

The World Order That Was Not Ordered

By the end of 2024, the world had celebrated the New Year, and Donald Trump had celebrated his second coming as President of the United States of America. All celebrations surely included a toast to a better 2025 and hopes for prosperity, tranquility, and peace. It would be perfectly normal if any of the celebrants had their own version of “prosperity,” “tranquility,” “peace,” and their way of understanding how to achieve it. What most celebrants got fundamentally wrong was the assumption that all their plans would materialize in an already existing world order.

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reshuffle, or if you may, dismantling of the existing order. In 2024, he miraculously dodged an assassin’s bullet, but America’s domestic bureaucracy could not dodge the DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency). The international order, in turn, could not dodge Donald Trump and his revisionist agenda.

The new (old) American president has been in office for only a month, yet domestic and international earthquakes are already shattering nearly every single pillar of “order,” “system,” or “institutions.” And we are not even in the aftershocks phase yet.

Political and business leaders, pundits, bureaucrats, and ordinary people worldwide are trying to guess what his agenda really stands for. It appears that the majority of the world’s intellectual populace is keeping a misty index finger up, trying to catch the direction of the new wind and navigate accordingly.



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America's domestic turbulence merits a separate analysis and it might be easier to decode the new administration's actions in that context. Regarding international affairs, the fundamental shock stems from the fear that America is abandoning its more than 200-year-old fundamental principles, policy priorities, and the Pax Americana in general. Even though the tsunami of changes is sweeping and fast-developing, one can only speculate about its causes, the vision behind it, and the reasoning of its architects. One phrase often heard from members of the new American administration is:

"The world has changed and we shall adapt to it." So, what has changed and how does the current American leadership perceive the changing world?

New Realities

The slogan "Make America Great Again" already implies something is seriously wrong with America. Domestically, these "wrongs" are well articulated: woke/DEI/identity policies, uncontrolled immigration, overblown bureaucracy, inflation, and unemployment. The fact is that skillfully address-

ing these “wrongs” effectively propelled Donald Trump to his second-term presidency.

Internationally, the declared “wrongs” also have names, such as fixation on climate change, unfair trade policies detrimental to American interests, uncontrolled international aid (including military assistance), the tendency of allies to take American security guarantees for granted, and a growing disrespect for America—even from its allies.

It appears that the lenses through which high-level American decision-makers and opinion leaders view the world paint a very grim picture. Let us take a closer look at some pieces of that picture.

The Institutions

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was initially envisaged as a predominantly Russian foreign policy tool for challenging Western dominance on the international stage. However, it has now become a highly Sino-centric organization, significantly increasing the number of its members and observers beyond its original five.

The same can be said about BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) which has attracted countries traditionally considered more or less Western allies such as Türkiye and the UAE. Furthermore, within BRICS, ideas of challenging the dominance of the U.S. dollar in international trade are actively circulating.

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The Bretton Woods institutions—the World Bank, IMF, and the WTO—were created right after the catastrophic World War II and used to be major pillars of international economic development. Not anymore. While they are still active, the BRICS

New Development Bank and China’s Belt and Road Initiative now offer viable alternatives for infrastructural development. The WTO has become an arena where the U.S. is challenged by China over allegedly unfair tariff policies.

Global Business Practices

During the Cold War, an alternative to Western support required at least nominal adherence to socialist and communist ideas—often sufficed by the presence of prefixes such as “socialist” or “people’s” in a country’s name and the monopolization of the state economy. Today, China offers partnerships and investments without ideological caveats or regard for the recipient’s performance on democracy and human rights. Not bound by anti-corruption regulatory restraints, Chinese companies happily offer bribes for preferential treatment by local officials. Chinese companies largely disregard ecological considerations and labor rights laws. With minimal bureaucratic procedures, Chinese state-sponsored credits are readily available for investment or development. These practices significantly shorten project initiation-to-implementation timelines, producing quick and visible results.

All of the above puts Western companies at a disadvantage. Western firms are strictly monitored by their respective governments and subject to extensive compliance regulations and independent climate, anti-corruption, and labor rights watchdogs. The best business practices adhered to domestically in the West have become nearly untransferable to the developing world, even if Western technologies are superior or Chinese business practices eventually negatively affect local populations.

Trade

Trade wars between China and the U.S. are neither surprising nor new. However, China is now effec-

tively encroaching on the U.S. market, not only with t-shirts and sneakers but also with strategic materials critical to the U.S.—materials that are no longer produced domestically, thereby increasing America's dependence on Chinese suppliers. Traditional U.S. markets like Europe are flooded with more affordable Chinese alternatives, including machinery, automotive products, and consumer goods. The same applies to cheaper solar panels, telecommunications goods, etc. When it comes to financial tools, Visa, Mastercard, and American Express are no longer the exclusive players in the credit/debit card market, now challenged by China's UnionPay. The list goes on, contributing to a worrisome trade deficit for the U.S..

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Nowadays, practically everyone knows about the impact of artificial intelligence on economic development. If the two major engines for AI are big data and its processing capabilities (powerful computer chips), China clearly has an advantage in both. With a population of 1.4 billion and unrestricted access to private data from its citizens and global companies, China enjoys an unmatched advantage in collecting big data and testing AI models. We can add to this the so-called “mined data” from Chinese social media platforms (TikTok), trade platforms (AliExpress), telecom companies (Huawei), and hacking of governmental or major business databases.

Such a reality undoubtedly positions China as a major competitor. Trump's every other hectic (and often bizarre) step on the international stage can be considered against the backdrop of such a perception or assumption. If so, a number of vital questions arise concerning world order—questions that require analysis and discussion.

Ukraine Under the Wing or the Bus?

Departing from the foreign policy agenda of a predecessor is not a new phenomenon in America. However, in this particular case, worried voices speculate whether the world is experiencing a fundamental shift in America's role—from traditionally siding with the oppressed against evil empires and axes of power to legitimizing the actions of evildoers by calling it the “new normal” and justifying it as “striving for peace.” Ukraine has become a litmus test for such shifting policies.

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The promise of ending the war between Ukraine and Russia was a constant theme in Trump's pre-electoral speeches and concrete actions followed immediately after his inauguration. The pace, methodology, and manner of these actions left domestic and external observers puzzled and worried. The Trump administration not only changed its rhetoric but also echoed false Russian narratives about the war in Ukraine.

This shift in rhetoric was followed by concrete actions, raising not only eyebrows but also the question: Is the U.S. really throwing Ukraine under the bus? Pressure on the Ukrainian leadership to sign a vague “minerals deal” without any security guarantees serves as merely the first step in a fundamental change of approach toward this horrific war by the U.S.. The unprecedented berating of President Zelensky in a White House meeting by President Trump and Vice President Vance, although shocking, was a logical outcome of this changing attitude. The recently announced [pause](#) in military assistance to Ukraine and [suspension](#) of intelligence cooperation reinforce speculation

that the U.S. is planning to achieve its desired results largely at the expense of Ukrainian interests. The U.S. leadership is making it very clear what is expected from Ukraine—take our offer, even if you do not like it, or show us a new President who will take our offer.

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Without U.S. political, economic, or military support, it will be extremely difficult for Ukraine to withstand Russian pressure. However, this situation is not unprecedented. Last year, due to a deadlock in Congress, support for Ukraine was halted and delayed for a full six months. Yes, Ukraine has seen some retreats, notably in the city of Bakhmut, but such delays did not result in the collapse of the front line. Yes, today's Ukraine has fewer soldiers to fight and the war is deeply unpopular after three years of continuous fighting. Nevertheless, European allies appear to be taking the looming danger of Ukraine's military defeat—and its possible consequences for Europe—far more seriously in the face of shifting American priorities. The most recent European summit on Ukraine's situation has already resulted in a “coalition of the willing” which, at a minimum, can provide financial support and boost Ukrainian defense.

Ukrainians, meanwhile, after experiencing prolonged disruptions in arms and ammunition supplies, have rapidly developed their own military industry, ranging from the domestic production of improved small arms to various aerial, terrestrial, and naval drones, armored and armed vehicles. While still not sufficient in quantity to fully replace U.S. supplies, particularly for air defense, this development is enough to continue fighting in a more technologically advanced manner. Notably,

according to a recent [report](#) from the reputable defense think tank RUSI, “tactical UAVs currently account for 60–70% of damaged and destroyed Russian systems.” The same applies to personnel losses in the Russian army. Various [reports](#) indicate that Ukraine currently produces between one and two million drones per year, meaning that the disruption of U.S. military supplies will not necessarily result in an immediate cessation of hostilities.

This development translates into a race-against-time scenario where it is unclear whether or not America's changing attitude will expedite peace or prove fundamentally problematic for the Trump administration.

Is Russia Up for Grabs?

The sudden change of heart toward the war in Ukraine and U.S. foreign policies in general, demands some rational explanation.

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east, mainly to China and India, under significantly discounted purchase agreements.

This shift in trade has pushed Russia further into China's orbit, making China its dominant trading partner. However, the so-called "partnership" is merely a soundbite; in reality, Russia's dependence on China has drastically increased over the past three years. Without Chinese electronic components and consumer products, Russia's ability to produce more advanced weaponry than Soviet-era designs would be severely limited. In return, Russia has become little more than a raw-material appendage to China. This growing dependence and the further rapprochement between China and Russia could pose serious challenges for the Western world, especially the U.S..

Under these circumstances, one can hypothetically consider the possibility of a special deal between the U.S. and Russia—one that convinces Russia to turn back to the West, secure its own version of a "minerals deal," and provide more American access to Russia's wealth in exchange for lifting political and economic sanctions as well as re-opening America for Russian oligarchs to invest or vacation. Naturally, for such a "restart" of relations, the war in Ukraine would need to end as soon as possible with details of a possible ceasefire appearing negligible in the pursuit of greater strategic goals.

Signs supporting this scenario have begun to emerge. The Trump administration's new policies emphasize changing rhetoric toward Russia—manifesting almost daily, but most significantly in the recent [UN resolution](#) on Ukraine and the G7 meeting [communiqué](#), which avoided calling Russia an aggressor. The Russian leadership has [declared](#) its interest in a minerals deal with the U.S. and President Putin has [instructed](#) a designated state-owned bank to collaborate with Elon Musk, among other developments.

Crisis of Alliances?

JD Vance's scandalous speech at the Munich Security Conference clearly stated that the current U.S. leadership does not see today's Europe as an ally when it comes to fundamental values. In Vance's (and presumably others') opinion, Europe is infected with the same "diseases" that the American administration is fighting—namely, "woke/DEI/identity policies, uncontrolled immigration, and overblown bureaucracy." If European leaders endorse these "diseases," they are no longer considered allies. Vance's comments that Europeans do not even have battle-proven forces to support Ukraine were quickly labeled as "disrespectful" by British and French politicians. All signs suggest that the current American administration no longer considers Europeans valuable or capable allies.

Canada and Mexico—America's two closest (and only) immediate neighbors—share the same fate. They have found themselves in renewed economic conflict with their major trading partner due to freshly imposed (and for now suspended) 25% tariffs on exported goods.

One might assume that American allies in the Middle East would avoid confrontation with these new policies, but the proposal to resettle Gaza's population and build a "Riviera" there is at odds with the Arab leaders' alternative plan for reconstruction, backed by USD 53 billion in pledged funds. It is also hard to imagine that Türkiye would be either excited about or supportive of the "Riviera Gaza" project.

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These realities leave little optimism—if any—about the sustainability of the world order which was

considered a given merely months ago. If China is the designated or real foe, the value of trusted alliances should increase, not diminish. Unfortunately, we observe the opposite, and history suggests that such scenarios have grim outcomes. The growing sentiment of replacing “God Save America” with “God Save Us From America” cannot bode well for world peace, even if attempts are made to justify it through fears of rising challenges

from China. If “America First” means resuscitating Russia in the name of Chinese threats and putting “Kremlin First”, the European and, for that matter, global security order, as we know it might collapse. As Benjamin Franklin famously said after signing the Declaration of Independence: “We must all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately” ■