

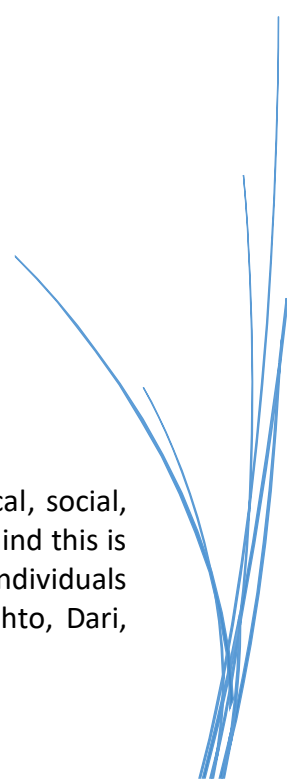
WEEKLY ANALYSIS

Issue Number – 465
(February 14-21, 2025)

A LOOK AT DONALD TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE UNITED STATE'S GLOBAL ROLE



Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS publications analyzing significant weekly political, social, economic, and security events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in Pashto, Dari, English and Arabic languages.



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Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)



A LOOK AT DONALD TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE UNITED STATE'S GLOBAL ROLE

Introduction

Donald Trump, the President of the United States, who previously served his first term with an unconventional approach to foreign policy, has returned to office after a brief hiatus, defeating Kamala Harris in the election to become the 47th President of the United States. Known for his unorthodox strategies and distinct policymaking style, Trump has once again pursued both domestic and foreign policies in a manner consistent with his first term—this time with even greater intensity.

At the core of Trump's policies are the principles of **"America First"** and **"Make America Great Again"**—a vision that prioritizes national interests over global engagement. His approach appears to be aimed at reducing America's involvement in international affairs, distancing the country from global governance frameworks and international treaties, cutting foreign aid, withdrawing from traditional political-military alliances, and engaging in economic confrontations with both allies and rivals.

This raises a critical question: Could these policies undermine the United States' international standing? And if Trump continues along this path, could the U.S. risk losing its status as the world's dominant superpower?

Two possible answers emerge: First, Trump may be seeking to revive the Monroe Doctrine-style isolationism, scaling back U.S. global interventions to focus on domestic improvement—a shift that would have significant implications for the international order. Alternatively, as a pragmatic and opportunistic leader, Trump might continue America's expansionist policies but under a new framework and with different strategic approaches.

This paper explores the trajectory of Trump's foreign policy and its potential consequences for the global influence of the United States.

THE RETURN TO THE MONROE DOCTRINE

Throughout the 19th century, the foundation of U.S. foreign policy was shaped by the Monroe Doctrine. Introduced in 1823 by President James Monroe, this doctrine became a cornerstone of America's approach to international relations, particularly in its dealings with European powers. The doctrine asserted that any European intervention in the Americas would be considered a hostile act and a direct threat to U.S. national security. In response, the United States declared its commitment to resisting such threats and ensuring the protection of the Western Hemisphere.

At the same time, the United States adopted a policy of non-intervention in European affairs. It distanced itself from European conflicts and rivalries, maintaining a neutral and observant stance. The underlying rationale of the Monroe Doctrine was that Europe was entangled in continuous crises, wars, and corruption, and the United States should avoid becoming entangled in these unnecessary conflicts.



Instead, America was encouraged to focus on its development by relying on its domestic resources and strengthening itself internally.

Although European powers initially did not take the doctrine seriously, it provided the U.S. with the necessary time and space to build its strength without being drawn into European disputes. By the time the United States defeated Spain in the 1898 war, it had become clear that nearly a century of strategic non-intervention had allowed the country to emerge as a major power.

With the dawn of the 20th century, especially during World War I, the Monroe Doctrine was temporarily set aside. Following World War II, the Truman Doctrine officially replaced it, which marked a fundamental shift in U.S. foreign policy. The Truman Doctrine was based on global interventionism, emphasizing the formation of political and military alliances to counter Soviet influence. During the Cold War, this approach enabled the United States to strengthen its alliances in Europe and Asia (such as with Japan) in opposition to the Soviet Union.

After the Soviet Union's collapse and the end of the Cold War, the doctrine of a "New World Order" further expanded U.S. global interventionism in response to new geopolitical challenges.

Although Donald Trump has not explicitly stated that he seeks to revive the Monroe Doctrine, there is little doubt that his foreign policy vision contains elements reminiscent of it. During his first term, certain aspects of his approach hinted at a modern adaptation of the doctrine, and now, with renewed determination, he appears to be pursuing this strategy more aggressively. At its core, Trump's rejection of internationalism suggests a form of opportunistic isolationism in U.S. foreign policy.

While it would be an oversimplification to claim that Trump is fully committed to a strict isolationist agenda, his strategy blends isolationism with his "America First" philosophy and selective interventionism under the slogan "Make America Great Again." Much like Monroe, Trump seeks to consolidate U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere. His ambitions include reasserting control over strategic assets such as the Panama Canal, exploring the possibility of annexing Canada, and even proposing the purchase of Greenland.

Another key isolationist principle in Trump's vision is economic self-sufficiency, particularly in terms of reducing U.S. dependence on China. In his view, America's commitment to free trade has primarily benefited other nations, allowing them to capitalize on opportunities that the U.S. itself has provided. Trump argues that the global liberal economic order has facilitated the growth of other countries at America's expense. From his perspective, international treaties and conventions have imposed unnecessary constraints on U.S. sovereignty, and he believes Washington should withdraw from agreements that limit its freedom of action.

Furthermore, Trump is critical of the billions of dollars the U.S. spends annually on foreign aid, arguing that much of it does little to strengthen American power. In his assessment, a more effective approach would be for the U.S. to focus inward—prioritizing domestic growth and national interests over costly international commitments. Taken together, these policies suggest that Trump is, in some form, reviving the Monroe Doctrine, adapting it to contemporary global realities while maintaining its core



principle: safeguarding America's dominance by minimizing foreign entanglements and reinforcing its strength from within.

THE CURRENT STANDING OF THE UNITED STATES AND ITS STRATEGIC TOOLS

While the Monroe Doctrine played a crucial role in positioning the United States as a potential great power, historical evidence suggests that America's rise to actual global dominance occurred after World War II, largely through the adoption of internationalism and multilateralism. Following the war—one in which the U.S. had directly participated and emerged as a principal victor—American policymakers saw an opportunity to expand their global influence.

The post-war world presented a unique landscape: the once-dominant European powers had been devastated, and the Soviet Union, with its anti-liberal ideology, sought to extend its reach over Europe and beyond. In this context, the U.S. positioned itself as the champion of liberal democracy and capitalism. Leveraging its substantial military and economic strength accumulated over previous decades, the U.S. launched the Marshall Plan to aid European recovery, assisting any nation that embraced liberal economic principles.

In addition to economic measures, the U.S. played a central role in shaping the global financial system. At the Bretton Woods Conference, it established a dollar-centered economic order and later created institutions to enforce and maintain this system. On the military front, the United States solidified its influence by founding NATO, ensuring a long-term strategic presence in Europe.

Another key instrument of U.S. influence was foreign aid, which became an essential tool for drawing weaker nations into its orbit. This approach became institutionalized in 1961 when President John F. Kennedy established USAID, officially framing economic assistance as a humanitarian effort while also serving as a means to expand American influence worldwide.

Beyond economic and military strategies, the U.S. also benefited from the development of international law. While international legal frameworks emerged from various sources, they ultimately reinforced America's position in global affairs. The establishment of the United Nations, with its headquarters in the U.S., further cemented American leadership, particularly as the country became the largest financial contributor to the UN and its affiliated organizations.

Although the Soviet Union remained a formidable rival throughout the Cold War—often countering U.S. ambitions—America effectively leveraged its economic, military, and institutional tools to weaken and ultimately outlast its adversary, leading to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

THE IMPACT OF TRUMP'S POLICIES ON THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

As discussed earlier, the United States rose to global dominance by moving beyond the Monroe Doctrine and embracing internationalism. Through multilateral engagement and strategic use of its economic and military power, the U.S. not only realized its potential as a superpower but also cemented its status as the unrivaled leader of the international order, particularly after the collapse of



the Soviet Union. However, in contrast to the foundational principles that have historically defined U.S. foreign policy, Trump appears to be steering the country toward isolationism and unilateralism—even in its dealings with key allies.

If Trump's push for a more isolationist approach is fully realized, what would be the consequences for the international system? This question lies at the core of this discussion and has both negative and positive implications.

One of the most immediate consequences of Trump's unilateralism would be the weakening of international law and the erosion of global legal frameworks. Since his first term in office, Trump has withdrawn the U.S. from several key international agreements and institutions, including the Paris Climate Accord, the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), UNESCO, and the United Nations Human Rights Council. By distancing the U.S. from these treaties and organizations, Trump has contributed to uncertainty and instability in international law, raising concerns about a shift toward legal anarchy. If the world's most powerful nation—a country that played a key role in shaping modern international law—chooses to disregard its commitments, other nations may also feel less compelled to uphold these agreements.

Another significant impact of Trump's policies, which could be viewed as both negative and positive, is their effect on the structure of the international system. If the U.S. retreats from global engagement and adopts a more isolationist stance, the existing world order may begin to unravel. While there is no definitive consensus on the precise nature of the current global order, many scholars describe it as a hybrid between unipolarity and multipolarity, with the U.S. at its center. A reduction in America's international role would accelerate the transition away from this model, potentially leading to a period of disorder and instability.

On the other hand, this shift could also create opportunities for a more balanced global system. Many international relations scholars argue that a truly multipolar world—where power is distributed among multiple influential states—would be more stable and equitable. If U.S. disengagement from global affairs allows for the emergence of a more inclusive and cooperative international order, then this transition could ultimately lead to a more favorable and sustainable global balance of power.

A SHIFT IN APPROACH, NOT IN OBJECTIVES

Contrary to the earlier hypothesis that Trump seeks to revive Monroe-style isolationism, a stronger argument can be made that he is not withdrawing from the global stage but rather reshaping U.S. foreign policy to align with his own unique style and strategic priorities. In other words, Trump is not changing America's fundamental objectives or its international role—he is simply altering the way these goals are pursued.

A closer examination of his policies makes this distinction clearer. His decision to withdraw from international agreements and institutions was not an attempt to disengage from global affairs altogether. Instead, Trump sought to maximize U.S. unilateral power by stepping away from treaties



that required the U.S. to compromise its interests for the sake of collective obligations. His approach was aimed at expanding America's influence, allowing it greater flexibility to act in its interests without being constrained by multilateral commitments.

Similarly, Trump's threats to withdraw from military and political alliances were not about abandoning U.S. allies but rather about shifting the financial burden onto them. For instance, he pressured NATO allies to increase their defense spending and purchase more American-made weapons, ensuring that the U.S. maintained its strategic dominance while reducing its economic costs.

His tariff policies also reflect this strategic recalibration. Trump's imposition of tariffs on key trading partners was not merely about economic protectionism; it was a tool to extract broader geopolitical concessions. By threatening Canada and Mexico with a 25% tariff increase, he pushed them to invest more in border security—an issue he prioritized. His trade war with China had a dual purpose: slowing China's economic growth while simultaneously repositioning India as an alternative trading partner. His agreement with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to increase bilateral trade to \$500 billion illustrates this shift.

Perhaps the most concerning aspect of Trump's approach was his stance on foreign aid, which had significant consequences for aid-dependent countries, including Afghanistan. By suspending U.S. aid for three months, Trump effectively forced recipient nations to the negotiating table, using financial leverage to demand strategic concessions. In Afghanistan's case, it is plausible that Trump sought to dictate the country's diplomatic alignments—potentially requiring the Taliban to coordinate its relations with China, Russia, or Iran under U.S. supervision. He may have even considered demanding a U.S. military foothold in Afghanistan, as evidenced by his repeated remarks on the strategic importance of Bagram Airfield.

In essence, Trump's foreign policy was not about retreating from the world but about redefining America's engagement—ensuring that every diplomatic and economic move served immediate U.S. interests with minimal constraints.

CONCLUSION

At one point in its history, the United States pursued an isolationist strategy, famously known as the Monroe Doctrine, to distance itself from international conflicts. While Trump never explicitly advocated for isolationism, his policies and actions suggest that he may have been leaning toward a modern version of it. However, while some evidence supports this idea, the alternative hypothesis—that Trump's approach is driven more by opportunistic pragmatism—seems more convincing.

As history has shown, the United States became a global superpower by embracing internationalism. It secured its dominance through legal frameworks, political and military alliances, economic coalitions, and free trade agreements. Additionally, by providing financial aid to other nations, the U.S. reinforced its influence worldwide. If America were to abandon these strategies, it would risk losing the very foundation of its global supremacy.



Trump, however, seemed to believe that imposing heavy tariffs on other countries would strengthen the U.S. economy. What he overlooked—or perhaps chose to ignore—is that the modern world’s economic boom has largely been driven by free trade, a system the U.S. itself helped create. It is unlikely that Trump was unaware of this reality. Instead, his policies suggest a hybrid approach—a mix of isolationism and internationalism, selectively applied based on circumstances. His goal was not to disengage from the world but to maximize America’s gains, often through unilateral decisions.

Given his business background, Trump approached global affairs with a more transactional mindset than his predecessors. His ambitions extended beyond those of past U.S. leaders, potentially reshaping the world into a more America-centric system. Ultimately, Trump sought to increase global compliance with U.S. interests, using new and often aggressive tactics to exert pressure on allies and adversaries alike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since Trump seeks to maximize U.S. interests through pressure and threats, Afghanistan should consider the following points:

1. The Islamic Emirate should carefully study Trump’s negotiation style and avoid conceding to his demands too easily.
2. It is evident that Trump initially adopted a strategy of intimidation and threats. The Islamic Emirate should remain aware of this tactic and not be swayed by it.
3. To reduce reliance on foreign aid, including assistance channeled through international organizations, the Islamic Emirate should focus on strengthening domestic resources and expanding economic and diplomatic relations with regional countries.

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