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USA

# A New Year, A New (Old) President—A New Era?

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**Americans celebrated the arrival of the New Year on January 1 with fireworks and the hope for better things in the future. But we also recognized that the new year is bringing Donald J. Trump back to the presidency on January 20 with promises to take swift action to remove undocumented immigrants, “to fix the economy,” and to fundamentally change government. Trump is in a position to do much of what he wants, controlling not only the presidency, but also with Republican majorities in the Senate and House, and with a friendly Supreme Court. With a cabinet and advisors who are billionaires, with his dictatorial manner and a huge popular following, we seem headed toward an authoritarian plutocracy, and some fear toward fascism.**

America’s economic and military power mean that Trump may not only remake America but could also transform the world. Domestically Trump promises to keep in place the corporate tax cuts that he and Congress carried out in 2017. Despite his tax cuts, he has promised to protect America’s most important social welfare programs—Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—but many Republicans want to drastically reduce those programs. Trump wants to change the Department of Justice from its theoretical “independence and impartiality” into his weapon against those he called “the enemy within.”

The Republican Congress can be expected to cut programs for housing and education. And if confirmed by the Senate, the head of Health and Human Services Department will be Robert F. Kennedy, who says “there is no safe vaccine,” could undermine public health. AI (artificial intelligence) has already begun to transform all forms of work, economic systems, and surveillance and intelligence, but Trump has no clear program to deal with these new developments.

Most dangerously for everyone in America and around the world, Trump will undo the Green New Deal embodied in President Joe Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act and as his slogan “Drill, baby, drill” suggests, encourage the expansion of petroleum production, worsening the world climate crisis.

In international politics, Trump—like Biden—sees a contest with China for world domination, fundamentally an economic contest, but with increasing tensions that forebode military conflict over the South China Sea or Taiwan. He has chosen Senator Marco Rubio, a strong critic and opponent of China, as his Secretary of State. Trump has promised to impose enormous tariffs on Chinese goods and is not averse to a trade war, though it could disrupt the world economic system.

On other international issues, Trump has promised to end the Russian war on Ukraine. He says he will cut aid to Ukraine, which could force on Ukraine a treaty in which it would have to give up about 20 percent of its territory—a victory for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Trump also calls for ending the Israel-Gaza war “in any possible way,” though in fact he is a strong supporter of Netanyahu who he told in October, “Do what you have to do” to end the war. Trump will support Israel’s wars and land grabs in the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, and will back its attacks on Yemen and even Iran.

Just as the Keynesian welfare states of the post-war period were transformed by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as we moved into an era of neoliberal globalization, so now that era is ending too, though where the world is going remains unclear. Toward fascist barbarism, or is there still hope for democracy and socialism? In such a period of change, opposition movements can grow rapidly and progressive and even revolutionary change is possible. The overthrow of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and the impeachment of South Korean president Yoon Suk Yeol

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show how fast things can change. We in the United States can expect rapid changes under Trump, leading to resistance by unions and social movements, and we can work to turn the resistance in the direction of democracy, justice, and socialism.

*5 January 2025*

*PS:*

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