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Kohnert, Dirk

GIGA, Hamburg

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Impact of Trump 2.0 on Sub-Saharan Africa

Dirk Kohnert ¹

Cartoon 1: *Trump's second inauguration*



Source: © [facebook](#), Trump cartoons by some of Africa's leading cartoonists, January 2025...

Abstract: As Trump takes aim at global norms and institutions, the question of what parts of the post-Cold War order can be saved, and for whom, needs urgent attention. Moving away from these positions will require major changes. Trump 2.0 has generated optimism in Africa. South Africa, in particular, was initially optimistic. But later, bilateral relations with South Africa deteriorated as the Trump administration, including his economic advisor, South African-born Elon Musk, openly sided with the white SA establishment, at least for the next four years. Prospects for democratic transitions were also dashed, as Trump did not care about democratising sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), but rather supported African autocracies, such as in Biya's Cameroon, Gnassingbé's Togo, and the Central African Republic and Ivory Coast. Trump's intention to dismantle USAid threw all its contractors into disarray. Fear, pain and hunger were the terrible consequences of US funding cuts, for example in Kenya and war-torn Sudan. The US was the largest ODA donor in SSA. In fiscal year 2023/2024, the US had donated nearly \$3.7 billion. Jihadism in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and beyond is likely to intensify and spread. The isolationist US Africa policy under Trump could further reduce Western influence. Trump's trade policies, particularly the imposition of tariffs and withdrawal from multilateral agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), have affected developing countries' access to the US market. This is particularly true in SSA, which relies heavily on exports of commodities, textiles and manufactured goods to the US market. The imposition of tariffs on steel, aluminium and other manufactured goods further increased the cost of exports from these countries, leading to reduced competitiveness and a decline in trade volumes. African countries benefiting from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) have seen their benefits diminish, as the Trump administration has de-prioritised AGOA.

Keywords: [Trump government](#), [Sub-Sahara Africa](#), [Trade policy](#), [nationalism](#), [protectionism](#), [rare earths](#), [counter-terrorism](#), [South Africa](#), [DR Congo](#), [Namibia](#), [Somalia](#)

JEL-Code: F13 - Trade Policy ; International Trade Organizations, F51 - International Conflicts ; Negotiations ; Sanctions; F52 - National Security ; Economic Nationalism, F6 - Economic Impacts of Globalization, H21 - Efficiency ; Political Economy, P16 - Political Economy, P52 - Comparative Studies of Particular Economies

¹ Dirk Kohnert, associated expert, [GIGA-Institute for African Affairs, Hamburg](#). Draft: 21 February 2025

1. Introduction

Cartoon 2: Trump deals unlimited



Source: © [facebook](#), Trump cartoons by some of Africa's leading cartoonists..., January 2025

In one of his first acts in office, less than two weeks after his return, [Donald Trump](#) ordered military airstrikes against a senior [Islamic State](#) (IS) attack planner and others in [Somalia](#). The strikes were carried out in the [Golis Mountains](#) in north-eastern Somalia. The Somali branch of IS was formed in 2015 by a group of defectors from the al-Qaeda-linked [al-Shabab group](#), the largest jihadist group in Somalia. IS in Somalia is notorious for extorting locals and carrying out mainly small, sporadic attacks. Trump also took a swipe at the [Biden administration](#), saying the US military had been targeting this particular IS planner for years, but blamed Joe Biden for allegedly not acting fast enough to get the job done. However, in fact, US forces had killed IS leader [Bilal al-Sudani](#) and 10 of his operatives in a remote mountain cave in northern Somalia in an operation ordered by Biden in 2023. On the contrary, one of Trump's last actions on leaving the White House in 2020 was to withdraw hundreds of US troops from Somalia. The US had invested heavily in the country for decades to contain the threat posed by al-Shabab. Trump ordered strikes in his first term, although he withdrew troops at the 11th hour of his presidency. Biden reversed this decision when he took over in 2021, in order to maintain a continuous US presence. [Trump 1.0](#) saw him de-prioritise US engagement in [Africa](#). [Trump 2.0](#) is likely to view Africa through a competitive lens as US adversaries [Russia](#) and [China](#) greatly expand their trade influence on the continent (Wright & Iqbal (2025)). The impact of his tenure continues to influence both US policy and the global order. From the trade war between the US and China to the lingering effects of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), the essays analyse the rise of protectionism, its influence on global supply chains, and the resulting economic consequences for both developed and developing countries. Key topics include the economic impact of tariffs, trade policy uncertainty and the reshaping of regional trade agreements such as the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement ([USMCA](#)) and United States–Korea Free Trade Agreement ([KORUS FTA](#)) (Saliya, 2025).

In his first week in office, US President Trump took aim at the norms and institutions of the [post-Cold War era](#), from global management of climate and health to international trade rules. Trump's actions therefore herald a permanent shift in the landscape, not just a switch that will flip back in four years' time. Trump has also launched a series of trade actions, notably punitive tariffs on steel and aluminium that have moved the US further away from [WTO](#) rules. A short-lived back-and-forth with [Colombia](#) over its refusal to accept planeloads of [deportees](#) offered a glimpse into the new administration's playbook: the matter was quickly resolved after Trump threatened to impose 25 % tariffs. Not only institutions, but also the norms of the post-Cold War order, such as those combating [racial](#) and [gender bias](#) and [inequality](#), are under threat, with programmes being scrapped and staff reassigned. A [freeze on almost all US foreign aid](#) 'pending review' has left the fate of US development and

humanitarian assistance programmes in doubt. So far, Trump and his cabinet have focused less on the pillars of the post-1945 world order: [NATO](#), the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#) (NPT), the [UN](#), the [World Bank](#) and the [IMF](#). The question remains whether Trump and those around him are willing to work within these institutions or will target them next (Hurlburt, 2025).

Cartoon 3: *Trump, he did it ...*

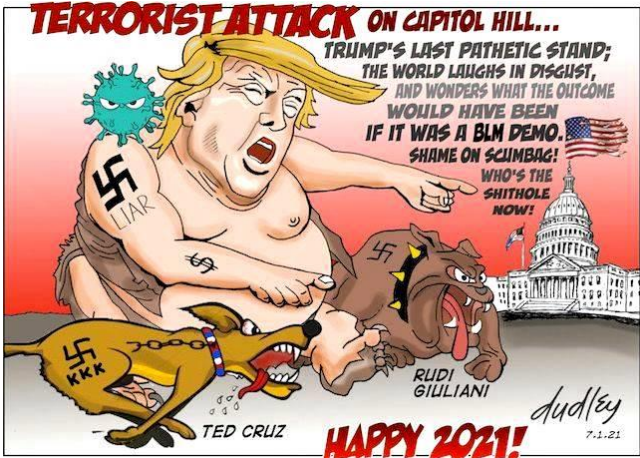


Source: © [facebook](#), Trump cartoons by some of Africa's leading cartoonists, January 2025

Across [Africa](#), the Trump administration's policies are already having profound consequences for some of the world's poorest and most disadvantaged populations. Fear, pain and hunger have been the dire effects of US funding cuts (Hourel & Chason, 2025). The President's decision to cancel or suspend billions of dollars in foreign aid is deepening [humanitarian crises](#) and putting countless lives at risk. Thousands of "stop-work" orders have been issued to employees and contractors of [USAID](#), which has long been Washington's main vehicle for global aid. USAID spent \$40 billion of the \$68 billion the US allocated to foreign aid programmes last year, making it the world's largest single donor, providing food, health care and clean water to tens of millions of people. Over the past five years, countries in [sub-Saharan Africa](#) (SSA) have received more than a third of US foreign aid spending. In the most desperate places, such as [war-torn Sudan](#), the impact has been immediate. Half the country's 50 million people need food aid, and famine is spreading as [Islamist militias](#) and their military allies battle a paramilitary force accused by Washington of genocide. The USAID suspension has halted national food programmes that feed millions and closed hundreds of community kitchens that operate in areas too dangerous for large agencies to enter (Hourel & Chason, 2025; Mahdawi, 2025). In one fell swoop, Trump fired more than 50 career civil servants and foreign service officers at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and then suspended others for allegedly trying to uphold basic rules related to firing or security related to sensitive and classified information (Unger, 2025). [Non-governmental organisations](#) and other humanitarian and development companies that work with the US government through grants and contracts have so far laid off well over a thousand employees. As many humanitarian and development programmes sputtered to a halt and thousands of people working to improve lives, livelihoods, health and freedoms internationally were separated from their jobs. Vulnerable communities around the world began to feel the effects of a disappearing partner. The United States is, after all, the largest provider of food aid. But strategic financial support in this and other areas is about much more than direct service delivery. Better systems and information are key factors. Take, for example, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network ([FEWS NET](#)), originally created by USAID during the [Reagan administration](#) in response to crises in Africa. This US innovation has become one of the world's preeminent sources of information and analysis on impending food crises, demonstrating the value of such information management programmes (technology) to US

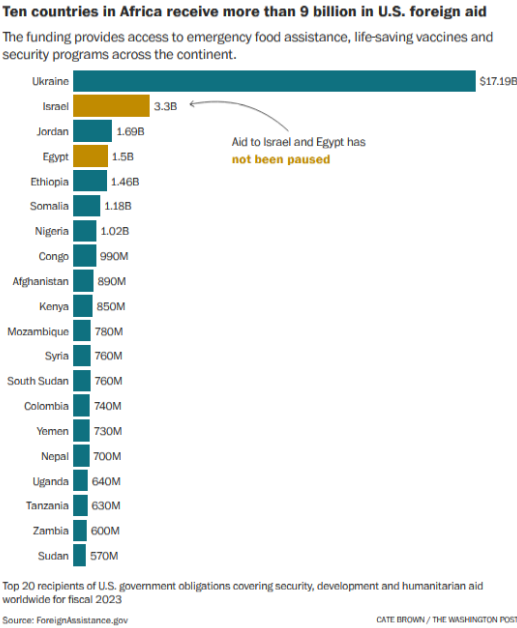
efforts from [Sudan](#) to [Afghanistan](#). Such systems, based on [satellite-based remote sensing](#) data and collaborative networks across the U.S. government and around the world, will only become more important in a world of increasingly [extreme weather events](#). The [Bush administration's](#) creation of the [Millennium Challenge Corporation](#) enabled larger, longer-term infrastructure investment partnerships with promising country partners, while the first Trump administration revived the US [International Development Finance Corporation](#). Regarding the future of USAID, [Elon Musk](#) has said that it is "time for it to die" and that President Trump has agreed to shut it down. In response to the Trump administration's early moves, news coverage is increasingly focusing on transnational threats mitigated by foreign aid, such as corruption, conflict, and criminal networks linked to human and drug trafficking (Unger, 2025).

Cartoon 4: *Trump and fake news on “terrorist attack on Capito hill”*



Source: © [facebook](#), 7 January 2021

Graph 1: *Ten countries in Africa receive more than 9 bn in U.S. foreign aid*



Source: © Houreld, Katharine & Rachel Chason (2025)

Formerly popular African [liberation movements](#) will remain under pressure. However, [elections scheduled for 2025 in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania and Gabon](#) are unlikely to bring democratic change, even though the use of digital technology promises to reduce the possibility of fraud. All the more so as Trump does not care about democratisation in [SSA](#). Dissatisfaction with civilian governments may therefore fuel conflict. [Jihadism](#) in the wider [Sahel, Horn of Africa](#) and beyond is likely to intensify and spread (Basedau et al., 2025).

Cartoon 5: *Trump and rigged elections, compared with African elections*



Source: © [Zapiro cartoon](#) published on *Daily Maverick* (10 November 2024) on Burning Issues Donald J. Trump #USAElection2024, [facebook](#), 11 November 2024

Some African observers fear that Trump will reduce US interest in the continent, as was the case during his first term. Based on ongoing research at the African Center for the Study of the United States at the [University of Pretoria](#), it is argued that Trump 2.0 could have mixed effects, raising both hopes and fears for Africa. For example, a transactional approach to foreign engagement and its preference for selective [bilateral relationships](#) based on US strategic needs could be positive for diplomatic relations, investment, and trade with some African countries. But it could also undermine Africa's autonomy and voice in global affairs. The policy risks harming democracy, stability, commitment to human rights, and climate change. It could also negatively impact [African immigration to the United States](#). The African Growth and Opportunity Act ([AGOA](#)) could also lead to a fragmentation of U.S.-Africa trade relations, hurting smaller economies with less bargaining power (Britz & Olekseyuk & Vogel, 2025; Isike & Oyewole, 2024). Trump's proposed strict immigration policy is another concern for many in Africa. He will tighten borders and deport illegal immigrants. This could make it difficult for Africans to immigrate, even legally, to the United States.

Cartoon 6: *No more aid*

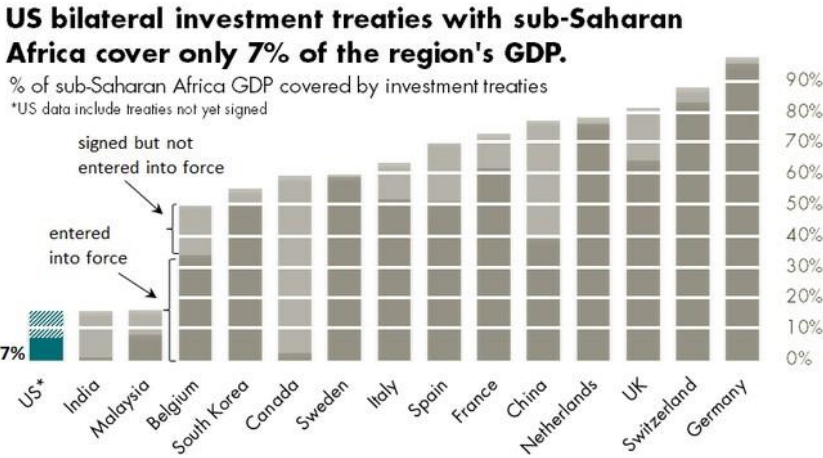


Source: © tv47ke, [instagramm](#), 2025

About 3 million of the 19 million African immigrants who emigrated between 1990 and 2020 went to the United States and Canada. Although Africa is one of the smallest contributors to the irregular immigrant population in the United States, Trump’s policy will have a negative impact on the ties between the United States and the [African diaspora](#). Africa’s share of the unauthorized immigrant population in the United States increased from 275,000 out of about 10.5 million in 2019 to 375,000 out of 11 million in 2022. Hundreds of thousands of Africans in the United States could be deported, affecting U.S. [remittances to Africa](#), which totaled \$13 billion in 2023. There are also concerns that Trump’s dismissive attitude toward Africa will overshadow [President Joe Biden’s](#) recognition of Africa’s autonomy and his doctrine of equal partnership with the continent. Trump’s approach may translate into favorable engagements with strategic African partners, but little with Africa as a whole.

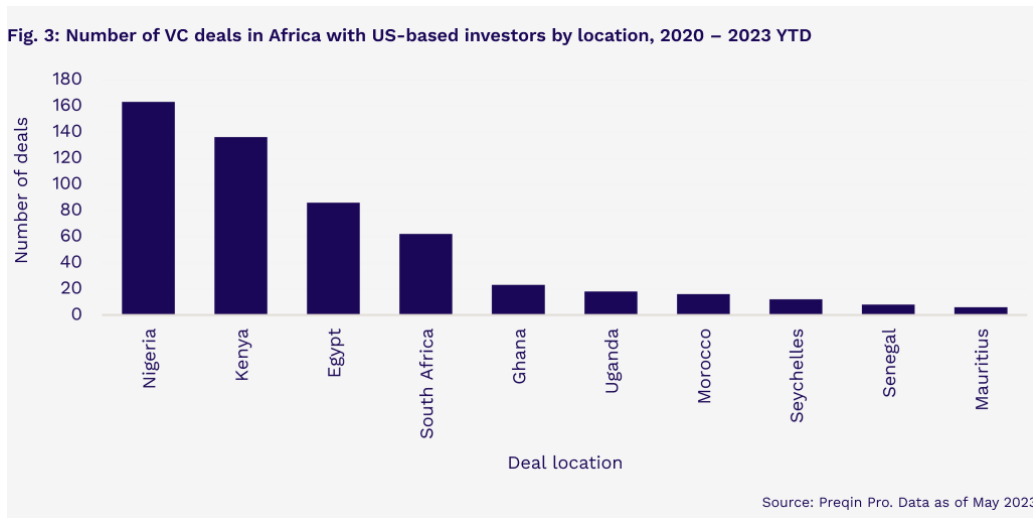
For example, unlike Presidents Barack Obama and Biden, Trump has not hosted a [U.S.-Africa Heads of State Summit](#). He has expressed admiration for [autocracy](#) and praised [dictators](#). This trend endangers struggling democracies and human rights developments in Africa. Some leaders may welcome less stringent external oversight. But it could strengthen authoritarian regimes, weaken political accountability, and undermine governance standards in countries where democratic institutions are fragile and democracy is in decline. Examples include [Burkina Faso](#), [Guinea](#), [Gabon](#), [Mali](#), [Niger](#) and [Togo](#). It is also unclear whether Mr. Trump can sustain the [Global Infrastructure and Investment Partnership](#), a [G7](#) initiative aimed at fostering sustainable and transparent investment in quality infrastructure around the world. Several African countries, such as [Kenya](#), [Sierra Leone](#), and [Mozambique](#), have benefited from the G7’s U.S.-led digital infrastructure projects. Others, such as [Angola](#), the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) (DR Congo) and [Zambia](#), are set to benefit from the G7-funded construction of the [new 800-km railway linking](#) these countries, the first open-access transcontinental rail network in Africa. Trump has also promised massive import tariffs, which is worrying all of the United States’ trading partners. Trump 2.0 could therefore strengthen military support for [counterterrorism](#) initiatives, prioritizing support for allied countries such as [Nigeria](#) and [Kenya](#). However, he may not commit American troops to the ground.

Graph 2: US bilateral investment treaties with Sub-Saharan Africa cover only 7% of the region’s GDP



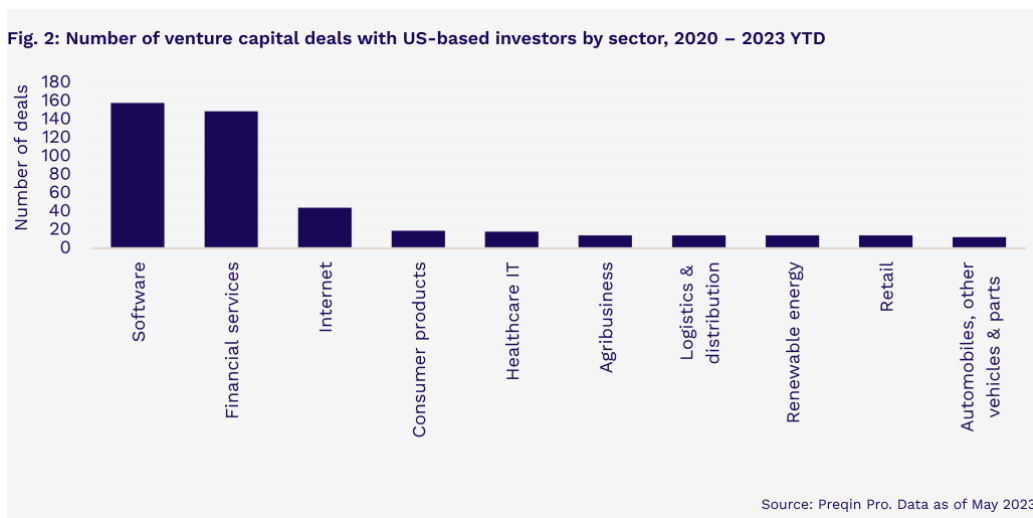
Source: © Source: Leo, 2014

Graph 3: Number of Venture Capital deals in Africa with US-based investors by location, 2020 - 2023 YTD



Source: © Harris, 2023

Graph 4: Number of venture capital deals with US-based investors by sector, 2020-2023 (YTD)



Source: © Harris, 2023

But there are also glimmers of hope on the horizon (Yade, 2024). For example, Trump recognised [Morocco's sovereignty over the territory of Western Sahara](#) in 2020, making the [Maghreb](#) country a key player in the [Abraham Accords](#). With this precedent, the kingdom could see its importance rise under Trump 2.0. Viewing Africa through the lens of competition with China, following the significant growth of China's influence in Africa and the weakening of US influence in Africa, the Trump administration created the [Development Finance Corporation](#) (DFC), which was better funded than its predecessors. The first Trump administration also launched the [Prosper Africa initiative](#) to support US investment across the continent, the growth of Africa's middle class and improve the overall business climate in the region. Since then, these adversaries have expanded their influence on the continent: [Russia](#) has confirmed its status as Africa's largest arms seller, and [China](#) has become Africa's largest trading partner, now doing five times more trade with Africa than the United States (Yade, 2024). Beyond Trump, the profiles of senior officials will say a lot about the White House's

intentions. This tougher approach could potentially be applied in the competition for influence in Africa. While Trump has repeatedly distanced himself from the policy agenda known as the 2025 Presidential Transition Project ([Project 2025](#)), he has since tapped people who helped craft the plan for various administration posts. In its proposals for the US State Department, Project 2025 calls for a return to "core diplomatic activities" and away from promoting policies that focus on cultural values, such as those that support [LGBTQI+ rights](#). This would have a positive impact in African countries that have criminalised LGBTQI+ people and activities, notably autocratic [Uganda](#), but also democratic countries such as [Senegal](#) and [Ghana](#). Uganda, which the Biden administration has excluded from preferential trade treatment because of concerns about gay rights, may find a more sympathetic ear from the Trump administration (Yade, 2024).

The fate of certain large-scale projects, such as the [Lobito Corridor](#), US President Joe Biden's major legacy in Africa, will also need to be monitored (Yade, 2024). Arguing that the [Paris Agreement](#) places an unfair economic burden on Americans and their businesses, Trump withdrew from the international climate change agreement during his first presidency. Meanwhile, Africa is bearing a disproportionate share of the costs of adapting to [climate change](#), despite having contributed relatively little to the changing climate, and there remains a massive climate finance gap. With reports that Trump is preparing to pull out of the Paris Agreement again (jeopardising global cooperation on climate change), and African countries leaving the UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (also known as [COP29](#)) in [Azerbaijan](#) disappointed, Africa can be expected to continue to pay increasingly high costs (Yade, 2024).

It's also worth keeping an eye on [Elon Musk](#), the South African-born billionaire who has emerged as a close adviser to Trump and is keen to make gains in African markets, particularly with [Starlink](#), and could offer new prospects for reducing the energy divide (Yade, 2024). He was seen in [New York](#) on the sidelines of the [United Nations General Assembly](#) in September 2024, meeting with [South African](#) President [Cyril Ramaphosa](#), [Namibian](#) President [Nangolo Mbumba](#) and [Lesotho](#) Prime Minister [Sam Matekane](#). Musk is set to play a influential role in the new administration, and his relationship with Ramaphosa in particular could take on outsized importance. South Africa's relationship with the United States has become more complex due to its growing ties with Russia and China, as well as [South Africa's recent genocide case against Israel](#).

In recent years, some Republicans have advocated the recognition of [Somaliland](#) as an independent state in order to strengthen US strategic influence through the [Red Sea](#) (Yade, 2024). Recent reports suggest that Trump may do so once in office, marking a significant shift in US policy towards the [Horn of Africa](#). But there will be other risks to watch. The [war in Sudan](#) rages on, tensions between [Rwanda](#) and the [DRC](#) are rising, and the ceasefire in [Ethiopia](#) is fragile. Accordingly, it would be risky for Trump to undermine US relations with [Kenya](#), officially a key non-NATO ally of the United States, for the sake of US interests in [East Africa](#). In the [Sahel](#), after [Niger](#) and [Chad](#) asked the United States to remove its military bases, the United States will have to find new strategic locations to host US defence systems that are vital to US security interests. [Gabon](#) and [Côte d'Ivoire](#) could be countries of interest to the new Trump administration. Much has changed in Africa since Trump left the White House in January 2021. Most importantly, African nations have an ace up their sleeve: a new centrality on the world stage that makes them highly coveted partners around the world. Africa now has options. The ball is therefore in Washington's court to engage with the continent. Otherwise, "[America first](#)" could take a back seat to "[Africa first](#)" - to the benefit of US adversaries (Yade, 2024).

2. Case studies:

Cartoon 7: Trump's Africa



Source: © [Roz Chast](#), New Yorker Cartoons, Condé Nast Store

While [Trumpism](#) primarily relates to US politics, its effects - such as shifts in foreign policy, trade and global alliances - have had a global impact, including in [Africa](#). Below are case studies of specific African countries that have experienced challenges or changes due to policies or attitudes associated with Trumpism.

The Trump administration's '[America First](#)' policy and reduced engagement with Africa has had a significant impact on the continent. While some countries, such as [Somalia](#) and [Chad](#), faced direct consequences from military and immigration policies, others, such as [South Africa](#) and [Kenya](#), experienced broader shifts in trade and development aid. These case studies illustrate how Trumpism, with its focus on domestic priorities and transactional diplomacy, often left African states navigating a more uncertain and less supportive international landscape.

1. South Africa

South Africa's relationship with the second Trump administration has been marked by trade tensions and diplomatic rifts.

The Trump administration's protectionist trade policies and scepticism towards multilateralism have affected South Africa, a key US trading partner in Africa. Trump's criticism of [South Africa's land reform](#) policies and his administration's threats to review trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act ([AGOA](#)) created uncertainty.

In 2018, Trump tweeted misinformation about South Africa's land reform efforts, claiming that white farmers (particularly [Boers](#)) were being targeted and killed. This sparked diplomatic tensions, and highlighted how Trump's rhetoric could exacerbate existing racial and political divides in the country.

2. Nigeria

[Nigeria](#) is threatened by reduced [US engagement and immigration restrictions](#).

The [Trump administration's travel ban](#), often referred to as the 'Muslim ban', initially included [Chad](#) (later removed), raising concerns in Nigeria, a predominantly Muslim country in the north. Nigeria faced increased scrutiny under Trump's immigration policies, with the US adding Nigeria to a list of countries facing visa restrictions in 2020. This strained diplomatic relations and limited opportunities for Nigerians seeking to study, work or reunite with family in the US.

The visa restrictions were seen as a setback for Nigeria, which has a large [diaspora in the US](#) and relies on remittances as a significant source of foreign income. The policy also fuelled anti-American sentiment in some quarters.

3. Somalia

[Somalia](#) suffers from US military withdrawal and [counter-terrorism](#).

Trump's decision to withdraw US troops from Somalia in late 2020 was part of his broader 'America First' policy, which aims to reduce the US military presence abroad. The move raised concerns about the stability of Somalia, which has been battling the extremist [group al-Shabab](#) with the support of US and [African Union](#) forces.

The withdrawal was criticised by regional allies and security experts who feared it would create a security vacuum and embolden al-Shabaab. The [Biden administration](#) later reversed the decision, but the abrupt withdrawal under Trump highlighted the unpredictability of US foreign policy under Trumpism.

4. Kenya

[Kenya](#) has had to cope with reduced development aid and a focus on counter-terrorism.

Under Trump, the US has reduced development aid to Africa, focusing instead on security and counter-terrorism. Kenya, a key ally in the fight against al-Shabaab, saw increased military cooperation but reduced support for development projects.

The shift in priorities under Trumpism meant less emphasis on initiatives to tackle poverty, health and education in Kenya. This was particularly worrying given Kenya's reliance on foreign aid for development and its ongoing challenges with unemployment and inequality.

5. Ethiopia

[Ethiopia](#) has been handicapped by the neglect of regional conflicts and humanitarian crises.

During Trump's presidency, the US was largely absent from the growing tensions in Ethiopia, which eventually led to the [Tigray conflict in late 2020](#). Critics argued that Trump's lack of engagement in African conflicts, and his administration's focus on domestic issues, contributed to a lack of proactive diplomacy in the region.

The Tigray crisis, which began shortly after the end of Trump's first presidency, highlighted the consequences of reduced US diplomatic engagement in Africa. While the crisis escalated under Biden, the lack of early intervention during Trump's tenure was seen as a missed opportunity to prevent large-scale violence.

6. Chad

Chad, a key US ally in the fight against terrorism in the [Sahel](#), was included in Trump's travel ban in 2017. This decision was widely criticised, as Chad has been a reliable partner in regional security efforts.

Chad's inclusion in the travel ban strained bilateral relations and raised questions about the consistency of US foreign policy. Although Chad was later removed from the list, the incident damaged trust and highlighted the transactional nature of Trump's approach to international relations.

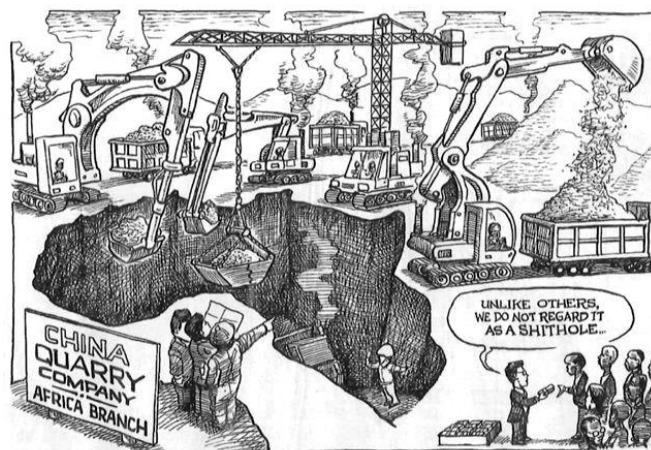
7. Zimbabwe

[Zimbabwe](#) has suffered from US sanctions and isolationist rhetoric.

While U.S. sanctions on Zimbabwe predate the Trump administration, Trump's isolationist rhetoric and lack of engagement with African leaders did little to encourage dialogue or support for democratic reforms in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's economic and political challenges have persisted under Trump, with little progress made in resolving long-standing issues. The lack of US engagement was seen as a missed opportunity to support democratic transitions in the region.

Cartoon 8: *Chinese control over African mining*²



Source: © Kevin KAL Kallaugh, *The Economist*, [Kaltoons.com](#)

² Cartoon, referring to the derogatory comments made by [Donald Trump](#) in January 2018, in which he denounced African states as 'shitholes', revealing the importance he attached to Africa (Kohnert, 2018; Ericsson & Löff & Löff, 2020).

Three more detailed case studies of the impact of Trump's second term on [rare earth](#) (REE) and resource-rich [South Africa](#), [DR Congo](#) and [Namibia](#) are presented below. All three countries are of utmost geostrategic importance due to their rich deposits of rare earths. Currently, [China](#) produces 58 % of all REEs worldwide. It is the main importer of minerals from Africa, with mineral exports from [sub-Saharan Africa](#) to China totalling USD 10 bn in 2019. Its dominance of the global rare earths market is rooted in politics, not geography. Rare earths are neither that rare nor that concentrated in China. Beijing has adopted a strategy of imports, dumping and control of rare earths that is hardly consistent with [WTO rules](#).

Therefore, in June 2022, a newly founded '[Minerals Security Partnership](#)', consisting of the [USA](#), the [EU](#), [Great Britain](#) and other Western industrialized countries, invited mineral-rich African countries to counter Chinese dominance. These included resource-rich countries such as [South Africa](#), [Botswana](#), [Angola](#), [Mozambique](#), [Namibia](#), [Tanzania](#), [Zambia](#), [Uganda](#) and the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) (Kohnert, 2024).

2.1 South Africa

Cartoon 9: *Trump 'confiscating' land*



Source: © Brandan Reynolds, [Business Day](#), February 6 2025

Initially, [Trump 2.0](#) sparked optimism in Africa. The return of Donald Trump to the US presidency, respondents in South Africa and other emerging countries showed optimism (MG Reporter, 2025). Beside South Africa, Trump welcomers in SSA counted mostly autocratic systems like, [Cameroon](#), [Togo](#), [Ivory Coast](#), the [Central African Republic](#) (CAR), [Chad](#) and [Mali](#) (MG Reporter, 2025). However, relations between Trump and South Africa have since soured (Ngcobo, 2025). South Africa appears to be at a crossroads in its waxing and waning relationship with the US, following President Donald Trump's controversial decision to cut financial aid to the country in February 2025. Trump said South Africa had engaged in what he called "unjust and immoral practices" against the white minority Afrikaner community and had filed a [genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice](#) (ICJ) in December 2023. His move has sent shockwaves through South Africa, with experts fearing he may use the opportunity to end preferential access to the US market through the special US-Africa trade programme known as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act ([AGOA](#)). Trump threatened to cut future funding because of what he described as "terrible things, terrible things" the country's leadership was doing (Ngcobo, 2025). The US president went on to accuse South Africa, without any basis in fact, of "[land grabbing](#)" and "doing things that may

be far worse than that". In the face of the South African government's vehement rebuttal, he doubled down, signing an executive order to freeze aid. This amounts to nearly \$440m (£353m), the amount of aid that will reportedly be allocated in 2023, although the US embassy in South Africa has since said that funding from [PEPFAR](#), an American programme to combat the global spread of [HIV](#), will not be affected, adding the caveat that "not all PEPFAR activities will resume". South Africa is one of the biggest beneficiaries of PEPFAR, contributing around 17% to its HIV/Aids programme, under which around 5.5 million people receive anti-retroviral drugs. In his executive order, Trump also accused South Africa of a "shocking disregard for the rights of its citizens" and of taking "aggressive positions" against the US and its ally Israel in its ICJ case. In addition to the aid freeze, he offered to help refugees from the [Afrikaner](#) community, mostly white descendants of early Dutch and French settlers, settle in the US. This echoes the views of Trump's close adviser [Elon Musk](#), the tech billionaire who was born in South Africa. He asked on [X \(Twitter\)](#) why President [Ramaphosa](#) had "openly racist property laws". This is not the first time that South Africa's land reform policies have drawn Trump's ire. In 2018, during his first presidency, he accused South African authorities of "killing farmers on a massive scale" and asked his then-secretary of state to investigate the government's "seizure of land from white farmers".

On the trade front, however, South Africa has a few things going for it. While the US has been one of South Africa's biggest partners, it has not been its closest trading partner. South Africa exports a range of minerals to the US, including [platinum](#), [iron](#) and [manganese](#). It is also one of the largest exporters under AGOA, generating around \$2.7 billion in revenue in 2023, mostly from the sale of vehicles, jewellery and metals (Ngcobo, 2025).

Cartoon 10: *President Cyril Ramaphosa on 'land confiscation'*

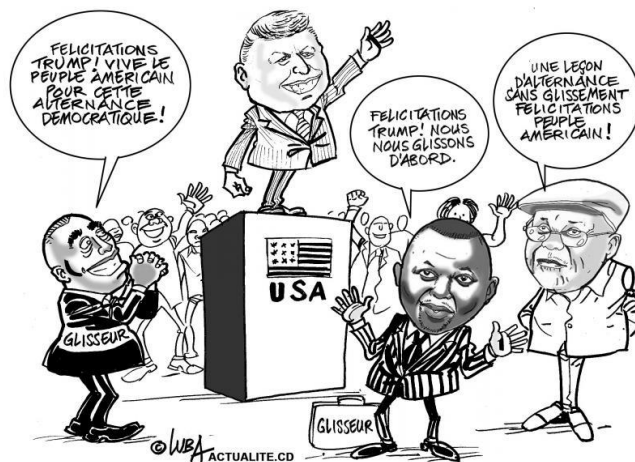


Source: © Brandan Reynolds, [Business Day](#), February 5 2025

As for South Africa's geostrategically located [REE mines](#), they are about to start commercial production, making it the second REE-producing country in Africa after Gakara in western [Burundi](#), the only African country with an REE mine that has produced commercial quantities to date (Bekoe & Burchard & Deatherage & Sindle, 2022). Most of these mines are located in the west and north of the country. There are currently four REE projects under development in South Africa: [Zandkopsdrift](#), [Steenkampskraal](#), [Glenover](#) and [Phalaborwa](#) (Garbarino, 2021; Kohnert, 2024).

2.2 DR Congo

Cartoon 11: *Trump, the new darling of Congolese politicians, sliders and anti-slippers*



Source: © Vital Kamerhe, actualite.cd, 11 November 2016

Already during the first presidency of Donald Trump his victory in the US presidential elections provoked reactions from the Congolese political class. Thus, Jean-Marc Kabund, Secretary General of the [UDPS](#) (Union for Democracy and Social Progress), congratulated Trump and invited him to be rigorous on the issue of the DRC in order to accompany the Congolese on the road to democracy (Kamerhe, 2016).

In 2025, two issues are on the table between [Kinshasa](#) and [Washington](#): the [security crisis in the east of the DRC](#), because of the simmering [Congo-Rwanda conflict](#), and the implementation of the strategic economic partnership between the two countries (Rigaud, 2024). These issues are far removed from the concerns of the new American president. Donald Trump's return to the White House has been greeted with indifference in Kinshasa. American influence on the continent and in the Congo is not what it used to be. The arrival of [Félix Tshisekedi](#) at the head of the DRC had warmed and normalised relations between Kinshasa and Washington after an icy period during the last [Kabila](#) years. The United States greeted Joseph Kabila's departure with relief and turned a blind eye to the highly unorthodox sleight of hand that enabled Félix Tshisekedi to take the presidential chair. For a time, the arrival of high-profile US ambassador [Mike Hammer](#) had raised the hopes of the Congolese on the economic front, with the signing of a 'privileged strategic partnership' for US companies to invest in the Congo (Rigaud, 2024). These were grand announcements that were not followed up by action. Mike Hammer was not to be outdone politically. Washington's thundering representative in Kinshasa supported Félix Tshisekedi at arm's length in his emancipation from his toxic alliance with Joseph Kabila. The overturning of the National Assembly was done with Washington's blessing. During his first term in office, Trump never showed the slightest interest in the African continent and even less in the greater Congo (Rigaud, 2024; Kohnert, 2018). Africa was not on the Republican candidate's agenda, just as it was not on that of [Kamal Harris](#). Donald Trump's priority will be American domestic policy, centred on immigration and the economy via tariffs. Three external concerns could mobilise the new President Trump internationally: [Ukraine](#), [China](#), the [Middle East](#) and [Iran](#), but no Africa (Rigaud, 2024). In Trump's political software, two rules need to be taken into account for the Congolese case. He no longer wants US military intervention outside the country. The second rule is that he does not like rules, particularly democratic ones. We can

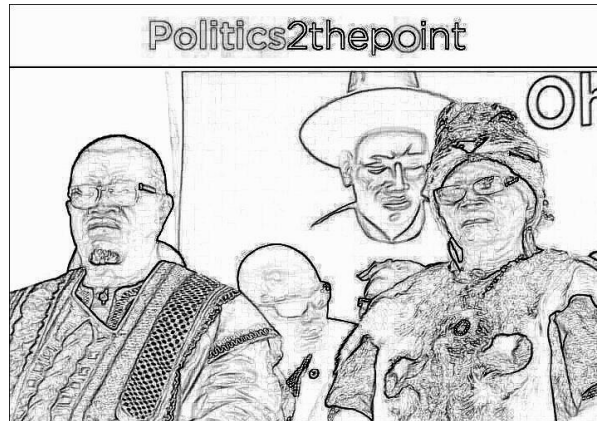
therefore assume that American diplomacy will be less attentive to the legitimacy and practices of the powers that be in Africa, and their little arrangements to hang on to their seats. Pro-democracy activists may well have something to worry about, and less support from Washington (Rigaud, 2024). While it is not really sure that Donald Trump knows how to place the Democratic Republic of Congo on a map, Félix Tshisekedi was quick to congratulate the new American president on the X network for ‘his wonderful victory’.

Two issues are on the table between Kinshasa and Washington. The most sensitive is the conflict in the east of the country with the [M23 rebels](#), supported by [Kigali](#). [Kinshasa](#) is constantly calling for sanctions against [Rwanda](#). For the time being, the United States has turned a deaf ear to Kinshasa's requests, favouring dialogue between the two neighbours via the [Luanda process](#). This does not really suit the DRC, which is failing on the military front and does not wish to come to the negotiating table in a weak position (Rigaud, 2024). Will Tshisekedi succeed in convincing Trump to sanction Kagame, as [Putin](#) did in his [aggression against Ukraine](#)? It is not certain that this comparison will persuade Trump, whose relations with Russia are well known. The second issue is economic: Tshisekedi would like to be able to relaunch the ‘[strategic partnership](#)’ with the Americans, which has remained little more than a declaration of good intentions. This summer, the United States pledged \$15 billion to electrify the landlocked areas of Congo as part of the [Power Africa programme](#). And Félix Tshisekedi would like to see this project become a reality. The electrification rate in the DRC is around 20 %, and less than 5 % in rural areas. In Kinshasa, nobody really thinks that Trump's election will have an impact on the country's development. The so-called ‘[international community](#)’, comprising the [UN](#), [EU](#) and the [United States](#), is losing momentum (Rigaud, 2024). The [UN blue helmets](#) are on their way out and [Belgian](#) and [French](#) influence is dwindling, all the more so as international partners and donors seem powerless to find a way out of an endless war between two neighbours whose suffering is irreconcilable. While there is nothing to expect from Trump in the Congo, it is also known that the American president is unpredictable. The presence of strategic minerals in abundance in the Congolese subsoil could attract the attention of the 47th President of the world's leading power. For that to happen, American companies would have to remind Trump that there is a country in the heart of Africa that abounds in them, called the Democratic Republic of Congo (Rigaud, 2024).

The Democratic Republic of Congo ([DRC](#)) is a mineral-rich country with vast deposits of minerals needed for [low-carbon technologies](#). These are of outmost strategical interest for the US. The DRC currently provides the vast majority of mined [cobalt](#) and has significant untapped reserves of [copper](#), [tin](#) and [gold](#) (Gibson, 2023; Kohnert, 2024). In addition, the DRC is endowed with other [REE](#) mineral resources. Deposits have been found in [carbonatite](#) complexes around Bingo ([North Kivu](#)), [Lueshe](#) and [Kirumba](#), as well as in other regions of the DRC, including [Numbi](#), [Manono-Kitotolo](#), [Kampene](#), [Kobokobo](#) and [North Lugulu](#), which cover most of the major cities and regions of the country. At least 60 % of [coltan](#) reserves are found in the DRC, where digitisation is increasing, and the development of [5G](#) technology will increase demand for Congolese coltan (Gibson, 2023).

2.3 Namibia

Cartoon 12: 'Namibia: Trump Parody' Namibia: Trump Parody',
underpinned By a Light-Hearted Spirit of Good Will'



Source: © Kaakunga, Rukee (2017), *The Namibian* (15 February 2017)
colour photo transformed into b/w by the author

The impact of a ['Trump 2.0'](#) administration on [Namibia](#) would likely be indirect, but could still be significant in areas such as [trade](#), [aid](#), [climate policy](#) and [geopolitical](#) dynamics. [Namibia's relationship with China](#) and its reliance on international cooperation for development and [climate resilience](#) would be key factors to watch. However, given Namibia's relatively small role in US foreign policy, the impact may be less pronounced compared to other African countries. Trump's approach to international organisations such as the [UN](#) has been to prioritise US interests, sometimes at the expense of multilateral cooperation. This could lead to changes in the way the US interacts with Namibia through global institutions, potentially reducing support for [UN peacekeeping](#) or other UN-led initiatives in Africa. The second term of Donald Trump as US President will also have a significant impact on Namibia. This will depend on a number of factors, including US foreign policy priorities, trade relations and global geopolitical dynamics. While Namibia is not typically a focus of US foreign policy, changes in US leadership could have indirect effects. Here are some potential areas of impact.

A Trump administration prioritises [protectionist trade policies](#), which will affect global trade flows. As a small economy, Namibia could be indirectly affected if US trade policies disrupt global markets or reduce demand for Namibian exports such as minerals (e.g. [uranium](#), [diamonds](#)) or [agricultural products](#). The African Growth and Opportunity Act ([AGOA](#)) is also being reviewed by the US administration, for example by restricting AGOA. Namibia's access to US markets could be affected, although Namibia is not a major beneficiary compared to other African countries. In addition, [foreign aid](#) and [development assistance](#) will be significantly reduced or eliminated. Trump could reduce or reallocate foreign aid, particularly to African countries. Namibia receives some US aid, particularly in areas such as health (e.g. HIV/AIDS programmes through [PEPFAR](#)) and conservation. Cuts to these programmes could have localised impacts.

In terms of [geostrategic interests](#), the Trump administration may prioritise aid to countries that align with U.S. strategic interests, such as countering China's influence in Africa. [Namibia's relationship with China](#) (e.g. infrastructure investment) could influence how the US engages with the country. Namibia has strong ties with China, which has invested heavily in

infrastructure and mining. A Trump administration may view Namibia through the lens of [US-China competition](#), which could lead to increased US engagement or pressure to reduce Chinese influence. The Trump administration's approach to multilateral institutions (e.g. UN, WHO) could also affect Namibia, which relies on international cooperation for development and [climate change initiatives](#). Climate change and environmental policy will be affected by a rollback of US commitments to global climate initiatives, which could indirectly affect Namibia, a country vulnerable to climate change impacts such as [drought](#) and [desertification](#). Reduced US support for global climate change efforts could hamper Namibia's ability to address these challenges. Namibia is known for its community-based conservation efforts. US support for wildlife conservation and anti-poaching initiatives could be affected depending on the administration's priorities.

Finally, there is the issue of security and [counter-terrorism](#). While Namibia is relatively stable, a Trump administration may focus on counter-terrorism and security in Africa, particularly in the [Sahel](#) and [Horn of Africa](#). This could lead to an increase in US military presence or aid in the region, indirectly affecting Namibia's security environment. Trump may prioritise relations with larger or more strategically important African countries, potentially reducing diplomatic attention to smaller countries such as Namibia.

Already during Trump's first term in office, [Gondwana Collection Namibia](#) released a satirical video '[Namibia First in Africa](#)' in collaboration with local musician [EES](#), mocking US President Donald Trump. The satirical video was released in 2017, and humorously depicts Trump in a Namibian context. Namibia stated that the video was 'underscored with a light spirit of goodwill' (Kaakunga, 2017).

Namibia's former ambassador to the United States, [Tuliameni Kalomoh](#), stressed in 2024 that foreign policy did not play a major role in the election campaign (Matheus, 2024). Namibia's exports to the US include beef, diamonds and uranium. This trade is covered by the AGOA agreement with the US. The US also provides financial assistance to Namibia through [PEPFAR](#). Rare earth elements ([REEs](#)) are 17 metals and alloys that are considered critical supply chain inputs in the production of military equipment, the civilian economy, including medical equipment and television technologies, and clean technologies that reduce carbon emissions. China currently produces 58 % of the world's REEs, leaving many countries, including the United States, vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. America's dependence on imported REEs, particularly from China, a strategic competitor, has prompted a review of all available market options. As a result, the US Department of Energy recommends diversifying the US supply chain of critical minerals to reduce the country's dependence on a single source (Matheus, 2024).

Africa's nascent REE sector has the potential to become a stable and predictable source of critical minerals for the United States. As of January 2022, [Burundi](#) is the only African country with an REE mine that has produced commercial quantities, but other countries such as [Namibia](#) and [South Africa](#) show commercial promise. They have the largest amounts of mineral deposits containing REEs compared to other African countries. Namibia is a politically stable country with an established mining sector and a strong relationship with the United States. Its REE mining landscape offers potential opportunities for US investors. The government welcomes foreign investment and ranks relatively higher than other countries in terms of [ease of doing business](#) and some best practices. However, there are signs that some principles of [good governance](#) and resource management may be weakening. In particular, there are concerns about respect for business contracts (Matheus, 2024).

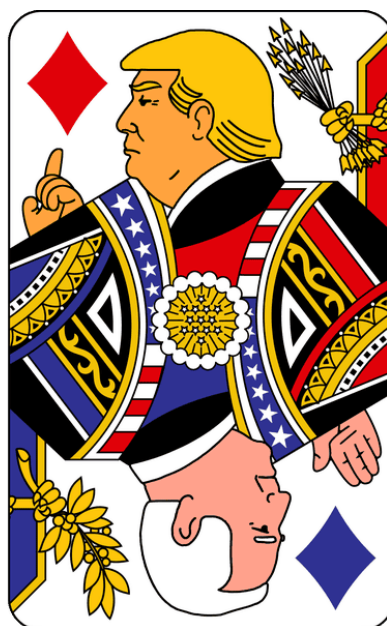
Rare earth elements (REEs), 17 metals and alloys, are considered critical supply chain inputs in the production of military equipment; the civilian economy, including medical equipment and television technologies; and clean technologies that reduce carbon emissions (Bekoe, Dorina A. et al, 2022). Namibia and South Africa have the largest amounts of mineral deposits containing REEs compared to other African countries (Bekoe, Dorina A. et al, 2022).

The US recognition of [Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara](#) and its recognition of [Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights](#), captured by Israel in the 1967 war, were of great concern to Namibia. Also of concern was the tightening of the economic and financial [blockade of Cuba](#). The US has also been a major donor to Namibian conservation efforts. Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism [Pohamba Shifeta](#) claimed that the Trump administration would not have a negative impact on [Namibia's tourism industry](#). Trump was president before and he maintained cordial relations. He knows Namibia because his family comes here to hunt. Former diplomat Pius Dunaiki predicts that economic and trade relations will grow under the second Trump administration. The geopolitical shifts could lead to greater competition between the US and China (Matheus, 2024).

[Windhook](#) expects a diplomatic charm offensive from the US in what could be described as [Cold War 2.0](#). Last but not least, Trump's racist idiosyncrasies, often expressed by calling African countries all sorts of uncomplimentary names, have offended Namibians (Matheus, 2024). On balance, however, Windhook doubts that Trump will terminate [AGOA](#) and [PEPFAR](#). Therefore, Namibia should not adjust its policies in response to the election results of a particular country (Matheus, 2024).

3. Conclusion

Cartoon 13: *'Everything, everywhere, all at once': what will Trump 2.0 unleash?*



Source: © Smith, David (2025)

Within hours, [Trump 2.0](#), who joked that he would be a "dictator" on "day one", is expected to unleash a blitz of executive orders and actions, including mass deportations and aggressive tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China (Smith, 2025). The phrase "shock and awe" will not do

it justice, according to one Trump ally, because, as [Steve Bannon](#), a former White House chief strategist, said at an event hosted by the [Politico website](#) in Washington, "shock and awe was a 2017 concept". The first hundred days of Trump's first term have been marked by chaos. An executive order banning visitors from seven Muslim-majority countries caused chaos at airports. Three things are different: the people, the policies and the process. Enabled by a [Republican-controlled Congress](#), a conservative [Supreme Court](#) and a cabinet chosen primarily for its loyalty, Trump could seek a dramatic expansion of presidential power. But the political honeymoon will not last forever. From the moment he takes the oath of office, Trump will be under pressure to deliver on his promises. Tax cuts in 2017, sweeping tariffs and increased oil production. Critics warn of potential economic instability and damage to international relations. No issue was more central to his campaign than [immigration](#). He promised the largest deportation operation in US history and has already begun pressuring Mexico and Canada on border security. Trump will also continue to wage a [culture war](#). He has vowed to cut federal funding to schools that he says promote critical race theory, transgender rights and vaccine and mask mandates. He remains a climate change sceptic and is likely to reverse Biden's agenda, withdraw from the [Paris Agreement](#) and promote fossil fuels. Meanwhile, foreign leaders are quickly calculating how to respond to the new normal. They have learned from the first term about Trump's affinity for strongmen and emphasis on personal relationships (Smith, 2025).

[China's investment diplomacy](#), perceptions of its role on the continent, and implications for US policy have been of great importance to [sub-Saharan Africa](#) since 2000. The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation ([FOCAC](#)) is a cornerstone of China-Africa relations. Africa is not a monolith; relations vary from country to country. Public perception surveys show a favourable attitude towards China. Chinese investment focuses on infrastructure and education. Debt trap diplomacy is often exaggerated; perceptions vary. China's engagement is seen as a partnership by many African countries. US financial support is greater, but perceptions vary widely. China is expanding its political and security interests in Africa. Development often requires interference in internal affairs (Onubogu & Daly, 2024; Montenegro & Alves, 2024).

The [Trump 2.0 administration](#) will impact [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) in several key areas:

First, it will impact in trade and aid. Potential reductions in foreign aid and shifts in trade policies, including changes to programs like [AGOA](#), could affect economic growth and development in the region.

Second, it will impact in [Geopolitics](#). Increased focus on countering China's influence in Africa might lead to heightened U.S. engagement or competition, particularly in countries with significant Chinese investments.

Third, [Climate Change](#) will be severely affected. Rollbacks in U.S. commitments to global climate initiatives could hinder Sub-Saharan Africa's efforts to combat climate change, a critical issue for the region.

Fourth, security will attract more attention. A focus on [counterterrorism](#) might increase U.S. military presence or aid in unstable regions, potentially impacting regional security dynamics.

Finally, [diplomatic engagement](#) might increase. The U.S. might prioritize relationships with strategically significant nations, potentially reducing attention to smaller or less influential countries. Overall, the impact would vary by country but could be significant in areas like trade, aid, and geopolitical competition.

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Résumé : *[Impact de Trump 2.0 sur l'Afrique subsaharienne]* – Alors que Trump prend pour cible les normes et les institutions mondiales, il est urgent de répondre à la question de savoir quelles parties de l'ordre post-guerre froide peuvent être sauvées et pour qui. L'abandon de ces positions nécessitera de grands changements. Trump 2.0 a suscité l'optimisme en Afrique. L'Afrique du Sud, en particulier, était optimiste au début. Mais par la suite, les relations bilatérales avec l'Afrique du Sud se sont détériorées lorsque l'administration Trump, y compris son conseiller économique, Elon Musk, né en Afrique du Sud, s'est ouvertement rangée du côté de l'establishment blanc sud-africain, du moins pour les quatre prochaines années. Les perspectives de démocratisation des pays à régime autocratique ont également été réduites à néant, Trump ne s'étant pas préoccupé de la démocratisation de l'Afrique subsaharienne (ASS), mais ayant plutôt soutenu les autocraties africaines, comme au Cameroun de Biya, au Togo de Gnassingbé, en République centrafricaine et en Côte d'Ivoire. L'intention de Trump de dissoudre l'USAid a fait le malheur de tous ses partenaires contractuels. La peur, la douleur et la faim ont été les terribles conséquences des réductions de financement américaines, par exemple au Kenya et au Soudan en guerre. Les États-Unis étaient le plus grand donateur d'APD en ASS. Pour l'année fiscale 2023/2024, les États-Unis avaient mis à disposition près de 3,7 milliards de dollars. Le djihadisme dans la région du Sahel, dans la Corne de l'Afrique et au-delà va probablement s'intensifier et se propager. Le djihadisme dans la région du Sahel, dans la Corne de l'Afrique et au-delà va probablement s'intensifier et se propager. La politique isolationniste des États-Unis en Afrique sous Trump pourrait réduire encore l'influence occidentale. La politique commerciale de Trump, notamment l'imposition de droits de douane et le retrait d'accords multilatéraux tels que le Partenariat transpacifique (TPP), a affecté l'accès des pays en développement au marché américain.

Zusammenfassung : *[Auswirkungen von Trump 2.0 auf Afrika südlich der Sahara]* – Da Trump die globalen Normen und Institutionen ins Visier nimmt, muss die Frage, welche Teile der Ordnung nach dem Kalten Krieg gerettet werden können und für wen, dringend beantwortet werden. Die Abkehr von diesen Positionen wird große Veränderungen erfordern. Trump 2.0 hat in Afrika für Optimismus gesorgt. Vor allem Südafrika war anfangs optimistisch. Doch später verschlechterten sich die bilateralen Beziehungen zu Südafrika, als sich die Trump-Administration, einschließlich seines Wirtschaftsberaters, des in Südafrika geborenen Elon Musk, offen auf die Seite des weißen südafrikanischen Establishments stellte, zumindest für die nächsten vier Jahre. Auch die Aussichten auf die Demokratisierung autokratisch regierter Länder wurden zunichte gemacht, da Trump sich nicht um die Demokratisierung von Subsahara-Afrika (SSA) kümmerte, sondern vielmehr afrikanische Autokratien unterstützte, wie in Biyas Kamerun, Gnassingbés Togo, der Zentralafrikanischen Republik und der Elfenbeinküste. Trumps Absicht, USAid aufzulösen, brachte alle seine Vertragspartner ins Unglück. Angst, Schmerz und Hunger waren die schrecklichen Folgen der US-Finanzierungskürzungen, zum Beispiel in Kenia und im kriegsgebeutelten Sudan. Die USA waren der größte ODA-Geber in SSA. Im Fiskaljahr 2023/2024 hatten die USA fast 3,7 Milliarden Dollar zur Verfügung gestellt. Der Dschihadismus in der Sahelzone, am Horn von Afrika und darüber hinaus wird sich wahrscheinlich verstärken und ausbreiten. Die isolationistische Afrika-Politik der USA unter Trump könnte den westlichen Einfluss weiter verringern. Trumps Handelspolitik, insbesondere die Verhängung von Zöllen und der Rückzug aus multilateralen Abkommen wie der Transpazifischen Partnerschaft (TPP), hat den Zugang der Entwicklungsländer zum US-Markt beeinträchtigt.