



## Geopolitics of Africa-Cuba-China Cooperation: Strategies of Balance and Tariff Evasion in the Non-Aligned Movement

*Geopolítica de la cooperación África-Cuba-China: Estrategias de equilibrio y evasión arancelaria en el Movimiento de Países No Alineados*

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**ABSTRACT** This paper focuses on Africa-Cuba-China (ACC) tariffed experiences within Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) geopolitics. ACC is caught in the web of internationalising belonging, ownership of state and continental survival traits. China amplifies socialism with Chinese characteristics on the global scene and international geopolitical spaces; Cuba embodies socialist realities with communist flavours; and Africa lays stretched on the plumbline of socialism, communism, and capitalism with drooping Pan-African Ubuntu characteristics. Their tariff experiences posture unity amidst dreadful threat from United States. The paper augments that realities in balancing shared threat confirm NAM ideation of catch-up diplomacy tact. It

also demonstrates how tariffs conditioned states to circumvent great power dominance amidst existing treaties and threats. Thus, why and how China leaps to being a more attractive partner within tariffed NAM geopolitics realities beckon apt rationalisation. Especially, how following catch-up diplomacy has posited counter balancing as shared affluence; and why ACC partnerships as well as cooperation aren't motivating NAM to retaliate? This research uses qualitative descriptive analysis on African-Cuban cases to embolden intra-inter-regional diplomacy of tariffed NAM states. It offers a spectrum to (re)think ACC threats, hindering multilateralism; especially how Africa views relating with Cuba, and vice versa within tariffed BRI balancing geopolitics. Observably, this predicament has continued to hinder actualisation of a liberated partnership of ACC within NAM. It explains the motivation in (counter)balancing against United States; and the nature of partnership(s) and cooperation diplomacy within NAM tariffed states.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Balancing, Tariffs, Diplomacy, Multilateralism, Great Power

**RESUMEN** *Este artículo se centra en las experiencias tarifarias de África-Cuba-China (ACCh) dentro de la geopolítica del Movimiento de Países No Alineados (MNOAL), atrapado en la red de la internacionalización de la pertenencia, la propiedad del estado y los rasgos de supervivencia continental. China amplifica el socialismo con características chinas en la escena global y los espacios geopolíticos internacionales; Cuba encarna realidades socialistas con matices comunistas; y África se extiende en la línea de plomada del socialismo, el comunismo y el capitalismo con características decadentes del Ubuntu panafricano. Sus experiencias tarifarias postulan la unidad en medio de una amenaza terrible por parte de Estados Unidos. El artículo sostiene que las realidades en el equilibrio de la amenaza compartida confirman la ideación del Movimiento de Países No Alineados sobre la táctica de diplomacia de ponerse al día. También demuestra cómo los aranceles condicionaron a los estados a eludir el dominio de las grandes potencias en medio de tratados y amenazas existentes. Por lo tanto, por qué y cómo China salta a ser un socio más atractivo dentro de las realidades tarifarias de la geopolítica del Movimiento de Países No Alineados requiere una racionalización adecuada. Especialmente, cómo el seguimiento de la diplomacia de ponerse al día ha posicionado el contrapeso como prosperidad compartida; y por qué las asociaciones y cooperaciones entre estos actores no están motivando al MNOAL a tomar represalias. Esta investigación utiliza un análisis descriptivo cualitativo sobre casos africano-cubanos para fortalecer la diplomacia intra e interregional de los estados tarifados del MNOAL. Ofrece un espectro para (re)pensar las amenazas África-Cuba-China que obstaculizan el multilateralismo; especialmente cómo África ve la relación con Cuba, y viceversa, dentro de la geopolítica tarifaria del BRI. De manera observable, esta situación ha continuado obstaculizando la realización de una asociación liberada entre estos actores dentro del MNOAL. Explica la motivación en el (contra)equilibrio contra Estados Unidos; y la naturaleza de las asociaciones y la diplomacia de cooperación dentro de los estados tarifados del MNOAL.*

*Palabras clave:* Geopolítica, Equilibrio, Aranceles, Diplomacia, Multilateralismo, Gran Potencia

## INTRODUCTION

### The Africa-Cuba-China Tariffed NAM Geopolitics

The bulk of non-aligned movement members are tariffed states (Kohnert, 2025). Their geopolitical

cooperation as tariffed states has (re)shaped multiple outcomes. First on how great powers relate with states, within non-aligned movement (NAM) outfit to balance threats and interests. Second, the balance of power pointedly engraves and amplifies rule-based order organising principles, amidst communism and

socialism canopies; as well as threatened Pan-African Ubuntu ways of life. Third, such intricate geopolitical rationalisation of cooperation in NAM embodies the aspirations and realities of Africa, Cuba, and China for geopolitical shared affluence.

Considerably, the past eight decades have rattled the geopolitics of tariffed states within NAM. The same tariffed states have also never fully been protected by NAM, and within NAM. As such, this has ended up with the necessity to offer clear choices, as well as decisions to make, take and enforce respectively. For example, how to organise as threatened states, guaranteed by great powers without of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) deliberation frameworks have birthed regionalism and international organising ideas. And, how NAM trading partners balance threats across internationally shared spaces under international law continues to stretch geopolitical praxis. So, as African and Cuban state representatives, along with strategic forerunners gathered in the summoned NAM, G-77 +China January 2024 Kampala meeting (NAM, 2024); the blooming Africa-Cuba weight of tariff experiences and agenda setting-shaping await maximum scrutiny as well as enforcement of interests. This scrutiny from all NAM tariffed stakeholders is brewing a niche of alternative grouping, and growing multi-lateral edge solution(s) for reciprocal partnerships and cooperation. One such observable synergy is the balancing effect on Africa-Cuba-China Cooperation & Shared Affluence.

This in essence explain the how and why optimism in Africa-Cuba-China relations for inter-intra-regional and international geopolitical belonging. While the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Feingold, 2023) enjoins these tariffed states within NAM; their diplomatic choices, and foreign policy priorities remain an unavoidable entrepreneurial dirge. Notably, Africa and Cuba's decades of shared affluence, as well as partnerships, remain an anchor to growth and posterity. Africa, Cuba, and China are a wealthy polity. They have served other continents with prime knowledge, labour and raw materials for centuries.

Notably, China's growth and industrilisation shall be complete with reciprocal partnership and cooperation with Africa and Cuba respectively (PRC, 2025). As such, existing regimes, states and governments (Matthew P. Funaiole, 2024) continue to weave reciprocal intra-inter regional growth in geopolitical ideology, politics, economics, security, industry, trade and culture respectively. Such an emboldened view to partnership makes balancing against threats to NAM tariffed members feasible for accelerated integration and global production chains.

As such, deciphering Africa-Cuba-China partnership, in the media narratives, gives a glimpse into (re) thinking geopolitical strategy. Especially, how countries that haven't experienced tariff's view NAM tariffed states partnership with China. The same has helped to amplify existing inequalities of global institutions like the UNSC, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund which determine geopolitical strategic relations. With the growing dysfunction of the international order hinged around the UNSC and related organisations that finance this system, continuous bewilderment and abuse have triggered all kinds of overt and covert jittery. Sadly, most of the countries that have no Veto power, or penholder positions hardly determine the agenda and outcomes of tariffs for security and peace regimes. Great powers dominate this platitude. Hence, this reality has led to continued organising from without the UN system. Such mobilisation of wit continues to galvanise potency in rationalising Africa-Cuba-China relations. This is critical, first because it demonstrates continued resilience of anti-imperialist ideologies (Han, December 2022, Volume 44, Issue 6.) that unite realities of tariffed NAM members within international politics. Second, it demystifies great power affinity and international influence dominance over geopolitical spaces of common interest. For example, Africa-Cuba-China nexus medical, educational and cultural exchanges have boosted self-determination goals (Win, 2014). Third, a coherent diplomatic identification with each other's plight draws attention to tenets of socialist, communist and Pan-African Ubuntu influence.

## DEVELOPMENT

### (Re)thinking tariffed NAM geopolitics for partnership and shared Affluence

“The longer you wait, the weaker one’s negotiation power gets. Negotiate Now. Policy must not be based on possibilities, for it may not happen. The policy cannot be based on high chances. Importantly, ambiguity is the key to the future. If you define it too much, it will disappear.” George Yeo, Former Singaporean Minister Taiwan Question.

When tariffed NAM geopolitical spaces emerged through military adventurism of great powers; a geopolitical precedent was grafted in ‘othering laws’ birthed to alter and replace history using might. This augmentation resonates with general theory of bipolar-multipolar international relations (Waltz, 1979) that coarse belonging. Also, consequent empires meticulously (re)designed the plough field to guarantee sustenance of interests, foreign policy militarisation and business chains. These military-economic manoeuvres have significantly hindered concerted response to tariffs within NAM and to NAM leaning members. Thus, the sandwiched Africa-Cuba-China NAM geopolitics wrestles with legislative realities and concessions curved at the twilight of asserting new ownership, identity and belonging within international systems. The tri-geopolitical pearls of internationalism, regionalism and nationalism have respectively amplified the necessity in exporting revolutionary ideas, migration reciprocity, multilateralism, international medical influence, infrastructure, education, cultural exchanges and trade as soft power diplomacy. Thus, the (re)construction of NAM tariffed members continue to bulge as sovereign and great power interests interact.

First is the historical inheritance of alliance system and narratives shaping geopolitical spaces and participation. Herein, the San Francisco United States led order at the end of WWII emboldened outcomes in the Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Chinese

and Cold War realities respectively. The winners and losers covenanted in principle with the U.S. to follow the ‘Hubs-Spokes’ alliance to dominate foreign and domestic geopolitical policies and politics that impacted emerging sovereigns. Observably, the alliance system privileged the alliance belonging over self-determination of sovereigns that most NAM members shared. Part of this emerged as response to tariff isolationist practices targeting states without of the alliance system. The purpose of this was to offer security guarantees that protect the alliance members; and U.S. hegemony helping to balance and hedge against China, North Korea and Russia respectively.

An important realisation is the creation of alliance security dilemma politics (Snyder, 1984) that those within and without of the alliance wrestle with to survive. For ACC, security dilemma means the pending doubt to trusting other states defensive power purposes. This uncertainty propels a state to accumulate power. It further escalates the secondary alliance dilemma framed after an alliance is formed. This is the space where Africa-Cuba-China cooperation in tariffed NAM geopolitics rests. Such anomaly is shaped by degrees of cooperation and defections encountered. Here, security dilemma is placed on the risk of abandonment and entrapment by superpowers having military and economic powers aiding tariffs. Conversely, the only weakness herein is hinged on; 1) political fear of collision and fear of collusion with great powers; and 2) military capability levels in shared geopolitical spaces. These clearly remain a tall order for measured parity among NAM tariffed members.

To this end, it’s clear that, the alliance system dictated how and when countries obtained independence. Their growth, trade, and privileges within geopolitical spaces, regions, the international system of trade and security became laden with competition between great powers, and their influence over territories. Notably, the alliance members continue to embody dominance through international organisations like UN, UNSC, OECD and the G7.

These groupings have significantly impacted how alliance members and non-alliance members act and view each other for strategic engagements. As such, how NAM tariffed countries succeed in partnering and cooperating to avert, as well as circumvent the alliance system have determined geopolitical realities of country diplomacy. Visible in this phenomenon are the shared threats, and multiple layers of complexity on how to associate internationally. These range from great power competition of balancing and hedging; self-determination needs of sovereigns; legal encumbrances in trade, commerce and infrastructure development; maritime, peace and security interests; cultural and educational diversity; tourism and hospitality glitches; labour migration, drugs and trafficking concerns. Overcoming these realities of (re)constructed worldviews and narratives that feed domestic, foreign and domineering alliance system interests needs unity in intent and will of all stakeholders. The ACC priorities in these spheres need to be harmonised for a win-win outcome of discourse, legislation and enforcement within shared geopolitics realities.

Furthermore, sovereignty within alliance system, remain threatened as much as those living without of the alliance system. This overtly implies that countries cannot (re)think and determine their future without seeking permission or consensus from the superpowers. Ironically, many sovereign states can only make foreign policy decisions of trade, security and development with prior approval from donors and security guarantors. For China, relating with Africa, and Cuba has emerged as a BRI balancing measure that can propel people-to-people exchange, multilateral geopolitical benefits, and the reciprocal knowledge exchange. For Cuba, relating with China and Africa demonstrate offering an alternative to challenge existing international system of dominance using soft power diplomacy. For Africa, relating with Cuba and China spur historical ties of ancestry, civilisation, people focused governance, purposeful development and necessity to unite as a people to merit international credibility and influence.

Second, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), nexus Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), and Maritime Silk Road (MSR). This vision of an international, interconnected system of roads, rail, air, cyber, maritime and space pivot Chinese national, regional and international interests respectively. This vision continues to drive all Chinese systems of knowledge development and investments, industrial and infrastructure designs, security operations, governance priorities, people-to-people engagements, and state-to-state relations (Barman, 2023). It's the sum of these that embody the Chinese world and the future of a growing 1.4 billion+ population (Li, 2021) and search for opportunities. While this strategy aims to leave no one behind; it also continues to brand itself as inclusive enough to allow for all the world to share, benefit and enjoy what China offers as a niche to the international systems of governance, geo-economics (Conteh-Morgan, *The United States and China: Strategic Rivalry in Africa*, Vol. 20, No. 1., 2018), and access to minerals, knowledge development, trade, security and industry. Considerably, all China-Africa summits have purposed to embolden this vision through the annually-held Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FACOC) (Albert, *China's Big Bet on Soft Power*, 2018) reunions. This has emboldened China's multipolarity (Ewing, 2003) posture of cooperation and win-win co-prosperity, within a socialist economy (Swaine, 2017).

Third, China-Russia cooperation balancing and hedging U.S. hegemony as a superpower within Asia, Africa and Latin America. This growing convergence of two superpowers presents hope, wit and interest in prioritising foreign policy goals within any given geopolitical space. The overcoming of two World War demands and Cold War avalanche relics to front common foreign policy interest in multipolar world order demonstrate a diplomatic jewel of trust without war at Africa's, Cuba's and China's behest. While thoughtful of the case-based variations on how ACC have been challenged to demonstrate their resilience, interdependence, and independence through political decision-making processes; the protagonists in China-Russia cooperation have con-



tinued to use foreign policy doses to influence international and domestic perceptions for acceptability to balance U.S. global influence. In agreeing with the augmentation that perceptions can deceive (Patrick M. Cronin, 2017), a cautionary approach to international politics ought to guide states geopolitical discourse. For Wang Yi, bilateral tensions, emanate from mutual perception of threat among great powers (CGTN, 2025). Contrastingly, from neorealist point of view, western order has been sustained by anarchy and domination, especially by great powers. It's these elements that have been institutionalised as western political order of democracy. Forthrightly, in giving credit to this system, it's clear that constitutional characteristics mostly help to constrain power of hegemonic states and voice opportunities for weaker states in asymmetries (Ikenberry, 2009). This posture of legitimate order remains a continuing bargain tact for weak and secondary states to avert exploitation. Thus, it's the augmentation of this paper that, perceived constitutionalism merits amidst agitative great power perceptions. Such, credibility in a process of limiting dominance affects institutional appropriation of power gains among Africa-Cuba-China cooperation within NAM.

Conscious of how Africa-Cuba-China cooperate within NAM as a whole, the demonstratable great power jilt in China-Russia cooperation distinctively contributes. It asserts glaring fragmentation in rule-based order outcomes. The same ideation has also helped to frame the composition of NAM and its geopolitics. Core issues related are trade, finance, infrastructure development, rules governing the maritime and cyberspace domains. Observably, these have all made governing more complex. This is so, because of the increased broadening threat of U.S. National security interest in AFRICOM (Nathan, 2009), (Volman, 2010), Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific (Medcalf, 2018) realms. Thus, for Africa-Cuba-China cooperation to thrive and circumvent these strategic networks impacting NAM tariffed geopolitics, greater responsibilities, starting with states and partners own defence need to be guaranteed. It's

such foreign policy diplomatic slate aggravating actualisation of the rationalisation in ACC's geopolitical interests for partnership and cooperation. While gleaning from how perception (He, 2018) of order as a source for reason, partnership, cooperation and alliance cohesion impact individual states in the spectrum of experienced geopolitical rivalry; it remained clear that sovereign partners are continuing to agree upon goals, strategy, tactics, and coordination of activities informed by interests. Hence, the growing urge to (de)escalate and play neutral, augment national interests that shape political behaviour toward perceived common threats. These are based on, a) perception of order, international state cohesion and existing alliance cohesion; and b) threat, governmental change prospects that shift and affect policy priorities dominating the chilling effect from great power rivalry.

Fourth, the ACC truism to becoming a NAM geopolitical bridge space continues to be tested amidst experienced tariffs. Mindful of precedence to how solidarity conferences (Lassen, 2025) of 1966/1967 boosted Cuban Revolution, and Liberation Movements in Africa and China respectively; NAM members continue to glean and amplify commonsense to actualise shared affluence. Notably, ACC ideological rhetoric, the circumventing of alliances and great power tariffs, as well as the willingness to participate in NAM geopolitics haven't categorically succeeded to offer the needed alternative in balancing threats. Many nations have watched and treaded cautiously on forming groups of common interest and belonging. NAM tariffed members embody and embolden this wish to find security guarantees. They also use this shared NAM cooperation to circumvent geopolitical threats. This is so because, i) notable NAM tariffed geopolitical threat complex is that, hegemonies lead regional order, and are bothered most by consequences of states seeking their own security and path to meeting their needs. ii) the elements in the NAM geopolitics are rooted within hegemonic plough fields, mistrust, threats and fears in an ever-increasing interconnected world. iii) while all states are not equally endowed, leadership

is not cast in socialism or communism or democratic capitalism, but rather in the spirit of men, who embody qualities of taking dominion on earth. iv) pivoting away from U.S. leadership in the world is a real threat to all tariffed NAM members; and v) embodying the plight and liberation anthem of tariffed NAM members, beckon multilateral approaches that affirm context and unique contribution of disadvantaged states within international politics.

Fifth, is the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung that laid Ten Principles (Yu, 2017) to guide NAM discourse and vision of a multilateral space. The same conference recognised political rigour and virtue to inform as well as shape outcomes within the United Nations. This Bandung Spirit of resilience continues to inspire NAM stakeholders and people to people relations to enforce a reciprocal multilateral world order. Unfortunately, the announced tariffs tilt and hinge on geo-economic positioning, accessing strategic resources and minerals, leadership in supply chains by the great powers (Conteh-Morgan, *The United States and China: Strategic Rivalry in Africa*, 2018). Tied to this is navigation freedoms, and continued maritime militarisation for offensive-defensive operations; the free trade enterprise monopoly complexities; communications and commerce; the international commons in security (piracy, terrorism, cyber-attacks, trafficking). Discerning the root causes and initiators of the emboldened public narrative on tariff agitation among ACC members nexus great powers draws and affects various outcomes. Notably, this agitative theatric ecstasy has been so well developed and delivered to, the homes and villages, cities and townships, palaces and state houses, countries, regions and continents; prints, radios and television; institutions, ideologues and think tanks on land, water, air and space that they vibrate with domineering legendary tremor tale.

### **Why ACC partnership and cooperation aren't motivating NAM retaliation**

The current domestic changes in Africa, Cuba, China and United States respectively have framed how

each country over the years has designed their international operations. For example, since the year 2000, the transition from Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), to U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC); to USAID's Power Africa, and the current urgently needed Build Act, of US International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC) as U.S Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), (WiegertMonday, 2018) still juggles with legalities of credible acceptance. The most recent being Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) scrutiny (Smith, 2025) which continues to shift U.S., foreign policy priorities respectively. Notably. it's the same U.S., posturing through these bodies used to counter ACC as projected in the tariff geopolitical rivalry. These consequently have aggravated and turned into frontline bracing NAM tariffed geopolitics. This has dispersed expressed thoughts and feelings of NAM citizens and diplomats respectively. Furthermore, it has affected huge sections of global chain centres of production, finance, communication, value addition and international trade and commerce opportunities for many free market-oriented businesses. It's such domestic-internationally affiliated playoffs that trigger the rut and rivalry in imposition of tariffs. While, these converge on the global stage, Africa, Cuba and China respectively absorb shocks and turbulence of sharing global commons that link them through NAM. Observably, if the shared threat is so potent and the cooperation so deep, why has it not translated into a unified, retaliatory tariff bloc within NAM? The answer lies in three main structural impediments.

First, the economic asymmetry and dependency are profound within NAM. While China is a manufacturing and economic giant, many African economies and Cuba's economy are small. They often remain reliant on commodity exports or tourism, and deeply integrated into western markets and manufacturing value chains. For example, the European Union and the United States remain the largest trading partners for the African continent as a whole (Eurostat, 2024). As such, imposing retaliatory tariffs on these great powers would be an act of economic self-harm for most African nations. A good case is where United

States retaliates by revoking preferential access in AGOA, with devastating consequences. Contrastingly, Cuba's economy is too small to have any meaningful impact in a tariff war. In short, the cost of confrontation is far too high for the weaker partners in the NAM cooperation adventure.

As such, pivoting away from great power dominance, especially the U.S. world order leadership could mean: a) embrace of non-liberal centric regional order and multilateralism; b) fracturing the anti-China cooperation propaganda; c) igniting major geopolitical conflict with global consequences in all security threat domains. When the tariffs are viewed from ACC cooperation lenses, the necessity to de-escalate threat levels; weathering through strained diplomatic relations to confront mismanagement of U.S. foreign policy and America first nationalism invoke change in open door policy of states (Heritage, 2019). Importantly, the acknowledgement of unique roles that each state play help to level grounds and treatment of sovereigns.

Second, there is a glaring lack of political and institutional cohesion. The Non-Aligned Movement is a forum, not an alliance. It operates on consensus and has no streamlined mechanism to enforce collective action. States still take unilateral diplomatic decisions based on needs and interest that meet both domestic and foreign policy concerns. Notably, the African Union, while more institutionalised, also faces deep internal divisions, with 55 member states pursuing diverse and sometimes competing national interests. Some African countries have strong security and economic ties with great powers and would be unwilling to jeopardise those relationships by joining an anti U.S., great power bloc. Considerably, the unity displayed at the NAM and UN meetings are often symbolic. For, they do not easily translate into tangible collective action (Moyo, 2021).

Regrettably, i) this posturing within ACC tariff experiences continues to offer no possibilities to expressing equity of rights under a stratified world order that distances and displaces majority Africa, Cuba and China. ii) to liberate ACC entrepreneurs (Albert,

Mike Pompeo, Speech by U.S. Secretary of State in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia during United Nations Economic Commission for Africa., 2020), renegotiating terms of references embedded to isolate and (re)create unsustainable dependence within the intents of Africa Command (AFRICOM) (Lauren Ploch Blanchard, 2014), IMF and World Bank austerity cliches, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to embolden multipolarity (Corkin, 2019) and win-win co-prosperity within socialist posterity canopies beckon (Bradsher, 2017). A gripping example is the Chinese announcement of zero-tariff access to African countries having diplomatic ties for trade and investment cooperation with Beijing (Agbetiloye, 2025). It's important to note that this comes amidst U.S., tariff geopolitical shift and embedded interests in AGOA, and America First Policy (Washington, 2025) respectively. While this is highly commendable, iii) the unity and solidarity of African states still falls short for a reciprocal geopolitical win-win joint bargain with China and U.S. In fact, the threatened market sizes of African Union continue to brace tariff enforcement complications and true integration of Africa under the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. Also, Cuba while not on the current tariff list, (Michael J. Lowell, 2025) received sanctions and tariffs (WITS, 2022) that impaired geopolitical and bilateral relations with Africa and China respectively.

The third, perhaps most important and observable outcome, is China's extended strategic ambiguity tact (Boon, 2024) shaping perception of order beyond Asia pacific spaces. Despite this diplomatic resolve of making Taiwan essential to China's maritime strategy in geopolitical cooperation praxis; a pragmatic circumvention necessity, weighs upon the tariffed NAM members to outwit confrontation when cooperating with China. Considerably, Beijing prefers to use the BRI and bilateral deals to build an alternative system rather than directly attacking potential threats. As such, leading a formal retaliatory tariff bloc of developing nations against the United States would be a radical adventurism. The same would force neutral countries to choose sides, and



potentially unite to brace European-orient tact of international dominance. Such level of risk is what China demonstrates in all NAM, +China meeting sessions (Guozhong, 2024). Such, catch-up diplomacy affirmed strategic presence and the necessity to network among independent partners for multilateral growth and stability within international politics.

While gleaning how perception of order (Vishwakarma, 2025) as a source for reason, partnership, cooperation and alliance cohesion impact individual states in the spectrum of NAM tariff geopolitics experiences; it remains clear that sovereign partners continue to agree upon goals, strategy, and tactics unilaterally. Hence the growing urge to de-escalate and play neutral, mindful of national interests, is shaping political behaviour toward perceived common threats. Ironically these threats continue to grow based on; i) perception of order ideology, the international state relations praxis and exhibited alliance cohesion; and ii), threat, governmental change prospects that shift and affect policy priorities within NAM tariffed members. This is crucial because; a) countries and regions organising and organised in Africa increasingly stick out their claims in the global commons, without having to surrender their sovereignty and responsibility. Also, b) playing the neutral ground in ubuntu spirit, strategy and security focused initiatives attract commandeering cooperation opportunities among states navigating tariff blockades. c) Africa, Cuba and China are abundantly endowed and growing block by block at different levels. Such potential cooperation of tariffed NAM members balancing threats with China amplify paradigm shift to buttress multilateralism. Lastly, d) deliberate interest to invest in maritime, space, cyber, AI and nuclear, helps to close perception and legal gaps within international negotiations and cooperation prospects.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Africa-Cuba-China potential, progress, policy frameworks and praxis of relating with other continents, multinationals, great powers, middle powers, regional blocs, international organisations, think

tanks and banking institutions have had quadruple traits of insistent dependence on sovereign states, abuse of factors of production, intellectual property, along with poorly framed production chains and negotiation outcomes. These realities have emboldened exploitative legal regimes and markets respectively. Notably, the intricate complexities of being tariffed have not yielded reciprocal gains for all stakeholders. The outfit of NAM & G-77 + China, demonstrate the insatiable need to not being fully recognised, fully respected and fully protected. This ordeal of negligence, hostile terms of reference, and attitude of 'othering' within international politics, beckons new lenses for strategic grafting in geostrategic interests. The potent assets in maritime, land, minerals, air, space and cyber interconnectivity continue to nudge security, growth and posterity of Africa, Cuba and China respectively. While the reciprocal sharing and enterprise of earth's wealth enjoins NAM tariffed states, sovereign and private enterprise have chiselled blocks of layered identity, ideology, dominance and partnerships respectively.

Critically observed truism in this paper has been, how China successfully positioned itself as an attractive alternative to Western partners. Such balancing continues to offer a different development model and vast resources for infrastructure. This has provided tariffed and sanctioned states like Cuba, and African states respectively, with practical means to circumvent Western-Oriental economic pressures to pursue their own development paths. However, this paper found that the potential for this partnership to evolve into a formal, retaliatory tariff bloc within the NAM framework is severely constrained. The primary obstacles are the vast economic asymmetries that make such a move too costly for Africa and Cuba, the lack of political cohesion within the Global South, and China's own strategic calculation to favour circumvention over confrontation.

The driving policy question in this paper has been, why the ACC partnership has not motivated NAM to retaliate with tariffs? The ACC cooperation-partnership, while strategically significant, does not and

cannot override the fundamental structural realities of the international system. The logic of economic survival and the calculus of national interest still take precedence over the ideology of solidarity. Considerably, Africa and Cuba cannot afford a direct economic war with the United States, and China is not willing to lead one. Therefore, instead of direct retaliation, the ACC partners within NAM have opted for a more subtle, long-term strategy: building resilience with uniqueness, amplifying silence as diplomacy, and deploying catch-up diplomacy as the alternative for bonding within multilateralism. The achievement of these goals mirror diverse investments for all stakeholders bracing tariffs.

Tariffed state experiences gratify exclusion from international politics. Such corrosive bilateral risks, and manipulative interests continue to dominate within asymmetrical complexities. While no tripartite formal body of ACC exists; Cuba-African relations, and China-African relations are anchored on historical ties and colonial extremes of subjugation. This paper rekindles research and discourse on the future of tariffed multilateralism praxis by suggesting that we must look beyond traditional metrics of alliance politics and its reproachment. Observably, the power of ACC partnership cooperation within NAM, and similar South-South coalitions lies not in their ability to mirror the confrontational tactics of great powers, but in their capacity to slowly and steadily alter the geopolitical, geo-economic, and geo-legal encumbrances. ACC within NAM represent a "de facto multilateralism" of the circumventers. This rightly poses a long-term, systemic challenge to the US-led order and need for research into the internal politics of NAM shaping collective action. For the possibility of the tariffed blocs overturning the tables remain viable, and strategic for global governance and balance of power.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this article.

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Ph.D. Feta Simon: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project Administration, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing.

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