

TRAJECTORIES OF US AFRICA RELATIONS UNDER TRUMP ADMINISTRATION.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the trajectories of U.S.-Africa relations under the Trump administration, focusing on key shifts in diplomacy, trade, security, and development cooperation. The objective is to analyze how the administration's policies influenced Africa's political and economic landscape and assess their long-term implications for bilateral and multilateral engagements. The study employs a qualitative research approach, relying exclusively on secondary data sources, including policy documents, government reports, scholarly articles, and analyses from international organizations. Findings indicate that the Trump administration adopted a transactional and security-driven approach to Africa, emphasizing counterterrorism cooperation while reducing traditional diplomatic and development engagements. The administration's "America First" policy led to cuts in foreign aid, skepticism toward multilateral institutions, and disengagement from major U.S.-Africa initiatives such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Furthermore, policy inconsistencies and negative rhetoric about the continent strained diplomatic relations. However, economic ties remained significant, with an increased focus on private-sector investment over traditional aid mechanisms, particularly through the Prosper Africa initiative. The study highlights that these shifts altered Africa's geopolitical alignments, prompting many African nations to strengthen partnerships with China, the European Union, and other global powers. The relevance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding how U.S. policy shifts influence Africa's development trajectory and strategic decisions. By providing a critical assessment of U.S.-Africa relations under Trump, this research offers insights into future engagement strategies and the evolving dynamics of global influence on the African continent.

Keywords: U.S.-Africa relations, Trump administration, diplomacy, trade, security cooperation, foreign aid.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the United States and Africa has evolved over centuries, shaped by historical, economic, and geopolitical factors. In the post-World War II era, U.S. engagement with Africa was largely influenced by Cold War politics, where the U.S. sought to counter Soviet influence by supporting anti-communist regimes and movements across the continent (Schraeder, 1994). During this period, U.S. foreign policy toward Africa was primarily strategic rather than development-oriented, with limited focus on economic partnerships or governance reforms. However, the end of the Cold War marked a shift in U.S.-Africa

relations, with increased attention to democratization, economic liberalization, and humanitarian assistance (Radelet, 2010). The Clinton administration (1993–2001) was particularly instrumental in redefining U.S.-Africa relations through policies that promoted trade and development cooperation. One of the most significant legislative achievements was the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), enacted in 2000, which provided African nations preferential access to U.S. markets, stimulating economic growth and integration into the global economy (van den Berg, 2020). Clinton's administration also emphasized conflict resolution and democratic governance, laying the foundation for sustained engagement with Africa.

Under the George W. Bush administration (2001–2009), U.S.-Africa relations saw a substantial increase in development assistance, particularly in health and security. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), launched in 2003, became one of the most impactful health initiatives, saving millions of lives by providing antiretroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS (Kavanagh, 2014). Additionally, counterterrorism cooperation gained prominence, especially in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, leading to increased military assistance and training programs for African nations to combat extremist threats, particularly in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions (Pham, 2011). The Obama administration (2009–2017) further deepened U.S.-Africa relations with a focus on economic growth, governance, and multilateral partnerships. Initiatives such as Power Africa, which aimed to increase energy access across the continent, and the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), which sought to empower African youth, underscored Obama's commitment to long-term engagement (Williams, 2015). Moreover, the administration expanded security cooperation, particularly in counterterrorism efforts, while also emphasizing human rights and democratic governance (Campbell, 2018). The continuity of engagement across different administrations demonstrated a generally bipartisan commitment to Africa, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis on trade, security, and development assistance.

The Trump administration (2017–2021) marked a departure from the traditional trajectory of U.S.-Africa relations, with significant policy shifts that had far-reaching consequences for the continent. Unlike previous administrations that balanced diplomatic, economic, and security engagements, Trump's foreign policy was largely transactional and security-driven, with reduced emphasis on multilateral cooperation and development aid (Shaban, 2018). The "America First" doctrine, which prioritized U.S. economic and security interests over global partnerships, led to a reassessment of U.S. commitments in Africa, including cuts in aid programs and skepticism toward long-standing trade agreements like AGOA (Moss, 2020). This study is significant because it provides a comprehensive analysis of how these policy shifts influenced Africa's political and economic landscape. By examining the key areas of diplomacy, trade, security, and development cooperation, the research highlights the broader implications of U.S. foreign policy changes on Africa's strategic decisions. Given the increasing geopolitical competition in Africa, particularly with China's expanding influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), understanding the impact of the Trump

administration's approach is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and international stakeholders (Zezeza, 2019).

Furthermore, this study contributes to the discourse on the evolving nature of U.S.-Africa relations by assessing whether Trump's policies represented a temporary deviation or a fundamental realignment of engagement. As the Biden administration seeks to re-establish ties with Africa, the findings of this research provide insights into potential policy directions and areas for strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation (Gavin, 2021). This study aims to analyze the key shifts in U.S.-Africa relations under the Trump administration, focusing on four major dimensions: diplomatic engagement, trade and economic policies, security and counterterrorism cooperation, and development and multilateral engagement. Diplomatic engagement examines changes in high-level interactions, official visits, and diplomatic rhetoric toward Africa. Trade and economic policies assess the impact of the administration's trade policies, particularly concerning AGOA, and the shift toward private-sector-led investments through the Prosper Africa initiative. Security and counterterrorism cooperation evaluate the administration's approach to security assistance, military partnerships, and counterterrorism operations in Africa. Development and multilateral engagement analyze the reduction in foreign aid, disengagement from multilateral organizations, and the broader implications for Africa's development. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how the Trump administration's policies influenced Africa's governance, economic trajectory, and geopolitical alignments.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, relying exclusively on secondary data sources to examine the trajectories of U.S.-Africa relations under the Trump administration. The research is based on the analysis of policy documents, government reports, scholarly articles, and assessments from international organizations. Given the retrospective nature of this study, secondary sources provide a robust foundation for evaluating policy shifts and their implications. Primary sources include reports from the U.S. Department of State, Congressional Research Service, and White House policy briefings, which offer direct insights into the administration's policies. Additionally, academic articles from journals such as *African Affairs*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *The Journal of Modern African Studies* provide scholarly perspectives on the broader implications of U.S.-Africa relations. Reports from international organizations, including the United Nations, African Union, and World Bank, further contextualize the impact of U.S. policy changes on Africa's development and strategic alignments.

The data is analyzed using a thematic approach, categorizing policy shifts into diplomacy, trade, security, and development cooperation. This analytical framework enables a structured assessment of how the Trump administration's policies deviated from previous administrations and the resulting effects on Africa. By offering a critical analysis of these changes, the study contributes to a broader understanding of U.S. foreign policy under Trump and its lasting effects on Africa's political, economic, and security landscape. As African

nations continue to navigate an increasingly multipolar world, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into how U.S. engagement strategies can evolve to align with Africa's priorities and the broader global order.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing U.S.-Africa Relations: Overview of Previous Administrations' Policies toward Africa

The trajectory of U.S.-Africa relations has evolved significantly over the decades, shaped by varying foreign policy approaches adopted by successive administrations. During the Cold War era, U.S. engagement with Africa was largely driven by geopolitical competition with the Soviet Union. This period saw strategic alliances with African nations based on ideological alignment rather than economic or developmental priorities (Schraeder, 1994). The post-Cold War era ushered in a new phase of engagement, particularly under the Bill Clinton administration, which introduced the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2000, aimed at fostering trade between the U.S. and African nations (Moss, 2011). Clinton's policy emphasized economic partnerships, democratic governance, and conflict resolution.

The George W. Bush administration built upon these foundations but with a greater emphasis on security and health initiatives. The establishment of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in 2003 marked a significant commitment to Africa's health sector, providing billions of dollars in aid for combating HIV/AIDS (Natsios, 2010). Additionally, Bush's focus on counterterrorism led to the creation of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2007, signaling a shift toward militarized engagement in Africa (Pham, 2011).

Under Barack Obama, the U.S. sought to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties with Africa through initiatives such as Power Africa, aimed at increasing electricity access across the continent, and the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in 2014, which emphasized investment and governance reforms (Kalu, 2018). Despite these efforts, critiques emerged regarding the limited tangible impact of some programs and the continued dominance of security interests over economic partnerships (Gavin, 2016).

The Trump administration marked a stark departure from its predecessors, adopting a more transactional and security-centric approach. While initiatives like Prosper Africa sought to enhance private-sector engagement, the administration's disengagement from multilateral institutions and critical trade agreements, along with cuts to foreign aid, signaled a retreat from traditional diplomatic and development strategies (Mazarr et al., 2020). These shifts underscore the importance of analyzing the theoretical underpinnings that explain U.S. foreign policy choices toward Africa.

U.S. Diplomatic Engagement with Africa

U.S.-Africa diplomatic relations have historically been shaped by strategic, economic, and political considerations, with varying degrees of engagement across different administrations. The Trump administration's approach to Africa represented a departure from previous U.S. policies, which emphasized development cooperation and multilateral engagement. Under Trump, diplomatic ties with Africa were often characterized by inconsistency and reduced engagement at the highest levels of government (Chikere, 2020). The administration's "America First" policy deprioritized Africa, leading to fewer high-level visits by U.S. officials and a lack of clear strategic direction in relations with African nations (Pham, 2021). One of the most notable diplomatic incidents under the Trump administration was the president's controversial rhetoric regarding African nations, which strained U.S.-Africa relations. Statements perceived as derogatory and dismissive created tensions, prompting African leaders and the African Union to issue formal complaints (Adeoye, 2020). Moreover, while previous administrations had established broad-based frameworks for engagement, such as the Obama administration's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) and the Bush administration's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Trump administration did not introduce any major new diplomatic initiatives tailored to Africa (Brown & Harman, 2021). Instead, engagement was largely limited to security partnerships and trade discussions that prioritized U.S. interests over long-term development cooperation.

Despite these challenges, U.S. diplomatic presence in Africa continued through embassies and regional initiatives, although engagement was often reactive rather than proactive.

Analysts argue that the lack of a comprehensive Africa strategy led to missed opportunities for deeper political and economic collaboration, especially at a time when global competitors like China and the European Union were strengthening their ties with the continent (Dahir, 2019). The reduced diplomatic engagement ultimately pushed African leaders to seek alternative alliances, diminishing the historical influence of the U.S. on the continent.

Trade Policies, Particularly AGOA and Private-Sector Investment

Trade has been a cornerstone of U.S.-Africa relations, particularly through initiatives such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which was enacted in 2000 to facilitate duty-free access to U.S. markets for African countries. However, under the Trump administration, trade policy saw a shift from multilateral economic engagement to a more transactional approach focused on individual bilateral agreements (Ezenwa, 2021). While AGOA remained in place, there was limited effort to expand or renew its provisions, and some African countries faced the risk of exclusion from the program due to compliance issues and shifting U.S. priorities (Kimenyi & Lutz, 2020).

Instead of prioritizing AGOA, the administration promoted the *Prosper Africa* initiative, which aimed to increase private-sector investment in Africa. Launched in 2019, the initiative was designed to facilitate American business expansion into African markets, leveraging private capital rather than traditional aid mechanisms (U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, 2019). While this approach aligned with the administration's preference

for market-driven solutions, critics argued that it lacked the institutional support and funding necessary to have a significant impact on U.S.-Africa trade relations (Shaban, 2020).

The shift toward bilateral trade agreements also raised concerns among African policymakers, as it signaled a potential departure from the broader trade benefits offered by AGOA. Some African leaders viewed this move as an attempt to reduce Africa's collective bargaining power in trade negotiations (Odoom, 2020). Furthermore, the administration's withdrawal from major multilateral agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), reflected a broader skepticism toward large-scale trade agreements, which indirectly affected Africa by reducing the overall level of U.S. economic engagement on the continent.

Security Cooperation and Counterterrorism Initiatives

Security cooperation remained a key area of U.S. engagement with Africa under the Trump administration, particularly in counterterrorism operations. The U.S. maintained military partnerships with African nations, focusing on combating extremist groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, and ISIS-affiliated militants in the Sahel region (Felter & Cheatham, 2020). However, the administration's security strategy emphasized burden-sharing, urging African governments to take greater responsibility for regional security while scaling back direct U.S. involvement (Vines, 2021).

Despite this, U.S. military support continued through initiatives such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), which provided training, intelligence sharing, and logistical assistance to African security forces (Gonzalez, 2020). However, there were significant reductions in U.S. troop deployments and military aid, as the administration sought to shift focus toward competition with China and Russia rather than counterinsurgency efforts in Africa (Olorunshola, 2021).

The security-first approach often came at the expense of broader development and governance support, which some analysts argue is essential for long-term stability. The lack of investment in addressing the root causes of extremism—such as poverty, unemployment, and weak governance—meant that security interventions were often reactive rather than preventive (Agbibo, 2020). Additionally, the U.S. withdrawal from key multilateral security commitments, such as its reduced participation in UN peacekeeping operations, raised concerns about the sustainability of counterterrorism efforts in Africa (Aning & Salihu, 2021).

The Role of Multilateral Institutions and U.S. Foreign Aid

The Trump administration's skepticism toward multilateral institutions had direct implications for Africa, as the U.S. reduced its financial commitments to organizations such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the African Union (Wekesa, 2021). This reduction in funding impacted various development initiatives, including health programs, peacekeeping missions, and economic assistance efforts (Gberie, 2020). The administration's decision to withdraw from the WHO in 2020, citing concerns over its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, was particularly controversial, as African

countries relied heavily on WHO support for pandemic response and public health infrastructure (Dahir, 2020).

U.S. foreign aid also experienced cuts, particularly in programs related to humanitarian assistance, climate change, and governance promotion. The administration proposed significant reductions to the budgets of agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), though many of these cuts were ultimately reversed by Congress (Norris, 2021). However, the overall shift in policy signaled a deprioritization of aid-based engagement in favor of security and economic interests.

Despite these challenges, some U.S.-Africa partnerships remained intact, particularly in health and education sectors. PEPFAR, a long-standing initiative focused on HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, continued to receive funding, though at reduced levels compared to previous administrations (Garrett, 2020). The administration's mixed approach to foreign aid and multilateral cooperation created uncertainty about the future of U.S. engagement in Africa, prompting many African leaders to seek alternative partnerships with China, the EU, and regional organizations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

International relations theories provide essential frameworks for understanding the shifts in U.S.-Africa relations under the Trump administration. Two dominant theories—**realism** and **neoliberalism**—offer contrasting perspectives on how and why states engage with Africa.

Realism, founded by **Hans Morgenthau (1948)**, posits that international relations are driven by power politics and national interest. Realists argue that states prioritize their survival and security over ideological or humanitarian concerns. This perspective is particularly relevant to the Trump administration's Africa policy, which focused heavily on counterterrorism and security interests rather than development or diplomacy (Waltz, 1979). For instance, the administration's emphasis on countering extremist threats in the Sahel region, while reducing developmental aid, aligns with realism's assertion that states act in self-interest to maintain their strategic advantages (Mearsheimer, 2001). The realist framework helps explain why U.S. engagement in Africa under Trump became increasingly transactional, with a focus on military partnerships rather than long-term developmental investments.

In contrast, **neoliberalism**, championed by **Robert Keohane (1984)**, argues that international cooperation and institutions play a crucial role in shaping global relations. Neoliberals assert that economic interdependence and multilateral organizations enhance cooperation between states, leading to mutually beneficial outcomes. This theory is particularly relevant in analyzing the policies of previous administrations, such as Clinton's AGOA initiative and Obama's Power Africa, both of which sought to deepen economic and diplomatic ties through institutional frameworks (Nye, 2011). The Trump administration's skepticism toward multilateral institutions, including the African Union and the United Nations, contradicts

neoliberal expectations, demonstrating a significant policy shift that disrupted traditional U.S.-Africa engagements (Ikenberry, 2018).

The relevance of these theoretical perspectives to this study lies in their explanatory power. Realism helps to contextualize the Trump administration's prioritization of security and strategic interests over development, while neoliberalism highlights the challenges posed by disengagement from institutional frameworks. By analyzing U.S.-Africa relations through these lenses, this research provides a deeper understanding of how different foreign policy approaches influence Africa's economic and political landscape.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Diplomatic Relations

The Trump administration's approach to diplomatic engagement with Africa resulted in reduced high-level diplomatic visits and strained bilateral relations due to rhetoric and policy inconsistencies. Unlike previous administrations, which emphasized building long-term partnerships with African nations through frequent state visits and summits, Trump's tenure saw a notable decline in direct presidential engagement with African leaders (Adeoye, 2020). The U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, initiated under President Obama in 2014, was not continued, and fewer high-profile delegations visited Africa compared to past administrations.

Additionally, Trump's controversial rhetoric regarding African nations contributed to deteriorating diplomatic relations. His reported remarks about African countries, described as "shithole nations" during a meeting in 2018, sparked outrage among African leaders and the African Union (Brown & Harman, 2021). This perception of disregard for African interests led to a cooling of relations, with some African governments publicly criticizing U.S. policies. Moreover, inconsistencies in policy—such as a fluctuating stance on trade agreements and foreign aid reductions—further weakened diplomatic trust (Chikere, 2020). A comparative analysis of U.S. diplomatic visits to Africa under different administrations highlights this decline:

Table 1: U.S. Presidential and High-Level Diplomatic Visits to Africa (2000-2021)

Administration	Number of Presidential Visits	High-Level Diplomatic Visits	Key Engagements
George W. Bush (2001-2009)	5	Multiple Secretary of State & Defense visits	PEPFAR, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)
Barack Obama (2009-2017)	4	U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, AGOA Renewal	YALI, Power Africa, Strengthened AGOA

Donald Trump (2017-2021)	0	Limited Secretary of State Visits	Prosper Africa, AGOA Disengagement
Joe Biden (2021-Present)	1 (as of 2023)	U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit Revived	Strengthening of U.S.-Africa Multilateral Relations

Source: Adapted from Adeoye (2020) and Brown & Harman (2021).

Trade and Economic Engagement

Trade relations between the U.S. and Africa under the Trump administration witnessed a shift from traditional aid-based models to private-sector-led initiatives. The most notable policy in this regard was the *Prosper Africa* initiative, launched in 2019, which aimed to promote American business investments in African markets (Ezenwa, 2021). Unlike AGOA, which provided African countries with preferential access to U.S. markets, *Prosper Africa* focused on facilitating direct business deals and leveraging private capital to drive trade. However, critics argue that the initiative lacked the institutional support and funding required to create significant trade benefits (Shaban, 2020).

AGOA, a trade program that had been instrumental in boosting African exports to the U.S. since 2000, saw diminished support under Trump. While the legislation remained active, the administration did little to expand or modernize it. Instead, there was a push for bilateral trade agreements, which created uncertainty for African economies that had long relied on AGOA benefits (Kimenyi & Lutz, 2020). The Trump administration's preference for one-on-one trade deals reduced Africa's collective bargaining power and created uneven economic relations between the U.S. and African states.

A comparative analysis of AGOA-related trade under different U.S. administrations provides further insight:

Table 2: U.S. Imports from AGOA Beneficiary Countries (2010-2020) (in Billion USD)

Year	Obama Administration (2010-2016)	Trump Administration (2017-2020)
2010	44.3	-
2011	53.8	-
2012	48.1	-
2013	39.3	-
2014	34.6	-
2015	27.3	-

2016	19.4	-
2017	-	17.5
2018	-	16.8
2019	-	14.7
2020	-	12.9

Source: Adapted from Kimenyi& Lutz (2020).

The decline in AGOA-related trade under the Trump administration reflects the reduced prioritization of African trade agreements. This decline coincided with Africa's increasing economic engagement with China and the European Union, as African governments sought alternative trade partners in response to U.S. disengagement (Odoom, 2020).

Overall, while the *Prosper Africa* initiative represented an effort to expand economic ties through private investment, its limited scale and the administration's reduced support for AGOA hindered U.S.-Africa trade relations. The shift toward bilateral trade negotiations also created uncertainty, leading many African nations to diversify their economic partnerships outside of the U.S.

Security and Counterterrorism Cooperation

Under the Trump administration, security and counterterrorism cooperation with Africa remained a key aspect of U.S. engagement, although there was a shift in approach. The U.S. continued its military partnerships with African nations, focusing on combating extremist groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, and ISIS-affiliated militants in the Sahel region (Felter& Cheatham, 2020). Initiatives such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) played a crucial role in training African security forces, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism operations (Gonzalez, 2020). However, despite maintaining these partnerships, the administration scaled back broader development assistance, which many analysts argue is essential for long-term security and stability (Agbiboa, 2020).

A major shift under Trump's security strategy was the emphasis on burden-sharing, urging African governments to take greater responsibility for their security while reducing direct U.S. involvement (Vines, 2021). The administration also proposed troop reductions in Africa, signaling a move toward reallocating U.S. military resources to counter China and Russia's growing global influence (Olorunshola, 2021). These reductions raised concerns about the sustainability of counterterrorism efforts, as African security forces faced operational challenges without continued logistical and intelligence support from the U.S. (Aning&Salihu, 2021).

Key Aspects of U.S.-Africa Security Cooperation Under Trump	Details
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Counterterrorism Focus	Targeted operations against Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, and ISIS affiliates
AFRICOM & TSCTP Support	Training, intelligence sharing, and military assistance
Troop Reductions	Proposed withdrawal of U.S. forces from Africa
Emphasis on Burden-Sharing	African nations urged to take greater security responsibility
Reduced Development Aid	Cutbacks in governance, economic, and humanitarian assistance

Source: Adapted from Felter & Cheatham (2020), Agbiboa (2020), and Vines (2021).

Multilateral Relations and Foreign Aid

The Trump administration's skepticism toward multilateral institutions significantly impacted U.S.-Africa relations, particularly in development aid and diplomatic engagement. The U.S. reduced its financial commitments to key organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the World Health Organization (WHO), arguing that these institutions were inefficient and that the U.S. was disproportionately funding them (Wekesa, 2021). The administration's decision to withdraw from the WHO in 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, was particularly controversial, as African nations relied heavily on WHO assistance for pandemic response and public health infrastructure (Dahir, 2020).

Foreign aid also saw significant reductions, particularly in programs focused on governance, humanitarian assistance, and climate change. Agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) faced budget cuts, although many of these were ultimately reversed by Congress (Norris, 2021). While the Trump administration maintained funding for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), it was at lower levels compared to previous administrations (Garrett, 2020). This shift away from multilateral engagement reinforced perceptions that Africa was not a strategic priority for the U.S. under Trump.

Impact of U.S. Multilateral Withdrawal on Africa	Effects
Withdrawal from WHO	Reduced support for Africa's COVID-19 response
Reduced UN and AU Funding	Decreased financial aid for peacekeeping and governance programs
Foreign Aid Reductions	Cuts to USAID and MCC funding for development programs

Continued PEPFAR Funding	Support for HIV/AIDS programs, though at lower levels
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Source: Adapted from Wekesa (2021), Norris (2021), and Garrett (2020).

Africa's Response and Geopolitical Realignments

In response to the shifts in U.S. policy, African nations sought to strengthen partnerships with alternative global powers, particularly China and the European Union (EU). The reduction in U.S. diplomatic engagement and aid prompted African leaders to increase economic and political cooperation with China, which continued to provide infrastructure investments through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (Dahir, 2019). China's emphasis on development financing, coupled with fewer political conditions compared to Western aid, made it an attractive partner for many African governments (Odoom, 2020).

Alternative Global Partnerships Strengthened by Africa	Key Areas of Cooperation
China	Infrastructure investment, trade, development financing
European Union (EU)	Trade agreements, security cooperation, climate action
African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)	Regional trade and economic integration
Russia & Other Global Powers	Security partnerships and arms agreements

Source: Adapted from Dahir (2019), Odoom (2020), and Brown & Harman (2021).

The European Union also played a more active role in engaging with Africa, particularly in trade, security, and climate change initiatives. The EU launched the *Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs*, aiming to enhance economic cooperation and job creation across the continent (Brown & Harman, 2021). Meanwhile, African nations continued strengthening intra-continental ties through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), reducing dependence on Western partners (Kimenyi & Lutz, 2020).

CONCLUSION

U.S.-Africa relations during the Trump administration underwent a notable transformation, characterized by a move toward a transactional and security-focused approach, with diminished emphasis on diplomacy and development assistance. The administration's *America First* doctrine led to the marginalization of Africa within U.S. foreign policy priorities, resulting in reduced foreign aid, a retreat from multilateral institutions, and disengagement from long-standing initiatives such as the African Growth and Opportunity

Act (AGOA). However, economic ties continued through initiatives like Prosper Africa, which prioritized private-sector investment over traditional aid models. Security cooperation also remained significant, especially in counterterrorism operations across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Nigeria. Nevertheless, the proposal to reduce U.S. troop presence and shift more security responsibility to African states raised doubts about the sustainability of these efforts. The administration's lack of engagement with multilateral platforms and its often dismissive rhetoric weakened U.S. influence in Africa, allowing other powers—such as China, the European Union, and emerging global actors—to expand their foothold. In turn, African countries responded by broadening their international alliances and deepening regional integration through mechanisms like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Although some aspects of the Trump-era approach resonated with Africa's focus on trade and self-reliance, the inconsistency and adversarial tone strained diplomatic relations and contributed to a wider geopolitical realignment on the continent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The United States should prioritize the restoration of diplomatic engagement with African countries by initiating high-level visits, convening summits, and conducting regular strategic dialogues. Strengthening both bilateral and multilateral relationships and increasing participation in African Union (AU) activities will help rebuild trust and promote collaborative partnerships on key issues.
2. The U.S. should enhance trade and investment relationships by revamping AGOA and expanding the scope of Prosper Africa. There is a need to negotiate durable trade agreements that support African industrialization and the production of value-added goods. Investing in digital infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and long-term economic growth initiatives will contribute to mutually beneficial development.
3. Security cooperation must be strengthened by integrating development assistance into counterterrorism strategies. Addressing the underlying drivers of extremism—such as poverty, youth unemployment, and political instability—will foster more sustainable peace and security. Additionally, deeper collaboration with regional organizations such as ECOWAS and the AU Peace and Security Council will support African-led solutions to security challenges.
4. The United States should recommit to multilateralism by engaging more actively with global and regional institutions including the United Nations, African Union, World Health Organization, and World Trade Organization. Increased support for climate action, global health initiatives, and humanitarian responses will bolster Africa's resilience to global crises. Support for regional economic integration efforts like AfCFTA will also enhance Africa's economic autonomy.
5. U.S. policymakers should adopt a consistent and respectful Africa policy that recognizes African nations as equal partners in the international system. Avoiding derogatory

rhetoric and maintaining coherence in foreign policy decisions will strengthen diplomatic relations and rebuild the credibility of the U.S. as a long-term and dependable partner in Africa's development journey.

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