



Donald Trump's foreign policy plans

Description

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Much has been said about Donald Trump's return to the American Presidency and his likely impact on world politics. The bewildering mixed-bag of views is a testament to the man's main trademark: unpredictability. Of everything I have read so far, perhaps the most incisive analysis was by Francis Fukuyama, the renowned political scientist from Stanford University.

He says that this time round, Americans voting for Trump, did so with full knowledge of who Trump is and what he represents. And he has won everything: the majority popular vote, all the swing states, the Senate, the House, and has control of the Supreme Court.

Fukuyama has a clear message. Trump is inaugurating a new era in US and world politics, based on rejecting neoliberalism and 'woke liberalism' ideology: "being aware of and actively attentive to important societal facts and issues, especially issues of racial and social justice," exemplified by political correctness.

Kissinger saw it coming in 2018. In an interview with the Financial Times he said, "I think Trump may be one of those figures in history who appears from time to time to mark the end of an era and to force it to give up its pretences. It doesn't necessarily mean that he knows this, or that he is considering any great alternative. It could just be an accident." He thought Trump might already be a substantial figure in world history. He even hinted that "the era which is ending may indeed deserve to go."

Many analysts believe that Trump's rejection of the woke ideology is what brought him to power. He benefited from the swath of working-class people that feel that left-wing political parties are no longer defending their interests and are shifting to parties of the right. An increasing number of European rightwing politicians are also exploiting this. They are Trump's natural allies in this evolving new world order.

Giorgia Meloni in Italy, Marine Le Pen in France, Gert Wilders in the Netherlands, AfD in Germany, are attracting groups of workers that are unhappy with "a free-trade system that eliminated their livelihoods even as it created a new class of super-rich." They are also unhappy with "progressive parties that seemingly care more for foreigners and the environment than their own condition."

Fukuyama expects Trump to make use of this and his strong mandate home. Under Trump "there would be a gradual decay of liberal institutions, much as occurred in Hungary after Viktor Orbán's return to power in 2010."

Fukuyama believes that Trump is ushering in a new and far-reaching era of world politics. Ultimately, Trump was elected by the Americans to defend the interests of Americans: "America first" – naked nationalism. That prevails. That's why President Macron said, "The question we, as Europeans, must ask ourselves is, are we ready to defend the interests of Europeans?" Europe should see this as an opportunity to "grow-up" and be more independent.

Fukuyama says "Trump is a self-proclaimed protectionist, who says that 'tariff' is the most beautiful word in the English language. He has proposed 10% or 20% tariffs against all goods produced abroad, by friends, [both in Europe and Asia] and enemies alike, [including 60% on Chinese imports], and does not need the authority of Congress to do so." Reality may temper this, but undoubtedly it will distort global trade.

But make no mistake. Europe will be heavily affected, politically and economically. There are warnings that there will be major changes in American foreign policy, with the US-EU

relationship becoming less strategic.

Taking this further, Trump will bring major changes to US foreign policy, but he appears to be averse to the use of military power. Elizabeth Saunders, professor of political science at Columbia University, says Trump has no 'fixed beliefs', but dislikes big alliances, multilateral trade deals and he admires authoritarian regimes.

Ukraine will be the first to see the impact of this, with Trump forcing an early settlement with Russia. In terms of Russia, he is likely to go for protectionism and accommodation, rather than confrontation.

NATO will be next – sharing the financial burden 'fairly' will be a key priority. Trump could either withdraw or weaken US leadership. The European members will struggle to fill the vacuum. They urgently need to show they have a plan.

In the Middle East he will give Netanyahu unequivocal support and bring maximum pressure to bear on Iran, strengthening sanctions. He will use his son-in-law to follow up on the Abraham Accords and engage more closely with Prince Mohamed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, in an effort to bring peace to the Middle East.

Cyprus should benefit from this, as far as it goes. Its close relationship with Israel, offering Israelis a safe refuge and a link to Europe, and the recent defense accord with the US will help.

It remains to be seen how he will treat Turkey, given its strong stance against Israel and support of Hamas. Trump's choice of Senator Marco Rubio for secretary of state and Congressman Michael Waltz for national security adviser, both known for their anti-Turkey stance on key issues, could make it difficult.

Asian countries will not fare any better than European, and trade with China will be fraught but the relationship with the country may be influenced by his admiration for Xi Jinping.

In terms of energy, he will withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement, overturn Biden's green policies, turn on oil and gas production tap – with his famous DRILL, BABY, DRILL –, support new US LNG export licenses and internationally he will not support policies related to advancing and funding green transition. Already, his election is overshadowing the COP29 Summit, in effect putting the US role in limbo, injecting uncertainty and possibly slowing the energy transition.

Trump has not merely won re-election. He has also brought about fundamental shifts in policy, ideology and the political landscape.

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