



**AMERICA FIRST 2.0 –**  
THE NEW TRUMP ADMINISTRATION  
AND THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

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## Editors' Foreword

Four years after the storming of the U.S. Capitol, Donald Trump has returned to the White House, marking the start of a crucial term with profound implications for both the United States and its allies. This publication delves into the ripple effects of Trump's re-election on Europe, highlighting its impact on transatlantic security, political dynamics, and economic stability.

European states, historically reliant on American defensive guarantees through NATO, face heightened uncertainty as Trump's "America First" policies resurface. His rhetoric and actions have already spurred nationalist populists across Europe, empowering leaders like Marine Le Pen and Viktor Orbán while deepening divisions within the EU.

Economically, Trump's proposed tariffs threaten to strain the EU's trade relations with the United States, challenging the bloc's resilience in the face of ongoing inflation and energy crises. As the EU grapples with these challenges, its leaders must strike a balance between maintaining transatlantic ties and asserting strategic autonomy.

This issue brings together expert analyses to explore how Trump's presidency will shape Europe's future. From the corridors of Brussels to the capitals of its member states to NATO, the decisions made in the coming years will define Europe's role in an increasingly polarized world.

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# Czech Republic

## Trump's return to the White House: What does it mean for the Czech Republic?

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Editor: Lucia Torlai

### Abstract

Given the United States relevance and influence on the global stage, the re-election of Donald Trump as US president is set to have a strong impact on the Czech Republic's economic policies, domestic politics and energy approach.

From an economic point of view, it will be crucial to see whether Trump will decide to impose tariffs on EU exports – posing a direct threat to Czechia's manufacturing and automotive sectors' well-being. A second Trump term, on the other hand, could open interesting new market opportunities, especially in the Czech semiconductor business.

Politically, his demands for increased NATO contributions from all the allies will impact the Czech economy and may lead to a discussion about whether it is more important to invest in defence and security, or prioritise other core sectors, such as healthcare and infrastructure development.

The Czech Republic may also encounter a slowdown in its path to meet the ambitious EU goal to reach neutrality by 2050, as Donald Trump's rejection of climate change accords and promotion of American liquified natural gas might push Czechia to increase its investments in carbon fossil sectors.

In its approach to the second Trump term, Prague will face many challenges, but also new opportunities; it will be important to adopt an elastic stance as the strategy to navigate the evolution of US-Czech relations under a new Trump presidency.

### Keywords

EU, US Foreign Policy, Czech Republic, Economic and Trade Policy, Energy, NATO.

### Introduction

Donald Trump's win in the US presidential campaign last November was closely followed by European Union leaders, including Prague's ruling class. For a country like the Czech Republic, situated in Central Europe with a multilateral economy closely tied and dependent on the European Union, Washington's policies toward Brussels will heavily affect, directly or indirectly, Czechia's approach to trade, domestic politics, and energy policies on the global stage.

## Economy and Trade

Washington and Prague have a long standing bilateral investment treaty. The United States is the Czech Republic's largest non-EU export destination and third largest non-EU trading partner. US-Czech trade reached record levels in 2022 with exports from the United States growing 23% to almost \$3.8 billion and imports from Czechia reaching \$7.5 billion. Leading U.S. exports to and investment in the Czech Republic include automotive parts and equipment, energy franchising, information technology, medical equipment and scientific equipment (International Trade Administration, 2023).

Should Washington decide to impose tariffs on EU's automotive exports, the Czech Republic could feel ripple effects given its heavy reliance on the automotive industry, which accounts for 24% of Czech exports, 34% of the manufacturing industry and employs around 500.000 people including indirect jobs (CzechTrade, 2023).

However, many experts predict that one of the Trump administration's main focuses will be to reduce US reliance on China, which could create an opportunity for Czechia. For instance, U.S.-based semiconductor manufacturer Onsemi has announced an investment of up to \$2 billion (44 billion CZK) in its existing facility in Roznov pod Radhostem, Czech Republic. This multi-year investment, which the Czech government has strongly supported, would solidify the advanced power semiconductor supply chain for European and global customers. Upon completion, the operation would contribute annually 270 million USD (6 billion CZK) to the Czech Republic's GDP, therefore representing one of the largest single foreign investments in the country's history (Onsemi, 2024).

Another important dimension of trade is energy. Trump's emphasis on promoting American energy exports, in particular of liquefied natural gas (LNG) will be a crucial factor in determining Czechia's approach to energy markets.

In light of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Czech government has worked to mitigate its reliance on Russia's natural gas. Prague's aim to reduce dependency on Russian gas, which according to CREA (2024) has accounted for 56% of the country's total imports of oil in 2022, 60% in 2023 and 49% in the first quarter of 2024, could be supported by Trump's presidency. In fact, the Czech Republic could become an important partner in achieving U.S. geopolitical goals in Europe. Trump's continuous promotion of US' Liquefied Natural Gas could enhance the EU to build and strengthen LNG infrastructures, also by providing incentives to adopt American-imported LNG in domestic and foreign businesses. The completion of projects such as the "North-South Gas Corridor", a pipeline that connects the LNG Terminal in Swinoujscie and the Baltic Pipe, through central and southern Poland with infrastructures in Central and Eastern Europe, would be crucial for Prague to reduce its reliance on Moscow's gas (GAS, 2023). Although Liquefied Natural Gas remains more expensive than Russian pipeline gas, the broader availability of diverse energy sources would reduce Czech exposure to volatility in energy prices, which is important for both consumers and industries in the long term (Government of the Czech Republic, 2023). However, until 2026 at least, the Czech energy sector will remain dependent on supplies from Russia, especially for crude oil (Friedrich Egbert Stiftung, 2023).

Donald Trump's re-election poses many challenges and uncertainties, but also new opportunities for the Czech economy. While trade tensions could heavily damage Czech manufacturing and automotive industries, new market opportunities may open in the country. It will be crucial for Czech

leaders to adapt the country's export-driven economy in response to Washington's economic and geopolitical stance towards the Old Continent.

## National Politics

Trump's re-election has aroused mixed feelings within the Czech government. While some members of the parliament viewed Kamala Harris as a more reliable and secure trading partner, others have started talking about the benefits for Europe of a new "Trump Therapy". In their view, an assertive tone from Washington in its approach to the EU could function as a "wakening call" for European countries to boost military investments and finally "establish a clear line in trade and external partnership" (Havlicek, 2024). Also, as the deputy chairman of the Czech opposition party ANO, Karen Havlicek stated recently in an interview on Euractiv (2024), Donald Trump's re-elections "could benefit the Visegrad group, despite recent reports of internal divisions, particularly over support for Ukraine" (Petras, 2024).

During his campaign and these recent few weeks, Donald Trump has repeatedly criticised NATO's effectiveness and the fairness of burden-sharing, criticising European allies for not increasing their defence spending. Recently, the neo-elected US President stated that he would "absolutely stay in NATO", whether the allies "pay their bills", and that "he would have no problem of leaving if that wasn't the case" (Politico, 2024).

The Czech Republic, although it has been increasing military expenditures and often calls other European nations to do the same, has not yet met NATO's target to allocate at least 2% of the country's GDP on defence spending. And, even though the Minister of Defence, Jana Cernochova, has announced that Czechia is expected to reach this goal by 2025 (CzechTrade, 2024), it might not be enough in case Trump further increases demands on his NATO allies. These requests could heavily affect and become a burden for Prague in deciding whether to allocate funds for internal priorities (such as healthcare and infrastructures) or military expenses.

Right now, within the Czech government, there is quite a broad consensus among pro-Western, centrist, and centre-right parties regarding NATO membership. However, Czech polls indicate that former Prime Minister Andrej Babiš's party, "ANO 2011", is going to win by a large margin in the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for next October. The party has been calling for a stop in supporting Ukraine militarily and is strongly opposed to an Ukrainian's EU membership. Donald Trump's promise to end the war and reduce military support to Kiev is aligned with ANO's foreign stance on the matter, and this could favour the party in gaining consensus.

Similarly, the fast-growing party "Freedom and Direct Democracy (Svoboda a prima demokracie, SPD)", led by Tomio Okamura, strongly opposes Czech membership to the European Union and is sceptical about NATO. SPD could find in Trump criticism towards the alliance an important opportunity to fuel an anti-EU and anti-NATO sentiment among Czech citizens. Similarly, Trump's anti-immigration stance, which emphasises the importance of tight borders and nationalism, could find fertile ground among the Czech Republic's most frustrated strata of population due to recent years migratory flows. Parties like SPD could benefit and gain wide-spread consensus by echoing Washington's rhetoric.

Also, Trump's reduced support of multilateral organisations and NGOs may affect the protection of marginalised minorities and groups; however, the Czech Republic is adhering to the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights and has repeatedly shown in the past resilience and commitment in respecting humanitarian obligations.

Donald Trump's re-election will significantly influence Czech internal politics. With the Czech parliamentary election scheduled for October 2025, Trump's rhetoric and policies will play a key role in intensifying and influencing domestic debates over many topics, from military expenses and the country's role in NATO- to national identity and immigration policies.

## Environmental policies

The re-election of Donald Trump will also have an impact on the Czech Republic's energy and environmental policies. Many analysts agree that a Trump presidency is likely to hinder progress towards sustainability goals (Euronews, 2024). In fact, Trump, on his first day in office, withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement and will likely resume efforts to reduce climate and environmental regulations (Bellona, 2024).

The Czech Republic is already struggling to align with the ambitious EU goal to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 through the Green Deal and to phase-out coal by 2033 (International Energy Agency, 2021). Trump's policies could diminish the pressure for regulatory alignment to Brussels' climate goals and slow down the process of transitioning to renewable energies, by prioritising and promoting fossil fuel industries.

Moreover, it is important to mention Czechia possesses six nuclear reactors that currently generate more than one-third of the country's electricity. Prime Minister Petr Fiala, speaking at the Triple Nuclear Energy Conference, noted that the country aims to have 50% of its electricity produced from nuclear plants by 2050 and is currently working on the construction of 4 new reactors (NuclearNewswire, 2024).

## Conclusion

To conclude, many bureaucrats are uncertain on how the 47th US President will approach Europe, especially from an economic point of view. Tariffs on European goods may have a strong impact on the European manufacturing sector, and Trump's call for purchasing American LNG is not a cheaper and more convenient alternative to Russian LNG. Therefore, the struggle to find new energy and oil partners for the European Union is likely to continue.

However, as highlighted in this article, new market opportunities could open up, especially in the Czech semiconductor sector.

From a political point of view, it is safe to say that Donald Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric will be echoed by many political figures in the Czech Republic, especially in view of the upcoming elections. This is the case of SPD, that Politico (2025) most recent poll projected at an historical 8%; it would not be a surprise if Tomio Okamura's party achieves an even greater result next October.

Trump's second term presents a landscape of uncertainties for Europe, economically and politically: while some predict significant challenges ahead, others view it as an opportunity for the European Union to reassert economic and political sovereignty. The Czech Republic should navigate this era with a high degree of flexibility, balancing the new economic opportunities with the challenges posed by the shift in geo-political dynamics.



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# Greece

## The Trump Effect on Greece: Gains, Losses, and Challenges

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### Abstract

Donald Trump's re-election in the 2024 US presidential elections will have far-reaching implications for Greece, particularly in economic, political, and social domains. This article explores the potential impacts of his policies on bilateral trade, emphasizing Greece's role as a strategic partner in sectors such as energy, technology, and infrastructure. It highlights the importance of diversifying Greece's economy and fostering innovation to enhance global competitiveness. The paper also examines geopolitical dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean, emphasizing Greece's strategic cooperation with the US, NATO, and regional powers, amidst evolving US-Turkey relations. Additionally, it discusses the influence of Trump's human rights policies on migration and social attitudes, as well as the challenges posed by his administration's stance on environmental issues. By leveraging multilateral alliances and domestic reforms, Greece can navigate these challenges and strengthen its position on the international stage.

### Keywords

Trump re-election 2024, Greece-US trade relations, Eastern Mediterranean stability, Energy security and LNG, Migration and refugee policies, Renewable energy investments

### Introduction

Donald Trump's re-election in the 2024 US presidential elections has sparked global interest, as his policies affect many countries around the world, including Greece. His victory is anticipated to significantly impact bilateral relations and shape the economic, political, and social developments. This article examines the potential impact of this re-election in different domains.

### Economy and Trade

It is undeniable that Greece seeks stability and growth in every aspect. While Greece considers the US as one of its main investment partners, Trump's approach to protectionism which combines tax incentives and tariffs on imports, is likely to cause obstacles in trade relations between Greece and the US. However, potential US sanctions against Turkey may enhance Greece's strategic importance as a partner (Gingeras, 2024; Tornos News, 2024). As the US continues to focus on the Eastern Mediterranean, its investment in sectors such as technology, tourism, and infrastructure is expected to rapidly increase (To Vima, 2024).

The potential expansion of bilateral economic relations hinges on maintaining regional stability as well as the Greek side's readiness to align with new US trade policies. Nevertheless, the stringent negotiating approach adopted by Trump may result in delays and challenges in reaching new agreements (Protothema, 2024).

The prospect of increased Greek agricultural and food exports to the US is another positive scenario. Greek companies operating in the shipping sector may also benefit from increased bilateral trade, especially if Washington implements policies that favour the use of liquefied natural gas (LNG), which Greece can offer as a transit hub (Protothema, 2024). In addition, Greek shipping, with a strong presence in international transport, may benefit from a possible US strategy to boost exports of LNG and other energy resources (To Vima, 2024).

At the same time, the importance of diversifying the Greek economy cannot be overlooked. To address this, Greece must prioritize the development of forward-thinking initiatives that drive innovation and technological advancement. Such efforts could include fostering collaboration between research institutions and the private sector, offering incentives for startups, and investing in cutting-edge industries. By strengthening the foundations of innovation and expanding its portfolio of high-value exports, Greece not only enhances its global presence but also creates opportunities to reinforce its industrial base. This strategy would position the country as a competitive player in international markets while cultivating deeper economic ties with key partners, including the US.

## International Politics

Greece's geopolitical importance in the Eastern Mediterranean may increase as the US relationship with Turkey remains tense. Although Trump has personal relations with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, his policies have often counterbalanced Turkish influence in favour of other allies (Ekathimerini, 2024). Greek-US strategic cooperation, particularly on energy security and countering Russian influence, has the potential to be strengthened. Enhanced military cooperation, such as the deployment of US military bases in Greece, may prove important for maintaining stability in the region. However, US involvement in the area might be restricted, and Trump's isolationist policies will compel Greece to face geopolitical challenges independently (Protothema, 2024).

In addition to that, alliances can enhance security and stability in the region, regardless of the direction of US policy. Greece should focus on its relations with European and, mostly, regional powers such as Egypt. Fostering multilateral cooperation can act as a safeguard against potential U.S. shifts away from Greece's geopolitical priorities. For instance, collaborative initiatives in maritime zones and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) between Greece and Cyprus are gaining increased importance in light of the realignment of U.S. policies (Ekathimerini, 2024).

Moreover, the dynamics of the US, NATO, and the EU can be highly beneficial for Greece. The increased US presence in Southeastern Europe represents a strategic advantage for the area. Also, potential complications in US-Russia relations may emphasize the need to prioritize regional stability. In this context, strengthening Greece's diplomatic capacity may be a key factor in maintaining peace and security (Gingeras, 2024; Tornos News, 2024).

## Citizen's rights

Divisions within the US have emerged due to Trump's policy regarding human rights. This could have an indirect impact on Greece. For instance, the focus on restrictive immigration policies may influence migration rates, which is extremely important for Greece as a receiving country. Nonetheless, European migration policy remains vital for the management of refugee flows, while Greek authorities are urged to implement effective integration strategies that address international challenges (Protothema, 2024).

Promoting the rights of the LGBTQ+ community and combating discrimination may face new challenges. Greek authorities will need to strengthen their domestic rights policies to align with the European and international standards. At the same time, the rise of xenophobia and populism globally, partly reinforced by Trump's policies and rhetoric, could affect political attitudes in Greece, especially on issues related to the integration of migrants and refugees (Protothema, 2024). Greece's cooperation with international organisations, such as the United Nations, will be crucial for raising awareness regarding equality and justice (Protothema, 2024).

## Energy and Environment

Ensuring energy security is a primary concern for Greece. Trump's policies prioritise the exploitation of fossil fuels. Since these policies scale back on international agreements, his administration may undermine national initiatives to transition to renewable energy resources (Protothema, 2024). However, increased exports of liquefied natural gas from the US may offer Greece an important opportunity to strengthen its role as an energy hub for Europe. Participation in energy projects such as the East Med pipeline may also be positively affected (To Vima, 2024).

Greece has the potential to emerge as a leader in the integration of green technologies, but this will require a coordinated focus on domestic investment and international partnerships. However, the lack of international leadership from the US on environmental issues may slow down global efforts to address climate change. Greece, already suffering from the effects of climate change, such as wildfires and desertification, will have to step up its own initiatives to fill the gap created by US disengagement (Protothema, 2024).

Beyond the immediate impacts, Greece should seek new opportunities for cooperation on clean energy technology. Investing in renewable energy, such as solar and wind, can enhance the nation's energy self-sufficiency and reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. In addition, improving infrastructure for energy storage and distribution will contribute to the creation of a more resilient energy market (To Vima, 2024).

## Conclusion

Greece's affairs are expected to be influenced by Donald Trump's re-election: his policies are expected to drive significant changes in both the economic and political spheres worldwide. From the strengthening of trade relations to the potential increase of Greece's strategic importance in the Eastern Mediterranean region, the country is at a critical juncture to take advantage of the opportunities offered by US policy. At the same time, challenges such as the possible isolation of the US, changes in trade policies and geopolitical tensions require Greece to adjust its foreign policy and strengthen its strategic position through multilateral alliances and domestic reforms. Ultimately, Greece must remain both adaptable and cautious while taking advantage of new dynamics in the international and European stage.



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# Italy

## The Impact of Trump's Victory in Italy

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### Abstract

With recent shifts in leadership and policy approaches, the geopolitical relationship established between Italy and the United States (US) has undergone significant change.

This holds especially true with Donald Trump's electoral triumph, which has generated significant attention in the international arena, as potential changes in the United States' foreign affairs strategy rise to the horizon.

Trump's stance on public policy and international agreements have had a detrimental effect on Italy and its economy in the past. It is still early to make assumptions on how his current decisions will impact Italy and the broader geopolitical scenario, hence the need for careful analysis on this matter.

This paper explores the historical context of U.S.-Italy relations by analyzing past and present policy decisions made under Trump's administration, and the possible outcomes of these on their relationship.

### Keywords

Trump, Italy, US-Italy partnership, 2024 US election, Globalisation.

### Introduction

On the 8th of November 2016, the United States witnessed significant change in its electoral history. Following months of intense debate, the country held its breath as it awaited the results. While a significant number of political analysts had confidently predicted victory for Hillary Clinton, who had established an important support base at the national level, the results defied expectations. (Wagner et al., 2018). As Trump secured the presidency, many experts were left to grapple with the unexpected turn of events.

A political outsider, Trump portrayed himself as the candidate breaking away from previous governance, advocating change for those who felt abandoned by traditional politics. Coherently, the campaign style he adopted was frequently controversial, and his slogan "Make America Great Again" resonated with many Americans seeking to return to traditional values. With populist rhetoric, he effectively appealed to individuals who felt "left behind" amidst globalization and economic stagnation. (Stiglitz, 2018). This strategy capitalized on widespread disillusionment with the establishment, which solidifies his base of support.

The election marked a significant shift in global politics, leaving several established allies of the US, including Italy, struggling to recalibrate their expectations. Trump's presidency introduced new tensions into U.S.-Italy relations, challenging their historically strong partnership through protectionist economic policies and shifting foreign priorities. This article will examine these dynamics, particularly in areas like trade, defence cooperation, and multilateral relations to understand how Trump's actions influenced Italy's role on the global stage.

As we stand on the verge of Trump's second term, it is crucial to evaluate its implications for Italy in the evolving geopolitical landscape. The significance lies in understanding how a realignment of U.S. priorities may alter Italy's economic and political positioning within Europe and its transatlantic ties. This analysis sheds light on whether these changes signify opportunities, risks, or a mixed outcome for Italy moving forwards.

## Economy and Trade

The election of Donald Trump in 2016 brought significant changes to the U.S. economy. Despite the U.S. public perceived that his administration would significantly improve economic health, a closer analysis reveals a mixed picture. The U.S. economy grew between 2017 and 2019 at an average annual rate of 2.5%, partly strengthened by tax cuts and deregulatory policies that had sought to stimulate business investments. (Bivens, 2023). While poverty rates fell from 12.7% in 2016 to 10.5% in 2019, showing improvement for lower-income households, income inequality widened, with the Gini coefficient (a measure to show how unevenly income is distributed in a country) rising during this period. (Semega, J., Kollar, M., Shrider, E. A., & Creamer, J. F, 2020). This mismatch highlights the unequal distribution of economic gains, which toned down the public's perception of a prosperous term.

Trump's protectionist trade policies of raising tariffs on imports, aimed at helping domestic industries grow, can be compared to those adopted in the aftermath of the Great Depression. This was received positively for U.S. companies with limited involvement in international trade, however such policies created inefficiencies in international supply chains, raising consumer and business costs. (Wagner et al., 2018). Italy, as one of Europe's largest exporters, found it even more challenging to operate under such a scheme, particularly when it came to the wine industry. The Italian Wine Union (Unione Italiana Vini) raised concerns over increased tariffs, which threatened their ability to continue supplying wine to the U.S. market, a major actor in Italy's export industry. (Gambero Rosso, 2024).

To ease the impact of the U.S. tariffs, Italy explored alternative markets and engaged in negotiations. A significant relief did not come until after the election of Joe Biden, who began lowering tariffs, thus offering much-needed relief to Italian exporters. (Stokes, B., 2024).

However, the current Italian government, headed by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, is vigilant about potential trade issues following the 2024 U.S. elections. Italy's strategic focus has now shifted to strengthening bilateral agreements with other nations, though their outcomes are uncertain under the evolving U.S. trade policies. (Gambero Rosso, 2024).

Analysts from all over the world, including those from the Italian Trade Agency, caution that the lack of future trade improvements could hinder Italy's economic prospects. (Italian Trade Agency, 2023). Despite this, opportunities for growth may arise from collaborations in technology, particularly in regions like Emilia-Romagna. With its ambitious vision of transforming into an "Italian Silicon Valley," this region is positioning itself as a hub for innovation and investment. Partnerships with

figures such as Elon Musk could amplify these efforts, potentially bringing transformative benefits to Italy's flourishing tech sector. (Barry, 2024).

Italy is still negotiating new bilateral agreements with the U.S., and the outcome will likely be influenced by the upcoming presidential inauguration. This development is still a source of concern for the financial markets; if the tariffs were to decrease, this would help the Italian industries, however the adverse outcome would result in the development of a new "America First" approach which would affect 'Made in Italy' brands and require a review of trade relationships between Italy and the U.S. (Gambero Rosso International, 2024).

## National policies

Donald Trump's current term builds on the ideological and political trends his presidency initiated in 2016, which have had lasting repercussions globally, including in Italy. The "America First" doctrine, marked by protectionist trade policies and strict immigration controls, not only redefined U.S. domestic and foreign policies but also inspired a wave of nationalist and populist movements worldwide. (Stiglitz, 2018). These movements found fertile ground in Italy, culminating in Giorgia Meloni's rise to power in 2022. Her agenda closely mirrors Trump's rhetoric and policies, emphasizing sovereignty, economic protectionism, and stricter immigration policies. (Kaval, 2025).

Meloni's government has continued to align with Trump's policies, reflecting shared values in prioritizing domestic interests and addressing external threats. For example, her administration's success in reducing illegal migration, with a 60% decrease in arrivals in 2024 compared to the previous year, resonates with Trump's enduring emphasis on border security. (Barry, 2024). Trump's administration's rhetoric and policies have indeed served as a model for Italy's nationalist policies, shaping a transatlantic ideological connection.

Moreover, the ongoing bilateral cooperation between Italy and the U.S. has been created by Trump's renewed focus on reshaping international alliances. (Chiaro, L., 2024). His current term has sought to strengthen NATO's strategic priorities, a stance that Italy under Meloni has supported despite their ideological divergence during Trump's earlier presidency. This evolving partnership underpins a pragmatic approach in sustaining joint security initiatives and addressing global threats. (Zampano, 2025).

Looking back, the contrasting responses of the U.S. and Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the challenges of decentralized versus centralized governance. (Vampa, 2021). These lessons remain relevant as both nations navigate emerging global health challenges under Trump's leadership. The misinformation landscape that undermined compliance with health directives during the pandemic has also become a shared concern, reinforcing the importance of effective communication strategies, an area in which Trump and Meloni have aligned their focus on controlling narratives. (Hatcher, 2021).

## Human rights

Donald Trump's presidency has also had a profound impact on human rights in Italy, influencing many socio-political dynamics. His administration's policies and rhetoric have notably spurred and legitimized the rise of populism in Europe, which explains why Giorgia Meloni has cultivated strong ties with Trump's circle, positioning herself as his main European ally.

A key element of Trump's domestic policies involved the use of identity-based rhetoric that reinforced divisions along racial and ethnic lines. His administration's travel bans, family separations at the border and inflammatory language against minorities, not only normalized discriminatory practices in the U.S. (Meng, G., 2020; Nagovitch, P., 2024), but also influenced Italian politics. In

recent years, Italy has faced challenges related to racial discrimination, particularly against African migrants and Trump's policies offered a precedent for using such rhetoric to mobilize political support while sidelining minority communities. This influence is visible in Italy's growing hostility towards migrants and asylum seekers, reflected in measures like stricter border controls and the closure of ports to rescue ships. (Campisi, J. M., & Sottilotta, C.E., 2022).

Trump's victory also reignited debates on reproductive rights, particularly as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court's conservative appointments which lead to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. (American Civil Liberties Union, 2025.; Rinaldi, O., & Mizelle, S., 2024). This ignited anti-abortion movements globally, including in Italy, where opposition to Law 194, the legislation guaranteeing access to abortion, gained momentum. Anti-abortion advocates have used Trump's policies as a symbol of victory, leading to increased protests and public discourse aimed at restricting access to reproductive healthcare. (The Guardian, 2024). Even in Italy, divisions over abortion have sharpened under Giorgia Meloni. Despite abortion being legal since 1978 under Law 194, access remains uneven, with about 63% of gynaecologists refusing to perform the procedure on their personal moral or religious grounds. (Armellini, A., Cristoferi, C., & Dikmen, Y., 2024).

Recent policies, such as allowing anti-abortion groups into clinics to counsel women, have intensified debates. Critics argue that this pressures women during vulnerable moments, while supporters claim it informs their choices. Internationally, Italy under Meloni has omitted references to "safe and legal" abortions in declarations like the G7 summit document, raising concerns over her government's commitment to reproductive rights. (Giuffrida, A., 2024). Additionally, efforts to promote motherhood through incentives, paired with reduced emphasis on abortion rights, have encouraged anti-abortion categories, sparking further divisions.

Similarly, Trump's administration's stance on LGBTQ+ rights, marked by attempts to roll back protections, found echoes in Italy, where far-right groups have pushed against LGBTQ+ inclusivity measures. The absence of comprehensive legislation for same-sex marriage and adoption in Italy reflects how international trends can reinforce domestic resistance to progress in human rights. (Reuters, 2023). Additionally, in October 2024, Italy's parliament made it illegal for couples to have a baby via surrogacy abroad, a law that has been criticized for disproportionately affecting LGBTQ+ individuals. (Amante, A., 2024).

Trump's election also affected Italy's unemployment and labor issues in an indirect but significant way. His administration's focus on "America First" policies, like imposing tariffs and disrupting global trade, created challenges for countries that rely on exports, including Italy. These changes made it harder for Italian businesses, especially in industries like manufacturing, to stay competitive, which impacted job creation.

Trump's push for fewer worker protections and more deregulation also set an example that some Italian politicians have reproduced. (McNicholas et al., 2018). Instead of creating stable jobs, these ideas often lead to temporary or insecure work, worsening problems for young people trying to enter the workforce. (Liotti, 2020).

Additionally, Trump's populist approach influenced Italian leaders, who adopted similar "put our country first" discourse. This has shifted attention away from big economic reforms that could fix unemployment in the long term, leaving Italy's job market, especially for youth, in a fragile state. (Petrucci, 2024). So, while the effects aren't direct, Trump's policies and political style have shaped the way Italy handles its own unemployment and labor challenges.



## Energy and environment

The energy and environmental protection domain represent an important policy area for both states, characterised by divergent approaches. Despite the regressive environmental stance of the Trump administration, Italy's approach to sustainability and environmental protection has remained largely unaffected. Unlike the U.S., where policies under Trump prioritized economic growth through fossil fuel expansion and the rollback of environmental regulations (Environmental Energy Brief, 2025), Italy has maintained a steadfast commitment to green values. This resilience stems from Italy's deeper entrenchment of environmental consciousness, shaped by both cultural attitudes and institutional frameworks. (Lai, O., 2022).

Italy's compliance with the United Nations Agenda 2030 and its alignment with European Union environmental policies, has provided a robust foundation for sustainable development. (United Nations, 2017). Initiatives like the European Green Deal and the country's constitutional amendment to protect the environment (Lai, O., 2022), demonstrate a strong commitment to ecological preservation, independently of U.S. influence. Furthermore, Italy's societal embrace of sustainability, evidenced by its promotion of renewable energy, waste reduction practices and green urban development, (European Parliament, 2021), reflects a national identity that is deeply tied to protecting natural resources.

In this context, the environmental direction of U.S. under Trump had little to no impact on Italy. While the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement might have slowed down global progress on climate action, it did not deter Italy from continuing on its path. On the contrary, Italy has continued to lead by example in areas like renewable energy adoption and climate adaptation strategies, showcasing how its green commitments are driven by domestic and European priorities rather than external political shifts. This divergence highlights the resilience and autonomy of Italian environmental policies in the face of international challenges.

## Conclusion

Trump's election has undeniably influenced Italy, shaping its trajectory in trade, human rights and national policy. His "America First" agenda disrupted global trade, indirectly challenging Italy's economic stability and compounding issues like youth unemployment. In human rights, Trump's divisive rhetoric and policies were echoed in Italy's political discourse, fueling debates on migration, minority rights and reproductive freedoms.

Despite these impacts, Italy's steadfast commitment to sustainability stands out. Unlike Trump's environmental rollbacks, Italy has upheld its dedication to green policies, driven by EU frameworks and a deeply rooted cultural emphasis on environmental protection. This divergence underscores Italy's resilience in maintaining autonomy in key areas.

Upon reflection, it is worth questioning whether Italy's response to these challenges has been truly forward-looking or simply reactive to external pressures. Has the country seized the opportunity to assert itself as a leader in shaping global norms, or has it merely sought to shield itself from the ripple effects of Trump's policies? As his potential return looms, Italy must confront the risk of over-reliance on EU mechanisms and ensure it has a coherent, independent strategy to navigate global uncertainties.

Ultimately, Trump's influence on Italy highlights the broader interconnectedness of global politics. As his potential return looms, the lessons from his past presidency remain vital, urging Italy to adapt while safeguarding its long-term priorities and values.

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# Lithuania

## The Impact of Donald Trump's 2016 Presidency on Lithuania

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### Abstract

Donald Trump's 2016 presidency marked a turning point in global politics, challenging traditional alliances and reshaping international norms. For Lithuania, a small yet strategically significant member of NATO and the EU, this period presented a blend of challenges and opportunities. This article examines the effects of Trump's policies on Lithuania across four key domains: economy and trade, security, human rights, and energy policy. It highlights Lithuania's adaptability in navigating trade disruptions caused by U.S. protectionism, its proactive response to NATO uncertainties, and its leadership in promoting human rights and democratic values in Eastern Europe. Additionally, the paper explores Lithuania's efforts to balance transatlantic energy cooperation with its renewable energy goals under the EU Green Deal. Lithuania's resilience and strategic initiatives during this period underscore its role as a dynamic actor in European and transatlantic affairs, offering valuable insights for small states managing complex global dynamics.

### Keywords

Lithuania-NATO Relations, US-Lithuania Trade Policies, Energy Security and LNG Imports, Human Rights and Democracy Promotion, Trump's Foreign Policy in Eastern Europe, Transatlantic Security and Economic Shifts

### Introduction

The election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States signalled a significant change in American foreign and domestic policy. For several nations, including Lithuania, his "America First" stance and unconventional trade and diplomatic tactics raised serious concerns about the potential weakening of NATO commitments. This, in turn, raised fears of increased Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, and the broader implications of Trump's perceived friendliness toward Vladimir Putin (Graham-Harrison, 2016).

As a small but strategically important member of NATO and the European Union, Lithuania has long depended on strong transatlantic alliances for political, economic, and security stability. However, the policies of the Trump administration upended long-standing coalitions, prompting questions about how they will affect smaller nations like Lithuania.

This article will analyze the potential effects of Trump's 2016 presidency on Lithuania. These will be analyzed through four themes: economy/trade, security politics, human rights, and environmental

policy. This article argues that the challenges posed by Trump's 2016 presidency provided Lithuania with an opportunity to demonstrate more independence as well as aiming to offer a thorough grasp of the impacts of Trump's previous policies on Lithuania's strategic interests by examining these factors.

## **Economy and Trade**

During his first administration, Trump's trade policies were characterised by protectionism and the prioritization of bilateral agreements. For example, in 2018 the Trump administration imposed tariffs on European steel and aluminium exports to the US (European Commission, 2018). While Lithuania's exports of these products were limited, the broader impact of the tariffs on EU agricultural and machinery exports also affected Lithuania's economy, leading to trade disruptions and higher costs for Lithuanian businesses (Trading Economics, n.d.).

Lithuania's chance to benefit from US-EU economic cooperation was delayed by Trump's mistrust of multilateral trade accords, which can be exemplified by the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The TTIP could have significantly benefited Lithuania's manufacturing and agriculture industries, while enhancing the competitiveness of Lithuanian food and machinery exports. Additionally, the TTIP would have enabled Lithuanian SMEs to join transatlantic supply networks, boosting economic resilience and innovation. Without the TTIP, Lithuania faced greater vulnerability to the economic risks of the US trade policies, and became more dependent on intra-EU trade.

Nevertheless, U.S. interests in cybersecurity and digital innovation provided opportunities for Lithuania's tech industry to grow (Ministry of the Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, 2024). In order to partially mitigate trade-related interruptions, Lithuania used its position as a regional leader and authority in these fields to draw in U.S. investments (Invest Lithuania, 2020).

## **Security Politics at National Level**

Important issues for Lithuanian national politics were raised by the Trump administration's stance on NATO and European security. Trump's frequent criticism of NATO members for failing to achieve the defense budget target of 2% GDP, stoked anxiety in Lithuania. Because Lithuania's security strategy is largely dependent on collective defense commitments, it increased its defense spending, hitting the 2% goal by 2018, and even reaching 2.52% in 2022 (Baltic Times, 2018; Delfi, 2022). However, uncertainty grew following Trump's conflicting position on NATO's Article 5, the foundation of collective defense. The administration's contradictory approach to Russia also sparked worries about possible changes in U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe and added to this uncertainty.

At the same time, Trump encouraged Lithuania to broaden its security alliances (Fox News, 2017). In response, a strategic shift toward deeper European security integration was made evident following the increased collaboration with Germany and other EU members. Initiatives, such as the creation of permanent NATO battalions in the Baltic region, and cooperative military training, highlighted this shift.

Furthermore, improved intelligence sharing and cooperative defense procurements were made possible by bilateral agreements with Germany. These efforts demonstrated Lithuania's commitment to strengthening EU ties while ensuring a strong deterrent against regional threats. Additionally, Lithuania ensured its security by actively participating in regional projects such as the Three Seas

Initiative, which gained U.S. support during Trump's presidency (Three Seas Initiative, 2019). The country also solidified its regional security network by fortifying its bilateral ties with neighboring Nordic nations.

## Human Rights Framework

Lithuania has positioned itself as an outspoken supporter of human rights, particularly confronting authoritarian regimes. While Trump's transactional approach to diplomacy often prioritized financial or geopolitical gains over human rights protection, Lithuania and other EU nations reaffirmed their commitments to global human rights frameworks, such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

Lithuania also demonstrated its involvement in the region by supporting pro-democratic movements in Russia and advocating for Belarusian democracy (Associated Press, 2024). It provides Belarusian activists with a forum to interact with foreign decision-makers and hosts opposition figures in exile, such as Svetlana Tikhanovskaya (Politico, 2020). Lithuania also imposed targeted sanctions against Belarusian officials accountable for violations of human rights (Associated Press, 2020). Additionally, it has fostered a network of democratic activists by providing funding and collaborating with non-governmental organizations to promote Russian civil society efforts (National Security Strategy, 2015).

Despite the global decline in support for human rights during Trump's presidency, these initiatives significantly demonstrated Lithuania's dedication to advancing democratic norms: the country increased the scope of its diplomatic activities inside the EU in order to create unified plans for dealing with violations of human rights in Eastern Europe and elsewhere (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020).

## Energy and Environmental Policies

Lithuania's energy policy aligns with EU goals for sustainability and renewable energy, focusing on reducing dependence on Russian energy (IEA, 2020). In contrast, Trump's administration prioritized fossil fuels and deregulation, creating potential conflicts in transatlantic energy partnerships (Columbia, 2025).

Lithuania had an opportunity to diversify its energy sources and reduce dependence on Russian energy imports with the United States' push for energy exports, and especially its liquefied natural gas (LNG). A key component of U.S. - Lithuania energy cooperation is the Klaipėda LNG terminal, an infrastructure project designed to reduce reliance on Russian gas. Lithuania was able to diversify its energy supplies and reduce its vulnerability to Russian geopolitical pressure by obtaining U.S. LNG imports. Lithuania's energy independence policy, which includes renewable energy investments and synchronization with Western Europe's grid, benefited from this collaboration. The enhanced energy cooperation with the U.S. further aligned Lithuania diplomatically with NATO priorities, connecting energy security with broader national defense objectives.

However, Lithuania's aspirations for renewable energy occasionally clashed with the Trump administration's support of fossil fuels and his repeal of environmental restrictions. Lithuania had to balance its commitment to EU climate goals with its transatlantic energy ties as the EU stepped up

its Green Deal programs. Debates over financing priorities revealed the friction, as EU climate-related subsidies occasionally collided with the U.S.-led energy security projects (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2016). The difficulties of striking a balance between national and international energy goals were further highlighted by Lithuania's attempts to incorporate regional renewable energy projects, such as wind farms in the Baltic Sea. With an estimated capacity that could provide sizable amounts of the nation's electricity needs, the Baltic Sea wind farms marked a significant step toward reaching Lithuania's renewable energy ambitions. These initiatives also supported the EU's climate targets, which call for 32% of energy to come from renewable sources by 2030 (Council of the European Union, 2018). However, Lithuania encountered difficulties securing investments and organizing cross-border infrastructure, especially when aligning its goals with neighbouring countries, such as Latvia and Estonia.

In addition to undoubtedly increasing Lithuania's energy independence, the integration of these projects could establish the country as a European leader in sustainable energy innovation.

## Conclusion

The new Trump administration presented Lithuania with a mix of opportunities and challenges. Politically, Trump's strategy on NATO highlighted the necessity of diversifying security alliances, while economically, the upheaval of established trading networks compelled Lithuania to adapt, and explore for new partnerships. Furthermore, the U.S.'s waning attention to human rights concerns left a leadership gap that catalyzed Lithuania's actions. In the energy sector, despite being reinforced by LNG imports, cooperation brought to light conflicts between EU sustainability goals and US fossil fuel priorities. These conflicts highlighted the complexities of balancing regional and transatlantic energy strategies.

Lithuania's reactions to Trump's policies demonstrate how resilient and flexible this tiny nation is in the current changing international environment. Lithuania has established itself as a competent and important player in European and transatlantic affairs by aggressively tackling obstacles and seizing new opportunities. Looking ahead, the period highlights how crucial proactive involvement and varied alliances are to creating a stable international order. Lithuania's experience under the Trump administration serves as a valuable example for other small states striving to balance national priorities with broader international dynamics in an ever-evolving political climate.

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# Poland

## Trump's Return to Office: What It Means for Poland, NATO, and Global Stability

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### Abstract

With Donald Trump's return to the U.S. presidency, Poland and other Eastern European allies are bracing for a new era of American foreign policy. Trump's 2016–2020 presidency brought a mix of unpredictability, direct diplomacy, and a shifting approach to NATO and global alliances.

For Poland, whose defence relies heavily on its alliance with the United States and NATO membership, Trump's victory introduces questions about the transatlantic partnership, NATO's commitment to European security, and potential adjustments in regional and global stability.

As Eastern Europe navigates these uncertainties, the region must prepare for a more transactional U.S. foreign policy while reinforcing intra-European solidarity. Poland, in particular, should explore strategies to enhance its defence capabilities and deepen ties with other NATO members, ensuring that its security interests are well safeguarded.

### Keywords

Transatlantic relations, Poland, Defence spending, Energy security, Multilateral cooperation

### Introduction

Poland's historic reliance on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its close partnership with the United States (US) might be tested under a potential recalibration of American foreign policy, following the results of last November's US presidential elections. The return of Donald Trump to the White House is expected to continue the previous mix of unpredictability and skepticism towards multilateral alliances, such as NATO, that marked his previous term in the office.

This introduces significant implications for Poland and its strategic security policy, as the durability of NATO's Eastern Flank and the country's regional security might be, once again, facing uncertainty under the new US Presidency.

This paper examines the potential ramifications of Trump's leadership on the Polish American strategic partnership, NATO's role in European defence, Poland's national defence policies, and its energy security strategy. It argues that Poland must adopt a proactive and adaptive approach,

balancing its reliance on NATO with increased self-sufficiency and diversified alliances.

Ultimately, Poland's actions in the coming years will influence not only its own security but also the stability of the transatlantic partnership and European defence as a whole.

## **The Polish-American Strategic Partnership: A Key Pillar Under New Scrutiny**

Poland's close relationship with the United States is a cornerstone of its security strategy, especially with increasing security threats from the east. Since joining NATO in 1999, Poland has benefited from strong American support through troop deployments, advanced training, and military exercises. ("U.S.-Polish Leaders Agree to Increased American Presence in Poland," 2023). Under previous administrations, Poland relied on the US as a primary deterrent against potential Russian aggression.

Trump's past positions on NATO have included calls for European countries to contribute a larger share of their defence spending, with suggestions that the US could limit its involvement if allies failed to meet certain spending thresholds. ("How much will Trump press Germany on military spending?", 2024). If his new administration follows a similar approach, Poland may face a new level of uncertainty regarding the extent of American military support. This could prompt Polish leaders to reconsider the balance of their security strategy, potentially pushing for more binding bilateral agreements or even a re-evaluation of European security arrangements outside of US involvement.

Moreover, Poland may feel renewed pressure to increase its defence expenditures even further, positioning itself as a proactive ally in Trump's eyes. While Poland already stands out within NATO for its high level of military spending, any hint of conditional US support may drive the country to seek greater self-reliance and expand collaboration with other European partners, particularly in regions where NATO's presence is weaker.

## **Poland and NATO's Eastern Flank: New Leadership in European Defence**

Poland's role in NATO has been essential to maintaining stability on the alliance's Eastern Flank, a frontline against potential Russian expansionism. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has fortified its presence in Poland and the Baltic states through the Enhanced Forward Presence initiative, stationing multinational battalions to deter aggression. ("NATO's Presence in the East: Necessary but Still Not Sufficient," 2024).

However, Trump's past statements suggesting NATO members should "pay their fair share" led some to question the durability of US support for NATO's defence of Eastern Europe. If his administration renews pressure on allies to increase their contributions, it could prompt Poland to advocate more strongly for an EU-led defence initiative or greater autonomy within NATO to ensure security against Russian activities.

Trump's scepticism toward multilateral organizations could also mean that Poland, a staunch supporter of NATO unity, might need to take on a larger leadership role within the alliance. Polish leaders may encourage other European nations to step up and share the burden of regional defence, reinforcing their own position as NATO's voice in Eastern Europe. Such an approach could help maintain the strength of NATO's presence on the Eastern Flank, even if Trump's administration adopts a more conditional stance on U.S. military involvement.

## Ramping Up Defence Spending and Enhancing Self-Sufficiency

Poland has already increased its defence budget, aiming to meet 4% of GDP by 2025 (“Poland to ramp up”, 2023), which is notably higher than NATO’s 2% target. This move highlights Poland’s awareness of the need for self-sufficiency in a volatile geopolitical environment, especially as US foreign policy becomes more unpredictable under Trump’s leadership. Investing in its own defence capabilities not only strengthens Poland’s position within NATO but also prepares the country to act independently if necessary.

With Trump’s return, Poland may accelerate its defence initiatives, focusing on new arms, advanced missile systems, cybersecurity measures, and enhanced infrastructure. These investments are crucial to achieving a level of military readiness that can respond effectively to any regional threats, especially if US support becomes more selective.

In addition to bolstering its own forces, Poland may seek out new regional defence collaborations. The Baltic states, for example, share Poland’s concerns about Russian aggression and may be willing to participate in joint security arrangements. By forming a regional alliance with countries that share similar security concerns, Poland can strengthen its position in Europe, creating a network of allies that reinforces NATO’s mission but which can also operate independently if needed.

## Energy Security and Independence: Poland’s Path to Resilience

For Poland, energy security is a critical component of national security. Poland has long sought to reduce its dependence on Russian gas, recognizing that energy dependence could lead to vulnerability in times of political tension. Projects like the Świnoujście LNG terminal and the Baltic Pipe—connecting Poland to Norwegian gas supplies—are essential to this effort, providing alternatives to Russian energy and enhancing Poland’s resilience to potential economic coercion. (“Baltic Pipe facilitates gas imports,” 2024).

Trump’s foreign policy may also place greater emphasis on energy independence, which aligns with Poland’s approach. With the U.S. focused on energy as a strategic asset, Poland can leverage American LNG exports to diversify its supply chain, strengthening both its economy and its energy independence. (“U.S. Energy Strategy” 2024). This collaboration could provide a mutual benefit, reducing Europe’s reliance on Russian energy and advancing Poland’s national security objectives.

Moreover, Poland’s drive for energy independence aligns it with other EU nations that are working to reduce their reliance on Russian gas and oil. By investing in renewable energy and exploring nuclear power, Poland not only supports EU climate goals but also reduces its exposure to external pressures. (“European energy transition: the Polish perspective,” 2024). In this way, Poland is working to secure a resilient energy policy that contributes to its long-term stability and strengthens its position within the EU.

## Global Implications of Trump’s Foreign Policy & Poland’s Strategic Calculations

Trump’s return to office suggests a continued shift toward a more multipolar world, where traditional alliances may be questioned, and new power dynamics could emerge. For Poland, situated in Eastern Europe and historically shaped by larger powers, the shift in US policy could bring both challenges and opportunities. Trump’s approach may encourage countries like Russia to test the boundaries of US and European commitments, creating potential flashpoints that could impact regional stability.

Poland's commitment to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and advocating for a strong European security policy highlight its role as a stabilizing force. However, if US support for NATO becomes more conditional, Poland may find itself in a more prominent leadership position within the alliance. Trump's emphasis on bilateral deals could prompt Poland to deepen ties not only with the U.S. but also with European and non-European partners, diversifying its alliances to ensure resilience.

A shifting global order may lead Poland to pursue new partnerships in Asia, the Middle East, or Africa, creating a wider network of security and economic alliances that can buffer against volatility. ("Poland's Strategic Partnerships in Asia," 2024). These adjustments would reflect Poland's proactive approach to navigating an evolving geopolitical landscape, enabling it to maintain its core interests of national security and regional stability while adapting to potential changes in American policy.

### **Conclusion: Navigating a Changing U.S. Foreign Policy**

Poland now faces a period of strategic recalibration as it adapts to Trump's return to the White House. While the US-Poland relationship remains foundational to Poland's security, Trump's administration could introduce new dynamics that require Polish leaders to seek additional avenues for collaboration and self-reliance. Strengthening ties within NATO, advocating for greater European defence integration, and investing in energy independence are some of the keyways Poland is preparing to navigate these uncertainties.

By embracing a proactive stance and leading initiatives within NATO, Poland is solidifying its role as a key player in Eastern European security. Its efforts to achieve energy independence and deepen regional alliances highlight its resilience in the face of potential policy shifts. Therefore, the choices Poland makes in the coming years will shape not only its own security but also the broader stability of Europe and the strength of the transatlantic alliance.

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# Romania

## From Washington to Bucharest: The Ripple Effects of Trump's Return

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### Abstract

Donald Trump's return to the presidency is set to reshape the global order, with significant implications for Romania, a NATO frontline state and strategic player in the Black Sea region. This article examines the multifaceted impact of Trump's policies on Romania's economy, security, energy sector, and human rights framework. The "America First" agenda, marked by protectionism and skepticism toward multilateralism, poses challenges to Romania's export-driven economy and its reliance on transatlantic trade agreements. Domestically, rising populist movements threaten democratic institutions and EU integration efforts, amplified by Trump's influence on global politics. In the energy sector, Trump's preference for fossil fuels and LNG exports could bolster Romania's energy security while complicating its alignment with the EU's Green Deal. Simultaneously, his approach to NATO and the Ukraine war raises concerns about regional security and the alliance's cohesion. Romania's human rights commitments, a cornerstone of its EU and NATO membership, also risk erosion under populist pressures and transactional U.S. foreign policies. As Romania navigates these challenges, it faces a critical juncture: whether to reinforce its democratic ideals and Western alliances or succumb to isolationist and populist currents. The decisions it makes will define its role within the transatlantic partnership and its position in the rapidly evolving global landscape.

### Keywords

Transatlantic Relations, Protectionism & Trade, Populism & Politics, NATO & Security, Energy & Economy, Human Rights & Democracy

### Introduction

What happens in Washington rarely stays in Washington. As Donald Trump reclaims the presidency, his policies are set to send ripples across the globe. His return to the White House has sparked renewed discussions about the direction of transatlantic relations, the stability of global security frameworks, and the future of economic cooperation. Trump's hallmark "America First" policies are set to redefine not only the priorities of the United States but also its engagement with key allies, including Romania. As a steadfast NATO frontline state and a pivotal player in the geopolitically sensitive Black Sea region, Romania has consistently depended on its partnership with the United States to ensure its security and bolster economic stability.

What does the re-election of Trump mean for a country at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and the West? Understanding the implication of Trump's return for Romania, and the West, is more pressing than ever as Romania navigates its role in a rapidly changing globe, influenced by its postponed elections,

political challenges, and the multifaceted far-reaching impact of U.S. policies on its economy, security, energy, and human rights. It is clear that Trump's presidency introduces a complex mix of opportunities and challenges for this vital alliance (Tăpălagă, 2024).

## Economy & Trade

Romania's economic ties with the U.S. have flourished in recent years, with American tech firms like Microsoft and Oracle establishing offices in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca and energy giants such as ExxonMobil previously partnering with OMV Petrol to explore Romania's vast Black Sea gas reserves (ExxonMobil, 2022). These collaborations highlight Romania's role as both a tech hub and an energy gateway for Europe. Romania, a key member of the European Union (EU), has used its strategic position to attract U.S. companies looking to expand into Europe's growing markets. However, with Donald Trump's return to the White House, there is renewed concern over the potential implications of his protectionist policies, particularly tariffs and trade restrictions. Trump's "America First" policies, a defining feature of his first term, aimed to reshape the global trade landscape. Often at the expense of global trade agreements, they focused on reducing the U.S. trade deficit and bringing manufacturing jobs back to the U.S.. Romania's open economy thrives on exports, from Dacia cars rolling off assembly lines in Mioveni to high-tech software solutions developed in Timișoara. Protectionist measures could put these industries at risk, shrinking their access to key U.S. markets (Pinsent Masons, 2024, & Stehrer, 2024). Romania could gain significantly from the EU's trade agreements with the U.S., like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), designed to boost trade and lower tariffs. Nevertheless, Trump's administration has expressed disinterest in such agreements, especially those negotiated under previous administrations (Schmucker, 2024). This could directly impact Romania, as it relies on the EU's trade agreements to access the U.S. market. The adoption of a more aggressive protectionist stance could not only affect Romania's ability to export goods but could also disrupt foreign direct investment (FDI) that relies on open market access.

Romania's economic ties with the United States have strengthened in recent years, particularly in the technology and energy sectors. In 2022, Romania's IT industry was valued at €4.9 billion, reflecting its substantial growth and importance to the national economy (Statista, 2024). In the energy sector, U.S. companies have shown interest in Romania's Black Sea gas reserves. For instance, ExxonMobil has been involved in exploring these offshore resources, highlighting Romania's potential as an energy gateway for Europe (ExxonMobil, 2022). These collaborations underscore the multifaceted nature of U.S.-Romania economic relations beyond traditional security alliances.

Even so, the re-election of President Trump introduces uncertainties. His "America First" policies, including potential renegotiations of trade agreements and the imposition of tariffs, could impact Romania's export-driven economy. Romania's exports of goods and services accounted for 42.54% of its GDP in 2022 (WITS, 2022). Key exports to the U.S. include steel ingots, rubber tyres, and iron pipes (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022). The imposition of tariffs on these goods could make Romanian products less competitive in the U.S. market, potentially leading to a decline in export revenues and affecting domestic industries reliant on these sectors (World Integrated Trade Solution, 2022).

Romania's response to these changes could be twofold. On one hand, Romania could leverage its strategic position within the EU to advocate for a united front in maintaining or renegotiating trade agreements with the U.S.. In this case, Romania could work with other EU member states to ensure that the benefits of transatlantic trade continue.

On the other hand, Romania may also need to focus on strengthening its bilateral relations with the U.S., particularly in sectors like IT, energy, and defence, where the U.S. has a vested interest in Romania's strategic location and resources.

## National Politics

Romania finds itself at delicate crossroads, grappling with the fallout of postponed elections and the growing strain of political uncertainty. Trump's return adds an unpredictable dimension to Romania's political climate, challenging its democratic institutions and complicating its response to global uncertainties. Populist voices continue to grow louder, and governance challenges continue to mount as Romania's stability and its transatlantic ties are at a highly vulnerable position. How Romania manages this precarious balance could determine the strength and direction of its ties with the United States in the years to come.

At home, the rise of populism has been embodied by figures like Călin Georgescu, a polarizing leader whose provocative rhetoric champions national sovereignty while casting suspicion on multinational organisations (Politico, 2024) - a stance that echoes Trump's approach. A former UN official turned outspoken nationalist, Georgescu gained attention for his controversial statements and willingness to challenge the status quo, making him a focal point in the media, particularly in discussions about populism and Romania's political future. His message strongly resonates with a frustrated population, weary of inefficient political systems and what they perceive as the growing interference of international organisations like the EU (France 24, 2024).

However, Georgescu's rhetoric poses significant risks for Romania's stability and democratic values. By undermining trust in multilateral frameworks and advocating for policies that prioritise isolationist or nationalist goals, he could weaken Romania's ties with the EU and NATO, two cornerstones of its security and economic stability. Moreover, his populist stance, bolstered by Trump's global influence, risks normalising anti-democratic tendencies and deepening societal divisions. If these narratives gain traction, they could derail Romania's reform efforts, strain its international partnerships, and embolden other populist movements in the region. This aligns dangerously with broader populist trends that exploit public discontent, paving the way for weakened governance and reduced accountability (Paun, 2024).

With the war in Ukraine reigniting memories of Cold War tensions, Romania's role as a NATO frontline state echoes its historic position as a bulwark against Soviet influence. Today, its soldiers patrol the Black Sea coast, just miles from Russian military activity, underscoring the country's strategic importance. The country's defence strategy is deeply intertwined with the alliance's collective strength and the steadfast support of the United States, and it relies heavily on its collective response to deter Russian aggression. Trump's claim that he could quickly end the war in Ukraine has raised eyebrows across Eastern Europe, especially in Romania. The boldness of such claims raises critical questions about the means he might employ - whether through diplomacy, concessions, or a recalibration of alliances - and the broader ramifications for the region. Coupled with his well-documented skepticism toward NATO, these positions cast a shadow over Romania's strategic security framework. Any erosion of NATO's cohesion under Trump's leadership could amplify regional vulnerabilities and test Romania's ability to safeguard its national security.

Adding to these concerns are Romania's long-standing governance challenges, which have only been magnified by the current political impasse. Fragile coalitions, frequent government changes, and a lack of cohesive policymaking have left the country struggling to maintain stability. This leadership vacuum, exacerbated by delayed elections, has deepened public frustration and created fertile ground for populist narratives to flourish.

Corruption remains the Achilles' heel of Romania's governance, eating away at public trust and leaving citizens disillusioned with the political system. Despite years of reform efforts and civic activism, high-profile scandals and political interference in key institutions, particularly the judiciary, have undermined progress. Judicial independence, a cornerstone of democracy, faces growing

challenges, raising serious concerns about the nation's ability to uphold the rule of law.

As Romania navigates these tumultuous times, the path it chooses will have far-reaching consequences. With the global political landscape shifting and populist sentiment rising, Romania's commitment to its democratic ideal and international partnerships will be highly scrutinised. In a world where Trump's leadership sets a precedent for challenging international norms, Romania must confront its own vulnerabilities and decide whether it will move forward with a vision of stability and reform or allow populism to shape its future (Marinescu, 2024).

## Human Rights Framework

As Romania continues its journey with the European Union and NATO, its human rights landscape remains a key area of focus, both domestically and on the international stage. While Romania has made notable progress in strengthening its democratic institutions and upholding human rights, recent political shifts, both at home and abroad, pose significant challenges. With Trump's victory, Romania's human rights policies could face increased pressure, particularly as his global rhetoric has often undermined international human rights frameworks and empowered populist agendas.

Trump's skepticism toward international human rights organisations, combined with his preference for transactional foreign policies, could have a noticeable impact on Romania (HWR, 2024). One could envision a scenario in which Romania, prioritizing economic and security ties with the U.S., overlooks its human rights commitments, echoing instances seen elsewhere. For example, during the Cold War, U.S. alliances with authoritarian regimes like Pinochet's Chile prioritized strategic interests over democratic values and human rights concerns. Similarly, Romania could find itself in a situation where economic agreements and security cooperation with the U.S. are heralded as achievements, while issues like LGBTQ+ rights or minority protections are sidelined in public discourse. Such a shift in priorities would underscore a troubling trade-off between immediate national interests and broader commitments to human rights, particularly under the influence of Trump's transactional foreign policy approach. Alternatively, this shift could lead to friction with the EU, which strongly emphasizes the protection of human rights among its member states.

Trump's reduced focus on global human rights could also embolden populist movements in Romania, such as the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR). Known for its nationalist and conservative stances, AUR has often challenged EU policies and framed human rights discussions, particularly those involving LGBTQ+ rights and minority protections, as threats to traditional Romanian values (Marinescu, 2024). By adopting Trump's approach as a model, these groups could further polarise the political landscape, undermining Romania's commitment to pro-European and democratic principles (Human Rights Watch, 2024, & State Department, 2024).

As a member of both NATO and the EU, Romania is held to high standards in upholding human rights. NATO emphasizes shared democratic values, while the EU places significant focus on human rights protections as a cornerstone of its governance. How Romania maintains its reputation as a human rights advocate amid these competing pressures will not only define its international standing but also influence its role within the transatlantic alliance. The country's ability to uphold these commitments, even in the face of shifting U.S. policies, will be a critical test of its democratic resilience.

## Energy & Environmental Politics

Romania's energy security and environmental goals are deeply influenced by both regional geopolitics and evolving global priorities. As it strives to reduce dependence on Russian gas and

invest in renewable energy (PÁL, SZÁSZI & VARGA, 2020), Romania must navigate a more complex terrain with Trump's return to power, where fossil fuels and liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports dominate U.S. policy. These shifting dynamics could reshape Romania's energy partnerships and challenge its path toward a sustainable future.

One of the most significant opportunities lies in the potential for increased U.S. LNG exports to Europe, including Romania. Imagine a tanker loaded with U.S. liquefied natural gas docking at Constanța, a symbol of Romania's shift away from Russian gas. Trump's pro-fossil fuels policies could make such scenes more common, reshaping the country's energy strategy while stirring debates about its environmental goals. The expansion of energy diversification through the U.S. LNG would enhance Romania's energy security, reducing its reliance on Russian gas - a crucial objective, especially given the ongoing geopolitical tensions with Russia (Energynews, 2024, & Volcovici, 2024). The BRUA (Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary-Austria) pipeline project, which could facilitate the transport of LNG from the U.S. to Romania, holds promise for strengthening Romania's energy ties with the U.S., contributing to both regional stability and energy independence.

However, this shift towards fossil fuels presents challenges for Romania, especially in relation to its membership in the EU. The EU's ambitious Green Deal, aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050, places heavy emphasis on reducing reliance on fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy. Increased imports of U.S. LNG could complicate Romania's efforts to meet these decarbonization goals, as natural gas - while cleaner than coal - remains a fossil fuel. Romania faces a delicate balancing act: reaping the short-term benefits of the U.S. LNG while staying on course with its long-sustainability goals.

Furthermore, Trump's withdrawal from global climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, signals a broader lack of commitment to international climate action (Schonhardt, 2024). As the global momentum for climate action weakens, Romania might face growing skepticism about the long-term viability of green energy initiatives. If the U.S. leads by example in deprioritizing climate agreements, Romania could question the effectiveness of investing in renewable energy projects, especially if it faces short-term energy security pressures.

## Conclusion

As Donald Trump reclaims the presidency, Romania faces a complex web of opportunities and challenges that will significantly impact its domestic and international standing. From trade and economic ties to human rights and energy security, Romania's decisions in the coming years will determine its path as a key player in both European and transatlantic affairs. Trump's policies - rooted in protectionism, skepticism towards international cooperation, and prioritization of fossil fuels - pose a direct challenge to Romania's strategic goals (Cingani, 2024, Stehrer, 2024, & Schonhardt, 2024). Yet, they also open the door for new energy partnerships and the potential for a recalibration of its alliances.

Romania stands at a crossroads once again, much like it did after the fall of communism. The choices it makes now - to uphold democratic ideals or give in to populist pressures - will shape its identity for decades to come, defining whether it remains a trusted Western ally or veers toward political isolation. With the future of NATO, trade agreements, and climate action hanging in the balance, Romania will need to be agile, balancing its EU commitments with its evolving relationship with the U.S. The decision made in the years ahead will not only define Romania's future but also its role in the broader Western alliance.

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# Eastern Europe

## What does Donald Trump's victory mean for Eastern Europe's far-right?

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### Abstract

This article presents the impact of Donald Trump's return to the White House on the far-right in Eastern Europe.

In states like Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria, where dissatisfaction with EU integration and economic difficulties are common, Trump's populist rhetoric—which includes criticism of the EU and support for nationalism—has gained traction.

His second term in office will probably give the far-right in the area more confidence, which will strengthen authoritarian measures and Euroscepticism.

The article also highlights the differences between Eastern and Western European far-right dynamics, suggesting that Trump's influence could further divide the EU and strengthen populist governments in Eastern Europe.

### Keywords

Eastern Europe, far-right evolution, Trump's influence, Immigration, Economic protectionism

### Introduction

On the 5th of November, everything became clear, Donald Trump returned to the White House. As many sources indicate, this election heralds a future of American unpredictability. Western European countries in voting intention on 2024 US presidential election with significant support bet on Kamala Harris - Germany 85%, Sweden 90%, Belgium 78% (Lethinen, 2024). In comparison, some Eastern European countries showed sympathy and approval for Donald Trump. These countries include Hungary, where Trump received as much as 62% of approval, Slovakia 52% and Bulgaria 58% (Lethinen, 2024).

The spectrum that links these countries is not only membership in the European Union, but above all growing populism, flawed democracy and the same anti-Brussels rhetoric. The recent presidency of Donald Trump has worsened relations between Brussels and Washington. Trump has repeatedly stressed that he is not a "fan of the EU", resulting in a 'crash' between the theoretical frameworks of the EU and the US.

However, he has found his supporters among EU Member states. A common feature of the Eastern European states listed above is the stammering populism and the welcome of Trump's return. This article examines how Donald Trump's return to power could embolden far-right movements in Eastern Europe, exacerbate Euroscepticism, and reshape the EU's relationship with populist governments in the region.

## Trump 1 vs Trump 2

Donald Trump's first presidency has brought great chaos and a general lack of understanding between Europe and the US. The quote "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus" aptly captures the nature of the relationship between the United States and the European Union during Donald Trump's first presidency (Steffenson and Smith, 2023, p. 389). Not only has Donald Trump repeatedly stressed that he is "not a fan of the EU", but he has also claimed that 'the UK was so smart in getting out of the EU' (The Guardian, 2017). During his first presidency, the growing and deepening populism began to spread. He exemplified the resurgence of right-wing populism, blending nationalist and anti-globalist themes. His government brought to light populist leaders across the world also in Eastern Europe.

Donald Trump has certainly done his homework and his 2nd presidency will be more assertive, mainly in terms of foreign relations (for example in regards to China, Palestine, and Ukraine). Many countries, including EU member states, will seek to deepen bilateral relations with the US. The political leaders and politicians who supported Trump during his first presidency will continue to do so over the next four years by clinging to the benefits of this friendship.

## Eastern European far-right and Donald Trump's Second Presidency

Although recent crises have compelled radical right parties to moderate their Euroscepticism, the upcoming Trump administration will likely undo that trend and give far-right and illiberal groups more confidence. As mentioned above, Donald Trump has taken a negative stance towards the EU and its integration. Trump's increased interactions with authoritarian European leaders since 2020 point to a transatlantic loyalty that will support his 2024 campaign and potential presidency (Samaras, 2024). In addition, a major problem is the deepening of the aforementioned populism, and thus Euroscepticism. According to the Authoritarian Populism Index- right-wing populist parties (within the EU) have grown steadily over the past thirty years (Authoritarian Populism Index, 2024, p. 55).

Donald Trump has had a decisive impact on Euroscepticism in Europe: Trump often referred to the EU as a "foe" in trade, accusing it of unfairly targeting the US, and the strategy of his government weakened the EU's standing as a single entity. A more divided Europe was encouraged by Trump's immigration and protectionism which were in line with Euroscepticism. Trump fervently backed Brexit, hailing it as a return to independence and sovereignty from the EU.

Analysing Donald Trump's statements, electoral plans, and relations with European politicians suggests that his next term will mirror the key aspects of his first term. Trump will help the far-right parties in Europe by increasing their electability due to their strong ties to him, in addition to normalizing and amplifying their ideologies.

Additionally, the presidency currently in the Council of the European Union holds Hungary. The government in Budapest has set the motto "Make Europe Great Again", 'which refers to both an active and proactive Presidency and to the fact that member states are stronger together than apart' (Hu24 EU, 2024).

The motto is an inspiration taken from Trump's "Make America Great Again", and it is undoubtedly a signal and an 'encouragement' for the new president of the United States of America to actively contribute to politics in Brussels. Moreover, the motto and the Hungarian presidency itself, which falls during the US elections and the formation of a new government, could harm the EU's already existing problems with cohesion and traditional liberal democratic norms.

Donald Trump's victory could potentially influence the far-right Eastern European member states in the narrative on non-immigration and the refugee crisis (border defence, walls, deportations). Trump's immigration policy might have the biggest impact on those states. Geographical and national origins are two stark differences between irregular migration patterns in the US and Europe, but European populists might not care (Pierini, 2024). Hence, in the coming years, Fico, Orban or Simion will be able to promise their policies based on the example of one of the most important political actors. In addition, Donald Trump often relies on disinformation in his speeches, which can be exploited by Eastern Europe's far-right on matters such as green transition, and refugee crisis, core issues of their rhetoric. A powerful friendship could not only lead to an increase in general populism in Europe but could also lead to a crash in opinion on defence (Russia as friend or foe) and support for the Ukraine.

As indicated by the European Data Journalism Network, in the last European elections, the highest abstention rates could be found in Eastern Europe. In addition to that, most European Eastern states (Poland, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria etc.) have never achieved more than 50 per cent turnout (European Data Journalism Network, 2024). Voter disillusionment, the difficulty of interacting with the electorate, and the effects of populist movements that aim to capitalize on sentiments of discontent and estrangement from the political establishment are the common themes that connect the low turnout in Eastern Europe with the political environment surrounding Donald Trump.

## **Eastern vs Western European far-right and second presidency of Donald Trump**

Many Eastern European nations may be more open to future Donald Trump's statements and policies because of the stark differences between their political and social landscapes and those of Western Europe. Western European politics are often more stable, with stronger pro-European Union and pro-democracy traditions, even if populism has also found traction there (e.g., Marine Le Pen in France, Matteo Salvini in Italy). Trump's rhetoric is less popular in Western European nations due to the wider ideological gap between populist and traditional centre-right or centre-left parties.

The effects of communism are still being felt in many Eastern European nations, where there is still a great degree of economic disparity, annoyance with corruption, and discontent with the rate of political and economic change. Economic issues including low incomes, joblessness, and modernization difficulties foster an environment that is conducive to populist appeals.

Eastern Europeans who feel left behind by the EU's economic policies and the global free market system are especially drawn to Trump's rhetoric of economic protectionism, job creation, and a strong opposition to globalization. Trump's message has a particular appeal to Eastern Europeans who feel left behind by the EU's economic policies and the global free market system.

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# European Union

## Exploring the Potential Effects of a Second Trump Term on the European Union

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### Abstract

The partnership between the United States and the European Union has long been a cornerstone of global diplomacy, characterized by shared values, economic interdependence, and robust security cooperation. However, with the election of President Donald Trump for a second term, the transatlantic relationship faces significant challenges. Trump's unpredictable foreign policy approach, skepticism towards multilateralism, and emphasis on unilateral actions raise concerns about the stability of this vital partnership. This paper explores the potential implications of Trump's re-election on the EU, particularly in areas of multilateralism, defence, energy, and trade. It highlights the growing vulnerability of the EU, given Trump's stance on NATO, climate change, energy security, and trade tariffs. The paper argues that the EU must embrace strategic autonomy and greater independence from the US to ensure its resilience and relevance in an increasingly multipolar world order. As global power dynamics shift, Europe must adapt to a changing geopolitical landscape and assert itself as a proactive, autonomous player on the international stage.

### Keywords

Transatlantic Relations, Multilateralism and Global Governance, European Strategic Autonomy, Energy Security and Climate Policy, Trade and Economic Protectionism, Geopolitical Stability and NATO

### Introduction

The partnership between the United States and the European Union has been a cornerstone of international relations for over six decades, built on a foundation of shared values, robust economic ties, and a deep-seated trust. Together, they stand as leaders in international diplomacy, playing pivotal roles in global trade and security (European External Action Service, n.d.). As each other's foremost strategic partners, their cooperation has historically enabled them to tackle issues ranging from economic crises to security threats. However, with the election of President Donald Trump for a second time, certain key aspects of this relationship are being called into question.

The Trump administration's unpredictable foreign policy approach, its scepticism towards multilateralism, and a growing tendency to prioritise unilateral actions, could undermine the collaborative frameworks essential for transatlantic cooperation.

There is a growing sentiment in Europe that a second Trump term will be more divisive, obstructionist and anti-competitive when compared to the first and will have even more consequential impacts on the global order. Trump's sensationalist and radical views are likely to exacerbate existing tensions within transatlantic relations as his administration looks to adopt a more aggressive stance on trade and tariffs, undermining the long-standing economic partnership between the two entities. Furthermore, there remain fears that Trump's often unpredictable approach to foreign policy may further destabilise geopolitical alliances and worsen security issues, especially in Eastern Europe. These questions of defence, energy, especially in light of his conservative and sceptic views on climate change, and trade, will be explored to consider the impact of Trump's election on the European Union.

## Multilateralism and Defence

We are currently in a state of geopolitical upheaval, in the midst of the creation of a new world order, owing to significant shifts in power balances and the emergence of non-western powers. Today's geopolitical landscape is characterised by increasing tensions, conflicts and a drastic reduction of faith in the ability of existing multilateral institutions to effectively address global challenges.

Enter Trump. Again.

President Trump has made no secret about his views on multilateral institutions, making it clear that he questions the need for America to fully engage, cooperate with or adhere to their mandates. His approach of selective multilateralism is exemplified, *inter alia*, in his administration's 'America First' doctrine (Policy Center for the New South, 2021). In the face of weakening US global leadership and the emergence of new powers including China, India and Brazil, this approach promises to prioritise unilateral actions that favour national interests over collaborative efforts, and propagates scepticism of global governance structures. In the past, this stance manifested in promises to reduce the US' financial contributions to multilateral institutions and significant withdrawals from key agreements including the Paris Climate Agreement, the Iran Nuclear Deal and the Open Skies Treaty amongst others. Such significant decline in US support and participation has reshaped the landscape of international relations.

A particular concern arises given the nature of multilateralism and the international legal system itself. Since these are largely predicated on the voluntary cooperation of States, the following question arises: if the US, a global superpower that has long championed democracy and the rule of law, can so openly violate international norms, what is stopping other nations from doing the same? The blatant disregard for the system of global cooperation by a state like the US calls into question the very future of multilateralism itself.

With reference to the effects on the European Union, such a view coupled with Trump's often unpredictable and volatile foreign policy efforts, intensifies doubt over the US' reliability as a global partner, especially in relation to defence. This is particularly concerning as with a weakened transatlantic alliance, other powerful global actors may recognise an opportunity for expanded global influence. This approach to foreign policy and defence has important consequences to consider for the bloc.

Given the European Union's borders' proximity to ongoing conflicts, it is undeniable that the effects thereof are felt more greatly in the European continent when compared to America, which is shielded and insulated by the protection afforded by the Atlantic Ocean. Trump has promised to instantaneously end the war between Russia and Ukraine once he steps into office and therefore, America's foreign policy action in this regard will resonate profoundly in Europe which is more directly affected by the instability.

Accordingly, we must consider the disproportionate influence this will have on Eastern European countries that remain vulnerable to aggression from Russia. This is concerning given the aforementioned withdrawal of the US from multilateral agreements and institutions, Trump's transactional and unpredictable approach to NATO, and fluctuating commitments to collective defence. Such fragmented security arrangements will undoubtedly leave the EU more vulnerable to external threats and could potentially embolden hostile actors, especially along the Union's eastern flank.

While this situation presents numerous challenges for the EU, it also highlights the Union's significant dependency on the US for its defence and underscores the urgent need for greater strategic autonomy. In light of rising geopolitical tensions and the unpredictability introduced by Trump's policies, the EU must recognise that it is geographically and historically situated at the forefront of these conflicts. It will therefore inevitably face the repercussions of instability in neighbouring regions and the effects of the actions taken by global powers to address such instability. (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2024a; European Council on Foreign Relations, 2024b). Therefore, it is crucial for the EU to take the responsibility for its defence and pursue independent initiatives and enhance military cooperation among member states to effectively address emerging transnational threats and ensure its security.

## Energy

While the world attempts to navigate towards net-zero emissions and carbon neutrality, Trump does not subscribe to the same mentality. Trump is a self-proclaimed climate sceptic (Carbon Brief, 2016). He fails to recognise climate change as a problem and makes it clear that America is not willing to shoulder their share of the cost for this "hoax". He has outspokenly called green energy a scam and under his previous administration he withdrew from the 2015 Paris Climate Accords. Once again, he has fulfilled his promise and withdrawn from this agreement by executive order as one of his first official acts of his second term. (National Public Radio, 2025)

This is slated to be coupled with a total embrace of boosts in oil and gas extraction and the shipping of fossil fuels abroad (Politico, 2024). In fact, as part of Project 2025, the comprehensive conservative roadmap that will serve to guide Trump's policy formation for the next four years, there exist proposals to stop the "war on oil and gas" (Climate News, 2024) in order to ensure energy security. The consequences of this could be profound.

Firstly, a renewed emphasis on fossil fuel extraction is likely to exacerbate climate change, making it more difficult for countries, including those in the EU, to achieve their climate targets under the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, a retreat from renewable energy initiatives could slow down the transition to sustainable technologies in both the US and Europe, hindering long-term energy security. This state of play is particularly concerning when considering the developments taking place under the umbrella of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Many criticised the outcome of the 29th Edition of the Conference of the Parties (COP) for the lack of progress on the major commitment made in COP28, namely 'a transition away from fossil fuels' (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2023).

Achieving this target will clearly lack support from the Trump administration, especially given his aforementioned views on multilateral cooperation when collective aims fail to align with what he believes to be America's best interest.

What is particularly concerning is the proliferation of this mentality due to Trump's reelection. President Trump in office has the potential to drive a new sense of unity amongst other leaders to reduce the importance and investments being made in green energy and climate change mitigation and reduction efforts. Currently, the European Union has transformed key areas of climate and energy legislation as part of the Green Deal which aims to make the 27-member bloc climate neutral by 2050 through visionary and ambitious policy that cements the Union as world's climate leader (Clean Energy Wire, 2024).

However, despite such intentions, it seems that Trump in office is likely to embolden right-wing populists who continue to challenge Europe's climate efforts and who argue that focus on sustainability in this regard is hindering Europe's competitiveness. Should this occur, it will manifest against a backdrop of climate backlash that is already being felt across the Union. Following the 2024 European Parliament elections, we observed a substantial reduction of the 'green wave' experienced in 2019, marking a clear ideological shift from left to right. Such a result has led to concerns about how this may lead to mainstream parties toning down their ambition to achieve collective climate goals.

There are also questions as to how Trump's election, and the outcome of the European Parliament election, will redefine the climate agenda, and, in particular, impact energy security (Carbon Brief, 2024). Similarly to defence, the EU has become increasingly reliant on the supply of liquefied natural gas from the US to meet its demands, especially following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the resultant reduction in Russia gas imports. This dependency is creating a growing vulnerability for the EU in light of policy shifts following Trump's election, raising concerns that the US may leverage this reliance to extract concessions in key areas including trade. Such a dynamic risks firstly diminishing the EU's geopolitical relevance due to its limited influence over energy prices and trade flows, secondly, making it less resilient to emerging natural and geopolitical threats and thirdly, placing it further under the thumb of the Americans. This situation is also subject to worsening given the many question marks that still surround Trump's tariff policies (Strategic Perspectives, 2024).

Additionally, increased competition for energy resources could heighten geopolitical tensions, particularly with major players like Russia and OPEC nations, destabilising energy markets. For Europe, this could mean rising energy prices and supply uncertainties as the US prioritises its own fossil fuel exports over stable partnerships.

In a different realm, we once again note that the European Union cannot afford a passive approach which relies on external powers for its energy security. Trump's election underscores the need for EU efforts towards more independence both from the US and from Russia in this regard. The ongoing geopolitical shifts highlight the necessity for Europe to diversify its energy sources, improve energy efficiency, and accelerate the transition to renewables.

## Trade

One of the major consequences of Trump's return to presidency on the EU is the impact on US-EU trade relations. Throughout his campaign, Trump was clear that the EU would not be exempt from US trade policy decisions once he is back in office. In fact, his administration has indicated a strong

stance on introducing a potential baseline tariff of 10–20% on imports from various countries, including the European Union. Therefore, while Trump was clear and categorical about his position regarding tariffs and limitations on Chinese goods, there remains uncertainty about his plans for the EU. (Collinson, 2024).

Trump's 'America First' protectionist approach aims to reduce the US trade deficit and protect American jobs and products. He has accused Europe of taking advantage of the trade conditions currently in place and stated that the EU does not import enough US goods. In fact, in a recent statement, Trump threatened that if the EU does not significantly increase its purchases of US oil and gas, it would face substantial tariffs on all imports (Euractiv, 2024). This rhetoric signals a return to aggressive trade negotiations reminiscent of his first term, reigniting trade tensions with the EU (Politico, 2024). The proposed tariffs could lead to a significant economic downturn for Europe. Analysts predict that Trump's tariffs could erode Europe's GDP by up to 1.5%, translating into potential losses of around €260 billion (Euronews, 2024). This uncertainty regarding Trump's trade policy may also result in a European response of curtailing capital expenditure. This is a pattern that was observed under the previous Trump administration, especially by firms with high exposure to US tariffs, which cut investment by almost 2 percentage points (Euronews, 2024).

## Conclusion

It is clear that a Trump Presidency means Europe must embrace strategic sovereignty on multiple fronts to ensure resilience in the face of unpredictable American policies. In the face of unilateralism and a tendency to disregard collaborative international efforts, Europe needs to respond to a Trump administration by preparing to stand on its own two feet. It must navigate the complexities of this evolving geopolitical landscape without being swayed by perceived American supremacy.

Embracing strategic autonomy is not just an option but a necessity. By focusing on independence and crafting robust strategies, Europe can navigate the uncertainties of a Trump presidency with confidence, ensuring it remains a significant player on the global stage without succumbing to external dominance or coercion.

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# NATO

## An Upcoming Storm over the Atlantic: the Implications of Trump's re-election for NATO

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### Abstract

The re-election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2024 represents a potential turning point for the future of NATO. Known for his "America First" approach, Trump's first term cast a shadow of uncertainty over NATO, with his critiques on the alliance's spending, purpose, and U.S. commitment.

This paper explores the implications of Trump's presidency on NATO, analyzing his stance on defense spending, burden-sharing, and U.S. leadership, and examining the alliance's response to these challenges. While NATO demonstrated resilience, Trump's rhetoric and policies forced the organization to adapt, increasing defense spending and reassessing its strategic priorities.

As Trump embarks on a second term, his isolationist tendencies and continued emphasis on financial commitments could further test NATO's unity and relevance, particularly in light of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and rising global tensions.

This paper assesses the potential future challenges NATO faces under a second Trump administration and discusses how the alliance might navigate these uncertainties to maintain its core role in transatlantic security.

### Keywords

NATO, Donald Trump, Transatlantic Security, Protectionism, Foreign Policy Priorities, Security & Defense, Europe and the United States of America, NATO's future challenges

### Introduction

The results of the 2024 U.S. presidential election have ushered in a seismic shift in global geopolitics with the return of Donald Trump to the White House. Known for his provocative nature, unconventional approach to foreign policy and for pushing his "America First" agenda, Trump's victory signals potential turbulence for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). During his first term, Trump was known for questioning NATO's relevance and for criticizing allied nations within the organization for insufficient defence spending, repeatedly hinting at reducing U.S. commitments to the alliance. Now, as he embarks on a second term, these unresolved tensions could resurface, placing NATO at a critical crossroad.

NATO is long regarded as the cornerstone of transatlantic security, being a paramount organisation for many states when it comes to security and defence. This organisation has faced different challenges in recent years, since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This article will go over the implications of Trump's re-election for NATO and, in order to provide a comprehensive analysis, it will provide an overview of Trump's actions and stances regarding NATO over his first term between 2017 and 2021. Finally, it will analyse Trump's current foreign policy agenda, and its implications for NATO.

## **NATO During Donald Trump's First Term**

Right from the beginning of his 2016 campaign, Trump made his scepticism of NATO very clear: describing the alliance as being "obsolete" (Parker, 2016), he asserted that NATO had failed to stop emerging threats such as terrorism and the rise of China. Moreover, Trump constantly criticized NATO's members for failing to meet their financial commitments (Diamond, 2017), which, as per NATO's defence spending guidelines, established in 2006 that member states should allocate at least 2% of their GDP to defence. By the time Trump took office, only five of the 28 member countries met this benchmark, the virtuous club formed by the US, the United Kingdom, Greece, Poland and Estonia (Bremmer, 2017).

Trump's rhetoric on burden-sharing reflected U.S. concerns that predated his presidency, but his approach was uniquely confrontational. He went as far as to claim that the U.S. was paying to protect Europe, while the Europeans were taking advantage. For instance, he accused Germany of being "totally controlled" by Russia due to its energy dependence, and harshly criticized his allies for "taking advantage" of American taxpayers (Diamond, 2018). His first term represented a critical juncture point for NATO, as Trump's presidency fundamentally challenged the alliance's value, governance structure, and purpose in a rapidly shifting global security landscape.

Trump's first NATO summit in 2017 set the tone for his administration's approach regarding the alliance. In a stark departure from his predecessors, he declined to explicitly affirm the importance of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the cornerstone of NATO's collective defence principle (Herszenhorn, 2017). Although he eventually clarified his support for this article, his omission at the summit alarmed European leaders and raised concerns about U.S. reliability. Another glaring issue was Trump's ambivalent stance on Russia: while NATO had intensified its deterrence measures in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Trump's overtures to Vladimir Putin (Gordon and Chokshi, 2017) created uncertainty about his administration's intentions.

A harsh criticism made towards the Trump administration came when Turkey, a key member of NATO, purchased the Russian-made S-400 missile defence system. This move violated NATO's interoperability standards and prompted U.S. sanctions (Gall, 2018), as Trump's administration faced criticism for failing to mediate the crisis effectively. Furthermore, Trump's decision to unilaterally reduce U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan (Stewart and Ali, 2020), a NATO-led mission, without prior consultation with allies, disrupted the alliance's cohesion. While consistent with his broader goal of ending so-called "endless wars", this move undermined NATO's operational planning and raised questions about the U.S. commitment to multilateralism.

## Overcoming the Hurdles

Despite the antagonistic stance that the first Trump administration took, some stand out consequences revealed a curious paradoxical reaction. Trump's critiques on NATO's lack of purpose and perceived inefficiency prompted a response from the organization and its member states, demonstrating both the importance of this organization for the actors involved, and the need for reforms.

Trump's criticism of NATO spending and its dependency on U.S. contributions prompted significant change within the organization. By 2020, Trump's last year as president, the number of NATO members meeting the 2% GDP defence spending target, had doubled compared to the start of his presidency (NATO, 2020). Despite the dip from 2021 to 2023, as of 2024, out of 32 NATO members, a total of 22 members now meet the target (NATO, 2024). Former NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg previously reported that member nations had collectively increased defence spending (Stoltenberg, 2020), and NATO's total defence expenditure rose from US\$913 billion in 2016, to US\$1185 billion as of 2024 (NATO, 2024). These figures highlight that member states value their guaranteed security and defence options, while recognizing that they have to meet their financial obligations.

In response to Trump's criticism, a renewed strategic focus reassessed threats and priorities, to act more decisively and in a less obsolete manner. Since the 2019 NATO Summit in London, NATO started focusing more on China and its rise (Brzozowski, 2019). Furthermore, at the 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid, there was a dedicated focus on issues such as terrorism, but also, on new threats, such as hybrid threats and the cyberspace (NATO, 2022). NATO has also been playing a more active role in recent years regarding the ongoing situation in Europe, and has welcomed Finland and Sweden (Lawrence et. al, 2024).

Another point that Trump's presidency highlighted, is the importance of maintaining prosperous and healthy multilateral institutions, but the possibility of US isolationism forced to explore greater security autonomy, exemplified by France's push for "strategic sovereignty" within the European Union framework (Keohane, 2017) or by Germany pushing for a stronger defence industry within its territory (Reuters, 2024).

While NATO showed resilience amidst Trump's hard stance, providing to be wanting to adapt to the current times and to fix key weaknesses within, Trump's criticism made NATO take action and make needed efforts to reinforce its capabilities and strengthen cooperation.

## Trump's 2024 Campaign on Foreign Policy Priorities and NATO Engagement

Trump's most recent campaign, which secured him a surprising win over Kamala Harris, touched upon many points from his previous campaign and first term as President of the United States of America, reflecting a continuation of his "Make America Great Again" and "America First" agenda. When it comes to foreign policy, his priorities favoured isolationism in order to boost the US capabilities; put greater focus on Asia and on the ongoing competition with China in key areas such as trade; and rejected longstanding international organisations and agreements in favour of American interests (Rashes, 2024).

Trump remains very critical of the states' commitment to NATO spending, questioning the organisation's real effectiveness and promoting the idea that only those that "pay their bills" should be eligible for protection (Mosner et. al, 2024). This suggests that Trump will adopt a similar stance to his first presidency, pressuring NATO to take strategic actions that show the purpose of the organisation, and ensuring that states meet their financial obligations in order to have access to the defence capabilities provided by NATO.

Regarding the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Trump has claimed that he would be able to quickly resolve the war in Ukraine, and that this would be done within 24 hours of him taking office (Kestler-D'Amours, 2024). Furthermore, he also claimed that he wouldn't commit to approving additional U.S. aid to Ukraine if reelected, justifying that European nations need to make higher contributions.

## **What does the Future Hold for NATO**

It's no wonder that NATO will face an increasing amount of challenges with the new Trump administrations, challenges that will put the organisation and its future up to a serious test, as Trump will most likely continue with his growing strategy of strengthening the States in deterioration of a greater engagement within the international community. His first presidency highlighted enduring vulnerabilities that NATO possesses, such as the reliance on U.S. leadership and financial resources, which would prove to be a dire consequence if this new administration decides to drift further away from NATO.

The biggest worry for the future of NATO concerns the conflict in Ukraine. Ukrainian leaders have long shown a clear wish to join the organisation, in an attempt to strengthen their defence capabilities against their burdensome and dangerous neighbour. Since 2022, the West has been a cornerstone of military support for Ukrainians, through different means such as weapons, training and aid (Rashes, 2024). There are growing concerns that Trump's second presidency, with its focus on reducing U.S. international involvement, could lead to a significant decrease in defence spending and towards financial support to Ukraine.

Given how Trump has repeatedly stated that he would resolve the conflict quickly, and his close personal ties with Russian president Vladimir Putin, another growing worry concerns how the United States could come up with a peace settlement that would see the Ukrainians lose a significant part of their territory, in order to rapidly reach an end to the conflict (Rashes, 2024). This could be achieved by disregarding Ukraine's stances and demands, in favour of providing a quicker way for establishing peace.

Moreover, our world today faces a majority of problems, some of which fall under the scope of security and defence. Beyond the aforementioned Russia-Ukraine war, there are also different conflicts/tensions in the Middle East, long-lasting conflicts such as Israel's territorial dispute with Palestine, etc. As uncertainty is on the rise and there are growing concerns of further proxy wars triggering in the near future, the international scenario starts to become perceived as less stable and peaceful over time. The idea of a weakened NATO with less American support in these circumstances could lead its members to rethink the organization's approach and actions going forward. European nations might explore alternative possibilities and look for collaborative security alternatives in key areas such as cybersecurity, which has become an important frontier for the next few years.

## Conclusion

Donald Trump's first term as President marked a period of significant tension and transformation for NATO. Trump's presidency challenged the alliance in unprecedented ways, as his administration questioned long-standing norms of collective security, criticized member nations for perceived inequities in defence spending, and lingered on the idea of a diminished U.S. role in NATO. These actions exposed fault lines within the alliance, while simultaneously forcing a reevaluation of its priorities and strategies. As NATO now faces the prospect of a second Trump administration, the lessons of his first term will certainly prove much valuable in navigating future challenges.

The stakes are higher, with the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and with a more insecure world than when Trump left office, and there are growing worries about further international conflicts sparking in the future. NATO has prevailed over the years and found a path through Trump's criticism during his first term, the next few years will put the organization up to a severe challenge, one that will for sure dictate the future of transatlantic security.

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## United Nations

### “America First”: Trump’s Plans to Make America Great Again at the United Nations

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#### Abstract

The second Trump administration will confront a multifaceted and increasingly complex geopolitical landscape. With a backdrop of domestic decline and global shifts toward nationalism, Trump’s re-election signals a continuation of his isolationist “America First” agenda.

This article explores the impact of a second Trump term on key U.S. foreign policies, particularly in relation to the United Nations and global conflicts. It examines the Russo-Ukrainian and Middle Eastern conflicts, U.S. policy toward Israel and Palestine, and the future of the Paris Agreement. Trump’s stance on international peacekeeping, military alliances, and climate change will be critical in shaping the global order. His policies may force NATO and the U.N. to adapt while testing alliances with key powers such as China and Israel.

Ultimately, this paper outlines how Trump's isolationist tendencies, combined with his combative rhetoric, will likely challenge international cooperation and alter U.S. engagement with global organizations.

#### Keywords

U.S. Foreign Policy, United Nations, Donald Trump, Russo-Ukrainian Conflict, US-China Relations, Middle East, Israel-Hamas Conflict, Paris Agreement

#### Introduction

It is a fact that the current geopolitical landscape is marked by worldwide political tensions, conflicts, and the rise of nationalist ideologies. The second Trump administration will inherit a much more complex and nuanced set of challenges than those faced throughout the first Trump term from 2017 to 2020. As the domestic economy collapses and crime rates increase, the choice of Donald Trump as the 47th President of the United States testifies to the decline of imperialism. What does it take to make America great again? What are Trump’s plans in this regard? And could his prospective isolationist policy truly benefit the US and fit into today’s shifting, multipolar world order?

This article aims to surmise on how US and international policy may be impacted by a second Trump term within the system of the United Nations. Firstly, it will explore the evolution of the two main current conflicts of interest to the US: the Russo-Ukrainian and the Middle Eastern wars. Drawing upon past statements and policy adopted by the first Trump Administration in regard to the UN, a final section will be devoted to expected climate change-related strategies.

## **Evolution of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict**

As President-elect, this is not the first time Donald Trump has interacted with either Putin or Zelenskiy. In 2016, the electoral campaign that would lead to Trump's first term as US President was investigated over alleged ties with Russia (BBC News, 2019). In 2019, Trump ran against former President Joe Biden, former Vice-President of the Obama Administration. Likewise, Trump was impeached over having reportedly solicited interference from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy (BBC News, 2020) to gather information on his opponent, Joe Biden and his son, Hunter Biden, who worked for a Ukrainian energy company. According to some, Trump's bargaining chip may have been the blocked \$391 million in military aid (BBC News, 2020). While both these events took place well before the Russian ground invasion into Ukrainian territory in 2022, they paint a clearer picture of both Donald Trump – much more the businessman than the politician – and a conflict that finds its roots much earlier, in the Euromaidan protests back in 2014.

The latest ATACMS strikes into the Russian Kursk, and Moscow's subsequent modifications to its nuclear doctrine have led to an unprecedented escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian war (Testa, 2024). Despite this, peacekeeping operations could become possible if agreed upon by both Russia and Ukraine, leaving some hope for the future, and in this case, the bargaining chip may benefit all powers involved. In the meanwhile, the United Nations' Fifth Committee is set to hold negotiations to lower US contributions for peacekeeping operations between 2025 and 2027, which currently exceed the national 25% budget limit historically imposed by the US Congress (Chen, 2024). This provides a push for Trump's isolationist agenda in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, which could force NATO and European countries to further increase their military spending, in line with European defence spending records hit of 2023 – 2024 (European Defence Agency, 2024). At Zelenskiy's requests, NATO may take the lead in UN peacekeeping efforts on the Russo-Ukrainian border. Trump may either decide against or drastically reduce the number of US deployed troops under the UN banner, leaving Russia more eager to accept a peacekeeping operation on contested soil.

The more prominent role played by China at the UN may constitute one of the greatest drawbacks of Trump's prospective isolationist stand. As a permanent member of the Security Council with veto power, Beijing has been progressively increasing its UN peacekeeping funding to boost the global status of its economy (Chen, 2024). During Trump's first term, the rivalry with China became so fierce that it escalated into a full trade war (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020), and as tensions rise in the Indo-Pacific, and Taiwan progressively pursues a rearmament policy, the US may end up leaving one conflict just to get stuck into another.

## **Prospective US policy in the Middle East**

In his closing statement of the presidential debate back on 10 September 2024, Donald Trump stated: "We are a failing nation. We are a nation that's in serious decline. We're being laughed at from all over the world." (ABC News, 2024). He then went on to touch upon not only the Russo-Ukrainian war, but also ongoing regional conflicts in the Middle East. Trump's own pro-Israel stance

is no secret, which has led to the US cutting its financial support for UNRWA, the UN body providing aid for Palestinian refugees, during Trump's first term (Beaumont et al., 2018). Washington also withdrew from the UN Human Rights Council over an alleged "chronic bias against Israel" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). Finally, Trump had even supported Israeli claims to Jerusalem as a capital, consequently moving the US embassy there (Coppolecchia, 2024).

Among the newly nominated 2025 - 2028 cabinet, Sen. Marco Rubio (Secretary of State), Rep. Mike Waltz (National Security Adviser), and Rep. Elise Stefanik (US Ambassador to the UN) stand out for their defined pro-Israeli stances (Kelly, 2024). Similarly to what had happened during Trump's first term, this may lead to US support for an unbalanced settlement in favour of Tel Aviv. As the Israel-Hamas war has taken on a new regional dimension (Testa, 2024), the US may also support Israeli territorial claims and occupation on Palestinian soil regardless of the opposing majority stance of the UN. Indeed, during his 2017 - 2020 term, Trump had backed Israeli allegations of sovereignty over the Golan Heights (Coppolecchia, 2024). Historically contested by Syria, Lebanon, and Israel, Tel Aviv successfully occupied this strategic chokepoint in early December 2024, after the unexpected fall of Al-Assad's regime in Syria (Testa, 2024).

Nonetheless, Trump may need to balance his pro-Israel stance and ambitions with the US-pursued "disengagement policy" in the Middle East, in place since 2008 (Coppolecchia, 2024), when it was introduced by former US President Obama during his first presidency. Obama's approach, continued by both Trump and Biden, entailed the gradual withdrawal of US troops in the region in exchange for a more favourable policy of "leading from behind" (Coppolecchia, 2024). That is to say that the US should still advocate for Middle Eastern stability, yet should gradually delegate direct involvement in conflicts to regional allies. Obama also intended US naval resources to be progressively deployed in the Indo-Pacific to contrast Russian imperialism and Chinese international aggressiveness (Coppolecchia, 2024).

This disengagement policy does not only relate to demilitarisation in itself, but to economic interests in the Middle East as well. In 2008, prior to the disengagement policy, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported the highest peak of US imports from OPEC countries, also UN member states, at over 170,000 crude oil and petroleum barrels per month (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2024). In September 2024, over an almost twenty-year-long gradual disengagement timeframe, US imports from OPEC countries dramatically sank at 38,148 barrels per month (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2024). Washington has superseded this reduction in imports from OPEC through an increase in domestic production of shale oil and gas and favouring Canada as a trading partner (Coppolecchia, 2024).

In the meantime, the US has managed to remain a trusted armament partner for Israel and petromonarchies alike, especially for Saudi Arabia. Trump may leverage the commercial and defence-based relations nurtured with both countries to attempt a second Israel-Saudi signing of the Abraham Accords (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020) as early as in 2025. The Abraham Accords stand as one of the most renowned achievements of the first Trump term: successfully brokering the deal between two of the greatest powers in the Middle East, may allow the US to meet renovated consensus within the UN, particularly from those countries in the international community which share Trump's pro-Israel vision.

## The future of the Paris Agreement

Much of Trump's own success with his Republican audience lies in his often-hyperbolic rhetoric. When particularly sensitive topics are raised, though, this could lead to alarmism at best; or misinformation or even disinformation in the worst cases. For instance, according to Kamala Harris, Vice-President during Biden's Administration and Democratic Presidential candidate in the 2024 US presidential elections, Trump would have repeatedly mocked climate change as a "hoax" (ABC News, 2024). Also, Sen. J. D. Vance, Trump's choice for Vice-President, recently underwent controversy (Friedman, 2024) for his opinions on the matter.

It is not hard to imagine that Trump may decide to follow the steps of his first Administration when it comes to climate change. That is, the US has officially left the Paris Agreement following President Trump's executive order on his first day in office in January 2025 (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025). The Paris Agreement, a legally binding document adopted in 2016 at the UN COP21, aims to prevent global temperatures from rising over 1.5 degrees Celsius. This decision aligns with Trump's isolationist ideology, allowing Washington to maintain its status as a globally uncontested industrial hub while further delaying a transition to greener energy policies. Additionally, Trump has revoked the Biden administration's order that had set a target for 50% of new vehicles sold in the US to be electric by 2030, signaling a broader rollback of climate-related regulations (The Guardian, 2025). With Biden's ban on Chinese-produced electric vehicles (Eckert et al., 2024), this may also allow Trump to not further compromise the supremacy historically attributed to the US when it comes to both the global economy and technological innovations. Still, a second Washington's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement will inevitably complicate a dialogue for a collective stance on the matter with traditional US allies within the United Nations – such as European and G7 countries – and with all the other parties of the Paris Agreement.

## Conclusion

In line with the first, the second Trump Administration will stand critically against the United Nations. This will prove especially true in the main fields of interest of the US: the Russo-Ukrainian and the Middle Eastern conflicts, the trade war with China, and climate change. During his first term, Trump had called the World Trade Organization (WTO) – which has strong ties to the UN – a "disaster" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). He had even threatened to withdraw from the organisation due to rules granting more flexibility to developing countries, China among them. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Trump had galvanised similar controversy in regard to the World Health Organisation (WHO): he had issued a withdrawal notice, cut the largest portion of funding to this specific UN agency, and accused it of misleading the world about Covid-19 under pressure from China (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

Due to the unpredictability of geopolitical, climate, and health-related events, the future of US-UN relations under a second Trump Administration remains hazy. Nevertheless, the 2017 – 2020 term may be helpful to more thoroughly comprehend Trump's – and his chosen cabinet's – stance on the most prominent issues of today. What is sure is that, when the choice is given and when convenient, Trump will not hesitate to choose "America first" in order to supposedly "make America great again".

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