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The World on Fire: The Role of Trumpism in Global Conflict

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Abstract

Trumpism marks a crucial transformation in the power dynamics of contemporary international politics. Emerging as a defining force, Trumpism rooted in unilateralism, selective intervention and interest-driven engagement has profoundly reshaped the strategic directions of the United States foreign policy. The article examines how Trumpism has replaced multilateral consensus with transactional diplomacy and pragmatic realism. Employing a qualitative research design within the theoretical framework of offensive realism, the research examines three critical conflicts of contemporary era: The Russian-Ukraine War, The Gaza Conflict and the 2025 India-Pakistan escalation. The findings reveal that Trumpism advances a strategic rationale centered on power maximization and national self-interest rather than normative diplomacy and collective security. The insights carry significant implications for global peace, the erosion of multilateralism and the future of international order.

Keywords: Trumpism, Unilateralism, National interest, US foreign policy, Transactional diplomacy

Introduction

The global landscape is undergoing a profound transformation which has increased geopolitical instability, military escalation and the weakening of multilateralism (Fukuyama, 2020). At the heart of this shift lies Trumpism, an unconventional and significant departure from traditional US foreign policy (Kagan, 2017). Trumpism is associated with the political rise of Donald J. Trump, the 45th and now 47th President of the United States, best described as populist-nationalist with realist inclinations (Mearsheimer, 2019). Trumpism is a unique manifestation

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of right-wing populism, combining nationalism, protectionism and anti-globalization thus redefining the traditional governance structure and political priorities of the United States (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). This reorientation under Trumpism has not only affected America's global stance but also reshaped the trajectory of major international conflicts from Eastern Europe to South Asia and the Middle East (Stokes, 2020).

Unlike previous administrations that supported America's role as a global peacekeeper, Trumpism prioritizes isolationism, selective intervention, unilateral action and diplomacy only when it serves strategic interests (Ikenberry, 2018). This shift raises critical questions about the future of US leadership in an increasingly multipolar world order (Zakaria, 2020). Trump is implementing a new doctrine of conditional engagement, where America should engage only when it provides national tangible benefits (Haass, 2020) moving away from moral responsibility toward power-centric politics (Walt, 2019). From the Russia-Ukraine war 2022, to the 2023 Gaza crisis and the analysis of the India-Pakistan dimension employs a hypothetical scenario for 2025, based on extrapolations from Trump's first-term policies and stated objectives, to explore the potential trajectory of his doctrine. (Kaplan, 2022). Trumpism influences the US role in global conflict and replaces traditional multilateral diplomacy with transactional interest-driven engagement (Jervis, 2021). Rather than resolving conflict through global consensus, Trumpism has redefined American engagement through the lens of interest-based lens where influence is exerted not through institutions but by power and control (Posen, 2020).

Trumpism's impact on ongoing global conflicts have proven to be much more complex and enduring. Unlike traditional US foreign policy approaches, Trump's administration has introduced isolationism, transactional approach and selective mediation that often-escalated tension rather than containing them. Global conflicts like the Russian Ukraine conflict, the Gaza crisis and the 2025 India Pakistan escalation have not only exposed the true nature of Trumpism but also revealed its potential to deepen instability and undermine the global peacekeeping framework. The research seeks to examine the influence of Trump policies on escalation and trajectory of major global conflict.

Understanding Trumpism

Trumpism functions within a realist framework, advocating for a strong state that pursues its national interest without being bound to any international limitation or commitments (Gray, 2021). To deeply understand Trumpism, it is essential to go beyond viewing it as merely a product of Donald Trump's presidency. While Trump became the figurehead of this movement, its ideological roots run far deeper in American political history (Albright, 2022). Trumpism is not just a set of ideas, it is a governing philosophy that reshaped America's engagement with the world.

❖ Isolationism

Isolationism is a foreign policy practice in which a state avoids political engagement, military alliances and involvement in the internal affairs or conflicts of other states; instead, it focuses on its own development and security (Mastanduno, 2021). Isolationism is one of the core features of Trumpism. Trump's isolationism does not advocate for total disengagement but rather a selective interventionism rooted in a strict cost benefit analysis (Daalder, 2020). His isolationist philosophy revolves around the belief that the United States should only engage globally when its national interests are directly served (Kaplan, 2021).

❖ Unilateralism

Unilateralism refers to a state's decision to act independently on the international stage without coordinating with other powers. Under Trump's leadership, US foreign policy underwent a significant shift towards unilateralism. This approach involves making foreign policy choices and taking actions that are solely based on national interest. Trump's administration acts independently and often ignores multilateral agreements, international organization or traditional allies (Sestanovich, 2020). The approach of unilateralism is concerning in the light of recent conflicts that require collective actions and multilateral diplomacy. Such a stance undermines the traditional mechanism of global conflict resolution and signals a retreat from US leadership in international diplomacy (Drezner, 2020). Trumpism reframes diplomacy as a tool of dominance rather than cooperation, this posture has diminished US influence and credibility in navigating complex global conflicts (Jervis, 2021).

- **With Great Powers comes Selective Responsibility**

Another fundamental essence of Trumpism is the rejection of a prominent constructive discourse of international relations that "With great powers comes great responsibility". This concept has been pivotal in influencing the actions of the United States (Kagan, 2019). Traditionally, the United States advocated for global institutions, peacekeeping effort, and development assistance because of the belief that its superpower status comes with a moral and strategic responsibility (Ikenberry, 2018). However, within Trump's doctrine the belief is "if a nation possesses great power, especially unmatched power like the United States, it is not required to act in the interest of others" (Jervis, 2021). Trump defines power as a license to prioritize national interest over collective global responsibility (Kupchan, 2020).

This research holds significant importance in the field of international relations, global conflict studies and American foreign policy. The article investigates a pivotal shift in US foreign policy under Trumpism, a transformation that has directly impacted global stability diplomatic dynamics. It examines Trumpism not as an ideological framework but also as a strategic doctrine, offering a deeper understanding of how US foreign policy engagement under Donald Trump has disrupted the global order. In an era marked by intensifying crises like the Russian Ukraine war, the Gaza conflict and the India Pakistan 2025 escalation, this research explains how Trumpism's interest-driven selective diplomacy has modified the international security environment. By focusing on three of the most volatile and high-stakes conflicts of the 21st century, the study offers timely insight into current geopolitical dynamics and valuable guidance for policymakers, and academics scholars

Methodology

The research employs qualitative methodology to illustrate the potential implications of a second-term Trump doctrine, we analyze a hypothetical escalation scenario of global conflicts, like the Russian Ukraine war, the Gaza Conflict and the India-Pakistan 2025 crises. The research utilizes discourse analysis, case studies, and document analysis to investigate Trump's foreign policy rhetoric and decision-making and strategic behaviour. Data is retrieved from both primary and secondary sources for comprehensive evaluation. The primary sources include official Presidential speeches, policy documents, treaties, official White House

communications, and social media statements. The secondary source incorporates academic books, international relations journals, academic articles, research thesis, media reports, expert analysis, think tanks report, opinion pieces and news coverage.

Limitations

This research acknowledges certain limitations. First, the research covers the impact of Trumpism across three distinct global conflicts that may have restricted the depth of analysis within each individual case study. While the research suggests that Trumpism may have shaped conflict dynamics. However, evidence to this trend linked solely to Trumpism is limited due to the complex and multilateral nature of international politics. Additionally, the research may have underrepresented alternative perspectives such as Abraham Accords, as a diplomatic tool that opened new channels for regional normalization and stability in the Middle East.

Review of the Literature

The article "Hegemony, the United States, and The World" asserts that great powers are not inherently bound to any ideology or norms, instead they adopt those that align with their strategic interest. According to the article's claim, states abandon ideals when they no longer serve their interest. Similarly, Trump rejects multilateralism and embraces unilateral war posture because it serves his interest (The Geostrata, 2022). Bruce Wolphe, a Senior Fellow in the United States Studies Center at the University of Sydney, in his book "Trump's Australia: How Trumpism changed Australia and the Shocking Consequences for US of a Second Term", argues that when he interviewed some senior officials from both the US and Australia, they noted that they had never encountered a president like Trump (Wolphe, 2023).

Brain Osgood examines Trump's Middle East strategy in his article "What have Trump Administration nominees said about Israel and its wars?". Trump during his first term recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and relocated the US embassy there. Pro-Israeli stance is historically common among US politicians. He criticised Former President Joe Biden and Former Vice President Kamala Harris for their policies towards the Middle East (Osgood, 2024). Sumanti Sen argues that Trump said that he would "fix the problem they have created and stop the destruction and suffering in Lebanon. I want to see the Middle East return to real peace" (Sen,2024).

These statements suggest Trump's intention of resolving problems in the Middle East.

Alice Speri in her article "Can Trump Put "America First and also make peace in the Middle East" examines Trump's legacy on the Gaza war. The author contends that Trump's unambiguous alignment with the Israeli government and normalizing relations through the Abraham Accords, compromised America's image as a neutral peace mediator. Parsi argues that Trump's rejection of balanced diplomacy and strengthening alliances with authoritarian leaders reduces the United States ability to mediate or resolve the recurring violence in the Gaza Conflict (Speri, 2025).

Dr. Muhemmad Akraam Zaheer in his article "Trump's Approach to Global Conflict" highlights how Trump's second term foreign policy is similar to his first term pattern of disengagement from multilateral crisis response mechanisms. Trumpism applies a realist logic that rejects moral leadership thus advocating for power-based calculations and unilateral strategies (Zaheer, 2025). Amitav Acharya in his article "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of Complex World Order", argues that Trumpism represents not just a shift in US behavior but a structural transformation in world politics. According to him, Trump is accelerating the transition to a multipolar order where regional powers will manage their conflict independently (Acharya, 2017).

While Zaheer and Acharya see Trump's actions as part of a coherent realism or structural plan, other scholars view his foreign policy as impulsive and unpredictable. Walt, for instance, argues that Trump lacked a clear strategic plan and that his unpredictable decision-making regularly endangered long-term American goals (Walt, 2020). Comparing Wolphe's research on broken alliances, Osgood and Speri's analysis of Trump's Middle East policies, and Acharya's concept of multipolarity reveals that scholars have different viewpoints on the geopolitical effects of Trumpism, ranging from alliance uncertainty to systemic change and regional instability.

With the emergence of Trumpism, scholars have extensively analyzed Trump's foreign policy strategies and their impact on the world. While this literature provides valuable insights, a systematic, theory-driven comparative analysis of Trumpism's impact across multiple conflict zones—particularly one that incorporates future scenarios to test its logical conclusions— remains

underdeveloped. Most literature regard Trumpism as a temporary political phenomenon or only highlight its domestic populist appeal paying limited attention to coherent strategic framework and its broader impact on US behavior during international crises. This research seeks to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive, theory driven analysis of Trumpism's strategic application across three different conflict zones.

Theoretical framework

- **Offensive Realism**

Offensive realism is a structural theory to international relations rooted in a broader framework of realist school of thoughts. The theory was developed by an American political scientist and international relations scholar "John Joseph Mearsheimer". In 2001, John Mearsheimer introduced offensive realism in his book "The Tragedy of Great Powers". (Steinsson, 2014). According to Mearsheimer, states inherently seek power which is their ultimate goal, in order to achieve dominance. Mearshiermer examines acquisition of unlimited power as a primary objective of states. As in an anarchical world, states must ensure their survival, maximum power minimizes vulnerability to threats and guarantees their security. (Mearsheimer, 2001).

- **Neo Classical Realism**

By linking systemic forces to domestic behavior, neoclassical realism expands on offensive realism's explanation of Trump's power struggle. It argues that the anarchical structure of international relations influences a state's behavior, leader's ideologies and domestic political doctrine determines how the state will respond on the international stage. Thus, the end of unipolarity and rise of the multipolar world influenced Trump's nationalist ideology to adopt unilateralism and selective intervention.

- **The Strategic Doctrine of Trumpism**

Trump's foreign policy closely aligns with the fundamental principles of offensive realism, which views international relations as anarchic and demands that states prioritize survival through power maximization, military capability and strategic autonomy (Mearsheimer, 2001). Trump's non-intervention in the Gaza conflict and delayed mediation in Ukraine and South Asia are consistent with this view: intervene only when interest is served not out of moral obligation (Posen, 2020). Trump's global policy is based on a zero-sum logic, where the development of one

state is considered as a direct loss for the United States (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016). Trump's limited engagement and initial refusal to mediate in the India Pakistan 2025 conflict showed his disdain for entangling diplomacy instead of acting as a global arbitrator (Haass, 2020). The United States under Trump avoided involvement unless it directly served America's strategic interest (Walt, 2019). Thus, neoclassical realism bridges the gap between structure and agency, demonstrating how systemic power dynamics and domestic populism contributed to Trump's unique style of transactional diplomacy.

Trump's Impact on the Russia–Ukraine War

The roots of the Russian Ukraine war lie in the long-standing geopolitical tensions between Moscow and Kyiv. The war began in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea following a pro-Russian separatist movement in Ukraine. Over the next several years Russia supported the movement in eastern Ukraine leading to a low intensity war in Donbas region. In February 2022 tension escalated, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine making it the largest military confrontation in Europe since World War II (Sanger, 2023). The war quickly became a symbol of authoritarian expansion and one of the defining global conflicts of the 21st century (Kramer, 2023). The conflict drew widespread international condemnation and sparked an unprecedented wave of military and economic support from the West to Ukraine.

- **Trump's Role in Shaping Russian Aggression**

While Donald Trump was not in the White House during the major escalation, his foreign policy stance, personal admiration of Vladimir Putin and opinion regarding NATO during first term had a considerable indirect impact on Russian aggression (Crowley & Sanger, 2023). The seeds of the conflict were planted long before Trump entered into politics but his presidency has shaped the strategic calculation in which Russia escalated the war. There are two interesting arguments about Trump and the Russian-Ukraine war: first is that Trump 1.0 approach to foreign policy laid some groundwork to embolden Russia's aggression and second that Trump 2.0 would either end the war through a bold deal or sacrifice Ukraine sovereignty for geopolitical gains (Rachman, 2024).

❖ Trump's Ambiguous Stance on Ukraine and Russia

While his administration approved lethal assistance to Ukraine including the Javelin anti-tank missiles (Kube, 2018). However, Trump's personal statements often conflicted with official policy. He consistently regularly expressed admiration for Vladimir Putin calling him a "strong leader" (Cranley & Sheth, 2018) and praising him as "smart" (Cranley & Sheth, 2018) for invading Ukraine. Even though the US intelligence has confirmed Russian interference in the 2016 election, Trump consistently downplayed these reports (U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 2020) showing his unwillingness to condemn Russian Aggression (BBC News, 2022). Trump withheld nearly $400 million dollars in military assistance to pressure President Volodymyr Zelensky into opening a domestic political investigation against Joe Biden, suggesting that Ukraine's security was negotiable and subject to US domestic politics (Impeachment Inquiry Report, 2019). This episode sent a message to Moscow that Washington's commitment to the Kremlin is conditional, politically motivated and lacked strategic consistency (Sanger & Haberman, 2019).

❖ Trump and NATO

A key component of Trump's impact was his efforts to weaken NATO, an alliance crucial for countering Russian expansion. (Daalder & Lindsay, 2018). During Trump's first administration, NATO, a 75-year-old security alliance, was at the brink of collapse (Daalder, 2020). NATO has historically been a cornerstone of US global leadership, representing the state's commitment to maintaining peace in Europe and upholding liberal democratic values. However, under Trump's administration this long-standing pillar of US foreign policy came under unprecedented pressure. Throughout his first term, Trump constantly criticises NATO (Hamilton & Meister, 2020), calling it "obsolete", "A bad deal for the US" (Trump, 2018) and labelled the alliance "a financial burden" that disproportionately strained US resources (Crowley, 2020). Trump's stance raised serious concerns about whether the United States would uphold Article 5 (mutual defense clause) of NATO during a crisis. This uncertainty had lasting consequences. Trump's approach weakened alliances unity and encouraged adversarial calculations in Moscow. Analysts argue that Trump's undermining NATO will directly impact Europe's security, increasing the likelihood of conflict. Trump's NATO skepticism may have influenced Putin's perception of Western determination, especially regarding Ukraine.

❖ Isolationism and Strategic Deal-Making

From the start of his second term, Trump has placed himself at the center of the Ukraine debate by repeatedly claiming that he could "end the war in 24 hours" (CNN, 2024), framing the conflict not as a moral disaster but as a diplomatic failure rooted in poor negotiation. In early 2025 his administration stopped military assistance to Ukraine and pressed the Zelensky government into negotiation (Wright, 2017). He also stated that Zelensky "should have prevented the war in the first place" (Skopeliti, 2025) blaming Ukrainian leadership for the war while minimising Russia's role as the aggressor.

❖ Trump's Peace Efforts

In February 2025, Trump's so-called efforts led to initial discussion over the Russian-Ukraine war where an American and Russian delegation met in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The US delegation sought to determine Russia's true commitment to pursue peace (Goldgeier, 2025). The summit highlighted persistent disagreement. Russia rejected the idea of NATO peacekeeping forces and reiterated that NATO's expansion to the east represented a direct threat to Russia's national security. Most Notably, Ukraine was not present in the summit. This led to widespread criticism and concerns that discussions regarding the country's fate were occurring without its involvement (Kagan, 2025). Trump minimized the importance of Ukraine's absence (The Washington Post, 2025). He later warned that "if Ukraine doesn't accept the deal, I'll pass on the negotiation" (Trump, 2025). Trump's broader second term strategy for the Ukraine war appeared to follow a four-point approach:

- Pressure Ukraine to accept peace on unfavorable terms
- Withdraw or reduce US military aid to force adherence
- Reassess or reduce NATO's responsibility
- Pursue reconciliation with Russia to isolate China and implement a divide-and-rule strategy.

❖ Trump's Divide and Rule Strategy

Trump during an interview with the political commentator Tucker Carlson gave his view on Sino-Russian relations. Trump emphasized on the potential danger of a united China and Russia. He declared that "I'm going to have to un-unite them, and I think I can do that" (Porter, 2024). Although his exact strategy is yet unknown, Trump campaign discourse raises the possibility of adopting an approach

comparable to Henry Kissinger's (Secretary of United States From 1973-77) diplomacy during the Cold War (1945-1991) (Gabuev, 2024). Trump may use the same tactic to counter the rising Sino-Russian alliance. Trump will use the traditional divide and rule strategy. Instead of directly challenging both Russia and China at the same time. Trump may be calculated that by fostering relatively close relations with Russia could create an opportunity to isolate China. Successfully creating such a divide would weaken multilateral organizations like BRICS and SCO (Walt, 2019). If this approach goes well it will strengthen US supremacy while weakening its enemies combined power (Brands, 2018).

- **The Future of Global Conflict**

Trump's strategic posture raises serious concerns regarding the future of global conflicts among US allies. For Eastern European allies like Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, this shift has resulted in loss of trust in the US security umbrella and that American security guarantee is declining (Bergmann & Berschinski, 2023). For rivals like China, Trump's strategy may indicate that the US is now prepared to withdraw from critical conflict zones, offering the opportunity for China to invade Taiwan. Ultimately the question is not just whether Trump can end the war, but at what price and whose interest will be prioritized in the process. (Sestanovich, 2020).

Trumpism and the Gaza War

The Gaza conflict is rooted in the long-standing Israel and Palestinian struggle of land sovereignty and identity. This conflict has historically been a critical point of contention in Middle Eastern affairs, shaping regional alliances, international diplomatic effort and global public sentiment (B'Tselem, 2021). In October 2023, Hamas launched a large-scale attack on Israel following tensions in Jerusalem and ongoing blockade. Israel responded with an intense air strike and a grounded ground invasion leading to thousands of casualties and severe destruction in Gaza. Trumpism played an important factor in influencing the war and transforming the political landscape of the conflict. Just like in the case of Ukraine, Trump's first term also arguably laid the groundwork for the present Gaza war (Tibon, 2023). From 2017 to 2021, his administration shifted away from long established US policy that sought to uphold a symbolic balance between Israel and the Palestinians. Instead, Trump adopted a distinctly pro-isreal stance, defunded aid to Palestinian programs and sidelining the two-state solution through the Abraham Accords. For decades the United States played a major role in the Israeli Palestinian conflict. US presidents

supported Israel security while backing Palestinian statehood through the two-state solution framework. However, under Donald Trump this long-standing strategic position was transformed into complete alignment with Israel. The Trump administration abandoned America's role as a mediator and fully aligned itself with the nationalistic vision of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

❖ Abraham Accords and the Marginalization of the Palestinian Cause

In 2017, Trump's government officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and in 2018 the United States embassy was relocated to Jerusalem (BBC, 2017). This strategy was a provocative step that effectively eliminated Jerusalem as a negotiation capital for a future Palestinian state. This decision broke the decade long US foreign policy tradition and international consensus. In 2020 the Trump administration broke the Abraham accord, one of the most contentious initiatives of Trump's Middle East policy. The Accord consisted of a series of normalisation agreements between Israel and four nations that included the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan (Johnson, 2020). The Accords made no reference to Gaza occupation or the two-state solution, the very heart of the Israeli Palestinian conflict Historically, Arab states had committed to the Arab league long-standing "Three No's "policy: no peace, no recognition, no negotiation with Israel without resolving the Palestinian crisis. This policy was aimed to maintain a unified stance in support of the Palestinian cause. Trump's administration effectively disrupted this Arab solidarity by providing diplomatic incentives, economic packages and arms deals to Arab states in exchange for recognizing and normalising relations with Israel (Thrall, 2021). This move isolated Palestinian people ideologically by portraying that the Palestinian cause was no longer important in regional diplomacy. The Accords institutionalise a form of geopolitical alignment driven by anti-Iranian sentiments, trade incentives and US strategic calculation through which Israel can normalise its relations with Arab states without making any territorial or policy concession. Palestinians were left without a regional support system and a loss of faith in diplomacy.

❖ Peace Deal or Seeds of War

The Accords marginalized Palestinian aspirations and eliminated the two-state solution from the American diplomatic framework (Thrall, 2021). This move not only weakened Arab solidarity but also intensified Palestinian frustration. In the resulting political vacuum, radicalization increased and Hamas gained increased support among a population that saw diplomacy as a dead end (Lynch, 2025). While

Trump's administration portrayed its strategy as "peace through strength", this move significantly altered the diplomatic landscape and arguably contributed to the Hamas-led attack on Israel in October 2023 (Beauchamp, 2023). Hamas exploited this vacuum by branding itself as the last defender of Jerusalem leading to its renewed rise in popularity and support among this young Palestinian. In 2018 to 2019, his administration withdrew over 20 million in US humanitarian aid and development funding for Palestine triggering a widespread crisis in the health, education and sanitation sectors in Gaza. Over 80% of the Gaza population lies on international assistance without which even the most basic services became inaccessible. This tactic did not weaken Hamas nor did it bring the Palestinian Authority (PA) to the negotiation table; instead it dismissed the civilian population's trust in international mediation and forced an extremist narrative that framed diplomacy as inherently futile.

❖ **Trump 2.0 Middle East Strategy**

During the 2021, tensions in Sheikh Jarrah and Al-Aqsa mosque Trump announced that the US would not intervene as a mediator which left no room for future negotiation. In the eyes of many Palestinian the US had already chosen a side unconditionally. Looking ahead to the second term of Trump, two key scenarios emerge: he may either seek to end the war or will frame the conflict strictly as a counter terrorism initiative against Hamas. Trump has condemned calls for a ceasefire as a sign of weakness and continues to frame the Gaza conflict through a counterterrorism lens, comparing Hamas and Palestinian militants with extremist jihadist groups like ISIS. This narrative will allow the justification of aggressive Israeli military actions that raise humanitarian concerns. His administration has blocked international efforts to the United Nations to investigate war crimes and imposed sanctions on Iran, escalating the risk of regional conflict . During the second term, Trump's strategy regarding Middle East might include:

- Unconditional political and military support for Israel, irrespective of large-scale civilian casualties or global criticism.
- Blocking ceasefire resolution or efforts to hold accountable those responsible for war crimes at the United Nation Security Council or International Court of Justice if it pursues investigation against Israel.
- Re-imposing sanctions on Iran and Iraq due to their support for Hamas and Hezbollah which would increase the risk of regional war.

- Pushing further for normalization deals between Israel and Arab states like expanding the Abraham Accords for more economic benefits and incentives without resolving the Palestinian statehood issue.
- Cut funding to international organizations involved in Gaza relief and post-war reconstruction
- Strengthen a unilateral US foreign policy stance and increase Washington's diplomatic isolationism (favouring Israel only) in Middle East issues.

Such Trump's policy will empower Israel's government and encourage more aggressive military operations and settlement expansions with the assurance of diplomatic US support. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza would worsen significantly and the prospect of realistic diplomatic resolution will become unlikely. If Trump pursues such policy it would have a destabilising effect on the region. His harsh rhetoric against Iran and continued neglectance of the Palestinian suffering will result in expanding Iranian involvement in Gaza and Lebanon through Hamas and Hezbollah. This might lead toward a direct military clash between Iran-backed militias and US-Israeli forces across Syria, Iraq and the Red Sea.

India-Pakistan: A Conflict Decades in the Making

The 2025 India-Pakistan conflict is deeply rooted in a long-standing history of geopolitical tensions, proxy war, and mutual allegation of terrorism with Kashmir serving as the epicenter of this mistrust (Fair, 2020). Since the late 1980s India has accused Pakistan of facilitating a separatist insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, which began with a violent uprising in 1989. New Delhi has consistently asserted that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) provides arms, training and ideological support to militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). India classified these groups as state sponsored terrorist organizations. Islamabad, on the other hand, denies direct involvement, claiming that it offers only diplomatic and moral support for the "freedom struggle" in Kashmir. The narrative of reciprocal blame terrorism has fueled decades of diplomatic failures, border skirmishes and open warfare (Schofield, 2000) .

❖ **The Pahalgam Attack and the Indo-Pakistan Tensions**

On April 22, 2025 a militant group in Indian administered Kashmir carried out a deadly terrorist attack in Pahalgam, a well-known tourist hub in Kashmir. The attack resulted in the death of 26 civilian tourists (Express Tribune, 2025). India immediately blamed the attack on Pakistan based terrorist networks, intelligence

agencies involvement and cross border terrorism (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2025). Indian media widely portrayed the attack as a "Pakistani proxy strike", while Pakistan categorically denied any involvement (Dawn News, 2025). In response India implemented a range of severe diplomatic and economic measures. India suspended the Indus Water Treaty, an agreement signed between India and Pakistan in 1960 that gives water rights to Pakistan from the Indus River. This move threatens water flow to Pakistan which will result in humanitarian and agriculture consequences (Wolf, 2013). Additionally, India closed key border crossings, disrupted trade routes and also expelled Pakistani diplomatic staff reducing the relationship to war time status.

- **Operation Sindoor and the Escalation of the 2025 Indo-Pak Conflict**

On May 7, India launched "Operation Sindoor", a pre-emptive limited duration military strike using precision-guided BrahMos and SCALP-EG missiles in Pakistan administered Azad Kashmir (Strategic Studies Institute, 2025). While New Delhi framed the operation as a counterterrorism response, Islamabad condemned the attack as an act of aggression that resulted in civilian casualties, including the destruction of religious sites and casualties at a local mosque (Al Jazeera, 2025). Pakistan accused India of fabricating terrorist allegations to justify military aggression in Pakistani territory. Pakistan reported over 30 civilian deaths and accused India of violating Pakistani sovereignty and international law (Human Rights Watch, 2025). In response Pakistan initiated operation Bunyan al-Marsus on May 10, launching strikes on Indian military installations at Pathankot, Udhampur and Sirsa air bases (RAND Corporation, 2025). This war was preceded by a tit-for-tat drones and artillery exchange marking the first recorded instance of drone warfare between two nuclear-armed states (Global Security Review, 2025).

Despite the high intensity escalation, both nations agreed to a cease fire by the evening of May 10, following an intensive background diplomatic effort led by Saudi Arabia, China and the United States (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025). The rapid progression from terrorist attack to military escalation to ceasefire within four days underscores how fast South Asia's dynamics could change (IISS, 2025).

- **Delayed Mediation and Strategic Calculation of Ceasefire Diplomacy**

Initially, Trump considered the war as a "regional issue" but then surprised the world by tweeting "after a long night of discussions, both countries have agreed to a ceasefire" (Sridharan, 2025). This statement confused many analysts raising a

critical question: Did Trump genuinely facilitate the ceasefire or simply took the credit for it? If Trump had sincerely intended to mediate, he could have acted at the beginning of the crisis not after a full-blown escalation. So, what was the reason for the delay in mediation? First, the ceasefire was announced only after Pakistan had conducted a retaliatory operation, suggesting that Trump intentionally allowed space for both states to assert their military position before intervening (Berman, 2020). This reflects a realist perspective of state behaviour that premature intervention may unfairly restrain one actor and prolong the conflict especially in an asymmetric warfare. Secondly, Trump dis-engagement created a diplomatic vacuum quickly filled by China and Saudi Arabia. Beijing, with its vested interest in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), had a strong incentive to stabilize the situation (Brands, 2018). This marked a significant shift in South Asia, where peace and stability was no longer a Western responsibility. China's involvement posed a direct challenge to US influence, potentially gaining power and conflict management capital in South Asia (Acharya, 2018). Another possible reason for Trump's delayed mediation may lie in strategic miscalculation. Initially, he may have believed that India backed by US investment, would emerge decisively from the conflict, reinforcing its role as a key counterweight to China that would serve broader American interest in the Indo-Pacific. However, after Pakistan retaliated effectively and the conflict escalated. Trump reconsidered his approach to prevent the conflict from draining the very strategic resources the US had invested in India to contain China, not to be wasted on Pakistan (Sridharan, 2025).

- **Trump's Deal-Making Diplomacy**

Another important aspect of Trump's handling of the 2025 India-Pakistan conflict was his belief that he can resolve the Kashmir issue through economic incentives, particularly trade. During a press interaction at the White House, Trump declared "we are going to do a lot of trade with Pakistan, we're going to do a lot of trade with India. We're negotiating with India right now, we're going to be negotiating with Pakistan soon" (The Economic Times, 2025). This reflects two critical dimensions of Trump's worldview: the belief that economic incentives can substitute for political compromise. His tendency to rely on deal-making logic was a strategic approach similar to that used in the Abraham Accords. Just like the Middle East Trump views a business deal as a solution to the India Pakistan conflict. The Kashmir Conflict is not a commercial dispute, it is a deeply rooted geopolitical issue that cannot be resolved with market-driven deals alone (Mearsheimer, 2001).

❖ Calculated Aggression: US Silence as Strategic License

In 2019, during Trump's first term, India launched an airstrike in Balakot, an illegal violation of the Line of Control since 1971. The Trump administration showed no interest in restraining India and Trump even praised India's "strong leadership" in combating terrorism. Similarly, in 2025 India once again India launched preemptive air strikes under Trump's second term. This pattern is hard to ignore. As a political analyst Cheong Seong-Chang argued that Trump's administration presents an environment conducive to strategic risk-taking it is an opportune time for South Korea to develop a nuclear weapon. In a similar way, Modi's administration may have rationally calculated that US silence would be guaranteed under Trump (Zakaria, 2020). This environment was the result of Trump's isolationist worldview, US-India defense agreements and support for India's article 370 revocation (Osgood, 2024). Trump viewed India as a bulwark against Chinese expansion. In such a geopolitical climate, India could strike Pakistan without fearing American backlash (DeYoung, 2025). As a result, Trumpism has empowered regional powers and transformed US silence into strategic license to attack (Ikenberry, 2018).

❖ The Logic of Trump's Global Doctrine

The insight drawn from these cases reveals that Trumpism frames power as a leverage privileging national gains over systematic stability of the world. A consistent pattern of transactional diplomacy and strategic pragmatics is observed across these conflicts. In each case Trumpism replaced valuable engagement with interest driven calculations, framing diplomacy as a negotiable deal. This ultimately eroded the credibility of the US as a neutral mediator; its conditional aid to Ukraine, support for Israel and calculated silence in the India-Pakistan conflict all reveal a foreign policy guided by leverage. Rational actors like Russia, Israel and India were emboldened to pursue aggressive policies, interpreting Washington's ambiguity as a strategic permission. In all three conflicts, Trump prioritized short term gains over long-term stability, advancing immediate interest at the expense of global peace and stability.

Trump's Calculated Mediation

Trumpism is often linked with isolationism, unilateralism and the erosion of multilateral diplomacy. Trump's wartime behaviour indicates a more strategically opportunistic stance rather than complete disengagement (Washington Post, 2025). His method of addressing global conflict demonstrates not withdrawal, but a

calculated selectivity. During his first term, Trump rejected the role of global mediator, labeling the international crisis as a burden and not worthy of US investment (The Media Line, 2025). However, in his second term, a notable shift is observed, Trump began to show interest in mediation in conflict. This change in strategy does not stem from a sudden liberal or humanitarian inclination. Instead, Trump's mediation is better understood through the realist lens of cost benefit diplomacy, engaging only when it serves American interest (Reuters, 2025). As Winston Churchill said "You can always count on Americans to do the right thing after they have tried everything else". For Trump, diplomacy is not a moral or ethical duty, but a tactical strategy. He preferred to negotiate only after tensions escalated and when the US could dictate the terms. This highlights the fundamental principle of Trumpism: Foreign policy is not about leadership but about strategic advantage. Mediation under Trumpism is not a break from Trumpism, it is the evolution driven by leverage.

Conclusion

Trumpism has emerged not just as a political style but as a strategic doctrine that has fundamentally reshaped America's foreign policy and global order. Characterized by its commitment to unilateralism, non-intervention, and interest-driven diplomacy, Trumpism challenged the post-World War II consensus of multilateralism and moral leadership. Under the banner of "America First", the US has abandoned its traditional role as a stabilizing global force and instead embraced selective engagement. As evident by the Russia-Ukraine war, the Gaza conflict and the 2025 India-Pakistan crisis, Trumpism is changing the very essence of US conflict behaviour. Whether by empowering authoritarian regimes, undermining alliances such as NATO, or abandoning long standing peace mediation framework, Trumpism is consistent with a realist calculation prioritizing national power and strategic advantage. Even where mediation was offered like in the Ukraine War and South Asia, it was driven by geopolitical gains rather than humanitarian concerns. Trumpism rejection of collective responsibility represents not just a tactical shift but a systematic transformation in the global leadership paradigm. In a world increasingly influenced by multipolar tensions and ideological fragmentation, Trumpism continues to shape global affairs, its long-term consequences may define a new era where power replaces principles and interest overshadows diplomacy.

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