

Trump's Return and the Impact of Future U.S Domestic and Foreign Policy on the World: The Prospective for Asia and Small States

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Abstract

Donald Trump's reelection as the President of the United States spells changes to the established status quo of the international community. All states are likely to be impacted from the policy changes of the US and international sanctions created by the United States of America, which will dictate negotiation, finding new avenues, and developing partnerships. South Asia will be broadly impacted from the plays by Washington and counter moves by competitors such as Russia and China. South Asian markets in terms of development must leverage existing strengths, technologies and develop new friendships for prosperity and future of South Asian nations globally and stability domestically.

METHODOLOGY

This paper will undertake an extensive systematic literature review and examine data, facts, intelligence, and information emerging from a rapidly evolving conflict situation. The methodology adopted for the paper, which is built upon insights derived from a comprehensive literature review. By grounding the methodology in existing scholarship, this study ensures rigor and relevance in addressing the topic. The paper also relies on secondary data sources, including reports, archival documents, and datasets identified in the review. These sources were chosen to triangulate findings and provide additional context.

BACKGROUND

As the world heads into 2025 a quarter of the way through the 21st century the expectation is for plenty of change in the year ahead not least here in the United States where Donald Trump will be returning to the White House, for some it is a triumphant return for the only man they believe can save America and turn its failures and fortunes around others though view it with trepidation believing that the country's position globally will be undermined.

Trump and US voters put domestic issues at the top of their priority list in particular the cost of living. Inflation has dropped dramatically since post pandemic highs but Trump says he'll improve the US economy and put more money in people's pockets. He wants to end taxes on tips and Social Security benefits, cut taxes for corporations and higher earners but he also wants to expand the child tax credit. Trump ambitiously wants to slash gas prices by more than a dollar and make interest on car loan payments tax deductible but some economists say that the tax cuts alone will add \$4.6 trillion to the US deficit.

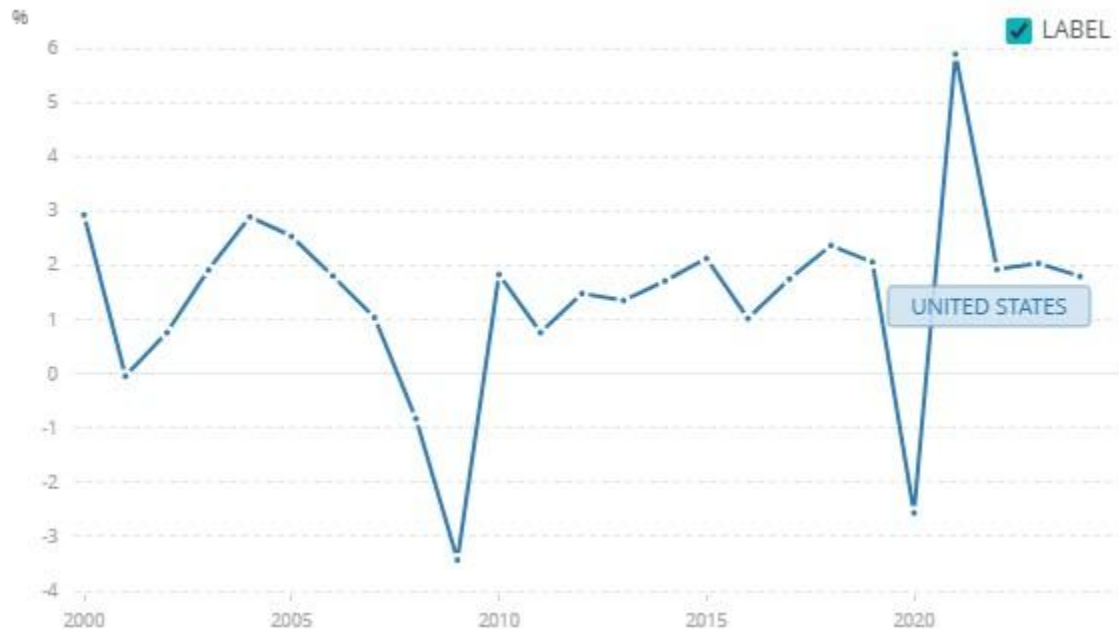


Fig. 2 GDP per capita growth (annual %) - United States (Source: World Bank, 2025)

“He's going to increase our deficit spending which itself could be inflationary but for sure it it just leads to a bigger mountain of debt that we have to pay interest on um and and at some point at some point when he's gone the country will have to deal with all that debt” according to Harry Holzer, Professor of Public Policy, Georgetown University.



The alternating pattern of isolationism and protectionism in the foreign policy of the U.S. continue to persist in Trump's America First policy. America's interaction with the rest of the world have been profoundly changed by the two fundamental ideas. Isolationism is founded on the idea of deliberate non-involvement in international conflicts and political alliances, often based on the belief that the country should focus on its own internal priorities and avoid situations that may spark conflict (Mead, 2002). This approach was most evident in the interwar period of 1918 to 1941 when the U.S. restricted immigration and rejected joining the League of Nations, imposed strict neutrality laws to avoid involvement in European wars (Kennedy, 1987).

However, economic disengagement is not always a sign of isolationism. In the early 20th century, the United States continued to be a major actor in international trade even if it avoided military alliances. Ultimately, the 1941 Pearl Harbour attack changed the U.S. policy which led it to join World War II and thereafter commit to worldwide participation (Gellman, 2019).

In order to protect the domestic industries of a country, protectionism includes restricting or limiting international trade, usually through high tariffs and trade barriers (Irwin, 2011). The Smoot-Hawley Tariff act of 1930 increased import duties in an attempt to save employment of Americans during the Great Depression which was a turning point in the U.S, protectionist policy (Eichengreen, 1992). However, this approach meant that the global economic crisis was worse and caused international trade to decrease as a result of retaliatory tariffs from other countries. Critics argue that this ideology can increase costs of consumers, cause global supply chains to break down and result in retaliation from other countries (Kurgman, 2020).

IMMIGRATION AND DEPORTATION

The other big vote winner for Trump was immigration. He has promised the mass deportation of the roughly 11 million illegal immigrants living in the US declaring a National Emergency mobilizing the military and ramping up border security has won broad conservative support but it would drastically reduce the workforce causing GDP by some estimates to shrink by more than a trillion dollars.

Trump plans to increase oil and gas production and bolster US energy independence with that he plans to roll back emissions regulations on cars and power plants and once again pull the US out of the Paris climate agreement. All of which is prompting climate concerns at home and abroad.

It doesn't appear plausible that the United States will take the lead in reducing the current trajectory of carbon emissions which are causing severe weather patterns through the burning of fossil fuels. Ikenberry (2011) discusses how other countries have been able to take the lead in international affairs because of the States' diminishing leadership and influence. As a result, other counties may now take on the leadership role in climate action instead of the United States.

ABORTION RIGHTS

On abortion rights Trump has said he doesn't plan to implement a nationwide ban on abortions instead leaving it up to states to decide their own policies but anti-abortion activists fear more restrictions on access to things like abortion medication.

EDUCATION

Trump wants to target education reform too; he's pledged to scrap the Department of Education giving States and parents more freedom to decide what children are taught. That would mean more funding to schools and colleges that teach conservative ideas and less funding for those that lean liberal.

“The strength of American higher education in part is derived from the fact that it is free from governmental overreach and political intrusion and and what we're seeing now is legislation introduced in red States and we fear national legislation that will eliminate all diversity equity and inclusion programs that serve a wide range of students” Lynn Pasquerella, President, American Association of Colleges and Universities interview (CNA Insider, 2024).

Many of these major changes would need approval from Congress but with the Republicans controlling both the house and the Senate Donald Trump will have the power to make the policies he wants moving the US's domestic agenda firmly to the right something that the majority of Americans now clearly support but it's not just issues here at home his election will cause ripples globally remember the saying when the US sneezes the whole world catches a cold. The Trump's next Administration will indeed affect the world the US is Trump's foreign policy and international security currently invested in Regional wars in the Middle East and between Ukraine and Russia Trump's policies could amount to a war on trade if he decides to implement tariffs they may also be a trump effect on climate change if he rolls back support for climate agreements but will Trump's America First policies necessarily mean that everyone else is last I spoke to Matt Duss former foreign policy director for Bernie Sanders 2020 presidential campaign and Executive Vice President of the nonprofit Think Tank Center for international policy.

PALESTINE

We should analyse if Trump's threats of “hell on earth if Israeli hostages are not released” by the time he's back in office are actually going to end the violence.

Trump has previously employed aggressive rhetoric as a strategic tool in both trade negotiations and foreign policy. His approach involved making bold threats in order to exert pressure on other nations, which can be observed in other instances during his presidency. The impact of those actions has already been shown by Israel's use of force in Gaza. However, this form of combative rhetoric from President Trump is not unexpected since, in early 2025, Trump declared a 25% tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico, claiming concerns over illegal immigration and drug trafficking. Following these discussions, both countries took action to address concerns of the U.S. which resulted in a temporary suspension of the tariffs (AP News, 2025).

Given the degree of military capabilities and level of force that the United States could unleash if it chose to, the gravity of this rhetoric is important to recognise. The history of this pattern raises the possibility that similar rhetoric may help Gaza and its efforts in moving toward a ceasefire. These instances illustrate the broader strategy of using assertive rhetoric and economic leverage to influence international allies and achieve policy goals.

UKRAINE

Vladimir Putin's readiness to participate in substantive talks is a crucial element in the current crisis in Ukraine. The prospect of a ceasefire and peace agreement is undoubtedly significant as many desire peace but there are still concerns about how long such accords will last. Will a ceasefire hold, or will it only serve as a temporary reprieve until Russia regains its footing and attempts to advance on Kyiv once again? Mearsheimer (2014) asserts that geopolitical interests frequently drive the behavior of superpowers like Russia making a peaceful resolution improbable unless such interests are taken care of. Despite the potential political challenges for Ukraine, especially with regard to territory losses in the East, a peace deal that ensures the sovereignty of Ukraine and a right to self-defense must be carefully considered if we are to determine

at the least a detrimental course of action. Negotiations are particularly challenging due to Russia's territorial aspirations and the historical background in Eastern Europe (Snyder, 2018).

Both countries have suffered greatly as a result of the war, with Ukraine bearing the brunt of it. But with its greater resources, Russia could be able to continue this conflict for a longer period of time than Ukraine (Kissinger, 2022). A strategy that preserves Ukraine's independence and defense capabilities while strengthening its relations with Europe offers a viable path forward and is worth serious consideration. As per Graham and Konrad (2023), negotiations which strengthen these connections may be able to support Ukraine's independence while reducing the strain from Russian aggression. Ultimately, the major issue remains whether Putin would consent to such an agreement.

NATO

Trump has repeatedly urged NATO allies to boost their defense budgets, at times threatening to withhold U.S. support if they failed to reach the alliance's defense expenditure targets. According to Newsweek (2018), he suggested in 2018 that NATO countries boost their defense budget target to 4% of GDP. More recently he has pushed for increasing this target to 5% of GDP, which is currently unmet by any NATO country (Politico, 2025). Trump's criticism of NATO is consistent with his belief that international agreements are being used against the States. His argument is that other members "essentially free ride" on American security promises while the United States are "paying too much" (Foreign Policy, 2025).

On the other hand, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, has stressed the significance of continued support for Ukraine and warned that a victory for Russia would have far reaching geopolitical repercussions and has highlighted Russia's collaboration with China, North Korea and Iran, implying that the Ukrainian war is a component of a larger geopolitical struggle (NATO, 2024).

Considering these differing perspectives, it is plausible that Trump may think about lowering American participation in NATO if he believes that members are not fairly sharing the cost of defense. However, given the present challenges facing the world, such a step would need to be balanced against the possible consequences of reducing NATO's collective security.

Through programs such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and AUKUS, the United States has significantly improved its relations in the Indo-Pacific area. Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. formed AUKUS in September of 2021 as a trilateral security collaboration with the goal of "promote a free and open Indo-Pacific that is secure and stable" (Medcalf, 2021). Similarly, the Quad, consisting of the U.S., Australia, India and Japan was first created to provide disaster relief and humanitarian aid but has now developed into a strategic platform tackling regional security issues (Grossman et al., 2022).

Both Trump and Biden administrations have prioritized China as a key component of the U.S. foreign policy. There are still questions about whether these initiatives will last or be reevaluated. Nearly every aspect of the United States' foreign policy decisions is influenced by its strategic competition with China which has established itself as the primary structure for addressing its diplomatic alliances and security obligations.

TARIFFS ON CHINA

The implementation of tariffs signaled a dramatic change in U.S. international and economic policy, especially during President Trump's first term. Trump reframed the use of tariffs which were historically thought to be an extreme tactic in international trade by arguing that they are necessary to protect American industry and address trade imbalances. Tariffs are essentially a "tax" on American customers as a result of the increased costs of products and services (Irwin, 2017). The impacts of these tariffs, especially ones targeted at China, are usually felt most significantly by American consumers. Although the cost of tariffs is not borne by foreign governments, American companies are compelled to absorb the additional expenses and eventually pass them on to customers. If the targeted countries' conduct did not change significantly, Trump was likely to maintain his tough tariff measures unfazed by any internal opposition. The executive branch has substantial control over foreign policy choices, giving the

president the ability to enact such actions unilaterally, even when congressional backing may differ (Frieden, 2021).

CHINA

China's economic struggles and US trade tensions allies times have been tough for workers in China. In 2024 workers are making half of their average \$410 per month, half of what most workers used to make a few years ago.

Echoed the sentiment authorities have also noticed and taken action since September a raft of economic stimulus measures was announced to address the weaker than expected post pandemic recovery this shifting of the tide as described by some came as China marked 4.6% GDP growth in the third quarter of 2024 now that also being the second straight quarter in which it missed its annual economic growth target which was set at around 5% to address these concerns authorities have unveiled a whole slew of stimulus measures ranging from monetary policies to moves to stop the property market from decline, and a 12 trillion in debt swap program to address high local government debt.

There have been some signs of recovery like improved retail sales figures in October and more buoyant property and capital markets but some analysts remain disappointed and urge China to unleash more economic firepower through intervention in policy. This especially as the country prepares for a new yet familiar challenge of Trump.

“If China or some other country is behaving badly we have things called tariffs that are so severe” Donald Trump. The return of US president elect Donald Trump to the White House in January is expected to heighten tensions for an already difficult sign for U.S-China relations.

Trump has threatened tariffs on All Foreign imports with an additional 60% on Chinese Goods even though that's just a campaign Trail threat for now government advises at a recent media briefing signal that China is ready if Mr Trump makes good on

his promises for other analysts end this will likely be a repeat of the tariff war during Mr Trump's first term the first school of thought says that China is actually in a stronger position than before just on trade alone it has trillions dollars of surplus the other school of thought says that China is coping with structural challenges for example weakness in the property sector and also consumption consumer spending has dropped so given these structural changes China may be in a position that is somewhat more vulnerable than trade War 1.0 another brutal trade War could spell even closer ties with China friendly countries like Russia but regardless of the volatility abroad one thing is certain that the Chinese leadership would be Keen to show a strong front to its domestic audience and ensure much prized Social stability at home

JAPAN

Japan enjoyed stable ties with Donald Trump during his first term. During Trump's first term then prime minister Shinzo Abe was the first foreign leader to meet with Trump when he was president-elect and they even became golf buddies. There were no major trade frictions, in fact, Trump supported Abe's concept of a free and open Indo Pacific. Trump enjoyed some modicum of public support in Japan, as when Trump lost the presidential election in 2019, people in Japan organised marches called "March for Trump" as a show of support toward Trump. The marches were replete with slogans noting "Stop The Steal" referring to the allegation of election fraud by Trump in 2019. Thus as the 2024 US presidential election approached the phrase "Moshitora" meaning "What if Trump?", emerged in Japan. As such faced with the possibility of Trump's return Japan's government began overtures to Trump via former Prime Minister Tarō Asō who was then the Vice President of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party and a close friend of the late Abe. Asō met Trump in New York in April 2024 during this meeting they confirmed the importance of the Japan-U.S. alliance according to Trump's camp.

But there are doubts as to whether Japan's new Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba can build on Abe's legacy and cultivate close ties with Trump. Ishiba's ruling party lost its majority in the general election in October 2024, the month he took office. This is in stark contrast to Abe, who had a strong mandate from the public in the form of majority in the Kokkai or the National Diet, the national legislature of Japan.

Former Japanese Ambassador to the U.S., Ichiro Fujisaki notes, “The reason Mr Abe was able to establish good relations with President Trump at the time was because of the 3 P’s. The first P was personal relations, second P was power as Abe was strong in his country. He won all the elections, and he had a majority in the Lower House as well as the Upper House. The third P is profit. Abe looked at how he could bring profit to the United States.”

However there is hope for Japan, as Ishiba is an experienced politician and was formerly the Defense Minister. Ishiba will seek to strengthen the Japan-US security alliance. In order for the United States to have influence in the Asian region, US presence in Japan becomes important, even the military presence. Ishiba is familiar with and knows the defense issues, diplomatic issues well. So there is the possibility that Japan may convince Trump.

Japan laid out plans for a defense buildup worth 43 trillion yen or about \$300 billion USD over 5 years back in 2022. This increase in spending sought to strengthen Japan's missile and standoff defense capabilities, which was an effort Trump has praised. Although it is unclear if Trump will be satisfied with this. In his first term Trump had demanded that Japan pay more to host US troops stationed there who number about 54,000. These US soldiers play a critical role in Japan's defence policy.

On trade it's not certain yet if Trump will impose tariffs on imports from allies including Japan. Although Trump has publicly discussed plans for 10-20% tariffs on all imports to the US and 60% tariffs for imports from China.

Japan will have to convince Trump that there is no reason to add tariffs to imports from Japan. Japan may be able to argue they are not hurting the US economy, and may seek to highlight that Japan is the number one investor that is creating jobs in the United States. According to Fujisaki “We have to explain these positions to himself and to his officials”

Another sticking point between Japan and the US, is Nippon Steel's proposal to acquire US Steel for \$4 billion which both the Biden Administration and Mr Trump

oppose. This has led to Japan's largest business organization Keidanren together with the US Chamber of Commerce have expressed their concern over political interference in these business deals in a letter to US Treasury Secretary Janet Yalen. Posting on social media in early December Mr Trump reiterated his objection to the acquisition adding that he will block the deal as president. However, the Biden administration has blocked the deal through Presidential Order, citing national security concerns and the US Defense Production Act of 1950. Steel is a key resource for defence technologies (The White House, 2025). Both US Steel and Nippon Steel have decided to challenge this order on 9 January, suing the US Government to reverse this decision citing illegal political interference

6 in 10 Japanese believe a Trump Presidency will have a negative impact on Japan according to a survey conducted by the public broadcaster NHK in November 2024. It remains to be seen how the Japan-U.S. Alliance could evolve as the President elect takes office.

SOUTH KOREA

The political turmoil in Seoul casts uncertainty on the South Korea-US alliance. South Korea was plunged into political turmoil after President Yoon Suk Yeol's short-lived attempt to declare martial law on 9 December 2024. This move stunned the nation and its allies. Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets demanding the resignation of Yoel. The fallout has rattled South Korea's economy, Asia's fourth largest and has cast doubt over its stability with foreign leaders scrapping planned meetings and visits including key engagement by the US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

The US has stressed the importance of the security alliance, with Seoul as a key Washington ally in the region. But the current crisis adds a layer of uncertainty to bilateral ties as the US too is heading into a period of transition.

About an hour's drive south of South Korea's capital Seoul, there are many American soldiers and personnel working at the nearby US Camp Humphreys military base. Camp Humphrey officially opened in 2018 and is now home to more than 40,000 American personnel and their families. With some additional 28,500 US troops stationed

across South Korea. Most of these troops from other bases in South Korea were moved to Camp Humphrey as agreed between Seoul and Washington in 2004. Trump has local business owners worried as he had previously threatened to reduce or even pull out American troops from South Korea which would be a big blow to business in South Korea that is dependent on business from US soldiers, personnel and their families.

South Korea has already signed a cost sharing deal with the US for the upkeep of American forces stationed in the country in 2024. Both sides agreed South Korea would pay about \$1.1 billion USD in 2026, the first year of the 5-year deal. Additionally, annual increases will be kept at 5% per year according to the agreement which runs until 2030. Which is beyond the 4-year term of the next US president but many observers in South Korea believe Trump would seek renegotiation.

For many South Koreans another concern looming over them is North Korea's deployment of troops to Russia for the Ukraine war.

Doo Jin-Ho, Chair of the Global Strategy Division at the Korea Institute for Defence Analysis recently told foreign media he believes sending North Korean troops to Russia could be a big gamble for leader Kim Jong-un but that it could pay off especially when Kim meets Trump. Which according to the Korea Institute for Defence Analysis is highly likely. It is important that South Korea prepares itself for changes when Trump takes office in 2025, and studies the ways it can benefit from those changes. As such it remains to be seen if the US South Korean Alliance which goes back more than 70 years will be able to stay strong as it did under the Biden Administration.

Opinions are mixed in South Korea while some see Trump as a threat to the alliance, there are many who say his presidency could bring about unexpected opportunities for bilateral ties and also inter-Korean ties which remained at a stalemate throughout the Biden Administration. But experts have warned that South Korea could demand for more self-reliance when it comes to the country's defence including to desperate resorts such as by acquiring nuclear weapons if the alliance with the US weakens and concerns of a conflict with North Korea grow

INDONESIA

Looking at Indonesia's 8th President Prabowo Subianto's vision for "a golden Indonesia", the date of 20th October 2024 marked the official start of Indonesia's post Joko era marked by the inauguration of Prabowo Subianto as the eighth President and Gibran Rakabuming Raka as the Vice President of Southeast Asia's largest economy with nominal GDP above 12 billion USD (International Monetary Fund, 2025).

In the aftermath of Prabowo's inauguration the post Joko Widodo changes have been swift, the new president Prabowo has sworn in the country's largest cabinet since 1966 with 109 members representing his pledge for a strong government. In contrast, his predecessor Joko had 34 ministers and heads of government agencies. Prabowo has had to build a coalition government together with Gibran and this is predicated on party member interests and on accommodations to non-state and non-party actors. There are concerns that a top heavy cabinet may bloat bureaucracy moving forward and with the start of 2025 Indonesian citizens will look to the cabinet to uphold their pledges

The Prabowo-Gibran Administration has set out eight goals in their "Asta Cita" mission to realize their vision of a golden era of Indonesia these include self-sufficiency in food, water, and energy, strengthening human resource development, downstreaming and industrialization, and fighting corruption and drugs among others. As part of materializing these goals a nationwide free nutritious meal program was planned to start on January 2nd in 2025 with Vice President Gibran Rakabuming conducting checks on the ground at schools prior to the program's launch. There was also a commitment to eradicate extreme poverty within the first two years of their term and a directive for an 8% economic growth target which some observers have called unrealistic given the current state of the Indonesian economy.

The most worrying under the administration may be the signal of the shrinking of the middle class. Which means that it will create a need for a better safety net for more and more people. Better safety nets for more and more people means more social programs, social assistance, direct cash transfers, and so on and so forth. This may consume more of the national budget. Then there is a question mark on the progress of

Indonesia's new capital Nusantara. Throughout campaigning president Prabowo pledged to continue its construction but Nusantara was not mentioned in Prabowo's inauguration speech and Minister of Public Works Dody Hanggodo has said that his party would likely stop major construction projects due to budget constraints. Making clear that while construction of the new capital will continue it will not be at the same pace as before. The Ministry of Public Works and Housing while still under former president Joko Widodo received a budget ceiling for the 2025 budget year of over 7 billion US dollars. Minister Dody Hanggodo has said that of the total budget, only around 4% can be used by the ministry for new projects but that he is still waiting for direction from president Prabowo.

Prior to winning the presidency Prabowo has long earned a reputation as a military strongman, one who is firm and deeply nationalistic having personally met global leaders even before his presidential inauguration and engaged with diverse partners in Asia and Europe to shore up Indonesia's positions in trade, defence, security and other areas. President Prabowo has secured over \$18 billion USD in investment commitments since winning the vote. With China as his first stop followed by the US in his first overseas tour, the new president has actively shown that he is planning on having a more hands-on approach in dealing with foreign policy matters than his predecessor.

Trump's plan on tariffs may hurt Indonesia, as Trump has proposed 60 percent tariffs on Chinese goods, and potentially 10-20 percent tariffs on goods from other countries, including Indonesia. Indonesia is one the largest trading partners with the US, exporting products like palm oil, electronic components, machinery, textiles, footwear, tires, and rubber. In 2023 exports from Indonesia to the US were at the value of USD 23.3 billion made up of inputs and raw material going towards US production. Trump's plan to increase tariffs would raise costs which would make Indonesia goods and products expensive for both US producers and consumer markets.

Indonesia relies on the US for their trade preference programs such as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). This program provides duty free access to the US market for specific goods from developing countries. Indonesia has benefited from this preferential treatment, exporting USD 3.56 billion under GSP provisions in 2023. Trump is taking a proactive stance on trade and has removed countries such as India and Turkey in the past from programs such as GSP. Indonesia's eligibility was also reviewed in 2017 by the US Trade Representative as part of their "proactive" review. So

Indonesia cannot rest assured of a preferred trade partner role with the US. Trump will seek his trademark “deals” from both allies, friends and enemies including Indonesia. Deals that will no doubt seek to balance costs to the US as seen by Trump. Trump may also seek to replicate his first term with the introduction of tax cuts and regulatory incentives that aim to bring US companies to invest in US domestic areas. Concerns exist that Trump’s tax policies could lead to a decline in US FDI abroad if American companies are encouraged to reinvest earnings domestically. Trump is also strong on shoring up manufacturing jobs in the US and reducing reliance on foreign supplies, this policy may cost Indonesia who has a vibrant manufacturing sector with electronics and automotive production.

“One thousand friends are too few while one enemy is too many” according to Indonesian president Prabowo. While former president Joko Widodo and current president Prabowo are different in their methods, at their root is a pragmatic approach to reap the benefits of foreign investment. This means that all eyes are on Indonesia and its new leader in anticipation of a promising future. Indonesia will need to diversify economic partnerships, build trade ties, reposition for strong local manufacturing, and explore new sources of FDI. This is necessary to lessen reliance on any single market.

THAILAND

Thailand's political challenges under new PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra's future. In Bangkok Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra seeks to build confidence in her government, demonstrating a normal business as usual image. However politics can often be stranger than fiction. The Thai political landscape is especially interesting in the tectonic upheavals and changes although the country continues forward. The origin of Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra’s government is unique but at the same time a familiar story for Thailand.

The Constitutional Court of the Kingdom of Thailand found Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin guilty of an ethics violation and removing him from office he's the fourth Thai Prime Minister in 16 years to be removed in verdicts by the same court. Thai lawmakers elected the country's youngest prime minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra who was 37 years old when she took the oath of office on 16 August 2024. Paetongtarn Shinawatra is the daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, ruling from 2001 to 2006.

Within a span of 72 hours Thailand changed Prime Ministers in 2024, and for the first time in a decade another Shinawatra family member took the helm of the Thai government again.

Paetongtarn Shinawatra is the country's youngest ever leader and also the second female prime minister, stepping in the footsteps of her aunt Yingluck Shinawatra, ruling from 2011 to 2014, who like her father and former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was ousted in a military coup.

In 2025, Paetongtarn Shinawatra is leading a coalition of former enemies turned possible strong allies or fair weather friends, consisting of past rivals of the governing Pheu Thai Party.

The previous government of Srettha Thavisin focused on quick wins such as reviving tourism arrivals to almost pre-pandemic records and trying to lure foreign investment to Thailand in order to boost Thailand's slow growing economy. This is a priority that Paetongtarn Shinawatra will continue in her government.

However there's still some unfulfilled campaign promises. There is for instance the digital wallet cash handout policy. While some Thais have already received their 10,000 baht or almost \$300 but the majority of the 50 million eligible Thais are still waiting for their money. It is going to cost the government a total of 13 billion USD in an effort to boost consumption. This is expected to come sometime in 2025 which is significantly later than initially announced.

Then there's the issue of household debt which is weighing heavily on the Thai economy which is almost 90% to the GDP. The Paetongtarn Shinawatra administration has developed some measures to address these challenges such as the suspension of interest and the delayment of principal payment so all in all these measures are aimed to ease the burden to the people so they are not defaulting on the loans or credit.

Paetongtarn Shinawatra has also proposed political reforms such as proposed amendments to the 2017 Constitution. But this has turned out to be much more

laborious than the Pheu Thai Party have hoped for and every consensus with the other parties is a hardfought one. There are some doubts whether or not the Thai people will get a new constitution before the next elections that are planned for sometime in 2027. But Thai politics operates in at least two worlds, in the halls of powers in Bangkok and outside the capital in the rest of Thailand.

Meanwhile in the local elections in northeastern Udantani, Thaksin Shinawatra is back on the campaign trail for the first time after returning from 15 years of self exile and a brief hospital detention and despite his 75 years being back at the front lines of politics appears to have rejuvenated his spirits. This may present unique challenges for the administration. As Thaksin Shinawatra is tying his political legacy to his daughter's political success but his personal investment in politics is seen by critics as meddling and could embolden his enemies to move against him and destabilise his daughter's government entire democracy as a whole.

In Bangkok Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra was touting her first 90 days in office promising a raft of policies for the 2025 year that she believes are a real possibility to change Thailand for the better. A few months is a short time frame to measure success but Thai politics rarely sails through calm waters and the path ahead can be murky as such a steady hand or two are needed to prevent the current Paetongtarn Shinawatra government from running ashore.

ASEAN

Is ASEAN still relevant amid the rise of minilateralism and new alliance building? This is a key question in the new ground realities of geopolitics. In geopolitics friendship and alliances are crucial. Countries that share similar interests often form alliances and groupings to the mutual benefit creating an interdependent ecosystem. There are numerous group groupings.

This includes the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe and North America, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Middle East, and in Asia the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN was founded in 1967. It currently has 10 member countries that include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Multilateralism is the cornerstone of ASEAN diplomacy. Meaning when it

comes to negotiating or meeting other groupings or major powers it chooses to do it as a block, as ASEAN.

But this preference for multilateral engagements is increasingly challenged by the rise of 'minilateralism', the evolution of the QUAD a security partnership among Australia, India, Japan, and the US, and the establishment of AUKUS, a trilateral pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the US have sparked debates about the rise and role of minilateralism in this region's architecture. Amid deepening major power rivalry and the shortcomings of large scale multilateralism, minilateralism is emerging as an alternative.

So how will this emerging possibly multipolar world order characterised with multiple minilateralisms affect the dynamics of ASEAN and its relevance? Geopolitical expert Dr Ellen Chong explained that the reason multilateralism is so important to Asia is because multilateralism is a diplomatic strategy not all states come to a multilateral gathering with the noblest of intentions, thereby requiring some states to strategise their interests. Often behind multilateralism meaning states do not want to put resources as multilateralism can be a way for some states to free ride.

At the same time ASEAN needs to deal with the rise of minilateralism. According to Thomas Daniel, Senior Fellow at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, ASEAN is no stranger to minilateralism. But today with the main concern being the emergence of minilateralism where ASEAN has no stake. And we see a lot of these minilaterals are by Asian dialogue partners as they might feel that their interests are not being adequately met. For thorny issues like the South China Sea, ASEAN seeks to address it through multilateral channels. How it's not realistic to expect all ASEAN members to share similar priorities but similar concerns may exist.

Maritime Southeast Asia States or claimant states in Southeast Asia and the South China Sea the question is can we realistically expect landlocked countries in Southeast Asia or countries that have a front to the Indian Ocean to share a similar degree of concern that those of us states who claimants in the disputed South China Sea.

Similarly we see countries on the mainland Southeast Asia who are in the lower Mekong region who suffer their own unique challenges because of Chinese developments such as dams and control of water in the upper Mekong. These states may ask questions about the kind of support that they feel that they ought to get from multilateral bodies such as ASEAN. Any lack of an answer may push them towards engaging in direct or minilateralism.

All these mini groupings may impact ASEANs economy as highlighted by Roland Rajah, Director at the Indo-Pacific Development Centre, Lowy Institute. AUKUS has internal cooperation on technology amongst their group but they are not showing this kind of initiative externally. QUAD is doing some things that show some initiatives in terms of combating illegal fishing and cyber security, infrastructure, and health. But they are still quite small-scale at the end of the day. Therefore, the reality might be that these minilateral arrangements like QUAD at this point don't have a big bearing on the region's economies.

Recently several ASEAN members have been exploring new trade opportunities. Four ASEAN member states have now partnered with the BRICS, a grouping that includes China, Russia, and India among other countries.

Currently, BRICS doesn't really do much according to Roland Rajah, as they have positioned themselves as a kind of voice for discontent with the way things are under a US led or Western led global economic order. In particular the closest thing they have come to would be the establishment of the BRICS Bank which has some funding attached. However the reality might be that this move might be a way to seek avenues of avoiding US sanctions and restrictions through the US dollar system rather than creating new economic opportunities. Currently it is just a beginning and it may be a long way off to establish a proper alternative system. When it comes to trade there's just not much on the table for ASEAN or other countries.

Some observers believe that certain ASEAN members like Malaysia joined BRICS to diversify their economic interests but with no immediate tangible benefits from this grouping so far. Others argue that this move reflects an effort to expand global partnership and reduce dependence on the West amid escalating global tensions.

Malaysia's ASEAN leadership and strategies to balance global partners. Taking over ASEAN Chairmanship for 2025 is Malaysia and it has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the China Plus One strategy. As companies diversify their businesses to alternative destinations beyond China. The existing ecosystem, abundance of resources and relatively skilled workforce put Malaysia in a sweet spot. In particular the semiconductor and data center industries have attracted billions of investments from Europe, the US ,and China.

Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia speaking at the keynote address of the Semicon Southeast Asia Conference in Kuala Lumpur event in 2024, “Today I offer our nation as the most neutral and nonaligned location for semiconductor production to help build a more secure and resilient global semiconductor supply chain”

As host for ASEAN, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has big plans for the Southeast Asian grouping. Malaysia is recognized as the sixth largest exporter of semiconductor and currently has 13% of the testing and packaging market. Malaysia is now eager to move up the value chain and venture into front-end advanced packaging and testing, including integrated circuit design. Thus ASEAN with a combined population of more than 670 million and the growing middle class not only represents a ready made market but also has the potential to develop its own supply chain for the important semiconductor industry. However it's a challenge to galvanise 10 member nations to come together and collaborate effectively. Speaking to this reality Zafrul Abdul Aziz, Malaysian Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry noted, “It is not going to be easy as there are countries more developed than others and we have a very diverse economic structure Economic Development and diverse industry groupings within ASEAN nations.

While actively expanding intra ASEAN trade that currently accounts for 22.9% of total exports. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim is also seeking to penetrate new markets through engagement with BRICS member countries ranging from Africa to South America as well as the Middle East.

Malaysia will be hosting the inaugural ASEAN-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit in May 2025. It is also roping in China as its largest trading partner for these meetings amid growing perception that Kuala Lumpur is leaning towards Beijing. Prime

Minister Anwar Ibrahim has already made three trips to China since he assumed office two years ago.

Richard McGregor, Senior Fellow for East Asia, Lowy Institute noted that “He is not taking sides. In some ways he is actively hedging but a little bit more towards China. It's interesting to observe though of course because I think the biggest investor in Malaysia is still the United States. But then we can guess he's looking to China to top that up but it doesn't necessarily pay instant dividends we'll see how that policy works out”

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has also reached out to Russian President Vladimir Putin and personally invited him to attend ASEAN meetings together with over a dozen dialogue partners. There are experts that are concerned about these moves, Professor Ong Kian Ming, Pro Vice Chancellor, Taylor's University noted “That may send the wrong signal to perhaps the United States and maybe some of the European Union member countries. Some of them may be less willing to come to Malaysia for the ASEAN dialogues as a result”.

While it's uncertain whether the second Trump Administration will impose more import tariffs on similar scale and scope as is campaign rhetoric, many Asian countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand which have substantial trade surpluses with the US are cautiously optimistic. “We are treading through a minefield. That's the bad thing. The good thing is that every country is treading through the same minefield. We just hope the bombs don't go off,” Richard McGregor said, indicating the braced optimism of Asian nations for the second term of Trump. Certainly, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim will have his work cut out to continue striking a delicate balance between us and China in order to stop Malaysia and Asian from being caught in a crossfire

TRUMP'S GREENLAND NEW DEAL

Trump has floated the idea of purchasing Greenland from Denmark. Greenland is a part of the Kingdom of Denmark, but they have their own autonomy, and they have largely been left out of any security discussions as it relates to any kind of Cold War or World War 3. In fact, the last time of any importance was during World War 2. The US

had a lot of US and Allied bases posted there to counter the Germans. US still has the Thule Air Base, which used to be very important during the Cold War, as it not only had fighters stationed there and it was a refueling location for strategic bombers, but it still has an early warning radar station for ballistic missile defense, part of a global network of missile defense systems, which includes, US satellite network that is also globally dispersed.

The reason why Greenland is becoming so important, besides the fact that Trump is talking about it, is because it is the closest landmass to the North Pole. And as the poles warm up and Arctic sea lanes become more available, we have countries like Russia and Near Arctic Countries like China, which is what they call themselves, starting to navigate the coastal waters in the Arctic. These countries are seeking alternatives for a better use for sea traffic, ability of logistics, supplies, and their overall economy. Another major reason Greenland is geostrategically important is that it has deposits of valuable precious metals, mineral reserves and oil which have remained unexploited. Global warming is now offering opportunities and the Arctic is looking like a very lucrative venture.

The question then becomes will Denmark sell Greenland? This is highly unlikely with Danish leaders responding negatively. Greenland itself has an independence movement seeking to become more autonomous from Denmark. So will Greenland agree to become the newest territory of the United States? There is a high level of doubt. But they could be looking at a grand new and lucrative deal sometime in the near future. Possibly a new US economic and security agreement. But what is highly unlikely might be any kind of successful courting from Russia or China to get Greenland to be under their influence of any kind. Nor will there be any kind of threatening maneuvers, any military maneuvers that would bring Greenland into their fold of any kind either. What people don't seem to understand is that Russia and China are not currently capable of projecting military power to that part of the world. Although both nations are fast seeking to build such capabilities. They are currently able to project military power beyond their own borders.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND THEIR IMPACT

As of January 2025, President Trump has signed several executive orders that have impacted a number of policy areas.

Imposition of Tariffs

Trump imposed a 25% tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico and a 10% tariff on China on February 1st, 2025 (White House, 2025). By increasing the cost of imported goods, the aim of these tariffs are to protect American manufacturers from foreign competition. These tariffs might raise consumer costs, disrupt international trade and spark retaliatory actions, even if their goal is to protect American steel, aluminium and automobile industries (Kurugman, 2020)

Revocation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

Those that had been given asylum in the United States because of political and economic upheaval in their native country were affected when Trump's administration ended Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for more than 300,000 Venezuelans in February 2025 (New York Times, 2025). The cancellation of TPS may result in further migration to small states, especially those in Latin America and the Caribbean which may strain their already fragile economies (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2020). Since many TPS holders send remittances back home, which are an essential source of financial support for suffering families, the possible sudden return of thousands of Venezuelan people might significantly worsen regional instability (Orozco, 2002). Additionally, as China, Russia and Iran have already offered diplomatic and economic help to the Venezuelans, they may be driven closer to these nations and this may increase tensions with other Latin American countries that see it as a betrayal of humanitarian obligation (Crandall, 2022; Ellis, 2023).

Social Media Policies

The proposed TikTok ban has been put on hold until April 5th, 2025 in order to allow a U.S. buyer time to gain control of the app. Both the social media scene and national security issues will be greatly impacted by this. Millions of American users may be impacted by the proposed ban of this Chinese app which could disrupt this platform used for social connection, business and entertainment as these users depend on the app for both social interaction and revenue. Such a prohibition may establish a precedent for government interference in digital platforms, violating the right to free expression. Although it may be presented as a means of preserving national security, measures like this can undermine the public's confidence and trust in the government's commitment to basic liberties (Ohio University, 2025).

Dismissal of Inspectors General

After the Trump administration dismissed Inspectors General from various departments, concerns over accountability and transparency were raised. The removal of Inspectors General compromises accountability because they serve as watchdogs. Their role is to maintain an eye on government agencies, investigate fraud and misuse, misconduct and make sure laws are adhered to and the public's confidence is maintained (Greenblatt, n.d.). The elimination of it has an impact on the U.S.'s stance on a democratic government model and the loss might make it more difficult for the States to push for accountability in other countries' governments and other international institutions (Newcomer, 1998).

Approach to decrease \$1 trillion from the federal budget

The Trump administration plans to eliminate The Department of Government Efficiency by July 4th, 2026 (Business Insider, 2025). The goal of Elon Musk's proposal of the \$1 trillion dollar budget cut is to decrease government spending. This means that funding for various government programs such as those in social welfare, infrastructure and research projects would probably be significantly reduced, if budget cuts of a trillion dollars were to be made (Brookings Institution, 2023). According to scholars, low income areas which depend on government supported programs like healthcare subsidies, housing aid and education grants may be disproportionately impacted by such changes (Moffitt, 2020). Eliminating such investments can worsen the economy by reducing consumer spending and creating job losses.

Attempt to end birthright citizenship

With an objective to decrease immigration and to prevent “birth tourism”, in which foreigners come to the States to give birth in order to obtain citizenship for their children, the Trump administration has issued an executive order to put an end to birthright citizenship (White House, 2025). This has sparked legal debates on constitutional rights because for more than 150 years, the U.S. immigration policy has been based on the 14th amendment to the Constitution which came into effect in 1868 and guarantees citizenship to anybody born or naturalized in the United States. This may have a substantial influence on the social fabric of immigrant communities and affect the U.S. demographic landscape (Lesley, 2024). Since the order was met with significant legal challenges it is still under review by courts (BBC, 2025).

Trade sanctions on Colombia

The trade sanctions of the Trump administration on Colombia represent a dramatic shift in the relationship between the U.S. and Colombia. The sanctions have had a significant effect on bilateral trade and collaboration between the two countries and are intended to put pressure on their government regarding matters such as drug trafficking and human rights. Strong trade relations between both countries have long existed especially in the field of mining, energy and agriculture. However, in the end, these sanctions have strained these relations, resulting in decreased trade flows and economic consequences for both nations. Colombia sought alternative foreign allies such as China and the EU to lessen the impact of the States’ sanctions (Torrado, 2024).

Revocation of policy allowing transgender military service

Transgender troops may soon be prohibited from serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. An executive order was signed by Trump to update the Pentagon’s stance on the subject (AP News, 2025). This executive order may have wider impacts such as legal and institutional difficulties in addition to its effects on U.S. foreign policy. Previous court cases such as *Doe v. Trump* (2019) has shown how complicated civil rights and military policies in the context of gender identity can be. Revising the policy might increase the internal policy conflicts with the Department of Veterans Affairs ‘ continuous effort for inclusivity of transgender veterans and the Department of Defense’s dismissal of transgender military service (Reidel, 2025)

Proposed shutdown of Federal Emergency Management Agency

Shutting down the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) raises a lot of concerns regarding the federal government's ability to handle natural disasters and emergencies. Since local governments would mainly be responsible for disaster response and recovery without FEMA's coordination and resources, critics believe that eliminating FEMA could result in insufficient disaster preparedness and response, possibly overwhelming states and local governments during crises. These resource-limited communities usually struggle to manage large-scale emergencies efficiently (Harrald, 2020). In the absence of FEMA which plays a crucial role in funding disaster relief, the financial burden falls upon these local governments, many of which have insufficient funds. Social and economic inequality may result from the imbalance in resources across states which may cause uneven reactions countrywide (Kapucu & Garayev, 2016). The country's capacity to effectively respond to and recover from crises is compromised by this policy shift.

Deregulation initiative

According to one of Trump's executive orders, every new regulation that is introduced, requires the elimination of ten regulations. The White House claims that the aim of this policy is to encourage a business-friendly environment, to lower the administrative hurdles and boost economic development. With consideration to job safety and consumer protection, this policy change raises questions about how regulatory oversight and economic growth can be balanced. Gunningham and Sinclair (1999) argue that eliminating protections altogether may leave room for instability and that regulatory frameworks should not be dismantled without considering their role in safeguarding public interests.

Critics warn that accelerating deregulation may result in weakening protection for public health and financial stability (Kariv-Teitelbaum, 2021). Regardless, the long-term impact of this policy change is entirely dependent upon the regulations chosen for elimination.

Elimination of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs

A major change in military personnel policy was brought by the executive order that required the Coast Guard and the Department of Defense to discontinue their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs. Improving unit trust and operational effectiveness is the aim of these program's initiatives. According to The RAND (2021) report, inclusion and diversity are crucial for fostering trust and unit cohesiveness, hence, the elimination of it may mean service members become less cooperative with one another. According to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS, 2023), minority and female recruitment rates in the U. S. military are already on the decline and eliminating these programs may result in further reduction of diversity in military ranks. Finding a balance between military performance and inclusion is still an important policy discussion as the United States deals with global security issues (Gibson, 2023).

Remote work policy

Trump's executive order ending working remotely for government employees raises questions about employee productivity and efficiency (The Guardian, 2025). Remote work for federal employees was implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic and resulted in employee satisfaction and retention rates and lower operational costs for federal agencies (Barrero et al., 2021). Although Supporters of the change argue that face-to-face collaboration improves better decision making and strengthens team dynamics in the workplace, the impact of this policy change is yet to be seen. (Gibson, 2023).

PATH FOR MALDIVES AND SMALL STATES

The prospects of small states with Trump's return with his "America First" approach indicates a turn towards greater isolation and less international collaboration without transactional dealmaking. One of the most significant implications for small states such as the Maldives, Pacific Island nations and the Caribbean is the reduction or halting of foreign aid, a policy which was attempted previously.

On one of the executive orders temporarily suspending all U.S. foreign assistance programs, Trump stated that “foreign aid industry and bureaucracy are not aligned with the American interests and in many cases antithetical to American values” in addition to “serve to destabilize world peace by promoting ideas in foreign countries that are directly inverse to harmonious and stable relations internal to and among countries” and “no further assistance shall be disbursed in a manner that is not fully aligned with the foreign policy of the President of the United States.”

Additionally, the retrieval of United States’ leadership on climate issues such as the withdrawal from Paris Agreement 2015 under which almost 200 countries agreed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to limit global temperature rise also shifts engagement and support for development priorities of small nations. This decision may reduce U.S. participation in global climate initiatives which poses a challenge for small, low-lying countries, highly vulnerable to climate change and rely on global cooperation to address environmental challenges. Because of the U.S. policy change, worldwide cooperation on climate change has become fractured with countries that are more dedicated to environmental action leading global effort (Harris, 2018).

Keohane and Nye (2011) explain that nations in the Global South have grown increasingly involved in climate governance as a result of their growing independence, often taking the lead on important environmental policies in the absence of U.S. leadership. However, small countries that historically relied on the U.S. leadership are left in a vulnerable position as a result of this shift because the United States have been instrumental in establishing international standards and providing resources for climate change adaptation although it allows them to step up. Falkner (2016) claims that while other countries step up their efforts to fight climate change, the worldwide momentum has not slowed down despite the United States exiting from international climate agreements.

Trump’s emphasis on prioritizing domestic economic growth and energy independence suggests that the support of the U.S. for climate change adaptation in vulnerable countries such as the Maldives, may be deprioritized and undermines the international efforts to combat climate change, leaving these nations at a greater risk.

Small nations in the Pacific, Caribbean and South Asia such as Maldives, Palau and Haiti are countries that rely on USAID grants for healthcare, infrastructure and education (USAID, n.d.; U.S. Department of State, 2016). USAID has informed all aid groups to take an immediate halt on all U.S. funded programs and stopped all payments for the first time since October 1st, according to the U.S. Treasury data (Reuters, 2025). Although waivers for emergency food and life saving medications have been provided, the lack of specific details in the executive order has brought uncertainty to the humanitarian groups with concerns over potential financial risks. Reports indicate that the interruption in the funding has put vital development and emergency programs at risk, with a large number of countries depending on USAID for their healthcare projects (Reuters, 2025). As it is the world's largest aid donor, it plays a vital role in funding these projects globally leaving small nations that rely heavily on US aid for development and disaster relief vulnerable to such abrupt policy changes.

USAID's Climate Adaptation Project is a component of the United States' long-standing partnership with the Maldives which aimed at enhancing the capacities to adapt to climate change. The Maldives have previously benefited from almost \$250,000 USAID-funded climate projects for enhancing coastal resilience, shoreline protection programs, warning systems for extreme weather events and renewable energy projects aiming to scale up their technology (USAID, 2023). The grants have supported the developments for breakwaters, seawalls and mangrove restoration projects to combat rising sea levels and coastal erosion.

Due to Trump's stance on climate change and the administration's decision to pause foreign aid for 90 days to review alignment with U.S. priorities, and the emphasis on increasing U.S. energy production, the focus on international climate aid may be insignificant. It remains uncertain whether aid to countries such as the Maldives will continue to receive funding and in the absence of this funding, the government of the Maldives may be grappling with maintaining and expanding these protective technologies, which leaves the islands predisposed to storm surges and flooding.

Additionally, Trump's protectionist tariff policies may have significant economic consequences, especially for small, trade-dependent countries that depend on reliable international supply chains. As global markets respond, these tariffs can result in increased prices for imported goods and fewer chances for export. In the past, tariffs have led to trade wars as a result of retaliatory responses from countries that are affected (Kurgman, 2020). Vulnerable economies such as those in the Pacific,

Caribbean and South Asia may be impacted by trade relations, currency fluctuations and a decline in investor confidence as a result of these retaliations (Rodrik, 2018).

CONCLUSION

It is clear the world is changing. The United States has played the role of self appointed peacekeeper, cop, aggressor, and central nexus of trade and finance for the past 70 years. Donald Trump's return to the White House in 2025 marks a significant shift in both U.S. domestic and foreign policy, with far-reaching implications for the international community. His "America First" agenda, characterized by isolationism, protectionism, and a focus on domestic economic growth, is poised to disrupt global alliances, trade relationships, and climate initiatives. The paper highlights how Trump's policies, ranging from aggressive trade tariffs to a rollback of climate commitments, will challenge the established global order, particularly in regions like South Asia, Europe, and the Indo-Pacific.

The analysis underscores the potential for increased tensions with major powers such as China and Russia, as well as the strain on traditional alliances like NATO. Trump's transactional approach to foreign policy, coupled with his emphasis on economic nationalism, may lead to a reevaluation of U.S. commitments abroad, including military presence in key regions like South Korea and Japan. This could force allies to seek greater self-reliance or alternative partnerships, potentially reshaping the geopolitical landscape.

Domestically, Trump's policies on immigration, taxation, and energy production reflect a prioritization of short-term economic gains over long-term sustainability. While his tax cuts and deregulation may stimulate economic growth, they risk exacerbating the national deficit and undermining global climate efforts. The withdrawal from international agreements like the Paris Climate Accord and the potential reduction of foreign aid could leave vulnerable nations, particularly small states like the Maldives, grappling with the consequences of diminished U.S. leadership.

The paper also highlights the challenges faced by U.S. allies in navigating this new reality. Countries like Japan and South Korea must balance their reliance on U.S. security guarantees with the need to adapt to Trump's unpredictable policies. Similarly, ASEAN nations face the dual challenge of maintaining regional cohesion while engaging with emerging minilateral groupings like AUKUS and the Quad, which could dilute ASEAN's centrality in regional affairs.

In conclusion, Trump's second term is likely to accelerate the fragmentation of the global order, with significant implications for international trade, security, and climate action. While his policies may resonate with a domestic audience seeking economic relief, they risk alienating allies, emboldening adversaries, and undermining global cooperation on critical issues. The international community must prepare for a more transactional and less predictable U.S. foreign policy, one that prioritizes American interests above all else. As the world adapts to this new reality, the resilience of multilateral institutions and the ability of nations to forge new partnerships will be crucial in maintaining stability and addressing shared global challenges.

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