

Research Article

# The Recalibration of U.S. Aid and Development Programs in Africa: Assessing the Impact of Trump's Neo-Isolationist Agenda

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## ABSTRACT



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This paper will analyse how the U.S. aid and development program to Africa is being recalibrated under the neo-isolationist agenda of President Donald Trump, the effect of the same on African socio-economic development and U.S Africa relations. The study evaluates the changes in the U.S. aid approach in 2016-2021 that occurred due to the qualitative analysis of the policy documents, reports by the USAID, and other aligned sources that discussed the shift in priorities. Among the major results, it can be shown that the administration of Trump cut back on multilateral commitments, pumped money back into counterterrorism initiatives, and cut down on support of health, education, and climate initiatives. The paper contributes to the knowledge about the role of alterations in the U.S. foreign policy in shaping world development practices and the ways the African states can proceed with the changing geopolitical dynamics. The results highlight the risks of a transactional approach to foreign aid in the long-term and provide policy proposals on how the U.S. and Africa can engage in the future.

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## Introduction

Foreign aid in the United States has been treated as an important tool of diplomacy and international leverage, especially in Africa, where developmental and humanitarian issues have left a permanent dependency on foreign assistance (Lancaster, 2007; Radelet, 2018). The U.S. assistance to Africa has conventionally been two-fold: they were aimed at supporting economic growth and stability in the region, as well as pursuing American strategic interests which comprise counterterrorism, trade relations, and democratic forms of governance (Schraeder, 2000; Morrison, 2019). Nevertheless, the rise of the President Donald Trump and his doctrine of America First became the sign of a new radical approach to aid diplomacy. This agenda was based on neo-isolationism thought and focused less on foreign and more on domestic issues, which led to the display of aid reductions, decreased participation in multilateral relations, and transition to assistance that is transactional and security-oriented (Dueck, 2020; Sachs, 2020). It is against this backdrop that the research would aim to answer a fundamental question: in what way did the Trumpian foreign policy reset the U.S. aid and development involvement in Africa and what were the consequences of the liaison between the two sides of the relationship? To be more precise, the questions that the study examines are the following: (1) How did U.S. aid to Africa change under Trump? (2) What were the areas of development that experienced the biggest impact of this shift? (3) What was the reaction of African states to the policy re-alignment? In this paper, the author discusses aid

relations between the U.S. and Africa in 2016-2021 through a qualitative approach based on official policy documents, aid statistics, and academic interpretations. It is divided into sub plans that involve the historical development of the U.S. aid, theoretical models, literature review, and empirical evidence as well as policy proposals.

This research is informed by the necessity to critically question the ideological and structural change in the U.S. foreign aid policy towards Africa under the Trump administration. The initial goal, which is to uncover the essence and scale of Trump-era U.S. assistance recalibration, is based on the fact that foreign aid as a diplomatic and developmental instrument had been transformed radically during the time of Trump. Trump was a nationalist aid maker focused on costs, unlike his predecessors who stressed multilateral engagement and long-term capacity building, tending to propose massive cuts in development budgets and redefine aid as a transactional tool to enhance U.S. security and economic interests (Dueck, 2020; Garcia, 2021). To achieve this goal, the trends in budgets, institutional reshaping (e.g., USAID), and policy narratives that characterized the recalibration process have to be analyzed.

The second goal, which aims at evaluation of the effects of development on important sectors of Africa, is oriented towards comprehending the influence of these changes on the such avenues as health, education, climate change, and governance. Such initiatives as PEPFAR or donations to multilateral organizations such as the WHO were significantly reduced or

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repositioned (Sachs, 2020). This dimension of the research seeks to discover the practical implications of withdrawal or reduction of aid, particularly to vulnerable groups and national development agenda in African nations. It also assesses the African institutions resilience and adaptive measures to aid shocks (Obeng-Odoom, 2021).

The current study offers a critical scholarly addition to the overlapping areas of foreign policy and development studies by offering a detailed argumentation on how ideological change, especially neo-isolationism under President Trump, is incredibly redefining the structure of international aid. Although the strategic and humanitarian role of U.S. foreign aid has been examined intensively in the literature in the past (Lancaster, 2007; Radelet, 2018), the present study places the recalibration of Trump in a larger theoretical and geopolitical perspective, which provides some insights into the impact of nationalist ideologies on the behavior of donors, the priorities of the sector, and the reaction of the recipient states. The research also contributes to theoretical arguments on aid and international relations by relying on the ideas of neo-realism, dependency theory, and constructivism.

The research has policy implications to the governments of the United States and Africa. To the U.S. policymakers, it offers empirical data on the unintentional effects of pulling out of the global leadership in the development such as diminished diplomacy power and reduced soft power in Africa (Sachs, 2020). The implications of the findings to African leaders and institutions are that development partners must be diversified, regional collaboration reinforced and resilience improved in order to mitigate volatility. Policy recommendations that are presented in the study provide a practical guidance in designing aid strategies that are more inclusive, sustainable and congruent with mutual interests.

Moreover, the study is very applicable to the current debates of global governance as well as the international aid. With the world struggling with the competing development assistance models between Western conditionality and the Chinese infrastructure-based model, this paper aids in putting into perspective the consequences of donor withdrawal, unilateralism, and transnationalism in the multipolar world order (Obeng-Odoom, 2021). It also provokes a reevaluation of the norms of aid, asymmetry of power, and the contribution made by multilateral institutions to develop global objectives. Therefore, the research is both a timely reflection and a prospective commentary of the U.S.-Africa relations in the realms of the changing world dynamics.

### Theoretical Framework

This paper is based on three interconnected theoretical approaches, namely Neo-Realism, Dependency Theory, and Constructivism, to examine how the U.S. aid and development initiatives in Africa will be recalibrated under the neo-isolationist agenda of President Donald Trump. These theories can be used as a multidimensional prism through which the strategic, structural, and ideological undertones of the U.S. foreign aid decisions can be explained.

According to the developed theories by Kenneth Waltz (1979), neo-realism holds that the international system is anarchic and states behave in the main to guarantee their survival, security and power. In this light, foreign aid is not a humanitarian act as such but a national interest achievement instrument. The neo-realist logic is closely detailed to the attitude of foreign aid that Trump has shown to followed since it is characterized as transactional and driven by the desire to gain short-term benefits. The assistance under his leadership was frequently shifted to programs that were helpful in counterterrorism, border protection, and migration control (Dueck, 2020). The change in strategy was also a manifestation of abandoning long-term development in favor of aid that strengthened the American geopolitical position, especially in areas that could be considered strategically important

to the U.S. security, including the Sahel and Horn of Africa (Brown, 2020).

Dependency theory is a theory that is expressed by various scholars such as Samir Amin (1976) and Walter Rodney (1972) that is a critique of the structural relationship of the rich donor nations and the developing countries which depend on aid. It claims that foreign aid tends to promote underdevelopment as it strengthens the aspect of economic dependency, political subservience and unequal exchange. The instrumentality and conditionality of aid, which ties aid to political conformity or adherence to policy, is familiar under Trump with the admonition of the dependency theory that aid is a vehicle of neo-colonial subordination. Further asymmetry of donor-recipient relationships was further institutionalized by the cut of multilateral flows and shift to bilateral aid based on interests. When the African nations accepted the aid in new conditions stipulated by Trump, they frequently did not have the bargaining force to shape the programs, which only worsened the dependency issue and curtailed the free developmental paths (Obeng-Odoom, 2021).

Constructivism puts a strong focus on how ideas, identities, and discourse influence international relations. Alexander Wendt (1999) maintains that material interests are not the only motivation behind the foreign policy but ideological constructs and norms also play a role. The foreign aid policy of Trump was ideologically defined by the program of America First, which did not recognize globalist principles and multilateralism, but instead supported nationalism, sovereignty, and cost-effectiveness (Dueck, 2020). This rhetorical and ideological transformation did not only affect the content of the U.S. assistance programs, but also its image. As an example, the constant donations of international organizations and the presentation of aid to the world as a waste of money delegitimized the decades of global cooperation in development (Sachs, 2020). Constructivism aids to understand the impact of such discursive changes on making policy choices and world expectations as it led to redefining the U.S with Africa relations.

### Literature Review

Historically, U.S. foreign aid has fulfilled several functions such as strategic, humanitarian, economic and diplomatic ones. In theory, the aid policy has been viewed in terms of neo-realism that states seek aid to advance the national interest and ensure a presence in the international arena (Waltz, 1979). Empirically, the U.S. aid has been demonstrated by various scholars such as Lancaster (2007), Radelet (2018) to have undergone a transition through containment strategies during the Cold War period, to security-oriented aid in the post-9/11 period, and as of recently, sustainable development goals. According to Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor (1998), the allocation of U.S aid is an interplay of political, commercial and humanitarian interests and that Africa has had to be offered aid on the condition of governance reform and democratization. NGOs like the USAID and PEPFAR have been instrumental in the process of transforming foreign policy to developmental results, especially health and education.

The nexus between aid and development has been a debatable factor in the development studies. On the one hand, there are those who support this assistance such as Sachs (2005), who believe that aid can stimulate growth and reduce abject poverty in case it is directed in the right way. Contrarily, some critics like Moyo (2009) and Easterly (2006) claim that aid promotes dependency, corruption of institutions and warping local accountability processes. Dependency theory views aid as a means of further neo-colonialism to strengthen the dependency status of the peripheral countries on the core economies (Amin, 1976). Newer controversies revolve around the effectiveness of development with an emphasis on the ownership of recipient countries, results-based models and multilateralism (Eyben,

2013). These discussions form a critical basis on which the recalibration of U.S. aid under Trump whose philosophy did not conform to the established developmental conventions can be considered.

Although the overall foreign policy of Trump has been studied extensively, little analysis has been done of the Africa-specific section of the foreign policy. According to Dueck (2020), this policy of Trump can be characterized as a conservative nationalist agenda, where bilateralism and economic nationalism are the preferred forms of interaction as opposed to multilateralism. According to Garcia (2021) there exists a trend of budgetary retrenchment, which is characterized by proposed cuts to USAID, WHO, and U.N., and it indicates that Africa is being relegated in the U.S. foreign policy. Brown (2020) addresses the conflict between institutional sluggishness and rhetoric of Trump, saying that as some serious deep cuts were suggested, Congress tended to keep intact fundamental development efforts such as PEPFAR. However, the transition to transnationalism and the rhetoric of the America First led to the lack of confidence in the planning of development on a long-term basis in African states (Sachs, 2020).

**Determination of Major Gaps in Knowledge.**

Even though there is now literature on Trump-era foreign policy, there remain some gaps. To begin with, there is a paucity of studies that examine aid recalibration sectorally in Africa, especially in terms of health, education and climate adaptation. Second, the available literature does not pay enough attention to the African agency, as it does not address how African states reacted to or opposed the shifts in U.S. aid (Obeng-Odoom, 2021). Third, the U.S. withdrawal of multilateral relationships and the subsequent increase in Chinese power has no long-term geopolitical consequences that are understudied. Also, empirical studies that involve capturing the experiences and views of the African policymakers are scarce and may provide a more in-depth understanding of regional approaches to resilience and diversification. The paper will fill these gaps by synthesizing a theoretical reflection with empirical evidence of the effects of Trump aid policy on Africa in 2016-2021 to have a comprehensive picture of the effects.

**Historical Background**

**The U.S. Aid to Africa: Cold War to Obama.**

The history of U.S foreign aid to Africa can be identified with the shifting priorities of American international strategy. Africa was a major receiving country of aid during the cold war because of the ideological rivalry between the Soviet Union and the U.S. The African states would be assisted not only on the basis of their development requirements but on their corresponding position to the Western or Eastern bloc (Schraeder, 2000). It is during this period that bilateral aid agencies were born like the USAID (created in 1961) which existed within a paradigm that blurred the developmental aid with the geopolitical containment.

This shifted aid towards humanitarian and development-oriented goals in the post-Cold War period especially with Presidents Clinton and Bush. Significant initiatives were the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of 2000 that opened up trade opportunities to African nations and the President Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) initiated in 2003 that became one of the iconic international health programs (Radelet, 2018). The relations between U.S and Africa under President Barack Obama concentrated on multilateralism, institutional reform, promotion of democracy and sustainable development, as the Power Africa and Feed the Future initiatives reinforced a holistic approach to development (Morrison, 2019).

**Trump Shift: Unilateralism, Budget Cuts and Aid Politicization.**

The administration of President Donald Trump presented a drastic shift in the old direction of multilateralism and

development. The agendas of Trump, he referred to as America First, favored self-interest of the nation, cost-effectiveness, and low involvement in the international sphere. It resulted in suggested budget reductions to the foreign aid schemes, rhetoric assaults on the multilateral organization, and the replacement of development diplomacy with the concept of transactional aid relations (Dueck, 2020). Every budget of the White House between fiscal years 2018 and 2021 repeatedly suggested cutting foreign aid by up to 30 percent, but Congress repeatedly opposed it and sometimes overturned it (CRS, 2020).

In addition, Trump considered aid to be leverage not a partnership but instead a source of assistance was based on what U.S. got back. The rhetoric of aid conditionality was more conspicuous, especially when it comes to the alignment of voting in the United Nations or collaboration in the sphere of security and migration control (Garcia, 2021). This politicization of aid destroyed years of hard work in helping to build democracy and governance in Africa, creating the impression of policy inconsistency and lack of engagement.

Table 1: The U.S. Foreign Assistance to African Countries Selected (in Millions USD), 2015-2020.

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Nigeria	726.0	703.1	680.5	611.4	678.1	638.4
Ethiopia	513.2	505.8	490.3	471.2	468.7	449.9
Kenya	637.3	615.7	598.4	562.8	540.2	530.5
South Africa	466.5	452.0	429.1	388.7	365.4	350.6
Democratic Republic of Congo	332.4	345.1	321.6	308.9	297.1	289.3

Source: USAID Foreign Assistance Data (foreignassistance.gov, CRS, 2021)

**Affected Major Initiatives (PEPFAR, WHO, USAID, AGOA)**

A number of large development programs were hit with the Trump presidency. PEPFAR was not destroyed, but there were stagnant budgets and internal administrative turmoil that hindered its leadership status in combating HIV/AIDS on the global front (Morrison, 2019). When the U.S. suspended funding to the World Health Organization (WHO) due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was a clear signal of the end of the cooperation between China and other countries in ending global health cooperation and it also endangered the coordination of responses in Africa where WHO is the central hub (Sachs, 2020).

The USAID also had turbulence and strategic reorientation of its leadership. It became more and more oriented in its mission to the economic leverage and counter-terrorism and not to inclusive development. Also, AGOA, the U.S.-Africa trade collaboration emblem, became the less prioritized subject of discussion, although the Belt and Road Initiative of China was gaining prominence in the continent (Brown, 2020). This discriminating withdrawal brought into question the sustainability of American development pressure in Africa and heralded a more fundamental change in ideology of U.S. foreign policy.

**Empirical Review**

**Aid Flow Trends under the Trump Administration.**

During the Trump administration, the U.S. foreign aid was slated to encounter major cuts, although Congress tended to resist the most drastic ones. Budget plans of the Trump administration between 2017 and 2021 had continuously suggested a cut of up to 30 percent in foreign aid including bilateral and multilateral aid (CRS, 2020). As an illustration, the FY2018 budget proposed to reduce expenditures on USAID, PEPFAR, and donations to international organizations, including the United Nations and World Health Organization (WHO) (Sachs, 2020).

Although general disbursements to Africa were relatively constant, thanks to Congressional opposition, the aid was changed. Investments were being shifted towards

counterterrorism, border control and political influence particularly in states that are considered strategic like Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia (Brown, 2020). Aid was increasingly conditional and based on the responsiveness of countries to the United Nations holding to the interests of the United States or cooperation in migration (Garcia, 2021).

**Sectoral Case Studies**

**a. Health Sector (e.g., PEPFAR and WHO Contributions)**

The Trump administration suggested to cut down on the President Emergency Plan to AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) which is one of the largest and effective health programs in Africa. These initiatives did not succeed, but the program was to be frustrated by the Congress, bureaucracy, personnel turnover, and bureaucracy in the USAID and the State Department (Morrison, 2019).

In 2020 the withdrawal of U.S. funding to the WHO in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had grave consequences on the African public health systems, which depend on WHO technical assistance and coordination. This action undermined the process of global response to pandemics and the position of the U.S. as a global health governor (Sachs, 2020).

**b. Education and Governance**

Traditionally the main elements of U.S. soft power, programs to support democracy, rule of law, and civil society were lesser funded and seen during the Trump administration (USAID, 2021). Countries that received democracy promotion in such states as Sudan, Zambia and Democratic Republic of Congo saw a stagnation or deterioration in their budgets. The U.S. did not seem to be eager to demand reforms in the governance structure, focusing on stability and economic transactions rather than democratic principles (Brown, 2020).

**c. Security and Counterterrorism.**

The rebalanced aid programme emphasized more on security cooperation. The U.S. also had more funding to Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and anti-terror activity support in the Sahel region and Horn of Africa (CRS, 2020). Although this change corresponded to neo-realist interests, critics said that it came at the cost of the development-oriented investment and did not solve the root causes of insecurity like poverty and fragile states (Obeng-Odoom, 2021).

**Reaction of African States and Institutions.**

The African governments reacted differently to the Trump-era of aid policies. In other countries such as Kenya and Nigeria that still held some strategic value to the U.S. counterterrorism objectives, the relations were relatively stable. Nevertheless, the insecurity and transnationalism of the Trump administration was of concern to many African leaders (Garcia, 2021).

As a reaction to the perceived U.S. disengagement, a number of African states enhanced the diplomatic and economic relationships with other world actors, especially China, the European Union, and Turkey (Brown, 2020). The Belt and Road Initiative of China especially reached out in the realm of infrastructure and telecommunications sectors during this time and this partially served the gap created by the U.S.

African Union efforts like Agenda 2063 were reemphasized at the regional level with calls to be more self-reliant and cooperate with each other. The African civil society groups also emphasized localizing aid and decolonizing development assistance, placing the end of aid dependency to endogenous development (Obeng-Odoom, 2021).

**Table 2:** Proposed U.S. Foreign Aid Budget Cuts vs. Congressional Appropriations (2018–2021)

Fiscal Year	Trump Administration Proposed Aid Budget	Actual Congressional Appropriation	% Difference
2018	\$28.2 billion	\$46.9 billion	+66.3%
2019	\$26.1 billion	\$47.2 billion	+80.8%
2020	\$29.0 billion	\$49.4 billion	+70.3%
2021	\$35.0 billion	\$52.7 billion	+50.6%

Source: Congressional Budget Justifications; U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (2021)

**Research Methodology**

The proposed research takes the qualitative research approach, allowing a critical look at the resettlement of the U.S. aid and development program in Africa within the framework of the neo-isolationist agenda of President Donald Trump. Qualitative approach is the best as it will enable a more in depth interpretation of the policy documents, discourse and trends of aid which would bring about the ideological and political subtleties of foreign aid decision-making. The analysis will be based mostly on secondary sources of data, such as reports of the U.S. governmental budget, official communications of the USAID and the State Department, Congressional testimonies, and international development evaluations that have been released in the period between 2016 and 2021. Further evidence is taken out of academic sources, think tank documents (e.g., CSIS, Brookings), multilateral organizations (e.g., WHO, World Bank), and news outlets that are deemed trustworthy when it comes to reporting on the Trump-era foreign policy choices.

Content analysis and comparison policy analysis are the tools of analysis that will be applied to determine how the Trump narrative of America First influenced the ideological frames of aid and how Trump compared his policies with those of his predecessors, specifically Barack Obama and George W. Bush. The research considers three critical areas, such as health, education/governance, and security, and their overlap with the U.S. strategic interests in the regions, including the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and West Africa.

The analysis dates back to January 2016 to January 2021 although pre-2016 data are used to provide the context. Although constrained by its use of secondary data and inability to access classified U.S.-Africa diplomatic correspondence, the methodology provides a theoretically-based and empirically deep examination of how the neo-isolationist agenda led by Trump altered the U.S. aid involvement with Africa.

**Findings and Discussion**

The re-focus of the U.S. assistance to Africa according to the neo-isolationist agenda of the President Donald Trump served as the manifestation of the multiple-level re-focus of the strategic priorities, with the developmental and geopolitical impacts. This study has findings that are classified into four key themes namely: strategic re-prioritization, multilateral disengagement, the role of emerging powers and long-term regional implications.

**Aid and the U.S. Security Interests: Strategic Re-prioritization.**

Among the most obvious changes to have occurred in the Trump administration was the reorientation of foreign aid to security-focused goals. Countries of most interest in U.S. counterterrorism operations, including Nigeria, Kenya, Somalia, and Niger, received more aid under programs like the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and other Department of Defense-funded security assistance (CRS, 2020). Instead of focusing on long-term human development, the Trump administration was interested in border control, anti-terror activities, and deterrence of migration (Brown, 2020). This is a neo

realist logic of transactional aid as opposed to development diplomacy because it is a strategic utility (Waltz, 1979). Although this strategy served the U.S. short-term interests, it did not deal with structural causes of the insecurity such as poverty, unemployment of the youth, poor governance institutions in the area (Obeng-Odoom, 2021).

### **Implication on Multilateral Engagement and African Development.**

The undermining of the U.S. contributions to international development bodies was brought about by Trump being a skeptic on multilateralism to a great extent. The most symbolic action was the blockage in the financing of the World Health Organization (WHO) during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted coordinated health efforts in Africa and damaged the credibility of the US as a health leader on the international stage (Sachs, 2020). On the same note, the suggested reduction in multilateral organizations like the World Bank, UNDP, and GAVI had effects on access to vaccines, education reform, and climate resilience initiatives in the continent (Garcia, 2021).

The political visibility and institutional disruption of development efforts of the previous administrations like PEPFAR, Feed the Future, and Power Africa was minimized. Although Congress did not cut funding in most instances, the lack of policy coherence and leadership vacuums in USAID and the State Department undermined the work of aid implementation (Morrison, 2019). The transition to bilateral and conditional interactions, which were frequently marked by the political loyalty or migration collaboration, disrupted the continuity of the U.S. Africa development relationships.

### **The Pakistan of China and other emerging partners.**

The new vacuum made by Trump in Africa offered a wide space to the new global powers, especially China, although Russia, Turkey, and the European Union are also interested. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China with its focus on infrastructure, loans, and trade turned out to be more appealing to African governments compared to the West and its requirements that African governments need to meet before receiving the aid (Brautigam, 2020). As the U.S. officials sometimes condemned the Chinese influence as predatory, the Trump administration did not provide many strategic options other than security partnerships.

The erosion of American soft power under Trump was accelerating the process of Africa shifting towards diversified partnerships, where countries such as Ethiopia, Angola, and Senegal started to bargain with non-Western actors (Obeng-Odoom, 2021). This restructuring also signaled an increased African agency in foreign policy, but it also signaled a relative weakening of U.S. influence in setting the rules of development and standards of governance on the continent (Brown, 2020).

### **Risks and Regional Responses over the Long Term.**

The sustainability, institutional resiliency and integration in the region all cast doubts as to the long-term impacts of the neo-isolationist agenda of aid pursued by Trump. The cuts in health and education assistance jeopardize the development towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in weaker states (Radelet, 2018). This withdrawal of climate funding weakened Africa, making it unable to cope with environmental hazards and reduced the global energy transition initiatives (Sachs, 2020).

As a reaction, regional institutions like the African Union highlighted self-reliance and advocated models like Agenda 2063 and agitated intra-African agendas such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The role of civil society also promoted the idea of aid decolonization and policy sovereignty, promoting the transformation of aid dependency and demanding the formation of equal partnerships (Garcia, 2021).

These local reactions underscore the increasing African assertiveness in finding its way in geopolitical ambiguity and rebasing its own development future on firmer independent grounds.

Generally, the U.S. re-calibration of developmental aid programs was an abrupt ideological shift between development diplomacy and the nationalistic, interests-based foreign policy. There was hindrance in strategic security objectives but developmental results, collaboration among nations and long term stability were compromised. The American withdrawal in the development leadership of the world created a vacuum that was more and more occupied by the non-Western powers, which questioned the American influence and changed the diplomatic orientation in Africa. As these results indicate, the role of upholding principled, consistent, and collaborative aid policies that focus on strategic interests, as well as sustainable development results, cannot be overemphasized.

## **Conclusion, Summary and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

This paper has discussed how the U.S. aid and development program in Africa should be recalibrated under the neo-isolationist agenda of President Donald Trump. The results indicate a massive shift of classical development diplomacy to a more transactional, security conscious and ideologically nationalistic one. Trump administration aid was rebalanced to meet U.S. strategic interests, with a special focus on counterterrorism and migration control, and support of multilateral development institutions and long-term socioeconomic investment in Africa diluted. Some of the most important programs including PEPFAR and U.S. donations to the World Health Organization became unstable with respect to funding, whereas programs that encourage democracy, education, and climate resilience received less political focus.

The extended meaning of this recalibration is far-reaching. This compromised U.S. credibility as a world leader in development, and this has left room to other world powers, especially China, to increase its influence in Africa. At the same time, African states and institutions started making a fresh rethinking of their development partnerships, which created a more multipolar diplomatic disposition. These changes highlight the necessity to have consistent, inclusive, and multilateral foreign aid policies that can help to achieve both the U.S. strategic interests and sustainable development ambitions in Africa.

### **Summary**

U.S. aid being recalibrated under the Trump administration turned out to be a turning point in U.S.-Africa relations, both strategically and ideologically. The aid changed to be narrow-minded and interest-oriented as the America First doctrine and the neo-isolationist principles led to a change in the aid landscape, which had aimed at development-oriented, multilateral involvement. Even though Congress averted the most drastic budget cuts, policy discontinuity, rhetorical enmity toward global institutions, and absence of diplomatic participation reduced U.S. soft power in Africa. This created new possibilities of African states diversifying alliances and encouraged the increasing debate on aid sovereignty, regional integration and self-reliance.

### **Recommendations**

#### **i. To Future U.S. Administrations:**

- a. Strengthen Multilateral Responsibilities: Future U.S. leadership must reinstate funding to global development institutions as well as renew support in collective health, education and climate programs that can advance the security and stability of the collective security.
- b. Recalibrate Support Aid To Long Term Capacity Building: Change long-term security demands to longer term

inclusive development, which empowers African institutions, civil society and local economies.

**ii. For African Policymakers:**

- a. Increase Regional Cooperation and Policy Autonomy: Improve regional institutions, like the Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to increase the bandwidth of individual countries and encourage intra-African collaboration.
- b. Diversify Development Partnerships: Strategy based on engaging with various international actors which include China, the EU, and emerging powers in a strategic manner but at the same time protect national interest and prevent any new kind of dependency.

**iii. In the case of International Organizations:**

- a. Make Local ownership in Program Design a priority, international agencies are encouraged to collaborate with governments and other grassroots actors of African countries to make sure that their development programs are locally-owned, sustainable, and context-specific.
- b. Monitor and Report Aid Retrenchment Effects: The world bank and UNDP should proceed to monitor and report the developmental impacts of donor withdrawal or aid conditionality in order to shape future changes in world governance.

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