

Klingebiel, Stephan; Baumann, Max-Otto

Research Report

Trump 2.0 in times of political upheaval? Implications of a possible second presidency for international politics and Europe

IDOS Policy Brief, No. 24/2024

Provided in Cooperation with:

German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), Bonn

Suggested Citation: Klingebiel, Stephan; Baumann, Max-Otto (2024) : Trump 2.0 in times of political upheaval? Implications of a possible second presidency for international politics and Europe, IDOS Policy Brief, No. 24/2024, German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), Bonn, <https://doi.org/10.23661/ipb24.2024>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/300630>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Trump 2.0 in Times of Political Upheaval?

Implications of a Possible Second Presidency for International Politics and Europe

Stephan Klingebiel & Max-Otto Baumann

Summary

A second presidential term for Donald Trump would undoubtedly have huge impacts on topics in all areas of international relations – topics that are intrinsically relevant to all actors due to the status of the United States as a world power. Trump's political agenda differs considerably from that of earlier Republican U.S. presidents. His populism has forced conservative internationalism to revert to isolationism.

We set out five brief analyses to shed light on areas of activity that are of major importance for global sustainable development and for the Global South: (i) basic features of the international system and the multilateral order, (ii) the United Nations (UN), (iii) international climate policy, (iv) development policy and (v) policy on Africa.

These areas each have their own particular dynamics. At the same time, they need to be seen as part of an international order that is currently experiencing upheaval. A similar pattern is likely to be observed in all of these areas: withdrawal from multilateral arrangements and in some cases deliberate steps to undermine them; reduction or termination of financial contributions in areas in which U.S. interests do not appear to be directly involved. Moreover, in some individual cases, Trump is likely (once again) to seek confrontation in multilateral forums with China and other states regarded by him as undesirable.

All of this will affect European interests. Firstly, Trump is likely to have an impact on the international community's ability to solve problems, for example in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and combating climate change. Secondly, if the United States were to withdraw in many areas, this would in

all likelihood create opportunities for China, Russia and their allies to exert greater influence.

Under 'Trump 2.0', the United States would presumably once again be a principal disruptor of the liberal world order. In the wake of radical global changes (growing importance of China and other actors in the Global South, etc.), a chain of disruptions triggered by the United States is likely to have serious direct and indirect repercussions (functioning of international organisations; pressure to increase the defence budgets of European countries, etc.).

While Trump is a driver of structural change in international politics, Biden's re-election would be likely to act as a firewall for a while. Yet Biden might also prove to be a weak partner in managing upheaval in the world order. Regardless of the outcome of the U.S. presidential elections, European actors need to future-proof their policies for a new geopolitical era.

For actors interested in an effective multilateral order, one approach to international politics that they could adopt would involve forging or harnessing alliances that can hold up in the face of U.S. government action. In principle, it would probably be advantageous to focus more on 'mixed alliances' of countries with different identities ('western', 'Global South', regional attributes, etc.). As recent years have shown, a resurgence of a bloc-based mindset and respective practices poses risks for joint approaches, for example in identifying progress in the field of international climate policy. Exemplary approaches may include transnational urban climate alliances and the Bridgetown Initiative for the reform of the international financial architecture.

1 Introduction

Donald Trump's presidency from 2017 to 2021 was both destructive and chaotic. His administration attempted to undermine facts and truths by presenting a different reality of 'alternative facts' (Zelizer (Ed.), 2022). A plan was largely lacking, while delivery of numerous reform ambitions was at best rudimentary. Trump's actions are presumably not solely the result of insufficient planning but are also designed to be deliberately unpredictable in political terms. This makes it difficult for other actors to adapt to his policy-making.

A second presidential term for Trump (referred to here in brief as 'Trump 2.0') is obviously not certain, but it cannot be ruled out either. Negative partisanship is one plausible explanation for the fact that Trump 2.0 is considered a possible outcome of the presidential elections scheduled for November 2024. In other words, this outcome may seem possible not because voters take a positive view of the relevant political agenda, but because they are more critical of the Democrats / Biden than of the Republicans / Trump.

Trump 2.0 would presumably have a more fundamental and more destabilising impact than his first term in office. Project 2025, an agenda put forward by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative U.S. think tank, is likely to be a relevant blueprint (Project 2025, 2024). It provides a detailed script for the programmatic approach to be taken by a Republican president in the event of a conservative government coming to power. It would be likely to exert considerable influence over a second presidency for Donald Trump (Swan, 2022). Our policy brief is based on Project 2025 but also on other publications and statements made by Donald Trump and his affiliates. In addition, it draws on independent analyses regarding both a possible second presidency and his first term in office.

Trump 2.0 would continue to pursue a largely evidence-free and anti-science political agenda. Project 2025 is full of unverifiable claims and distortions of the truth, e.g. 'The Biden Admin-

istration's extreme climate policies have worsened global food insecurity and hunger. Its anti-fossil fuel agenda has led to a sharp spike in global energy prices' (Project 2025, 2024, p. 257) and 'The aid industry claims that climate change causes poverty, which is false' (Project 2025, 2024, p. 257).

Whether or not Trump will be re-elected is open and not the topic of this analysis. Instead, we aim to achieve greater clarity through foresight and strategic planning in order to be better prepared for this eventuality. We focus on international topics, particularly issues connected with global sustainable development, the requirements that multilateral action must meet and the role of development policy. Our policy brief uses conceptual considerations from the field of strategic planning in international relations. Strategic planning is a structured and systematic approach that uses ideas and drafts about the future to anticipate change and thus be better prepared for it (Spitz, 2024).

2 Analysis of selected international policy areas

A second presidency for Donald Trump would undoubtedly have huge impacts on topics in all areas of international relations – topics that are intrinsically relevant to all actors due to the status of the United States as a world power.

We set out five brief analyses to shed light on different areas of activity that are of major importance for global sustainable development and in terms of their impact on the Global South: (i) basic features of the international system and the multilateral order, (ii) the United Nations (UN), (iii) international climate policy, (iv) development policy and (v) policy on Africa.

(i) Basic features of the international system and the multilateral order

The rules-based multilateral order is currently facing difficult times. The 'liberal hegemony' (Keohane, 1984) that developed under U.S. leadership is increasingly being called into question by

emerging countries. Although the United States is still the most powerful nation, the contours of a multipolar system are becoming apparent in which China (the new 'East') and developing countries (the new 'South') are forming autonomous centres of power – in China's case with hegemonial ambitions (Ikenberry, 2024). The challenge to western dominance can be seen in areas such as the debate initiated by China on 'true multilateralism', the limited support for the West's resistance to Russia's war against Ukraine, the calls by the developing countries for a greater say in the institutions of world order and the fact that they can now choose between different global partners (Ero, 2024; Fortin, Heine & Ominami (Eds.), 2023; Klingebiel, 2023). The world order is undergoing a process of change.

A second Trump administration should be seen in the context of these global changes. Whereas the United States was able to contain challenges to liberal hegemony in the past, it is now increasingly rarely able to do so. Analyses of Project 2025 indicate that a second Trump administration would take a critical look at U.S. involvement in multilateral institutions and frameworks and would not shy away from drastic measures if it considers this involvement to run counter to short-term interests. Longer-term strategic interests in multilateralism are likely to be of little concern to Trump, for example diffuse reciprocity through multilateral arrangements. The frontline of Trump's anticipated crusade against multilateral institutions will include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – organisations that, according to Project 2025, 'espouse economic theories and policies that are inimical to American free market and limited government principles' (Project 2025, 2024, p. 701). Trump could drastically reduce or discontinue contributions and even withdraw the United States from these and other international institutions.

Project 2025 recommends that the United States should withdraw from the OECD because it has

become 'little more than a taxpayer-funded left-wing think tank and lobbying organization' (Project 2025, 2024, p. 698). The same could happen with the World Trade Organization (WTO), which is described as 'institutionally unfair and nonreciprocal' (Project 2025, 2024, p. 795), because – according to this Republican criticism – it has failed to prevent China from undermining free trade. In addition, Trump could pursue a fundamental reform of the WTO's dispute resolution process. Project 2025 also puts forward the option of creating a successor to the WTO that is 'open only to liberal democracies' (Project 2025, 2024, p. 801). It is difficult to conceive how Trump could manage to implement a project of this kind and create an institution that would be better for the United States, let alone for the rest of the world. However, he could use this idea to increase the pressure on the WTO.

Evidence from Trump's first period in office suggests that his ideas about other emerging countries and their alleged hostility towards the United States will once again be important factors driving his foreign policy. Efforts to contain China are likely to form a particular focus of his foreign policy. The same would apply to a second Biden administration, as Biden recently imposed high punitive tariffs on electric cars from China and conducted military manoeuvres with Asian partners. Yet while these were deliberate measures, Trump might target China – as a Communist and illiberal country and as a challenger to U.S. hegemony – to a considerably greater extent. Project 2025 refers to 'Communist China's economic aggression and quest for world domination' (Project 2025, 2024, p. 783). Trump would therefore in all likelihood take a critical look at Chinese influence in multilateral engagement. The same applies to the question of how open international organisations are towards China. Trump's campaign against the World Health Organization (WHO) and its alleged pro-China stance during the COVID-19 pandemic could serve as a blueprint in this context. Trump might also attempt to use the G7 and the G20 as platforms to contain China's influence.

If the United States were to cut its financial contributions and if bilateral animosities were to find their way into international forums, this would considerably impair the ability to act at a global multilateral level in the absence to date of good, tried and tested patterns of response for other actors. Global trust in multilateral approaches, already in scarce supply, is likely to deteriorate further. The legitimacy of joint approaches and the ability to enforce them would no doubt decrease further in areas in which the United States continues to be involved as the leader of the West: in the provision of development cooperation, in international organisations and in the UN Security Council. At the same time, global opponents could gain in influence. During Trump's first period in office, Russia and China as emerging powers already began to exploit the perceived weakening of the United States to enforce their national interests more flexibly and forcefully (Regilme, 2022). Trump 2.0 is likely to reinforce this trend.

(ii) United Nations

With its universal membership, the Security Council, the various specialised agencies and organisations and a development apparatus totalling US\$ 55 billion (2022), the UN is at the heart of the multilateral system. As a global organisation, it agrees on international frameworks, a notable example being the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. US\$ 15 billion – 27% of the UN's development and humanitarian funding – comes from the United States, which contributes more than any other member state. The country thus provides huge support for the UN's work, for example to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in peace missions and in the field of humanitarian aid and human rights.

Trump 2.0 will presumably aim to pursue the hostile approach towards the UN traditionally adopted by the Republicans, particularly those in the MAGA movement (**M**ake **A**merica **G**reat **A**gain), on a broad scale. For them, the UN incorporates an intrusive form of multilateralism that jeopardises sovereignty and is influenced by left-

wing values. Trump would presumably considerably reduce U.S. contributions to the UN, in some cases terminating them completely, and in those areas in which cooperation is continued would pursue an aggressive value-for-money approach (Project 2025, 2024, p. 191). For the first time, a U.S. government might call into question the system of assessed contributions and demand that they should be replaced by voluntary contributions to fund the regular UN budget (as called for by Trump's former security adviser John Bolton (2024)).

If the United States were to unilaterally terminate its assessed contributions, this would result in a huge liquidity crisis for the UN. Yet Trump would also cut voluntary funding too. Project 2025 takes a critical view of humanitarian aid, claiming that it is in effect 'sustaining war economies, creating financial incentives for warring parties to continue fighting, discouraging governments from reforming, and propping up malign regimes' (Project 2025, 2024, p. 268).

As in his first term in office, Trump would presumably not permit the U.S. government to fund organisations that support abortion as part of family planning. Funding for the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) would very probably once again be discontinued completely. Trump could (once again) leave the WHO, UNESCO and the UN Human Rights Council – due to its policy towards China (too friendly) and Israel (too critical).

Reduced contributions by the United States would have a serious impact on the ability of the UN and its agencies to act and would have a direct effect on developing countries. Withdrawal by the United States would also have geopolitical consequences. China would probably attempt to fill the gaps left by the United States, applying for leadership positions, proposing new initiatives and mobilising political majorities through the G77. To the extent to which multipolarity is becoming a reality, the systems conflict with China is likely to escalate. Even under Biden, there is now already a new struggle for power and influence in the UN. In 'soft' areas in particular,

China is currently attempting to lay the foundation for gaining more influence in the longer term through personnel, financing and initiatives of its own (Baumann, Haug & Weinlich, 2024). This contest for influence is jeopardising the integrity of the norms, values and processes of the UN.

A new UN Secretary-General is due to be appointed during Trump 2.0. It is very unlikely to be someone from the United States (it is Latin America's turn to hold this post), but Trump would presumably ensure that the successful candidate is not a strong leader. The new Secretary-General will need to be accommodating towards the United States. Yet without strong leadership, the UN will undoubtedly be fundamentally weakened – at a time when the rules-based order is under almost unprecedented pressure and global problems (climate, migration, health, etc.) are being exacerbated.

(iii) International climate policy

The general geopolitical conditions play a huge role in international climate policy (Carbon Brief, 2024). Relations between the United States and China are a key factor along with the fact that supply chains are now geared towards geopolitical conflict lines and that elections are being held in more than 50 countries in 2024, most importantly the U.S. presidential elections.

There are few policy areas in which Trump's anti-evidence and anti-science stance is so evident as in the field of climate change. This was apparent during his first period in office. It concerns climate policy as a whole, in which Trump reversed most of the main climate action measures instigated by the previous Obama administration, but also the international climate finance architecture. Under Trump, the United States withdrew from the Paris Agreement (2017) and stopped payments to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCCC). One of the core paradigms of Project 2025 involves stopping 'the war on oil and natural gas' (Project 2025, 2024, p. 365).

There is a stark difference between Biden's international climate engagement and Trump's approach. On the first day of his presidency, Biden signed an executive order to rejoin the Paris Agreement. His efforts to persuade the U.S. Congress to commit to higher contributions to international climate finance were in part unsuccessful due to Republican resistance. With funding totalling US\$ 370 billion, Biden's Inflation Reduction Act is one of his most important milestones for a green transition in the United States. However, it will one-sidedly promote the U.S. economy.

Although Biden's international climate policy differs very considerably from that of his predecessor, some commentators have pointed out that he has not been sufficiently willing to address climate change, particularly in international climate policy. Others have acknowledged the extraordinary efforts undertaken by his administration (e.g. Kalantzakos in: Carbon Brief, 2024).

Leaving aside an assessment of the Biden administration in terms of its record on climate issues, Trump 2.0 would have a fundamental impact on international climate policy:

- His administration would probably considerably undermine efforts to tackle climate change and push ahead with the 'geopolitisation' of international climate policy.
- Emissions would presumably increase dramatically – adding an estimated four billion tonnes to U.S. emissions by 2030 (Viisainen & Evans, 2024).
- Trump would presumably once again withdraw from the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC (Project 2025, 2024).
- Trump 2.0 would probably withdraw to a great extent from the international climate finance architecture. A Trump administration would aim to significantly reduce direct U.S. contributions to international climate finance and to reverse pledges already made to the GCF.
- The outcome of the U.S. presidential elections could have a direct negative impact on the new

international climate finance architecture (New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance, NCQG), which is already proving difficult to develop and will be at the very top of the agenda at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 29) in Baku at the end of 2024.

(iv) Development policy

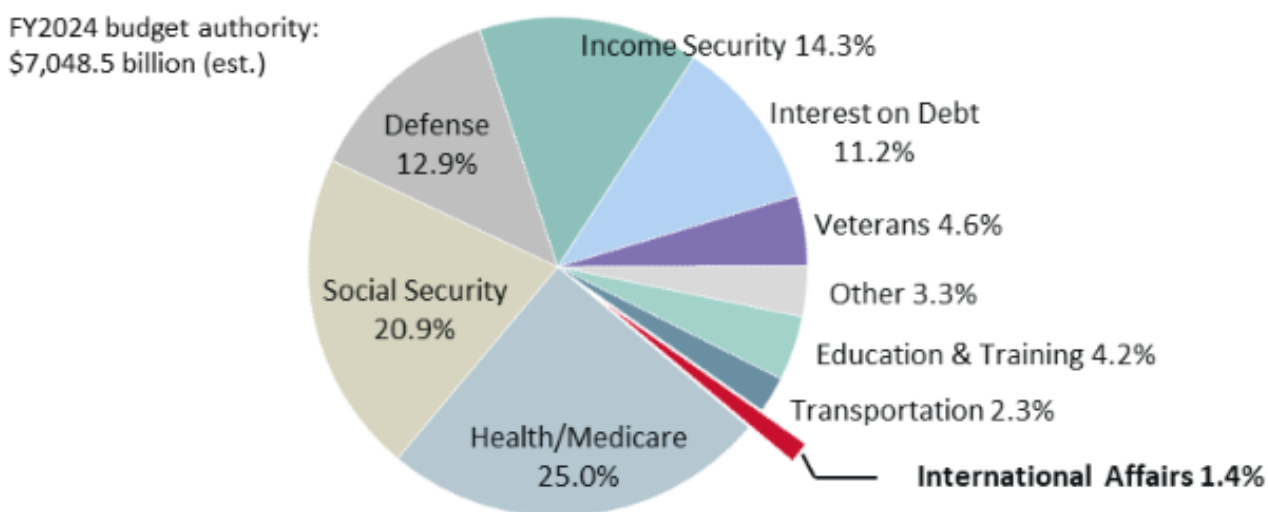
The United States devotes only 0.24% of its gross national income (figures as of 2023) to official development assistance (ODA), thus well below the average of all western donors (0.43%). Due to the size of its economy, however, it is still the world's largest donor by far. In 2023, the United States invested a total of US\$ 66.04 billion in ODA. This makes the United States very important to the international development banks and many UN development agencies. In sectoral terms, the United States focuses on health. Civilian support for Ukraine since the Russian invasion in February 2022 led to an increase in ODA funding in the United States in 2022/2023.

Generally speaking, changes to U.S. development policy between 2017 and 2021 were notable but they were less radical than in other policy areas and less pronounced than some observers

had previously assumed they would be. In particular, the cuts to funding were less fundamental than feared. This was due not least to successful resistance from the Democrats in Congress (Hill, 2023) and from conservative politicians in Congress who warned against cuts of this kind. Conservative religious and evangelical alliances point out that the political benefits for the United States are large even if the share of the U.S. national budget spent on international affairs – including ODA but also many other budget items such as the U.S. embassies – is only 1–1.5% (1.4% in fiscal year 2024; see Figure 1). Trump's defence minister at the time, General James Mattis, argued (2017) strongly in favour of foreign and development aid: 'If you don't fully fund the State Department, then I need to buy more ammunition.'

Various political measures can be regarded as probable under Trump 2.0. Other measures depend on which political forces are able to gain the upper hand in this administration. Even if it currently seems unlikely, it is at least conceivable that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the country's main development agency, might be dismantled.

Figure 1: Share of the U.S. federal budget spent on international relations, 2024 budget year (estimate)



Source: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47579>

Project 2025 outlines a disastrous situation in U.S. development policy: ‘Over the years, USAID expanded the number of countries assisted, the scope and size of its activities, and especially its budget. The Trump Administration faced an institution marred by bureaucratic inertia: programmatic incoherence; wasteful spending; and dependence on huge awards to a self-serving and politicised aid industrial complex of United Nations agencies, international nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and for-profit contractors. Once started, programs continue almost indefinitely—in many countries, for decades’ (Project 2025, 2024, pp. 253f.).

Potential goals pursued by Trump 2.0 in development policy include:

- reducing USAID’s budget to the pre-COVID level;
- linking development policy closely to U.S. foreign policy objectives;
- proactively countering China’s growing development influence, particularly the Belts and Road Initiative. Various initiatives could build on Trump’s first term in office, primarily the Clear Choice initiative, but also new activities (for example new development partnerships envisaged with Japan, Israel, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Taiwan);
- ending the climate focus of development policy and activities to reduce fossil fuels; instead continuing what it claims to be the responsible use of oil and gas;
- ending the DEI (**D**iversity, **E**quity and **I**nclusion) approach (including the LGBTQ+ agenda);
- driving an anti-abortion policy using a PLGHA (**P**rotecting **L**ife in **G**lobal **H**ealth **A**ssistance) approach;
- expanding support for religious groups and for the U.S. private sector.

(v) Policy on Africa

In 2017–2021, Trump showed only moderate interest in Africa. His derogatory rhetoric and the extent of his ignorance about the continent were notable. However, in 2018, his administration published an Africa Strategy and launched the Prosper Africa initiative to address declining U.S. investment, particularly in view of China’s activities in African countries. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which has been in force since 2000, was not revoked. Sub-Saharan Africa has been one of the priority regions of U.S. ODA for some time now; six countries in this region are among the ten main recipient countries.

Trump 2.0 could generate attention for Africa to some extent. An important motivation for this would be China’s growing role on the continent and in other developing regions. To counter increasing Chinese influence, Project 2025 (2024, p. 13) cites ‘powerful alliances with fast-growing nations in Africa’ as an important goal: ‘Africa’s importance to U.S. foreign policy and strategic interests is rising and will only continue to grow’ (Project 2025, 2024, p. 186). It proposes re-engaging with North African nations and advocates shifting the strategic focus from ‘assistance’ to ‘growth’ for sub-Saharan Africa.

In principle, relations – including cooperation arrangements for development – would be likely to focus on a fairly small group of like-minded partner countries. Security topics – including the dangers posed by terrorist groups – would continue to be relevant, although the focus would be more on support measures for African partners and less on an active role for the U.S. military in African countries on the ground.

3 Conclusions and recommendations

Trump's political agenda differs very considerably from that of former Republican U.S. presidents. His populism has forced conservative internationalism to revert to isolationism (Fukuyama, 2024). His presidency would weaken an important instrument of power for the United States, namely soft power – the country's attractiveness, its values and the population's way of life.

The areas of activity described here each have their own dynamics. At the same time, they need to be seen as part of an international order that is currently experiencing upheaval. This international order, which arose under U.S. hegemony following the Second World War and is now up for renegotiation, rests on four key elements: 'free trade; post-war multilateral institutions; the growth of democracy; and liberal values' (Acharya, 2017). Up until now, the leadership role assumed by the United States has provided a certain degree of reliability and predictability from which western countries benefit greatly (Acharya & Buzan, 2019; Lavallée (Ed.), 2022).

As in 2017–2021, the United States under Trump 2.0 would presumably once again become a 'principal disruptor' (Rielly 2019) of the liberal world order. In view of the radical global changes currently under way (growing importance of China and other actors in the Global South, etc.), which have in turn led to more upheaval in recent years, a 'metarupture' (Spitz, 2024) caused by the United States would probably have serious direct and indirect repercussions (functioning of international organisations; pressure to increase the defence budgets of European countries, etc.).

A pattern is likely to emerge in the aforementioned areas of activity: withdrawal from multilateral arrangements and in some cases deliberate steps to undermine them; reduction or termination of financial contributions in areas in which U.S. interests (or what Trump 2.0 regards as such) are not directly involved. In some individual cases, Trump is likely (once again) to seek confrontation

in the multilateral forums with China and other states regarded as undesirable.

All of this will affect Europe's interests. Firstly, it is likely to have an impact on the international community's ability to solve problems, for example in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and combating climate change. European states have major global interests in these areas. Secondly, from a more geopolitical perspective, the U.S. approach would probably open up opportunities for China, Russia and their allies to exert influence, thus strengthening opponents of the European states in the systems rivalry. This will have an impact on liberal values, for example, which continue to be one of the EU's key global concerns, even if geopolitically inspired initiatives such as the Global Gateway initiative have now detracted from other priorities such as the promotion of democracy. China and other actors among the anti-western, nationalist forces can be expected to exploit opportunities at all levels (from sub-state engagement to international organisations) to attack liberal values, to obstruct their implementation, to undermine these values by reframing them and to narrow the scope for civil society engagement. In the area of trade policy (where Trump began trade wars with China), tensions can be expected which would undoubtedly prove to be problematic for the EU and its strong foreign trade. Further weakening of the WTO would be disadvantageous, particularly for poorer countries, which depend very heavily on a multilateral trade organisation.

For actors from the Global South, the liberal order was never fair and inclusive (Fortin, Heine & Ominami (Eds.), 2023). Many of them would therefore very probably regard Trump 2.0 and the accelerated global upheaval that he would cause not as a crisis, but instead at least partly as an opportunity for faster change. Trump's isolationist tendencies, which would damage U.S. hegemony from within, would probably be welcomed by many developing countries. For them, Trump 2.0 would not mark a negative turning point in international relations, but instead would be a welcome catalyst for global changes that are almost impossible to

halt anyway. European actors increasingly face the challenge that their interest in a universal, rules-based and values-driven world order now appears even more Eurocentric than ever and that potential partners for shaping a new world order in principle welcome the transition to a multipolar world order that is less dominated by the West (including European states).

The problem is bigger than Trump

On the other hand, re-election of Joe Biden would not avoid all these problems completely. Moreover, Trump is merely a symptom of more fundamental causes that are affecting the international role of the United States. As a result of economic changes, the international system no longer works for large sections of the U.S. population. Political polarisation of society is far advanced and is undermining the normative foundations of U.S. leadership policy and the willingness to stand up for global public goods.

While Trump is a driver of structural change in international politics, Biden's re-election is likely to act as a firewall for a while. Yet Biden might also prove to be a weak partner in managing upheaval in the world order.

Regardless of the outcome of the U.S. elections, European actors therefore need to future-proof their policies for a new geopolitical era. The question is not so much whether the existing system and its power relations can be preserved but instead whether and how long the western states can play a key role in shaping global change.

Implications and starting points for Europe

The potential change of government in the United States and the larger systemic changes that this would trigger or reinforce will have an impact on European actors. This will be the case even if Trump does not win a second presidential term, because the domestic conditions in the United States mean that Biden's options would also be severely limited. Both the EU and Germany will need to assume a greater geopolitical role in order to help shape global policy.

The following challenges exist with regard to fundamental issues and above all with a focus on the areas of activity analysed here:

- **Alliances:** For actors interested in effective multilateralism, one approach that they could adopt would be to use alliances that can hold up in the face of U.S. government action. In principle, it would probably be more advantageous to focus on 'mixed alliances' of countries with different identities ('western', 'Global South', regional attributes, etc.). As recent years have already shown, a resurgence of a bloc-based mindset poses risks for finding joint approaches, for example in identifying progress in the field of international climate policy. Positive examples might include transnational urban climate alliances, activities such as the Bridgetown Initiative to reform the international financial architecture and innovative initiatives to mobilise resources beyond individual states (taxation of the super-rich tax, etc.).
- **U.S. influence to exert pressure on China:** The United States will presumably aim to exert even greater influence on Europe and Germany to actively limit China's influence as a global development actor. In this context, policy-makers need to become better at making autonomous assessments of when exactly and how a joint approach would be best and when it would be more expedient to act independently of the United States.
- **Climate policy and finance:** The United States will undertake even greater efforts to disengage from international commitments to international climate policy and climate finance and to development funding not directly related to U.S. interests. It will be even more important for the EU and Germany to demand rules that require all capable international actors to share the load – in other words new obligations for advanced (former) developing countries (China, fossil fuel exporters, etc.), but also obligations for the United States.

- **Increasing pressure on development policy:** Trump's actions are likely to contribute to growing pressure to increase defence budgets in particular more rapidly – a development that would exacerbate the difficult situation regarding public finances and would continue to fuel debate in Europe around the necessity for development cooperation. At the same time, the need for funding would increase dramatically if a Trump administration were to withdraw funding for sustainable development. In view of these challenges, adequately funded development policy is likely to be of huge importance – particularly with a

view to maintaining international credibility and reliability and to creating alliances.

- **Civil society:** European actors should work to strengthen the role of civil society, particularly in international organisations. Civil society can act as a corrective to autocratic trends and can hence play a role in maintaining a rules-based and values-driven international order.
- **Post-2030 agenda:** Finally, the global sustainability agenda is likely to lose considerable momentum. Without the United States, it will be much more difficult to reach universal consensus.

References

- Acharya, A., (2017). After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order. *Ethics & International Affairs* 31(3) 271–285.
- Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2019). *The making of global international relations*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108647670>
- Baumann, M.-O., Haug, S., & Weinlich, S. (2024). From developing country to superpower? China, power shifts and the United Nations development pillar. *Global Policy* 15(2), 51–61. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13260>
- Bolton, J. (2024). Trump should lay off Nato, target the U.N. *Wall Street Journal*, 8 March, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-should-lay-off-nato-target-the-u-n-7e02e960>
- Carbon Brief. (2024, 20. Mai). Experts: What are the biggest geopolitical risks to climate action in 2024? *Carbon Brief*. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/experts-what-are-the-biggest-geopolitical-risks-to-climate-action-in-2024/>
- CRS (Congressional Research Service). (2024). *Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs: FY2024 Budget and Appropriations*. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47579>
- Ero, C. (2024). The Trouble With “the Global South”: What the West Gets Wrong About the Rest. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/trouble-global-south>
- Fortin, C. Heine, J., & Ominami, C. (Hg.). (2023). *Latin American Foreign Policies in the New World Order: The Active Non-Alignment Option*. Anthem Press.
- Fukuyama, F. (2024, 29. April). „Trump 2.0 wäre viel schlimmer als die erste Amtszeit“. *Internationale Politik; Das Magazin für globales Denken*. <https://internationalepolitik.de/de/trump-20-waere-viel-schlimmer-als-die-erste-amtszeit>
- Hill, C. (2023, 18. Oktober) Trump 2.0? Potential implications for global aid. *Devpolicy Blog*. <https://devpolicy.org/trump-2-0-potential-implications-for-global-aid-20231018/>
- Ikenberry, J. G. (2024). Three Worlds: The West, East and South and the competition to shape global order. *International Affairs*, 100(1), 121–138.
- Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After hegemony: Cooperation and discord in the world political economy*. Princeton University Press.
- Klingebiel, S. (2023). *Geopolitics, the Global South and Development Policy* (IDOS Policy Brief 14/2023). <https://doi.org/10.23661/ipb14.2023>
- Lavallée, M.-J. (Hg.). (2022). *The End of Western Hegemonies?* Vernon Press.
- Mattis, J., (2017). Amerikas Soft Power im Zeitalter Trumps. *Project Syndicate*. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/american-soft-power-decline-under-trump-by-joseph-s-nye-2019-05/german>
- Project 2025. (2024). <https://www.project2025.org/>
- Regilme, S. S. (2022). United States Foreign Aid and Multilateralism under the Trump Presidency. *New Global Studies*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.1515/ngs-2021-0030>
- Rielly, J. E. (2019). Can President Donald Trump Destroy the Liberal International Order? *Politique américaine* 2019/1(32), 215–227. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-americaine-2019-1-page-215.htm?ref=doi>
- Spitz, R. (2024, 3. Mai). Why shifting from prediction to foresight can help us plan for future. *World Economic Forum*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/05/prediction-foresight-planning-future-disruption/>
- Swan, J. (2022, 22. Juli). A radical plan for Trump’s second term. *Axios online*. <https://www.axios.com/2022/07/22/trump-2025-radical-plan-second-term>
- Viisainen, V., & Evans, S. (2024, 6. März). Analysis: Trump election win could add 4bn tonnes to US emissions by 2030. *Carbon Brief*. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-trump-election-win-could-add-4bn-tonnes-to-us-emissions-by-2030/>
- Zelizer, J. E. (Hg.) (2022). *The Presidency of Donald J. Trump: A First Historical Assessment*. Princeton University Press.

Prof. Dr Stephan Klingebiel is Head of the “Inter- and Transnational Cooperation” programme at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). He is Visiting Professor at Ewha Womans University, Seoul (Republic of Korea), Visiting Professor at the University of Turin (Italy) and Honorary Distinguished Fellow at the Jindal School of Government and Public Policy (India).

Email: stephan.klingebiel@idos-research.de

Dr Max-Otto Baumann is a Senior Researcher in the “Inter- and Transnational Cooperation” programme at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS).

Email: max-otto.baumann@idos-research.de

Published with financial support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), based on a resolution passed by the German Bundestag, and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

Suggested citation:

Klingebiel, S., & Baumann, M.-O. (2024). *Trump 2.0 in times of political upheaval? Implications of a possible second presidency for international politics and Europe* (Policy Brief 24/2024). IDOS. <https://doi.org/10.23661/ipb24.2024>

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS).



Except otherwise noted, this publication is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0). You are free to copy, communicate and adapt this work, as long as you attribute the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) gGmbH and the author(s).

IDOS Policy Brief / German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) gGmbH

ISSN (Print) 2751-4455

ISSN (Online) 2751-4463

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23661/ipb24.2024>

© German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) gGmbH

Tulpenfeld 6, 53113 Bonn

Email: publications@idos-research.de

<https://www.idos-research.de>

Printed on eco-friendly, certified paper.

