

CHAPTER 7

Trump 2.0 and the Rise of Economic Nationalism: Lessons for African Development in a Capitalist World

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Introduction

In recent years, global economic dynamics have been reshaped by the resurgence of economic nationalism, a political-economic doctrine that prioritises national interests, domestic industries and sovereign control over economic policy (Rodrik, 2018). This shift marks a departure from the post-Cold War consensus of liberal globalisation, where free trade, open markets and multilateral cooperation were seen as the bedrock of progress (Fukuyama, 2022). The return of Donald Trump to the political forefront, often dubbed 'Trump 2.0', has reignited these debates with renewed intensity. Under his 'America First' agenda, Trump advanced a model of strategic economic nationalism that redefined the United States (US) approach to global trade, industry policy and international alliances (Bremmer, 2023). More assertive and calculated than during his first term, Trump's policies reflect a broader global pivot toward protectionism, seen also in China's state capitalism and the EU's recalibration of industrial policy (Tooze, 2022).

Despite widespread analysis of Trump's economic policies in the context of Western alliances and Asian economies, there remains a critical research gap concerning the implications of these policies for African development. This paper seeks to address that gap by examining how African nations can extract strategic insights from Trump's economic nationalism to inform their own development models.

Research questions

The resurgence of economic nationalism in global politics—most prominently embodied in Donald Trump’s ‘America First’ doctrine—has reshaped debates about sovereignty, industrial strategy, and participation in the global economy. As major powers increasingly retreat from liberal globalisation and adopt more protectionist economic policies, African nations are confronted with both challenges and opportunities. Understanding these shifts is crucial for African policymakers aiming to strengthen domestic industries, mitigate external vulnerabilities, and navigate a rapidly evolving international economic landscape.

Against this backdrop, this study examines the strategic dimensions of Trump 2.0’s economic nationalism and assesses its relevance for African development trajectories. The following research questions guide the analysis:

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1. What are the core features of Trump 2.0’s economic nationalism, and how do they compare with other global protectionist models?
2. How can African countries adopt or adapt elements of economic nationalism without undermining their participation in the global capitalist system?
3. What policy strategies can African states employ to balance the benefits of open markets with the need for domestic economic resilience?

This paper argues that, regardless of one’s political orientation, Trump’s approach offers valuable policy lessons for African nations seeking to strengthen economic sovereignty, industrial capacity and strategic autonomy. While not advocating for uncritical adoption of protectionism, the analysis investigates how aspects of economic nationalism can be repurposed to reduce dependency and economic fragility in African economies.

The paper is structured as follows: first, it provides a conceptual overview of economic nationalism and capitalism; second, it analyses

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Trump's economic doctrine; third, it compares Trump's approach with those of other global actors; fourth, it examines African economic structures; fifth, it identifies lessons Africa can draw from Trump 2.0; sixth, it discusses policy adaptations and finally, it concludes with practical recommendations for African policymakers.

Understanding economic nationalism and capitalism

To understand the significance of Trump 2.0's policies and their relevance for African development, it is crucial to first define and distinguish the two dominant economic paradigms at the heart of this discussion: economic nationalism and capitalism. While both can coexist, they are rooted in different philosophies and can produce competing policy directions.

American expansionism, economic nationalism, and the rise of Trump's 'America First' agenda

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The notion of 'America First' advanced by Donald Trump is not an isolated development in US foreign and economic policy, but rather a modern iteration of long-standing traditions of economic nationalism and imperial expansionism (Kupchan, 2020; Mead, 2017). Scholars have traced the roots of US foreign policy to territorial expansion, protectionism and the pursuit of economic dominance, which are echoed in Trump's rhetoric and policies (Colás and Saull, 2006; Herring, 2008). This literature review explores the historical antecedents of these ideas, their evolution, and the ways in which Trump's policies reflect both continuities and shifts in American foreign policy.

The historical roots of US expansionism and economic nationalism

The US foreign policy has been deeply intertwined with the ideals of manifest destiny and expansionism since its early years. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the acquisition of Alaska in 1867, and the annexation of Hawaii and territories following the Spanish–American War are key events that highlight the US's longstanding ambitions for territorial and

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economic growth (Gaddis, 2005). According to Hunt (2009), these territorial acquisitions were framed not only as extensions of American values but also as economic necessities to secure access to resources and trade routes. Scholars like Chomsky (2020) argue that American expansionism has always been driven by economic interests, often cloaked in the language of democracy promotion and global security.

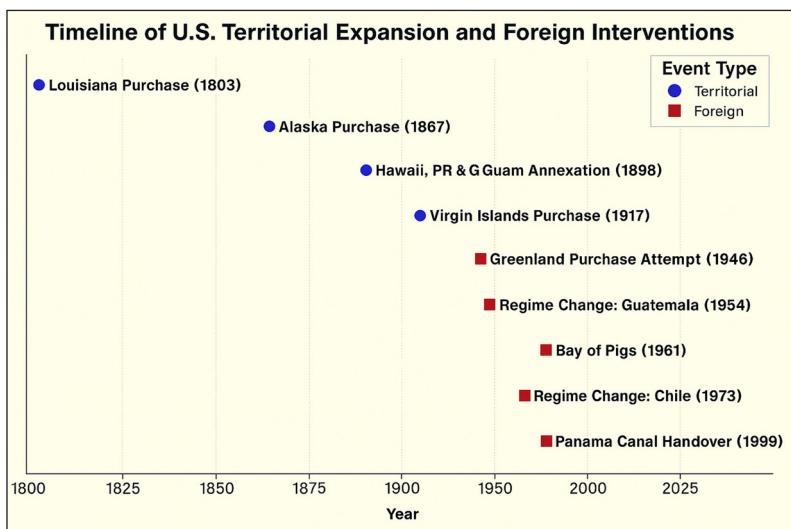


Figure 7.1: A graphical representation of key US territorial acquisitions and foreign interventions from 1803 to 1999

Source: Author's own

The role of the US in the Panama Canal and its influence in Latin America through regime change and military intervention (such as the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961) reflect a history of imperial control designed to safeguard US economic and strategic interests in the Western Hemisphere (Grandin, 2006; Kinzer, 2007). Despite the rhetorical justifications of promoting democracy or human rights, the underlying motivations are often centred on economic control and geopolitical influence.

The economic nationalism of Trump and its historical continuities

Trump's 'America First' agenda can be seen as a revival of economic nationalism, a policy tradition that has ebbed and flowed throughout US history. Historically, economic nationalism in the US has involved the use of tariffs, protectionist trade policies and the support of domestic industries to strengthen national economic power. The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, for example, was a key example of the US retreating from global trade to prioritise domestic industries during the Great Depression (Miller, 2020). Trump's use of tariffs as a central feature of his economic policy reflects a protectionist agenda aimed at restoring American manufacturing jobs, reducing trade deficits, and decreasing dependence on foreign nations, such as China. Scholars such as Miller (2020) have noted that Trump's rhetoric around economic sovereignty and his blunt stance on trade renegotiations align with past protectionist moments in US history, when the nation sought to shield its domestic economy from global competition. The desire for economic self-sufficiency is also evident in Trump's approach to military and geopolitical influence, as seen in his repeated calls to control Greenland and reassert US dominance over international trade routes, such as the Panama Canal. As Hunt (2009) points out, these actions are not new but are part of a broader pattern of US interventionism in Latin America and the Caribbean, where American influence has historically been maintained through economic and military means.

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The modern implications: Trump as a reflection of America's global vision

Trump's 'America First' rhetoric has been controversial, however, it is firmly rooted in the traditions of American economic nationalism and imperial ambitions. As Chomsky (2020) and Gaddis (2005) argue, American foreign policy has often been characterised by a desire to control key economic assets such as the Panama Canal, oil reserves and trade routes, to safeguard its geopolitical and economic interests. Trump's bold

statements regarding Greenland, his interest in Canada and his aggressive stance on global trade underscore a return to economic protectionism that prioritises American power and wealth. These developments signal a renewed phase of economic nationalism where Trump, unlike past US presidents, openly embraces a more brazen and less diplomatically nuanced approach. Hunt (2009) notes that while past leaders justified such actions through the rhetoric of global security and democracy, Trump dispenses with these ideals in favour of blunt economic self-interest. In this context, Trump's policies reflect a modern resurgence of economic nationalism in the US, providing a point of reflection for other nations, including African countries, that seek to navigate the tensions between national autonomy and global integration. As African nations grapple with similar economic pressures, the US experience under Trump offers valuable insights into how economic nationalism can be employed to balance domestic priorities with the demands of global capitalism.

Economic nationalism: Origins and principles

Economic nationalism is an ideology that prioritises national control over economic policy, emphasising the protection and growth of domestic industries, employment and markets. It often manifests through tariffs, trade restrictions, subsidies for local businesses and strategic government intervention in the economy (Helleiner, 2002; Rodrik, 2018). The core belief is that economic independence strengthens national sovereignty and resilience. Historically, economic nationalism has been a common strategy for states seeking to build industrial capacity. The US, for example, employed protectionist tariffs throughout the nineteenth century to protect its emerging industries (Chang, 2002). Germany under Bismarck, post-war Japan and even modern-day China have used forms of economic nationalism to transition from weak or dependent economies into global industrial powers (Reinert, 2007). It is, therefore, not a relic of the past, but a strategy with ongoing relevance.

Capitalism: Dynamics and global reach

Capitalism, by contrast, is based on free market principles where the means of production are privately owned, and economic activity is driven by supply and demand. The system rewards competition, innovation and efficiency. Its primary aim is to create wealth through open exchange, entrepreneurship and limited state intervention (Friedman, 2002; Smith, [1776] 2003). Capitalism has been the dominant global economic model since the late twentieth century, particularly following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have promoted capitalist reforms worldwide, particularly in developing nations (Peet, 2003; Stiglitz, 2003). In Africa, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s and 1990s, which emphasised liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation, were textbook applications of capitalist orthodoxy (Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999). While capitalism fosters growth and innovation, critics argue that it also leads to inequality, market failures and vulnerability to global shocks, particularly in underdeveloped economies with fragile infrastructure and limited industrial bases (Rodrik, 2011; Stiglitz, 2003).

The tension and intersection

Though seemingly at odds, economic nationalism and capitalism are not mutually exclusive. In fact, many of today's most successful economies combine capitalist principles with nationalistic safeguards. China is a prime example, blending state capitalism with global market participation (Bremmer, 2010). The US, often seen as a bastion of free market capitalism, has also historically engaged in protectionist practices, especially under Trump (Miller, 2020; Rodrik, 2018). The real tension lies in the balance: capitalism promotes integration into the global economy, while economic nationalism emphasises self-reliance. Too much protectionism can stifle innovation and lead to inefficiency; too much openness can expose domestic industries to harmful competition and external dependency (Chang, 2002).

For African countries, the challenge is even more complex. Most African economies are heavily dependent on raw material exports, foreign investment, and aid (Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999; Taylor, 2016). This dependence limits policy flexibility and increases vulnerability to external shocks such as commodity price fluctuations or geopolitical crises. As such, blindly embracing capitalism without strategic safeguards may reinforce dependency rather than drive transformation (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012; Rodrik, 2011).

Why this matters for Africa: The case for strategic economic nationalism

The stark developmental contrasts between a sample study of West Africa and the US, as highlighted in the comparative Table 7.1 below, underscore the urgency for African policymakers to chart a strategic economic path tailored to the continent's unique context. Despite West Africa's lower GDP per capita (~US\$2 200), compared to the US (~US\$83 000), its population size (~US\$430 million), resource endowments and emerging tech and fintech sectors position it for robust, independent economic development, if managed through a strategic hybrid of economic nationalism and capitalist engagement.

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Table 7.1: A comparison table between West Africa and the US

Category	West Africa (as a single state)	United States of America
Countries included	16 countries (e.g., Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, etc.)	50 states + Washington D.C.
Population	~430 million (2025 est.)	~334 million (2025 est.)
Area	~6.1 million km ²	~9.6 million km ²
GDP (nominal)	~\$950 billion (2024 est.)	~\$28 trillion (2024 est.)
GDP per capita	~\$2,200	~\$83,000
Major languages	English, French, Arabic, Hausa, Yoruba, Wolof, etc.	English (main), Spanish (growing), others
Currency	XOF, NGN, GHS, GMD, SLE, GNF etc.	US Dollar (US\$)
Natural resources	Oil, gas, gold, cocoa, bauxite, rubber, cotton	Oil, gas, agriculture, tech, industrial minerals
Technology/ Industry	Developing, with growing fintech, agriculture, mining	Advanced—global leader in tech, finance, defence
Climate	Tropical to semi-arid (Sahel), coastal humid	Arctic to tropical, desert

Source: Author's own

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The capacity for independent development

West Africa, if conceptualised as a single economic bloc, possesses significant human and natural resources. With approximately 5 million km² of land and vast reserves of oil, gas, gold, cocoa, bauxite and rubber, the region is not resource-poor (UNCTAD, 2022). These are critical assets that can drive industrialisation, if protected from exploitative global value chains. Drawing on Rodrik (2011), economic nationalism becomes essential here, not to retreat from global trade, but to provide policy space for infant industries to mature.

Dani Rodrik (2011: 70) argues that successful development often hinges on a state's ability to 'discipline globalisation,' meaning that countries must adopt heterodox policies that may go against global neoliberal norms in order to nurture domestic capacity. The US itself has historically done this from the early use of tariffs and subsidies to protect industries, to Trump's more recent return to tariffs and trade renegotiations (Miller, 2020).

Similarly, West Africa's growing fintech, agriculture and mining sectors, despite being in a developing stage, show promising signs of endogenous capacity. While the US boasts advanced, global leadership in tech and finance, it took centuries of protected economic development to reach that point, often involving aggressive economic nationalism (Chang, 2002).

Why economic nationalism is a viable path

What makes economic nationalism especially relevant for Africa is the continent's history of SAPs and trade liberalisation that failed to yield inclusive growth (Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999). These externally imposed reforms often hollowed out local industries and increased dependency. Trump's unapologetic pursuit of US interests through tariffs, renegotiated trade deals and reduced foreign aid offers a contemporary example of how even global powers pursue self-interested policies under the guise of national development (Stiglitz, 2018; Taylor, 2016).

For African states, the takeaway is clear: embracing global capitalism does not require abandoning domestic priorities. Rather, a balanced model, as suggested by Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), emphasises strong institutions that can selectively engage the global economy while building internal resilience.

Policy relevance of the US-West Africa comparison

Table 7.1 further reveals that West Africa's larger population (430 million vs. 334 million in the US) offers a potentially large internal market, which can be used to scale industries if integrated and protected properly akin to the US model of continental economic integration. Moreover, with a tropical and semi-arid climate conducive to year-round agriculture and an increasingly educated and urbanised youth population, the region is well-positioned to drive its own industrial revolution if guided by intentional state-led planning. Currencies, languages and infrastructure fragmentation remain key challenges, however, they also represent areas where regional cooperation, not global dependence, can yield powerful

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synergies. As the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) takes hold, opportunities for regional economic nationalism, develop as a bloc to protect and scale African industries to become even more viable.

Global responses: EU, China and the new protectionist order

The rise of Trump 2.0 and the resurgence of US economic nationalism did not occur in isolation. Rather, it intensified a global trend already underway, a shift from liberal globalisation toward strategic protectionism. Major economic powers like China and the EU have, in various forms, adopted their own versions of economic nationalism, contributing to the emergence of a new global protectionist order (Hopewell, 2021; Rodrik, 2020). This shift has profound implications for the Global South, particularly African nations, whose development paths are often shaped by external power structures (Taylor, 2020).

China: State capitalism as strategic nationalism

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China represents the most successful hybrid model of capitalism embedded within a nationalist framework. Its economic rise has been orchestrated through state-directed industrial policy, tight control over key sectors and aggressive global expansion via the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Naughton, 2018; Rolland, 2019). The Chinese state subsidises industries, restricts foreign ownership in strategic sectors and imposes technological transfer conditions on foreign investors (Kennedy, 2020).

Beijing's success shows that economic nationalism is not inherently incompatible with growth and globalisation. In fact, China has used the global capitalist system to its advantage while preserving autonomy over domestic economic priorities (Kroeber, 2016). For African leaders, this underscores the viability of pursuing global competitiveness without surrendering national control.

Trump's economic agenda was, in many ways, a direct reaction to China's economic rise. The US–China trade war was not just about trade imbalances, but about challenging the strategic threat posed by China's

state-led model (Bown, 2020). Africa, often caught between Chinese and Western economic influences, finds itself in the crossfire of this emerging bipolar global economy (Sun, 2019).

European Union: Defensive industrial policy

The EU, long a champion of free trade and multilateralism, has also begun to pivot toward economic self-preservation. Facing supply chain vulnerabilities and dependence on foreign technologies, the EU has launched policies like the European Industrial Strategy, aimed at boosting domestic innovation and reducing reliance on non-EU countries for critical technologies and raw materials (European Commission, 2020; Pisani-Ferry, 2021).

Post-COVID, the EU intensified efforts to protect 'strategic autonomy', especially in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, energy and digital infrastructure (Leonard et al., 2021). The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism is another example of the EU adopting protectionist tools under the guise of environmental policy; a move likely to impact African exporters lacking green technology capacity (Bruegel, 2021).

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A fractured global economic consensus

Together, these shifts by the US, China and the EU signify a fracturing of the global consensus that dominated the post-Cold War era. The WTO's authority has weakened, regional trade blocs have gained momentum and countries are increasingly using trade, aid and technology access as tools of strategic influence (Baldwin, 2016; Hopewell, 2021).

For African nations, this new landscape offers both risks and opportunities. On the one hand, increased global protectionism may shrink market access and reduce aid dependency (Friedman, 2020). On the other hand, it creates space for policy experimentation and South-South alliances, potentially enabling African states to assert greater economic agency (Adebajo, 2021).

Rather than passively absorbing the outcomes of great power competition, Africa can and must position itself as a shaper of its economic

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destiny. Observing how major powers adapt their capitalist systems with nationalistic safeguards provides African policymakers with a spectrum of strategies to explore (Rodrik, 2020; Mkandawire, 2014).

African economies: Structural realities and policy vulnerabilities

To meaningfully assess what lessons Trump 2.0 and global economic nationalism offer for Africa, one must first understand the structural realities of African economies. Despite the diversity of the continent, many African countries share common developmental features, characterised by weak industrial bases, reliance on commodity exports and high vulnerability to external economic shocks (UNECA, 2020; McMillan, Page and Te Velde, 2017). These structural conditions create both limitations and openings in the quest for economic self-determination.

Overdependence on raw material exports

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Many African economies are built on a narrow base of commodity exports, such as oil in Nigeria and Angola, copper in Zambia, cocoa in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire and gold in South Africa and Tanzania (AfDB, 2021; UNCTAD, 2019). These sectors are capital-intensive, often foreign-owned, and generate limited employment. More importantly, they expose countries to price volatility on international markets, over which they have little control (Collier and Goderis, 2009).

This dependence on extractive industries mirrors the colonial economic model, where Africa served as a supplier of raw materials for industrial powers. In this context, integration into global capitalism has not fostered robust, diversified development, but rather a neo-colonial economic dependency (Amin, 1976; Mkandawire, 2014).

Weak industrialisation and manufacturing gaps

Industrialisation remains one of Africa's biggest economic challenges. The manufacturing sector contributes only around 10–12 per cent to GDP in many countries, compared to 25–30 per cent in East Asian economies at

similar stages of development (UNIDO, 2019; Lin, 2012). The lack of infrastructure, energy reliability, skilled labour and technology access has hindered African industrial growth (AfDB, 2020).

This structural gap is compounded by premature deindustrialisation, a phenomenon where countries lose manufacturing capacity before fully industrialising, due to exposure to cheap imports and unfavourable trade terms (Rodrik, 2016). The liberalisation promoted by structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and 1990s accelerated this trend, dismantling tariffs and protective barriers without first building local competitiveness (Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999).

Aid dependency and external policy influence

Many African governments remain highly dependent on foreign aid and concessional loans, which limits their policy autonomy (Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock, 2017; Moyo, 2009). Donor-driven development agendas, tied to neoliberal principles, have often prioritised macroeconomic stability over structural transformation (Stiglitz, 2003). Conditions imposed by institutions like the IMF and World Bank discourage strategic state intervention, despite historical evidence that such intervention has played a key role in most developed economies (Chang, 2002).

This external influence results in weak domestic policy sovereignty. Governments often lack the flexibility to impose tariffs, subsidise key industries, or protect infant sectors, all central to the economic nationalism pursued by Trump or China (Rodrik, 2007).

Fragmented regional markets

Another key challenge is the fragmentation of African markets. Despite the establishment of AfCFTA, intra-African trade remains below 20 per cent, compared to over 60 per cent in Europe (UNECA, 2021). Weak logistics, non-tariff barriers and political rivalries hamper the realisation of a truly integrated continental economy (Songwe, 2019).

Without regional coordination, African countries compete in global markets, rather than collaborate to scale industries or negotiate better

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trade terms. This weakens their collective bargaining power and limits the potential for continental value chains to emerge (Signé and Van der Ven, 2019).

Political economy constraints

The political economy of reform in Africa is often shaped by elite interests, corruption and short-term electoral pressures (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012). Nationalistic policies such as subsidies, industrial policy or import restrictions require long-term planning and political consensus, which is frequently undermined by unstable governance and weak institutions (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012).

Moreover, economic nationalism in Africa must be carefully managed to avoid crony capitalism, where protectionist policies benefit a small elite, rather than foster broad-based development (Kelsall, 2013).

Turning vulnerabilities into strategy

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While these challenges are real, they are not insurmountable. Trump 2.0 shows that even advanced economies are reconsidering the costs of hyper-globalisation. For Africa, the key is to transform structural weaknesses into strategic imperatives: use protection where it builds capacity; deploy capitalism where it stimulates competition and innovation and assert policy space where external pressures restrict domestic development goals (Rodrik, 2020; Taylor, 2020).

The next section explores how African countries can extract concrete insights from the Trump model to reframe their economic strategies and build resilient, sovereign economies.

Lessons from Trump 2.0 - A strategic framework for African development

Despite its divisive nature, Trump 2.0 offers several critical lessons for African countries grappling with the challenge of balancing economic nationalism and global capitalism. By critically examining Trump's

economic policies, African nations can adapt certain strategies to recalibrate their own development trajectories. The framework proposed in this section emphasises strategic autonomy, economic diversification and innovative industrial policies (Rodrik, 2020; Taylor, 2020).

Economic sovereignty and protection of domestic industries

One of the key pillars of Trump's economic nationalism was economic sovereignty, the idea that the US must prioritise its own industries, jobs, and national interests in a globalised world (Bown and Irwin, 2019). For Africa, the lesson here is that economic sovereignty must be central to development strategy.

While global trade has brought benefits, African nations must learn to protect strategic sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and technology. These sectors should not be left to the whims of global markets, but rather should be nurtured through carefully crafted protectionist policies, such as tariffs on goods that could undermine local industries (Chang, 2002; Rodrik, 2007).

African governments could adopt infant industry protection measures for key sectors, such as automotive manufacturing, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and technology, all of which are critical to reducing dependency on foreign goods (UNCTAD, 2019). By strengthening these industries, African countries can diversify their economies and reduce reliance on raw material exports (Lin, 2012).

Innovation and competition as catalysts for growth

At the same time, Trump's embrace of competition and innovation in sectors such as technology, defence and pharmaceuticals also offer lessons (Muro et al., 2020). Trump's tax cuts and deregulation efforts aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and private sector innovation underscore the importance of creating environments conducive to business growth (White House, 2018).

For African countries, fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems is critical.

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By incentivising local start-ups, creating favourable tax regimes for small businesses and investing in education and training, African nations can begin to shift from being passive consumers of technology to active producers (Signé, 2020).

In addition, to spur innovation, African governments must ensure that research and development (R&D) receive adequate funding and support (AfDB, 2020). For instance, countries like Kenya and Nigeria have seen success with digital innovation in mobile banking and agritech (World Bank, 2019). By investing in such sectors, African countries can develop the technological autonomy that is essential for sustainable development.

Bilateral trade agreements and regional cooperation

Trump's rejection of multilateral trade agreements in favour of bilateral trade deals demonstrates the importance of tailoring economic agreements to national priorities (Evenett and Fritz, 2020). African countries should pursue bilateral agreements that focus on fostering intra-Africa trade and securing access to critical global markets.

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The AfCFTA presents a golden opportunity for African nations to pool resources, reduce trade barriers and build regional supply chains (UNECA, 2021). However, individual countries must also negotiate directly with other major powers to secure favourable trade terms (Signé and Van der Ven, 2019).

By adopting a strategic mix of multilateral and bilateral agreements, African countries can increase their negotiating power and begin to shift the terms of trade in their favour. This means making trade deals that focus not only on exports, but also on technology transfer, skills development and industrial investment (UNCTAD, 2021).

Leveraging the global supply chain - Reshoring and strategic autonomy

Trump's reshoring policy, which aims to bring manufacturing back to the US from overseas, is driven by the desire to reduce dependency on foreign nations for critical goods and services (Office of Trade and Manufacturing

Policy, 2020). While Africa cannot fully reshape global supply chains in the same way, it can leverage its role in global value chains to increase the value-added activities within its own borders (Gereffi, 2018).

For instance, rather than simply exporting raw materials like minerals, oil and agricultural products, African countries should push for downstream processing within their own borders (UNIDO, 2020). By developing refining, processing and manufacturing capacities, African nations can increase the local economic value derived from these commodities.

Additionally, strategic autonomy in sectors such as energy, healthcare and agriculture is essential (Rodrik, 2020). Africa can explore alternative energy sources like solar and wind, which not only address energy access issues but also offer new opportunities for job creation and technological innovation (IRENA, 2021).

Aligning national priorities with global trends

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Trump's second term was marked by policy recalibration that aligned national goals with global trends, particularly in technology and innovation (Muro et al., 2020). While Africa should assert its sovereignty, it must also recognise the importance of engaging with the global economy, especially in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, artificial intelligence and biotechnology (Signé, 2020).

African countries must identify global megatrends and align their development goals accordingly. For example, as the world transitions toward a green economy, African nations can invest in sustainable industries such as electric vehicles, green energy and eco-friendly agriculture (AfDB, 2021). These sectors offer not only environmental benefits, but also economic opportunities in the long term (OECD, 2020).

A balanced, nationally focused globalism

Trump 2.0's economic nationalism offers valuable insights into how African countries can rethink their place in the global economy. The key

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lesson is that Africa can embrace global capitalism without becoming subordinate to it. By striking a balance between strategic protectionism and innovation-driven competition, African countries can build resilient, diversified economies that are self-sustaining, globally competitive, and strategically autonomous (Rodrik, 2020; Taylor, 2020).

The future of African development depends not only on participating in the global market, but on actively shaping the terms of that participation. Drawing lessons from Trump's economic nationalism, African policymakers can craft development strategies that prioritise domestic industries, stimulate innovation and ensure that the continent's economic growth is grounded in self-reliance and sovereignty.

Conclusion and policy recommendations

In the face of rising economic nationalism, exemplified by Trump 2.0, African countries find themselves at a pivotal moment in their development journey. The tension between economic nationalism and global capitalism presents both challenges and opportunities. By examining Trump's policies and the experiences of other global powers, African policymakers can identify strategies that will allow them to navigate this evolving global landscape effectively.

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The lessons from Trump 2.0 underscore the importance of economic sovereignty, protecting local industries, fostering innovation and asserting policy space in the face of global competition. However, this must not lead to self-isolation. Capitalism, with its emphasis on innovation, competition and global integration, remains an essential driver of economic growth. Thus, a balanced approach is required, one that combines elements of protectionism for strategic sectors with active participation in global markets to access new technologies, capital and trade partnerships.

Policy recommendations

1. Develop national industrial strategies: Focus on diversifying the economy, particularly in manufacturing, technology and renewable energy. Protectionist policies should be used

judiciously to support nascent industries.

2. Encourage innovation and technology transfer: Invest in R&D and entrepreneurial ecosystems, focusing on sectors that can drive long-term growth.
3. Strengthen regional integration: Fully implement AfCFTA and invest in regional infrastructure to boost intra-Africa trade and collective bargaining power.
4. Build strategic autonomy in critical sectors: Focus on achieving self-sufficiency in areas like energy, agriculture and healthcare, reducing reliance on external powers.
5. Create long-term vision plans: Foster political stability and long-term economic planning that balances national goals with global integration.

By embracing these recommendations, African nations can create economies that are both self-sustaining and globally competitive, setting a new course for sustainable development in the twenty-first century.

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