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Great expectations of global autocrats from Trump's return to the White House



Donald Trump's new presidential term would be predictable regarding American foreign policy. However, all significant global issues where the US is an actor would become completely unpredictable overnight and rapidly spiral into chaos.

Nothing has changed compared to 2016 when he said he would solve global affairs effortlessly because he would approach them as he would ordinary business deals.

On his way to the White House, he assured the voters that his lack of diplomatic skills, and particularly his knowledge of global relations, would be easily replaced with skills he was good at.

He fulfilled that promise to a large extent during his presidency, but such US foreign policy left a mess on the global stage. Moreover, it was the trigger that activated numerous current crises.

Trump's possible return to the White House would happen in circumstances that barely resemble those of 7 years ago when his first term started.

Trump would be using his old "tools" to handle problems in light of the Chinese threat to Taiwan and its aggressive policy in the Indo-Pacific and the escalation of the crisis in the Middle East with Iran's support and participation. However, they would not be efficient at all.

Secondary US role

The US would become an unnecessary factor once more. Its impact in resolving global crises would be secondary, and its influence left mainly to aggressive and authoritarian regional players and their agendas.

One of the circumstances that most influenced Vladimir Putin's decision to attack Ukraine 2 years ago was the disturbed relations between the US and its European partners.

Trump's distancing of the US from the EU

(through economic protectionism) and from NATO (through the creation of a climate of mistrust and constant threats of the US withdrawing from the alliance) became fertile ground for Putin's assessment that the Western bloc would not be able to react in the event of an attack on Ukraine.

Trump's recent reiteration of his old and predictable policy that partners in Europe **must pay more** if they want US participation in their defence, particularly Trump's supporters in Congress refusing to send Kyiv a new aid package, is a big boost for Russian expectations of the invasion.

Trump's solution for Ukraine would be in favour of Russia and to the detriment of Ukraine

The former US president said last September that he could stop the war in Ukraine in 24 hours, even though he never explained in detail how he would do it. "If I tell you exactly, I lose all my bargaining chips," said Trump.

However, Trump's solution for Ukraine would be in favour of Russia and to the detriment of Ukraine because it would mean Kyiv retreating from the occupied areas in the east of the country and Crimea.

The European response to the blockade of aid to Ukraine that exists in the US Congress, using significant **bilateral agreements** on financial support and guarantees on preventing any future attack by Russia, is one of the new circumstances and a type of prevention in the event of Trump's return to the White House.

As 2 years ago, when he expected that Trump's isolationism regarding Europe had caused enough discord among the Atlantic partners, Putin still expects the return of Trump's predictable policies in Washington when he could make a more favourable deal with the US regarding Ukraine.

Handing over leadership to China

Beijing's expectations regarding its aggressive ambitions in the Pacific, particularly in the South China Sea, are similar.

"The U.S. will always pursue America first, and Taiwan can change from a chess piece to a discarded chess piece at any time", said Chen Binhua, a Chinese official in charge of Taiwan affairs, last January.

By mentioning the (unchanged) slogan of Trump's policy, he clearly alluded to the former and potentially future US president and Beijing's expectations that the return of the predictable policy to Washington would mean a significant relief for China's plans.

Trump's recent announcement hints at a new trade war where it would be impossible for the US to count on long-term economic superiority regarding China

And not only regarding security. Trump's predictable tightening of economic relations with China would ruin the previous efforts of Joe Biden's administration to bring the rivalry with a weakened China into a more favourable framework for the US.

Trump's recent announcement that upon his return to the White House, he would raise tariffs on imports from China, even by 60%, hints at a new trade war where it would be impossible for the US to count on long-term economic superiority regarding China.

Who will fill the security vacuum?

A series of processes that have increased the US's ability to strengthen its position in the Indo-Pacific with the help of allies since Trump's departure from office would halt if he were to return.

Security platforms in the region (AUKUS and QUAD) and bilateral security ties with crucial partners in the Far East - Japan and South Korea - would become questionable.

The tripartite **agreement** between the US, Japan and South Korea at Camp David last August, which led to a historic rapprochement between the 2 US allies, would have been impossible if Trump had been involved. But there is a possibility it would be terminated if he were allowed to lead US foreign policy again.



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Trump's leadership would undoubtedly narrow the options for the solution to the Middle East crisis, given that his support for Israel does not provide an answer to possible compromises and, above all, to the possibility of resolving the status of Palestine, which would be acceptable to the Arab partners in the region.

A range of authoritarian and aggressive regimes globally have high hopes of predictable Trump returning to the White House.

They see it as a chance to fill the security and strategic vacuum, which would definitely be created by the withdrawal of the US from solving crises in which they are involved.

Donald Trump winning a new mandate is their chance to shift the economic trends in their favour in the long term in terms of controlling supply chains (China) and energy trade (Russia), which has been slipping from their hands thanks to the efforts of the US and its

allies.