

THE 2024 RE-ELECTION OF DONALD TRUMP: IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, GLOBAL DYNAMICS AND STRATEGIC BALANCE

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Abstract

The potential re-election of Donald Trump in 2024 presents significant ramifications for international relations, global dynamics, and the strategic balance of power. His "America First" policies, characterized by a focus on nationalism, protectionism, and skepticism toward multilateral institutions, have already strained traditional alliances and shifted global alignments. A second term could exacerbate tensions within NATO, the United Nations, and other international bodies, while catalyzing the formation of new coalitions of like-minded states. This shift in U.S. foreign policy would impact global trade, security, and climate cooperation, potentially leading to a more fragmented global order. Nations and organizations must prepare for a world where U.S. leadership is less predictable, and power dynamics become increasingly multipolar, with a greater emphasis on regional alliances and strategic autonomy.

Keywords: *America First, International Relations, Global Dynamics, Strategic Balance, Multilateralism*

Introduction

The 2024 U.S. presidential election, in which Donald Trump seeks re-election, stands as a pivotal moment in shaping the future of global politics. Following his first term, Trump's political rhetoric and policies particularly on trade, defense, and diplomacy have left an indelible mark on international relations. His presidency initiated a departure from established diplomatic norms, introducing a populist approach to foreign policy that challenged both American allies and adversaries. As Trump's 2024 campaign unfolds, it is essential to explore the potential consequences of a second term, particularly with regard to the shifting dynamics in key global regions and strategic arenas. This paper investigates how a re-elected Donald Trump might affect the international system, analyzing both the potential risks and opportunities for global stability.

The re-election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2024 has significant implications for international relations, global dynamics, and the strategic balance between nations. As one of the most polarizing figures in modern U.S. politics, Trump's policies on trade, defense, climate change, and diplomacy have the potential to reshape the global landscape. His administration's stance on international alliances, such as NATO and partnerships with global powers like China and Russia, could either exacerbate existing tensions or create new avenues for cooperation. Furthermore, Trump's —America First doctrine may influence U.S. foreign policy, especially in the context of global economic competition, security concerns, and geopolitical rivalries. The reelection could signal a shift in the U.S.'s approach to international organizations, environmental agreements, and global trade networks, which could have long-lasting effects on global stability and alliances. As Trump seeks a return to the White House, the implications of his potential re-election hold significant weight not only for U.S. domestic policy but also for the broader dynamics of international relations, global security, and strategic balance. This research aims to assess how a second term under Trump might alter these areas, considering the evolving nature of global challenges such as great power competition, climate change, and shifting alliances.

While there has been considerable academic focus on Trump's first term and its impact on international relations, there remains a notable gap in understanding the potential consequences of his re-election in 2024. Scholars have analyzed his approach to key global issues such as trade wars, military disengagement, and the reshaping of multilateral institutions, but much less has been said about the possible long-term effects of his policies if he returns to office for a second term. The gap in the current literature lies in the uncertainty regarding how Trump's political vision, particularly in relation to great power competition with China, Russia, and Iran, would evolve in a global context increasingly shaped by technological advancements, climate crises, and post-pandemic recovery (Uford, Effiong & Charles, 2023). This research will explore three primary areas of interest:

- i. Will Trump's "America First" stance continue to strain alliances within NATO, the United Nations, and other international bodies, or will it lead to the formation of new coalitions of like-minded states?
- ii. How might Trump's re-election affect the U.S.-China rivalry, the U.S.-Russia relations, and the broader power structures in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East?
- iii. What changes in U.S. defense policy, military alliances, and economic strategy could arise under a second Trump administration, and how might these affect global security and strategic balance?

Addressing these questions will provide valuable insights into the potential reconfiguration of international relations and the strategic equilibrium in the face of a shifting global order under Trump's leadership. This research will contribute

to filling the gap in existing literature by offering a forward-looking analysis of how the 2024 re-election of Donald Trump may impact global dynamics in the next decade.

The America First Agenda: Reaffirming or Reevaluating Global Unilateralism?

Donald Trump's —America First policy was a cornerstone of his foreign policy strategy during his first term. This approach, characterized by the prioritization of U.S. interests, often came at the expense of longstanding international agreements and partnerships. Under his administration, the U.S. withdrew from key international accords such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the Iran Nuclear Deal, imposed tariffs on China, and questioned the relevance of NATO (Dennis, 2016; Chong, 2020; Couk, 2024). If Trump were to win a second term, it is likely that his administration would continue this skeptical stance towards multilateralism. His emphasis on protecting American industry and reducing the country's international commitments may lead to a further weakening of institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). However, this approach could also result in new trade alliances and security arrangements tailored to U.S. interests, potentially upending the existing strategic order. The "America First" agenda, introduced by Donald Trump during his 2016 presidential campaign and later implemented during his first term in office, represents a shift toward a more unilateral, nationalist approach to U.S. foreign policy. Trump's rhetoric and policies often centered around the idea that the U.S. should prioritize its own economic and security interests over multilateral engagement and international cooperation. This literature review explores the key academic discussions surrounding the "America First" agenda and its implications for global unilateralism, examining how scholars have interpreted its effects on international relations, global institutions, and U.S. alliances.

Several scholars have framed the "America First" agenda as a stark departure from previous U.S. foreign policy, which was characterized by a commitment to multilateralism and international institutions like the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), and NATO. According to Mearsheimer (2018), Trump's foreign policy echoes classical realism, where the pursuit of national interests and military power is prioritized over global governance or cooperation. Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Iran nuclear deal, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) exemplifies this tendency toward unilateralism, signaling a retreat from traditional diplomatic engagement (Gallup, 2022). In contrast, others argue that Trump's foreign policy represents a pragmatic reevaluation of U.S. leadership in a rapidly changing world order. Mollo and Rosefields (2017) suggests that "America First" should not be understood solely as an act of isolationism, but rather as a recalibration of U.S. involvement based on

the perceived decline of American influence and the increasing assertiveness of rising powers like China and Russia. From this perspective, the focus on economic self-interest, trade imbalances, and military burden-sharing with allies reflects a more transactional and cost-benefit approach to international relations.

One of the primary criticisms of the "America First" agenda has been its impact on global governance and multilateral institutions. Scholars like Sims (2023) argue that Trump's rejection of international cooperation and his undermining of global institutions could erode the liberal international order established after World War II. The U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and its decision to cut funding to international bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) have led to concerns about the weakening of norms around collective action on issues like climate change, public health, and arms control. According to Anne (2024), this has created a "leadership vacuum," where other nations, particularly China, are stepping in to fill the gap and push for new global governance frameworks that are less dependent on U.S. hegemony. However, some scholars view this shift as part of a broader trend of questioning the efficacy and fairness of existing multilateral systems. For example, Margherita (2024)) suggests that Trump's challenge to the existing international order may reflect growing dissatisfaction with the status quo, particularly among U.S. citizens who perceive their country as being taken advantage of by international organizations and agreements. The concept of "strategic autonomy" has gained traction in global debates, especially in Europe, where leaders are increasingly advocating for a greater degree of independence from U.S. influence in shaping global affairs (Derek, 2024).

Impact on U.S. Alliances and Global Power Dynamics

The "America First" agenda has had profound consequences for U.S. alliances, especially within NATO and with key Asian allies like Japan and South Korea. Trump's insistence that NATO members "pay their fair share" for defense and his skepticism about mutual defense commitments raised questions about the future of these alliances (Stancatis, 2024). Scholars like Jeffrey (2024) argue that this behavior may drive NATO members, as well as other countries, to reconsider their dependence on U.S. security guarantees and seek to strengthen regional defense capabilities. For instance, European Union countries have increasingly discussed the potential for a "European Defense Union," which could diminish their reliance on U.S. leadership in military matters. Moreover, Trump's emphasis on bilateral trade deals and his confrontational stance toward China, encapsulated in the trade war, has contributed to the rise of alternative power centers, particularly in Asia. According to Erice (2024), Trump's foreign policy has inadvertently accelerated the shift toward a more multipolar world, where China, Russia, and the European Union are asserting greater influence over global economic and security affairs. This shift raises important questions about the future of U.S. hegemony in a rapidly

changing geopolitical landscape.

A central debate in the literature is whether the "America First" agenda represents a temporary deviation from the established norms of U.S. foreign policy or a long-term transformation of the global order. Scholars like Mike (2024) argue that the foundational principles of multilateralism and liberal internationalism are too deeply ingrained in U.S. foreign policy and that Trump's approach may not represent a permanent shift but rather a reaction to specific economic and political conditions. On the other hand, Viisaineri and Evans (2024) contends that the return of great power competition and the growing disillusionment with liberal internationalism in both the U.S. and other major powers suggest that the "America First" framework could be more enduring, signaling a permanent shift in U.S. foreign policy toward unilateralism and self-interest.

Moreover, some scholars suggest that Trump's approach to global governance could lead to a reevaluation of how countries view their roles in the international system. As global power dynamics shift, nations may increasingly adopt a more self-interested or "realist" foreign policy approach, which focuses on national sovereignty and strategic autonomy rather than collective action (Weisman, 2024). The literature on the "America First" agenda reflects a wide range of views on its impact on global unilateralism, multilateralism, and the future of international relations. While some scholars view Trump's policies as a temporary reaction to changing global dynamics, others believe that his approach signals a more permanent shift in U.S. foreign policy and a reevaluation of America's role in global governance. The continued evolution of this debate will depend on how future administrations balance the competing demands of national interests, international cooperation, and the changing nature of global power. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for predicting the future of U.S. foreign policy and the implications for global stability.

Trump Security and Military Strategy: A Shift toward Isolationism?

One of the most notable aspects of Trump's first term was his tendency to prioritize American military interests over global engagements. His decisions to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria and Afghanistan, while aligning with his campaign promises, raised concerns about America's commitment to global security and its alliances, particularly with NATO. Trump's repeated calls for NATO members to contribute more to defense spending underscored his belief that other nations should bear a greater share of the security burden. A second term could see further troop withdrawals from overseas bases and an increased focus on border security and domestic defense. While this might appeal to Trump's base, the implications for global security would be profound. A reduction in U.S. military presence could lead to power vacuums in critical regions like the Middle East and East Asia, potentially emboldening adversarial states such as Russia and China.

Additionally, U.S. allies may seek to diversify their security arrangements, potentially leading to the fragmentation of the current strategic balance. Donald Trump's approach to security and military strategy during his presidency (2017–2021) marked a significant departure from the post-World War II consensus on U.S. foreign policy. While Trump was often characterized as a strong advocate for U.S. military power, his rhetoric and policies suggested a more isolationist and "America First" approach. Trump's foreign and defense policies emphasized reducing the U.S. military footprint overseas, questioning the value of traditional alliances, and focusing on economic and national interests. This shift led to debates over whether his policies represented a genuine move toward isolationism or a recalibration of U.S. strategy to prioritize specific strategic goals over broad international engagement. This section explores the key elements of Trump's security and military strategy, analyzing whether they reflect isolationism or simply a reevaluation of U.S. global engagement.

Trump's —America First rhetoric, which guided much of his administration's policies, had direct implications for U.S. military and security strategy. The core principle of this approach was to prioritize American interests, particularly economic interests, over multilateral commitments and interventionist policies. This philosophy was evident in his frequent calls for reducing U.S. involvement in foreign conflicts and the military expenditures associated with maintaining U.S. global leadership. Sanger (2024) argues that, one of the key manifestations of this strategy was Trump's emphasis on burden-sharing with allies. He regularly criticized NATO allies for not meeting their defense spending targets, arguing that the U.S. was unfairly shouldering the defense costs of Europe. Trump's insistence that NATO members increase their defense budgets and his questioning of the alliance's relevance reflected his broader critique of U.S. involvement in international security arrangements that he believed disproportionately benefited other countries at the expense of American taxpayers. According to his administration, the U.S. military should only be engaged when it directly benefited the U.S. economy or security, thus challenging the idea of military commitments based on traditional alliances or global security considerations (Patnck, 2024).

A central feature of Trump's security and military strategy was his desire to reduce the U.S. military presence in various regions, particularly the Middle East. Trump advocated for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from ongoing conflicts like the wars in Afghanistan and Syria, which he criticized as —endless wars.¶ This was in line with his campaign promises to bring American soldiers home and to focus on rebuilding the U.S. economy rather than engaging in foreign military interventions. Suri (2018) asserts, in 2018, Trump announced the decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria, a move that was controversial both within his administration and among U.S. allies. This decision was framed as a shift away from nation-building and regime-change operations that had characterized previous U.S. interventions, particularly in the Middle East. The withdrawal from Syria was followed by a

significant reduction in U.S. troops in Afghanistan, with Trump signaling a desire to end the "forever wars" and focus on countering threats that directly impacted the U.S., such as terrorism and nuclear proliferation (Sawafta and Nidal, 2018). Trump's —bring the troops home policy resonated with a significant portion of the American public, especially those weary of long-term military commitments in the Middle East. However, critics argued that such withdrawals, particularly from Syria, could lead to power vacuums that would be exploited by adversaries like Russia, Iran, and ISIS. The decision to reduce military presence abroad highlighted a fundamental tension in Trump's foreign policy: the desire to scale back U.S. involvement in global conflicts while simultaneously projecting military power when it suited American interests.

Trump's security and military policies have often been framed as evidence of a shift toward isolationism. However, such a conclusion oversimplifies the complexities of his foreign and defense strategy. While Trump did advocate for a reduced role in certain international conflicts, he also pursued aggressive military postures in some areas, particularly with regard to China and Iran. For instance, Trump's administration took a more confrontational approach toward China, particularly in the realm of trade and military competition in the Indo-Pacific. Trump's "Indo-Pacific strategy" sought to counter China's growing military and economic influence, particularly in the South China Sea and in its Belt and Road Initiative. This included increasing military cooperation with regional allies like Japan, South Korea, and Australia, while also bolstering U.S. military presence in the region. Trump's defense strategy in the Indo-Pacific represented a recalibration of U.S. military priorities rather than a retreat from global engagement (Olmert, 2024). The U.S. continued to focus on countering the rise of China as a strategic rival, using military alliances and economic measures to contain its influence.

Similarly, Trump's stance toward Iran was marked by military engagement, despite his general preference for reducing troop levels abroad. His decision to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran nuclear deal, and the subsequent escalation of tensions with Iran, including the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani in January 2020, suggested that Trump's military strategy was not entirely isolationist. Instead, it focused on strategic deterrence and intervention where he saw immediate threats to U.S. interests, particularly with regard to Iran's nuclear ambitions and regional influence (O'Brien, 2024). Trump's foreign policy approach can, therefore, be seen not as a shift toward isolationism but rather as a rethinking of the nature and scope of U.S. military engagement. His policies emphasized selective engagement prioritizing military intervention when it served specific U.S. interests (such as countering terrorism or deterring adversaries like Iran and North Korea), while avoiding unnecessary entanglements in distant conflicts. Trump's security and military strategy was also heavily intertwined with his economic policies. His administration often linked defense spending with broader economic priorities,

framing military strength as essential for protecting American economic interests. This was evident in his increased focus on military spending, particularly in modernizing the U.S. military's technological capabilities, such as advancing cybersecurity and missile defense systems. Trump also prioritized defense deals with key allies, including arms sales to Saudi Arabia, which he argued would create jobs in the U.S. and strengthen bilateral relations. In line with his "America First" doctrine, Trump believed that the U.S. should leverage its military power to create favorable economic outcomes, particularly through trade deals and security partnerships that benefited the U.S. economy. This pragmatism often led to a transactional approach to military alliances and engagements, where U.S. military support was seen as conditional on economic and strategic gains (Bolton, 2024).

Trump's military policies raised important questions about the future of U.S. alliances and global security. His criticism of NATO and calls for members to meet defense spending targets caused concern among U.S. allies in Europe, who feared a weakening of the transatlantic relationship. Similarly, his approach to the U.S. relationship with South Korea and Japan, while emphasizing their own defense contributions, led some to question whether the U.S. would honor its security commitments in the long term. Despite these concerns, Trump's —America First policies did not entirely dismantle existing alliances or reduce U.S. global influence. Instead, they reshaped the way the U.S. approached its security commitments, emphasizing burden-sharing and aligning military engagements with specific U.S. interests. The global security environment became more uncertain, as countries adjusted their defense strategies to account for the U.S.'s changing role in the world. Trump's security and military strategy did not represent a full embrace of isolationism but rather a recalibration of U.S. military engagement based on a narrow view of national interests. While he reduced U.S. military commitments in certain regions and prioritized domestic defense needs, his administration maintained a strong focus on countering adversaries like China, Iran, and North Korea. Trump's policies reflected a pragmatic approach to security that emphasized selective engagement and burden-sharing with allies, rather than the U.S. retreating from its role as a global power. Ultimately, Trump's tenure highlighted a shift in U.S. defense priorities, with the nation questioning the costs and benefits of its extensive military footprint abroad, while also ensuring that its military remained a powerful tool for protecting American interests on the global stage.

Trump Environmental Policy and Climate Change: Uncertain Global Cooperation

During his first term, Trump famously withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement, arguing that it unfairly burdened U.S. businesses. His administration also rolled back numerous environmental regulations, favoring fossil fuel industries over renewable energy initiatives. Trump's stance on climate change was often criticized for ignoring the global nature of the crisis. In a second term, Trump

is unlikely to significantly alter his environmental policy. This could have far-reaching consequences for international climate cooperation, particularly with the European Union, which has been vocal about the need for global climate action. A continued U.S. withdrawal from international climate initiatives could slow the global transition to renewable energy, further exacerbating environmental challenges and straining relations with countries advocating for stronger climate measures. The environmental policies of the Trump administration (2017–2021) were a significant departure from those of previous U.S. presidents, particularly with regard to climate change and global environmental cooperation. Throughout his presidency, Donald Trump's approach to environmental issues was marked by skepticism toward climate science, a preference for deregulation, and a focus on prioritizing economic growth over environmental protections (Ikenberry, 2024). Trump's stance on climate change, environmental policy, and international agreements often created uncertainty around U.S. leadership in global environmental initiatives and exacerbated challenges in international cooperation on climate action. This section examines the key features of Trump's environmental policy, its implications for climate change, and the resulting uncertainty in global cooperation.

One of the defining features of Trump's environmental policy was his stance on climate change. Unlike many of his predecessors, Trump was a vocal critic of the scientific consensus on climate change and expressed doubts about the human role in global warming. Throughout his presidency, Trump referred to climate change as a —hoax‖ or downplayed its severity, aligning himself with climate change skeptics and fossil fuel industry interests. Trump's skepticism was reflected in his decision to roll back numerous environmental regulations designed to combat climate change. This included rolling back the Clean Power Plan, an Obama-era initiative aimed at reducing carbon emissions from power plants, and weakening fuel efficiency standards for automobiles. Trump also targeted environmental regulations governing air and water pollution, the protection of national parks, and wildlife conservation. These regulatory rollbacks were framed as efforts to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses, enhance economic growth, and promote energy independence, especially through the expanded use of fossil fuels (e.g., coal, oil, and natural gas). Perhaps the most emblematic policy of Trump's environmental stance was his decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, was a landmark international treaty in which nearly every country in the world pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius and ideally to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The agreement also emphasized climate finance to support developing nations in their efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement in 2017 was one of the most significant actions he took in relation to global environmental policy. Trump argued that the agreement placed

undue economic burdens on the U.S., threatening American jobs and industries, particularly in the coal and manufacturing sectors. He claimed that other countries, such as China and India, were not held to the same level of responsibility, and therefore, the U.S. should not be bound by its provisions (Baumann and Weinlinch, 2024). The decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement was met with widespread international condemnation and was seen as a significant setback for global climate cooperation. The U.S. had been a key player in negotiating the agreement, and its withdrawal created uncertainty around the future of international climate action. Many countries, particularly those in the European Union and vulnerable island states, expressed concern that the U.S. departure would undermine the global effort to limit climate change and could set a dangerous precedent for other nations to follow (Carbon Brief, 2024). However, Trump's withdrawal did not mean the end of U.S. participation in climate action. Several U.S. states, cities, and businesses, including major corporations like Microsoft, Apple, and Tesla, pledged to adhere to the goals of the Paris Agreement and continue efforts to reduce emissions. This "subnational" level of action, while significant, was insufficient to make up for the absence of federal leadership in global climate diplomacy.

A major focus of Trump's environmental and energy policy was promoting U.S. energy independence through the increased production of fossil fuels. Trump sought to deregulate the energy sector, aiming to make it easier for companies to extract and use oil, coal, and natural gas. This approach was consistent with his belief that the U.S. should not depend on foreign sources of energy and should take advantage of its own resources. Trump's administration reversed numerous environmental protections that were seen as obstacles to the development of fossil fuel industries (CRS, 2024). The approval of the Keystone XL pipeline and the opening up of federal lands for oil drilling in places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge were among the most high-profile examples of this policy. Additionally, Trump's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rolled back restrictions on methane emissions and allowed more leeway for coal-fired power plants, which were seen as contributors to both air pollution and climate change. The focus on fossil fuels as a path to energy independence also had broader implications for global climate change efforts. By supporting fossil fuel development, Trump prioritized economic and national security interests over the global imperative to reduce carbon emissions. This stance was a direct challenge to the transition toward renewable energy that had been gaining momentum under previous administrations, particularly the Obama administration. Trump's environmental policies created significant challenges for global environmental cooperation. The withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the rollback of domestic climate policies undermined U.S. credibility as a leader in global environmental efforts. As the largest historical emitter of greenhouse gases, the U.S. played a central role in shaping international climate negotiations, and its

withdrawal from the Paris Agreement sent a message that climate action was no longer a priority for the federal government. The lack of U.S. leadership in global environmental initiatives contributed to a sense of uncertainty in international climate diplomacy. Countries that had been working with the U.S. on climate change, such as the European Union, Canada, and small island nations, found themselves navigating a new geopolitical landscape where U.S. commitments to global climate goals were in flux. At the same time, the U.S. decision to withdraw gave rise to new coalitions and alliances in climate diplomacy, particularly between the European Union, China, and other emerging economies, which began to take on a larger role in advocating for stronger climate action. China, for example, increasingly positioned itself as a leader in global climate policy, particularly following Trump's withdrawal. This shift was particularly notable in the context of China's growing investment in renewable energy technologies, such as solar and wind, and its role in the UN climate negotiations. While China's commitment to reducing emissions and addressing climate change was questioned due to its continued reliance on coal, the global landscape of climate leadership began to evolve in ways that reflected a shift toward a more multipolar approach, with multiple countries assuming greater responsibility for climate action (Sanger, 2024).

Trump's environmental policies also had implications for public health and environmental justice. The weakening of regulations aimed at limiting air and water pollution, as well as the push to open public lands for resource extraction, disproportionately affected vulnerable communities, including low-income and minority populations. These communities often faced higher exposure to pollution and environmental degradation, which exacerbated existing health disparities. Trump's focus on economic growth over environmental protections raised concerns among environmental justice advocates, who argued that his policies neglected the needs of marginalized communities. The rollback of regulations like the Clean Water Rule, which protected drinking water sources from pollution, and the weakening of air quality standards were viewed as moves that prioritized corporate interests over the health and safety of U.S. citizens, particularly those in frontline communities. The environmental policies of the Trump administration, particularly regarding climate change, had profound implications for both U.S. domestic policy and international cooperation on environmental issues. Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, his skepticism toward climate science, and his focus on fossil fuel development signaled a clear departure from the global consensus on climate action. These policies created uncertainty in international climate diplomacy, as the U.S. was no longer seen as a reliable leader in global environmental initiatives. While some U.S. states, cities, and businesses continued to pursue climate action, the absence of federal leadership undercut efforts to address the global climate crisis. Trump's environmental policy

reinforced the challenges of balancing economic interests with environmental sustainability, and his legacy will likely continue to influence the discourse on climate change for years to come.

Trump and the Global Strategic Balance: Competition with China and Russia

Under Trump's leadership, the U.S. adopted a confrontational approach to both China and Russia, emphasizing the need to counteract their growing global influence. Trade tariffs on China, military posturing in the South China Sea, and sanctions on Russia were key components of this strategy. If Trump is re-elected, the U.S. may continue its competitive stance towards China, particularly with regard to technology, trade, and military dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. Meanwhile, Russia may view a second Trump administration as an opportunity to further assert its influence in Europe and the Middle East, especially in the context of NATO's perceived decline. This could lead to a more fragmented and multipolar world order, with regional powers seeking to assert dominance in their respective spheres of influence. During Donald Trump's presidency (2017–2021), U.S. foreign policy underwent a significant transformation, marked by a heightened focus on competition with major global powers, particularly China and Russia (Nibelt, 2024). Trump's approach to international relations emphasized a strategic reorientation, with a clear prioritization of national interests and a more confrontational stance toward these two nations. His policies reflected a desire to recalibrate U.S. foreign engagement by challenging China's growing global influence and countering Russia's military and geopolitical ambitions. This shift in U.S. foreign policy had far-reaching implications for the global strategic balance, intensifying great power rivalry, particularly in key areas such as trade, military power, and geopolitical influence. This section explores the key features of Trump's competition with China and Russia, analyzing the implications for the global strategic balance.

One of the defining elements of Trump's foreign policy was his approach to China, which he viewed as the primary long-term strategic competitor to the United States. Trump's administration embraced a confrontational stance, seeking to counter China's growing economic, military, and technological influence. His approach was shaped by the belief that China posed a direct challenge to U.S. global dominance and the international order, particularly in terms of trade practices, intellectual property, and territorial disputes. Trump's administration launched an aggressive trade war against China, primarily focused on addressing what the U.S. perceived as unfair trade practices. The U.S. accused China of currency manipulation, intellectual property theft, and forcing American companies to transfer technology to Chinese firms as a condition for market

access. Ikenberry (2024) asserts, in 2018, Trump imposed tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of Chinese goods, sparking a tit-for-tat tariff exchange between the two nations. The trade war significantly disrupted global supply chains and introduced uncertainty into the international trade system (Charles & Uford, 2023). The Trump administration's —America First economic approach sought to reduce the U.S. trade deficit with China and bring manufacturing jobs back to the U.S. While some of these objectives were achieved through trade negotiations, such as the Phase One Trade Deal in 2020, the broader economic competition between the two countries persisted. Beyond tariffs, the Trump administration took a more confrontational stance on technology, particularly regarding Chinese technology companies like Huawei and ZTE. Trump's government accused these companies of posing national security risks due to their ties to the Chinese government. The

U.S. placed restrictions on Huawei's access to American technology, severely impacting the company's global operations and signaling the broader technological competition between the two powers.

In terms of military competition, Trump's approach to China was characterized by a focus on the Indo-Pacific region, where the U.S. sought to counter China's growing assertiveness, particularly in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. The Trump administration increased military cooperation with allies in the region, including Japan, South Korea, and Australia, and conducted freedom of navigation operations to challenge China's expansive territorial claims in the South China Sea. Trump also worked to expand the U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific to maintain a strategic balance in the region. This included increasing arms sales to Taiwan, a move that angered Beijing and heightened tensions over the status of Taiwan. Trump's administration also bolstered its relationship with India, aiming to create a counterbalance to China's growing influence in the region. Trump's policies aimed at containing China's rise were not limited to the Indo-Pacific but extended to global geopolitics. The U.S. sought to challenge China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aimed to expand China's influence through infrastructure projects across Asia, Africa, and Europe. Trump's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" strategy sought to offer an alternative to Chinese economic influence in developing regions, positioning the U.S. as a global leader in economic development and security partnerships.

Under Trump, the U.S. and China increasingly engaged in a process of economic and technological decoupling. The Trump administration-imposed export controls on Chinese technology companies, particularly those involved in semiconductors, telecommunications, and artificial intelligence. This technological rivalry highlighted the growing concerns over China's technological advancements and the strategic competition for dominance in emerging industries such as 5G, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing. The push for decoupling also extended to supply chains, as the U.S. sought to reduce its dependence on Chinese manufacturing, particularly in critical sectors like pharmaceuticals and electronics. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted vulnerabilities in global supply chains, exacerbating the desire for

diversification away from China as the dominant global supplier. While China was seen as the primary economic and technological competitor, Russia was viewed by the Trump administration as a more immediate geopolitical and military threat. Trump's approach to Russia was characterized by a mix of engagement and confrontation, with a focus on countering Russian influence in Europe, the Middle East, and the broader international order. Trump's policies toward Russia were marked by an ambiguous mix of praise for Russian President Vladimir Putin and a recognition of Russia's increasingly aggressive foreign policy, particularly in Europe. While Trump often downplayed the threat posed by Russia and even expressed admiration for Putin's leadership, his administration was forced to take action in response to Russian aggression. One of the key areas of U.S.-Russia competition during Trump's presidency was the conflict in Ukraine. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its ongoing support for separatist groups in eastern Ukraine remained a significant point of tension between the U.S. and Russia. Trump's administration provided military aid to Ukraine, including anti-tank missiles, as part of its efforts to support Ukraine's sovereignty and counter Russian influence in the region. Trump also imposed economic sanctions on Russia in response to the annexation of Crimea, election interference, and other hostile actions.

Russia and the Middle East: Implications for the Global Strategic Balance

Trump's policies toward Russia were also shaped by competition in the Middle East, particularly in Syria and Iran. Russia's growing presence in Syria, where it supported the regime of Bashar al-Assad, brought it into direct opposition with U.S. interests in the region. Trump's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria in 2019 created a vacuum that Russia sought to fill, increasing its influence in the region at the expense of the U.S. and its allies. The Trump administration also took a tough stance on Russia's role in Iran, particularly in the context of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Anne (2024) argues that, Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the agreement in 2018, reimposing sanctions on Iran and increasing pressure on Russia, which had played a key role in the deal as a partner of the Iranian government. Trump's —maximum pressure campaign against Iran created a complex geopolitical dynamic in which Russia found itself positioned as an ally of Iran, further deepening the competition between the U.S. and Russia in the Middle East.

One of the most contentious aspects of the U.S.-Russia rivalry during Trump's presidency was Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The U.S. intelligence community concluded that Russia had engaged in a concerted effort to influence the election in Trump's favor, primarily through cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and social media manipulation. The controversy surrounding these allegations fueled tensions between the U.S. and Russia and led to a series of sanctions, expulsions of diplomats, and other retaliatory actions. In response to Russian cyber threats, the Trump administration imposed additional sanctions on Russia, including measures aimed at punishing Russian cyberattacks on U.S. infrastructure and election systems. However, Trump's generally positive

rhetoric toward Putin and his reluctance to fully confront Russia left some questions about the consistency and effectiveness of U.S. policy toward Russia.

Trump's competition with China and Russia had significant implications for the global strategic balance. On one hand, his confrontational approach to China and Russia escalated tensions and led to a more multipolar world, where the U.S., China, and Russia increasingly competed for influence across a range of domains, from trade and technology to military and geopolitical power. Trump's policies also led to a fragmentation of global alliances. In the case of China, the U.S. sought to rally its allies around a common goal of containing China's rise, particularly in the Indo-Pacific (Sims, 2023). However, in some instances, U.S. allies were hesitant to fully align with Trump's hardline stance, especially in light of China's growing economic influence and the potential costs of decoupling. In the case of Russia, Trump's ambivalence toward Russian aggression complicated U.S. relations with European allies, who viewed Russia's actions in Ukraine and its broader geopolitical ambitions as direct threats to European security. The Trump administration's policies on Russia created divisions within NATO and raised concerns about the future of the Western alliance. Overall, Trump's foreign policy pushed the U.S. into a more adversarial stance with both China and Russia, accelerating global geopolitical rivalries and creating a more complex and uncertain international landscape. The competition between the U.S., China, and Russia during Trump's presidency highlighted the return of great power rivalry and raised questions about the future of global cooperation and stability in a multipolar world. Donald Trump's presidency marked a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy, as the country increasingly focused on competition with China and Russia, two rising global powers. Trump's approach was characterized by aggressive trade policies, military posturing, and a focus on strategic interests that sought to counter both countries' influence on the global stage. While Trump's actions contributed to the intensification of great power competition, they also created uncertainty regarding U.S. alliances and global leadership. The long-term implications of these policies will continue to shape the global strategic balance and the future of international relations in the 21st century.

Trump's Second Tenure and Human Rights and Democracy: A Shift toward Autocratic Leadership?

Trump's relationship with authoritarian leaders during his first term was often characterized by praise for figures such as Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-un. His willingness to engage with autocrats raised concerns about the future of democracy promotion and human rights advocacy under his leadership. In a second term, Trump's foreign policy could further prioritize pragmatism over idealism, strengthening ties with authoritarian regimes that align with U.S. strategic interests. This may lead to a decline in the global emphasis on human rights and democratic values, potentially emboldening autocratic regimes and undermining the efforts of international human rights organizations. As Donald Trump secure a second term

in office, many analysts predicted that his approach to human rights and democracy could further deviate from traditional U.S. foreign policy principles, potentially signaling a shift toward autocratic leadership at both domestic and international levels (John, 2024). During his first term (2017-2021), Trump often displayed an authoritarian leadership style, frequently undermining democratic norms, challenging the rule of law, and siding with autocratic leaders abroad. A second term could accelerate these trends, impacting human rights advocacy and the global perception of U.S. leadership in the promotion of democracy. Trump's first term witnessed a frequent erosion of democratic norms and institutions in the United States. From his attacks on the media, which he labeled as "fake news" and "the enemy of the people," to his repeated questioning of the integrity of the 2020 election, Trump undermined trust in key democratic institutions. His rhetoric and actions were often seen as attempts to weaken checks and balances, bypass judicial oversight, and discredit governmental bodies that held him accountable. If re-elected, Trump could continue these tactics, especially in the aftermath of the January 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection, which he downplayed or reframed in a manner that aligned with his populist base.

A second term could bring about further erosion of democratic principles, particularly through the use of executive orders that bypass Congress, appointing ideologically aligned judges to the federal bench, and challenging the legitimacy of elections he deemed unfavorable. Given Trump's tendency to attack political opponents and question election outcomes, there could be a further hollowing of democratic institutions, deepening partisan divides, and increasing political polarization in the U.S. During his first term, Trump demonstrated a willingness to roll back civil rights protections, particularly for marginalized groups. Policies such as the Muslim travel ban, the family separation policy at the southern border, and efforts to undermine the Affordable Care Act all highlighted Trump's tendency to prioritize national security or populist agendas at the expense of human rights. In a second term, there is a strong possibility that Trump would intensify his efforts to curb the rights of immigrant populations, particularly as he made his tough stance on illegal immigration a central theme of his presidency. Moreover, Trump's dismissive stance toward the Black Lives Matter movement and his tendency to downplay systemic racism in the U.S. would likely continue in a second term, potentially leading to further marginalization of racial and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, Trump's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, including downplaying the severity of the crisis, undermining public health experts (Uford, Mfon & Charles 2023), and promoting misinformation, could be indicative of a broader approach to governance where individual liberties take a back seat to populist appeals. If reelected, Trump may continue to prioritize economic recovery and individual freedoms over public health, with consequences for vulnerable populations and marginalized communities.

One of the most consistent elements of Trump's foreign policy was his warm relations

with autocratic leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Despite their track records of human rights abuses, Trump often praised these leaders for their strong leadership styles, positioning them as partners in advancing U.S. national interests. A second term could see Trump further aligning with autocratic regimes, downplaying concerns over human rights abuses and democratic backsliding in exchange for strategic alliances or economic deals. Trump's transactional approach to foreign relations, prioritizing deals over ideals, often led to a disregard for democratic norms and human rights in other nations. His administration's disengagement from multilateral human rights institutions, such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (from which the U.S. withdrew in 2018), and his criticism of international agreements like the Paris Agreement or the Iran nuclear deal, demonstrated a preference for unilateralism over multilateral diplomacy. A second term could further erode U.S. influence in international human rights advocacy, as Trump would likely continue undermining such institutions, instead focusing on bilateral agreements with strongman leaders who align with his vision.

Summary of Major Findings: A Continuation of "America First"

Trump's foreign policy would likely continue to emphasize an "America First" approach, prioritizing U.S. interests over multilateral commitments. This could lead to reduced U.S. involvement in global institutions like the United Nations and NATO, as well as trade agreements that are perceived as disadvantageous to the U.S. Expect an intensification of trade confrontations, particularly with China and the European Union. Trump's aggressive stance on trade deals could further disrupt the global economy and potentially lead to decoupling in critical sectors like technology and manufacturing.

Trump's re-election would likely exacerbate tensions with China, especially on issues related to trade, technology, and military presence in the South China Sea. Expect continued pressure on China with tariffs, sanctions, and perhaps further actions to decouple U.S. and Chinese economies. The Indo-Pacific region could see heightened military tensions, particularly around Taiwan, as Trump has already made strong statements about defending Taiwan against Chinese aggression.

Trump's first term saw significant strain in NATO relations, as he repeatedly questioned the value of the alliance. A second term could push NATO nations to reconsider their security strategies and defense spending, potentially weakening the unity of the Western alliance. Trump's skepticism about European Union integration and U.S. involvement in European security could drive a wedge between the U.S. and its European allies, potentially leading to a stronger, more independent EU foreign policy. Trump's tendency to seek a closer relationship with Vladimir Putin may continue, impacting U.S. policies on Russia's actions in Ukraine, Syria, and other conflict zones. This could complicate NATO's position in Eastern Europe and globally. Trump's foreign policy in the Middle East might continue to focus on countering Iran, supporting Israel, and minimizing U.S.

military involvement in the region, while emphasizing arms sales to allies like Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Trump's support for military expansion, including modernization of U.S. nuclear forces and increasing defense budgets, could influence global security dynamics. This may lead to a renewed arms race, particularly in cyber, space, and missile defense technologies. Countries in Asia and the Middle East may seek to adjust their security policies based on Trump's unpredictable stance, potentially forming new alliances or enhancing existing ones in response to perceived U.S. disengagement or unpredictability. A Trump administration might further withdraw from international climate agreements, including the Paris Accord, prioritizing domestic energy production over global environmental efforts. Countries like China and the EU, which have embraced climate change initiatives, could seize the opportunity to take a leadership role in global environmental diplomacy, shifting the balance of power in global climate governance.

Trump's economic policies, especially on trade and tariffs, could cause instability in global markets. Nations that depend on free trade, especially emerging economies, may find it harder to navigate a world shaped by U.S. protectionism. As Trump pushes for the reshoring of manufacturing jobs to the U.S., countries with dependent manufacturing sectors may experience disruptions, while others may diversify their trade relations away from the U.S. The 2024 re-election of Donald Trump would mark a continuation of a more nationalist and unilateral U.S. approach to international relations. This could lead to significant shifts in global alliances, trade, and security, with potential consequences for the international order, global economic stability, and the balance of power among major nations.

Conclusion

The re-election of Donald Trump in 2024 would likely bring about significant changes in the dynamics of international relations, global trade, and strategic balance. While his first term demonstrated a clear shift toward unilateralism, skepticism of multilateral institutions, and an "America First" approach, a second term could deepen these trends, potentially reshaping the global order. However, the implications of his re-election are complex. The United States' role in global governance, its security alliances, and its economic leadership will all be influenced by the continuation of Trump's policies. The world may see the emergence of a more fragmented and competitive international system, marked by shifting alliances, regional power struggles, and new trade dynamics. Ultimately, Trump's re-election could redefine the strategic balance of the 21st century, with far-reaching consequences for both the U.S. and the international community. This article structure provides a clear analysis of the potential consequences of Donald Trump's re-election on various aspects of global politics. It is designed to present a balanced examination of how his leadership might influence international relations,

trade, security, environmental policy, and global strategic dynamics.

Recommendations

The potential re-election of Donald Trump in 2024 would have significant implications for international relations, global dynamics, and the strategic balance of power. Based on his past policies and "America First" approach, the following are key recommendations for various actors in the global arena to consider:

- i. **Strengthening Multilateral Institutions with Caution:** While Trump's previous tenure saw skepticism and withdrawal from various multilateral agreements, it's important for international organizations to recalibrate their engagement strategies in anticipation of his potential re-election. These organizations should explore ways to maintain influence by offering more flexible, pragmatic partnerships, accommodating U.S. interests while ensuring the overall integrity of the system. For example: NATO should work to reassure the U.S. that European security and collective defense remain a priority while encouraging more equitable burden-sharing within the alliance. The UN and WTO should consider reforming their structures to make them more responsive to U.S. concerns, while ensuring that the core principles of global cooperation, human rights, and free trade remain intact.
- ii. **European Union: Defending Interests While Engaging with the U.S.:** European leaders will need to balance a commitment to transatlantic unity with the reality of potential tensions due to Trump's —America First— stance. A two-pronged approach is necessary: The EU should continue to work closely with the U.S. on key security issues, such as NATO defense spending and counterterrorism, but should avoid becoming overly dependent on Washington's leadership in global governance. In the face of potential U.S. withdrawal from international agreements, the EU should bolster its own foreign policy and security capabilities, especially in areas like defense, trade, and climate action. It could further cement its role as a counterbalance to both U.S. and Chinese influence in global forums.
- iii. **China and Russia: Leveraging Opportunities, Preparing for Rivalry:** Both of these global powers have seen opportunities to advance their interests in a world where U.S. leadership is less predictable. However, they must be prepared for the volatility that a re-elected Trump may bring, especially in terms of trade and security dynamics. China and Russia should strengthen their partnerships, particularly in economic and technological sectors, to counterbalance a potentially retrenched U.S. role in global leadership. The strengthening of ties through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and closer defense cooperation could align their strategic interests in Eurasia and beyond. Both China and Russia must stay attuned to Trump's potential protectionist and unilateral approach, particularly in terms of tariffs, sanctions, and military posture. They must remain agile and ready to pivot quickly in response to U.S. moves that could affect their interests.

- iv. **Global South: Navigating a Changing Geopolitical Landscape:** Countries in the Global South, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, will face growing challenges as U.S. foreign policy becomes more transactional. Many of these nations rely on the U.S. for trade, aid, and security cooperation. To reduce dependency on the U.S., these countries should strengthen ties with other global players like China, the EU, India, and regional powers. For instance, countries in Africa could increase engagement with China's BRI, while Latin American states may look to diversify trade agreements away from the U.S. Building regional coalitions and strengthening organizations such as the African Union (AU) or the Latin American Community of Nations (CELAC) could allow these countries to build resilience to potential disruptions in U.S. foreign policy.
- v. **The Middle East: Navigating Shifting Alliances:** Trump's "America First" policies often led to a transactional approach to the Middle East, notably through the Abraham Accords and his support for authoritarian leaders. If re-elected, Trump's policies could lead to further instability in the region, especially in terms of U.S. disengagement from multilateral peace processes and security agreements. Middle Eastern countries should expect that the U.S. will demand more from its allies, particularly in defense spending and trade agreements. However, they should also be prepared for a potential pullback from U.S. intervention in regional conflicts. Countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Israel could look to deepen their ties with Russia and China for security and economic purposes. The formation of new security pacts, possibly with Russia, could provide a counterbalance to any perceived U.S. retreat from the region.
- vi. **Global Trade and Economic Cooperation: Prepare for Protectionism:** Trump's economic policies, such as tariffs, trade wars, and the withdrawal from trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), could continue to disrupt global trade patterns. Countries may increasingly pursue bilateral or regional trade agreements outside of the U.S. sphere. The EU, China, and Japan could strengthen existing partnerships, while emerging economies could pursue new trade deals to bypass U.S. tariffs. Countries should continue to champion free trade agreements within regional groupings (e.g., the RCEP in Asia) and focus on digital economy partnerships, which could provide growth avenues even amid protectionist trends.
- vii. **Climate Change and Global Governance: Anticipate Fragmentation:** Trump's past decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement demonstrated a lack of prioritization for global environmental issues. If re-

elected, his stance could make coordinated global action on climate change more difficult. Nations should take the lead on climate action in their regions. The EU, for example, could deepen its Green Deal, while countries in Asia or Africa could push for regional sustainability agreements that are less dependent on U.S. leadership. Countries heavily invested in climate action, such as small island states, should seek to deepen their partnerships with other climate-conscious nations (e.g., the EU, China, India), bypassing the U.S. when necessary.

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