

Tibor Glant – Gábor Csizmazia:
First 100 days of Donald Trump's second presidency¹

Executive Summary

- The first 100 days of the US presidency is a highly mediatized "political honeymoon", but in the case of Donald Trump, the latter two are a contradiction in terms.
- For his first 100 days to be truly successful and "transformative", the President needs a landslide electoral victory and bipartisan congressional support – rhetoric is only built on these. Today, illegal immigration is the only area where the President still has the support of the public and a (bipartisan) majority in Congress. Hence Trump handles it as a priority.
- Overall, however, the first 100 days of the second Trump-term relied mainly on rhetoric and executive orders, with many of the measures invoking national emergency.
- Since Donald Trump's governing by executive orders is at certain points open to legal and political challenge, the last 100 days have not really put the spotlight on the presidency's past activity, but rather on the future activity of Congress.
- In his own way, Donald Trump is already proving successful on immigration policy and in reshaping the federal government, but on foreign policy it is too early to talk about a consistent Trump doctrine.

The analysis covers the first 100 days of Donald J. Trump's second term as president. It focuses mainly on how he has organized his government, what he has and has not delivered on his campaign promises, what his preferences are, how he has shaped US domestic and foreign policy, and how this has been received by American society and international public opinion.

Introduction

In recent decades, few starts to a US presidency have seemed as turbulent as the first 100 days of the Donald Trump's second term in office. The President's already vocal communication has now been supplemented by a series of drastic and often unprecedented actions, while the latter's international political, security and economic ramifications are often difficult to follow. Accordingly, this analysis seeks to present and assess the main steps of the first 100 days of the second Trump presidency, with a particular focus on the restructuring of the US federal government, immigration policy and foreign policy.

An important caveat of this analysis is that the first 100 days of any US presidency, from the moment it acquires symbolic significance, is a highly mediatized period. This means that many of its elements may be subject to real-time interpretations, and their true significance can only be understood in retrospect. Consequently, not all US domestic and foreign policy developments over the past three months can be considered as broadly representative of the second Trump presidency, and therefore not all of them are covered in detail in this analysis.

¹ Tibor Glant (Glant.Tibor@uni-nke.hu) is research professor at the John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics, Ludovika University of Public Service. Gábor Csizmazia (csizmazia.gabor@uni-nke.hu) Head of the America Research Program at the John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics, Ludovika University of Public Service.



1. The concept and meaning of the first 100 days

1.1. Context

The first hundred days of a new presidential term have traditionally been considered a “political honeymoon” in American political parlance. The term itself dates back to the New Deal era, the first legislative term of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s (FDR) first presidency. In the spring of 1933, the United States was in the grip of a serious economic, social, cultural and political crisis. FDR, who succeeded the Republican Herbert Hoover, began a vigorous legislative drive, and the most important measures of the so-called ‘first New Deal’ were enacted in the first 99 days, with the strong support of congressional Republicans. In a subsequent White House radio address (fireside chat), the President called it 100 days and a political honeymoon.²

The notion of political honeymoon suggests that the incoming, newly elected President is at the height of his/her popularity, and that both Congress and the mainstream press are more permissive towards him than we would otherwise expect them to be. Since the mainstream media has been clearly pro-Democrat since the 1960s (Eisenhower was considered the last ‘presentable’ Republican president)³, the Republicans’ political honey moons have been shorter and shorter for the last almost seventy years. This is particularly true of Donald Trump, perhaps the most divisive US President ever. He has had no real political honeymoon in either his first or second term, although he started each time with clear congressional majorities in both houses. The first 100 days of his second term are assessed in this light.

1.2. Trump’s self-image and mandate

As the landmark first 100 days of the Roosevelt presidency showed, the initial effectiveness of a successful, what’s more, “transformative” (bringing about significant economic and/or social and political change) presidency, requires two things. First, the President must have a clear political mandate (i.e. a landslide electoral victory both within the Electoral College and in terms of the popular vote) and, second, he/she must have a reliable political support in the legislature (i.e. the political forces that agree with him/her must rule the Senate and the House of Representatives).⁴ These can then form the basis for a series of presidential rhetoric and symbols.

The Trump presidency has been rich on the latter from day one. The 47th President of the United States began his inaugural address by saying that “from this day forward, our country will flourish and be respected again all over the world.”⁵ Donald Trump drew a sharp distinction between previous years (particularly the four years of the Biden presidency) and his second presidency in terms of, among other things, American national identity, the purpose of the federal government, and the reliance on resources and foreign policy. The speech included a number of forward-looking phrases that had been originally associated with an upward phase in the country’s earlier history, such as “frontier”,⁶ “manifest destiny”,⁷ “the American dream”⁸ and “exceptionalism”. Most of these are familiar in American public discourse today, but are less used phrases in everyday politics, especially when piled together in a single speech. The lofty rhetoric also appealed to Trump’s self-image: “I was saved by God [from the assassination attempt in

² FDR addressed the American people through the radio from his armchair by the fireplace in the President’s Office on a weekly or bi-weekly basis - these became known as “fireside chats”.

³ Popular on both sides of the aisle, Ike was the last Republican president to date not to be regularly called a ‘fascist’ in the mainstream press.

⁴ WOOLLEY, John T. – PETERS, Gerhard: [Biden in Action: the First 100 Days](#). *The American Presidency Project*. 2021.04.30. [online, 2025.04.28.]

⁵ TRUMP, Donald: [The Inaugural Address](#). The White House, 2025.01.20. [online, 2025.04.28.]

⁶ The term „frontier”, introduced by the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner (1893), originally referred to the areas of North America that were on the fringes of civilization (the socio-economic infrastructures established by settlers) and beyond. More broadly, it can refer to the new frontiers of human development (including scientific and technological development).

⁷ A term coined by the American journalist John O’Sullivan (1845), primarily to describe the predestines and obvious fate which provided a foundation to mission-like westward expansion of the North American settlers.

⁸ A term used by the American writer James Truslow Adams (1931) to describe an area where everyone is given the opportunity to live a better and richer life, according to their abilities and achievements.

Pennsylvania] to make America great again.”⁹ Accordingly, Trump has already invoked a historic mandate when he spoke of halting “America’s decline” and begin “the complete restoration of America”, essentially envisioning a (re)transformative presidency.

Yet all this is just rhetoric. The success of a spectacular agenda depends on the political power behind it. Donald Trump, as in his 2017 speech to both houses of Congress, emphasized that his mandate is backed by the masses of the American electorate,¹⁰ as illustrated by his victory in seven battleground states in the 2024 election and his winning of the popular vote. While both are notable achievements, it is overshadowed by the fact that Donald Trump’s victory is more optical than overwhelming: he won the race against Kamala Harris by just over two million votes, which is not a major blowout in historical terms. What is more problematic, however, is the seemingly firm congressional majority: the Republicans did indeed win the Senate and retain power in the House of Representatives, but the latter means a paper-thin majority of just 4 representatives. It is no coincidence that the major developments of the first 100 days of the Trump presidency have been embodied in new executive orders rather than new congressional legislation.¹¹ While many of the President’s actions do reflect elements of Republican thinking (due in no small part to his control over the party), as do some of his bipartisan ideas, he has spent his first 100 days governing alone rather than in concert with Congress.

2. Featured actions in Donald Trump’s (second) first 100 days

2.1. The takeover and reorganization of the federal government

In 2024, Donald Trump campaigned on ending waste and the draining of federal resources and the use of the federal government as a political weapon, including government censorship. Accordingly, one of his first actions was to create the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) headed by Elon Musk, the world’s richest man, the head of Tesla and Space X, “X” (formerly known as Twitter). From a legal perspective, DOGE is an “independent federal institution” and not an official cabinet department, although it reports directly to the President in the same way as, for example, the Department of State or the Department of Defense. The key argument of the Democrats in opposition is that Musk was not elected by anyone and therefore his operation is illegal. DOGE has exposed a number of shocking abuses and has made a number of proposals to digitize the federal government and make it more efficient.¹² However, since Musk is “only” an advisor to the President, it is up to the White House to decide which of these proposals should be put before Congress.

In contrast to Trump’s first term, this time congressional Republicans rallied behind the President and passed all his cabinet appointments relatively quickly, in just under two months. This is a major success, because the Trump administration includes, among others, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the son of the Democratic presidential candidate assassinated in 1968, and Tulsi Gabbard, who ran in the 2020 Democratic primaries. The relatively smooth congressional approval of Kennedy and Gabbard shows that Republicans were willing to support two formerly iconic Democrats, while Democrats were unable to block the appointment of politicians who had been “stolen” from them. Trump’s first nominee to head the Justice Department was Matt Gaetz of Florida, and he was the only person whom the President was forced to drop. This portfolio is held by Pam Bondi, who previously served as Florida’s attorney general. The same Republican majority – with the support of some Democrats – voted to extend funding for the federal government in March, ensuring the conditions for continued government.

This rapid and well-coordinated democratic takeover of power was attempted to be hindered from the outset by the pro-Democratic forces of the administrative state, partly by sabotaging the implementation of orders (e.g. the opening of the Kennedy files within the FBI), partly by leaking sensitive

⁹ TRUMP, Donald: [The Inaugural Address](#). The White House, 2025.01.20. [online, 2025.04.28.]

¹⁰ In 2017, the President talked about “rebellion [that had] started as a quiet protest”, while in 2025 he referred to the “revolution of common sense”. TRUMP, Donald: [Remarks by President Trump in Joint Address to Congress](#). *The White House*. 2017.02.28. [online, 2025.04.28.]

¹¹ WOOLLEY, John T. – PETERS, Gerhard: [Trump’s First 100 Days in 2025](#). *The American Presidency Project*. 2025.02.18. [online, 2025.04.28.]

¹² [Department of Government Efficiency \(@DOGE\) / X](#)

government information (e.g. Signal-gate).¹³ In this, they have found open support in the traditional mainstream press,¹⁴ which has been visibly discredited during the 2024 election campaign, while the podcasts, which are crucial to the election, have been relegated to the background, as this fight is being fought in the traditional political and media space. The White House has responded by reorganizing the press briefing schedule and setting aside a special place for “new media” representatives.¹⁵ This suggests that the White House is consciously shaping the media environment. Part of this is that the administration is virtually on camera: hardly a day goes by without a press event for the President.

While Trump issued a total of 220 executive orders in his first term, he is now at 139 in the first 100 days of his second term. By comparison, Woodrow Wilson, who also served two terms, had 1,803 such orders. Four-time elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt had 3,725, while Richard Nixon, associated with the concept of “imperial presidency”, had 346, and George W. Bush had 291. So Trump’s activity in this direction does not seem excessive for the time being, especially in the light of the 276 executive orders issued by Barack Obama and 364 by Bill Clinton.¹⁶ However, there is a stark contrast between the 139 issued within the 100 days and the 220 issued during Trump’s previous presidential term. This also fuels Democratic accusations that Trump is operating outside the constitutional framework.

2.2. Immigration and deportations

Closing the southern border, ending illegal immigration, deporting illegal immigrants, dismantling organized crime linked to illegal immigrants were a few of the most effective promises of the Trump campaign. Under President Biden, the borders had opened: according to some congressional estimates, more than 8 million people have entered the US with the intention of settling and nearly 4 million have been granted citizenship.¹⁷ Customs and Border Protection (CBP) released a dedicated phone app (CBP One) to allow asylum applications to be submitted from abroad. These people were then admitted or transferred to the US and scheduled for an immigration court hearing. At these asylum hearings, the deportees often fail to show up, making their stay illegal. For example, according to statistics released by the Biden administration in the summer of 2024, around 320,000 unaccompanied minors were lost in the system.¹⁸ An equally serious problem is that those who are in the US illegally sometimes commit shockingly serious crimes. Several horrific murder cases have been linked to such immigrants, such as the violent deaths of Laken Riley and Rachel Morin. According to the PEW Research Service, of the 37 million first-generation immigrants living in the US, about 23.5 million are already citizens and 11 million are in the country illegally. Another 2 million are in temporary protected status.¹⁹ The issue therefore needs to be addressed and Trump’s support on this issue ranges from 55-60%.

One of Trump’s first actions was to close the southern border, citing national emergency. It is important to note two things: firstly, this is not without precedent, as not only the Trump administration but also the Biden administration had previously referred to national emergency when protecting the southern border. Secondly, in the case of Trump, the emergency is not only triggered by mass migration but also by cross-border drug trafficking: in the United States, the number of deaths caused by synthetic opioids, in particular fentanyl, which is 50 times more powerful than heroin, has increased dramatically

¹³ One of Trump’s promises to the public and to Robert Kennedy was to open the still secret files of the Kennedy assassinations (JFK in 1963 and RFK in 1968). Pam Bondi’s request for these files was denied by the leadership of the FBI’s New York office at first but the latter was unable to repeat this second time around, and the head of the office subsequently resigned. For news of James Dennehy’s resignation, see the March 4 news story.

¹⁴ In American terms, the phrase “mainstream media” includes Fox News, while the term “legacy media” covers the same circle without Fox News, which is the only major media outlet supporting Republicans.

¹⁵ Perhaps the best summary was published on a Swiss French website, in English: SILVA, Carolina: [Media Access Change in the White House: A New Political Media Landscape](#). *HEconomist*, 2025.04.12. [online, 2025.04.27.]

¹⁶ The American Presidency Project: [Executive Orders](#). *The American Presidency Project*, 2025.04.24. [online, 2025.04.27.]

¹⁷ See for example: U.S. House Committee on Budget: [Biden’s Border Bust](#). *U.S. House Committee on Budget* [online, 2025.04.27.]

¹⁸ TEAR, Jennie: [Biden-Harris Admin Loses Track of 320,000 Migrant Children](#). *New York Post*, 2024.08.21. [online, 2025.04.27.]

¹⁹ MOSLIMANI, Mohamad – PASSEL, Jeffrey S.: [What the data says about immigrant in the US](#). *PEW Research Center*: 2024.09.27. [online, 2025.04.27.]



John Lukacs Analyses on Global Affairs 2025/5

over the last decade: according to some estimates, between 1999 and 2020, nearly 565,000 people died from opioids.²⁰ The drug is often not brought into the country by illegal immigrants, but dealing with the mass influx of illegal immigrants has so overwhelmed US authorities that it has become more difficult to intercept fentanyl produced in Mexico using Chinese materials and then smuggled into the US by drug cartels.

In order to tackle irregular migration (and the fentanyl epidemic), Trump has stopped aid to those not legally in the US and declared war on "sanctuary cities".²¹ He has appointed his old ally Tom Homan to head Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the agency responsible for enforcing immigration laws and rules, and deportations have begun. He declared the Mexican drug cartels, the Tren De Aragua (TDA) from Venezuela and MS-13 from El Salvador as international terrorist organizations. In a separate deal, some of the black-belt criminals were transferred to El Salvador, while others were housed in the infamous Guantanamo Bay prison. The first act of the new 119th Congress was the Laken Riley Act which obliges the Department of Homeland Security to detain any illegal immigrant who commits a misdemeanor or violent crime against another person in a worth more than \$100. The CBP One app (called the CBP Home App) has been redesigned to allow for self-deportation requests.²²

This decisive action provoked strong opposition in Democratic circles and in most of the sanctuary cities. For example, the ICE raid in Chicago on January 21st had to be called off because details of the planned raid were leaked to the press. In other cases, local authorities gave illegal residents advance notice that the federal government planned to take action against them, giving them an opportunity to flee. In California, the names and phone numbers of active ICE agents were posted. The Departments of Justice and Homeland Security have issued official statements warning that obstructing federal deportations is a serious crime and will be treated as such.²³

Another proven form of resistance is to challenge federal government decisions in court. More than a hundred such lawsuits have been filed against Trump's various actions, most of which are specifically related to immigration issues.²⁴ There have been judges who have tried to stop deportations, and there have been judges who have ordered the federal government to bring back a deported Salvadoran citizen from El Salvador. This kind of resistance is constitutional and understandable: the government says that the judges are interfering with the executive branch, and the opposition is talking about the rights of the deported. The Trump administration has taken the case to the Supreme Court, arguing that the judges are obstructing the operation of the executive branch, which is a constitutional issue.

The bombshell came on April 25th when the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced in an official statement that two judges had been arrested on charges of illegally aiding and protecting illegal criminals. In New Mexico, a judge had taken several TDA members into his home, one of whom was also caught carrying a prohibited weapon. When the case came to light, the judge tried to suppress the evidence, and was therefore arrested and disbarred. The seriousness of the case is shown by the fact that the TDA criminal was sending around pictures of beheaded victims from his phone. In Wisconsin, a judge tried to prevent the arrest of an illegal Mexican offender by trying to get him out of the courthouse to avoid ICE agents. What's more, the offender, who is in the United States illegally, was brought before the judge because he had beaten a man half to death and seriously injured a woman.²⁵ This, of course, is seen by

²⁰ DUFF, Jonathan H. et. al.: [The Opioid Crisis in the United States: A Brief History](#). *Congressional Research Service*, 2022.11.30. [online, 2025.04.27.]

²¹ "Sanctuary cities" are administrative units that are unwilling to cooperate with the federal government on immigration issues (or only to a limited extent). For their complete, regularly updated list, see the [Center for Immigration Studies](#) [online, 2025.04.27.]

²² U.S. Department of Homeland Security: [DHS Launches CBP Home App with Self-Deport Reporting Feature | Homeland Security](#). *U.S. Department of Homeland Security*, 2025.03.10. [online, 2025.04.27.] Those who volunteer for deportation are not automatically and permanently banned from the US and have the chance to re-enter the country legally.

²³ McCARTHY, S.A.: [ICE 'Leakers' Identified - Will Prosecutions Follow?](#) *The Washington Stand*, 2025.02. 26. [online, 2025.04.27.]

²⁴ These cases are followed by several websites, such as US News and World Report. SMITH-SCHOENWALDER, Cecelia: [These Are the Lawsuits Against Trump's Executive Orders](#). *U.S. News*, 2025.04.25. [online, 2025.04.27.]

²⁵ For the official statement, see the website of the [DOJ](#) while the interview with Pam Bondi on the case: Fox News: [Pam Bondi details judge's actions before arrest: 'Can't make this up'](#). *YouTube*, 2025.02.26. [online, 2025.04.27.]

the Democrats and their supporting media as an attack on the judiciary, a concrete step in the Trumpian autocratic takeover.

The biggest storm was caused by the case of Kilmar Abrego Garcia. Dubbed a 'Maryland father' by opposition media, Garcia was deported to his native El Salvador on March 15th. According to the Trump administration, there is evidence that Garcia is a member of MS-13 and could be deported to his home country of El Salvador, contrary to a previous court ruling. In 2019, Garcia, who is in the US illegally, was detained and granted protection because he claimed that if he was sent home, his life would be in danger, having fled a criminal gang threatening his family in 2013. According to one interpretation, he cannot be deported except to El Salvador, while according to the other, he cannot be deported at all because he enjoys refugee protection, while his wife is a US citizen and they have a child together. The irony is that Garcia's wife filed a domestic violence complaint in 2021 and asked for a restraining order against him, but now claims that their differences have been settled and that her husband has not behaved violently towards her.²⁶ Following the deportation, a Maryland state senator made a public funded visit to El Salvador and demanded to meet the 'Maryland father' in person. He himself posted pictures of this meeting on Facebook, but did not even ask him if he was really a member of MS-13 because, in his own words, "I know what his answer is".²⁷ Several other members of Congress also travelled to El Salvador to see for themselves that Garcia was alive. All the Republicans could say was that the Democrats were apparently more interested in the life of an MS-13 gang member living illegally in the United States than in the lives of American hostages taken by Hamas, whose fate is still unknown.²⁸

2.3. Foreign policy

Foreign policy is an area where Donald Trump has the greatest potential of making a real difference. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly, foreign policy primarily falls under presidential authority, and a second term is an ideal opportunity to achieve foreign policy successes that are often less valuable in domestic political battles, as the President (in the absence of re-election) can then focus on his legacy. Secondly, it was already a feature of the Trump administration in its first term that its activity was more visible in foreign affairs. Against this backdrop, Donald Trump returned to the White House with an ambitious foreign policy agenda. In fact, on his first day in office, the 47th president made a bold move by proposing to take back US control of the Panama Canal, buy Greenland, while also raising the idea of Canada joining the US as the 51st state. While the latter was unrealistic (and presumably a political poking of then Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau), the former two points were in line with the renewed geopolitical competition in the 21st century and concepts of US expansionism in the 19th century which were used in the President's inaugural address.

In fact, the fundamental foreign policy problem of the second Trump administration can also be linked to its anachronistic nature. Apart from a few symbolic expressions in the inaugural address, the Trump administration's worldview is completely devoid of the idealism traditionally characterizing US foreign policy (or at least of the semblance of such idealism). What this means in practice is that while Donald Trump's rhetoric and actions suggest a US leadership ready for action, it has little to offer the outside world. In terms of world order, the Trump presidency is able to identify and spotlight a specific problem (e.g. the US-China power struggle or the viability of international organizations), but offers no meaningful vision for other actors in international politics (e.g. it does not seem to be able to use soft power to attract Southeast Asian or Latin American states that are valuable allies in the power struggle, yet at the political level, it can discourage old allies). Thus, issues that are evergreen in US geopolitical thinking (e.g. US control of international waters and crucial sea lines of communications and choke points, US dominance in the Western Hemisphere, and Eurasian stability that does not threaten US interests) remain prominent, but do not form the picture of a new and coherent world order – at least not in the first 100 days.

²⁶ HALPERT, Madeline: [Who is the man in middle of Maryland deportation case?](#) *BBC News*, 2025.04.19. [online, 2025.04.27.]

²⁷ CHAITIN, Daniel: [Dem Senator Says He Did Not Ask Deported Illegal Immigrant About MS 13](#). *Daily Wire*, 2025.04.20. [online, 2025.04.27.]

²⁸ Forbes Breaking News: [Full Gaggle: Stephen Miller Reasponds to Van Hollen's Trip to El Salvador to Check on Abrego Garcia](#). *Forbes Breaking News*, 2025.04.18. [online, 2025.04.27.]



John Lukacs Analyses on Global Affairs 2025/5

In his inaugural address, Donald Trump noted: "My proudest legacy will be that of a peacemaker and unifier."²⁹ Although he did not mention Ukraine (nor Russia) in this context, the course of the Russia-Ukraine war affects Republican foreign policy strategies on several points. In Republican circles, the question of support for Ukraine remains a divisive issue, however, everyone ranging from isolationists calling for withdrawal to proactive hawks agree that the Biden administration's approach on its own was not sustainable because it lacked tangible milestones.³⁰ The Trump administration has set two objectives for the first 100 days. On the one hand, it has established high-level diplomatic contacts with the Kremlin and started negotiations, and on the other, it has tried to broker a ceasefire. However, this was more of a probing, as US-Russian relations have traditionally been concerned not only with European security, but also with stability in the Middle East, global international challenges (e.g. proliferation of weapons of mass destruction) and the balance of great power relations (including China's rise). At the moment, there are only speculations as to what exactly are US and Russian officials discussing with each other, but it is clear that it is not exclusively about Ukraine: on the US side, the prominent figure (most visible in his activity) in the bilateral talks is not the Special Envoy for Russia and Ukraine Gen. Keith Kellogg, but rather Steven Witkoff, the President's Special Envoy to the Middle East.³¹ It is possible that this is due to a personal relationship of trust with the President, but it is also likely that Witkoff has more insight into other (Middle Eastern) issues than Kellogg has.

On Ukraine, another milestone planned within the first 100 days of the Trump presidency was the signing of the US-Ukraine economic cooperation agreement, most notably the deal on rare earth minerals in the Eastern European country. Washington has not only made inquiries on this issue, but has also set out concrete expectations for Kyiv, although with less tangible results: the US side was supposed to sign an agreement on the extraction of Ukrainian minerals in February, but this was not done during the first scandal-plagued White House meeting between Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky.³²

The common feature of the US-Russian negotiations on a Russian-Ukrainian ceasefire and the US-Ukrainian negotiations on economic cooperation is the US primacy vis-à-vis Europeans, which is mainly expressed in unilateral actions. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth attended the meeting of international partners supporting Ukraine (the Rammstein Group) in February, but not in April, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio was absent from the ministerial summit in London, which was intended to promote peace talks on the European side.³³ As previously expected, the Trump administration is unabashedly displaying Republican discontent with most European NATO member states. Accordingly, Washington's complaint about the imbalances in transatlantic defense burden-sharing is nothing new, nor is it surprising that the US would increasingly shift its support for Ukraine to its European allies in terms of military, but mainly in financial and humanitarian terms (while the latter already saw a greater burden by Europeans). Nevertheless, in transatlantic relations, the Trump administration continues to make visible use of political linkages compared to the first term. The essence of the latter is that Washington sees the different issues (political, defense, trade, etc.) in the US-European relationship as closely interlinked which therefore cannot be addressed separately. This was most unusually illustrated by J.D. Vance in his speech at the Munich Security Conference. The US Vice President explained that his administration perceives in Europe primarily not an external (Russian or Chinese) but an internal threat, most notably in the institutional threats to freedom of speech and political expression. Essentially, he asked his hosts the rhetorical question: what is the point of spending US defense resources on the security of Europe if the latter does not apply equally to everyone in the political sphere (especially to those groups labelled nationalist-

²⁹ TRUMP, Donald: [The Inaugural Address](#). *The White House*, 2025.01.20. [online, 2025.04.28.]

³⁰ One of the preconditions for Republican support for the last congressional aid package for Ukraine in April 2024 was precisely that US government officials report on the planned and implemented results of arms shipments and financial assistance to Ukraine.

³¹ GRAMER, Robbie et. al.: [What happened to Keith Kellogg?](#) *Politico*, 2025.03.11. [online, 2025.04.28.]

³² PRUCHNICKA, Anna: [Past US aid to Ukraine not included in minerals deal, Kyiv says](#). *Reuters*, 2025.04.28. [online, 2025.04.28.]

³³ JOZWIAK, Rikard: [After US Snubs London Meeting, What's Europe's Game Plan For Ukraine-Russia Peace Talks?](#) *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, 2025.04.27. [online, 2025.04.28.]

populist).³⁴ Of course, from the US side such a speech is not new, but it is a watershed in two respects: first, it was delivered at the highest level transatlantic security and defense conference, and second, it may be a sign of political-ideological tensions that are likely to arise between the transatlantic parties.

The most dominant foreign policy measure of the first 100 days of the Trump presidency has been the imposition of tariffs, mainly on China but also on all other countries. In essence, the Trump tariff war marks another phase in the American dismantling of the liberal international order,³⁵ with the caveat that Donald Trump, for all his determination, does not intend to maintain it against everyone. The tariffs of at least 10% are part of the American toolbox of economic power, i.e. weapons to achieve various goals. With regard to Canada and Mexico, the Trump administration continues to advocate a free trade policy (or more precisely, a consistently rules-based trade policy). The US tariffs against its northern and southern mainland neighbors are not primarily intended to protect any one industry (although there are examples of this), but are punitive measures to address shortcomings in the fight against cross-border drug trafficking. Similarly, tariffs are not the main issue in trade relations with the European Union and its member states: it is non-tariff measures that tend to make it more difficult for goods and services to move more freely between transatlantic partners, and the Trump presidency is likely to expect Europeans to move closer in this area (in addition to showing greater willingness to buy certain US products). As many had expected, Washington has started to negotiate with its trading partners, with whom it is trying to reach a new agreement not only on tariffs.³⁶ Although the People's Republic of China is presumably no exception, the real trade war is still likely to be between Washington and Beijing.

3. Reception and what is yet to come

At home, Democrats have declared open opposition to the Trump administration. There have been coordinated street demonstrations and congressional speeches, but also lawsuits against the President's decisions and judicial rulings that Trump regularly criticizes. At the same time, there has also been open violence, with seemingly organized attacks on Teslas, as Musk has become a "public enemy". This has become so violent that the FBI classified the attacks on Teslas and car dealerships as terrorist acts, and several arrests were made.³⁷ However, this has not only led to a drop in Tesla's stock prices, but also to a collapse in the Democrats' image. The opposition party's positive perception barely reaches 30%, while Republicans in government are measured at over 40%.

The administration has also suffered a number of embarrassing incidents. These included the deportation of Garcia to El Salvador, and Signal-gate: on at least two occasions, various members of the government shared confidential or secret information on this encrypted platform, which was accessible to unauthorized persons. In the first case, the editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, hardly accused of being pro-Trump, was added to a government group discussing the attack on the Houthis in Yemen,³⁸ and later Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth was found to have shared similar information with his family on the same platform.³⁹ In response to the "big news" in the press, the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security began hunting down leakers.

³⁴ VANCE, J.D.: [Remarks by Vice President Vance at the Munich Security Conference](#). *The White House*, 2025.02.14. [online, 2025.04.28.]

³⁵ CSIZMAZIA, Gábor: The Trump Administration's Tariff Policy. John Lukacs Analyses on Global Affairs. 2025/2, April 4, 2025, p.2.

³⁶ NORMAN, Greg – LAWRENCE, Edward: [President Trump working on larger trade deals -- not just ones involving tariffs](#). Fox News, 2025.04.28. [online, 2025.04.28.]

³⁷ DORGAN, Michael: [Number of Tesla attacks soars past 50 as violence targeting Musk's company escalates](#). Fox News, 2025.04.02. [online, 2025.04.27.] A DOJ 2025. március 27-i közleményét a letartóztatásokról ld.: U.S. Department of Justice: [Nevada Resident Arrested and Charged in Connection with Violent Tesla Arson in Las Vegas](#). Office of Public Affairs, 2025.03.27. [online, 2025.04.27.]

³⁸ GOLDBERG, Jeffrey – HARRIS, Shane: [Here Are the Attack Plans That Trump's Advisers Shared on Signal](#). *The Atlantic*, 2025.03.26. [online, 2025.04.27.]

³⁹ Reuters: [Hegseth shared Yemen attack plans with wife, brother and lawyer: Reports](#). *USA Today*, 2025.04.20. [online, 2025.04.27.]

Despite all of this, more than 40% of those questioned say the country is moving in the right direction, which is a significant improvement over the 25-28% during the Biden era. A year ago, 65-70% said things were going in the wrong direction, today a little more than 50% think so. About 45% are satisfied with Trump's job performance (this barely reached 30% in the case of Biden), while the most popular Democrat, Hakeem Jeffries, is at 29%.⁴⁰ At the same time, some Fox News staffers say almost daily that Democrats have a good chance of winning at least a majority in the House of Representatives in the 2026 midterm elections. If this is indeed the case, the state of grace in which Trump governs today will last only two years.

Abroad, the second Trump presidency has received mixed reception. On the one hand, there was an initial constructive attitude from the allies and partners of the United States (e.g. Canada and European countries): many people sought contact with Donald Trump even before his inauguration. On the other hand, the bold and unabashedly presented agenda aroused resentment among many: the idea of Canada's accession as the 51st state, for example, could be perceived as a political joke, yet it disappeared from the statements of leading American politicians slowly, which may have resulted in such a frustration in Canadian public life that liberal party politicians, whose support had been declining until then, were able to improve their domestic electoral chances with their defiant opposition to Trump (according to preliminary surveys, the liberals won the election). The real political backlash was caused by the Trump administration's tariff policy: first the US stock market and international market stakeholders, and soon after, the United States' key trading partners, voiced their displeasure. The global introduction of the tariffs announced on April 2 proved counterproductive in terms of domestic and foreign policy, so it is no coincidence that (following the surge in the yield on 10-year US government bonds) the Trump presidency partially backed down or postponed the implementation of its trade policy ideas.⁴¹

As the 2026 midterm elections approach, the task list for Republicans, who still hold a majority in the legislature, is becoming increasingly challenging. Within a year and a half, they must find a solution to perhaps the most controversial issue of the 2020 and 2024 elections: the problem of authentic voter identification. Only 24 of the 50 states require official photo IDs in federal elections, leaving the issue of fraud open. The first step has already been taken: Wisconsin voted in favor of mandatory identification⁴² with an official photo ID (making Wisconsin the 24th state on the list), but this cannot be done so quickly in all states. The issue is expected to be brought to the federal agenda during this legislative session. Meanwhile, a formal investigation has been launched into the Democratic fundraising website ActBlue, as it was proven several times last year that people who were not even aware of it had become Democratic donors. The company closed some of the loopholes in December. The satisfactory resolution of these two cases is crucial for maintaining faith in the integrity of the elections. The Trump administration must act in these cases until it is certain that the Republicans have a majority in Congress.

4. Conclusions

The first 100 days of a presidency can be deceptive. The world is getting a taste of what to expect in the next three and a half years, but opposite trends may also unfold and the presidency may assess which situations it should avoid or approach more cautiously in the future. Even in light of historical experience, it would be irresponsible to draw far-reaching conclusions from the first 100 days. Still, this period of Donald Trump's second term in office has provided some lessons.

Firstly, the first 100 days have demonstrated Donald Trump's determination to carry out his political experiments. The reorganization of the federal government, the start of deportations, and the imposition of tariffs have demonstrated that the second Trump presidency will not hold back on its agenda of urgent change: the President has introduced his most decisive measures based on national emergency and on laws that are decades or centuries old (e.g. the Alien Enemies Act of 1789 and the International Economic

⁴⁰ RealClearPolling: [President Trump Job Approval](#). *RealClearPolling*, 2025.04.27. [online, 2025.04.27.]

⁴¹ [Modifying Reciprocal Tariff Rates to Reflect Trading Partner Retaliation and Alignment](#). *The White House*, 2025.04.09. [online, 2025.04.29.]

⁴² BOSMAN, Julie: [Wisconsin Voters Approve Amendment Requiring Photo ID to Vote](#). *The New York Times*, 2025.04.01. [online, 2025.04.29.]



John Lukacs Analyses on Global Affairs 2025/5

Emergencies Powers Act of 1977), which could lead to constitutional court cases and a rethinking of the balance of power between the branches of government.

Secondly, there are still corrective movements in American politics. The checks and balances are not provided by opposition politicians today, but rather by federal judges, public opinion, and the stock market. Donald Trump's political support is given until the end of 2026, although with the mid-term elections approaching, this means a narrowing room for maneuver. Moreover, the latter is limited not only in time but also in terms of means: the President is actively using the possibility of governing by executives orders, which allows for rapid and spectacular, but equally volatile reforms in the American political system. As a result, the last 100 days have actually put the spotlight not on the presidency's activity so far, but on the activity of Congress expected for the future.

Lastly, it should be noted that although Donald Trump has provided analysts of international relations and American foreign policy with lots of material since his second presidential inauguration, it is still too early to talk about a mature Trump doctrine. This is true even if we take into account that Donald Trump has consistently advocated a transactionalist logic for decades. Corrective movements can also be seen in foreign policy. In the past 100 days, the Trump administration has indicated that it is ready to walk away from the task of Russian-Ukrainian peacemaking (partly turning its back on the President's main legacy in mind). Meanwhile in addition to the "maximum pressure" and "MIBA" (Make Iran Bankrupt Again) concepts announced against Iran, the possibility of another deal has also arisen, and on the issue of tariffs, the President has used the possibility of exceptions, suspensions and tightening on several occasions (all through unexpectedly delayed announcements). Whichever scenario the Trump presidency follows in these matters, the main question remains what role it intends for the United States in the new world order and how it can get other countries to accept it.



John Lukacs Analyses on Global Affairs 2025/5

The *John Lukacs Analyses on Global Affairs* discusses the most important issues related to the transformation of the global political and economic order. The series aims to contribute to the discourse on the changing world order through scientifically rigorous analyses and to shed light on the dynamics of international relations. The analyses examine great power competition, the transformation of global political structures, and the foreign policies of key actors shaping the 21st-century geopolitical landscape.

The analyses are jointly edited by the *America Research Program* and the *China and Indo-Pacific Region Research Program*, both of which operate under the John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics. The authors of the analyses are primarily the researchers of the Institute and members of its research groups, but external experts may also participate, provided they adhere to the academic requirements. The analyses are available in both English and Hungarian and aim to offer valuable and useful insights into the changing world order for the academic community, policymakers, and the wider public.

Publisher:

John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics
Eötvös József Research Centre
Ludovika University of Public Service

Editors:

Gábor Csizmazia, Viktor Eszterhai, Balázs Tárnok

© Author(s)

Publisher's contact information:

1441 Budapest, P.O. Box 60.
Address: 1083 Budapest, Ludovika tér 2.
Tel: +36 1 432-9000
Email: jli@uni-nke.hu