

New Leaders, New Worlds: How 2025's Political Shifts Could Rewrite the Global Order

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Introduction

The world in 2025 has undergone significant transformations characterized by substantial shifts in political leadership, escalating geopolitical tensions, and the resurgence of economic protectionism. This year has witnessed drastic changes in governance across several key nations, leading to renewed hostilities and a reconfiguration of international alliances. The global economic landscape has also been reshaped by the imposition of new tariffs, reinforcing trade barriers that further complicate international commerce. Additionally, the continuation of longstanding conflicts, coupled with the resurgence of regional disputes, has contributed to an increasingly volatile global order. As we navigate through these complex geopolitical dynamics, it becomes evident that 2025 is a year defined by intense competition, strategic realignments, and heightened uncertainty.

From the reelection of Donald Trump in the United States to the renewed conflict in the Congo, the international arena is witnessing a period marked by political and economic turbulence. These developments underscore the necessity of closely analyzing the prevailing political trends that are shaping the course of global events. Understanding these trends is crucial for anticipating future challenges and mitigating potential risks. By examining the various political, economic, and security-related shifts taking place, policymakers, analysts, and stakeholders can work toward proactive solutions that address emerging threats and maintain stability in an increasingly fragmented world. In such an environment, foresight and strategic planning become essential tools in navigating the uncertainties that define the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

Trump, Tariffs, and Trade

The re-election of Trump as the 47th U.S. President has caused the entire international community to reassess their relationship and partnerships with the U.S. Given the policy actions he took during his previous tenure; the international community can't be blamed for being too cautious in dealing

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with the current U.S. administration.² Trump's last administration saw a plethora of policy decisions that not only undermined their global image but were counterproductive in trying to illustrate the practicality of the US as a major partner.³ Trump administration's policies have largely remained the same. Not only have isolationism and protectionist economic policies remained the centerpiece of their political agenda, but so has the belief that they can carry out such agendas with inexperienced but loyal policymakers. This is an all too familiar picture that the world has already seen during his first term as president.



Source: ABC News

During his first two weeks in office, Trump signed around 50 executive orders concerning domestic and foreign interests. And, as with his previous administration's executive orders, a huge portion of them have either been retracted, put on halt, or faced legal challenges in courts. One of his administration's many decisions was to impose a 25% tariff on Canada and Mexico and a 10% tariff on all goods imported from China. Even though the tariffs on Canada and Mexico are yet to be implemented, given that they have been provided several ways to avoid the tariffs, such policy decisions to impose trade barriers on historical and geographical allies are seen as not only counter-productive but also self-destructive.

² Toby S. James, "The Effects of Donald Trump," *Policy Studies* 42, no. 5-6 (October 14, 2021): 755–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2021.1980114>.

³ Schake, K. (2020). *Republican Politics and Policy After Trump*. *Survival*, 62(6), 35–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2020.1851082>.



Source: Bloomberg News

It can be seen that this year will be a period of economic and political recalibration for both domestic and international actors. Domestically, the administration's proposed exclusion of government spending from Gross Domestic Product calculations aims to present a more transparent economic picture; however, this move could obscure the true impact of fiscal policies, particularly the Department of Government Efficiency's spending cuts, which may lead to significant federal job layoffs and reduced consumer spending causing the economic growth to slow down even more.⁴ Furthermore, the administration's aggressive tariff strategies, including proposed universal baseline tariffs and specific penalties targeting major trading partners like China, Canada, and Mexico, have raised concerns about escalating trade tensions and potential global trade wars.⁵ These protectionist measures, coupled with restrictive immigration policies, could lead to higher inflation and interest rates, as well as labor shortages in key sectors such as agriculture and construction, thereby slowing economic growth. While the International Monetary Fund has adjusted its U.S. growth forecast upward to 2.7% for 2025, acknowledging strong consumer demand and productivity growth, it also warns of inflationary risks associated with current policies.⁶

⁴ Guardian Associated Press, "US May Exclude Government Spending from GDP, Obscuring Effect of Doge Cuts," The Guardian (The Guardian, March 3, 2025), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/03/trump-government-spending-gdp-doge>.

⁵ Al Jazeera, "Trump Hits Canada, Mexico, China with High Tariffs as Trade War Intensifies," Al Jazeera, March 4, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/4/trump-hits-canada-mexico-china-with-high-tariffs-as-trade-war-intensifies>.

⁶ International Monetary Fund, "WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK UPDATE - Global Growth: Divergent and Uncertain," *Www.imf.org* (IMF, January 2025),



Source: CNN

A significant point of contention remains former President Donald Trump's commitment to reducing the United States' involvement in global conflicts, advocating for a diminished role in multipolar political engagements rather than maintaining a position of global hegemony. This policy was presented as a means to curb excessive government expenditure on foreign affairs, prioritizing domestic interests instead.⁷ However, Trump's rhetoric regarding the implementation of this strategy has been widely criticized. His public discourse has been marked by hostility, particularly in his characterization of China as a principal global antagonist.⁸ Additionally, he has refrained from explicitly condemning Russian President Vladimir Putin as the aggressor in the Russia-Ukraine conflict⁹ and has demonstrated unwavering support for Israel, endorsing policies that many view as facilitating the forced displacement of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, his interactions with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have been

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2025/01/17/world-economic-outlook-update-january-2025>.

⁷ ibid

⁸ Matthew Hill and Steven Hurst, "The Trump Presidency: Continuity and Change in US Foreign Policy," *Global Affairs* 6, no. 1 (March 11, 2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2020.1726788>.

⁹ ABC News, "Trump Refuses to Call Putin a Dictator," YouTube (ABC News, February 25, 2025), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVr7iuce_Ak.

characterized by an unnecessarily confrontational approach.¹⁰ Most experts assert that under Trump's leadership, the United States would likely adopt a more restrained global presence underpinned by explicitly transactional relationships with all states, including longstanding allies.

A Repeat of Europe's Past? The Steady Rise of European Right-wing Populism

Cultural anxieties, economic insecurity, and the decline of centrist parties drive the resurgence of right-wing populism in 2025. A growing sense of cultural displacement has led many European voters to support populist leaders who frame multiculturalism and globalization as threats to national identity. Social media has further amplified nationalist rhetoric, allowing anti-immigration narratives to gain traction among disillusioned voters. Economic instability, particularly among working-class populations, has also been strategically leveraged through welfare chauvinism, reinforcing opposition to immigration and EU integration. As traditional centrist parties struggle to maintain credibility, nationalist movements such as the "Patriots for Europe" coalition have consolidated their influence, reshaping European political landscapes and challenging the EU's institutional stability.¹¹ The 2024 European Parliament elections further cemented this shift, with right-wing populist parties making unprecedented gains. The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and Identity and Democracy (ID) groups are projected to hold 25% of parliamentary seats, surpassing traditional centrist groups such as the European People's Party (EPP) and Socialists & Democrats (S&D) for the first time.¹² The ECR alone is expected to gain 18 additional seats, while Hungary's Fidesz party, with 14 seats, may join them, further solidifying their position.¹³ Anti-European populists dominated polls in nine EU member states, including Austria, France, Italy, and Hungary, and ranked second or third in another nine countries, such as Germany, Sweden, and Portugal.

¹⁰ BBC, "Trump Calls Zelensky a 'Dictator' as He Hits Back at 'Disinformation' Criticism," *BBC News*, February 19, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/c62e2158mkpt?post=asset%3A2f59b312-664f-4a0c-b1ec-4df30abdc659#post>.

¹¹ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, "Shifts in the European Political Landscape," Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), 2024, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/topics/dossiers/european-elections-2024-and-the-eus-next-strategic-agenda/shifts-in-the-european-political-landscape>.

¹² Kevin Cunningham et al., "A Sharp Right Turn: A Forecast for the 2024 European Parliament Elections," ECFR, January 23, 2024, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/a-sharp-right-turn-a-forecast-for-the-2024-european-parliament-elections/>.

¹³ *ibid*



Source: Politico

The rise of right-wing populist parties has significantly altered national and regional politics across Europe. In Western Europe, Marine Le Pen's National Rally and Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy have transitioned from fringe movements to mainstream governance.¹⁴ In Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary's Fidesz party and Poland's Law and Justice Party continue to institutionalize nationalist policies through media control and judicial reforms.¹⁵ In Northern Europe, the Sweden Democrats have gained prominence by capitalizing on public anxieties about immigration and crime.¹⁶ This political shift threatens EU cohesion, leading to potential legislative gridlock and weakening collective responses to global challenges such as Russian expansionism. Additionally, concerns over democratic backsliding have intensified, particularly in states where right-wing populists have gained control over judicial and media institutions, further complicating Europe's geopolitical landscape.

¹⁴ Necva Tastan Sevinc, "2025: Will the Far Right Break through Europe's 'Cordon Sanitaire'?", Aa.com.tr (Anadolu Agency, 2025), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/2025-will-the-far-right-break-through-europe-s-cordon-sanitaire-/3438061>.

¹⁵ Laura Silver, "Populists in Europe – Especially Those on the Right – Have Increased Their Vote Shares in Recent Elections," www.pewresearch.org (Pew Research Center, October 6, 2022), <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/10/06/populists-in-europe-especially-those-on-the-right-have-increased-their-vote-shares-in-recent-elections/>.

¹⁶ Manuel Müller, "European Parliament Seat Projection: 'Patriots' Lose Ground, Left and Greens Make Gains," Foederalist.eu (Der (europäische) Föderalist, January 30, 2025), <https://www.foederalist.eu/2025/01/ep-seat-projection-january-2025.html>.

Conflict in Congo Continues

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is standing at a critical juncture, where significant economic potential is overshadowed by persistent instability and political uncertainty. With a projected GDP growth rate of 5.7%, largely fueled by a mining sector that used to contribute nearly 30% of public revenue, the country appears poised for mixed economic expansion.¹⁷



Image: Djaffar Sabiti/REUTERS

Rising global demand for copper, cobalt, gold, and lithium, along with increased foreign investment, is expected to sustain this momentum, while large-scale infrastructure initiatives such as the Inga hydropower project and the Lobito corridor, which strengthens trade connections with Angola and Zambia, offer further avenues for development. Private consumption is also expected to rebound as inflation declines to an estimated 6%, accompanied by lower interest rates.¹⁸ However, the informal nature of the economy continues to limit the effectiveness of monetary policies, while endemic insecurity in the eastern provinces—exacerbated by ongoing clashes with armed rebel groups such as M23—poses a formidable threat to investor confidence and economic stability. The already fragile relationship with Rwanda has deteriorated further, with accusations of Rwandan support for M23 escalating regional tensions and compounding security risks.¹⁹

¹⁷ Emiliano Tossou , “DRC: Mining Will Support GDP Growth of 5.7% in 2025 (Budget),” Ecofin Agency, 2024, <https://www.ecofinagency.com/mining/1110-46006-drc-mining-will-support-gdp-growth-of-5-7-in-2025-budget>.

¹⁸ World Bank, “Democratic Republic of Congo Overview,” World Bank (World Bank Group, October 18, 2024), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>.

¹⁹ *ibid*



Source: International Crisis Group

Despite these economic prospects, political fragility and a worsening humanitarian crisis cast a long shadow over the DRC's future. The re-election of President Félix Tshisekedi in December 2023 has failed to consolidate political stability, as governance challenges, including corruption, weak state institutions, and an unpredictable parliamentary landscape, continue to undermine effective policymaking.²⁰ Efforts to implement structural reforms remain hampered by the entrenched insecurity in the east, where more than 8.4 million people are internally displaced, and over a million have sought refuge in neighboring countries, deepening an already dire humanitarian situation.²¹ The capture of Goma by the M23 rebel group, a Tutsi-led faction reportedly supported by Rwanda, has further exacerbated regional tensions, reigniting ethnic divisions and intensifying hostilities between rebels and government forces. Analysts highlight that M23's recent offensive differs from previous attacks due to alleged Rwandan logistical and operational support. Despite Rwanda's denials, UN agencies have documented the presence of Rwandan troops in DRC territory, raising concerns over Kigali's growing influence in the conflict.²² Experts suggest that Rwanda's backing of M23 is driven by strategic economic interests,

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Humanitarian Action, "Democratic Republic of the Congo (RRP) | Humanitarian Action," [Humanitarianaction.info](https://humanitarianaction.info/document/global-humanitarian-overview-2025/article/democratic-republic-congo-rrp-1), December 4, 2024, <https://humanitarianaction.info/document/global-humanitarian-overview-2025/article/democratic-republic-congo-rrp-1>.

²² Ian Wafula, "DR Congo Fighting: The Evidence That Shows Rwanda Is Backing M23 Rebels," *BBC*, January 29, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgyz11mlkvo>.

particularly the control of the region's vast mineral wealth, including gold, coltan, and tungsten.²³ M23's territorial gains enable them to tax mining operations, generating substantial revenue that strengthens their insurgency and complicates efforts to stabilize the region. The geopolitical stakes are further heightened by intensifying competition between Western powers and China over the DRC's vast mineral wealth, with external actors seeking influence in the country's resource-driven economy. While regional economic integration projects such as the Lobito corridor present opportunities for trade and growth, ongoing violence threatens to spill across borders, destabilizing Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania.

Relief in South America: Argentina's financial stability comes at a cost

The election of Javier Milei's government and his "chainsaw" approach to slashing public spending alongside his economic policies have led to mixed economic consequences. Poverty has reached 53 percent in the last year compared to the longstanding 25.9 percent of the previous year.²⁴ People with stable income and higher education are now going into poverty, as the cut in public spending has resulted in subsidies being removed, which many people depended on. Yet, Argentina's uncontrollable inflation required such strict measures to be imposed by the government. Over the past years, Argentina has grappled with severe economic instability marked by hyperinflation, currency devaluation, and fluctuating foreign direct investment (FDI). In 2023, the nation experienced a staggering inflation rate of 211.4%, primarily driven by pre-election spending and a currency collapse that saw the peso plummet to 360 ARS/USD after a 54% devaluation. Although fiscal tightening in 2024 managed to lower inflation to 117.8%, structural economic weaknesses persisted, and the peso further depreciated to 970 ARS/USD by the end of the year.²⁵ FDI, which peaked at USD 7,284 million in Q4-2023 due to strong debt inflows and reinvestment, witnessed a sharp decline in 2024, dropping by 62% to USD 2,385 million in Q2.²⁶ These economic fluctuations were exacerbated by political reforms, including deregulation

²³ Sonia Rolley and Felix Njini, "M23 Rebels in Goma: Gains to Boost Illicit Mineral Trade through Rwanda, Analysts Say," *Reuters*, January 28, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/congo-rebel-gains-boost-illicit-mineral-trade-through-rwanda-analysts-say-2025-01-28/>.

²⁴ Josefina Salomon, "A Year into Javier Milei's Presidency, Argentina's Poverty Hits a New High," *www.aljazeera.com* (Al Jazeera, December 7, 2024), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2024/12/7/a-year-into-javier-mileis-presidency-argentinas-poverty-hits-a-new-high>.

²⁵ Financial Express, "Argentina 2025: Steering through Transformation with Cautious Optimism," *Financialexpress.com* (Financial Express, February 20, 2025), <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/argentina-2025-steering-through-transformation-with-cautious-optimism/3754359/>.

²⁶ *ibid*

measures under President Javier Milei, who introduced the RIGI regime in July 2024, offering 30-year fiscal guarantees, reduced corporate taxes, and incentives for large-scale investments in mining, energy, and agribusiness.²⁷ However, challenges such as lingering foreign exchange restrictions, inflationary pressures, and political resistance continued to hinder economic stability.



Source: CNN

Looking ahead to 2025, Argentina is poised for a cautious yet determined economic recovery, with real GDP expected to grow by 5% and inflation forecasted to drop to 25.9% due to strict fiscal discipline and monetary reforms. President Milei's administration aims to stabilize the economy through aggressive budgetary tightening, including significant public sector downsizing and further deregulation to enhance business confidence.²⁸ The government's economic strategy includes easing capital controls to attract foreign investors, expanding trade partnerships—particularly with the United States—and negotiating debt relief with the IMF. On the social front, targeted subsidies and salary adjustments are expected to support the recovering middle class. However, risks remain, particularly due to high inflation levels, persistent currency volatility, and political opposition, including controversies surrounding the failed \$Libra cryptocurrency.²⁹ While

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ Isabel Debre, "How Javier Milei's Shock Measures Are Reshaping Argentina's Economy," *www.apnews.com* (AP News, December 10, 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/argentina-milei-trump-musk-default-economy-inflation-libertarian-18efe55d81df459792a038ea9e321800>.

²⁹ Jack Nicas and David Yaffe-Bellany, "Argentina's Crypto Scandal Swindled Thousands. What Did Javier Milei Know?," *The New York Times*, February 28, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/28/world/americas/argentina-crypto-scandal-president.html>

Argentina's reform trajectory indicates a movement towards economic stabilization, the success of these policies will depend on their effective implementation and broader global economic conditions.

Conclusion

The global political and economic landscape of 2025 is defined by significant realignments, rising protectionism, and the resurgence of ideological divides. The re-election of Donald Trump has reinforced isolationist and transactional foreign policies, reshaping international alliances and trade relations. In Europe, the steady rise of right-wing populism has altered the balance of power, challenging the stability of the European Union and fostering nationalist policies that may hinder regional cooperation. Meanwhile, the Democratic Republic of Congo continues to struggle with economic potential overshadowed by persistent conflict and geopolitical tensions, complicating its path toward sustainable development. In contrast, Argentina's efforts to stabilize its economy under President Javier Milei have yielded mixed results, highlighting the complexities of economic reform in politically volatile environments.

As the world navigates these transformative shifts, it becomes increasingly evident that geopolitical stability remains fragile, requiring proactive and strategic engagement from both national and international actors. The interplay between economic policies, security concerns, and ideological movements will shape the trajectory of global affairs in the coming years. To mitigate risks and foster resilience, policymakers must adopt a balanced approach that prioritizes diplomacy, economic cooperation, and inclusive governance. In an era of heightened uncertainty, adaptability and foresight will be critical in ensuring sustainable and stable global progress.