

America's Role in a Changing World: European Concerns over Trump's Re-Election

Muhammad Derfish Ilyas

Department of Leadership Studies, University of the Cumberland, Williamsburg, KY, USA

Email: derfish@brandeis.edu

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Abstract

The impetus for this research is to examine America's evolving role in a changing world, particularly in light of European concerns regarding the potential re-election of Donald Trump. Since the mid-20th Century, the United States has been the leader of the Western world, playing a pivotal role in maintaining and advancing a liberal international order. However, recent developments have called into questioning the durability of America's leadership in this domain. Specifically, the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the possibility of his return to the presidency have raised doubts among European allies about the U.S.'s commitment to the liberal international order. This study employs a descriptive methodological approach and conducts a comparative analysis of Trump's first-term policies with potential policies in a prospective second term. Additionally, the research compares the U.S., Europe, and Russia across various dimensions, including defense budgets, NATO involvement, military collaboration, climate targets, trade partnerships, human rights, U.N. contributions, economic growth, alliance positions, global influence, and immigration policies. Key findings of this research indicate a growing trend of isolationism, exemplified by the "America First" policy, which has strained U.S.-Europe relations. The study further suggests that a second Trump presidency could exacerbate these challenges, complicating military cooperation, economic relations, and human rights initiatives. These findings are crucial for American and European citizens, global leaders, and policymakers to develop strategies to mitigate rising tensions and prevent the potential isolation of the U.S. from the Western alliance.

Keywords

U.S.A, America, Donal Trump, Re-Election, Western World, America First

1. Introduction

In recent years, America's political landscape has experienced significant shifts, notably with the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President in 2016. His earlier tenure was marked by an unconventional approach to diplomacy and foreign policy, where he prioritized policies favoring the United States, often at the expense of other countries, particularly European allies. With the 2024 U.S. presidential election approaching, the prospect of Trump's return to the presidency is causing growing concern among America's European counterparts.

In a 2021 interview with TIME, when President Biden attended the G7 summit for the first time, he reassured U.S. allies that "America is back." However, the response to this assurance was, "For how long?" (Myrick, 2021). This question has gained urgency, especially as European countries now consider the potential impact of a second Trump term.

According to research by Goldman Sachs, if Trump were to become President again, Europe's economy could face "significant consequences." This includes potential reductions in gross domestic product and a rise in inflation (Von Daniels, 2024a). New defense and security pressures, compounded by trade policy uncertainty and the spillover effects of U.S. domestic policies, are expected to be the main drivers of these economic impacts (Von Daniels, 2024b).

At the recent NATO summit in Washington, the smiles of world leaders often appeared strained, reflecting the underlying anxiety brought on by Trump's unpredictability towards NATO. This sense of urgency and unease infused the discussions (Donnelly, 2024). NATO countries are currently taking steps to engage with individuals in Trump's political circle to ensure that relations remain cordial and to mitigate perceived threats (Donnelly, 2024). Nonetheless, some experts express deep concerns about the challenges a renewed Trump presidency could pose to NATO's stability and operations (Donnelly, 2024).

A survey conducted by the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (S.W.P.) involving experts from 19 European countries revealed that the fear of democracy being undermined through democratic means is a primary concern in many European capitals (Von Daniels, 2024a). The risk of a spillover effect on countries that abandon democratic norms is heightened by Trump's apparent affinity for authoritarian rulers (Von Daniels, 2024b). As European nations grapple with the possibility of Trump's return to power, it is clear that the transatlantic relationship faces significant challenges. The coming months will be crucial in determining the future of this vital alliance and its impact on global stability and prosperity.

1.1. Background on America's Role in the Western World

Since the mid-20th Century, the United States has emerged as the leader of the Western world. Following the end of the Second World War and its rise as a global power, the U.S. has actively preserved and enhanced a liberalism-based international system that has fostered development and stability across the Western world (Engel et al., 2023).

Through leading institutions such as NATO, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, the U.S. has spearheaded the spread of democratic principles, free markets, and security among its Western allies (Rebeiz, 2024). According to Rebeiz (2024), this “Pax Americana” has contributed to unprecedented economic growth, technological advancement, and cultural interconnectedness within the transatlantic community.

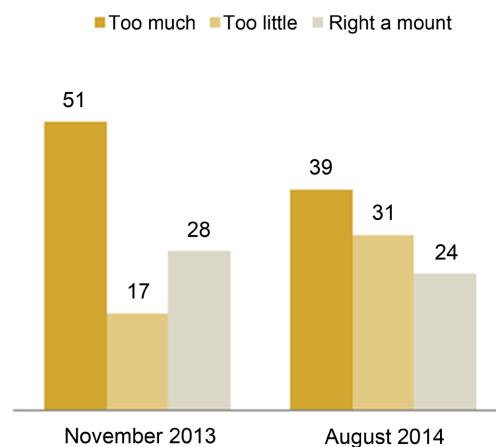
However, America’s position in the Western world has recently been threatened. The election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the possibility of his return to the presidency have raised doubts among European partners regarding the United States’ commitment to the liberal international order (Arshad et al., 2023). Concerns have been expressed about the Trump administration’s “America First” policy and its skepticism toward international organizations, which may lead to U.S. isolation and a weakening of the Western alliance system.

As the 2024 U.S. election approaches, the future of America’s role in the Western world hangs in the balance. The U.S.’s ability to maintain its leadership and uphold the liberal international order will be crucial in determining the stability and prosperity of the transatlantic community in the years to come.

A 2014 study conducted by the Pew Research Center revealed shifting perceptions about America’s role in addressing global issues: 51% of respondents believed the U.S. was overly involved, 17% felt it was doing too little, and 28% thought its involvement was appropriate. This data underscores growing concerns about the extent and nature of U.S. engagement in international affairs (Figure 1).

Changing Opinions about U.S. Role in Solving Global Problems

In terms of helping to solve world problems, does the United states do ..



Survey conducted August 20-24, 2014. Other Don t knowresponse notsho wn.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY

Figure 1. Changing opinion about US roles.

1.2. Overview of Transatlantic Relations

The transatlantic relationship between the United States and Europe has been a cornerstone of global stability and prosperity since the end of World War II (Karakaya, 2023). Rooted in shared democratic principles, this relationship has been characterized by cooperation across political, economic, and security dimensions. According to Riddervold et al. (2023), through institutions like NATO, the E.U., and the G7, the U.S. and its European partners have worked to promote the norms of liberal democracy, free trade, and collective security worldwide. This “American peace” has facilitated post-WWII economic growth and technological advancement in the West.

However, Schade (2023) argues that the durability of transatlantic relations has become increasingly uncertain in recent years. As cited by Bora (2023), European allies were alarmed by Donald Trump’s election in 2016 and are concerned about the possibility of his return to the White House. Trump’s “America First” policy and his skepticism of international cooperation have raised fears of a U.S. withdrawal that could weaken the Western alliance system. The outcome of the 2024 U.S. election will be pivotal in determining the future of U.S.-European relations (Von Daniels, 2024a). Thus, the ability of the U.S. and Europe to sustain their strategic partnership and uphold democratic values will shape the future of the Western world (Arshad et al., 2023).

A 2023 Pew Research Center survey assessed perceptions of whether the U.S. considers other countries’ interests. In Canada, 62% believed the U.S. disregards their interests, while 37% felt it does. In Poland, the sentiment was more positive, with 67% saying the U.S. considers their interests and 27% disagreeing. In Germany, 59% felt the U.S. was considerate of their interests, contrasted by 39% who did not. The U.K. displayed a near-even split, with 50% believing the U.S. neglects their interests and 49% feeling acknowledged. These results highlight varied European and Canadian perspectives on U.S. international conduct (Figure 2).

1.3. Problem and Significance of the Study

Trump’s first term introduced policies that deviated from established norms, challenging the foundations of transatlantic relations. His “America First” approach led to strained alliances, economic tensions, and a re-evaluation of security commitments. Understanding European apprehensions about a potential Trump re-election is crucial for predicting future international relations and policy changes. This study also sheds light on the role America plays in the global governance system.

European concerns reflect broader anxieties about the United States’ commitment to multilateralism and international cooperation. Given that global challenges like climate change, pandemics, and security threats require collaborative efforts, perceptions of America’s involvement are vital. Moreover, this research emphasizes the importance of public opinion and diplomatic strategies in shaping

international relations. By presenting European perspectives, this paper aims to guide policymakers in avoiding pitfalls in transatlantic relations and fostering a more stable and cooperative global environment.

A 2022 Pew Research Center survey revealed shifting American perceptions of global power dynamics, with many believing in the diminishing influence of the U.S. and the rising power of China. Only 19% of Americans felt the U.S. was getting stronger, while 66% believed China was gaining strength. Additionally, 32% thought U.S. influence was staying about the same, compared to 22% for China. Meanwhile, 47% perceived the U.S. as weakening, while only 10% felt China was losing strength. These findings highlight a significant shift in American views on global leadership and the growing perception of China as a dominant global force (Figure 3).

Divided views on whether the U.S. considers other countries' interests

% who say the U.S. take into account the interests of countries like theirs in making international policy decisions

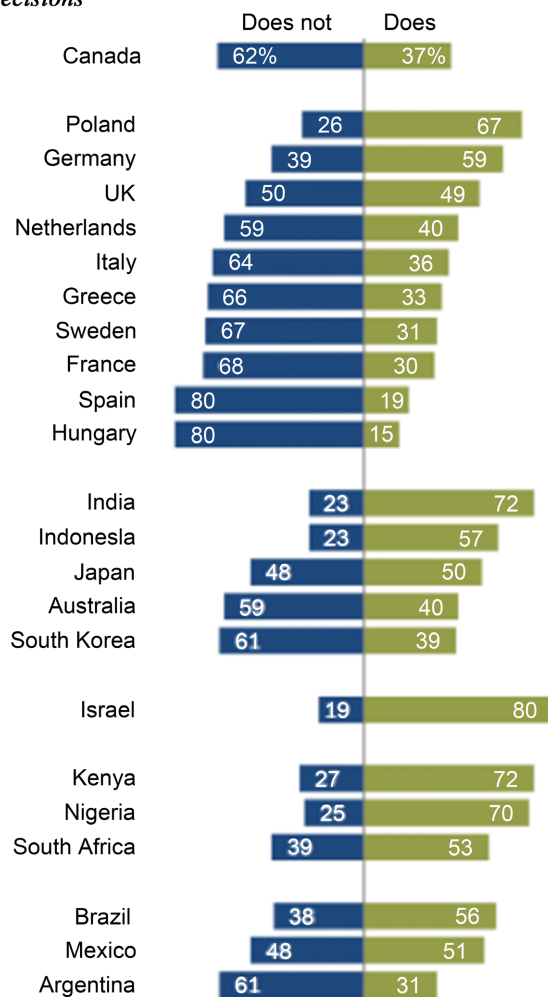
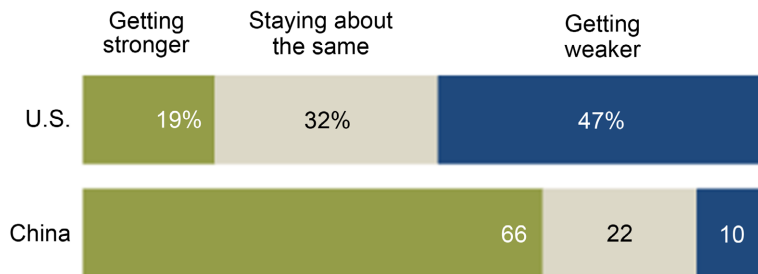


Figure 2. Views whether US considers other countries interests.

Americans tend to say U.S. influence around the world is diminishing and China's is getting stronger

% of U.S. adults who say each country's influence in the world has been_ in recent years



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 21-27, 2022. Q14b&h.

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Figure 3. American tend to say US influence around the world.

1.4. Problem Statement

This paper examines America's international role and global perceptions of a potential second presidency of Donald Trump, analyzing its implications for America's status as a global leader.

1.5. Research Question

RQ1: How is America's international role perceived globally in the context of a potential second presidency of Donald Trump?

RQ2: How would a second Trump presidency impact America's position as a global leader?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The study of America's evolving role in a changing world, focusing on European concerns regarding Trump's potential re-election, is of considerable importance for several reasons. First, the U.S. has been a pivotal force in global politics, economics, and security for decades. Any changes in its leadership can have profound effects on international relations and global stability. As longstanding allies, European nations are particularly attuned to shifts in U.S. foreign policy, making this analysis crucial for understanding the broader implications of America's leadership on the global stage.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Historical Context

The historical background of America's shifting position in international relations, from the European viewpoint, is not just a matter of several decades of political and diplomatic development, but also the result of various choices and strategies made

by the U.S. After the Second World War, America emerged as one of the leading global powers, helping to construct the liberal international system based on values such as democracy, free markets, and security cooperation through institutions like the United Nations, NATO, and the WTO (Sullivan, 2023). According to Bolt & Van Zanden (2024), this period was marked by close collaboration between the United States and Europe, aimed at reconstruction after the devastating world wars and containing the Soviet threat during the Cold War.

Peters (2023) noted that the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s further solidified America's global status, defined by its geopolitical, economic, military, and cultural dominance. However, this era also saw the emergence of new challenges and changes. The War on Terrorism, following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, involved military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq; while European allies initially supported these efforts, disagreements later arose over the conduct and duration of these operations.

Burke (2023) highlighted that the Global Financial Crisis, which began in 2008, also strained transatlantic relations, sparking debates over financial market regulation and austerity measures. During Obama's presidency, efforts were made to restore relations and emphasize multilateralism, but the rise of populist forces in both Europe and the U.S. revealed growing dissatisfaction with the status quo (Jentleson, 2023).

The election of Donald Trump has been described as a major departure from traditional U.S. foreign policy. Ghilescu (2023) argued that his administration's "America First" policy, which prioritized national self-interest over multilateralism, angered European partners. Gallarotti (2023) observed that this shift included calls for increased European NATO spending, withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, and the imposition of trade tariffs that negatively impacted the European economy.

European nations are particularly concerned about Trump's potential re-election in 2024, fearing a continuation of these policies. As Murray (2023) pointed out, history has shown that changes in U.S. leadership can significantly affect the global order and U.S.-Europe relations. Understanding this context is crucial for addressing current European apprehensions and anticipating future geopolitical dynamics.

2.1.1. America's Leadership in the Post-World War II Era

The United States emerged from World War II as the dominant global superpower, largely unaffected by the devastation of the war. According to Devinatz (2024), America enjoyed a prosperous economy, and the dollar had replaced the British pound as the world's reserve currency, positioning the U.S. to significantly influence the post-war international system. Caplan (2020) notes that the Marshall Plan was a key mechanism through which the U.S. provided substantial financial aid for the reconstruction of Western Europe, thereby halting the spread of communism and establishing new markets for American goods. Hufbauer & Hogan (2023) adds that the U.S. also played a pivotal role in creating international

organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, all of which were founded on American principles and goals. Internationally, as [Majumdar \(2023\)](#) explains, the U.S. aimed to contain the Soviet Union's influence, leading to the formation of NATO and involvement in the Korean War. The U.S. also engaged in Latin America, with the CIA conducting operations in countries like Guatemala, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. [Sheehan \(2023\)](#) highlights that culturally, American products like Coca-Cola and the Hilton hotel chain became symbols of American imperialism. [Hass \(2023\)](#) found that the rise of the consumer society in the U.S. was fueled by economic growth, with the middle class increasingly embracing products such as automobiles and televisions.

However, [Moore Jr. \(2024\)](#) points out that America's leadership role came with significant challenges. The Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union, the bloody Korean War, and domestic struggles for civil rights all tested American resolve and pride. [Sawal & Anjum \(2023\)](#) argues that the post-war period marked a turning point in U.S. foreign policy, as the nation shifted from isolationism to assuming the mantle of leader of the "free world." The U.S. leveraged its economic and military power to reshape the world order according to American values, a role that continued to define the country's international standing during the Cold War and beyond ([Sawal & Anjum, 2023](#)).

2.1.2. The Evolution of Transatlantic Relations

The evolution of transatlantic relations between the United States and Europe has been characterized by both periods of close cooperation and significant tension, reflecting broader geopolitical shifts and changes in leadership on both sides of the Atlantic ([Brogi, 2023](#)). [Back \(2023\)](#) describes how the U.S., along with Western European countries, developed a strong relationship in the post-Second World War period based on economic and political understanding and shared democratic values. This period also saw the formation of key organizations such as NATO in 1949, established to provide collective security against Soviet aggression. The connection was further solidified by the Marshall Plan, which saw the U.S. providing substantial financial aid to assist with the reconstruction of European economies.

The 1990s and early 2000s introduced new challenges. According to [Desmaele \(2024\)](#), the Balkan conflicts highlighted the lack of a cohesive defense strategy in Europe, and the 9/11 attacks shifted U.S. focus to the Middle East, leading to wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. [Nolan \(2023\)](#) notes that these interventions, particularly the 2003 invasion of Iraq, deepened divisions, as many European countries opposed the U.S. action. Economic disagreements also emerged, with differing approaches to the 2008 global financial crisis. Nevertheless, the Obama administration attempted to restore cooperation through collective security and diplomacy, evident in agreements such as the Paris Climate Accord and the Iran nuclear deal ([Ilyas, 2023b](#)).

The election of Donald Trump in 2016 marked a significant departure from

established norms. According to [Schade \(2023\)](#), his “America First” policy led to tensions over defense spending, trade tariffs, and climate change commitments, causing European leaders to question the reliability of U.S. leadership. As the 2024 election approaches, Europe’s concerns about a potential second Trump term underscore the ongoing complexities of transatlantic relations and the necessity for a balanced, cooperative approach to address global challenges.

2.1.3. Key International Commitments and Alliances

According to [Brooks & Wohlforth \(2023\)](#), the United States has been a key architect of the global international system since the Second World War. By leveraging international organizations, cooperation, and diplomacy, the U.S. has pursued its goals and vision for the world.

NATO: As noted by [Dolan \(2023\)](#), NATO has been central to cooperation between North American and European countries since its formation in 1949. With the U.S. as the leader of NATO, the alliance has served as a tool for American military power and diplomacy in Europe and beyond.

United Nations: [Reiter \(2023\)](#) emphasizes that the U.S. played a crucial role in establishing the United Nations in 1945 and has remained a key player on the international stage. The U.S. has utilized the U.N. to advance its foreign policy goals in diplomacy, economic development, and humanitarian efforts.

International Financial Institutions: [Sheng \(2023\)](#) highlights that the U.S. has been instrumental in the creation of international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). These institutions have allowed the U.S. to shape the international economic system.

Bilateral Alliances: According to [Ghilescu \(2023\)](#), in addition to these multilateral agreements, the U.S. maintains bilateral relationships with major allies, including Japan, South Korea, Israel, and various European countries. These alliances have enabled the U.S. to exert influence, ensure access to strategic regions, and manage global power dynamics.

3. Disc U.S. Sion

3.1. Trump’s First Term: Policies and Reactions

3.1.1. “America First” Policy

The “America First” policy was a cornerstone of Trump’s foreign strategy during his first presidency. According to [Murray \(2023\)](#), this approach marked a significant departure from the post-World War II liberal international order that the U.S. had long championed.

[Oche \(2023\)](#) found that the “America First” policy prioritized U.S. interests above international cooperation, focusing on renegotiating trade deals to reduce the U.S. trade deficit. This approach was evident in actions such as the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord, the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the imposition of tariffs on strategic

partners like China (Ilyas, 2023a). Olsen (2021) further notes that this policy was poorly received in Europe and Asia, where U.S. allies viewed it as a signal that America was retreating from its global commitments. It also raised doubts about the U.S. commitment to multilateral security arrangements, particularly NATO. Overall, the “America First” policy represented a shift towards nationalism and bilateralism in U.S. foreign policy, disrupting longstanding alliances.

3.1.2. Major International Actions and Their Impacts

In one of his first acts as President, Donald Trump signed an executive order in January 2017, withdrawing the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement (Zreik, 2023). Barnes (2023) notes that the TPP was a trade agreement among 12 Pacific Rim countries, including the United States, representing 40% of the global economy. The primary rationale for the withdrawal was to protect American producers and jobs from competition with countries that have lower labor costs. However, Bearce & Park (2023) argues that this move could prove challenging due to the complexities of supply chains and the competitiveness of American wages. Additionally, the withdrawal may weaken the U.S. strategic position in the region, as it creates opportunities for China to negotiate alternative trade agreements.

1) Withdrawal from the I.N.F. Treaty

In 2019, the United States withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (I.N.F.) Treaty, which had been signed with the Soviet Union in 1987. According to Pasandideh (2019), the Trump administration justified this decision by citing Russia’s violation of the treaty through the development and deployment of a prohibited cruise missile. Bezabh (2023) notes that this move was met with concern from U.S. allies in Europe and Asia, who feared it could trigger a dangerous arms race. However, the Trump administration argued that the treaty had become outdated and placed the U.S. at a military disadvantage, as it did not limit the nuclear arsenals of non-signatory countries like China. The demise of the I.N.F. Treaty represents a significant setback for international arms control efforts.

2) Withdrawal from the UNHRC and UNESCO

Griffith (2023) wrote in his book that the Trump administration announced the U.S. intention to withdraw from two international bodies: the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The U.S. cited the UNHRC’s “unrelenting bias” against Israel and its admission of nations with poor human rights records as the reasons for its withdrawal. U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley criticized the council, calling it a “protector of human rights abusers” and a “cesspool of political bias” (Moore Jr., 2024). According to Morelli (2021), the decision to leave UNESCO was also linked to accusations of “anti-Israel bias” and the need for “fundamental change” within the agency. The U.S. had previously left UNESCO in the 1980s, only to rejoin in 2003.

3) Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement

This decision marked a significant shift in the U.S.'s approach as a leader in the global fight against the environmental crisis. According to Zhang et al. (2017), the Trump administration argued that the Paris Agreement was unfair to the American economy and workers, as it imposed restrictions on industries. However, analysts predicted that the withdrawal would harm U.S. competitiveness in emerging clean energy sectors, allowing countries like China to take the lead.

Ward & Bowen (2020) noted that the U.S. withdrawal process officially began on November 4, 2020, the day after the presidential election. Similarly, Naustdal (2023) concluded that this action was widely condemned and regretted worldwide, leaving the U.S. as the only country outside the global agreement. The withdrawal also impacted climate change science and the likelihood of achieving the Paris accord's emission targets. Following the November 2020 election, President-elect Joe Biden pledged to rejoin the Paris Agreement upon taking office, which he did on January 20, 2021. This change signaled a return to U.S. leadership in the fight against climate change.

3.1.3. Impact on Transatlantic Relations

The prospect of Donald Trump's potential return to the White House has raised significant concerns among America's European allies about the future of transatlantic relations. Scholars like Zhao (2017) and Zhang et al. (2017) predict that a re-elected Trump would pose a substantial risk to the European economy, particularly in terms of trade policy, defense burdens, and the secondary effects of U.S. domestic policies. Critics such as Saad (2018) have also expressed fears that Trump's autocratic tendencies could embolden populist demagogues in Europe, undermining the liberal democracy that has long been the foundation of the transatlantic alliance. During Trump's first term, significant diplomatic and military agreements, such as the INF Treaty and the Paris Climate Agreement, were abandoned, leaving Europeans with the impression that the U.S. was no longer willing or capable of leading the world. In the years to come, the two partners will face the formidable task of rebuilding trust and reestablishing American commitment to the liberal international order.

3.1.4. Global Reactions and Perceptions

1) European concerns and responses

European concerns over the potential re-election of Donald Trump are multifaceted, reflecting anxieties about the stability and future of transatlantic relations. According to Löffmann et al. (2023), during Trump's first term, his "America First" policy and decisions to withdraw from key international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the INF Treaty, strained alliances. European leaders worry that a second Trump term could lead to further U.S. isolationism, undermining collective security and economic cooperation. Additionally, Dolan (2023) notes that Trump's transactional approach to diplomacy and his defense spending demands on NATO members have heightened

fears of increased defense burdens and uncertainty in trade policies. In response, Europe has been working to bolster its strategic autonomy, exploring ways to reduce reliance on U.S. leadership and strengthen internal cohesion within the European Union.

2) Reactions from other global powers

China viewed Trump's presidency as a period of intense rivalry and economic confrontation. According to Zuo (2021), the trade war between the two giants began when Trump imposed tariffs on Chinese products, which Beijing reciprocated. By 2019, the U.S. had levied tariffs on \$360 billion worth of Chinese goods, and China responded with tariffs on \$110 billion worth of American goods (Fang et al., 2022). Janusch & Lorberg (2023) notes that Chinese President Xi Jinping was particularly vocal in criticizing protectionist policies, advocating for globalization and multilateral trade frameworks as the path forward. The tension extended beyond economics to other areas such as technology and security, where the U.S. restricted the Chinese tech giant Huawei.

Russia's reaction to Trump was mixed. Initially, there were expectations in Moscow that relations between the two countries would improve, as Trump had promised during his campaign (Deyermund, 2023). However, when the Trump administration decided to withdraw from the INF Treaty in August 2019, citing Russia's violations, the move was poorly received in Moscow (Sokolshchik, 2024). Russian President Vladimir Putin accused the U.S. of actively dismantling arms control frameworks and undermining global stability. Despite this, Trump's reluctance to criticize Putin and the lack of strong responses to Russian aggression in Ukraine and cyber activities led scholars to perceive the U.S. as being lenient on Russia.

The European Union also had significant concerns about Trump's policies. The tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from Europe, along with threats to impose additional tariffs on auto exports, strained economic relations to the breaking point (Ghilescu, 2023). In response, the E.U. implemented countermeasures on \$2 billion worth of U.S. products, including Harley-Davidson motorcycles (Perry et al., 2023). European leaders like Juncker and Merkel emphasized the importance of multilateralism and criticized the Trump administration's neo-mercantilist policies. The U.S. exit from the Paris Climate Agreement and the Iran Nuclear Deal further deepened the divide across the Atlantic.

3.2. Prospective Second Term: Potential Policies and Global Perceptions

3.2.1. Anticipated Policies Based on First-Term Actions

If Donald Trump were re-elected, his policies would likely mirror those of his first term, with a continued emphasis on an "America First" strategy. According to Tourangbam (2024), this could involve further withdrawals from multilateral agreements, a shift toward more bilateral agreements, and the imposition of tariffs on countries deemed undesirable, such as China. De Castro (2024) suggests that NATO allies would face increased pressure to raise their defense expenditures and

possibly undergo military reorganization. Additionally, as per [Deyermund \(2023\)](#), Trump might intensify efforts to achieve energy self-sufficiency, potentially increasing domestic hydrocarbon production and withdrawing from climate agreements. Overall, a second term could heighten the transactional nature of U.S. foreign policy and raise concerns among allies about the future of American leadership.

3.2.2. Immigrant Policy

Donald Trump's immigration policy would likely continue his first-term focus on strict enforcement measures. According to [Walker \(2023\)](#), this could involve further efforts to control the U.S.-Mexico border, such as building additional segments of the wall or increasing funding for border security. Trump might also reduce the number of asylum seekers allowed into the country and continue deporting immigrants living in the U.S. illegally. Additionally, as [DiStefano \(2024\)](#) notes, he could push for immigration reforms that prioritize skilled workers while restricting family-based immigration. Overall, his policies would likely emphasize reducing the number of immigrants and prioritizing national security over the protection of refugees and asylum seekers.

3.2.3. European Concerns and Preparations

European concerns about a potential second Trump term focus on uncertainty regarding U.S. commitments to NATO and multilateral agreements. According to research by [Lichtman & Lichtman \(2024\)](#), 67% of Europeans lack confidence in Trump as a leader. The study further notes that E.U. members have responded by increasing their defense budgets, with NATO spending growing by 3.9% in 2021 alone. Additionally, the E.U. is advancing initiatives like the European Defense Fund to bolster military self-sufficiency. Moreover, as [Amadae et al. \(2024\)](#) highlights, E.U. leaders, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, are emphasizing unity and strength in response to what they perceive as American indifference, isolationism, and transactional diplomacy.

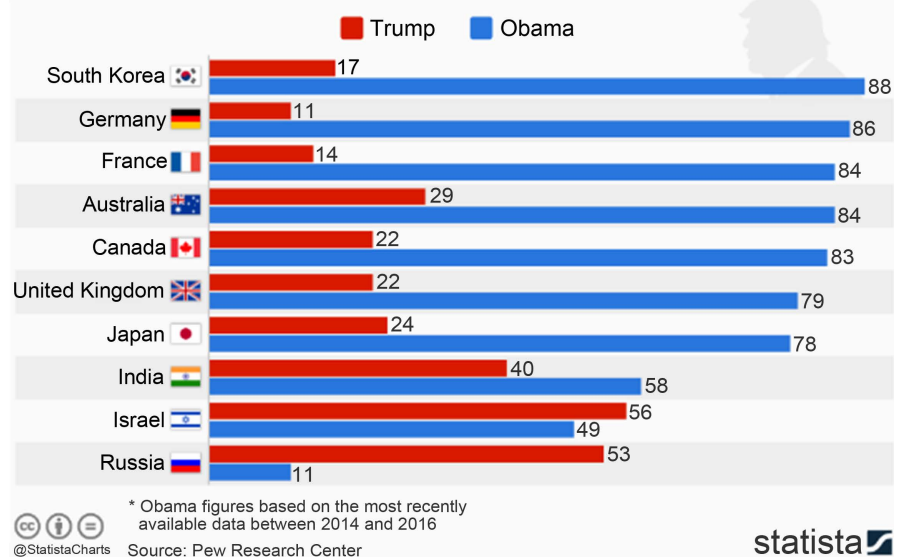
3.2.4. Global Perceptions and Potential Diplomatic Shifts

Global perceptions of a potential second Trump term indicate significant concerns about U.S. reliability. According to [Taim \(2024\)](#), 62% of global respondents believe that the U.S. does not respect other countries' concerns. Leaders like Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau have expressed worries about rising protectionism and unilateralism.

As the graph from [McCarthy \(2024\)](#) shows, Russia has the highest confidence that Trump is pursuing the right policies. Some countries, such as China, may exploit this situation by increasing their influence within the region through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative. In terms of diplomacy, nations are likely to pursue deeper integration with multilateralism and strengthen regional cooperation to address the uncertainty surrounding the U.S., emphasizing the importance of collective governance on the global stage ([Figure 4](#)).

The World Is Questioning Trump's Leadership

Share confident in the U.S. president doing the right thing globally (%)*



Source: (McCarthy, 2024).

Figure 4. World is questioning Trump's Leadership.

3.2.5. Analysis of Expert Opinions and Predictions

Yang & Kropf (2023) argues in his book that a second Trump term would exacerbate global tensions and further undermine multilateralism. According to Yoon (2024), 65% of respondents expect U.S.-E.U. relations to deteriorate in the future. Critics like De Castro (2024) contend that Trump's approach could lead to a decline in democracy and the rise of authoritarian governments. Additionally, there are concerns about increased trade friction and potential tariffs on European goods that could negatively impact economies. Analysts like Ian Bremmer suggest that countries may turn to China for leadership, emphasizing that the U.S. must reassert its commitments and regain the trust of its partners.

3.3. Impact on America's Role as a Global Leader

3.3.1. The Concept of the Rules-Based International Order

The Rules-Based International Order (RBIO) is a framework established after World War II to promote global stability through adherence to international laws and norms. According to Sullivan (2023), the RBIO was designed to maintain order by upholding the principles of the global system. Dolan (2023) explains that this system encourages international cooperation on issues such as commerce, security, and human rights. However, Nossal (2023) argues that the U.S.'s commitment to the RBIO was undermined during the Trump administration, particularly through the "America First" policy, which included withdrawing from initiatives like the Paris Climate Accord. A survey by Eliasson et al. (2023) revealed global support for multilateralism, a key component largely absent from Trump's foreign policy. Scholar Paikin (2024) warns that weakening the RBIO could lead to increased global conflict, disadvantage the U.S., and empower autocratic regimes.

3.3.2. The Importance of Transatlantic Unity in Great Power Rivalry

Transatlantic unity is crucial in the context of Great Power rivalry, particularly with rising tensions between the U.S., China, and Russia. According to Olsen (2021), a strong NATO alliance is evident in the 3% increase in NATO defense spending in 2021. Similarly, Murray emphasizes that European leaders believe solidarity is essential to tackling challenges and upholding democratic values. A survey by Dimitrova (2024) found that about 70% of Europeans consider NATO vital for their security. Thus, the partnership between the U.S. and Europe is key to maintaining both sides' influence in a multipolar world, addressing global challenges, and enhancing the stability of their shared strategic interests.

3.3.3. Potential Consequences of Weakened Alliances

1) Military and security implications

Weakened alliances significantly impact military and security dynamics, leading to reduced collective defense capabilities. According to Dimitrova (2024), this NATO disadvantage may encourage adversarial actions, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine. European countries may feel compelled to increase their defense budgets—NATO spending rose by 3.9% in 2021—to counter what they perceive as the U.S. withdrawing from the global stage. Research by Nielsen & Dimitrova (2022) found that this fragmentation could result in a patchwork security environment, complicating coordinated military actions and the exchange of intelligence. Additionally, the escalation of tensions may prompt countries to acquire independent defense systems, potentially worsening regional security and undermining existing deterrence measures.

2) Economic implications

Valli (2018) noted that as the U.S. adopts a more unilateral approach, trade agreements may fracture, disrupting global supply chains. For example, the tariffs imposed during Trump's administration strained established trading relationships, leading to retaliatory measures from allies. A 2020 report by Nielsen & Dimitrova (2022) indicated that U.S. trade with key partners could drop by up to 30% under protectionist policies. This environment fosters uncertainty, discouraging investment and economic collaboration. Ultimately, weakened alliances can impede collective efforts to address global economic challenges, such as recessionary pressures or pandemics, thereby negatively impacting economic growth worldwide.

3) Political and diplomatic implications

The erosion of alliances creates significant political and diplomatic challenges, leading to diminished U.S. influence on the global stage. According to MacDonald (2018), when the level of trust between partners decreases, collaboration on critical issues such as climate change and security is also affected. A global survey by Taim (2024) revealed that 62 percent of respondents believed the U.S. was not respecting other nations' concerns. This disconnect may push countries to seek other partners, contributing to the rise of China's and Russia's influence. Additionally, weakened diplomatic relations complicate the formation of consensus on international treaties and may result in disjointed strategies for addressing global

emergencies, thus threatening the stability of the liberal international system.

3.3.4. Comparative Analysis with Other Global Powers

A comparison of the U.S. under Trump's administration with other world powers reveals fundamental differences in the approach to handling global matters. According to Heisbourg (2024), Russia, emboldened by a perceived U.S. retreat, increased its military assertiveness, exemplified by the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in March 2014 and further involvement in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Research by Janković & Mitić (2024) found that 80% of Russian military spending is allocated to modernization and conducting conflicts. Both China and Russia have capitalized on weakened U.S. alliances to strengthen their global presence. Chinese President Xi Jinping, for example, has proposed a new model of great power relations aimed at promoting leadership styles different from the American approach.

Table 1 below provides a comprehensive comparison of the U.S., Russia, and Europe across various key statistics and policy areas:

Table 1. Comparivite analysis.

Category	USA	RUSSIA	Europe
Defense Spending (2021)	\$801 billion (3.52% of G.D.P.)	\$66 billion (4.3% of G.D.P.)	\$331 billion (E.U. + U.K., 1.64% of G.D.P.)
G.D.P. (2021)	\$23 trillion	\$1.48 trillion	\$17.1 trillion (E.U. + U.K.)
NATO Members	Yes (28 countries)	No	Yes (21 E.U. countries + U.K.)
NATO Burden Sharing	3.52% of GDP	N/A	1.64% of G.D.P. (E.U. + U.K.)
War/Military Collaboration	Leading role in NATO, global military bases	Collaboration with BelarU.S., CSTO	Joint E.U. military missions, NATO participation
Climate Targets	Net-zero by 2050	No official net-zero target	Net-zero by 2050 (E.U.)
Climate Change Stats	15% of global emissions	4.7% of global emissions	8.7% of global emissions (E.U.)
Climate Change Agreements	Paris Agreement (left and re-joined)	Paris Agreement, criticized for inaction	Paris Agreement, European Green Deal
Trade Partnerships	U.S.MCA, bilateral trade deals	Eurasian Economic Union, bilateral deals	E.U. Single Market, numeroU.S. F.T.A.s
Bilateral Trade Stats	\$4.3 trillion in exports and imports (2021)	\$583 billion in exports and imports (2021)	\$8.8 trillion in exports and imports (E.U. + U.K., 2021)
Human Rights Rankings (2021)	25th (Freedom HoU.S.e)	Not Free (Freedom HoU.S.e)	Mixed, generally higher in Western Europe
Military Personnel	1.4 million active duty	1 million active duty	1.5 million (EU + UK combined)
U.N. Contributions	Largest contributor	Permanent Security Council member	Significant contributors (EU as a bloc)

Continued

Economic Growth Rate (2021)	5.7%	4.7%	5.4% (E.U.)
Immigrant Policy Stats	1 million new legal immigrants per year	125,000 new legal immigrants per year	2.7 million new legal immigrants per year (EU)
Major International Agreements	Paris Agreement (left and re-joined), U.S.MCA	Paris Agreement, E.E.U.	Paris Agreement, numeroU.S. bilateral and multilateral F.T.A.s
Major Policies	“America First” policy, tariffs on China	Eurasian integration, military modernization	European Green Deal, Common Agricultural Policy
Alliance Position and Stats	Leader in NATO, multiple bilateral alliances	Leader in CSTO, bilateral with China	Strong NATO presence, E.U. collective defense
Global Acceptance Stats	Mixed, with declining trU.S.t under Trump	Low trU.S.t, viewed as adversarial by the West	Generally high, with strong global partnerships

3.4. Case Studies

3.4.1. NATO Burden Sharing and Military Collaboration

NATO burden sharing remains a critical issue as member states grapple with varying defense expenditures. According to Schnauffer II (2022), NATO defense spending increased by 3.9% across the alliance, largely due to heightened security threats, particularly from Russia. However, research by Dolan (2023) found that only 10 out of 30 NATO countries meet the guideline of spending at least 2% of their GDP on defense. This discrepancy has created tensions, especially with the U.S., which, under Trump’s administration, has demanded more financial contributions from allies. Rynning (2024) emphasized in his book that burden sharing is crucial to NATO’s collective defense strategy. He argued that improved cooperation, including training and planning, is essential for maintaining readiness against emerging threats. Similarly, Cordesman (2018) noted that NATO’s Strategic Concept reaffirmed the need for integrated military architectures and called on member states to enhance compatibility and joint capabilities in response to security threats from both state and non-state actors in a rapidly changing international landscape (Blankenship, 2024).

3.4.2. Climate Change Initiatives and International Agreements

Climate change initiatives and international agreements have faced significant upheaval in recent years, particularly following the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in 2017 under Trump (MacNeil & Paterson, 2020). According to Von Daniels (2024a), this decision, justified by claims of unfair economic burdens, highlighted a broader retreat from multilateral environmental commitments. Shouse (2021) noted that the U.S. was the only country to withdraw from the agreement, which led to widespread disappointment and doubts about international cooperation on climate change. In contrast, Sullivan (2023) reported that the E.U. and China intensified their climate actions, with the E.U. committing to climate neutrality by 2050 and China pledging to achieve the same by 2060. The E.U. has actively

enhanced its climate measures in response to the U.S. withdrawal, supporting initiatives such as the European Green Deal. Research by [Puglerin \(2021\)](#) at COP26 in 2021 underscored the need for coordinated global efforts to combat climate change. The absence of U.S. support specifically has made achieving climate goals more challenging, ultimately impacting international relations and the environment.

3.4.3. Trade Policies and Economic Partnerships

Trade policies and economic partnerships underwent significant shifts during Trump's first term, characterized by a preference for bilateral agreements over multilateral frameworks. According to [Myrick \(2021\)](#), the U.S. withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (T.P.P.) impacted trade relations in the Asia-Pacific region and allowed China to solidify its position through other deals. [MacDonald \(2018\)](#) noted that the Trump administration imposed tariffs on approximately \$360 billion worth of Chinese products, sparking a trade war in which Beijing responded in kind. This unilateral approach strained relations with key partners, prompting the E.U. to impose €2.8 billion in tariffs on U.S. goods. Researcher [Finbow \(2018\)](#) suggested that such measures could disrupt supply chains and the global economic order, projecting that ongoing trade tensions might lead to a decline in the U.S. G.D.P. growth rate. In the future, rebuilding multilateral trade frameworks will be crucial for U.S. economic hegemony, maintaining stability, and fostering cooperative economic relations in an increasingly competitive and protectionist environment.

3.4.4. Human Rights and International Organizations

Human rights and international organizations faced significant challenges during Trump's administration, particularly concerning U.S. engagement with key bodies ([Blitt, 2021](#)). According to [Haynes \(2020\)](#), the U.S. withdrawal from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2018, citing alleged bias against Israel, weakened the U.S.'s position in advocating for human rights. [Eboe-Osuji \(2021\)](#) noted that U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, referred to the council as a "cesspool of political bias," signaling a shift away from multilateralism. This decision raised concerns that it might embolden authoritarian governments and reduce global accountability. Moreover, research by [Ali \(2024\)](#) indicates that the U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO over perceived anti-Israel bias has also diminished the organization's effectiveness in the fields of education and culture. Critics argue that such exits erode the effectiveness of international organizations and weaken global governance systems. As nations grapple with rising authoritarianism and human rights abuses, a renewed U.S. commitment to international organizations will be crucial for restoring credibility and promoting universal human rights standards.

3.5. Recommendations for Strengthening Transatlantic Relations

3.5.1. Policy Suggestions for the U.S. Government

The U.S. government should prioritize rebuilding alliances by reaffirming its

commitments to NATO and reengaging in multilateral agreements. According to [Von Daniels \(2024b\)](#), rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement and participating in other climate change initiatives can help the U.S. regain its leadership credibility. Similarly, [Sullivan \(2023\)](#) argued that trade policies should shift back to multilateral approaches, such as re-engaging with T.P.P. partners to counterbalance China's growing influence. Furthermore, [Ghilescu \(2023\)](#) emphasized that maintaining a consistent human rights agenda in foreign policy will enhance the U.S.'s standing in international organizations. Therefore, [Yoon \(2024\)](#) suggested that diplomacy, cooperation, and support for the liberal international order are essential for the U.S. to maintain stability and trust in the contemporary world and effectively address modern challenges.

3.5.2. Strategies for European Allies

European allies should strengthen internal cohesion and increase defense spending to reduce reliance on U.S. leadership. According to [Heisbourg \(2024\)](#), a unified NATO approach is essential, with member states aiming to meet the 2% G.D.P. defense spending guideline to enhance collective security. Additionally, [Sharikov \(2022\)](#) suggests that Europe should pursue strategic autonomy by developing independent defense capabilities, such as the European Defense Fund. [Dimitrova \(2024\)](#) argues that promoting joint initiatives on climate change and digital governance will reinforce collaboration within the E.U. Similarly, [De Castro \(2024\)](#) highlights that by presenting a united front, European allies can effectively counter rising global challenges, maintain stability in transatlantic relations, and foster a stronger European identity.

3.5.3. Collaborative Initiatives and Joint Projects

According to [Gawron-Tabor & Yamada \(2024\)](#), European allies should enhance internal unity and increase defense budgets to reduce overdependence on U.S. leadership. This must be done collectively, with NATO members striving to achieve the 2% G.D.P. defense spending target to strengthen the alliance's security. Additionally, [Fattori \(2022\)](#) argues that Europe should pursue strategic autonomy by developing its own defense capacities, including the European Defense Fund. Similarly, [Haavik \(2024\)](#) suggests that advancing cooperation on climate change and digital governance will reinforce stability within the E.U. By remaining united, European states can effectively address growing global threats, maintain order in relations with the U.S., and build a stronger, more unified European identity.

3.5.4. Building Public Support and Mutual Understanding

[Charillon \(2023\)](#) recommends that building public support for transatlantic cooperation requires effective communication strategies that emphasize shared values and common goals. Similarly, [Moral et al. \(2021\)](#) suggest that enhancing cooperation in combating climate change, such as through the EU-U.S. Climate Dialogue, can improve joint efforts toward achieving net-zero targets. Furthermore, [Sheng \(2023\)](#) emphasizes that collaboration in military training, intelligence

sharing, and development will strengthen NATO's defense capabilities. Economic cooperation, facilitated by initiatives like the Trade and Technology Council, can streamline regulations and enhance economic protection against external influences. Additionally, Von Daniels (2024a) highlights that supporting R&D collaborations in new technologies will boost innovation and competitiveness. In this way, allies can effectively address common challenges and strengthen their partnership within collaborative frameworks.

4. Concl U. S. Ion

4.1. Summary of Key Findings

This research highlights the significant challenges and transformations in America's role as a global leader, particularly during the Trump administration. The key findings reveal a growing trend of isolationism under the "America First" policy, which has led to increased tensions between the U.S. and Europe, as well as the deterioration of international cooperation. The withdrawal from crucial agreements like the Paris Climate Accord and the INF Treaty angered European allies and other global powers. Many scholars conclude that a second Trump presidency may exacerbate these issues, making military cooperation, economic relations, and human rights initiatives more challenging, thereby altering the dynamics of international relations and diminishing America's influence.

4.2. Reaffirmation of the Importance of a Strong Transatlantic Relationship

The cooperation between the U.S. and its European partners is essential for effectively addressing common threats such as climate change, terrorism, and the rise of authoritarianism. Strengthening NATO and fostering closer economic ties will not only enhance security but also provide resilience against external pressures. By focusing on transatlantic relations, both sides can build a robust partnership that upholds democratic values and contributes to the establishment of a stable, rules-based world order in the long term.

4.3. Final Thoughts on the Future of America's Global Leadership

The future of America's global leadership depends on its ability to navigate complex geopolitical dynamics while restoring trust among allies. With emerging global powers like China and Russia challenging U.S. dominance, it is imperative for the U.S. to embrace multilateralism and collaborative approaches. The key to maintaining leadership lies in fostering meaningful partnerships and coordinating efforts to address various challenges. Continuity in a foreign policy that upholds democratic principles and human rights will be crucial for regaining the confidence of partners and achieving global stability in the years to come.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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