



Call for Abstracts The Reset Africa Summit.

Rethinking Africa's Strategic Position Amid Global Shifts in Foreign Policy: A Conference on African Investment, Trade and Development Financing.

Deadline for abstract submissions: **May 30, 2025**

Deadline for paper submissions: **June 30, 2025**

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Introduction:

The contemporary global political economy has undergone significant reconfiguration, primarily driven by unilateral shifts in foreign policy by major donor states. This era has witnessed a marked retreat from multilateralism, with most states adopting a unilateral foreign policy approach that prioritises national economic interests over global development cooperation. Notably, the United States has implemented substantial reductions in USAID operations, suspended most of its foreign assistance programmes, imposed high tariffs on strategic trade partners, and withdrawn from critical multilateral agreements and institutions. These policy changes have disrupted the longstanding equilibrium of development financing, trade, and diplomatic engagement, creating a cascading effect on other donor countries.

The reduction in global development aid and the introduction of trade tariffs have disproportionately adverse effects on African economies. Nations heavily dependent on external assistance for public health, education, and food security have faced funding shortfalls, leading to cascading effects on service delivery, poverty alleviation, and macroeconomic stability. Furthermore, the erosion of predictability in aid disbursement has introduced significant fiscal planning challenges for African governments and diminished the leverage of civil society organisations (CSOs) that previously relied on international grants. The ripple effect extends to domestic political economies, where sudden donor withdrawal may undermine state legitimacy and social contracts, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge opposing viewpoints that highlight the potential benefits of these disruptions. Critics of foreign aid argue that it fosters dependency, distorts local markets, and impedes the development of autonomous governance systems. Thus, the current climate may also present a pivotal opportunity for African nations to reimagine development financing through endogenous resource mobilisation, regional integration, and private sector engagement. While this is the case, further research and discussion are required.

Rationale for the Abstracts



We are commissioning abstracts for the **RESET Africa Summit** that convenes from July 25, 2025, in Nairobi. This conference will provide a high-level, interdisciplinary platform for the interrogation of these foreign policy transitions, examining their implications for African development. We invite papers that touch on the four thematic areas and encourage contributions that look beyond to include contextual issues related to the thematic areas. We explicitly invite scholars from the Global South to take part in this call by focusing on the following four thematic areas:

1. **Trade: Navigating a Fragmented Global Order:** African exports continue to be hemmed in by renewed protectionism—tariffs and non-tariff barriers imposed by developed economies such as the United States and the United Kingdom—that have deepened the continent’s marginalisation in global markets and eroded multilateral trade norms. This protectionist turn exposes Africa’s over-reliance on primary commodities and highlights a critical gap: the continent’s structural unpreparedness to absorb external shocks due to weak industrial bases, infrastructural deficits, and limited trade finance (Signé & van der Ven, 2021). While the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers a blueprint for unifying markets, diversifying partnerships, and adding value through regional value chains, realising its promise requires targeted investments in trade facilitation, digital infrastructure, and institutional reform to bridge these capacity gaps and strengthen Africa’s resilience (UNECA, 2020). Key Research Questions:
 - How can African economies recalibrate trade strategies in response to protectionist policies of major economies?
 - What are the implications of regional trade blocs (e.g., AfCFTA) for insulating African economies from global shocks?
 - How can Africa leverage South-South cooperation and alternative markets (e.g., BRICS) to diversify trade partnerships?
 - What are the short- and long-term impacts of Trump-era tariffs on African exports, particularly within key sectors such as textiles, agriculture, and rare earth minerals?
 - How should African countries strategically position themselves in response to potential reimpositions or expansions of tariffs by future U.S. administrations?
2. **International Development, Foreign Aid, and Fundraising:** African countries face a critical financing gap as the abrupt withdrawal of traditional Western aid reverses gains in health, education, and poverty reduction, revealing their vulnerability to external policy shifts and deepening aid dependency that undermines fiscal autonomy and local institution-building (Buchanan-Smith & Fagen, 2020; Moyo, 2009). Moreover, donor conditionality favouring neoliberal reforms may exacerbate inequality and stifle context-specific development strategies (Vernon, 2019; Hudson & Leftwich, 2014), while emerging philanthropic and South–South cooperation models remain fragmented and underutilised (Sulla & Zikhali, 2018). This thematic area will therefore examine how domestic resource mobilisation through tax reform, blended finance, strengthened governance, and coordinated philanthropic partnerships can sustainably fill the void left by declining foreign aid (Stiglitz, 2007; UNECA, 2020). This conference aims to address the following research questions:



- What innovative strategies can African governments and CSOs employ to strengthen domestic resource mobilisation and reduce dependence on external aid?
- To what extent have abrupt foreign aid withdrawals exposed systemic vulnerabilities in African aid management systems, and how can these be addressed?
- How effective are alternative financing models, such as public-private partnerships and African philanthropy, in compensating for declining international aid?
- What are the most effective and context-specific fundraising strategies African CSOs, and public institutions can adopt amid shifting donor priorities?
- How can digital tools and community-driven financial innovations be leveraged to diversify and localise fundraising approaches for development initiatives in Africa?

3. **African Government Response and Uptake:** African governments' ability to absorb global economic shocks is highly uneven, reflecting disparities in political will, institutional strength, and policy coherence (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2017; World Bank, 2020). While some states with robust central banks and finance ministries have managed crises effectively, others hobbled by corruption, weak bureaucracies, and heavy aid or debt burdens struggle to maintain service delivery and fiscal stability (Cheeseman & Klaas, 2017; Haines, 2019; Moyo, 2009). This thematic area will therefore investigate how innovative governance mechanisms such as sovereign wealth funds, public-private partnerships, and coordinated regional integration can strengthen policy autonomy, harmonise responses, and bolster collective resilience to future shocks (Ajakaiye, Adeyeye, & Olayiwola, 2020; Rodrik, 2006). Overall there are impediments, real or perceived, that preclude Africa from understanding itself in terms of its potential, threats and advantages that either weaken it or can make it great. This theme therefore seeks to foster conversation around the following research questions:

- How are African governments adapting their public expenditure strategies and service delivery mechanisms in response to the withdrawal or reduction of foreign aid, and what lessons can be drawn from divergent national experiences?
- What institutional innovations—such as sovereign wealth funds, public-private partnerships, and domestic revenue mobilisation reforms—have emerged across African states to fill development financing gaps, and how effective have they been?
- In what ways do political leadership, governance quality, and institutional capacity shape African governments' ability to respond to global economic shocks, including pandemics and climate-induced crises?
- How can African regional bodies, such as the African Union (AU), African Development Bank (AfDB), and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), support policy harmonisation, fiscal resilience, and technical assistance for vulnerable member states in the current context?
- To what extent can regional integration frameworks enhance collective resilience, reduce external dependencies, and support coherent economic and social policy responses to global disruptions?



4. African Philanthropy and the Private Sector: The withdrawal of Western aid has exposed a financing void in Africa that domestic philanthropy and corporate social investment (CSI) may be poised to fill, yet their potential remains hampered by fragmented giving structures, weak legal frameworks, and misalignment with national development goals (Moyo, 2016; Ibrahim & Moyo, 2020). Despite deep-rooted traditions of mutual support, including Kenya's harambee and South Africa's stokvels, these practices seldom scale into coherent, strategy-driven mechanisms. Additionally, the CSR initiatives often lack the policy incentives and accountability systems needed for sustained impact (Sulla & Zikhali, 2018; Porter & Kramer, 2011). This theme will therefore probe how strengthened regulatory environments such as tax incentives, streamlined NGO registration, and blended-finance models can institutionalise African philanthropy and CSI, ensuring they robustly complement state efforts and effectively address development funding gaps (Hudson Institute, 2018; GIIN, 2022). Therefore, this conference will explore the following questions to respond to the current needs:

- What models of African philanthropy—traditional, religious, or institutional—have proven most effective in addressing critical development gaps, and what socio-political or economic conditions enable their success?
- How can the African private sector be systematically engaged as a complementary partner, rather than as a substitute, for public sector investment in delivering essential services such as health, education, and infrastructure?
- What legal, fiscal, and regulatory frameworks are necessary to catalyse domestic giving, social entrepreneurship, and philanthropic innovation across various African contexts?
- How does African philanthropy, both formal and informal, intersect with or disrupt prevailing power structures in development, particularly concerning equity, accountability, and the governance of social investments?
- How can African philanthropic actors collaborate with governments and international development partners to improve transparency, coordination, and impact measurements in the financing and delivery of social goods?

Finally, we also acknowledge that decoloniality is a cross-cutting sub-theme within each of the four current thematic areas -Trade; International Development, Foreign Aid, and Fundraising; African Government Response and Uptake; and African Philanthropy and the Private Sector. We request authors to consider how the same may be infused to enrich the discourse by foregrounding the critical need to gradually eliminate the past legacies that continue to shape Africa's economic, political, and social structures.

Instructions for authors

We invite you to submit **350-word** abstracts by **30th May 2025** and full papers by **June 30**. If you are uncertain about the fit of your paper for the conference editors, you can write to the ResetAfricaSummit-abstracts@scofieldassociates.co.ke to discuss this. Please do make sure, however, that one or more of the key concepts in the extended abstract for the introduction are employed in your paper. You are free to relate in the way you see fit, but a key concept under each of the four themes. Please include a minimum of **4-6 keywords**, listed after the



abstract. Keywords should be as specific as possible to the research topic. Full article drafts should be **8000** words maximum, including references, figures and tables.

Timeline

After approval of abstracts shortly after **May 30th, 2025**, we expect contributors to submit the first draft of their paper to us by **June 30th** by email (ResetAfricaSummit-abstracts@scofieldassociates.co.ke). After **May 30th**, the editors will review the draft papers, assess suitability and provide prompt feedback for authors to work with in further improving their papers. We aim for submission of all papers for the conference by **July 15**.

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