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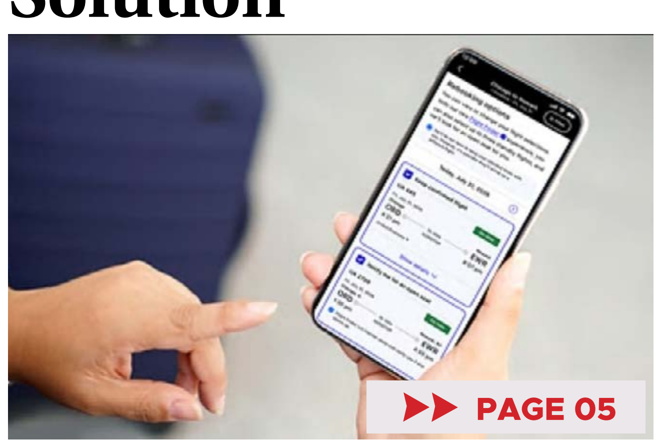

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GRA Clarifies Mobile Phone Duty Rules for Travellers to Ghana

The Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) has clarified that travellers arriving in Ghana with more than two mobile phones will not automatically be required to pay Customs duty on the additional devices.

The clarification follows public concerns over recent comments suggesting that travellers carrying more than two mobile phones could have the additional handsets treated as commercial imports and subjected to taxation.

In a press release issued on September 3, 2026, the GRA said the number of phones carried does not, on its own, determine whether Customs duty is payable. Rather, Customs officers assess each case based on the circumstances surrounding the goods.

According to the Authority, the key consideration is whether the phones are genuinely intended for the traveller's personal use or are being brought into the country for another person, for sale, distribution or other commercial purposes.

Customs officers may consider several factors, including the nature and quantity of the devices, whether they are already in use, whether they are new and commercially packaged, the number of similar items being carried and whether the circumstances suggest an intention to sell or distribute them.

The GRA said a traveller could legitimately carry multiple phones for personal reasons, including a work device or a replacement handset, without those devices necessarily being classified as commercial imports.

However, passengers carrying several new or similarly packaged phones, particularly on behalf of other people, may be required to provide further information to establish whether the devices qualify as personal effects or should be treated as imports.

The Authority explained that Ghana's Customs framework distinguishes between personal effects and goods imported for commercial purposes. Where goods are determined to be commercial imports and are subject to duty, the applicable taxes and duties will be assessed in accordance with Customs laws and procedures.

The GRA also advised travellers that goods genuinely intended for personal use may be brought through the green channel, while passengers carrying goods beyond personal effects should use the red channel to declare them and pay any applicable duties.

Travellers uncertain about the status of their belongings have been encouraged to declare the items and seek guidance from a Customs officer at their point of entry.

Integrity. Fairness. Service.

GRA

PRESS RELEASE

GRA CLARIFIES CUSTOMS TREATMENT OF MOBILE PHONES CARRIED BY TRAVELLERS

The Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) has noted the public discussion following recent comments on the Customs treatment of mobile phones brought into the country by travellers. The Authority appreciates the concerns raised and wishes to clarify how Customs treats passenger baggage and personal effects.

It is not an automatic rule that a traveller carrying more than two mobile phones will be required to pay Customs duty.

The key consideration is whether the items being carried are genuinely for the passenger's personal use or whether, based on the circumstances, they are being imported for another person, for sale, distribution or other commercial purposes.

Customs officers therefore assess each case based on its circumstances. Factors that may be considered include the nature and quantity of the items, whether they are already in use, whether they are new and commercially packaged, the number of similar items being carried and whether the circumstances indicate an intention to sell or distribute them.

The reference to a number of mobile phones was intended to illustrate circumstances in which Customs officers may need to make further enquiries. **The number of phones carried does not, on its own, determine whether duty is payable.**

A traveller may therefore legitimately carry more than one phone for personal reasons, such as a work device or a replacement handset, without the items necessarily being treated as commercial imports.

Where, however, a passenger carries several new or similarly packaged devices, particularly for other persons, Customs may need to establish whether the items qualify as personal effects or should appropriately be treated as imports.

Personal Effects and Commercial Imports

Customs law distinguishes between personal effects and goods imported for sale, supply or other commercial purposes. This distinction is important to ensure fairness between travellers bringing in their personal belongings and individuals or businesses importing goods commercially.

Where goods are determined to be imports and are subject to duty, the applicable duties and taxes will be assessed in accordance with Ghana's Customs laws and procedures.

Guidance for Travellers

Travellers are encouraged to observe the following:

- Goods that are genuinely for personal use may be brought in through the green channel.
- Where the quantity or nature of goods goes beyond personal effects, travellers should use the red channel to declare them and pay any applicable duties.
- Travellers who are unsure about the status of items they are carrying are encouraged to declare them and seek guidance from a Customs officer at the point of entry.

Our Commitment

The purpose of Customs controls is not to inconvenience legitimate travellers, including Ghanaians returning home with personal belongings or reasonable gifts for family. The objective is to facilitate legitimate travel while ensuring that goods imported for commercial purposes are appropriately declared and treated in accordance with the law.

This approach is consistent with Ghana's Customs framework under the Customs laws and regulations and the passenger concessions provided under the Exemptions Act, 2022 (Act 1083).

The GRA remains committed to the fair, consistent and professional application of Customs procedures and will continue to provide clear information to help travellers understand their rights and obligations.

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#GRA - Ghana FIRST

Know Your Taxes, Pay Your Taxes, Let's Build Ghana!

Kenya Airways Sweeps Four Titles at 2026 World Travel Awards Africa Gala

Kenya Airways has strengthened its position as one of Africa's most recognised airlines after securing four major titles at the 2026 World Travel Awards Africa Gala Ceremony in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

The national carrier was named Africa's Leading Airline 2026, the top honour among its four wins at the prestigious awards. The recognition highlights Kenya Airways' continued standing in the highly competitive African aviation sector and reinforces its reputation as a leading carrier on the continent.

In addition to the overall airline award, Kenya Airways received Africa's Leading Airline Economy Class 2026, recognising its economy-class offering and passenger experience.

The airline also claimed Africa's Leading Airline Lounge 2026, underscoring the quality of its airport hospitality and lounge experience. The award adds another dimension to Kenya Airways' performance, demonstrating recognition beyond its core flight operations and into the wider passenger journey.

Completing the quartet was Africa's Leading Inflight Magazine 2026, recognising the carrier's inflight publication and its contribution to the passenger experience.

The four awards represent a broad endorsement of Kenya Airways' services, spanning the overall airline experience, economy-class travel, premium airport facilities and inflight content.

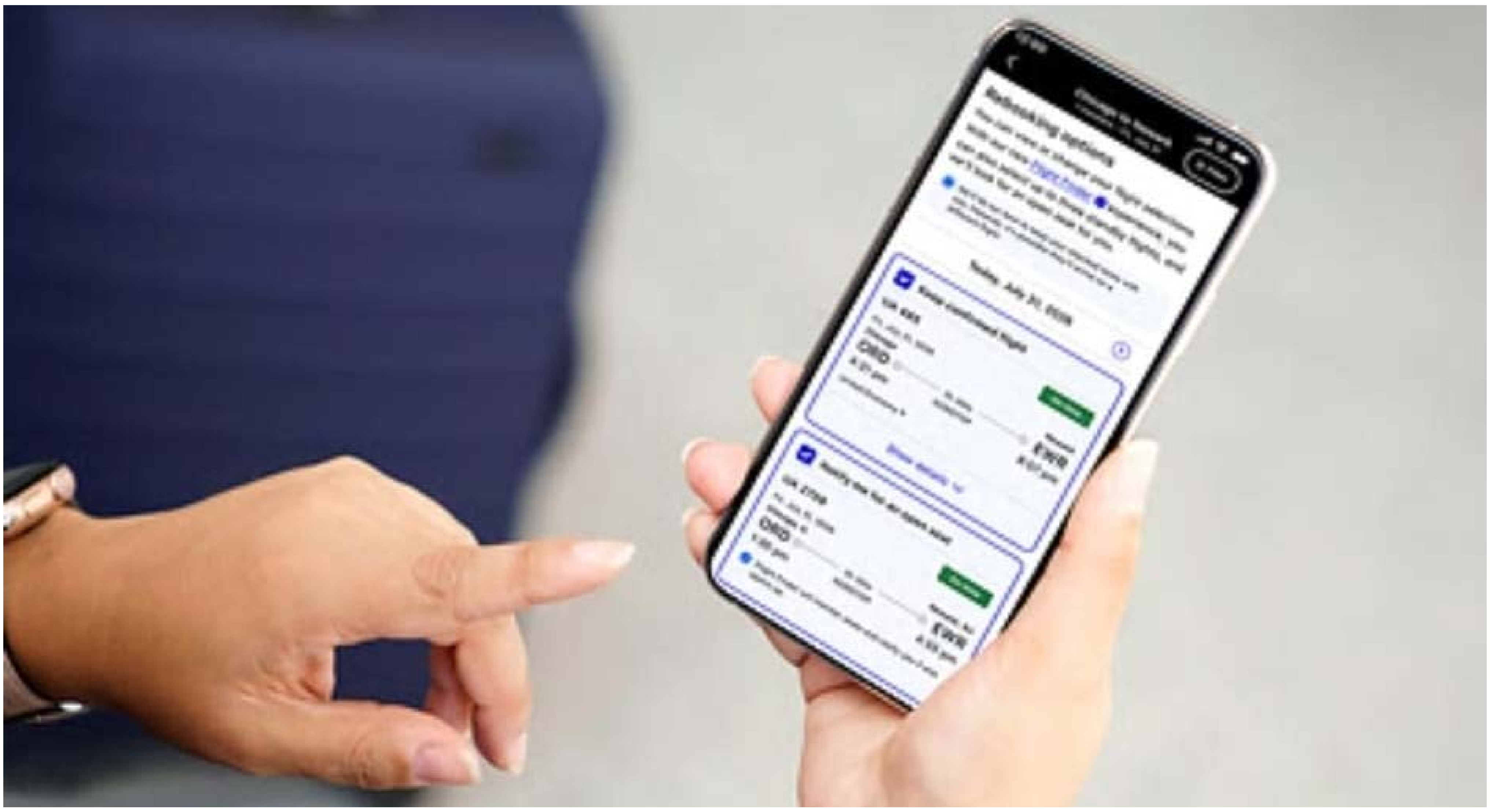
The wins at the Zanzibar ceremony further strengthen the airline's profile across the African travel and tourism industry. Securing multiple titles in a single awards programme also positions Kenya Airways prominently among the continent's leading aviation brands.

The World Travel Awards are widely associated with recognising excellence across the global travel and tourism industry, with winners selected across a range of categories.

For Kenya Airways, the 2026 results provide a significant boost to its brand credentials, particularly as airlines across Africa continue to compete for passengers through service quality, customer experience and distinctive travel offerings.

With four major titles under its belt, Kenya Airways emerges from the 2026 World Travel Awards Africa Gala as one of the ceremony's standout airline winners, reinforcing its position as a leading name in African aviation.

United unveils innovative New Mobile-based Solution



United Airlines has announced an industry-first mobile app feature that gives customers more flexibility and options when travel plans are disrupted.

Now, customers who are rebooked to a later flight after a travel disruption can stand by for up to three earlier flights*. Instead of repeatedly checking the app to see if seats open up on earlier flights, United automatically monitors availability behind the scenes and sends a text notification when a seat becomes available.

This new feature is rolling out just in time for the busy Labor Day travel weekend; more than 3.4 million people are expected to fly United between September 3-8 – about 300,000 more than last year. More than 85% of United customers use the airline's award-winning mobile app on the day they travel, making digital tools an increasingly important part of how customers manage disruptions and navigate their journey.

Customers can use the new feature in three simple steps:

Add yourself to the standby list on up to three earlier flights. Sit back while United automatically monitors those flights for available seats. Get a text when a seat becomes available and choose whether to switch to the earlier flight – while keeping your existing confirmed reservation until you decide.

"This feature reflects our commitment to making travel more seamless and less stressful for our customers," said Jennifer Schwierzke, Vice President of Customer Operations, Strategy & Execution at United. "During disruptions, customers can keep their confirmed itinerary and stand by for three additional flights. We work behind the scenes to monitor availability and alert customers as soon as a seat becomes available."

The feature expands United's portfolio of self-service recovery tools, which allow customers to automatically rebook flights, receive meal and hotel vouchers when eligible and track checked bags during disruptions – all without having to wait in line to speak to an agent.

Recent mobile app updates that help customers prepare for travel, navigate changes and stay informed include:

more seamless airport experience: Customers can now use Digital ID in Apple Wallet, which offers a secure and private way for users to add and use an ID in Apple Wallet using information from their U.S. passport, to make it easier to enroll in TSA PreCheck® Touchless ID right in the United app. Real-time inbound aircraft status updates: United is expanding its "Where is my plane coming from?" app feature by showing customers their inbound aircraft directly on the flight status page, providing even more insight into where their plane is before departure. TSA wait times tracker: As the first major U.S. airline to offer the feature, United introduced Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security wait time estimates† at U.S. hub airports, giving customers greater visibility into airport security lines before heading to the airport. Personalized connection support: United launched new, personalized app features that make catching connecting flights easier, including personalized, turn-by-turn directions to connecting gates with estimated walk times, real-time flight status updates, tips for longer layovers, and notifications powered by United's ConnectionSaver technology if the airline is able to hold a departing flight for those with an extra-tight connection. Bag tracking enhancements: United integrated Apple's Share Item Location, so customers everywhere who travel with an AirTag or Find My network accessory can seamlessly share the accessory location with United's customer service team to help locate their luggage in the event that it is misplaced or mishandled.

AI's Market Path Will Get Bumpier

By Mohamed A. El-Erian

The US economy and its financial markets are in a generational race whose implications extend well beyond the prospects for future prosperity and financial stability. The race is between AI and related technologies that hold massive potential to unlock productivity and earnings growth, on the one hand, and the unintended consequences of these technologies, on the other.

Most of us need AI to unlock those significant productivity and earnings gains, especially as the economy carries weighty legacy issues. But while the race has been remarkably smooth so far, it is likely to become far more volatile.

Count me among those who are genuinely excited about what's happening in the AI revolution and its potential interaction with equally exciting advances in the life sciences, robotics, and eventually quantum computing. By enhancing the input that goes into so much of what we do—intelligence—AI's economic potential is enormous. It is, as US Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh framed it in his Jackson Hole speech last month, potentially a "new factor of production."

Google's James Manyika has gone further in conversations with me and elsewhere. AI is not just a "general purpose technology" (like electricity) that can improve how we do what we do today. With recursive self-improvement and other advances, it is also increasingly an "invention machine for inventions" that will allow us to do even better things. Such observations have fueled the promise of massively higher corporate earnings, which in turn has driven stock-market indices to record highs and channeled a massive amount of equity and bond financing to the tech sector.

Nowhere is this dynamic more vividly demonstrated than in Nvidia's staggering earnings last month. Its eye-popping revenue growth continues to validate the size of the sector's capital expenditures. The same dynamic is also apparent in Anthropic's IPO preparations, where, like SpaceX, the "total addressable market" it hopes to tap is enormous.

Yet my excitement comes with concerns, not so much about the longer-term risks of shock events or "extinction" (though that is obviously important), as about AI's more immediate unintended consequences and their collateral damage. Fears of the latter are already spilling into the political and social arena and could well affect the pace and depth of the technology's adoption.

These changing conditions carry the risk of crowding-out effects, especially in the short term, owing to a classic intertemporal mismatch. The potential longer-term benefits of AI could address many of our current problems, from low growth and high debt to climate change and extreme inequality; but more immediately, AI's development and deployment is being complicated by issues that, if we are not careful, could make these very problems worse.

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Consider what has been happening in the government and corporate bond markets. In a world where deficit financing and traditional corporate borrowing already claim a large share of available bond funding, the massive increase in hyperscalers' demand for credit has been a factor in pushing borrowing costs, including mortgage rates, higher.

This is especially the case now that historically reliable large buyers of US securities seem less inclined, owing to domestic considerations (in the case of Japan and Gulf countries) and geopolitics (China and Canada). Moreover, in certain parts of the United States, incremental energy demand has contributed to higher electricity prices, further exacerbating a mounting multiyear affordability crisis that falls hardest on lower-income households.

The tension between the march of AI and the need to manage its immediate consequences is not the only risk. Another is the mismatch between exciting, rapid AI advances and uneven adoption rates across the economy. A particularly insightful and comprehensive study from Google shows that while diffusion has been very broad, it has been rather shallow. Because AI has yet to penetrate deeply into workflows, much of its productivity potential remains untapped.

All this suggests that the AI trajectory—which encompasses advances in science, adoption across the economy, and mitigating the risks—is likely to become more challenging. That is why those leading the revolution are looking to policymakers to play a larger role in facilitating adoption and minimizing collateral damage. Given the dynamics at play, such interventions would require agile public-private partnerships. For example, Demis Hassabis, the founder of Google DeepMind, recently proposed a Financial Industry Regulatory Authority-like arrangement whereby a cooperative private body would wield publicly delegated regulatory powers in consultation with government agencies.

So far, the financing of AI (which is US capital markets' superpower) has been relatively smooth. Equity investors have been able to make money from intensifying promises of future-wide economic prosperity. But the road is about to get bumpier, especially now that both major political parties are leaning into the populist side of the debate. Meanwhile, the group of economists and behavioral scientists working on AI and studying the tensions mentioned above is still too small, given what is at stake.

The era of relatively friction-free financing and seemingly effortless market gains may soon give way to one marked by stronger, multi-directional headwinds. Navigating this challenging terrain will demand far greater agility and collaboration between governments and tech firms, both domestically and internationally.

AI has the power to solve some of our major economic challenges and unlock previously unimaginable levels of growth. But if it is mismanaged, it could bring damaging costs.

Mohamed A. El-Erian, a former president of Queens' College at the University of Cambridge, is Practice Professor at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is also Senior Global Fellow at the Lauder Institute. He is Chief Economic Adviser at Allianz, Chair of Gramercy Funds, the author of The Only Game in Town: Central Banks, Instability, and Avoiding the Next Collapse (Random House, 2016), and co-author (with Gordon Brown, Michael Spence, and Reid Lidow) of Permacrisis: A Plan to Fix a Fractured World (Simon & Schuster, 2023).

Whipsaw Trade Policy Is Depressing Foreign Direct Investment

By Jonathan D. Ostry

When US President Donald Trump warned business leaders in Davos last year that tariffs were coming, he offered a word of friendly advice: "Come make your product in America" and thereby sidestep looming import duties from the get-go. In the months that followed, Trump's America First trade policy took shape. The "Liberation Day" tariffs were announced, paused, restored, found to be unconstitutional, and then replaced by duties enacted under different legislation.

The upshot was a combination of high tariffs (at rates last seen in the 1930s) and burdensome uncertainty for businesses that could no longer plan their operations. Even now, unpredictability remains a signature feature of US trade policy, with new rounds of unilateral tariffs recently announced amid the expiration of tariffs imposed in February and a renewed push to restore higher levels of protection for US firms.

These two components (restrictiveness and unpredictability) extend to the global trade policy landscape more broadly. As advanced economies have embraced industrial policy, tariffs have emerged as a central instrument to reduce dependence on foreign supply chains, promote reshoring of jobs and production, and address perceived unfair foreign trade practices. But what about the impact of the policy regime on inward foreign direct investment (FDI), which remains an important objective in its own right?

In a recent paper, my colleagues and I examined how trade-policy shocks affect bilateral FDI flows. While our research was motivated by policy developments in the United States, it takes a global perspective, covering bilateral investment flows from over 200 source countries to 35 OECD countries over nearly four decades. Our goal was to quantify causal effects: how FDI evolves in the aftermath of a trade-policy shock (an increase in restrictions or uncertainty) relative to the counterfactual of no shock.

In theory, trade restrictions have ambiguous effects on FDI. On the one hand, because tariffs raise trade costs, they will tend to deter efficiency-seeking and export-oriented FDI, which relies on the seamless exchange of intermediate goods across borders within global value chains. By increasing both the level and volatility of trade costs,

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trade-policy shocks (restrictions and uncertainty) reduce the expected profitability of integrated production networks and weaken incentives to locate stages of production abroad. Unpredictability depresses FDI by increasing the option value of delaying investment until the policy landscape is clearer.

On the other hand, trade barriers may encourage market-seeking or tariff-jumping FDI (as Trump alluded to), whereby firms establish production facilities within protected markets to preserve access and avoid import duties. This tactic was in evidence last year amid the US-China tariff escalations, when several Chinese firms expanded production in North America and third countries to circumvent US tariffs.

Taken together, these considerations suggest that the relationship between trade-policy shocks—both realized trade restrictions and increases in policy uncertainty (words and deeds)—and FDI is ultimately an empirical question.

Our findings paint a sobering picture of how both trade restrictions and policy uncertainty affect bilateral FDI inflows. While both shocks dampen FDI, the uncertainty shock is far more potent (its impact on a comparable basis is about three times larger than the restrictions shock—a 50% reduction (relative to the FDI sample mean) in the first year following a one standard-deviation uncertainty shock, compared to 15% for the tariff shock). The difference reflects how investment decisions involving high sunk costs respond to expectations about future regulatory environments. When uncertainty spikes, investors sit on the sidelines, delaying investments until the policy fog clears.

Interestingly, the damage to FDI appears to be stronger when source and host countries are geoeconomically and geopolitically close than when they are distant. When host and source countries are close partners in global production networks, the hit to FDI from trade restrictions is amplified. And when host and source countries are geopolitically close (based on United Nations voting records), the impact of uncertainty shocks is likewise amplified.

Amid governments' reconsideration of the benefits of global trade integration, tariffs have emerged as a central policy instrument, justified on national-security grounds, to support domestic manufacturing and employment, or to correct other countries' perceived unfair trade practices (including state subsidies and undervalued currencies). Seen in this light, the chilling effect of tariffs on FDI might be viewed as unavoidable collateral damage.

But even for those who desire less global trade integration, the surge in policy uncertainty seems to carry a cost without any corresponding benefit—an own goal or self-inflicted wound. In this respect, elevated policy uncertainty is a puzzle. If a country opts for higher trade restrictions to promote its (perceived) domestic interests, a predictable policy is far superior to a volatile one, as it avoids the unnecessary and large collateral damage to FDI inflows.

Jonathan D. Ostry, Professor of Economics, Global Affairs, and Public Policy at the University of Toronto, is the author of several books, including Confronting Inequality (Columbia University Press, 2019) and Taming the Tide of Capital Flows (MIT Press, 2018).


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Customs Valuation, Publican AI and the Future of Ghanaian Industry

By: Daniel K. Twimasie, PhD.

Ghana has repeatedly searched for a credible answer to one persistent question: how should the state determine the true value of imports without undermining legitimate international trade? From manual assessment after independence, through pre-shipment inspection, destination inspection, the GCNet/National Single Window era, the Pre-Arrival Assessment Report System (PAARS), the Integrated Customs Management System (ICUMS), and now Publican AI, each reform has promised greater accuracy, speed and revenue assurance. Publican AI should therefore be seen not as an isolated controversy, but as the latest chapter in a long struggle over customs valuation.

The recent debate has understandably been framed around technology. Importers and freight forwarders worry about opaque algorithmic assessments; the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) argues that stronger tools are needed to address under-declaration, misclassification and incorrect country-of-origin claims. Yet beneath the technology question lies the older and more difficult issue of valuation method: when should Customs accept declared transaction values, when should it question them, and how should reference data or AI-assisted risk indicators be used without becoming arbitrary assessment? These concerns deserve attention. But the deeper problem is not simply technological. It is institutional.

Valuation tools have changed over the decades, but many underlying behaviours have remained stubbornly familiar. The apparent tension between importers and Customs often masks a more complex reality: dutiable value negotiation, political influence, and varying levels of import documentation scrutiny. Large importers may have the resources, relationships and transaction volumes to contest valuations more effectively. Smaller enterprises, by contrast, often face the full force of Customs vigilance with less bargaining power and weaker capacity to absorb processing delays or value uplifts.

This matters for enterprise and entrepreneurial development in Ghana. Customs valuation is not a narrow border procedure. It shapes landed cost, selling price, working capital, market entry decisions and the entrepreneur's assessment of whether a business opportunity is viable. When identical or similar goods attract widely different assessed values within comparable timeframes, the effect is unfair competition.

The transaction value dilemma

At the centre of the problem lies the WTO principle of “transaction value”. In simple terms, imported goods should normally be valued on the basis of the price actually paid or payable when sold for export, subject to permitted adjustments. The principle is intended to support a fair, neutral and uniform valuation system, while preventing arbitrary or fictitious values.

Ghana's difficulty is that the transaction value principle has collided heavily with widespread under-invoicing. In my 2024 doctoral fieldwork on import valuation and firm-level entrepreneurship, Customs respondents estimated that a very high proportion of commercial import declarations were inaccurate. They also contrasted Ghana's situation with more compliant trading environments, citing South Korea as an example where, in their view, only a small share of declarations becomes contentious. The figures may be debated, but the reality is familiar to many actors at the port: Customs is overwhelmed by suspicious declarations and therefore leans heavily on a database of reference values.

Reference values are not inherently improper. The World Customs Organization (WCO) recognises valuation databases as useful risk-assessment tools. The problem arises when they become substitutes for transaction value, minimum thresholds, or unexplained bases for value uplift.

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In practice, traders may experience the system as a "black box" of sorts: import invoices are accepted in some cases, uplifted in others, and the reasons are not always clear enough to command confidence. Publican AI may help Customs detect questionable values and reduce valuation inconsistency. But it will succeed only if it produces transparency rather than a more sophisticated "black box". The issue is not whether Ghana should use technology at the ports. It is whether technology can support rules-based valuation governance: one that confronts under-invoicing without creating arbitrary assessment, preferential treatment or renewed uncertainty for legitimate enterprise.

Part Two: From valuation control to enterprise policy

I argue that Ghana's Customs valuation problem is institutional, not merely technological. The reform response must therefore be broader than introducing a new digital tool. Ghana should neither reject international valuation rules nor accept them passively when local market realities demand a more development-oriented application.

The global trade system places strong emphasis on trade facilitation. The WTO, the WCO and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) insist that Customs must avoid arbitrary values, unnecessary delays and disguised barriers to trade. Importers also need predictable values, transparent decisions and credible appeal processes. No serious economy should want Customs discretion to become a substitute for fair, objective import valuation.

Ghana's situation requires forthrightness. In a developing economy burdened by under-declared imports, the debate cannot begin with the presumption that every commercial invoice presented to Customs reflects the true transaction value. Rather, stakeholders must confront squarely the reality of widespread under-invoicing and its injury to local producers, compliant importers, SMEs and government revenue.

This is where Publican AI must be handled carefully. Properly designed, it could help Customs detect questionable values, misclassification and false origin claims. It could also improve consistency by reducing Customs indiscretion. Improperly governed, however, it could deepen suspicion if traders cannot understand why values are uplifted, how reference data are updated, and how disputes are resolved.

The Ghana International Trade Commission should become more central to this conversation. Established under Act 926, the GITC is more than an anti-dumping body. It is part of Ghana's statutory trade-remedy and dispute-settlement architecture, including matters involving Customs valuation, classification and origin. Its larger promise lies in helping Ghana develop evidence-based responses to unfair trade practices and valuation disputes without abandoning WTO-consistent discipline.

GITC should help Ghana interpret and apply WTO and WCO rules from the standpoint of domestic industrial development, fair competition and local enterprise survival. That requires data, technical capacity and public confidence. It also requires stronger collaboration with GRA-Customs, the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI), the Private Enterprise Federation (PEF), the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI), and credible sector associations.

Local industry also has responsibilities. AGI, PEF and affected firms must move beyond episodic complaints about cheap imports. They should provide credible evidence of injury, input costs, import trends, valuation anomalies and employment effects. Without documented evidence, the public conversation will remain trapped between trader resistance and revenue enforcement.

Towards a Ghanaian valuation compact

A practical reform agenda should include clear reasons for value uplift, stronger post-clearance audit, bank-payment verification where appropriate, time-bound appeal procedures, and periodic publication of anonymised sector valuation data. Reference databases should also be reviewed regularly so they remain risk-assessment tools, not disguised minimum values. These measures would protect revenue while making the system more predictable and transparent, especially for compliant businesses.

The long-term objective should be a Ghanaian valuation compact: a practical national settlement among Customs, traders, manufacturers and policymakers on how imports are valued fairly, transparently and consistently. Customs must be empowered to confront under-invoicing, but traders must be protected from arbitrary assessment. Local manufacturers must be shielded from injurious under-declared imports, but not through crude protectionism. If Publican AI helps Ghana build such a compact — anchored in current data, transparent decisions and credible review — it will be more than another port reform. It will become part of the institutional infrastructure for Ghana's industrialisation.