

How Trump’s resurgence could affect the global order



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As Donald Trump prepares to assume office as the 47th president of the United States, the world braces for a seismic shift in global politics. His second term, bolstered by a stronger electoral mandate and full Republican control of both chambers of Congress and the Supreme Court, is poised to challenge the fragile framework of the so-called “rules-based international order.” This order, long championed by Western democracies, particularly the US, may be heading toward an uncertain future under Trump’s leadership. His unpredictable and transactional approach to both domestic and foreign policy suggests that the US’ global role could be radically redefined, with profound consequences for geopolitics.

A mandate for disruption
First, Trump’s return to power is unlike his first term. He steps into the Oval Office now with fewer constraints. Republican dominance in Congress and a conservative Supreme Court majority effectively give him an open field to enact his agenda. However, this concentration of power doesn’t guarantee smooth sailing. Trump’s presidency is likely to encounter internal divisions, public backlash, and global resistance.

On the other hand, Trump’s hardline rhetoric and actions signal that he will govern with an iron fist. His renewed pledge to implement aggressive immigration policies foreshadows a crackdown on undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers. His appointed border chief has already hinted at mass deportations, even involving naturalised citizens. The suggested approaches will undoubtedly devastate countless families but may also backfire due to labour shortages in key industries like agriculture and construction, exacerbating inflationary pressures in an already

fragile economy.

The high-tech sector also stands at a crossroads. Trump’s protectionist trade policies, including a proposed 25 percent levy on Canadian and Mexican imports and punitive measures against China, threaten to ignite trade wars. While such policies may appeal to nationalist sentiments, they risk crippling supply chains and driving up consumer prices. Even Trump’s behind-the-scenes adviser, Elon Musk, has warned that the US’ economic future depends on attracting skilled labour—a policy area seemingly at odds with Trump’s restrictive immigration stance.

The UN and the decline of multilateralism
Perhaps the most telling indicator of Trump’s global stance will be his treatment of international institutions. His disdain for multilateral organisations like the United Nations is well-documented. During his first term, Trump withdrew from the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization, signalling his disregard for collective global action.

This time, Trump may go further. If the UN condemns US or Israeli actions, Trump could threaten to slash funding or even withdraw from the organisation altogether. His administration is likely to disregard international law when it clashes with US interests. Ironically, Trump’s blatant dismissal of global norms might expose the hypocrisy of a system that enforces international law selectively—harshly penalising adversaries while excusing allies.

Foreign policy: Isolationism or neo-imperialism?
In foreign policy, Trump’s intentions are murkier but no less concerning. His approach to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war will be a litmus test for his broader global strategy. During

his first term, Trump dismissed the conflict as irrelevant to US interests. Now, he may attempt to position himself as a peacemaker by engaging Russian President Vladimir Putin in back-channel diplomacy. However, such a move could fracture NATO and undermine the Atlantic alliance that has underpinned Western security since World War II.

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region and strain relationships with traditional allies like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Trump’s relationship with Gulf monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, will likely be in the spotlight. His first foreign trip as President in his first term was to Riyadh, underscoring the strategic importance he places on

Israel and several Arab states, could also expand under Trump. Saudi Arabia remains hesitant to formally recognise Israel without progress on Palestinian statehood. Israel’s intransigence makes such normalisation unlikely, potentially stalling Trump’s ambitions for deeper Israeli-Arab integration.

Trump’s second term could take the US down one of two distinct paths. A return to isolationism would accelerate the decline of US global dominance, creating space for a multipolar world led by rising powers like China. Alternatively, Trump might adopt a neo-imperialist model, blending nationalist rhetoric with aggressive military and economic strategies. This approach could drag the US into more direct confrontations, resembling the Cold War but with more fragmented battle lines.

Unlike the 20th century, today’s geopolitical tensions are not centered in Europe. While Trump may focus on Russia-Ukraine and Middle Eastern conflicts, South Asia might remain relatively untouched—at least during the early years of his presidency. This selective engagement could leave critical regions vulnerable to Chinese and Russian influence.

On the other hand, Trump’s authoritarian tendencies, evident during his first term, are likely to intensify. His admiration for strongmen like Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi, Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un reveals his comfort with autocratic governance. Trump has openly mused about having dictatorial powers, raising concerns about democratic backsliding in the US.

Trump’s second presidency is set to redefine global politics in unpredictable ways. His leadership could either bolster the US’ waning dominance or accelerate its decline. Trump’s actions could reshape alliances, provoke conflicts, and challenge the very foundations of the global system as we know it now. While a lot remains to be seen, one thing is for certain: the world is entering uncharted territory. And with Trump at the helm, the journey ahead will be anything but predictable.



US President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, DC, on March 14, 2017.

FILE PHOTO: AFP

Biden’s strategy of militarily containing Russia has left Ukraine devastated and Europe on edge. Trump’s potential pivot toward conciliation with Russia could force European allies to reconsider their security postures. Yet, this rapprochement might also embolden Moscow, accelerating the erosion of the post-Cold War order. The US could face a painful choice: accept strategic setbacks or escalate forcefully to reassert dominance.

In the Middle East, Trump’s policies are expected to be even more aggressive than during his first

term. His unwavering support for Israel is likely to deepen, potentially encouraging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to pursue further annexation of the occupied West Bank and continue military aggression in Gaza. Trump’s disregard for Palestinian rights, coupled with his administration’s readiness to recognise illegal settlements, could

permanently extinguish hopes for a two-state solution.

The possibility of Trump launching strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities or pushing for regime change in Tehran raises the spectre of a wider regional conflict. His “maximum pressure” campaign, marked by the assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani during the first Trump administration, failed to curb Iran’s influence. Still, Trump appears undeterred and may double down on the confrontational strategy. Such actions could inflame anti-American sentiment, destabilise the Gulf

these alliances. But gulf nations have been diversifying their alliances, deepening ties with China and even engaging diplomatically with Iran. Saudi Arabia’s growing relationship with Beijing—joining BRICS and partnering in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—poses a potential conflict with Trump’s “America First” agenda. Will Trump pressure Gulf states to sever ties with China, risking economic fallout? Or will he tolerate these relationships to maintain regional stability?

The Abraham Accords, which normalised relations between

Another year of devastation for the Palestinians



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Imagine waking up each morning to the sound of sirens echoing through your neighbourhood, the uncertainty of safety as you send your children to school, and the constant fear of losing everything you hold dear. This is the harsh reality many Palestinians face daily: a life filled with resilience and courage amid overwhelming challenges.

For many Palestinian children, growing up has meant playing in the shadows of conflict rather than playgrounds. Bombings have turned schools into ruins. The destruction of schools like the al-Fakhoura School in Gaza, and the attack on al-Awda School that killed several students, have left permanent scars on the community. Mental trauma often runs deeper than physical wounds, with many children showing signs of PTSD, recurring nightmares, and developmental delays. Some families have described the struggle of explaining war to their children while trying to shield them from its harsh realities.

Healthcare workers serve as silent heroes, tending to trauma patients in overwhelmed hospitals. Blockades choke the supply of critical medicines, while damaged facilities struggle to keep pace with rising public health crises. Clean water remains a luxury for many, with outbreaks of cholera and hepatitis A compounding the challenges in the already fragile healthcare system. Tragically, numerous doctors have been targeted and killed in the line of duty, including the deadly February 2024 strike on al-Quds Hospital, further weakening the healthcare



The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has only worsened.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

system and leaving communities with limited medical support. The death of Dr Ayman Abu al-Ouf during an earlier airstrike remains a painful reminder of the toll taken on the medical community.

Journalists brave these conditions daily, risking their lives to share untold stories with the world. The 2022 death of Shireen Abu Akleh, a veteran journalist shot while covering a raid, sparked international outrage and brought renewed focus to the dangers journalists face in conflict zones. In 2024, reports surfaced of media personnel being deliberately targeted during coverage of clashes,

of settlements and the government’s aggressive policies. Protests in Tel Aviv and Haifa in March 2024 reflected the growing rift, with a significant portion of Israeli society calling for immediate diplomatic resolutions and an end to the occupation.

Europe’s involvement in the Palestinian struggle has been both direct and indirect. Some European nations, including Germany and the UK, have provided diplomatic backing for Israel, while others have called for accountability and human rights protection. In February 2024, the Netherlands’ Supreme Court halted the export

sanctions and arms embargoes.

In the Middle East, the roles of actors such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey continue to shape the Palestinian landscape. Iran has openly supported Palestinian factions like Hamas with financial and military aid, while Saudi Arabia has taken a more cautious diplomatic approach, balancing regional alliances with public sympathy for Palestinians. Turkey, under President Recep Erdogan, has frequently condemned Israeli actions and provided humanitarian aid to Gaza, though its involvement has fluctuated with diplomatic shifts.

Meanwhile, Syria’s re-entry into regional diplomacy has introduced further complexities, with Israeli airstrikes targeting Iranian-linked militias in Damascus throughout 2024, escalating regional tensions.

Political shifts in Israel have also played a decisive role in shaping the conflict’s trajectory. Benjamin Netanyahu’s government has solidified headline policies, emphasising security concerns while often ignoring humanitarian issues. The 2024 Knesset passed sweeping legislation that expanded settlement activities in the West Bank, leading to mass protests from both Israeli and Palestinian communities. These policies have exacerbated tensions, with military raids in refugee camps becoming increasingly frequent, including the devastating May 2024 raid in the Jenin camp, which resulted in multiple civilian casualties and drew sharp criticism from the United Nations.

Social media has become a battleground for debates over the Palestinian conflict. Throughout 2024, platforms like X and Instagram have been flooded with images of bombed-out homes and stories of loss, while misinformation campaigns and heated debates have further polarised public opinion. Hashtags such as #EndTheOccupation and #StopArmingIsrael have trended globally, amplifying the voices of activists demanding accountability. Viral videos capturing forced evictions and settler violence in East Jerusalem have heightened global awareness but also sparked ideological divides, with influencers and journalists playing a critical role in amplifying these narratives.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has only worsened. The blockade has strangled economic life, forcing over 80 percent of residents to depend on international aid for survival. The February 2024 Israeli airstrikes on Rafah displaced thousands and left entire neighbourhoods in ruins, prompting urgent calls

for humanitarian corridors to be opened. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has struggled to keep up with the rising demand for aid, while funding cuts have further strained its operations. Families often face impossible choices between securing food and medicine, with international relief organisations citing access restrictions as a significant barrier.

The West Bank has also experienced a surge in tensions, marked by increased military raids and settlement expansions. Violent clashes between settlers and Palestinians have resulted in multiple fatalities, such as the tragic March 2024 raid on the Jenin refugee camp where at least four Palestinians were killed. Entire communities have been uprooted, with limited accountability for settler violence. Palestinian men and children continue to face arbitrary detentions, with many held without formal charges under Israel’s policy of administrative detention. Reports of abuse in Israeli prisons, including physical violence, psychological mistreatment, and denial of medical care, have drawn sharp criticism from international human rights organisations. The detention of children as young as 12, often without access to legal representation, remains a pressing concern for global human rights advocates.

Despite these challenges, the resilience of the Palestinian people has remained unwavering. Their steadfastness in the face of hardship continues to inspire global solidarity and demands for justice. The path to peace demands more than temporary ceasefires; it requires accountability, the lifting of blockades, and a global commitment to genuine dialogue rooted in human rights. The world cannot afford to look away. The voices of Palestine’s children, healthcare workers, journalists, and families must echo loudly, for they embody the true narrative of resilience, resistance, and the unwavering hope for freedom.