international assessment closer to that of other expansionist leaders, such as Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, as evident in their policies regarding Ukraine and the South China Sea, respectively. However, Trump's efforts to reclaim the Panama Canal, buy the Chinese Panama Canal Ports and Greenland, acquire Gaza and absorb Canada have faced resistance from affected governments and peoples of Panama, China, Denmark, Canada and Palestine with solidarity from many other states in South America, the Middle East and Europe (Isidore and Liu, 2025; RCI, 2025; Stone and Boymal, 2025). This development has challenged the rule-based international order as well as the anti-colonial and anti-expansionist position that the US had championed and sometimes defended for decades.

The US trade and other economic dimensions of foreign policy have been indiscriminately used by Trump against friends, allies and (potential) adversaries alike. The US–Canada relations have shifted from one of historical cordiality to unpredictable animosity, as the Trump administration imposed 25 per cent tariffs on imports from both Canada and Mexico (Peralta and Northam, 2025 RCI, 2025;). The Trump administration imposed additional 10 per cent tariffs on all imports from

Introducing African Perspectives on Trump 2.0: United States Foreign Policy and the New World (Re)Order

China on 4 February 2025, and an additional 10 per cent on 4 March 2025 (Feingold and Botwright, 2025; Robinson et al., 2025). Amidst these, Trump promised Europe to be next and announced tariff reciprocity in its trade relations with India. On 2 April 2025, Trump announced the 'Liberation Day' tariff, which amounted to a global declaration of tariff war, targeting more than 100 countries across Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe (Mesa, 2025; Panetta, 2025). This measure was designed to encourage investors to produce in the US and boost employment locally, address trade imbalances, contain the influx of products from China and its proxy investments globally and compel countries to negotiate trade relations bilaterally, based on Washington's terms. Although Trump subsequently postponed the global trade war, it attracted mixed international reactions and responses (Feingold and Botwright, 2025; Peralta and Northam, 2025; Zurcher, 2025). Many countries were compelled to negotiate with the administration on Washington's terms, while some investors promised to relocate or revive production in the US, others resisted what they referred to as trade unilateralism and bullying. For instance, the European Union (EU) threatened retaliation, and Canada and China gained global attention for their resistance to Trump's tariff war. Most notably, after a tit for tat trade war between China and the US, which witnessed no fewer than 125 per cent tariffs on both sides and restrictions on exports of some Chinese rare earth minerals to America, both Beijing and Washington realised the need to negotiate (Feingold and Botwright, 2025; Robinson et al., 2025). Regardless, Trump's tariff challenged the enduring international economic order that was based on market globalisation, open borders and a multilateral approach to trade regime, which the US represents and defends.

In a move towards de-globalisation, Trump has withdrawn the US from international climate commitments, a decision that has threatened global regimes for a just energy transition and environmental sustainability (Global Carbon Fund, 2025; Marggraff, Schoeman and Oyewole, 2025). The new administration suspended all US foreign aid except for Israel and Egypt, and moved to end the days of the USAID (The White House, 2025a). This development has greatly affected some of the poorest countries and peoples, globally (Democracy Now, 2025; Editorial, 2025).

On trade, climate, aid and many other subjects of interest in international relations, the US has become increasingly distanced from its traditional allies, especially in Europe and North America. While the US Vice President JD Vance questioned the democratic credentials of Europe at the Munich Summit in February 2025, the US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth reiterated Trump's position at NATO's summit, a few days later, that Europe had to pay for its defences (Latschan, 2025; Lopez, 2025; The Economic Times, 2025). In the absence of Ukraine and Europe, the US initiated peace talks with Russia in February 2025 at the Saudi Arabian capital, promising to lift sanctions, and rationalising the need for Kyiv to concede territory (Pamuk and Magid, 2025). Despite Russia's inconsistency with peace talks, Trump has displayed more tolerance toward Moscow compared to Kyiv. In June 2025, Trump blamed the Ukraine war on the decision of G7 leaders to expel Russia from the group (Verhelst, Taylor-Vaisey and Cancryn, 2025). Saudi Arabia has moved from a pariah state status to the new darling of US diplomacy, as it hosted the first foreign state visit by the 47th President and promised hundreds of billions of dollars in foreign investment to America (Schwartz and England, 2024; The White House, 2025b). These reflect Trump's transactional and personalised approach to foreign policy and favourable disposition toward autocratic leaders at the expense of decades of US records in promoting multilateralism, democracy, human rights and rule-based order globally.

African perspectives

The field of international relations has been dominated by Euro-American perspectives, often to the detriment of other perspectives, especially from the developing countries and regions of the world, such as Africa (Acharya, 2014; Bischoff, Aning and Acharya, 2015; Odoom and Andrews, 2017; Smith, 2009). Given their shared strength, influence and leadership role in technological development, international politics, economy, culture, law and order, the collective West (Europe, North

Introducing African Perspectives on Trump 2.0: United States Foreign Policy and the New World (Re)Order

America and Australia¹) has used its unique position to assume the centre stage of global affairs and attendant knowledge production. Accordingly, most understandings of the new or old-world order, disorder and reorder have been conceived, shaped and marketed around developments in the West, while others are mostly peripheral and supporting stories (Acharya, 2014, 2025; Faleye, 2014). Alas, African experiences and perspectives have mostly received limited attention in world affairs. Amidst these, most of what is considered African perspectives are Western or broadly foreign perspectives of the continent's experiences (Abrahamsen, 2017; Mazrui, 1977; Ogunnubi and Oyewole, 2020; Oyewole, 2025; Taylor, 2010). This is made possible by decades of dedicated resources to African studies in Europe and North America, without commensurate or adequate academic efforts to study world affairs and the place of Africa, other regions and global players on the continent.

Despite some efforts, the commitments towards research and development (R&D) to understand the experiences of Africa, and their relations to events and happenings in the rest of the world, and the major global players, such as the US, are limited. This has limited the recognition of the African contributions to the conceptions and understandings of major subjects of international relations. Notably, Trump 2.0 has become a major development in international affairs, given its influence on the US domestic and foreign policies and the consequences for the world order, disorder and reordering (Brands, 2025; Cooley and Nexon, 2025; Goddard, 2025; Kimmage, 2025). Therefore, the subject of Trump 2.0 has generated media and policy debates and growing academic interests globally (May, 2024; Transatlantic Task Force, 2025). Amidst these, there are disparate media and policy reflections on the political, economic and cultural prospects and challenges of Africa in relation to the US under Trump 2.0 (Gopalda, 2024; Isike and Oyewole, 2024a; Munga, 2025). However, beyond policy briefs, media articles and oral presentations, a need remains for more research efforts to produce a concise and coherent

1 It is noted that Australia struggles to position itself between its location in the South and its ontological and epistemological orientations towards the North (see Suleiman, Isike and Mickler, 2023: 3).

body of knowledge from Africa that reflects the diversity of African experiences and their multidimensional perspectives on Trump 2.0, its influence on the US foreign policy in relations to the continent and the entire world for academic and policy purposes.

As evident in the first six months of the new administration, the effects of US foreign policy under Trump 2.0 have outpaced academic responses and knowledge production, especially from Africa and other developing regions of the world. Beyond what is often discussed in international debates, Africa has felt the impact of Trump 2.0, including its influence on US foreign policy and the global order. Despite the popularity and admiration for Trump among the African population, some of his choice of words about the continent have been considered derogatory and dehumanising. In March 2025, for example, Trump remarked that 'nobody has heard of the country' (Ngcobo and Jones, 2025), when referring to Lesotho. Trump has condemned South Africa's Expropriation Act as racist against the white minority, alleged genocide against them, and controversially offered refugee status and relocation to the US (Community News, 2025; Friedman, 2025; US Mission South Africa, 2025). Due to these developments, some critical areas of US–South Africa relations have suffered, including Trump's withdrawal of funding support for the war against HIV/AIDS. Moreover, Trump and his team have been less supportive of South Africa's hosting of the G20 (Majadibodu, 2025).

Thousands of illegal immigrants from across the world are now facing deportation in the US, and many African nationals, notably Nigerians, Ghanaians, Kenyans, Zambians and Zimbabweans, are affected (Ekanem, 2025a). In March 2025, many African countries appeared on Trump's visa ban watchlist, including Libya, Somalia and Sudan on the red list (of eleven countries that their citizens are completely banned), Eritrea, Sierra Leone and South Sudan on the orange list (with ten countries that their citizens would face additional restrictions) as well as Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, São Tomé and Príncipe and Zimbabwe on the yellow list (with 22 countries that have 60 days to address concerns and risks) (Cole,

Introducing African Perspectives on Trump 2.0: United States Foreign Policy and the New World (Re)Order

2025; Ferragamo, 2025). Moreover, Trump's global trade war extended tariffs to no fewer than 50 African countries (Mesa, 2025; Panetta, 2025). Although the tariffs were later postponed, they threatened to erode the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Again, the impacts of US aid cuts and suspension have been significantly felt in Africa (Cilliers, 2025). As earlier suspected, Trump has displayed little or no interest in developing a coherent US African strategy, and in supporting democracy and climate resilience on the continent as well as reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the region to secure permanent seats (Isike and Oyewole, 2024a).

Against this background, there is a growing concern about whether Trump 2.0 will improve or undermine the US–Africa relations. Despite its numerous inadequacies, Joe Biden's administration developed a US African strategy, made high-level visits to the continent, supported democracy, climate resilience and socioeconomic development in Africa through trade, aid and investments as well as UNSC reform with African permanent seats (Isike and Oyewole, 2024b, 2024c). While the Trump administration has yet to display sufficient commitment toward these directions, some of its policies have their own considerable merits. Unlike Biden, Trump's foreign policy is culturally indiscriminate of the system of government, thereby offering African democracies and autocratic states similar opportunities to set their relations with the US in a transactional manner (Isike and Oyewole, 2024a). Moreover, Trump notably brokered the DRC–Rwanda Peace deals, where many earlier initiatives have failed, thereby contributing to peacebuilding on the continent (Ekanem, 2025b; Lawal, 2025). However, the DRC–US minerals for peace deal that underscored the Trump-brokered DRC–Rwanda deal revealed the transactional approach of the new administration to US foreign policy, which is a subject of concern to many on the continent and beyond (Carter, 2025; Zungu, 2025). Nevertheless, many observers, including some contributors in this volume, believe that Trump 2.0, its associated foreign policy and the global effects are rare opportunities for Africans to reduce aid dependency, better manage its resources to cater for human development, boost intra-African trade and local capacity in value-added production to raise its strategic importance in global value chain and

develop food and economic sovereignty, and suitable political systems that are efficient, indigenous and popular among the peoples. Some admirers of MAGA believe that Africa needs a Trump-like leader to make the continent great. Consequently, the world is changing fast with the second coming of Trump, and this calls for intellectual interrogations from different perspectives and regions, including in Africa.

About the book

Africans are not blind, deaf or dumb to the world. The continent has always been involved in observing, reacting, reflecting and responding to world affairs. However, the diversity, coherence, conciseness, visibility, timeliness and impacts of the African contributions to knowledge, practice and realities of international relations remain open to debate. In response to this challenge, the African Centre for the Study of the United States at the University of Pretoria (ACSUS-UP) initiated this project three weeks after the inauguration of Trump as the 47th President of the US, after observing some of the rapid changes to America's foreign policy positions and their (potential) contributions to global order, disorder and reorder from an African point of view. The objective was to provide a concise and timely scholarly reflection that combines conciseness with diversity of African experiences, to inspire intellectual deliberations as well as inform and impact policy engagements on the continent, particularly in relation to US foreign policy, in a rapidly changing world order.

This book is the outcome of a hybrid workshop organised on the subject by ACSUS-UP on 19 May 2025. As the first volume of this project, the book is divided into sixteen chapters. Beyond this first chapter introducing the book, there are fifteen other chapters under five sections. Section II focuses on US foreign policy, covering Chapters 2 to 4. Amidst these, Chapter 2 by Prolific S. Mataruse assesses the different approaches to critical minerals derisking as a matter of US national security and economic competitiveness under Presidents Joe Biden and Donald Trump. While Biden prioritises domestic production, international cooperation and sustainable practices to secure supply chains and counter China's dominance, Trump focuses on promoting domestic

Introducing African Perspectives on Trump 2.0: United States Foreign Policy and the New World (Re)Order

exploration, exploitation and processing of critical minerals. Regardless of these differences, Trump 2.0 will likely maintain and expand the Biden-related derisking infrastructure, excluding liberal, environmental, and international commitments, partly because critical minerals mining and processing capacity largely remains global, and building domestic capacity will take time.

In Chapter 3, Zekeri Momoh examines Trump's transactional foreign policy and isolationism, their determinants and implications for the US global leadership. Shaped by irregular migration, bloated bureaucracy, excessive government spending on foreign aid, and high tariffs imposed on US-made goods, among other factors, Trump has pursued a domestic reform and foreign policy that are transactional and isolationist. Hence, the decisions such as the withdrawal of the US from the WHO, UNHIC, Paris Climate Accord, threatening NATO members, trade war and Trump's approaches to the Gaza and Ukraine conflicts have undermined Washington's global leadership and encouraged the emergence of a multipolar world order² with the EU and BRICS looking to shape the global political economy. Chapter 4, by Luvuyo Jalisa and Ayabulela Dlakavu, examines US foreign policy under President Trump (2017–2021 and 2025), particularly the trade policy and the political economy's impact on Africa. It demonstrates the extent to which Trump's nationalist foreign policy, spanning his two presidential terms, has impacted trade policy and volumes between the US and Africa. By analysing Trump's policies, including transactional diplomacy, tariff impositions, aid reductions, and climate agreement withdrawals, the chapter explores Africa's vulnerabilities and opportunities. The chapter concludes that Trump's policies accelerate a fragmented, yet multipolar world order, compelling African nations to prioritise strengthening of regional governance institutions and other existing bilateral and multilateral partnerships, such as the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), the EU, UN and relations with China.

2 Some scholars have argued that the world is not yet fully multipolar in the classical Cold War sense, where multiple great powers have roughly equal capabilities. Instead, we are navigating a polycentric international system: asymmetric, fragmented, and marked by issue-based coalitions and ideological competition (see Ash, 2025; Çeviköz, 2025).

In two chapters, Section III focuses on immigration. Chapter 5 by David Akindoyin, Toyosi Ajibade and Samuel Oyewole, examines the characters of immigration policy under Trump's first and second presidencies, factors that are responsible for these developments, and their implications for the US foreign relations. Framed as a challenge to national security, sovereignty and economic prosperity, immigration remains central to Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) agenda. While his first term (2017–2021) saw sweeping restrictions, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) rescission, travel bans, refugee admission cuts and heightened visa scrutiny, Trump's second term has intensified these measures, expanding deportations, suspending refugee programmes and tightening visa policies, with considerable and enduring impacts on US external relations, Africa and global (dis)order. Chapter 6 by Jude Odigbo and Afa'anwi Ma'abo Che further examines the implications of Trump's anti-immigration policy and deportation on socio-economic, political and security conditions in Africa. Using general strain theory to anchor linkages between migrant deportation and asserted implications, it argues that this development will increase the vulnerability of African states and may compel deportees to resort to desperate measures for survival, as their home countries lack suitable support systems to assist them. It recommends the establishment of a more robust domestic development framework that enhances individuals' capacity to thrive in their home countries, thereby reducing the demand for migration.

In three chapters, Section IV addresses economic nationalism. In Chapter 7, Joel Leonard explores Trump's economic nationalism, as evident in the 'America First' policy, willingness to acquire new territories, tariffs, trade deals and aid policy, as well as the prospects and challenges of these development approaches in a capitalist world order, and the lessons for Africa. Abdulsheesh Abdulyakeen's Chapter 8 assesses the waves of Trump's tariffs and implications for Africa's export competitiveness, especially in the textile and agricultural sectors. It laments the vulnerability of Africa to external developments in the global economy and recommends improving intra-regional trade through AfCFTA, industrialisation, value-added production, trade diversification policies,

Introducing African Perspectives on Trump 2.0: United States Foreign Policy and the New World (Re)Order

and collective bargaining for better conditions in global trade under and beyond Trump 2.0. In Chapter 9, Edwin Hlase examines the recent US–South Africa diplomatic meltdown and its economic sovereignty. While much of Trump’s agenda has overlooked Africa, South Africa has emerged as a notable exception. Trump has publicly condemned the South African government, alleging land confiscation, discriminatory policies and ‘anti-Americanism’, and issued a punitive executive order terminating substantial US funding for partnership in critical sectors. The chapter contends that Trump’s approach, despite its punitive nature, presents an opportunity and impetus for South Africa to reconfigure its economic strategies and reduce its dependency. While maintaining ties with the US remains crucial, this chapter underscores the urgency for South Africa and other African states to pursue pathways toward greater economic sovereignty and self-reliance.

Section V on security comprises Chapters 10 to 12. In Chapter 10, Mmamashilo Herminah Mmako and David Maningi Mkhonto examine how Trump 2.0 will shape the US’s commitment towards alliance building in achieving a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and as countermeasures against an assertive China. The chapter concludes that continued US leadership in the security dimension of the Indo-Pacific will endure, albeit Washington focuses on China and deterrence attempts. Guillermo Moya Barba’s Chapter 11 analyses the Trump administration’s foreign policy and its implications on the existing conflicts between Spain and Morocco over Western Sahara and the maritime dispute concerning the Canary Islands. It reflects on some possible decisions by Trump that may (re)shape the status quo of the conflicts. Moreover, Chapter 12 by Benjamin Serebour, examines the evolving dynamics of US development assistance in West Africa and its implications for security and democratic governance, with a particular focus on the Sahel region. Drawing on legitimacy crisis and norms diffusion theories, it analyses how poor governance and rising insecurity have contributed to declining public trust in democratic institutions. The chapter examines how the suspension of US aid amid increasing geopolitical competition from Russia has altered the normative landscape and eroded Western efforts to promote liberal democratic values in the region. It underscores the need for external

efforts to promote democracy by employing context-specific approaches that align with the socio-economic and security realities of citizens.

Section VI focuses on geopolitics. In Chapter 13, Neo Letswalo examines how Trump 1.0 and 2.0 MAGA-oriented foreign policy affected the US global leadership position, the implications for US–China geopolitical competition in Africa and the continent’s industrialisation and critical resources. It argues that the US isolationist approach provides a window of opportunity for Africa to develop autonomy from the traditional neoliberal world order and establish the desired industrialisation of the continent. In Chapter 14, Ekeledirichukwu C. Njoku and Samuel Oyewole explore the prospects of Africa’s strategic realignment in response to foreign policy approaches of Trump 2.0 and analyses the balance between strategic patience in US–Africa relations and the continent’s increasing alignment with China, Europe, Russia and other competing powers. It concludes that Africa will likely adopt a wait-and-watch approach, characterised by strategic patience and cautious diplomacy in its engagements with Washington under Trump 2.0, amidst (re)alignment with other major players in international relations.

Section VII focuses on African responses. In Chapter 15, Khouloud Abouri and Hiba Ouzaouit examine the extent to which Trump 2.0 reshapes US–Africa relations by analysing his second-term foreign policy decisions and their implications for Africa’s governance, economy and strategic position. The chapter contributes to the understanding of how Africa navigates shifting global power structures by exploring the impacts of Trump 2.0 and its foreign policy on the region’s political economy and international standing, and the extent to which these policies reinforce historical patterns of marginalisation or open new avenues for African agency in global affairs. Using the case study of South Africa, Chapter 16 by Buhle Mnyanda explores the Global South’s reactions to Trump 2.0. It examines how Trump’s return has affected relations with South Africa, its temporary strategic plans and the available options for repairing relations with the US.

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14

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**Introducing African Perspectives on Trump 2.0:
United States Foreign Policy and the New World (Re)Order**

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Chapter 1

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