West Africa Topic Paper

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I. History and Context

West African Nations have a long history steeped in French Colonialism and tied intrinsically to the transatlantic slave trade. Furthermore, a history of neocolonialism throughout the 20th century has caused a great deal of regional instability and crisis that have required humanitarian assistance from other nations in order to fully address.

The world's (historically) largest contributor of foreign aid and assistance programs, the United States launched a swath of humanitarian programs and initiatives during the Cold War, primarily as a geopolitical tool to contain the growing influence of the Soviet Union. Many of these programs focused on the region of West Africa. For instance, in 2003 the United States launched the "President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief" or PEPFAR program which provided HIV/AIDS assistance from the USAID to several prominent West African countries to address the epidemic within the region (Brown and Morgenstern, 2022).

Several noteworthy initiatives within the last decade have focused on both security and stability concerns in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. There is a strong correlation historically between the decision of where the US has decided to send humanitarian aid and assistance, as well as in what areas. For West Africa, the first decade of the 21st century saw directed efforts towards issues of regional terrorist agents (eg. Boko Haram), food security (eg. agricultural development programs/grants/aid), and disease/pandemics (eg. ebola) (Brown and Morgenstern, 2022).

The US does not, as one might imagine, choose to engage in humanitarian efforts out of pure altruistic intent. Geopolitically, there are several factors that have incentivized the US to maintain close economic and diplomatic ties to the region of West Africa. Economically, it is a region of vast resources and opportunity for investment. Recent projections expect it could be

home to 40% of the global population by 2050 (Kindo, 2025). The West African region is also key to the monitoring of terrorist cells, global surveillance through satellites, and its overall actions and state of being has direct impacts to US interest across the globe (Bartos et al., 2025).

Demographically, the current population is predominately young, and is lacking in key markers such as education and skilled training. The US, in the wake of large cuts and disengagement of foreign assistance, has permitted engagement opportunities to other actors to take advantage of these circumstances. Currently, Chinese efforts in the region have taken advantage of education and training gaps in order to train miners to harvest valuable mineral resources, gain workers to extract petroleum, and to establish a strong space program and satellites (Kindo, 2025).

Much of the region has been reliant upon Foreign Aid, and has not developed the infrastructure necessary to become independent of development aid. Debaters under this topic will thus be given the opportunity to consider ways in which the US could most effectively reengage in foreign assistance programs with West Africa in manners that allow the redressment of crisis, regional stabilization, geopolitical competition with China, US security concerns, and several other areas that should allow a season full of rich and diverse debate.

II. Status Quo

A. Current Policy/Legislation/Pending Actions

The United States dramatically reduced its foreign aid footprint in West Africa following the shuttering of USAID in early 2025, eliminating funding across humanitarian relief, food security, education, technology development, and counterterrorism assistance programs throughout the region. In place of a broad framework for foreign assistance under the principle of humanitarian concerns, the Trump Administration has shifted toward a paradigm of bilateral

transactional agreements (Down, 2026). This approach selectively picks-and-chooses a far more limited approach essentially exclusive to military aid and counterterrorism cooperation in countries like Nigeria where immediate strategic interests align (Stepansky, 2025). In instances where there is not a clear benefit to the US' own interests, the practice of the status quo is not to administer foreign aid. This results in clear and inherent areas of substantive harm for debaters to address through their plans.

America's withdrawal from foreign assistance to West Africa has not occurred in isolation. Countries such as France, Germany, and the European Union at large who have historically contributed assistance to West Africa have made parallel reductions to their own aid commitments. This has further left West African nations with few established partners to absorb the loss of USAID cuts (Okereke, 2025).

As a result of the sudden vacuum, China, Russia, and several other middle powers have moved quickly to expand their regional presence. China in particular has accelerated infrastructure development, workforce training, and space and satellite partnerships across West Africa, leveraging access agreements that give Chinese interests preferential rights to the region's substantial natural resources, most of which are extracted and refined outside of Africa (Ward and Plant, 2025).

B. Key Problems

There are several issues that now threaten the region, and the US' own standing and security, in the wake of the dissolution of USAID. While the cuts have harmed the well-being of areas around the globe, it has particularly devastated healthcare systems in Africa. Furthermore, the nature of how the US has moved to a transactional and conditional basis for allowance of assistance has spiked concerns from experts. There are significant risks if partner countries

cannot meet their obligations that assistance could be pulled out at a moment's notice without much in the way of forewarning, giving recipients no time to adequately prepare alternative sources of funds and resources. Already enacted cuts from the US and other donors have resulted in organizations such as the World Bank and African Development Bank to face funding shortfalls that could set-back an array of initiatives within the region (Ward and Plant, 2025).

Specifically, a rapid restructuring of global health aid from the US has the potential to critically hamper programs targeted at issues such as maternal care, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other disease detection, prevention, and treatment efforts. There is also the threat from rising conflict in the region, with the subsequent violence and displacement magnifying humanitarian needs. Research from the Center for Global Development warns starkly that the sweeping changes implemented by the US are not only without historical comparison, but will be incredibly devastating and cost lives (Stepansky, 2025). Lancet's modeling specifically predicts that, by 2030, the defunding of USAID programming will result in 14 million preventable deaths (McCurdy and Bradley, 2025).

The humanitarian consequences of USAID's withdrawal extend well beyond immediate food and medical shortages. The collapse of health and agricultural infrastructure that USAID once sustained has placed millions of lives at risk and reversed decades of developmental progress in a matter of months. Additionally, the governmental instability produced by the funding gap is expected to accelerate militant recruitment across the region, compounding the security challenges that American counterterrorism programs were designed to address (Lynn, 2025).

As previously mentioned, with nowhere else to turn the region will continue to be pushed toward engagement with China, Russia, The Wagner Group and Middle Powers like The UAE

(Okereke, 2025). This reorientation will mean those powers will hold a greater geopolitical presence within the region and have more control over matters of diplomatic and economic concerns. Given the extensive natural resources and economic opportunities, as well as the security implications for the US by permitting rival powers access and influence to the region, there is a great impetus for a topic that promotes research and debate over an area of the world that has not been an area of focus for the community in several years.

III. Probable Affirmative Case Areas

A. Healthcare/Disease

There is a wealth of ground to explore in the area of healthcare in the West African Region including the expansion of programs and funding for ODA to create vaccine/pharmaceutical distribution programs in West Africa. The loss of USAID programs have led to a 9 billion dollar global gap in vaccine funding, and there are significant calls to reinstate this important aid to help the most vulnerable people (Gates, 2025). Funding and development of disease/outbreak monitoring cuts to ODA have directly impacted successful programs that have been instrumental in saving lives. Malaria, Tuberculosis, AIDS, and maternal and child health programs were widely regarded as among the most successful U.S. foreign policy initiatives of the 21st century. (Siefman, 2025). Calls for funding and development of infrastructure including water and electricity which currently are barriers to development of healthcare infrastructure are also areas that affirmatives could find ground in the literature (Adekanabi, 2025).

B. Infrastructure

West Africa needs substantial investment into infrastructure. Assistance with development of transportation and utility infrastructure (roads, bridges, water, power lines) (Ward and Park, 2025) and developmental aid and investment into the building and maintenance

of schools, teachers, and other educational systems of support are all areas that could be explored.

C. Agriculture/Food

Modernization of farming infrastructure and practices, funding drought-resistant seed development, irrigation systems, and soil restoration, and the funding of regional food reserve systems and early warning mechanisms to prevent famine during climate shocks are all viable affirmative case areas. The US could also focus its ODA on programs that develop food distribution networks and market development to help pivot away from reliance on subsistence farming for remote communities (Barrett, 2025).

D. Technology

West Africa is ripe for technological development including Space Exploration and Satellites "Space is a critical domain for US national security, and African nations will play a pivotal role in defining space competition between the United States and China. The United States is sorely underinvested in this area; China is not. But the United States can secure its interests in space through creative, modest investment across multiple sectors of African economies" (Ferrill and Petit, 2026). There are advocates for development of space assets, investment in space infrastructure, satellites for strategic national security and communications. (Sam, 2025)

The US also has an opportunity to rethink development aid in a way that would help drive long-term foreign direct investment for US companies through engagement with West African energy policy and development (Sam, 2025). There are advocates for development of alternative energies including harnessing Solar Power (Kindo, 2025), and advocates for the

development of nuclear energy programs (Payton, 2025). The US should utilize ODA to spur foreign direct investment especially in technology development (Beith, 2025).

E. Resource Development and Mining

Another area where affirmatives can find substantial ground is in ODA for resource development (Sam, 2025). The countries of West Africa are largely undeveloped or underdeveloped and have rich and abundant mineral deposits (Usman, Zainab & Csanadi, Alexander, 2025).

F. Climate Change and Security

Climate change has profound effects on the future of West Africa's stability and regional security. Historically, USAID and developmental assistance programs to the region placed an emphasis on mitigating and addressing climate stressors such as reduction of water and arable land resources. Beyond the scope of humanitarian concerns posed by a potential food and water crisis, the knockdown effects pose risks to regional and US security. As the DoD highlights, there is a direct correlation between the disparity communities face from the consequences of climate change and the rise of violent extremism. This not only means that there is a future threat of community and regional conflicts, but violent terrorist extremism can easily spill-out to broader concerns that threaten the US and its allies (Garamone, 2024).

IV. Probable Negative Strategies

A. Case Debate

The West Africa Topic has abundant and equal negative ground especially in terms of case debate. There are multiple authors who have written about the desire to cut ties with the US and for Africa to pivot economic engagement and trade relationships with alternative partners that have potential to increase economic development of region, as well as capability for other actors to solve long-term infrastructure and development needs; moreover, some African nations believe Russia and China to be better actors and partners when dealing with ODA (Shurkin, 2024). Additionally, Negatives will be able to point out stability, safety, and security concerns in the region. Many of the countries in West Africa have unstable governments and have parts of the region fall into the "Coup Belt" (Murphy, 2023). When the US halted USAID efforts in the region it further undermined stability, and gave rise to other actors in the region. Substantial ground exists that Africa has moved on from US aid, and has prioritized more effective investment strategies. "Aid to Africa has weakened focus on business and trade partnerships, which are more effective in combating structural underdevelopment." (Yade, 2025). Teams will also have the advantage of traditional arguments about the success of development aid.

Plans will have much to prove in terms of solvency. Negative teams will have access to a variety of literature specific to each of the case areas outlined above. For example, a topic over developmental aid will have to account for the cuts/dissolution of USAID agencies and programs. Wording of resolutions that create mechanisms rooted primarily through methods of economic engagement will struggle with competition of nations choosing the US over established regional agencies such as ECOWAS, or international actors such as China, Russia, or Middle Eastern regional powers. Furthermore international relations current standing means that

negative teams can argue lines of attack based on the limits of affirmative fiat, such as West African countries saying no to efforts for the US to increase engagement.

B. Disadvantages

a. Soft Power Competition

The power vacuum left by the US has created an opportunity for China and other rival powers such as Russia to increase their sphere of influence in the region. West Africa's wealth of natural and mineral resources are as attractive to these countries and their own aims as they are to the interests of the US. Great Power competition thus has a strong foundation of uniqueness within the area of West Africa, and Negative teams will have an easy time finding literature that discusses the prospect of increasing US involvement in the region increasing the potential for further escalation or conflict as part of a zero-sum game.

b. Ethical Consequences

Negative teams will also have the ability to challenge the validity of affirmative's on an ethical point of view. Depending on the mechanism of plan action, such as providing aid through conditions, there will be a chance to argue that the plan increases harm on the recipient of aid rather than alleviating it. Furthermore, negatives may cover the unintended consequences of reversing course away from aid withdrawal, such as the chance to undermine regional stability by reinforcing dependency or reliance on foreign assistance to address concerns that makes it less likely for West African nations to develop sufficiently independent infrastructure and structures over time. Conversely, aid given to nations that have poor records of human rights protections or poor civil liberties might strengthen and empower regimes to commit further atrocities.

c. Diplomatic Consequences

The distribution of aid within the region has the potential for the United States as an actor to receive diplomatic backlash from regional allies or other member states depending on the target of the recipient aid. Additionally there is mounting evidence that the recent drawback of US aid has driven many members of the African Union to focus more on multilateral frameworks and policies to bolster self-sufficiency. In the long-run, a return to a US-Centric model of aid and resource distribution might undermine efforts to grow African multilateralism.

C. Counterplans

Negative teams will have an easy time researching literature to support an array of specific and competitive counterplans to Affirmative policy action. Agent counterplans might involve arguing that countries such as China are indeed better suited to serving the needs of the region given their current emphasis on increasing regional presence, or other Western government entities such as the EU could help pivot the region away from reliance on a Great Power rival while also alleviating any negative consequences from US involvement or entanglement. Furthermore, regional actors and economic groups such as ECOWAS or the AU could be viable options. Process counterplans could propose tying the foreign assistance of the Affirmative plan to prior consultations with regional actors and stakeholders, or attaching conditions to the aid to help advance US interests in a more direct manner than that of the Affirmative's case. The negative can also propose alternative instruments entirely as a mechanism of accessing the plan's advantages (e.g. loans v. grants, security assistance v. humanitarian) that avoids potential pitfalls and issues that are identifiable through review of prior USAID programs in the region.

D. Kritiks

Given the historic and exploitative nature of Western involvement in the region, Negative teams will be able to approach the topic through several different critical lenses throughout the course of the year. Impacts of instability from governmental corruption, lack of regional infrastructure for economic, health, education, and transportation concerns, as well as climate change can all be traced to a history of exploitation and colonialism of African states by European and Western nations. Furthermore, the instruments of the Affirmative work through systems that are largely focused on furthering geopolitical competition with rivals such as China, containment of extremism and terror groups, and acquisition of economic resources. All of this will empower links to familiar areas of critical literature on issues such as neoliberalism, securitization, colonialism, capitalism, and several others.

V. List of Resolutions

A. 4-6 Tentative List:

1. USFG should significantly increase its Official Development Aid to one or more West African nations.
2. The USFG should significantly increase its Foreign Assistance to one or more West African Nations.
3. USFG should significantly increase its Foreign Direct Investment to one or more West African nations.
4. USFG should significantly increase its Official Development Aid to one or more of the following countries: Nigeria, Ghana, and/or The Ivory Coast.
5. USFG should substantially increase its Economic Engagement with one or more of the following countries: Nigeria, Ghana, and/or The Ivory Coast.

6. USFG should substantially increase its Economic Engagement with one or more West African nations.

B. Key Considerations Regarding the Wording of the Final Resolution

The resolutions proposed above each involve choices regarding which important terms of art will be selected to guide the direction of the season. It will be necessary for teams to approach these terms with care and specificity as they construct their positions for and against the heart of the final resolution. First is the consideration of whether or not the final wording of the topic will orient itself through a mechanism that is more driven by concerns such as humanitarian needs (Official Development Aid, Foreign Assistance) where the US benefits are more indirect and diplomatic, or transactional approaches (Foreign Direct Investment, Economic Engagement) where the US stands to more immediately and structurally benefit from its engagement with the recipient nation(s).

The other key area of distinction that must be decided upon is the scope of the object. West Africa as a whole is a region of the continent that by some definitions can vary, and usually contains somewhere within the range of 15-16 different independent states. This gives the Affirmative potentially a great deal of flexibility to focus on different areas of need on a country-by-country basis, but can also lead down a path where Negative teams encounter such a diverse array of specific country-based plans that the research burden becomes untenable. Regions of the country that are prone to teams that create ‘squirrelly’ cases may take advantage of such a broad term.

Vice versa, the resolutions that constrain the topic to a smaller list of specific nations remove these risks. However, there is much that can be argued about which West African countries are more deserving of inclusion within the bounds of the topic than others. While

Nigeria, Ghana, and The Ivory Coast are critical actors within the region, they are not fully encompassing of all strategic and humanitarian needs, and failure to permit the involvement of other countries as part of a plan's reach may ultimately lead to difficulty finding adequate solvency and advantage research.

C. Rationale for the ranking of the resolutions based on the potential advantages and disadvantages of the wordings

We chose to start our rankings with the definition focused on ODA. Official Development aid has a wealth of literature and encompasses what US policy and practice has been with providing assistance across the globe. Topic literature talks in terms of development aid or aid/assistance in general. This type of aid is focused more towards humanitarian assistance and support which provides the best division of ground and would provide robust debates on the topic. The disadvantage to this wording is that the term ODA while official is often used interchangeably with other terms such as humanitarian assistance or foreign assistance. We also like the foreign assistance topic, and think that it has the same strengths and weaknesses as the ODA topic we ranked at the top of the list. We included a topic on Economic Engagement and on Foreign Direct Investment because these are also terms of art found in the literature, although we do not feel that the government is always the main driver of these types of programs and that corporations and investment firms are often the main driver of these two topics. We also chose to list a few more limited topics by selecting some of the larger, more stable regions of West Africa, we think those topics might be too limiting.

VI. Definitions

1. West Africa is a limited set of countries laid out by the African Union

African Union ND (The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999)). "Member States". African Union, No Date, https://au.int/en/member_states/countryprofiles2

Western Africa

Member State	Abbreviation	Date of joining the OAU or AU
Republic of Benin	Benin	25 May 1963
Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso	25 May 1963
Republic of Cabo Verde	Cabo Verde	18 July 1975
Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	Côte d'Ivoire	25 May 1963
Republic of the Gambia	Gambia	9 March 1965
Republic of Ghana	Ghana	25 May 1963
Republic of Guinea	Guinea	25 May 1963
Republic of Guinea-Bissau	Guinea-Bissau	19 November 1973
Republic of Liberia	Liberia	25 May 1963
Republic of Mali	Mali	25 May 1963
Republic of Niger	Niger	25 May 1963
Federal Republic of Nigeria	Nigeria	25 May 1963
Republic of Senegal	Senegal	25 May 1963
Republic of Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	25 May 1963
Togolese Republic	Togo	25 May 1963

2. Official Development Assistance must be for economic development and welfare of the recipient first and foremost. It should be concessional not conditional

OECD No Date (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives. They work closely with policy makers, stakeholders and citizens to establish evidence-based international standards and to find solutions to social, economic and environmental challenges). "Official development assistance – definition and coverage". Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, No Date. https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/official-development-assistance--definition-and-coverage.html

Official development assistance flows are **defined as grants and loans to the official sector of countries and territories** on the DAC List of ODA Recipients, INGOs and multilateral development institutions **which are:**

provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, **or** by their **executive agencies; and each transaction of which:**

is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries **as its main objective; and**
is concessional in character.

3. Alternative Terms:

A. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is an investment into another country that grants significant influence in the foreign enterprise's decision-making processes

Bernstein 20 "Research Starter: Foreign Direct Investment". EBSCO, 2020. https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/business-and-management/foreign-direct-investment-fdi

Foreign direct investment (FDI) refers to the investment made by individuals or businesses **from one country into the businesses of another country, granting significant influence in the foreign enterprise's decision-making processes.** FDI typically occurs in open and less regulated economies with a capable workforce and promising growth prospects, **encompassing not just financial capital but also technology and management**. The impact of FDI on local economies is a nuanced topic; while it can enhance productivity and economic growth, its benefits are not guaranteed, necessitating policies that support local human resources and skills development.

Historically, the role of FDI has evolved, with increased scrutiny and debate over its advantages and risks. **In the United States, FDI plays a crucial role, contributing to millions of jobs and significant exports.** However, concerns have emerged, particularly regarding the influx of investments from countries like China, which has raised fears about national security and economic sovereignty. As global competition for FDI intensifies, many countries face pressure to balance attracting foreign investments while safeguarding local interests. Despite challenges and a growing trend toward protectionist measures, **FDI remains a fundamental component of the interconnected global economy,** continuing to drive growth and job creation worldwide.

B. Economic engagement seeks behavior change with economic instruments – economic benefit is not the purpose

Jakstaite 2010 (Gerda Jakštaitė is a Doctoral Candidate at the Vytautas Magnus University Faculty of Political Sciences and Diplomacy). CONTAINMENT AND ENGAGEMENT AS MIDDLE-RANGE THEORIES. BALTIC JOURNAL OF LAW & POLITICS, VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2 (2010). DOI: 10.2478/v10076-010-001

The approach to engagement as **economic engagement focuses exclusively on economic instruments of foreign policy with the main national interest being security**. **Economic**

engagement is a policy of **the conscious development of economic relations** with the adversary **in order to change the target states' behaviour and to improve bilateral relations**. 94

Economic engagement is academically wielded in several respects. It recommends that the state engage the target country in the international community (within their existing rules) and modify the target state's foreign policy, thus preventing the emergence of a potential enemy.95 Thus, **this strategy aims to ensure safety in particular , whereas economic benefit is not a priority objective**.

And it must must expand access

Kim 2024 (Dong Jung Kim is Associate Professor in the College of International Studies and Graduate School of International Studies at Korea University. His research interests include balancing strategies, alliance politics, and the security-economy nexus in world politics). "A Twenty Years' Crisis? Rethinking the Cases for U.S. Economic Engagement with China". Perspectives on Politics, Cambridge University Press. 2023. doi:10.1017/S1537592723000312

Economic engagement refers to the adoption of **policies** that are **designed to expand** the targeted state's **access to foreign markets, goods, services, technology, factors of production, investments, organizational know-how, or production networks** (Mastanduno 2003; Nincic 2010).

C. Humanitarian assistance is for humanitarian purposes and must save lives and/or alleviate suffering. Specific types defined by UN

UNTerm ND (UNTERM is the official global terminology portal of the United Nations. It provides terminology and nomenclature in subjects relevant to the work of the United Nations in the six official UN languages — Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish — to ensure a consistent use of official United Nations terms, system-wide). "Humanitarian Assistance", United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. No Date. https://unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/view/59171aec-7207-4d95-b851-7b7b6d7b27ea

Definition

Material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to humanitarian crises.

Remark

The primary objective of humanitarian assistance **is to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity**. **Forms** of humanitarian assistance **are: direct assistance, indirect assistance, and infrastructure support.**

VII. NFHS Criteria

A. Timeliness and Durability

Foreign aid and foreign direct investment have long served as the primary mechanisms through which the United States has built and maintained relationships across West Africa. Historical American engagement in the region has touched countless dimensions of need: disease prevention, education, trade, natural resource development, and humanitarian assistance in the form of food relief and disaster response. These remain defining challenges facing the region today. The very recent dismantling of USAID and the accompanying shift from a humanitarian to a transactional foreign policy framework make this a particularly timely topic, as there has not been a direct opportunity for Policy Debate competitors to bite into this incredibly drastic reorientation of foreign policy. Furthermore, the enduring nature of the underlying issues of state stability, health, food security, and great power competition will ensure the topic will remain relevant and debatable throughout the course of a full season.

The topic is also an opportunity for debaters to engage with an international-based resolution that is not primarily about security issues. The past two international focused topics have been NATO Security Cooperation (2022-2023), Foreign Arms Sales (2019-2020). The two before that were economic engagement topics to China (2016-2017) and Latin America (2013-2014). It has been 10 years since we have looked at non-security international topic, and almost 20 years since debaters have had a resolution that looked at Africa as an area of primary focus (2007-2008). The topic is thus timely not just because there is strong inherent ground for both sides (unlike topics with weak Inherency in recent years, eg. Arctic, Intellectual Property, Security Cooperation), but also because it examines both a core mechanism and topic area that have been sidelined for years.

B. Accessibility and Material

The mechanisms at the center of this topic are among the most well-documented instruments of American foreign policy, giving debaters and coaches a familiar foundation to build from. Students with prior exposure to humanitarian assistance arguments and literature will find substantial transferable knowledge, lowering the barrier to entry without sacrificing depth. Beyond any existing knowledge base, there is a robust and growing body of topic-specific literature spanning public health, food security, counterterrorism, great power competition, and economic development that will give teams at every level ample material to develop nuanced affirmative and negative positions. The current state of affairs particularly means that there will be a distinct evolution of literature from previous years given the drastic changes that have taken place.

The topic's focus on West Africa also ensures that there is a variety of nations and programs that Affirmative's will be able to approach, while still having decent limits through both the core mechanism of economic engagement and the geographic restriction of West Africa itself. There is precedent for approaching the African continent in this particular manner as shown by the Sub-Saharan Africa topic (2006-2007). While that topic constrained teams to focus on public health assistance programs, our topic would permit broader forms of accessible approaches to issues of health as well as natural and mineral resources, diplomatic ties, and other forms of non-health humanitarian engagement.

C. Student Interest and Engagement

The debate over American foreign aid has become one of the most prominent policy conversations in the current news cycle, giving students an immediate and recognizable entry point into the topic. Beyond notable recent headlines, the region itself offers an opportunity to dive into a compelling array of issues that students are likely to find meaningful. The topic

directly focuses on issues such as food insecurity, natural disasters and accompanying displacement from climate change, pandemic preparedness, healthcare infrastructure, education access, and a history of colonial exploitation that has effects to this very day. All of these present as concerns facing the region of West Africa in ways that invite genuine intellectual engagement across a wide range of student backgrounds and interests.

The breadth of the topic also works in its favor from a competitive standpoint. With sixteen nations comprising the West African region and a diverse portfolio of potential aid mechanisms (e.g. food assistance, climate adaptation, technology development, public health infrastructure, etc.), Affirmative teams will have significant freedom to craft creative and specific plan texts that reward deep research. Negative teams are equally well-served, as the literature base supports robust case debate alongside well-developed disadvantage, counterplan, and kritik positions that will sustain meaningful clash throughout the season, even as Affirmatives continue to develop and diversify new approaches to the topic over the course of the competitive year.

D. Educational Quality

There is a rich amount of potential education under the topic. Not only has it been many years since Africa has been a core area of the topic, but the previous cycle of international topics have focused on reduction of arms and security concerns (Arms Sales / NATO emerging tech). The chance for students to have an international topic for an underrepresented global region in our activity, as well as the focus on more humanitarian issues and mechanisms, all provide subjects of education with deep literature bases for students to access.

E. Balance (Equal ground)

There is opportunity for a wide variety of affirmative cases falling into all areas of ODA. Debaters will have the opportunity to engage with areas including climate change, healthcare, child development and maternal care programs, food insecurity, agriculture, mineral and resource development, safety and security, infrastructure, technology, space exploration and development. There is a wealth of literature and ground opportunities for affirmatives to engage West African nations through official development aid. This is especially true due to the cuts to USAID programs and the transactional approach taken by the Trump administration. West Africa is a topic that is ripe with opportunities for Affirmative debaters to explore and engage the topic in a variety of ways.

The negative has a wealth of opportunities to engage in plan-specific arguments that will apply to the wide range of affirmative options. This means that teams will be able to derive consistent but varied avenues of stasis to center their strategies for negation. There is also an incredibly rich literature pool that says the withdrawal of USAID is an opportunity for West Africa to stand on its own and to negotiate beneficial partnerships without the Western World infusing its own objectives and goals. The negative also has great research on why traditional foreign assistance and humanitarian aid can be both harmful and ineffective towards either alleviation of crisis or achievement of US intended goals and outcomes.

With the shift towards West Africa creating additional ties to other powers, there are a variety of disadvantages Negative teams may choose to employ against Affirmative cases that are specific to US competition with China, Russia, and other regional Middle Powers. Furthermore, a drastic reversal once again of policy can even further increase instability and potentially reentrench reliance on the US. Disadvantages may also choose to focus on the possibility for an increase of corruption, or unintended consequences of assistance/aid

misallocation. There is also extensive Counterplan ground through different agents outside of the United States, as well as methods of achieving goals in the region outside the mechanism/process of foreign assistance. As mentioned above, areas of kritikal concerns are strongly prevalent as well in the matters of Colonialism, International Relations, and Securitization to name a few.

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Appendix A: Example Affirmative Evidence

MINERALS

Africa is of great strategic importance to the United States – it is imperative that the US resume engagement

Signe 2025 (LANDRY SIGNÉ is a senior fellow for the Brookings Africa Growth Initiative whose research focuses on Global Economics and Development). "A NEW US-AFRICA BLUEPRINT FOR TRUMP AMID CHINA'S RISE". Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings Institute. Policy Brief, 27 May 2025. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-new-us-africa-blueprint-for-trump-amid-chinas-rise/

Despite waning U.S. engagement in **Africa**, the continent **has only grown in strategic importance**, reflecting key economic and demographic changes. The continent boasts 13 of the world's top 20 fastest-growing economies as of 2025 (IMF 2025). By 2050, one in four people in the world will reside in Africa (Sinha and Getachew 2024), which is expected to account for $16.12 trillion in combined consumer and business spending (Signé 2020). Furthermore, the continent lies atop **30% of the world's critical minerals** (Chen, Laws, and Valckx 2024) that are **essential** for **electric vehicles**, **power storage**, **medical supplies, consumer electronics, and defense and military technologies**—and thus the **technological future of any modern economy** ("Critical Minerals and the Future of the U.S. Economy" 2025; Rowan 2025). **Competitors such as China** are significantly **outpacing the United States** in overall investment, including foreign direct investment (FDI), infrastructure, and resource extraction, creating both **geopolitical risks and missed economic opportunities for U.S. investors**. The Trump administration should **approach Africa with urgency**, recognizing that **U.S. engagement can drive security, strength, and prosperity** for both Americans and Africans.

The US wants to move away from reliance on China for REMs – engagement with Africa is vital to protect US economic and defense supply chains

Morrow 2025 (Richard Morrow is an analyst at the Brenthurst Foundation, a Johannesburg-based think tank established by the Oppenheimer family to strengthen African economic performance). "Why Sub-Saharan Africa Matters for U.S. Economic and National Security". Council on Foreign Relations, 4 April 2025. https://www.cfr.org/articles/why-sub-saharan-africa-matters-us-economic-and-national-security

Trump is aware of the importance that critical minerals have in his vision for an American renaissance. His desire for Greenland to become part of the United States has more to do with accessing the island's untapped mineral supplies than it does with welcoming 57,000 new U.S. citizens. Likewise, his plan for bringing an end to the ongoing war in Ukraine is underpinned by a mineral deal that would see the United States access Ukraine's critical mineral reserves.

Herein lies a major weakness for **the United States**: it **relies on importing many** of those **critical minerals**. A 2024 review by the USGS found the country to be **wholly reliant on imports for twelve of the fifty critical minerals and more than 50 percent reliant on an additional twenty-nine**. Among those critical mineral trade partners are Australia, Canada, and Chile. **China**, too, **is a major player** in the global critical mineral supply chain: **the country produces 99 percent of battery-grade graphite**, more than **60**

percent of lithium chemical, **and 70 percent** of refined **cobalt**, according to the International Energy Agency.

As such, **the United States finds itself in a precarious position** whereby **its ability to import** the **materials vital for its economy and defense industries is controlled by foreign actors**, some of whom **benefit from its vulnerability. China exerted** its **dominance when**, in December 2024, it implemented **a ban on the export** of **gallium**, **germanium**, and **antimony**—all boasting multiple military applications—to the United States. Indeed, the number of global export restrictions aimed at critical minerals has increased fivefold from 2009 to 2022, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

This is why **the United States** will **need** to **focus more on** sub-Saharan **Africa**. While **China** is blessed with its critical mineral reserves, it **imports vast quantities from sub-Saharan Africa**, **a region that boasts 30 percent of the world's proven critical mineral reserves**. This has been made possible due to years of investment in developing an intricate series of supply-chain networks as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. **In the** Democratic Republic of Congo (**DRC),** for example, a country endowed with 68 percent of the world's known cobalt reserves**, Chinese companies** are said to **have a controlling presence** in as much as **80 percent** of the **nation's critical mineral supply chains**.

It is no secret that **the United States has been a laggard on this front** and has only lately realized the **importance that sub-Saharan Africa will play in global supply chains.**

US has the opportunity to pair engagement for minerals with heavy US investment into African-region logistics and infrastructure

Morrow 2025 (Richard Morrow is an analyst at the Brenthurst Foundation, a Johannesburg-based think tank established by the Oppenheimer family to strengthen African economic performance). "Why Sub-Saharan Africa Matters for U.S. Economic and National Security". Council on Foreign Relations, 4 April 2025. https://www.cfr.org/articles/why-sub-saharan-africa-matters-us-economic-and-national-security

The test for the new Trump administration will be how it chooses to engage the region. Initial decisions that saw the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) put on ice do little to suggest that Trump wishes to deepen ties with governments in sub-Saharan Africa. This became further apparent when South Africa's ambassador to the United States—representing the world's largest producer of platinum group metals—was declared persona non grata by Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

If the Trump administration does intend to engage with countries around critical minerals, however, then **it will likely be transactional**. DRC President Felix Tshisekedi has engaged in discussions around a **minerals-for-security** deal that he appears to be borrowing from the proposed U.S.-Ukraine deal. In theory, it would see Washington provide support to Kinshasa amid its ongoing battle with M23 rebels in the country's eastern, mineral-rich reaches, and in doing so, pave the way for U.S. companies to do business in the country. The deal could also be seen by some in the DRC as an opportunity to break China's monopoly over the country's critical mineral landscape. Such a development has the potential to spark similar engagements, including a larger **minerals-for-aid** approach, **which could see** the Trump administration **change tack on USAID funding**, for example.

But any such engagement cannot overlook the fact that **the United States would need to invest heavily across the region**, especially in terms of **logistics** and transport **infrastructure**. The African Development Bank estimates that **only 27 percent of the continent's roads are paved**, while $293 billion is needed for transport infrastructure each year until 2030 if "structural transformation" in Africa is to be fast-tracked. As the Lobito Corridor illustrates, **infrastructure projects in Africa**—particularly around transport—**are significant both in terms of cost and scale.**

Africa is crucial to rare earth minerals. The US is quickly falling behind China who have established several partnerships with regional nations

Signe 2025 (LANDRY SIGNÉ is a senior fellow for the Brookings Africa Growth Initiative whose research focuses on Global Economics and Development). "A NEW US-AFRICA BLUEPRINT FOR TRUMP AMID CHINA'S RISE". Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings Institute. Policy Brief, 27 May 2025. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-new-us-africa-blueprint-for-trump-amid-chinas-rise/

A key focus of the Trump administration has already been the quest to secure critical minerals. **Africa,** and in particular, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC**), has moved to center stage for this** mission as the U.S. discusses a potential **"minerals-for-security deal**" between itself, the DRC, and Rwanda. Demonstrating Trump's preference for transactionalism within foreign policy, the U.S. responded to the DRC's proposal by proposing the negotiations for a peace deal between the two countries that would include an economic incentive for all three parties through a series of bilateral mineral deals (Home 2025). In this area, **the U.S. is lagging behind China, which has already been successful in leveraging African partnerships** to **cement its global leadership in dominance in rare earth metals,** controlling "55% of global rare earth mining capacity and about 85% of rare earths refining," including refining "60% of the world's lithium and 80% of the world's cobalt" (Crebo-Reiker et al. 2024). China has focused its investments on mineral and metal trade, having increased African imports in these goods from roughly $15 billion in 2010 to $50 billion in 2021 while investing heavily in Chinese private sector refining projects, including lithium processing plants in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Morocco, and more (Usman and Csanadi 2023).

Global demand for these critical minerals will only continue to rise, as highlighted by Sara Way: "The International Energy Agency predicts that by 2050, the demand for nickel will double, demand for cobalt will triple, and demand for lithium will rise tenfold" (Way 2024). It is now estimated that of the 50 minerals classified as critical by the U.S. government, **12 are 100% net import reliant** on foreign entities, **and 31 are 50% net import reliant**, **with a large proportion of these coming from China** (Foran 2024; Conte 2023). This dependence **represents a significant security, foreign policy, and economic concern**. The Biden administration attempted to support U.S. mining companies, but the past four years have heightened competition, with new entrants, including the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, now also vying for control (Munyati 2024a).

These minerals will also play **a key role** in the **development** and **deployment** of **emerging technologies**. Given the United States' unique strength in technological development—but with the intensifying pressure from competitors like China—**the U.S. needs to rapidly accelerate its partnerships** with the public and private sectors **across African technology and mineral value chains** as the future of these advanced technologies will be shaped by its early adopters and researchers.

PRESENCE

China, Russia, Iran, and Gulf Countries are all increasing African presence and engagement in wake of the US withdrawling

Signe 2025 (LANDRY SIGNÉ is a senior fellow for the Brookings Africa Growth Initiative whose research focuses on Global Economics and Development). "A NEW US-AFRICA BLUEPRINT FOR TRUMP AMID CHINA'S RISE". Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings Institute. Policy Brief, 27 May 2025. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-new-us-africa-blueprint-for-trump-amid-chinas-rise/

China continues to engage extensively with Africa, having become the largest bilateral trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa—exceeding U.S. trade volumes by a factor of four in 2024 (Munyati 2024b; Ecofin Agency 2025a; "Africa," n.d.), its largest bilateral creditor, the world's leader in the control of critical minerals. Additionally, China is now a major FDI contributor, exceeding the United States since 2013, reaching roughly double U.S. FDI ("Data: Chinese Investment in Africa," n.d.). China continues to forge ahead in this leading role, with President Xi Jinping **announcing $51 billion in loans, investment, and aid to Africa over the next three years** (Calabrese 2024). China's involvement in Africa cannot be understated, but **it is not the only country increasing** its **engagement** with the continent. **Russia has expanded its military presence**, including signing agreements for new military bases, increasing weapons trade, and establishing an agreement with Sudan to establish a naval port in the Red Sea (Knipp 2024). **There have also been reports about negotiations between the Niger** junta, who are looking for cash and weapons **and Iran and Russia who are looking for uranium sales** and access to the Imouraren mine, which is home to one of the **world's largest uranium deposits in the world** (ADF 2024). **Members of the Gulf Cooperation Council**, such as the UAE, whose imports and exports have increased by 30%, and Saudi Arabia, whose trade volume has increased in value 12 times over the past decade (Munyati 2024a), **have also increased their military presence** along Africa's Red Sea coast and have participated as peacekeepers in African conflicts.

An "American First" approach to African engagement harms opportunities for US investors, and threatens regional and US security by magnifying terrorism, regional instability, and pandemics

Signe 2025 (LANDRY SIGNÉ is a senior fellow for the Brookings Africa Growth Initiative whose research focuses on Global Economics and Development). "A NEW US-AFRICA BLUEPRINT FOR TRUMP AMID CHINA'S RISE". Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings Institute. Policy Brief, 27 May 2025. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-new-us-africa-blueprint-for-trump-amid-chinas-rise/

Taken at face value, it may seem that **isolationist**, **transactional**, and **competition-driven approaches** have **inherent contradictions** between their objectives when it comes to **peace and security**. For example, if the isolationist "American first" approach dominates, the Trump administration might not engage with AFRICOM, whereas if an approach focused on competition with China dominates, this could mean that AFRICOM is maintained or expanded as a lever for competition. However, because of how inextricably linked traditional security, including counterterrorism efforts, are with broader prosperity and power goals, the Trump administration should recognize how these drivers work together and prioritize initiatives that meet shared objectives. **Robust support** for **counterterrorism** will, in turn,

unlock greater economic opportunities for U.S. investors. The Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth's visit to AFRICOM's headquarters during his first overseas trip in office is an important first step that should be built upon for U.S. engagement in regional security (U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs 2025).

Instability and fragility, both a cause and effect of conflict, **breed** transnational **threats to the U.S.,** including **terrorism** and **pandemics**. To minimize these threats, the Trump administration should focus on harnessing key opportunities, which include **coordinating security assistance with investments** in **governance** and **economic development** that **could address the root causes of instability** while **strengthening partnerships with African-led organizations** to enhance local ownership of peace initiatives, expand African capacity to confront regional threats before they impact U.S. interests. This includes consistent support for the African Union's peace and stability efforts. By promoting **regional integration** and **accelerating trade**, **the U.S.** can play a leading role in **creating jobs** for the growing youth population that can **reduce radicalization** and **create long-term stability** in countries and markets **for U.S. investors**.

HEALTH

Suspension of foreign assistance terminated multiple global health programs and threatens a grave risk of escalating mortality

Tezuka et al. 2026 (Tomomi Tezuka is a Professor of Global Nursing at Iryo Sosei University in Chiba, Japan. Naomi Ito is a professor at the Department of Radiation Health Management for the Fukushima Medical University School of Medicine in Fukushima, Japan. Kenzo Takahashi is a researcher for the Tetsuikai Research Institute in Tokyo, Japan). "The impact of U.S. foreign aid reduction on global health". Tropical Medicine and Health, Vol. 54, Number 33 (February 2026). https://doi.org/10.1186/s41182-025-00894-3

The suspension of foreign assistance by the United States—the world's preeminent donor—led to the abrupt **termination** of numerous bilateral **global health programs**. This disruption **spanned critical initiatives in malaria, maternal and child health, and nutrition**, as well as **essential infectious disease control efforts** targeting HIV, tuberculosis, and polio. Furthermore, the funding gap has extended to non-profit organizations, foreign governments, and major multilateral health institutions, **including** Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, **the African Development Fund**, and the World Bank, **all of which are now confronting severe budgetary shortfalls**. USAID has about 6200 projects [6], of which 770 are related to global health. About 80% of them, or 615 projects, were forced to close [7]. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reported that although planned budget cuts for PEPFAR were avoided, only $2.9 billion of the $6 billion appropriated budget has been released [8]. The administration's **reductions** in global health assistance **pose a grave risk of escalating preventable mortality worldwide**. Empirical modeling suggests the following concerning outcomes:

• **Malaria resurgence: an estimated 18 million additional malaria cases could occur annually**, potentially resulting in up to 166,000 deaths [9].

• Reversal of polio eradication: paralytic polio cases are projected to increase by 200,000 annually, threatening to undo decades of global progress [4].

• Emerging infectious threats: the incidence of **high-consequence infectious diseases, such as Ebola virus** disease**, is expected to rise by more than 28,000 cases each year** [4].

• Tuberculosis burden: predictive modeling indicates that new tuberculosis cases could increase by 10.7 million by 2030, with a **projected mortality of 2.2 million** [10].

• **HIV/AIDS crisis**: according to a study published in The Lancet, a withdrawal of PEPFAR support could lead to an estimated **4.43–10.75 million additional HIV infections and 0.77–2.93 million HIV-related deaths** between 2025 and 2030, relative to the status quo [9].

East Africa is already seeing rapidly escalating outbreaks as a result of US absence of disease surveillance and response

Mandavilli and Nolen 2026 (Apoorva Mandavilli is a science and global health reporter for the NYTimes who has advanced degrees in science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and New York University. Stephanie Nolen is a global health reporter for the NYTimes whose journalism tracks progress of infectious diseases). "Efforts to Contain Ebola May Have Been Hindered by Lack of U.S. Involvement", The New York Times. 20 May 2026. https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/20/health/ebola-congo-united-states-trump.html

The Ebola crisis in East **Africa is rapidly escalating**, with cases now confirmed in major population centers in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda**. Public health experts** around the world and health workers on the ground **say** that **the response has been significantly hindered by the** near-**absence** so far **of the United States, historically the leader in any major outbreak.**

The United States used to fund robust disease surveillance networks across the region and **maintained emergency teams** to take charge in public health crises like this one. **Much of that work ended with the shutdown of the U.S. Agency for International Development** early last year. The U.S. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has also lost hundreds of experts**, including some in the Democratic Republic of Congo, **who could have helped contain the epidemic**.

Epidemiologists and others who worked on previous Ebola outbreaks say that **the fact that this one came to international attention weeks, or perhaps months**, **after it began** and had already spread across international borders**, is a direct result** of the **weakened surveillance.**

American officials did not learn of the outbreak until Thursday**, nine days after the World Health Organization did, and almost a month after the first person died**.

And the US was key in previous outbreaks, specifically in West Africa

Mandavilli and Nolen 2026 (Apoorva Mandavilli is a science and global health reporter for the NYTimes who has advanced degrees in science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and New York University. Stephanie Nolen is a global health reporter for the NYTimes whose journalism tracks progress of infectious diseases). "Efforts to Contain Ebola May Have Been Hindered by Lack of U.S. Involvement", The New York Times. 20 May 2026. https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/20/health/ebola-congo-united-states-trump.html

In previous outbreaks, **U.S.A.I.D**., which **coordinated the practical aspects of a response, trained health workers, facilitated contact tracing, boosted testing capacity and provided resources for safe burials**.

(Traditional funeral practices in the region, which bring groups of loved ones together to bathe the body of the deceased, pose a major risk for transmission.) It would also have pushed partner organizations to move faster.

Historically the United States would likely also have already set up intensified surveillance at border posts with neighboring countries, said Courtney Blake, who helped lead **the U.S.A.I.D. response to a multicountry Ebola outbreak in West Africa** in **2014** and **2015**.

"In case there is spillover, we would want to make sure that we're able to capture it very quickly," she said. "But our ability to do that swiftly has been eliminated."

Many **experts said the places where the U.S. absence would be felt most sharply were in the supply chain for moving protective medical supplies and**, if eventually there is a **vaccine or treatment** for this species of the virus, for moving those too.

"The supply chain was organized perfectly, arriving on time, and we saved lives in 2019," said Dr. Manenji Mangundu, the country director for the aid agency Oxfam in Congo and a veteran of multiple Ebola outbreak responses.

Containment efforts in this outbreak have been further complicated by the fact that the infections are caused by a species of the virus, called Bundibugyo, for which there is no vaccine or therapeutics. The standard tests for Ebola do not detect it, which means it had been circulating for some time before analysis at Congo's national laboratory finally raised the alarm.

Numerous positions in the U.S. government created to help detect and respond to global health threats **remain vacant**. The **coordinator for global health security**, a position created by Congress in 2023 to oversee preparedness to biological threats, **is unfilled**. The White House Office **of Pandemic Preparedness and Response Policy**, established by Congress in 2022**, is also unstaffed**.

ENERGY

Energy cooperation is an ongoing opportunity between US-Africa engagement. Specifically SMRs

Payton 2026 (Ben Payton is an Energy and Infrastructure Reporter at African Business). "Trump era brings rethink of Africa's energy access challenge". African Business, 19 May 2026. https://african.business/2025/05/energy-resources/trump-era-brings-rethink-of-africas-energy-access-challenge

Meanwhile, US energy secretary Chris Wright pledged at a summit in March that the US would continue to support energy access in Africa, taking a technology-agnostic approach, and would consider the needs of African partners.

One priority is likely to be support for nuclear energy in Africa. Proponents say small modular reactors (**SMRs**), a nascent technology that allows nuclear energy to be deployed on a smaller scale than in conventional nuclear power stations**, are well-suited to African countries** such as Ghana and Kenya that are eager to harness nuclear power. **US companies** are in the **lead** in commercialising **SMRs**, making this a natural field for **US-Africa cooperation**.

There are some signs that **US enthusiasm** for **nuclear technology** is **influencing** other funding **organisations. The World Bank** is set to approve **a change to its lending rules** to allow it to support **nuclear energy** at an executive board meeting next month.

Or fossil fuels

Payton 2026 (Ben Payton is an Energy and Infrastructure Reporter at African Business). "Trump era brings rethink of Africa's energy access challenge". African Business, 19 May 2026. https://african.business/2025/05/energy-resources/trump-era-brings-rethink-of-africas-energy-access-challenge

Other figures are much more enthusiastic about how **Trump and Wright** may reset energy relations with Africa – particularly in **fossil fuels**.

NJ Ayuk, executive chairman of **the African Energy Chamber**, an oil and gas industry lobby group, argues **that USAID's "biggest mistake" was to focus excessively on renewables at the expense of other energy sources**. "They missed a great opportunity to drive gas development," he says, highlighting **how liquified petroleum gas** could play an important role in addressing the **continent's clean cooking problem**. "That was a strategic mistake. That was very, very ideological."

By contrast, he welcomes **the Trump administration's** much **more positive stance towards fossil fuels**. Trump allowed the US Export-Import Bank to reauthorise its $4.7bn loan for the stalled **LNG p**roject in Mozambique in March, which should pave the way for TotalEnergies to restart work on the project in the coming months.

SPACE

African nations will play a pivotal role in space competition between the US and China – investment into African states is necessary for the US to regain strategic advantage

Farrell and Petit 2026 (Maureen Farrell is a nonresident senior fellow with the GeoStrategy Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. Matt Petit is a mission lead for economic security at Vannevar. He joined the company after seventeen years as a foreign service officer with the US Department of State, working primarily on Africa and strategic competition issues). "To compete with China in space, the US must form more equitable commercial partnerships with African nations". Atlantic Council, 18 February 2026. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/geotech-cues/to-compete-with-china-in-space-the-us-must-form-more-equitable-commercial-partnerships-with-african-nations/

Space is a critical domain for US national security, and **African nations will play a pivotal role** in **defining space competition between** the **United States** and **China**. The United States is sorely underinvested in this area; China is not. But **the United States can secure its interests in space through** creative, modest **investment across** multiple sectors **of African economies.**

US space access and cooperation in Africa was once comprehensive. Now it's virtually nil. From 1980 to 1991, Somaliland was an alternate landing site for the NASA space shuttle. NASA and the US Air Force

maintained telemetry, tracking, Earth station, and data networks across Eritrea, Kenya, Nigeria, Morocco, Gabon, and South Africa through the 1990s. However, through a series of state-backed investments and following a concerted, yearslong strategy, **Beijing is gaining control over the entire value chain for critical minerals that are essential for space technologies**. This places China in the driver's seat on prices, timelines, and deployments of its space systems—and US and allied space systems—in the coming years. **China's space-economic diplomacy in Africa is doubly threatening** to the United States: It **provides China** with sharper and nearer **offensive capabilities, and** it gives Beijing unmatched **leverage over US and allied** advanced defense and space **supply chains**.

There is still hope for the United States to regain some of its strategic advantage in space, but **it will require** rewriting the rules of the game in ways that benefit **African states**. The US commercial space sector might offer a hidden advantage that could start to reroute critical minerals supply chains from China's dominance. **US companies—with government financing**—could start to **restructure critical technology supply chains in Africa** by growing talent, building equity, and providing end-use of that technology. This would help generate significant political buy-in and start to slowly **tilt the space diplomacy playing field back in Washington's favor**.

China has been crowding out the US in Africa as part of its effort to curb US air/space competition

Farrell and Petit 2026 (Maureen Farrell is a nonresident senior fellow with the GeoStrategy Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. Matt Petit is a mission lead for economic security at Vannevar. He joined the company after seventeen years as a foreign service officer with the US Department of State, working primarily on Africa and strategic competition issues). "To compete with China in space, the US must form more equitable commercial partnerships with African nations". Atlantic Council, 18 February 2026. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/geotech-cues/to-compete-with-china-in-space-the-us-must-form-more-equitable-commercial-partnerships-with-african-nations/

China has been systematically acquiring and building assets that **expand its global military readiness and economic advantage**. **Africa is at the center of this dual-use strategy**. Ports, bases, and naval visits in places such as Nigeria, Gabon, and Angola provide China both maritime **domain awareness** and access to **minerals critical** to its domes **tech and defense industries**. Coupled with billion-dollar Chinese investments in rail corridors, roads, and mines, China controls a massive proportion of the upstream critical minerals supply chain.

China has also cornered the downstream market. China's near-90 percent control of global rare-earth processing allows it to score broader economic wins and advance its domestic technological sovereignty goals. **The United States relies on China for 70 percent of its rare earths**, according to a 2024 US Geological Survey report. **China's export controls over germanium and gallium** refining **caused prices for the minerals—vital for space solar cells and advanced radars—to more than double** in 2024. The samarium cobalt and neodymium magnets for which China currently dominates production **are vital** to advanced air systems such as the F-35, as well as ship propulsion and air/space actuators.

African states will partner with the US on space. Satellites and space infrastructure is key to African states for tracking security threats, climate change, deforestation, migration, and minerals

Farrell and Petit 2026 (Maureen Farrell is a nonresident senior fellow with the GeoStrategy Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. Matt Petit is a mission lead for economic security at Vannevar. He joined the company after seventeen years as a foreign service officer with the US Department of State, working primarily on Africa and strategic competition issues). "To compete with China in space, the US must form more equitable commercial partnerships with African nations". Atlantic Council, 18 February 2026. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/geotech-cues/to-compete-with-china-in-space-the-us-must-form-more-equitable-commercial-partnerships-with-african-nations/

African states are acting in their own self-interest in partnering with willing space powers, including China. With rapidly growing populations, African countries have immense internet, telecommunications, and data needs. However, with limited budgets and at times large, ungoverned territories, many African governments struggle to meet these needs. Overhead satellite capabilities could provide African states with the overwatch they need and their mineral wealth provides the means to pay for them.

As Space in Africa founder Temidayo Oniosun wrote in September 2025, African states have viable sovereign uses of their own for space data. **In addition to tracking security threats** afflicting states such as Burkina Faso, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), many other **states seek to use space assets to tackle** issues such as **deforestation, water management** and hydrology, **climate forecasting, migration, and poaching.**

The US commercial space sector needs Africa and can offer a new kind of diplomacy

Experts have long proposed expanding space cooperation with African countries as a win-win for the United States, and the continent's rapidly growing, tech-savvy population has a burgeoning interest in working with space-based capabilities. A long-standing bipartisan consensus holds that **the United States needs more options for sourcing critical minerals for the national industrial base**. Yet, there are fewer diplomatic and development tools available after last year's cuts in the US federal service, tools that once positioned the United States to support Africa's space economy ambitions.

China still trails the United States in commercial space launch and coverage. Despite feverish investment by state-backed venture capital, Chinese companies such as Galactic Energy and LandSpace are still getting off the ground. While Galactic's reusable Pallas rocket has not yet successfully launched, **SpaceX has completed more than five hundred** reusable rocket **missions**, and **Blue Origin** has recorded **dozens of reusable launches**.

The US commercial satellite sector is also dominant, often paired with commercial lift providers. Companies such as Maxar, Umbra, Hawkeye360, CapellaSpace, and PlanetLabs are leading the way in advanced overhead imagery. **US companies** are also **exploring in-space manufacturing**, autonomy, and **communications**, as well as expanding opportunities for the cislunar economy—**commercial activities between Earth and the moon**. SpaceX has already expanded access to its **StarLink network** across **two dozen African states.** Chinese commercial satellite companies still rely on China's state research apparatus, funding, and launch to reach orbit, though that gap is closing.

Appendix B: Example Negative Evidence

ALIENATION

US transactional engagement with Africa could deter regional governments from working with the US and push them towards other nations. It could also worsen stability in the region

Morrow 2025 (Richard Morrow is an analyst at the Brenthurst Foundation, a Johannesburg-based think tank established by the Oppenheimer family to strengthen African economic performance). "Why Sub-Saharan Africa Matters for U.S. Economic and National Security". Council on Foreign Relations, 4 April 2025. https://www.cfr.org/articles/why-sub-saharan-africa-matters-us-economic-and-national-security

A solely **transactional trade relationship** with sub-Saharan Africa **is of some concern**, however. Such an approach could **resemble a neocolonial agenda** and **deter governments in the region from engaging** with the United States. Sub-Saharan **countries could instead find more comfort engaging with** BRICS nations—the intergovernmental organization comprising ten emerging markets including **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, along with Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates**—not least because of a shared sense of political alignment and history but also because of a wider structural shift in global affairs.

For the United States, securing **certain trade arrangements** could also see it **compromise on** some of the **values** it has historically championed in its dealings with trade partners, namely: **good governance**, **human rights,** and the promotion of **free and open societies**. **A minerals-for-security deal** with the DRC, for example, **could worsen the ongoing conflagration, causing greater human suffering** and **displacement** within an **already-fragile region**.

AFRICAN GOVERNANCE TRADEOFF

US withdrawal from African aid is giving regional actors a chance to create joint governance, improve innovation, remove external dependency, and build health sovereignty

Nwofe et al. 2026 (Justin Onyebuchi Nwofe, Emmanuel Adewale Ojo, Femi Emmanuel Owolagba, Precious Ogechukwu Onyebuchi, Tajudeen Disu, Kingsley Chukwuemeka Onugwu, Michael Tomori, Daniel Chinenyeike Offie, Nneka Egbonrelu, Dickson Adetolu Adetoye, Amali Owoicho, John Ogaga & Babatope O. Adebiyi). "U.S. withdrawal from WHO and aid programs: implications and opportunities for Africa's global health security". Globalization and Health, Volume 22, Number 19 (2026). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-026-01189-w

The withdrawal of the U.S. from global health partnerships and the freezing of USAID funding **presents a critical moment for Africa**. Rather than a **setback**, this juncture offers an **opportunity** for the continent to **strengthen leadership, innovate, and advance health sovereignty**. It is a time for decisive action, not despair. It serves an opportunity for **African governments to reimagine health systems**, **reduce** external **dependency**, and **invest in sustainable**, **locally driven solutions**. The opportunities outlined below are

what African governments and regional policymakers can leverage on to reimagine the health of the continent within existing political, fiscal, and institutional constraints.

There a multitude of ways US disengagement provides positive policy opportunities for African institutions to develop autonomy and better governance

Nwofe et al. 2026 (Justin Onyebuchi Nwofe, Emmanuel Adewale Ojo, Femi Emmanuel Owolagba, Precious Ogechukwu Onyebuchi, Tajudeen Disu, Kingsley Chukwuemeka Onugwu, Michael Tomori, Daniel Chinenyeike Offie, Nneka Egbonrelu, Dickson Adetolu Adetoye, Amali Owoicho, John Ogaga & Babatope O. Adebiyi). "U.S. withdrawal from WHO and aid programs: implications and opportunities for Africa's global health security". Globalization and Health, Volume 22, Number 19 (2026). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-026-01189-w

The **U.S. withdrawal** from WHO and cut in global health funding threatens global health security and **poses serious risks for Africa's healthcare systems, surveillance, and emergency preparedness**. However, this turning point **also creates opportunities**. **Africa can seize the moment to reduce dependency**, **strengthen** local **innovation**, **and pursue health sovereignty**.

By **investing in pharmaceutical production**, **industrializing** health-related **industries**, and **expanding public-private partnerships**, **Africa can mobilize** the resources needed for **resilient systems**. **Regional institutions** such as Africa CDC and AMA **can coordinate** cross-border **health governance**, while **institutional reforms** will **enhance accountability** and **sustainability**. **Policy autonomy** will allow governments to **prioritize local needs** and design context-driven strategies.

This is not simply a crisis of lost funding, **it is a call to action**. Africa now has the chance to lead, innovate, and secure health sovereignty, ensuring both continental resilience and a stronger contribution to global health security. African governments and policymakers now face a critical responsibility to lead this transition, translating policy autonomy into concrete investments, institutional reform, and regional cooperation that can secure sustainable health systems and strengthen global health security.

EXPLOITATION/NEOCOLONIALISM

US developmental aid, particularly through USAID, is responsible for sustaining structural inequality between nations. It's responsible for developing the reliance on external assistance that is now allowing the US to leverage African nations for the benefit of the US

Hazelton 2026 (Ben Hazelton is an MPhil candidate in Development Studies at the University of Oxford's Department of International Development. His dissertation research examines the expansion of critical mineral mining in former apartheid-era mining towns in Namibia, with a focus on environmental justice). "Humanitarian Aid for Minerals: Trump's Transactional Statecraft and the Weaponization of Dependency". The Journal of Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs. 27 March 2026.

Dependency theory provides a useful lens for interpreting the Trump administration's shift toward conditioning humanitarian aid on access to mineral resource governance in Zambia. It conceptualizes the global economy as structured to benefit a "core" of wealthy nations at the expense of a "periphery" of developing countries.9 **Dependency theorists have long critiqued development aid**, **particularly** with institutions such as **USAID, as a structural instrument that sustains unequal global relations and creates forms of reliance that limit national development**. Proposed responses within the dependency school vary. Reformist approaches, associated with figures such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Raúl Prebisch, advocate for more equitable integration into global markets through fairer trade terms.10 More radical perspectives, including those of Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin, call for forms of "delinking" from the global capitalist system altogether.11 Despite these differences, the literature shares a common normative concern: that **the global economic system is** not merely unequal, but **systematically structured to sustain inequality between countries**.

At first glance, the Trump administration's approach to aid appears to align with the reformist dependency perspectives. For example, in addition to mineral concessions, Secretary Rubio's proposed agreement with Zambia includes a requirement for $340 million in domestic health spending, reflecting calls for greater national responsibility and reduced aid dependence. In the "America First in Africa" planning, administration rhetoric reinforces this framing, with the goal of the Trump administration "resetting its relationship with Africa based on mutually beneficial partnerships rather than aid, dependency, and spreading divisive ideology."12 Within this logic, American private investment and technological capacity are presented as tools through which African states can "be more self-reliant" and unlock underdeveloped mineral resources, creating a purported "win-win" outcome.13

However, this framing collapses under closer scrutiny. The administration is not dismantling dependency. Rather, it is leveraging it. **Aid is being weaponized as an economic cudgel**, transformed from a mechanism of support into a tool of coercion**. Existing reliance on life-saving programs such as PEPFAR** in Zambia **becomes the very leverage through which concessions are extracted**. Rather than enabling national autonomy, this approach exploits vulnerability. The "America First in Africa" strategy does not represent a departure from the historic dynamics identified by dependency theorists, but an intensification of them. **Dependency is no longer a byproduct of aid, but an explicit instrument of statecraft.**

African nations have become dependent on western nations which the US has utilized to exploit them. Economic assistance is a neocolonialist tool of the US that allows it to maintain control of the region and disadvantage local economies in favor of the US' ambitions

Tegegne 2024 (Yalemzewd Desie Tegegne is a Doctoral Candidate and Faculty member of the Department of Social Science, History Program at Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia). "Neo-colonialism: a discussion of USA activities in the Horn of Africa". Cogent Arts and Humanities, Volume 11, Number 1 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2335755

African nations that gained their independence have faced economic bankruptcy because of poor management, bad planning, and corruption, which have caused them to become more and more dependent on Western nations. Meanwhile, **the region reliance on only one or two exportable goods**

limits the country's potential to create domestic earnings. Therefore, obtaining support from abroad in the form of foreign financial assistance during the early years of independence was a pipe dream. Such assistance, now known as development assistance, has always been insufficient or difficult to obtain. Despite the fact that some nations are fortunate, **the outcome is occasionally not favorable**. Whenever there are external investments, the potential benefits might not be enormous (Falola, 2003; Nkrumah, 1966).

Neocolonialism refers to a system in which previous colonial powers, along with the new superpowers, **employ various economic and political strategies** in order **to maintain control** of the region. The US**, as a neocolonialist, controls** the Horn of Africa in **its sphere of interest by providing economic assistance**. In fact, it is onerous to justify that success in the US translates into success in Africa. Somewhat, the progress of the US might result in the underdevelopment of countries in the Horn (Falola, 2003). Harold Markus argued that Ethiopian investment sustained 70 percent of U.S. Point Four efforts. The capital came from a burgeoning economy, which in 1953 and 1954 yielded a net surplus of about $50 million, but Ethiopia still became a developing nation (Marcus, 1994).

As a neocolonialist nation, **the US gives its businesses a competitive advantage** in the manufacturing and distribution of goods. Thus, there have been instances where imported items have damaged domestic production, including that of **food crops like grains**. What is hurtful is the **recruitment of** those who are part of **the region's political elite** as agents **to advance US neocolonial ambitions**. Hence, the US double standard is evident: **the US criticizes the region** for a variety of issues, **yet their businesses also look for ways to make money in the region**, even when things are chaotic.

US has historically co-opted its foreign assistance to Africa to further its own interests by supporting military coups, terrorist schemes, and supporting antidemocratic rebel groups

Tegegne 2024 (Yalemzewd Desie Tegegne is a Doctoral Candidate and Faculty member of the Department of Social Science, History Program at Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia). "Neo-colonialism: a discussion of USA activities in the Horn of Africa". Cogent Arts and Humanities, Volume 11, Number 1 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2335755

The U.S. has continually one of the biggest contributors of foreign assistance to the region, spending tens of billions of dollars over the past several decades on initiatives for democracy. However, behind the veil of this cover, US would engage in **supporting military coups against democratically elected leaders**, donating different rebel groups of the region, recognizing trickery votes, and others. In fact, the **US intelligence services generated** odd **terrorist schemes**. This was evident, US undemocratic states of the region such as she supported the imperial regime under Emperor Haile Selassie, and peppercorn EPRDF in Ethiopia. **US assisted antidemocratic rebel groups in Somalia and Kenya** (Hussain, 2017). Thus, US did nothing for Ethiopia and Eritreans to exercise democracy since 1940s. This was due to; Emperor Haile **Selassie fulfilled US interests in the region** by forwarding Radio Marina, the latter Kagnew Station. Radio Marina was an Italian facility in Asmera that the US military took control of in 1942 and later enlarged and integrated into a global network that gathered and beamed information to the Pentagon, US intelligence offices.

US neocolonialism has caused massive socioeconomic and political consequences. It's destroyed African sovereignty, employment, technological development, and created erratic and violent political climates

Tegegne 2024 (Yalemzewd Desie Tegegne is a Doctoral Candidate and Faculty member of the Department of Social Science, History Program at Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia). "Neo-colonialism: a discussion of USA activities in the Horn of Africa". Cogent Arts and Humanities, Volume 11, Number 1 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2335755

Neocolonialism has led to socioeconomic and political consequences over under developing countries. In the Horn of Africa, where US decisions were mainly made, **sovereignty has been lost due to** its **neocolonialism**. As a result, the US was providing material donation and financial aid through its normative agents, and these initiatives could not benefit the recipient because they were dictated and monitored (Gavin W. , 1981).

US Neo-Colonialism has increased unemployment in the Horn of Africa, where the educational system of countries in the Horn modelled from US produce more job seekers then entrepreneurs. Low technological development in the Horn, where inappropriate machines entered the region and the people lacked the knowledge to operate them. In addition, the influx of foreign expatriates, led to the loss of motivation and repatriation of profits (Rodney, 1972).

Additionally, US neocolonialism has produced titular leaders in other countries. These were usually used to promote its objectives rather than the interests of countries in the region. The US attempted to reduce violent extremism in the Horn of Africa by implementing various counter-extremism projects. According to Ploch, the counter-extremism activities of the US include influence operations, public diplomacy, financial sanctions, travel bans, support to combat terrorist financing, limiting terrorist mobility, and enhancing the counter-terrorism capacities of regional allies (Lauren, 2010).

Political climates become extremely erratic and violent. **Protests, strikes, food riots**, and student demonstrations became commonplace in most nations in the 1980s and 1990s. The issues caused by the SAP resulted in several political developments, including the **escalated use of violence** to quell the unruly populace, **the fall of** some **administrations**, and a **change in leadership** (Falola, 2003; Cooper, 2001).