

## Trump 2.0 will usher in a post-American world order

Terry SU

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In a remarkable political comeback, Donald Trump was [re-elected](#) president of the United States with help from, among others, [tech tycoon Elon Musk](#).

The victory of Trump, [a convicted felon](#), symbolises America’s repudiation of its exceptionalism as a “shining city upon a hill” distinct from the Old World – the dashing of the nation’s long-held moral conceit amid voters’ willingness to succumb to self-interest, even though Trump was described as a [“fascist”](#) during his campaign by his own former chief of staff John Kelly.

In this view, Trump’s second term will mark another turn in US foreign policy towards an interest-based transactional approach. How will it impact the geopolitical issues of the day?

The most immediate issue is the de facto US and Nato-vs-Russia war in [Ukraine](#). Even though no one believed Trump when he promised to end the war in one day, few doubt that his inclination would be to press for a ceasefire, with the likely result that Russia will keep the Ukrainian territory it has gained through its “special military operation”, regardless of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky’s latest “victory plan”.

As for Moscow, it is fresh from the success of the [Brics summit](#) it hosted in Kazan last month, a prestigious affair attended by dozens of world leaders and high-ranking officials, including China’s President Xi Jinping, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi and United Nations secretary general Antonio Guterres. With Trump, the self-styled master of the art of the deal, now back in the picture,

Russian President Vladimir Putin can be expected to bargain hard over Ukraine and even woo Europe.

If peace in Ukraine could be achieved before or not long after Trump's inauguration next January, it would kick-start his attempt to break up the American "empire lite", thus bringing forward the start of a multipolar world order that could see a European identity inclusive of Russia, while the Global South continues to emerge, with China still playing a dominant role in Brics.

For their part, European Union countries have little choice but to move towards independence from Washington. Upon Trump's re-election, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for a "more united, stronger and more sovereign" Europe. Ultimately, signposts point to a reconciliation with Moscow, one way or another, if the continent is to staunch economic bleeding and political marginalisation.

In the Middle East, Trump's re-election may be a dream come true for Israel's hardline Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; the incoming US president could be a bigger champion of Tel Aviv's hawkish stance against Palestinians and their Muslim supporters than the outgoing administration has been. Do not forget, however, that Trump loathes hot wars. He is unlikely to want conflict with Iran, which impressed many with the scope of its ballistic missile strike on Israel early last month.

Even when it comes to China, despite the bipartisan consensus in Washington that the world's second largest economy is the biggest strategic rival of the US, one will see that there is no real chance of America entering a shooting war, whatever China hawks around Trump, such as Steve Bannon, Robert O'Brien, Matt Pottinger and Elbridge Colby, are arguing.

The bottom line is that by now Beijing is too militarily formidable for Washington to defeat without crippling itself in the process. The new Trump administration may look to exert extreme pressure on Beijing for the sake of bargaining, but I doubt Trump will allow any spiralling into war.

Meanwhile, Beijing seems to have braced itself for Trump's second act. It unveiled a monetary stimulus package right after the US Federal Reserve's rate cut in September. This month, it is extending a visa-free entry policy to citizens from nine more countries, including US allies like South Korea, but not Japan and the US itself. China also remains committed to opening up its market.

On the other hand, the People's Liberation Army launched a long-range missile into the Pacific in September, its first such test in 44 years, on top of rounds of drills off Taiwan over the past months. Days ago, the Chinese navy carried out its first dual aircraft carrier exercises in the South China Sea.

Gameplay is a means of ensuring peace, especially now that China, with its unrivalled technological and manufacturing capabilities in cutting-edge sectors, is such an envy of the world that it is seen as a threat breathing down the necks of the US and its allies, and worrying Global South countries like Indonesia and Vietnam.

Still, China finds itself in a position comparable to the US' before the two world wars: strong enough to avoid war, and to continue producing and selling. In this regard, it recently agreed on patrolling arrangements with India to de-escalate border tensions.

Last but not least is the impatience on Wall Street with the US government's restrictions on investment in China. Suffice it to say that economic laws of cost efficiency will reveal Washington's reshoring and friendshoring initiatives to be wishful thinking, as profit-chasing money flows to China and its Belt and Road Initiative partners. Musk himself has huge China exposure via his electric vehicle business Tesla, while Apple CEO Tim Cook was recently in Beijing on a charm offensive.

I have no crystal ball, of course. But with Trump's return to the White House a done deal, a grand spectacle could soon unfold before our very eyes, as the US, China, Europe and Russia take their gameplay to the next level in a post-American international order.

**Terry Su is president of Lulu Derivation Data Ltd, a Hong Kong-based online publishing house and think tank specialising in geopolitics**