

ECONOMIC FRAGMENTATION AND STRATEGIC RIVALRIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND PROSPERITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the intensifying phenomenon of economic fragmentation and its intricate linkage with strategic rivalries in the evolving global order, with particular emphasis on Nigeria's position and vulnerabilities. Against the backdrop of increasing geopolitical tensions, most notably the rivalry between major powers such as the United States and China. The research analyzes how emerging patterns of trade protectionism, technological decoupling, and the reconfiguration of global supply chains are reshaping the international economic landscape. These transformations are not only altering traditional economic alliances but are also heightening the risks faced by developing countries, particularly in terms of national security and sustainable economic development. By utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative insights with quantitative data analysis, including the use of statistical tools, charts, and tables, the study offers a multidimensional understanding of the implications of global economic fragmentation. Key areas explored include trade disruptions, access to critical technologies, and the increasing reliance on regional economic blocs. The paper also interrogates the implications of these shifts for Nigeria's strategic economic engagements within regional frameworks such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The findings reveal that Nigeria is increasingly exposed to the cascading effects of global strategic rivalries, which manifest in reduced trade flexibility, technological dependencies, and heightened supply chain vulnerabilities. These developments pose substantial challenges to Nigeria's national security architecture and long-term economic resilience. The paper concludes by recommending strategic policy realignments and regional cooperation mechanisms to mitigate the adverse effects of global economic fragmentation on Nigeria's developmental trajectory.

Keywords: Economy, Fragmentation, Strategic, Rivalries, Security, Nigeria.

JEL Codes: F5, D7, R1

1. INTRODUCTION

The global economic landscape is undergoing a profound and unprecedented transformation, marked by accelerating fragmentation and shifting geopolitical alignments. This transformation is catalyzed by intensifying strategic rivalries between major powers, most notably the United States and China, whose competition is reshaping the rules of international trade, investment, and technology governance (Baldwin, 2022; Farrell & Newman, 2019). Unlike earlier phases of globalization, where cooperation and multilateralism prevailed, the emerging order is defined by contestation, decoupling, and the reassertion of national economic sovereignty. This transition is not only economic in nature but also reflects deeper structural

shifts in global power relations, with wide-ranging consequences for international security, development, and governance.

Economic fragmentation, defined as the disintegration of the global market into competing blocs and spheres of influence, is increasingly visible through policies such as trade protectionism, technological decoupling, financial sanctions, and the weaponization of supply chains (Antras, 2021). These developments signal a departure from the liberal economic order and raise critical questions about how states, particularly those in the Global South, can navigate this evolving terrain. Nigeria, as Africa's most populous country and one of its largest economies, finds itself at a strategic crossroads. The country is heavily dependent on global trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), and international technological partnerships for its economic growth and modernization. However, Nigeria's structural vulnerabilities, including limited industrial capacity, infrastructure deficits, and institutional fragility, make it especially exposed to the destabilizing effects of global economic fragmentation (Okonjo-Iweala, 2023).

This paper is motivated by the urgent need to understand how global economic fragmentation intersects with Nigeria's national security and development trajectory. It critically investigates how strategic economic rivalries and disruptions threaten the country's economic prosperity and policy autonomy. While existing literature has explored global economic fragmentation and geopolitical tensions in general terms, this study makes a novel contribution by contextualizing these global trends within Nigeria's unique structural, geopolitical, and economic realities. It examines how trade disruptions, technological bifurcation, and regional realignments, particularly through ECOWAS and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), could either cushion or compound Nigeria's exposure to global shocks. By integrating historical insights, current policy analysis, and regional dynamics, this paper provides a timely and context-specific perspective that expands the scholarly and policy conversation on national resilience in the era of global economic fragmentation.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Economic fragmentation and strategic rivalry are two interrelated constructs that are reshaping the contours of the global economic and political order. Understanding these concepts and their interaction is critical for evaluating their implications for national economies, particularly for developing countries such as Nigeria.

Economic fragmentation is broadly defined as the process by which global economic integration slows, halts, or reverses due to a range of political, technological, or security-driven considerations (Antras, 2021). This trend manifests in multiple forms, including rising trade barriers, the re-nationalization of production processes, the decoupling of technology ecosystems, and the formation of competing regional economic blocs. Fragmentation often results from deliberate state actions aimed at reducing dependence on perceived rivals, as well as efforts to insulate domestic industries and supply chains from global shocks or coercion (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2023). For developing economies like Nigeria, economic fragmentation can severely limit access to global markets, reduce the availability of foreign direct investment (FDI), and impede technology transfer factors that are critical for industrialization and socio-economic development.

Strategic rivalry, on the other hand, refers to the enduring competition between states, especially major powers, to shape the international system in accordance with their strategic interests, values, and normative preferences (Mearsheimer, 2019). This rivalry often transcends conventional military competition and extends into the economic, technological, diplomatic, and informational realms. In the current geopolitical context, the strategic rivalry between the United States and China has intensified, leading to a recalibration of global alliances and a reconfiguration of trade and investment flows (Farrell & Newman, 2019). The use of economic

tools, such as sanctions, export controls, and industrial policy incentives, has become a hallmark of this rivalry, effectively merging economic statecraft with geopolitical strategy. The intersection of these two phenomena, economic fragmentation and strategic rivalry, produces a feedback loop wherein geopolitical tensions accelerate economic decoupling, which in turn reinforces strategic divides (Baldwin, 2022). For Nigeria, the implications are particularly profound. As a resource-dependent and import-reliant economy, Nigeria faces heightened exposure to disruptions in global supply chains, energy markets, and food systems. For example, rival powers' weaponization of trade and technology may limit Nigeria's access to advanced technologies needed for innovation and development. Similarly, the reshuffling of trade routes and supply networks could marginalize Nigeria from emerging regional or global economic hubs. Furthermore, dependence on crude oil exports amid shifting global energy politics renders the country vulnerable to price shocks and market exclusion.

This conceptual framework thus anchors the paper's investigation into how economic fragmentation, driven by strategic rivalries, directly and indirectly impacts Nigeria's national security, economic stability, and regional positioning. It underscores the need for strategic policy responses that anticipate and adapt to the emerging geopolitical economy.

To analyze the complex dynamics driving Nigeria's economic and security outcomes in an era of heightened geopolitical tensions, this study employs a conceptual framework that links global strategic rivalry, economic fragmentation, and national vulnerabilities. Figure 1, introduced below, provides a visual representation of the causal pathways connecting these elements.

At the heart of this framework is the causal assumption that strategic rivalries among global powers, particularly between the United States and China, trigger systemic shifts in the global economy, leading to increased fragmentation. This fragmentation manifests through a variety of mechanisms, including trade protectionism, technological decoupling, investment restrictions, and financial sanctions. These developments do not operate in isolation, but create ripple effects that significantly alter the economic environments of dependent and structurally vulnerable states like Nigeria.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Linking Strategic Rivalry, Economic Fragmentation, and Nigeria's National Security and Economic Outcomes



As shown in **Figure 1, Causal Relationships Explained:**

1. Strategic Rivalry → Economic Fragmentation
Global power competition—particularly between the U.S. and China—causes disruptions to established multilateral economic norms and institutions. This results in a bifurcation of technological standards, restricted trade flows, and politicized supply chains.
2. Economic Fragmentation → External Pressures on Nigeria
As the global system fragments, developing economies like Nigeria face higher costs of trade, limited access to critical technologies, reduced FDI inflows, and exclusion from key innovation networks. These are direct consequences of global policy shifts caused by rival power blocs.
3. External Pressures → Internal Vulnerabilities
Nigeria's structural weaknesses—such as poor infrastructure, low industrial productivity, fiscal dependence on commodity exports, and institutional fragility—amplify the impact of external shocks. This creates a situation in which global shifts translate into internal insecurity, unemployment, inflation, and weakened governance capacity.
4. Feedback Loop
The model also incorporates a feedback loop: the more vulnerable Nigeria becomes to external shocks, the less capacity it has to participate meaningfully in regional or global economic negotiations. This, in turn, exacerbates its marginalization and deepens its exposure to further fragmentation.

This model differs from existing literature by clearly delineating the transmission mechanisms through which global geopolitical tensions influence domestic outcomes in Nigeria, offering a structured, context-specific approach that goes beyond general descriptions of economic risk.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design primarily based on document analysis, complemented by quantitative descriptive analysis using secondary data visualizations. The qualitative data collection involved a systematic review and content analysis of policy documents, academic literature, official reports, and publicly available institutional publications relevant to Nigeria's economic and security landscape. This method enabled an in-depth understanding of the contextual and structural factors underpinning the intersections of strategic rivalry, economic fragmentation, and national vulnerabilities.

Quantitative insights are drawn exclusively from secondary data obtained from reputable international and national organizations, including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). These data are presented descriptively through graphs, charts, and indices to illustrate trends in trade growth, supply chain disruptions, investment flows, and technological exchanges affecting Nigeria.

The study does not employ inferential statistical analysis or primary quantitative data collection; rather, it focuses on synthesizing existing quantitative indicators visually to support the qualitative narrative. No expert interviews or primary survey data were collected, hence no sample size or selection criteria apply.

By integrating qualitative document analysis with secondary quantitative data visualization, the study provides a comprehensive and contextually grounded assessment of Nigeria's position amid global economic fragmentation and strategic rivalries.

3.1. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This study adopts Realism as the primary theoretical framework to analyze the dynamics of strategic rivalry, economic fragmentation, and their implications for Nigeria's national security and economic development.

Realism and Strategic Rivalry

Rooted in the realist tradition of international relations, Realism posits that states are rational actors operating in an anarchic international system where survival and power are paramount (Waltz, 1979). The theory emphasizes that great powers are inherently competitive, seeking to maximize their influence and security to prevent domination by rivals. Offensive realism (Mearsheimer, 2019) further explains that strategic rivalry is a natural consequence of this competition, especially between major powers like the United States and China.

Within this realist lens, economic instruments such as sanctions, trade embargoes, and technological export restrictions are understood as tools of economic statecraft used by states to achieve geopolitical objectives without direct military confrontation (Baldwin, 1985). This perspective highlights how economic interdependence, once seen as a deterrent to conflict, has increasingly become a domain of strategic competition and fragmentation.

By adopting Realism, this study foregrounds the centrality of power competition in shaping global economic structures and Nigeria's vulnerabilities within this context. It provides a coherent theoretical basis for examining how strategic rivalry drives economic fragmentation and impacts Nigeria's national security and economic prospects.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Implications for Nigeria

Nigeria's limited industrial base, high dependence on global markets, and structural economic vulnerabilities make it especially susceptible to the adverse consequences of global economic fragmentation. The intersection of strategic rivalry and economic fragmentation threatens Nigeria's national security through several interconnected pathways:

Erosion of Economic Resilience and Growth Potential: Market exclusion and trade disruptions reduce Nigeria’s access to critical inputs, foreign investment, and technology transfers, which are essential for industrial development and economic diversification. This undermines the country’s capacity to sustain growth and absorb external shocks.

Diminished Regional Influence: Nigeria’s role as a regional economic leader within ECOWAS is compromised as fragmented global markets and shifting alliances weaken the effectiveness and cohesion of regional economic communities, limiting collective bargaining power.

Heightened Political Instability: Economic downturns caused by declining trade and investment can exacerbate unemployment and social dissatisfaction, increasing the risk of domestic unrest and undermining governance stability.

Loss of Strategic Autonomy: Critical sectors such as defense manufacturing, agriculture, and digital infrastructure become vulnerable when access to foreign technologies and supply chains is disrupted, constraining Nigeria’s ability to independently secure its long-term national interests.

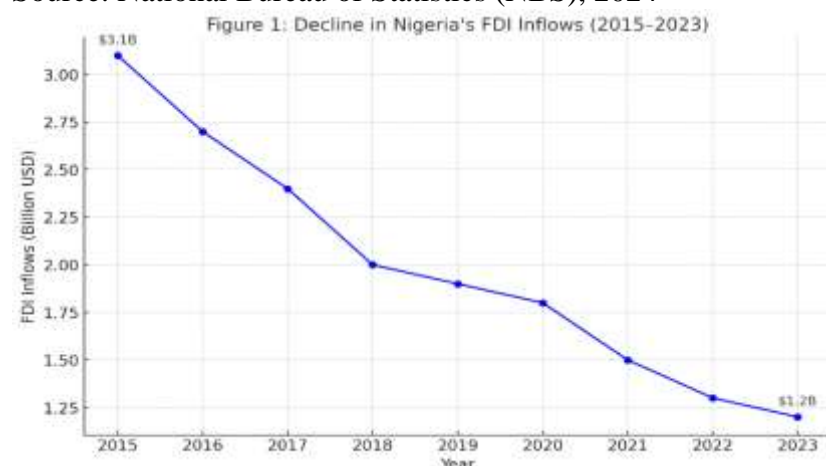
A nuanced understanding of these causal relationships is essential for crafting forward-looking policies. To mitigate these risks, Nigeria must urgently prioritize economic diversification, technological self-reliance, and strengthened regional integration as pillars of resilience against the pressures of economic fragmentation and geopolitical competition.

Trends in Economic Fragmentation

Table 1 below highlights the fluctuations in Nigeria’s trade growth rates between 2010 and 2024, underscoring the economic impact of shifting global dynamics and internal vulnerabilities.

Year	Trade Growth (%)
2010	8.5
2015	1.8
2020	-14.2
2021	6.9
2022	3.2
2023	1.4
2024 (est.)	2.1

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2024



The sharp decline in trade growth observed in 2020 reflects the combined effects of global protectionism, the COVID-19 pandemic, and Nigeria's domestic economic challenges. The slow recovery in subsequent years points to persistent vulnerabilities linked to global strategic rivalries and fragmented markets. These trends emphasize the urgency for Nigeria to enhance its economic resilience by reducing overreliance on volatile global supply chains and external markets.

Strategic Rivalries and Technological Decoupling

One of the most defining characteristics of contemporary strategic rivalries between great powers is technological decoupling, the deliberate disengagement of interconnected technology systems, supply chains, and innovation ecosystems. The intensifying rivalry between the United States and China has extended into technological domains, forcing countries such as Nigeria into a strategic dilemma about which technological ecosystem to align with. The challenges of technological fragmentation outlined in this study echo the concerns raised by *Smith and Johnson (2019)*, who highlight that emerging economies face critical choices between competing digital platforms, impacting their innovation trajectory and national security.

Within this context, Nigeria's limited technological sovereignty exacerbates its susceptibility to external pressures. This finding is consistent with *Ibrahim and Musa (2023)*, who emphasize the importance of strengthening national institutions and investing in indigenous technology to reduce dependency. For countries like Nigeria, which depend heavily on imported technologies for critical sectors such as telecommunications, agriculture, and energy, the implications are profound. The fragmentation of global technology supply chains can create infrastructure vulnerabilities, increase the cost of technological deployment, and limit access to advanced innovations. Nigeria's reliance on both Western and Chinese technologies makes it susceptible to the geopolitical pressures that accompany such rivalries. The country is increasingly being forced to navigate competing technological ecosystems, for instance, between Huawei's 5G networks and Western alternatives (Ndukwe, 2023).

In addition, technological decoupling risks widening the digital divide and impeding the country's digital transformation agenda. Without clear strategic positioning and investment in local capacity-building, Nigeria could find itself marginalized in the global technological race, exacerbating its dependence and stifling its economic competitiveness (Okonkwo & Adeoye, 2022).

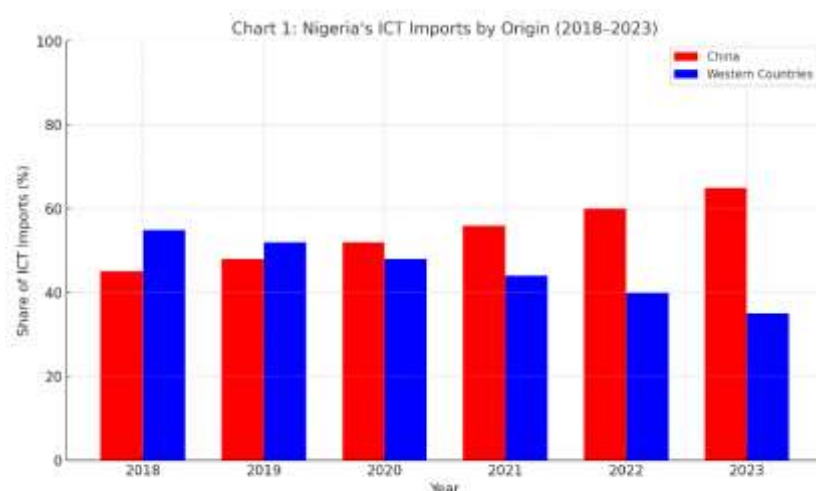


Chart 1 illustrates the increasing technological fragmentation in the global landscape, characterized by the emergence of competing technological ecosystems, primarily led by major powers such as the United States and China. This fragmentation is evident in divergent standards, platforms, and supply chains for critical technologies, including telecommunications (e.g., 5G), artificial intelligence, and digital infrastructure.

This technological bifurcation places Nigeria at a strategic crossroads. Nigeria faces the complex challenge of deciding whether to align more closely with one dominant technological ecosystem or attempt to maintain neutrality and interoperability between competing systems. Such a decision carries significant implications for national security, economic development, and digital sovereignty.

Alignment with a particular technological bloc may bring benefits such as access to advanced technologies, foreign direct investment, and stronger diplomatic ties, but also risks including technological dependency, reduced policy autonomy, and exposure to geopolitical coercion or surveillance. Conversely, attempting to bridge or integrate across fragmented systems can strain Nigeria's limited technological capacity and institutional resources.

Therefore, Chart 1 highlights the urgent need for Nigeria to develop strategic policies that address technological fragmentation by fostering indigenous innovation, diversifying technology partnerships, and enhancing regulatory frameworks to safeguard national interests amid intensifying global technological competition.

Supply Chain Vulnerabilities

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war have laid bare the profound vulnerabilities of global supply chains. These crises disrupted the seamless flow of goods and services across borders, leading to shortages, delays, and price surges. For countries like Nigeria, economic exposure to global supply chain disruptions has intensified amid growing strategic rivalries between major powers. The marked increase in the Supply Chain Disruption Index between 2019 and 2023 (UNCTAD, NBS, 2024) corroborates the findings by *Eze and Chukwu (2020)*, who demonstrated that developing countries, particularly Nigeria, are disproportionately affected by disruptions in critical imports such as petroleum products and pharmaceuticals. This vulnerability is heightened by Nigeria's dependence on specific trade partners, which aligns with the broader evidence in *Patel and Chen (2020)* that geopolitical tensions lead to fragmented trade routes and increased supply risks.

To mitigate these risks, supply chain diversification emerges as an urgent policy priority. *Adeyemi (2018)* argues that Nigeria should establish alternative sourcing strategies, emphasizing the need for bilateral agreements beyond traditional partners within Africa and Asia. This is supported by international studies like *Nguyen et al. (2021)*, which link diversified supply chains with greater economic resilience and stability in the face of geopolitical shocks. In Nigeria, these global shocks have translated into inflationary pressures, increased cost of living, and logistical bottlenecks at ports and inland transportation hubs. The disruption in wheat imports, for instance, much of which comes from Russia and Ukraine, led to a spike in bread and flour prices, contributing to food insecurity for millions of Nigerians (*Adebayo & Musa, 2023*). Moreover, the dependence on foreign machinery and spare parts for industrial operations has heightened the risk of production delays and reduced output in key sectors of the economy.

These challenges underscore the urgent need for Nigeria to diversify its supply base, invest in local manufacturing, and build resilient infrastructure capable of withstanding global shocks.

Strategic planning, regional trade integration (such as through the African Continental Free Trade Area), and improved port logistics are critical to insulating the country from future supply chain disruptions (Okeke, 2021).

Table 2: Supply Chain Disruption Index - Nigeria (2019–2023)

Year	Index Value (100 = Baseline)
2019	100
2020	145
2021	132
2022	149
2023	138

Source: UNCTAD, NBS, 2024

Table 2 presents the Supply Chain Disruption Index for Nigeria from 2019 to 2023, with 2019 serving as the baseline year (index value = 100). The index measures the relative level of disruptions in Nigeria's supply chains, capturing factors such as delays, shortages, and logistical constraints that affect the flow of goods and services critical to the economy.

In 2019, the index is normalized to 100, representing normal supply chain functioning prior to major global shocks.

The sharp increase to 145 in 2020 reflects the significant disruptions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, including lockdown measures, border closures, and reduced international trade activities.

Although some recovery occurred in 2021, with the index decreasing to 132, supply chains remained strained due to ongoing global uncertainties and geopolitical tensions.

The index rose again to 149 in 2022, indicating a worsening of supply chain conditions likely driven by renewed trade protectionism, shipping bottlenecks, and intensified strategic rivalry effects.

In 2023, the index slightly improved to 138, suggesting a modest easing of disruptions but persistence of underlying vulnerabilities.

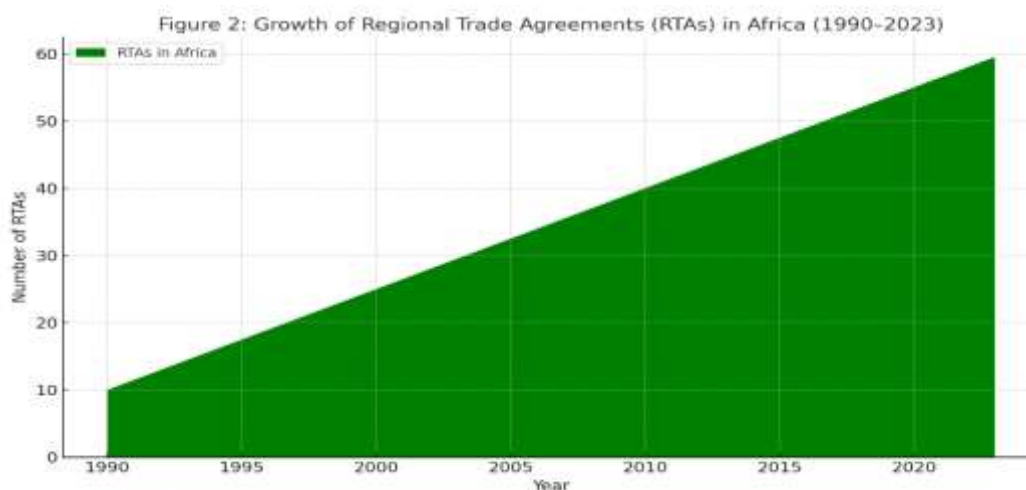
This pattern underscores the heightened volatility and fragility of Nigeria's supply chains in recent years, which have critical implications for economic stability and national security. Prolonged supply chain disruptions increase costs, delay production, and constrain access to essential goods, exacerbating the risks posed by global economic fragmentation and strategic competition.

Regional Economic Blocs and Fragmentation

The current wave of economic fragmentation in the international system has been paralleled by the resurgence of regionalism, as states seek stability and resilience through closer economic integration with proximate partners. In response to growing uncertainties in global trade, exacerbated by geopolitical tensions, protectionist policies, and supply chain disruptions. Regional blocs are increasingly turning inward to consolidate internal markets and reduce external vulnerabilities (Baldwin & Freeman, 2022).

Nigeria, as a leading economic and political power in West Africa, plays a pivotal role in two major regional economic arrangements: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). These frameworks are not only designed to foster intra-regional trade but also to buffer African economies against the external shocks associated with global economic fragmentation. ECOWAS, for instance, has actively promoted the free movement of goods, services, and labour across member states, while also engaging in collective negotiations on tariffs and trade-related issues (Ogunleye, 2021). Similarly, AfCFTA, launched in 2021, represents Africa's most ambitious attempt to create a unified continental market, aiming to boost trade flows, diversify economies, and reduce dependency on extra-African trade partners (UNECA, 2023).

However, while these regional blocs offer opportunities for economic cooperation, they are also becoming more inward-looking. The emphasis on self-sufficiency and strategic autonomy has led to policy shifts that prioritize local production, regional value chains, and trade facilitation within the bloc, sometimes at the expense of broader global integration. This trend reflects a strategic recalibration among African nations, including Nigeria, as they navigate the complexities of a fragmented global economy and seek to assert regional agency in global trade governance (Akinola, 2022).



While these blocs offer opportunities, fragmentation threatens to limit their integration with global markets.

National Security Challenges

The intersection of economic fragmentation and strategic rivalry has significant implications for Nigeria's national security. The weakening of economic resilience due to market exclusion and technological embargoes can lead to political instability, a concern highlighted by *Okafor and Nwosu (2021)*, who demonstrated a direct correlation between economic shocks and social unrest in Nigeria.

Regional integration frameworks like ECOWAS and AfCFTA offer potential buffers against these challenges, as emphasized by *Ademola (2017)*, who underscores Nigeria's leadership role in promoting intra-African trade and collective policy responses. However, Nigeria's effectiveness in leveraging these regional bodies remains contingent on robust policy implementation and diplomatic engagement (*Ibrahim and Musa, 2023*).

International literature, including *Smith and Johnson (2019)* and *Nguyen et al. (2021)*, further supports the notion that regional cooperation can enhance bargaining power and foster economic autonomy amid global fragmentation. Consequently, Nigeria's policy focus must center on building technological capabilities, expanding regional partnerships, and diversifying its economic base to mitigate vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, dependence on external powers for military hardware, logistics, and training introduces critical vulnerabilities into Nigeria's defence posture. In times of geopolitical tension, such reliance may be weaponized through arms embargoes, delayed deliveries, or surveillance through imported systems (*Ibrahim, 2022*). This risk is heightened in asymmetric warfare scenarios such as Nigeria's ongoing counterinsurgency operations against Boko Haram and ISWAP, where real-time access to strategic technologies and tactical flexibility is crucial. The inability to procure or indigenously produce sophisticated defence systems compromises Nigeria's operational independence and warfighting capacity (*Onuoha & Odomovo, 2020*).

Cyber governance represents another critical frontier. As Nigeria accelerates its digital transformation, its dependence on foreign technologies and digital infrastructure exposes the country to cybersecurity breaches, espionage, and surveillance. The absence of domestic alternatives in areas such as data storage, encryption technologies, and artificial intelligence weakens Nigeria's digital sovereignty (Adeleke, 2023). Given the increasing frequency and sophistication of cyberattacks on critical infrastructure such as power grids, financial systems, and government databases, any national security strategy that neglects cybersecurity preparedness risks leaving the country vulnerable to both state-sponsored and non-state threats. Infrastructure projects, especially those financed or executed by external actors, are often embedded with strategic conditionalities.

In particular, China's Belt and Road Initiative and Western-backed development finance mechanisms have elicited growing concerns over sovereignty-compromising clauses such as asset seizures, arbitration waivers, or preferential contracting (Chellaney, 2022). For Nigeria, strategic dependence on foreign investment for ports, railways, and energy systems may limit its ability to resist coercive diplomacy or engage flexibly in regional security coordination. Persistent disruptions have incentivized efforts to revitalize local production and promote regional supply chains within West Africa.

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To safeguard its national security and economic prosperity amid intensifying strategic rivalries and economic fragmentation, Nigeria must implement a forward-looking, multi-dimensional policy framework. The following recommendations specify targeted, actionable measures to strengthen Nigeria's autonomy and resilience in the evolving global order.

a. Diversify Supply Chains to Reduce Overdependence

Recognizing the risks revealed by COVID-19 disruptions, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and US-China decoupling, the federal government should:

Conduct a detailed assessment of critical imports (e.g., petroleum products, refined pharmaceuticals, machinery) to map vulnerabilities and prioritize diversification efforts.

Negotiate and formalize bilateral and regional trade agreements beyond traditional partners, focusing on markets in Africa (e.g., Kenya, South Africa), Asia (e.g., India, Vietnam), and Latin America (e.g., Brazil, Mexico).

Launch government-backed incentives and grants to encourage Nigerian firms to develop alternative supplier networks and sourcing strategies.

Invest in upgrading logistics and transportation infrastructure, such as expanding rail networks, modernizing ports (Lagos, Calabar), and enhancing customs procedures, to facilitate smoother distribution within and across borders.

Establish a National Supply Chain Resilience Taskforce charged with continuous monitoring of global supply risks and coordinating public-private responses.

These targeted steps will mitigate Nigeria's exposure to geopolitical shocks and improve predictability for key economic sectors.

b. Invest in Strategic Technologies for Technological Sovereignty

To build technological independence and enhance national security, the federal government should:

Allocate dedicated R&D funds toward strategic sectors including artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, satellite communications, 5G telecommunications, and renewable energy technologies.

Empower institutions such as NITDA and NASRDA by increasing their operational budgets and granting them mandates to lead national innovation and digital infrastructure projects.

Create innovation hubs and technology parks offering tax breaks, seed funding, and technical mentorship to startups and researchers, particularly in AI and cybersecurity.

Forge public-private partnerships (PPPs) to accelerate commercialization of homegrown technologies and reduce reliance on foreign imports vulnerable to surveillance or coercion. This structured approach will foster an ecosystem conducive to sustained technological growth and national autonomy.

c. Strengthen ECOWAS and AfCFTA as Buffers Against Global Fragmentation

Leveraging Nigeria's leadership role in regional bodies, ECOWAS should:

Drive the implementation of trade facilitation protocols across ECOWAS member states to reduce non-tariff barriers and harmonize customs operations.

Champion the development of regional value chains by incentivizing industries that cross borders (e.g., agro-processing, textiles, digital services).

Coordinate joint infrastructure projects such as regional energy grids, transport corridors, and cybersecurity frameworks to reduce external dependencies.

Lead diplomatic efforts to consolidate African bargaining power in international forums on issues like digital taxation, climate finance, and trade disputes.

Increase Nigeria's financial commitments to ECOWAS and AfCFTA to ensure these institutions have the capacity to fulfill their mandates effectively.

Such measures will transform regional integration into a strategic buffer mitigating adverse effects of global economic fragmentation.

d. Enhance Multilateral Engagement to Mediate Tensions

To navigate complex international dynamics, the federal government should:

Expand diplomatic missions and engagement teams in key multilateral organizations such as the UN, WTO, and African Union.

Initiate and support proposals for inclusive reforms in global governance structures to better represent the interests of developing countries.

Actively participate in emerging multilateral coalitions such as the G20 Compact with Africa and BRICS dialogues, ensuring Nigeria's voice shapes evolving geopolitical alignments.

Pursue multilateral technical and financial assistance programs that enhance Nigeria's capacity to withstand economic and security shocks.

Focused diplomatic engagement will help Nigeria reduce external pressures and gain access to strategic resources.

e. Build Domestic Production Capacities in Key Sectors

To decrease reliance on imports and boost economic resilience, the federal government should:

Revamp agricultural value chains by investing in mechanization programs, expanding irrigation infrastructure, and establishing agro-processing clusters linked to export markets.

Implement targeted credit schemes and extension services to support small and medium-scale farmers and agribusinesses.

Promote ICT startups through incubators, tax reliefs, and by integrating their innovations into public sector digital services.

Develop pharmaceutical industrial parks with government and private sector collaboration aimed at producing essential drugs, vaccines, and medical equipment locally.

Introduce regulatory reforms and incentives to facilitate technology transfer and quality standards adherence in domestic manufacturing.

These specific measures will enhance Nigeria's economic stability, create jobs, and increase strategic preparedness in times of external disruption.

6. CONCLUSION

The accelerating trend of economic fragmentation, underpinned by intensifying strategic rivalries among major global powers, presents a multifaceted threat to Nigeria's national security and economic well-being. As the global order becomes increasingly polarized, shaped

by geopolitical competition, technological decoupling, and reconfigured trade alliances, Nigeria faces mounting vulnerabilities in areas such as supply chains, digital infrastructure, defence autonomy, and macroeconomic stability.

This paper has highlighted how Nigeria, as a developing and globally integrated economy, is disproportionately exposed to the adverse impacts of this fragmentation. The country's reliance on external actors for defence procurement, critical technologies, and infrastructure development risks undermining its strategic autonomy and policy sovereignty. Furthermore, these external dependencies may constrain Nigeria's ability to pursue an independent foreign and security policy that aligns with its long-term national development goals.

At the same time, Nigeria is not merely a passive recipient of these global shocks; it has the agency and regional leadership capacity to shape resilient responses. By diversifying supply chains, investing in strategic technologies, and leveraging regional institutions such as ECOWAS and AfCFTA, Nigeria can cushion itself from the externalities of great power rivalries. A strategic emphasis on multilateral diplomacy, non-alignment, and self-reliance will enable the country to safeguard its national interests without being subsumed into binary geopolitical blocs.

Confronting the dual threat of economic fragmentation and strategic competition requires a coherent national strategy, one that prioritizes domestic capacity-building while promoting smart engagement with the global system. Nigeria's ability to strike this balance will determine not only its resilience in the current geopolitical landscape but also its trajectory toward sustainable peace, prosperity, and regional influence in the years to come.

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