

# What does the international community make of Trump's 2024 America first policy?

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How does the 2024 Trump foreign policy vision of “Make America Strong Once Again” resonate in international capitals?

A MARTÍNEZ, HOST:

Three nights down, one to go at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

J D VANCE: I officially accept your nomination to be vice president of the United States of America.

(CHEERING)

MARTÍNEZ: Ohio Senator J.D. Vance criticized President Biden for being a career politician.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

VANCE: For half a century, he's been the champion of every major policy initiative to make America weaker and poorer.

MARTÍNEZ: As opposed to former President Donald Trump, who Vance and other speakers vowed would, quote, "make America strong once again," the theme of the night. So how did Trump's and Vance's foreign policies resonate in foreign capitals? To find out, we're joined by three of our NPR international correspondents, Eyder

Peralta in Mexico City, John Ruwitch in Beijing and Charles Maynes in Moscow. Charles, you're leading off for us here. So how is Moscow viewing the prospect of a second Trump presidency?

CHARLES MAYNES, BYLINE: Well, Russia is formally not taking sides. The Kremlin says Moscow will work with any administration and it's the choice of the American people who they elect as president. That said, Russian president Vladimir Putin has been asked about the race several times and his answers are worth exploring, such as when he was asked point-blank by a Kremlin pool reporter in February, who's better for Russia, Biden or Trump?

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN: (Non-English language spoken).

MAYNES: So as you can hear, Putin says Biden, because, he argued, Biden's more experienced, more predictable and what he called an old-school politician. And he was asked about this again more recently and Putin said, look, everyone thought I was taking a dig at President Biden. But, no, Putin reminded people that Trump's the guy who started this process of imposing massive sanctions on Russia, who backed out of a major nuclear arms deal, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, that Russia was trying to keep - the implication here that this guy Trump is too unpredictable. But Putin added that whoever was in the White House, it didn't much matter. He didn't think U.S.-Russian relations were likely to change much either way.

MARTÍNEZ: Yeah, but yet there's been a lot of talk about a new Trump administration demanding Ukraine enter negotiations with Russia on Russia's terms. So how would that be received in Moscow?

MAYNES: Positively, but I think quietly so. I think that's why you see this slightly more deferential attitude towards Trump and Vance here. Trump says he can end the war in Ukraine. And Putin last month was asked about this and said, well, we'll take this offer seriously. And Vance has been quoted as saying we shouldn't supply any more weapons to Ukraine. And yesterday, we heard from Russia's foreign minister who said, yeah, that's a good idea.

You know, these positions of Trump and Vance clearly align, or certainly overlap, with Russian objectives in Ukraine and Europe. And it looks like Russian officials

are stepping lightly because they don't want to be seen as overly embracing Trump because he is unpredictable and because of the baggage from the 2016 U.S. presidential election, when Russia, rightly or wrongly, was seen as trying to tip the scales in Trump's favor. The feeling here anyway was that U.S.-Russian relations became a political football in domestic American politics, and that continues today.

MARTÍNEZ: John Ruwitch, you're in Beijing. That's where Vance has been quite blunt, saying that he, quote, "does not like China" and that China is the biggest threat to the U.S. So how is this going down in China?

JOHN RUWITCH, BYLINE: Well, the Chinese foreign ministry responded to his threat remark the other day. A foreign ministry spokesman said Beijing opposes making China an issue in U.S. elections and left it at that. You know, Vance is something new for everybody, including China. In fact, we did a quick search on the internet here in Chinese, and apart from that very brief remark, there don't appear to be any other instances of Chinese officials responding to things Vance has said about China.

There are plenty of online comments, of course, because Vance does have strong opinions that he's expressed about China, in many respects aligning with Trump on it. He's accused China of stealing U.S. jobs, and at the RNC last night, of hurting working-class wages. He favors a tough approach with tariffs and pressure. He also introduced legislation this year as a senator to partially block China's access to U.S. financial markets over currency manipulation.

MARTÍNEZ: And, John, how does a Trump presidency propose to handle a dispute between China and Taiwan?

RUWITCH: Well, that's the thorniest issue in U.S.-China relations. The first Trump administration did not have major substantive changes to longstanding U.S. policy on Taiwan. But he did raise previously taboo questions about why America is supporting Taiwan in the first place. And he did it again in a Bloomberg interview that was just published yesterday. He said Taiwan took our microchip industry. He said they should be paying the United States to defend them. And this may be an area where, actually, Trump and Vance may not totally agree. Vance has said that the U.S. needs to prevent a Chinese takeover of Taiwan because of those microchips, because they're absolutely critical to the U.S. economy. I talked with

Wu Xinbo about the Trump-Vance dynamic. He's a professor at Fudan University in Shanghai. Here's what he said.

WU XINBO: (Non-English language spoken).

RUWITCH: So he thinks Vance may be more of a national security hawk than Trump, who he describes as an economic nationalist. Vance wants the U.S. to completely shift focus away from Europe to Asia to counter China. He wants to prevent China from annexing Taiwan. And that's just the kind of policy that Beijing would not be happy about if these guys were elected.

MARTÍNEZ: All right, now we go to Eyder Peralta in Mexico City. Eyder, if we're talking about military action, both Trump and Vance have talked about using U.S. special forces against the drug cartels in Mexico. How seriously does Mexico take that?

EYDER PERALTA, BYLINE: Well, I mean, we shouldn't forget that these two countries have gone to war. I mean, Mexico lost half its territory to the U.S. And over the past year or so, influential Republicans have proposed bombing cartels in Mexico. Recently, J.D. Vance said he would favor declaring cartels foreign terrorist organizations, and that would open the door to military strikes in Mexico.

In the past, the Mexican president has downplayed these threats. He says he's called them electoral games. But he also said that any action like that would be considered an invasion and that there would be an immediate response. It is worth noting that the U.S., Mexico and Canada are the biggest market in the world. Analysts I've spoken to are always quick to point out that the economic relationship is so important between these countries that it acts as a guardrail against any sort of cavalier action.

MARTÍNEZ: Eyder, immigration and the border often dominate the political discussion foreign policy-wise when it comes to the U.S. and Mexico. So how are Mexico and maybe the wider region around Mexico reacting to some of that rhetoric?

PERALTA: I mean, again, Mexico has already dealt with a President Trump, and it mostly went along with the immigration policies that he wanted to put in place. But I do have to say that I heard something different at the RNC last night. The rhetoric on immigration has gotten more severe. We still heard immigrants being

called murderers and rapists - that's Trump's famous line - but yesterday, that was only the beginning. Let's listen to how Peter Navarro, Trump's former trade czar, described immigrants.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

PETER NAVARRO: Murderers and rapists, drug cartels, human traffickers, terrorists, Chinese spies and a whole army of illiterate illegal aliens stealing the jobs of Black, brown and blue-collar Americans.

PERALTA: And, look, study after study has shown that immigrants are actually less likely to commit crimes in the U.S. But what seems notable is that the Republican Party appears to be coalescing around this idea that both immigration and drug trafficking are critical - dire, even - national security issues. And that, of course, could very well be laying the groundwork for more dramatic policy.

MARTÍNEZ: NPR's Eyder Peralta in Mexico City, John Ruwitch in Beijing and Charles Maynes in Moscow. Thanks to all three of you.

PERALTA: Thank you.

MAYNES: Thank you, A.

RUWITCH: You bet.

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