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THE NEW TRUMP EFFECT ON TURKIYE-USA RELATIONS

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Donald Trump, re-elected as the 47th President of the United States (US), has made a swift start to his second term, signing more executive orders in the first 100 hours than any other American president and continuing to implement more and more policy changes. Domestically, issues such as border security, illegal immigration, reducing costs, and ending merit-based hiring have become central topics of discussion. Meanwhile, foreign policy has experienced significant changes, including the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and exits from multilateral partnerships like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

Trump has always seen the US as a global power that needs to regain its dominance on the world stage, and as his second term progresses, these intentions are becoming more concrete. Compared to his first term, Trump's policies are now more assertive, determined, and well-calculated. These policies go beyond being a reaction to international "inequalities"; they are shaping up as a solid plan aimed at establishing a long-term balance of power in line with the "America First" mantra. This approach redefines US foreign policy, its stance on international agreements and partnerships, laying the foundation for more assertive and direct actions. For countries like Türkiye, which have experienced both the benefits and challenges of engaging with the Trump administration, the current question is how to adapt to this more refined and resolute version of Trump's presidency.

This article will compare Trump's foreign policy approach in his first term with the policies he has followed in his second term so far, and attempt to project its implications specifically for Türkiye. In this context, the TTIP Agreement and CAATSA sanctions will be considered as key areas to understand Türkiye's position in its economic and political relations with the US. Türkiye's policies towards these sanctions and the shelving of agreements will be examined through the statements and actions of state officials; the meaning of these decisions for Türkiye and the potential roadmaps for the future will be assessed.

Trump 1.0 vs 2.0

Trump, seen as one of the most marginal presidents in American history due to his methods, statements, and tweets, found the policies of previous administrations to be detrimental to the US and reversed them to enhance America's power. In line with this, he withdrew from several international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and took a threatening stance against international organizations like NATO and the World Trade Organization (WTO). These steps showed

that the rules and institutions maintaining order in the global system were being disregarded by an actor who had created them. This represented a shift in the global order established by the US after World War II. Trump's unpredictable actions raised concerns and warned all nations that they needed to step out of their comfort zones and stand on their own. For example, the historically strong alliance between the US and Europe experienced unprecedented tension during the Trump era, and the transatlantic partnership was more strained than ever. In addition to Trump's rhetoric and actions toward EU

leaders, issues like the cancellation of the TTIP Agreement, increased NATO spending, and trade tariffs formed key points of division.

When comparing Trump's first and second terms, both continuing policies and new strategies stand out. Starting his second term with an ambitious approach, Trump is presenting a clearer, faster, and more decisive profile than in his first term. While his first election was seen as a fluke, the second one is regarded entirely as Trump's success.¹ In the first term, other world leaders who believed that Trump was an anomaly and that things would return to normal once he left office are now faced with his steps showing that he is serious about being taken seriously, and they must accept the reality of Trump.

Trump, initially seen as a madman who made unpredictable and irrational decisions during his first term, has continued his strategy of deterring rivals with the Madman Theory. In his second term, his statements regarding Canada, Greenland, and the Middle East's "Middle Eastern Riviera" project, substantiate that he continues to follow this pattern. He also maintains policies like applying trade tariffs to countries not engaging in fair trade with the US, weakening relations with allies, increasing NATO spending, and tightening immigration policies.

For leaders who have previously observed Trump and his policies, his second term seems to be framed more around reaching agreements based on mutual interests. It is important to note that these agreements

will likely prioritize the interests of the US. Additionally, the term will likely be intense and exhausting, as preparing for the unexpected is a central aspect of dealing with Trump. One of Trump's most characteristic features in foreign policy is that he often appears to lack a strategy. This unpredictability makes it difficult for rivals to anticipate his next move and leaves allies unprepared for various outcomes, ensuring that nothing is taken for granted.

In this period, where the global power of the US is beginning to erode and the transition to a multipolar world order is accelerating, Trump is trying to clarify the US's position by increasing pressure on other countries. Trump's threatening rhetoric is a key component of his strategy to enhance US deterrence. While this strategy has been successful in influencing his supporters and citizens, and may yield short-term gains, its long-term consequences could differ dramatically for US rivals, allies, and the international order.² If tensions rise and countries such as Canada become "the 51st state," and if efforts to annex Greenland intensify, Trump's deterrence strategy could fail, and crises may escalate.

It is now evident that there is a significant shift in international relations. The Trump administration has argued that the "concessions" and guarantees made since World War II need to end, and that other nations should no longer take the role of the US for granted. Since the post-war period, many countries have preferred to maintain the status quo under US

¹ Where Trump 2.0 is distinct from Trump 1.0, Hindustan Times, (22.01.2025). <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/where-trump-2-0-is-distinct-from-trump-10-101737565154903.html>

² IR Theory Explains Trump's Foreign Policy, Whether Realists Like It or Not, Foreign Policy, (03.02.2025). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/02/03/ir-theory-trump-balance-power/>

protection, ensuring peace, democracy, and prosperity without assuming significant responsibilities themselves, opting for a more compliant form of development instead of rising as independent powers.

However, particularly since the 2000s, rival or excluded states such as Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea have tried to take advantage of Washington's declining influence by leading the transition to a multipolar system or quietly rising within the existing order to gain advantages. The Trump administration believes that the unconditional guarantee of the international status quo by the US should be ended, and this status quo is being reshaped in line with US interests.

The uncertainty and disruptions created by the Trump administration in global politics, as well as its coercive policies toward traditional allies, may push states to focus not only on increasing their national power but also on reshaping regional dynamics and creating independent security, economic, and diplomatic mechanisms. While the world is predicted to divide into a more fragmented structure under the Trump administration, this division should be understood not only as multipolarity but also as multicentric and regionalism. Therefore, stronger regional formations are likely to emerge in regions such as Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Pacific. In the Middle East, the US's diminishing interest and unconditional support for Israel could lead to stronger

regional solidarity within the framework of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) around the Palestinian issue. As Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hakan Fidan stated at the G20 Summit, economic diplomacy channels could be used to bridge geopolitical divisions, enabling G20 countries to take on a balancing role in the region.³ In Europe, Trump's threats toward NATO, trade wars, strategic moves in Greenland, and the continuation of the war in Ukraine are pushing Europe to adopt a more unified defense and foreign policy stance. In this case, European countries are also considering strengthening their trade relations with China.

Under Trump's instinct-driven administration, it is not surprising that countries that are not bound to the US by any agreement may also act with similar instincts, finding opportunities in his administration. One of the countries seeing opportunities in the new administration is Türkiye, with its main expectation being the removal of CAATSA sanctions.

What is CAATSA and Türkiye's Reaction to Sanctions

The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) is a sanctions program approved by the US Congress in 2017. The law aims to impose sanctions on Russia, North Korea, and Iran.⁴ Russia has been considered a primary threat, with the energy, defense, and intelligence sectors targeted.⁵

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<https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/bakan-fidan-baris-ekonomik-kalkinma-ve-refahla-desteklenmedikce-kalici-olamaz-898560.html>

⁴ Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) Related Sanctions, US Department of the Treasury - Office of Foreign

Assets Control (OFAC), (n.d.).

<https://ofac.treasury.gov/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/countering-americas-adversaries-through-sanctions-act-related-sanctions>

⁵ Dilek, M. S., & Oğuz, Ş. (2021). Trump Yönetiminin CAATSA Hamlesi (14 Aralık 2020) Ne Anlama

Türkiye was subjected to CAATSA sanctions under Section 231 on December 14, 2020, due to its purchase of the S-400 missile defense system from Russia.⁶ Although Türkiye was not on the list of target countries, this provision also stipulates sanctions for states and individuals cooperating with Russia in the defense sector, which led to the decision to apply the law to Türkiye as well. The decision targeted the Presidency of Defense Industries and four senior officials. President Donald Trump delayed the application of these sanctions to Türkiye, seeking ways to minimize damage to Turkish-American relations by narrowing their scope, but due to pressure from Congress and the Senate, Trump was unable to completely block the decision. Thus, the law came into effect on April 7, 2021, under the Biden administration.

CAATSA sanctions have been a significant issue in Turkish-US relations. Türkiye condemned and rejected these sanctions, highlighting President Trump's acknowledgment of Türkiye's rightful stance.⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and state officials repeatedly stated that these sanctions were an attack on Türkiye's sovereignty, emphasizing that it was inconsistent with the spirit of alliance for a NATO member to be subjected to such sanctions for the first time. They also pointed out that Türkiye purchased the S-400 defense system in 2017, before the

CAATSA sanctions were imposed, invoking the principle of non-retroactive law and arguing that these sanctions should not apply to Türkiye.

In response to the sanctions, Türkiye announced its determination to develop its national defense industry and build a defense sector capable of competing globally. In this regard, domestic production projects have been accelerated; leading national defense companies such as ASELSAN, TUSAŞ, and ROKETSAN have concentrated on critical areas such as air defense systems and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). To reduce dependence on defense imports and provide an economic and strategic response to the sanctions, new international partnerships have been developed, particularly with countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

With the re-election of Donald Trump, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan reiterated that CAATSA sanctions should be lifted and indicated that they would begin working with the new government on this issue.⁸ Trump's efforts in his first term to block the CAATSA sanctions on Türkiye and his second term's new agreement with India to secure F-35 stealth aircraft⁹ have sparked hopes that agreements could be reached with Türkiye regarding F-16s and the S-400 system. In this context, the new Trump era can be seen as a period where

Geliyor?. *Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5(1), sf 191.

⁶ Pompeo, M. R. (2020). The US Sanctions Turkey Under CAATSA 231. *US Department of State*, 14. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-united-states-sanctions-turkey-under-caatsa-231/>

⁷ No: 321, ABD'nin Ülkemize Karşı Açıkladığı Yaptırım Kararları Hk., T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, (n.d.). <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no-321-abd-nin-ulkemize-karsi-acikladigi-yaptirim-kararlari-hk.tr.mfa>

⁸ Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Hakan Fidan'ın Anadolu Ajansı Editör Masası'na Verdiği Mülakat, T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, (05.02.2025).

<https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-hakan-fidan-in-anadolu-ajansi-editor-masasi-na-verdigi-mulakat.tr.mfa>

⁹ Trump says India agreed to purchase more US oil, gas, Reuters, (13.02.2025).

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/markets/commodities/trump-says-india-agreed-purchase-more-us-oil-gas-2025-02-13/>

the likelihood of lifting CAATSA sanctions is high.

TTIP Agreement and Türkiye's Position

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) was a planned free trade and investment agreement between the European Union (EU) and the US, which was never completed. Negotiations began in June 2013 and continued until 2016, consisting of a total of 15 rounds. Following the election of President Trump in 2016, the negotiations were halted, and a decision by the Council of the EU on April 15, 2019, stated that "the TTIP negotiation directives have become obsolete and are no longer valid."¹⁰

The goal of the TTIP was to facilitate trade between the world's two largest economies, reduce customs tariffs, and stimulate investment flows to boost economic growth. However, significant differences arose between the two countries on issues such as agriculture, food safety, and environmental standards. The EU's strict regulations on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and hormone-treated meat conflicted with the US's more lenient standards. Public opinion in Europe was concerned that aligning standards under the TTIP framework would lead to a lowering of EU standards.¹¹ Environmental organizations, particularly in countries like Germany and France, organized protests against TTIP due to concerns over environmental and consumer rights. In

short, public support for the TTIP agreement steadily decreased. One of the reasons for this was the lack of transparency in the negotiation process, leaving citizens with insufficient information.

Türkiye's trade relations with the EU, are rooted in the Ankara Agreement signed on September 12, 1963. This agreement laid the legal foundation for Türkiye-EU relations and the Customs Union (CU) process.¹² As a result, trade between Türkiye and the EU quickly increased, and Türkiye opened up to the European market. The Ankara Agreement abolished customs duties and imposed the same tariffs on products imported from third countries. However, this meant that Türkiye could be harmed unless it signed the same agreement with countries that the EU had signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with. In this context, the TTIP agreement between the US and the EU meant that US goods could enter Türkiye duty-free through the EU, while Turkish goods would not enjoy the same privilege. In other words, if Türkiye did not sign an FTA with the US, it would be subject to US tariffs. Indeed, the then Minister of Economy, Nihat Zeybekci, stated that Türkiye's absence from the TTIP agreement would mean the CU could not be sustained.¹³ Therefore, Türkiye's inclusion in the TTIP agreement was crucial. According to a report published by the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye in 2013, Türkiye's participation in the TTIP

¹⁰ EU Negotiating Texts on TTIP, European Commission, (n.d.).

https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/united-states/eu-negotiating-texts-ttip_en

¹¹ Selen Akses, TTIP Süreci ve Kamuoyu: Anlaşmaya Destek Azalıyor mu?, (Haziran 2016).

¹² Transatlantik Ticaret ve Yatırım Ortaklığı (TTIP), T.C. Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı, (n.d.)

<https://www.ab.gov.tr/p.php?e=111>

¹³ TTIP Anlaşmasında Yoksak Gümrük Birliği Sürdürülemez, Anadolu Ajansı, (01.11.2014)

<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/ttip-anlasmasinda-yoksak-gumruk-birligi-surdurulemez/105652>

process was expected to bring economic advantages not only to Türkiye, but also to the EU and the US, by leading to an increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in all three countries.¹⁴

In 2015, Türkiye reached a consensus with the EU to update the Customs Union to prevent potential economic losses if the TTIP agreement were signed. However, after the failed coup attempt in 2016, the process stalled, and relations gradually became more strained. With Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election, the future of the TTIP agreement became even more uncertain, and in 2019, the EU officially declared that the agreement is no longer valid. In 2021, as part of the decision to create a "positive agenda" between the EU and Türkiye, the modernization of the Customs Union came back on the agenda. In July 2024, Minister of Trade Ömer Bolat announced the start of high-level dialogue and consultation meetings on the Customs Union and expressed hopes for its update in the near future.¹⁵ Given potential changes in global trade dynamics during Trump's second term, strengthening Türkiye-EU economic and political ties in the face of potential tensions with the US will become even more crucial.

Projections for the New Era and Türkiye-USA Relations

In the second Trump term, it is possible to create a projection specifically for Türkiye by considering the dynamics in Europe and the Middle East.

When examining Türkiye-US relations in the second Trump term alongside European dynamics, it can be said that it will be a period that holds both risks and opportunities for Türkiye. Across the Atlantic, transitioning into a new paradigm is inevitable both domestically and internationally. Trump's increase in trade tariffs and his growing divergence from Europe in security policies show the emerging rifts in economic and security matters. On the other hand, Vice President JD Vance's speech at the Munich Security Conference (MSC), where he noted that the US and Europe are now distanced in terms of values, signals a divide that goes beyond disagreements over defense spending or trade policies. This could mark the beginning of a new era in transatlantic relations where political and ideological differences, as well as security and economic factors, will play a decisive role. Political disagreements, especially regarding the Ukraine issue, highlight the divide between the US and Europe. Trump's claim that Ukraine is the party that started the Russia-Ukraine war, his labeling of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as a "dictator", and the harsh responses these statements received from European leaders have created a significant point of tension in transatlantic relations. However, perhaps the greatest rift occurred during discussions at the White House on February 28, when JD Vance and Trump publicly accused Zelenskyy of disrespect and accused him of "gambling with world war three." Following this development, many European leaders, including European

¹⁴ Güneş, D., Mavuş, M., & Oduncu, A. (n.d.). *AB-ABD serbest ticaret anlaşması ve Türkiye üzerine etkileri*. Türkiye Cumhuriyet Merkez Bankası Ekonomi Notları, (26.11.2013).

¹⁵ Bakan Bolat: Gümrük Birliği Anlaşmasının Güncellenmesi İçin Brüksel'de Görüşmeler Başladı,

Gazete Oksijen, (10.10.2024).

<https://gazeteoksijen.com/ekonomi/bakan-bolat-gumruk-birligi-anlasmasinin-guncellenmesi-icin-brukselde-gorushmeler-basladi-225398>

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron, and UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, expressed their support for Zelenskyy and their commitment to Ukraine. This event serves as a solid example of Zelenskyy's earlier statement, where he referred to JD Vance's remarks at the National Security Council, stating that the days of old alliances were over.

As tensions between the US and Europe deepen, Türkiye emerges as a crucial actor that can fill the strategic gap for both sides. European experts predict that Türkiye's role in defense will increase due to Trump's policies, and in addition to Türkiye's important position within NATO, military relations with the EU need to be strengthened.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Washington, dissatisfied with European defense spending, may position Türkiye as a more strategic partner against Europe and be more open to enhancing military and defense industry cooperation with Türkiye.

In the economic field, particularly with the US engaging in trade wars, especially with China, there is a risk of a global economic slowdown and increased protectionism. However, this situation may also encourage the search for new markets. While economic downturns in Europe, caused by trade tensions with the US, could negatively affect Türkiye's trade with the EU, this situation holds both risks and advantages. Turkey could take advantage of this situation to increase exports to the

US According to Murat Özyeğin, Chairman of the Türkiye-US Business Council (TAİK) of the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), Türkiye-US trade is expected to increase in the new Trump era.¹⁷

The wars and crises involving Israel and Iran are among the foremost issues that could strain Türkiye-US relations. Trump has shown a much closer relationship with Israel compared to Biden administration. Netanyahu's visit to the White House as the first foreign leader, Trump's statement that the US would take over Gaza, and Netanyahu's praise for this idea highlight the shared interests between the two leaders. Trump's support for Israel, including a military aid package worth \$7.4 billion, further exemplifies this close relationship. The US administration's position in this process will be crucial for all Middle Eastern countries. However, for Türkiye specifically, its strong opposition to Israel and support for the Palestinian cause may lead to tensions between Ankara and Washington.

Türkiye-US relations are also likely to become more strained with the increasing tensions between the US and Iran. Although Trump has stated his openness to nuclear deal negotiations, on February 4, 2025, he signed a presidential memorandum to reinstate the "maximum pressure" campaign to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.¹⁸ This decision is a clear indication of Trump's intention to maintain a tough stance against Iran.

¹⁶ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/trumps-approach-to-boost-turkiyes-role-in-europes-defense-experts-say/3488562>

¹⁷ Ekonomi Gazetesi, "Trump döneminde Türkiye ile ABD ticareti artacak," *Ekonomi Gazetesi*, 2025, <https://www.ekonomigazetesi.com/ekonomi/trump-doneminde-turkiye-ile-abd-ticareti-artacak-57532/>

¹⁸ The White House, "Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Restores Maximum Pressure on Iran," *The White House*, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/02/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-restores-maximum-pressure-on-iran/>

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei rejected Trump's desire to negotiate on the nuclear deal, calling it "illogical, unreasonable, and dishonorable."¹⁹ Furthermore, according to the Wall Street Journal, US intelligence warned Washington about Israel's plans to strike Iran's nuclear facilities.²⁰ Such an attack could lead to a crisis that would upend regional balances. However, Trump, committed to ending ongoing wars during his presidency, is unlikely to engage in a hot conflict that could escalate to a nuclear risk, preferring instead to apply sanctions on Iran and focus his attention on China.

Meanwhile, the political changes in Syria will bring new developments, with Türkiye playing a key role in this process. Border security and the return of refugees are critical issues for Türkiye. Trump has stated that Türkiye will play a key role in Syria and emphasized his good relationship with President Erdoğan. As Türkiye-US relations will be shaped by mutual interests, both parties are likely to recognize the numerous opportunities for cooperation available.

In conclusion, the second term of Donald Trump is expected to bring significant changes to both the US's role in global politics and Türkiye-US relations. Trump's tough and pragmatic approach in economy, security, and foreign policy will present both opportunities and risks for Türkiye. CAATSA sanctions and US policies in Europe and the Middle East may reshape Türkiye's strategic position. In this process,

Türkiye is expected to conduct abalanced and multifaceted diplomacy, while strengthening its economic and military cooperation.. Given the rapidly changing global power dynamics, it will be crucial for Türkiye to carefully manage its relations with the Trump administration, demonstrating flexibility in alignment with mutual interests and developing independent strategic moves.

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¹⁹ NBC News, "Iran Supreme Leader Khamenei Criticizes Nuclear Deal, Trump, Obama, and Oil Sanctions," *NBC News*, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/iran-supreme-leader-khamenei-nuclear-deal-trump-obama-oil-sanctions-rcna191142>

²⁰ Wall Street Journal, "Israel Sees Opening for Strikes on Iranian Nuclear Sites, US Intelligence Warned," *Wall Street Journal*, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-sees-opening-for-strikes-on-iranian-nuclear-sites-u-s-intelligence-warned-76a7fa24>

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