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Trumpfication and Trumpformation of Development Aid: Ramifications for Africa in Democracy, Human Rights and Good Governance

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Abstract

The second Trump administration's ascent in January 2025 precipitated the most rapid rupture in the post-1945 development aid architecture, and eighteen months on, that rupture has proved cumulative rather than one-off. Through Executive Order 14169 and a cascade of subsequent actions, the United States froze foreign assistance, dismantled the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), terminated thousands of contracts and grants, expanded the Mexico City Policy into a sweeping "Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance" rule, and pivoted from need-based multilateralism to transactional, security- and minerals-driven bilateralism. This article advances two analytical constructs—Trumpfication (the politicisation and securitisation of aid as a reward-and-punishment instrument) and Trumpformation (the structural reconfiguration of aid institutions toward selective, transactional engagement)—to interpret the shift. Drawing on documentary analysis, OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) data showing a historic 23.1% real-terms decline in global ODA in 2025 followed by a further projected decline in 2026 (the first three-year consecutive fall since 1992–1995), peer-reviewed mortality modelling, and country-level evidence across five African regions, the article assesses ramifications for democracy, human rights and governance. It finds that aid-based leverage for elections, anti-corruption and civil liberties has collapsed; that strategically valuable autocrats are insulated while non-aligned democracies are punished; that a second wave of "responsible exit" terminations in February 2026 shows the rupture continuing rather than stabilising; and that health-data-sharing compacts and the Democratic Republic of Congo's minerals-for-security pact exemplify an emerging template in which aid is exchanged for sovereign data, resources and strategic access rather than governance reform. The article argues that the moment demands

an African-led accountability, financing and evaluation system grounded in Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) principles, accelerated domestic resource mobilisation, and pan-African solidarity through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Keywords: Trumpfication, Trumpformation, Usaid, Pepfar, Securitisation Of Aid, Africa, Democracy, Human Rights, Made In Africa Evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

On 20 January 2025, hours after his second inauguration, President Donald J. Trump signed Executive Order 14169, "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," ordering a 90-day pause on virtually all U.S. foreign development assistance on the grounds that the aid system was "not aligned with American interests" (The White House, 2025). Within weeks the Department of Government Efficiency had dismantled USAID's operational capacity; by 26 February 2025 the State Department announced termination of 5,800 USAID contracts and 4,100 State Department grants, roughly 83% of all USAID programming (Human Rights Watch, 2025). USAID formally ceased independent operations on 1 July 2025, and the Rescissions Act of 2025 clawed back close to USD 9 billion in already-appropriated humanitarian funding.

The magnitude is without precedent. OECD (2026a) DAC data record a 23.1% real-terms fall in global ODA in 2025—the largest annual contraction ever recorded—with the United States alone responsible for three-quarters of the decline (a 56.9% fall in U.S. ODA). Bilateral ODA to sub-Saharan Africa fell 26.3%. Crucially, this was not a single shock but the start of a trend: OECD (2026c) projections released in June 2026 anticipate a further 6.9% fall in DAC ODA in 2026, with bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa projected to decline a further 11.6% and health financing to fall as much as 63% below its 2022 peak—marking only the second time on record that ODA has fallen for three consecutive years (OECD, 2026c).

Quantitative reduction, however, is only part of the story. The Trump 2.0 aid regime is qualitatively distinct, characterised by what we term Trumpfication—the politicisation and securitisation of aid as a reward-and-punishment instrument tied to short-term U.S. interests—and Trumpformation—the longer-term structural reconfiguration of aid architecture away from multilateral, normative cooperation and toward bilateral, transactional engagement. Aid is no longer a neutral instrument of development; it is leverage, increasingly exchanged for strategic minerals, migration cooperation, and now, as this article documents, access to recipient countries' health data systems.

This article asks what Trumpfication and Trumpformation mean for Africa's democracy, human rights and governance. It develops a conceptual framework integrating conditionality theory, securitisation theory and decolonial perspectives on aid dependency; traces the sequenced mechanics of the policy shift through mid-2026; analyses thematic implications for democratic backsliding, rights regression and governance erosion; presents condensed regional case evidence; and considers implications for civil society, evaluation systems and African strategic responses.

A note on method: this is a documentary and policy-analytic study rather than a primary-data investigation. Evidence is triangulated across three streams—official U.S. and African government sources (executive orders, congressional and Treasury records), multilateral statistical reporting (principally OECD DAC data), and peer-reviewed or investigative reporting on impact (mortality modelling, civil-society and press investigations)—updated continuously through July 2026 to capture a policy landscape that has continued to shift well past the initial 2025 shock. Where figures are projections rather than confirmed outturns, this is flagged in the text.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: TRUMPFICATION, TRUMPFORMATION AND THE NEW AID LOGIC

Trumpfication denotes the immediate politicisation and securitisation of aid: its instrumentalisation as a device withdrawn from non-aligned partners (South Africa, over its Expropriation Act and International Court of Justice case against Israel) and granted to strategically valuable partners regardless of governance performance (Egypt, whose FY2026 budget seeks USD 1.3 billion in unconditional Foreign Military Financing) (Sharp, 2026). Trumpformation refers to the deeper structural reorganisation: the dismantling of USAID as an independent agency, withdrawal from multilateral mechanisms, and entrenchment of a bilateral, transactional model embodied in the December 2025 U.S.–DRC Strategic Partnership Agreement and, as recent reporting reveals, in new bilateral health compacts that condition assistance on data-sharing rather than policy reform (Adams & Rodriguez, 2026).

Together these processes describe a shift in aid logic from need-based, multilateral and normative cooperation to interest-based, bilateral and transactional bargaining—captured in the administration's "aid-to-trade" rhetoric and its December 2025 National Security Strategy, which casts critical-mineral supply chains and negotiated peace settlements as organising priorities (McGowan & Ferragamo, 2025).

This shift can be situated in three theoretical traditions. First, aid-conditionality theory, notably Burnside and Dollar's (2000) contention that aid generates growth only in "good policy environments," long licensed donors to attach political conditions; the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) institutionalised this through performance scorecards (MCC, 2025). Easterly, Levine and Roodman (2004) showed the Burnside–Dollar finding was not robust, while Moyo (2009) and Collier (2007) advanced more sceptical positions on aid dependency altogether. Trump 2.0 effectively weaponises conditionality by detaching it from developmental rationale and welding it to strategic and commercial alignment.

Second, securitisation theory, developed by the Copenhagen School and applied to development by Duffield (2001, 2007) and Abrahamsen (2005), holds that issues become "securitised" when framed as existential threats demanding extraordinary measures. Fisher and Anderson (2015) anticipated that securitised aid tends to entrench authoritarian partners; Trump 2.0 accelerates this by treating aid that does not serve security, trade or migration-control objectives as expendable.

Third, decolonial and political-economy perspectives problematise the architecture entirely. Mawdsley (2017, 2019) traced the rise of "South–South Cooperation 3.0," in which China, India and Gulf states offer alternatives premised on non-interference and infrastructure focus. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argued the post-1945 aid system reproduced "coloniality of power"; the dismantling of USAID, paradoxically, exposes rather than dismantles this structure, since the United States now openly performs the transactional, extractive function long latent within it. Khumalo (2021) and the African Evaluation Association (2025) locate the moment within a longer arc of demands for decolonised evaluation and African epistemic sovereignty, a position developed further in Section 11.

Synthesising these traditions, we argue that aid is increasingly used as leverage rather than a neutral development instrument, and that the move from humanitarian predictability to transactional, security-weighted engagement carries acute consequences for democratic norms, rights protection and institutional governance across Africa.

3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

U.S. assistance to Africa rested on four pillars built over six decades. USAID, established under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to project soft power during the Cold War, disbursed an average of USD 23 billion annually between 2001 and 2024 and is credited with preventing an estimated 91 million deaths globally over two decades, including 30 million among children (Context/TRF, 2026, citing Lancet modelling). In 2024 alone, USAID's global obligations reached USD 35.4 billion, with USD 12.7 billion—its single largest regional allocation, some 31% of total programming—directed to sub-Saharan Africa (Africa Practice, 2026). The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), launched by President George W. Bush in 2003, became the most consequential global health programme in history, saving an estimated 26 million lives and placing 20 million people on antiretroviral therapy by 2025. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (established 2004) embodied performance-based aid: countries qualified through scorecards on democratic governance, economic freedom and human-capital investment, and two-thirds of its portfolio—over USD 10 billion since inception—supported African partners (MCC, 2024). The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), enacted in 2000, granted duty-free U.S. market access to qualifying sub-Saharan states conditioned on rule-of-law, human-rights and market-reform criteria; AGOA imports peaked at USD 10.2 billion in 2022 before declining to USD 8.0 billion by 2024 (Congressional Research Service, 2025).

These instruments were imperfect but normatively framed: they tied aid to development outcomes and governance reform, however inconsistently applied. The Biden administration (2021–2025) had reinforced this orientation, restoring family-planning funding and suspending AGOA eligibility for Ethiopia (2022, over the Tigray conflict) and for Uganda, Gabon, Niger and the Central African Republic (January 2024, over rights abuses and coups). Trump 1.0 (2017–2021) previewed several Trump 2.0 themes—the first reinstatement of the Mexico City Policy, suspension of contributions to UN bodies, a proposed but rejected 32% USAID budget cut—but Congress and bureaucratic resistance preserved core programmes. Trump 2.0, fortified by an aligned Congress and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), executed a far more comprehensive demolition.

4. THE MECHANICS OF TRUMPFICATION AND TRUMPFORMATION

The reorientation proceeded through a sequenced cascade of executive, administrative and legislative actions. Executive Order 14169 (20 January 2025) imposed the initial 90-day freeze; Secretary Rubio's stop-work memorandum (24 January) extended it to existing contracts, exempting only Foreign Military Financing for Israel and Egypt and limited emergency food assistance. A Presidential Memorandum (27 January) reinstated the Mexico City Policy and foreshadowed its later expansion. Between 28 January and 6 February, DOGE moved to dismantle USAID itself: its headquarters were locked, its website taken offline, more than 10,000 employees placed on leave, and Inspector General Paul Martin fired on 11 February after warning that USD 8.2 billion in unspent humanitarian aid had become "largely nonoperational." Elon Musk, DOGE's lead, declared publicly on 2 February that USAID was "a criminal organisation" whose "time" had come "to die." Executive Order 14204 (7 February) then froze assistance to South Africa over its Expropriation Act and ICJ case against Israel, while simultaneously creating a refugee pathway for white Afrikaner farmers. The State Department's 26 February announcement terminated 83% of USAID programming. USAID formally closed on 1 July 2025; the Rescissions Act (24 July) clawed back close to USD 9 billion in humanitarian appropriations, and further rescissions in August targeted international organisations (Foley Hoag LLP, 2025; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2025).

In September–December 2025 the administration launched its "America First Global Health Strategy" and National Security Strategy, followed by the U.S.–DRC and U.S.–Rwanda Strategic Partnership

Agreements (4 December 2025). In January 2026 it released the "Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance" (PHFFA) rules—comprising Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance, Combating Gender Ideology in Foreign Assistance, and Combating Discriminatory Equity Ideology—extending the Mexico City Policy to all non-military assistance, an exponential expansion from the roughly USD 9 billion captured under Trump 1.0's version to an estimated USD 39.8 billion (Winston & Strawn, 2026).

Two further developments, both emerging since mid-2025, confirm that Trumpformation is an ongoing rather than completed process. First, in February 2026 the administration initiated a second wave of terminations—an internally described "responsible exit"—ending programmes in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Somalia and Zimbabwe that had survived the initial 2025 cuts precisely because they were deemed lifesaving; State Department officials justified the move on the grounds that "there is no strong nexus between the humanitarian response and U.S. national interests" (Alliance Magazine, 2026). Second, Secretary Rubio's replacement architecture—an USD 11.1 billion, five-year direct-to-government health financing programme covering fifteen African countries pledging USD 12.2 billion in matching funds—has, according to a July 2026 investigation, been structured around a new form of conditionality: several agreements grant U.S. agencies access to recipient countries' health data systems in exchange for funding, raising unresolved questions of privacy, data sovereignty and long-term surveillance capacity (Adams & Rodriguez, 2026; Axios, 2026). This represents a qualitatively new dimension of Trumpformation—conditionality no longer expressed through governance benchmarks but through access to sovereign data infrastructure.

5. DEMOCRACY IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA

The most immediate consequence is the collapse of aid-based leverage for elections, anti-corruption and rule-of-law reform. In Uganda, President Museveni signed the UPDF (Amendment) Act on 12 June 2025 enabling military trial of civilians; opposition figures Kizza Besigye and Robert Kyagulanyi faced prosecution, abduction and assault through 2025. Museveni was declared winner of the 15 January 2026 election with 71% amid extensive repression, with virtually no U.S. democracy-assistance programming on the ground and AGOA exclusion having lost much of its diplomatic significance after the wholesale aid freeze (Human Rights Watch, 2026a). In Tanzania, the October 2025 elections returned President Samia Suluhu Hassan after the main opposition candidate was barred from the ballot, drawing a muted U.S. response.

Kenya illustrates how the withdrawal of external scrutiny compounds a pre-existing domestic accountability crisis. The June 2024 Finance Bill protests, which forced President William Ruto to withdraw the bill after 65 deaths and the storming of Parliament, were reignited in June 2025 by the death in police custody of blogger and teacher Albert Ojwang, a case that Human Rights Watch's (2026b) World Report documented alongside "killings, abductions, and arbitrary arrests" by state security forces, including the videotaped police shooting of bystander Boniface Kariuki Mwangi during the ensuing demonstrations. Human rights organisations recorded at least a further 31 deaths during the Ojwang protests alone, with dozens more reported missing by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. Crucially, this domestic reckoning unfolded with markedly diminished Western diplomatic engagement compared with the 2024 cycle; by June 2026, when Ruto's administration advanced a new Finance Act reintroducing many of the levies Kenyans had rejected two years earlier, renewed "Gen Z" protests broke out with little of the international attention or pressure that had accompanied the original 2024 movement (Al Jazeera, 2026; Human Rights Watch, 2026b). The Kenya case thus illustrates a broader pattern documented across the region: as USAID-funded election observation, civic-education and human-rights-monitoring programmes wound down, incumbents faced a domestic protest cycle without the customary international accompaniment of diplomatic censure, sanctions threats or conditional aid review.

Autocratic resilience increases where external pressure falls. Egypt is paradigmatic: despite Freedom House's perennial "not free" classification, the FY2026 budget seeks USD 1.3 billion in unconditional Foreign Military Financing, (Sharp, 2026) reversing roughly USD 750 million in conditional withholding under the Biden administration (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2025). The aggregate effect is a two-tier system: strategically aligned autocrats are insulated while non-aligned democracies face arbitrary punishment—incentivising authoritarian convergence and undermining external pressure for free and fair elections during a 2026 electoral cycle spanning Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania and beyond.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The human rights consequences are wide-ranging. First, the expansion of the Mexico City Policy into the PHFFA constitutes the most regressive U.S. assault on sexual and reproductive health and rights in four decades, now capturing U.S. NGOs, multilateral organisations and foreign governments, and prohibiting DEI activities and gender-affirming care alongside abortion-related services (Federal Register, 2026a International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2026). The Guttmacher Institute (2026) documented disruptions to reproductive-health programming in Uganda and Ethiopia comparable to those under Trump 1.0.

Second, the PEPFAR funding freeze translates into preventable deaths. Modelling across seven African countries estimated 60,000–74,000 excess HIV deaths over 2025–2030; South Africa alone faces a projected 565,000 additional HIV infections by 2034. A broader Lancet-published modelling exercise estimates that the wider dismantling of USAID could produce up to 14 million additional deaths globally by 2030, including over 4.5 million among children—the starkest single quantification yet of the human cost of Trumpformation (Context/TRF, 2026). State Department data confirm 4.7 million fewer people tested for HIV between 2024 and 2025, a 22% drop.

World Health Organization (2023) data show that unsafe abortions already account for up to 13% of maternal deaths globally; the expanded gag rule risks pushing that figure further upward, with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (2026) describing the policy as "a deeply regressive act of imperialism masquerading as foreign policy" that "weaponises all non-military U.S. foreign assistance."

Third, the new health-data-sharing compacts described above (Section 4) carry their own rights dimension: ProPublica's investigation found that agreements unlocking health financing for several African countries require sharing access to national medical-record systems with U.S. agencies, prompting civil-society concern over privacy, consent and the precedent of conditioning survival-critical funding on surrendering control of sensitive data infrastructure (Adams & Rodriguez, 2026).

Fourth, LGBTIQ+ communities face heightened jeopardy as U.S. counter-pressure recedes—most visibly in Uganda, where the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, largely upheld by the Constitutional Court in April 2024, remains in force; Amnesty International (2025) noted that "military trials of civilians flout international and regional standards" yet continued absent meaningful external pressure. Fifth, civil society and rights defenders lose institutional support; Human Rights Watch (2025) warned the terminations were "reckless, cruel, and will wreak havoc" on democracy and rule of law. Sixth, marginalised groups bear disproportionate costs: refugee rations in Uganda and Kenya were cut to as little as 28% of standard, female workers in Ethiopia's Hawassa Industrial Park lost jobs after AGOA suspension, and eastern DRC recorded a 361% rise in cholera deaths (from 409 in 2024 to 1,888 in 2025) after water-and-sanitation programmes in Goma were terminated (Oxfam America, 2026).

7. GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Beyond elections and rights, Trumpfication erodes the institutional substrate of good governance. Accountability systems—anti-corruption units, public-financial-management reform, auditor-general training—were disproportionately financed by USAID's Democracy, Human Rights and Governance bureau and MCC threshold programmes. The MCC Board terminated or discontinued compacts across Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Lesotho, Malawi, Senegal and Togo in August 2025, and threshold programmes in The Gambia, Kenya, Mauritania, Tanzania and Togo—cancelling, among others, Kenya's USD 60 million Nairobi Urban Mobility programme (MCC, 2025).

Security-first aid displaces governance-focused aid. The December 2025 National Security Strategy elevated counter-terrorism, migration control and critical-mineral supply-chain security as organising priorities (McGowan & Ferragamo, 2025). The U.S.–DRC Strategic Partnership Agreement of 4 December 2025 epitomises this turn, granting U.S. firms preferential access to Congolese cobalt, copper, lithium and tantalum in exchange for training and equipment for Congolese forces (U.S. Department of State, 2025). Yet implementation through mid-2026 has exposed the limits of transactionalism as a substitute for governance: in March 2026 the U.S. Treasury sanctioned senior Rwandan military officials and the Rwanda Defence Force for violating the Washington Accords through continued support for the M23 armed group, which by then controlled the provincial capitals of Goma and Bukavu; by June 2026, Treasury was compelled to sanction a Rwandan gold refinery and associated network for laundering smuggled Congolese minerals, even as the Strategic Partnership Agreement remained formally in force (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2026). The Oakland Institute's (2025) investigative report Shafted documented that Rwanda continued to process and export Congolese minerals throughout the "peace" period, concluding that regional-integration provisions in the agreement risk legalising rather than resolving the laundering they were meant to end. As the Institute for Security Studies (2026) observed, minerals-for-security arrangements substitute transactional bargaining for the political and institutional reforms that conflict resolution actually requires—a governance lesson with implications well beyond Central Africa. Congolese lawyers and human-rights defenders had already filed a constitutional challenge in January 2026, arguing that the Strategic Partnership Agreement bypassed parliamentary oversight and required amendment of national law (Oakland Institute, 2025).

Institutional reforms lose leverage more broadly. Pre-2025 conditionality attached to MCC compacts and AGOA eligibility pushed governments, however imperfectly, toward judicial independence and electoral-management reform; with these levers removed or rendered arbitrary, the signal to reformers and reform-resistant elites alike is that performance no longer determines relations mediated by strategic value.

Civil-society funding collapse compounds the governance erosion, discussed further in Section 9. The compound effect is a weakened accountability ecosystem, replaced by transactional, executive-centred governance in which incumbents bargain bilaterally with Washington, Beijing, Moscow or Gulf capitals over strategic access with minimal accountability.

8. REGIONAL CASE EVIDENCE

East Africa illustrates the layered impact of Trumpfication. Kenya lost an estimated 46% of U.S. funding overnight; its MCC threshold programme was terminated in August 2025, removing USD 60 million earmarked for Nairobi urban mobility and a co-financing vehicle for anti-corruption reform, forcing the National Treasury to plug a resulting health-financing gap even as extrajudicial killings and the death of blogger Albert Ojwang in police custody reignited civil unrest with muted external response. Uganda demonstrates security-partner insulation most starkly: despite documented abuses, its status as a counter-terrorism partner and host to nearly two million refugees shielded it from meaningful reprimand through the January 2026 election. Ethiopia remains AGOA-suspended since 2022 over the Tigray conflict, a suspension the International Growth Centre (2025) estimated cost a 31.7% decline in Ethiopian exports to the United States. Tanzania's MCC programme was terminated in August 2025 amid an uncompetitive October 2025 election that returned President Samia Suluhu Hassan after her main rival was barred from the ballot. Rwanda received a strategic-partnership agreement in December 2025 even as it faced U.S. sanctions in March and June 2026 over M23 support—illustrating the incoherence of simultaneous reward and punishment. Somalia and South Sudan continued receiving security-framed counter-terrorism and humanitarian assistance, though humanitarian funding overall fell sharply.

Southern Africa experienced the most dramatic punitive action. South Africa's EO 14204 froze assistance over its Expropriation Act and ICJ case; PEPFAR terminations covering roughly USD 420 million displaced over 8,000 healthcare workers and closed clinics across 70% of supported facilities, prompting the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust and the South African Medical Research Council to mobilise emergency rescue financing pending Treasury matching. Malawi's USD 350 million MCC compact was terminated in August 2025 and its remaining USAID programming ended in the February 2026 "responsible exit" round; Mozambique lost MCC compact development amid an active Cabo Delgado insurgency where security cooperation nonetheless persisted; Zambia's USD 458 million compact remained under review amid debt-restructuring pressure.

West Africa and the Sahel show the limits of both Western withdrawal and Russian substitution. The Alliance of Sahel States (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger) withdrew from ECOWAS, expelled French and, later, U.S. forces (including closure of Air Base 201 at Agadez in March 2024), and pivoted to Russia's Africa Corps, yet by April 2026 coordinated JNIM and Azawad Liberation Front attacks—killing Mali's Defence Minister and forcing Russian withdrawal from Kidal—exposed that high need secures neither Western nor Russian flexible support once transactional logic dominates. Nigeria, USAID's largest African recipient after South Africa, lost an estimated USD 440 million in health funding (about 15% of its health budget) but mobilised a rapid domestic response, allocating an additional USD 200 million within a month; Ghana removed the cap on its National Health Insurance Levy in March 2025, redirecting proceeds fully to health; Senegal's MCC regional compact was discontinued in August 2025; Côte d'Ivoire faced anticipated tariffs on cashew exports.

Central Africa is dominated by the DRC case detailed in Section 7; Cameroon remained AGOA-suspended on human-rights grounds since 2020 even as a December 2025 bilateral health memorandum of understanding projected increased spending, reflecting the selective prioritisation characteristic of Trumpfication. North Africa illustrates strategic insulation most starkly: Egypt's unconditional FMF request proceeds unimpeded, while Morocco's Western Sahara recognition was extended through a February 2026 Critical Minerals memorandum of understanding, and Tunisia's continuing democratic backsliding under President Kaïs Saïed has drawn IMF and EU migration-cooperation conditionality rather than U.S. democracy support.

On AGOA specifically: after lapsing on 30 September 2025, the U.S. House passed a three-year extension to 2028, but the Senate reduced this to a single year; President Trump signed the resulting one-year reauthorisation (through 31 December 2026, retroactive to the lapse date) on 3 February 2026 (U.S. Trade Representative [USTR], 2026). A further modernisation review, inviting public comment through May 2026, leaves AGOA's future beyond 2026 unresolved—compounding, rather than resolving, the uncertainty facing African exporters (Federal Register, 2026b).

Table 1 summarises the dominant pattern and representative evidence for each of the five regions.

Table 1. Summary of Regional Case Evidence on Trumpfication and Trumpformation in Africa

Region	Dominant Pattern	Representative Evidence	Key Instruments Affected
East Africa	Security-partner insulation coexists with punishment of weaker-leverage states	Uganda shielded through a repressive Jan. 2026 election; Kenya's civic unrest met with muted external response; Rwanda simultaneously rewarded (Strategic Partnership) and sanctioned (M23 support)	MCC threshold compacts (Kenya, Tanzania); AGOA suspension (Ethiopia); democracy-assistance programming
Southern Africa	Punitive action against non-aligned democracies	South Africa's EO 14204 freeze over the Expropriation Act and ICJ case; PEPFAR terminations displacing 8,000+ health workers; Malawi and Zambia compacts terminated or under review	PEPFAR; MCC compacts (Malawi, Zambia); refugee and health financing
West Africa / Sahel	Transactional logic fails to secure engagement from any external power	Alliance of Sahel States' pivot to Russia unravels under 2026 JNIM/ALF attacks; Nigeria and Ghana mobilise rapid domestic fiscal responses instead	AGOA; MCC (Senegal); bilateral security cooperation
Central Africa	Minerals-for-security template substitutes transactionalism for governance	U.S.-DRC Strategic Partnership Agreement (Dec. 2025); continued Rwandan mineral laundering despite Washington Accords; June 2026 Treasury sanctions on a Rwandan refinery	Strategic Partnership Agreement; AGOA (Cameroon); regional peace architecture
North Africa	Strategic insulation of aligned autocrats and transactional bargains	Egypt's unconditional USD 1.3bn FMF request; (Sharp, 2026). Morocco's Western Sahara recognition extended via Critical Minerals MoU; Tunisia's backsliding met with IMF/EU rather than U.S. conditionality	Foreign Military Financing; Critical Minerals MoUs; IMF/EU conditionality

9. CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER SIEGE

Trumpfication has produced an existential financing crisis for African civil society. USAID was the largest external funder of African NGOs in health, governance and humanitarian assistance; the termination of thousands of contracts cascaded through implementing organisations. OECD (2026a) recorded a 35.8% fall in humanitarian ODA in 2025—the largest single-year decline on record. This funding collapse intersects with shrinking civic space: Kenya's Public Benefit Organisations Regulatory Authority targeted 2,802 NGOs for deregistration and published restrictive regulations in June 2025; Uganda's 2025 UPDF Amendment Act enabled military prosecution of civil-society critics, and its Computer Misuse Act has been used to imprison online creators criticising the president. As Jeffrey Okoro of CFK Africa in Nairobi's Kibera settlement observed, "there is a pervasive sense of fear—of losing access to critical health care services and of livelihoods lost. Even programmes that were not directly supported by USAID have been affected as it disrupted the supply chain of medications in Kenya" (Statnews, 2025).

The convergence of donor retreat and regulatory restriction produces what we term a double squeeze: organisations face simultaneous revenue loss and reduced operating freedom, with small organisations serving women's rights, LGBTIQ+ inclusion and reproductive health closing entirely while larger internationally affiliated NGOs consolidate regional offices. Yet the rupture also produces opportunity: as Brian Kagoro of the Open Society Foundation has argued, civil society had become too dependent on external donor narratives, and the shock may force a return to indigenous resource mobilisation, community accountability and politically grounded movements (Gavin, 2025).

10. AFRICA'S STRATEGIC RESPONSES

Four broad responses are discernible. First, diversification of partners: China has expanded engagement through the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation and Belt and Road financing, the Gulf states have increased infrastructure and agricultural investment, and Russia has consolidated its Africa Corps footprint in the Sahel; the Center for Global Development (2026) tracked 442 government aid-cut response events across 54 African countries in 2025, finding Morocco, Algeria and South Africa scoring highest on response intensity. Second, domestic resource mobilisation: Nigeria added USD 200 million to its health budget, Ghana redirected its health-insurance levy, South Africa's Treasury released rescue financing for HIV programming, and African Tax Administration Forum data show sub-Saharan tax-to-GDP ratios rising modestly from 15.7% (2022) to 16.4% (2024). As Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama put it, the USAID demolition was "a signal to Africa that the time has come for us to be more self-reliant" (Project Syndicate, 2025). Third, pan-African solidarity through AfCFTA implementation and the Africa Centres for Disease Control's continental health-financing mechanism, though intra-African trade remains below 20% of total African trade—a structural deficit requiring sustained political commitment. Fourth, and most consequential for this article, the rise of indigenous accountability systems: AfrEA, national VOPEs and the EvalIndigenous network have intensified efforts to operationalise Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE)—a decolonising approach centring African epistemologies, Ubuntu philosophy and Africa-led commissioning, formalised in AfrEA's 2025 MAE Handbook and elaborated in a growing peer-reviewed literature on positionality and methodology (African Evaluation Association, 2025; Tirivanhu et al., 2026).

Afrobarometer data cited by Project Syndicate (2025) found 65% of Africans wanted their governments to finance development with domestic resources rather than external loans—crystallising a sentiment long latent in African political thought that aid dependency is incompatible with sovereignty.

11. IMPLICATIONS FOR EVALUATION SYSTEMS

The disruption carries profound implications for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). Traditional results-based frameworks, designed for predictable multi-year donor cycles, are inadequate to an environment of sudden terminations and politicised conditionality. Four challenges stand out. First, data and infrastructure loss: PEPFAR's health-information systems, covering hundreds of thousands of frontline workers, have fragmented, undermining longitudinal tracking—a problem now compounded by the data-sovereignty questions raised by the new health-data-sharing compacts (Section 4). Second, the need for adaptive, political evaluation that foregrounds power, interests and incentives rather than compliance verification. Third, operationalising MAE: AfrEA's agenda calls for evaluation grounded in African cultures, worldviews and methodologies—from indaba deliberative processes to baraza community accountability forums adapted by Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister (Watera, 2019)—and the 2025 MAE Handbook, UNICEF's regional engagement through the African School of Evaluation (Accra, November 2025) and the AfrEA Conference (Addis Ababa, June 2025), and Tirivanhu et al.'s (2026) work on positionality together provide a maturing methodological and institutional scaffold. Fourth, building Africa-led commissioning through national VOPEs and emerging ethics-governance frameworks (Yami, 2026), reducing dependence on donor-driven evaluation cycles.

The evaluation profession thus stands at a juncture: donor retreat removes the dominant commissioner but also the methodological tutelage that long privileged Eurocentric approaches. The MAE moment, long discussed as aspiration, is now a matter of professional urgency.

12. CONCLUSION AND POLICY DIRECTIONS

This article has argued that the Trump 2.0 administration's reorganisation of foreign assistance constitutes a dual and continuing rupture: an immediate Trumpfication—politicisation and securitisation of aid as reward and punishment—and a deepening Trumpformation, evidenced most recently by the February 2026 "responsible exit" terminations and by health-data-sharing compacts that introduce a wholly new conditionality logic. Democracy suffers as aid-based leverage collapses while aligned autocrats are insulated and non-aligned democracies punished. Human rights regress as the PHFFA rules shrink reproductive health services and PEPFAR cuts threaten a documented 60,000–74,000 excess HIV deaths, within a wider mortality picture that may reach into the millions. Governance weakens as MCC compacts terminate and minerals-for-security arrangements—exemplified by the DRC's experience through mid-2026—demonstrate that transactionalism secures neither peace nor accountability. The third consecutive annual decline in global ODA now projected for 2026 confirms that this is a structural transformation, not a passing shock.

Yet the moment is also clarifying. African scientists, evaluators and civil-society actors increasingly articulate a position that aid dependency was never compatible with sovereignty or developmental autonomy. Nigerian molecular biologist Christian Happi's verdict—"this whole attitude of begging, crying, and throwing hands up needs to stop"—captures a broader sentiment now shared across the continent's scientific and evaluation communities (Tsanni, 2025). Five policy directions follow.

First, accelerate domestic resource mobilisation. The African Development Bank (2024) estimates an annual financing gap of USD 402.2 billion through 2030 for the continent's structural transformation, even as government revenues have risen from roughly USD 435 billion (2015) to a projected USD 626 billion (2025)—evidence that the mobilisation trajectory, while positive, remains far short of need. The OECD and African Tax Administration Forum's Tax Transparency in Africa 2026 report finds that African countries have collectively recovered EUR 4.6 billion in additional revenue since 2009 through enhanced tax-information exchange, with more than 3,500 exchange relationships now in force continent-wide (OECD, 2026b)—a proof of concept that should be scaled toward a continental target of 20% tax-to-GDP by 2030, alongside sustained illicit-financial-flow recovery.

Second, deepen pan-African solidarity through AfCFTA implementation. Progress has been real but slower than advocates hoped: the Guided Trade Initiative has demonstrated that duty-free trading under AfCFTA rules is administratively feasible among early participants (including Kenya, Rwanda, Ghana and Egypt), yet the World Economic Forum's (2026) review of value-chain pilots identifies persistent friction in customs processes, standards recognition and non-tariff barriers that continues to depress intra-African trade below 20% of the continent's total. Translating AfCFTA's legal architecture into a genuine alternative to donor dependency will require the same urgency African governments have applied to the aid shock itself, backed by a coordinated diplomatic posture in dealings with the United States, China, the EU and Gulf states.

Third, diversify partnerships strategically rather than indiscriminately, learning from the DRC's experience that minerals-for-security agreements negotiated without parliamentary or civil-society consultation can compromise sovereignty. Fourth, protect and resource civil society through national philanthropic ecosystems and revised regulatory frameworks that protect rather than constrict civic space. Fifth, operationalise Made in Africa Evaluation by anchoring continental and national evaluation policy in MAE principles and building VOPE capacity so that monitoring, evaluation and learning are commissioned, conducted and consumed by Africans for African development priorities.

The dismantling of USAID is, in one sense, the death of a certain post-1945 development consensus. It is also the opening of a long-overdue conversation about African epistemic, financial and political sovereignty. The continent that emerges from this rupture will be shaped less by what Washington decides than by what African states, institutions and citizens themselves choose to build. For the evaluation community specifically—gathered, as this paper originally was, at fora such as the Uganda Evaluation Week and the wider EvalIndigenous and AfrEA networks—the task ahead is to ensure that the accountability systems Africa builds in the aftermath of Trumpformation are designed, owned and led on the continent, so that the next global aid shock, whenever and from wherever it comes, finds African governance, rights and evaluation infrastructure resilient rather than dependent.

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