

# Note from the editor

*“Disruption creates more choice and opportunities for agency. Maintaining relevance then requires constant redefinition, reframing, ideating, prototyping, and testing of our choices.”*

*— Roger Spitz, The Definitive Guide to Thriving on Disruption: Volume I - Reframing and Navigating Disruption.”*

## The Strategic Role of Industrial Engineers in a Post-Tariff Global Economy

In an era marked by protectionist policies and geopolitical turbulence, Industrial Engineers find themselves at the forefront of an economic recalibration. The resurgence of trade tariffs under President Donald Trump—particularly those targeting China, Mexico, Canada, and the European Union, and potentially also Africa with the AGOA agreement—disrupts long-established global supply chains, upended existing trade agreements, and forced multinational corporations to rethink the basis of their operations. In this new landscape, Industrial Engineering is not just relevant—it is indispensable.

Industrial Engineers are uniquely trained to respond to these shifts. Their expertise in systems thinking, supply chain optimisation, operations research, and risk management equips them to redesign global production and distribution networks that are now subject to regulatory unpredictability and rising costs. Companies now face a complex equation balancing cost, resilience, and regional political realities.

The reconfiguration of global supply chains demands more than logistics tweaks—it requires systemic re-engineering. Industrial Engineers must be called on to evaluate local opportunities, simulate alternative supplier models, and optimise production layouts in the face of uncertain tariff impacts. Their analytical tools allow them to model multiple future scenarios and guide strategic decisions with agility and precision.

Moreover, Industrial Engineers are central to building not only resilience, but to also equip their environments with anti-fragility. Redundancy, flexibility, and sustainability are now design imperatives. Engineers must craft systems that can absorb (and exploit) shocks, reroute outputs, and maintain performance under duress. In short, they must engineer not just for efficiency, but for adaptability in a fragmented global economy, also positioning to exploit the opportunities that arise.

Their work also extends to policy advising and corporate strategy. As companies and governments debate the costs of deglobalisation, Industrial Engineers bring clarity. They quantify trade-offs, propose alternatives, and help shape industrial policy grounded in real-world system dynamics.

In this era of shifting alliances and economic nationalism, the Industrial Engineer is not simply a technical functionary—they are a strategic navigator. The profession must seize this moment, not just to respond, but to lead. Reimagining globalisation, enabling smart manufacturing, and securing economic resilience: these are not abstract challenges. They are Industrial Engineering challenges. And the world needs them now more than ever.

This edition has a total of 14 articles, with 11 from authors with South African connections and the balance from international authors.

If you have suggestions on how we could take this journal forward, please let me know.

Corne Schutte  
Editor