

## One Year of President Trump: Views from Around the World

*By GMF Experts*

**WASHINGTON:** This American president, like his predecessor, says it is time for nation building at home rather than inspiring them to a cause greater than themselves.

**BRUSSELS:** There is a new sense of confidence in Brussels, but policymakers and observers fear that decades of relative stability, already challenged by new global forces, are being put at further risk by the mercurial behavior of the Trump administration.

**BERLIN:** For the optimists in Germany, Trump is a *sui generis* president and his foreign policy is an aberration. But for the pessimists, he is the new normal.

**PARIS:** Trump has not disrupted relations between France and the United States. But maintaining stability may become more challenging in the coming year.

**WARSAW:** Despite mixed messages about NATO's Article 5, the facts on the ground show a robust and strengthening security relationship between Poland and the United States.

**ROME:** Despite the initial skepticism that followed the election of Donald Trump, it has been business as usual in relations between Italy and the United States.

**ASIA:** 2018 is expected to be the year when things finally heat up on the economic front with China.

Since the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, the world has been struggling to understand the administration and to figure out how to best deal with it. GMF experts from around the world assess the administration's first year — and what they expect from it in 2018.

### Disengagement in Washington

*By Jamie Fly*

One year into the Trump presidency, many American allies and partners are asking questions about the sustainability of American leadership and the wisdom of American intentions. Fears focus on the destructive potential of Trump's foreign policy: the threat to the liberal international order, the challenge of an "America First" trade agenda to the global trading system, the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Climate agreement and the potential scrapping of the Iran nuclear deal, the damage to U.S. institutions and agencies such as the State Department. But it is easy to forget that many American partners and allies across multiple regions of the world were already frustrated after eight years of President Barack Obama — in large part to a perception of U.S. disengagement and retreat.

The Trump administration would argue that it has reversed this trend. It has shored up relationships from the Gulf to Israel to India and East Asia. The use of chemical weapons by Bashar al-Assad was met with cruise missile strikes. After years of talk, the self-pro-



claimed Islamic State was chased out of its capital in Raqqa. Strategic patience on North Korea has been replaced with a policy that makes it perhaps the top national security priority. In a break with past administrations, Russia and China were declared strategic competitors. Yet there are also significant continuities between the foreign policies of Obama and Trump. In particular, under both presidents, the United States has become more cautious about the use of military force and more selective about when and where to intervene.

Under Trump, the United States has essentially become irrelevant to the conflict in Syria — one that will define the Middle East strategic landscape and European security for years to come. Across the Middle East, Iran has been allowed to expand its influence and increase its aggression and Russia has solidified its renewed status as a regional power. In Asia, more confrontational rhetoric toward Beijing has been coupled with a failure to complete in Asia's great economic power game. Despite increased support to American allies in Europe, there are renewed questions about America's long-term commitment to European security. Perhaps most importantly, this American president, like his predecessor, says it is time for nation building at home rather than inspiring them to a cause greater than themselves.

Trump may change direction — either in response to crises or on his own. But if he does not, U.S. allies will be forced to hedge or seek new partnerships. Rival powers will be emboldened and take actions that undermine American interests as they push alternative models of governance. Perhaps more important than the Trump response in the near term will be how the American people respond to what will be an increasingly complicated and chaotic global landscape. If its first year is any indication, the Trump presidency may be remembered less for its actions and more for its continuation of a trend in which leaders are guided by the false narrative that inaction and disengage-

ment by the United States will make the world more stable and prosperous.

## Dismay in Brussels

*By Ian Lesser*

From the day Trump was elected, European leaders have been trying to decode developments in America. One year on from the inauguration, there is dismay in Brussels. Europeans are now a little more relaxed about the solidity of the U.S. security guarantee and are relieved that there is also nothing revolutionary on the horizon with Moscow. Leaders have “priced in” Washington's push on European defense spending — itself nothing new, even if the language is now more assertive. But on virtually every other front, from the Iran deal to climate diplomacy to the Middle East peace process, the Trump administration has challenged cherished European policy interests. The rhetoric from Washington on immigration, and the events in Charlottesville and elsewhere have also held up a mirror to Europe's own struggle with xenophobia, nationalism and populism.

Europeans prize predictability from Washington and want to believe that, policy differences aside, transatlantic affinity and personal relationships provide a steady flywheel for relations. But these fundamental elements are now in doubt. Key diplomatic positions remain unfilled (notably the position of U.S. ambassador to the EU). EU officials are looking to reinforce partnerships with other actors in the United States — key states, Congress, business, and institutions outside government. There is a new sense of confidence in Brussels. But policymakers and observers here fear that decades of relative stability, already challenged by new global forces, are being put at further risk by the mercurial behavior of the Trump administration. The real question is: How will it react in a serious security or financial crisis? No one in Brussels has any real idea.

## Uncertainty in Berlin

*By Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff*

For Germans, the question was whether the Trump presidency would be merely bad, or catastrophic, for Germany. One year in, uncertainty about Trump has given way to competition of perceptions about transatlantic relations. While the optimists claim their worst fears have not come to pass, the pessimists think that the reality is actually worse than anyone could have expected. In their view, reality is so bad that Trump can only be a *sui generis* president and important elements of his foreign policy are an aberration. While the optimists do not take such a grim view on the current state of affairs, they also believe that Donald Trump is the new normal of U.S. foreign policy. The debate about Trump, and what he means for transatlantic relations, will shape Germany's own future foreign policy. In particular, if he is seen as part of a structural shift in U.S. foreign policy, Germany will have to start contingency planning for a "post-American" Europe.

The optimists argue that few of Trump's initial ideas have become policy: Neither Germany nor the EU nor China find themselves in the midst of a trade war with the United States. The U.S. economy is continuing to grow at a healthy pace. Donald Trump did not destroy confidence. After initial reluctance, the president has endorsed NATO and its mutual defense clause, has appointed a cabinet that understands the value of the Alliance, and has even increased U.S. commitment to the reassurance initiative on NATO's Eastern Flank. Trump has not embraced the Russian president and has not sought a big power accommodation at the expense of smaller nations. In sum, this group of analysts says, focus on what Trump does, not on what he says.

The skeptics say that Trump has abdicated America's role as the leader of the free world, offended traditional allies, has given up support for democracy and

thus opened the doors to authoritarian rulers all over the world. He has turned against the rules based global order that respects liberal values. He abandoned international agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Paris Climate accord, and the Iran nuclear deal. By announcing to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, he has recklessly increased tensions in the Middle East and minimized the chances of peace between Israel and Palestine. He had played a dangerous tit-for-tat game with an unpredictable dictator and helped to bring the world to the brink of nuclear war. What else do you need, the skeptics ask, to see the clear and present danger that this president represents?

## Opportunism in Paris

*By Martin Quencez and Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer*

During Trump's first year of presidency, France's priority has been to preserve cooperation with Washington on key French security priorities — particularly the Sahel and the fight against terrorism. President Emmanuel Macron has aimed to opportunistically fill the leadership void created by Brexit, the political weakening of Angela Merkel and the unpredictability of President Trump. On climate change, but also in the Middle East and with China, Macron has taken over the mediating role from which Washington has been retreating. While Trump's erratic tweets have undermined U.S. diplomacy and negotiation opportunities, Macron has reaffirmed France's diplomatic tradition of talking to everyone, including Iran, Russia and Turkey, and is actively engaging with China on the need for more reciprocity.

Despite disagreements over policy, Macron has also succeeded in building a strong personal relationship with Trump. He did not directly confront Trump but rather sought to circumvent him and explaining their differences. Developing a personal bond with the U.S. president did not help in shaping American policy — despite French opposition, Trump withdrew the

United States from the Paris climate agreement, undermined the Iran nuclear deal, and decided to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. But it did strengthen France's position in Europe and in the world.

In other words: So far, Trump has not disrupted relations between France and the United States. But maintaining stability may become more challenging in the coming year. Trump's "America First" discourse, translated into economic and trade policy, could lead to new measures directly affecting European companies and markets, which would trigger strong reactions from France. Trump's deep opposition to multilateralism could also provoke new tensions as France relies on multilateral institutions to promote its foreign policy, especially in Africa. Finally an international crisis with Russia, China, or Iran could put Macron in a difficult situation if France is perceived as the main mediator between Europe and the U.S. president.

## Positivity in Warsaw

*By Michał Baranowski*

President Trump is viewed much more positively in Poland and several other countries in Central Europe than in Western Europe. First of all, Poland focuses on security and defense cooperation. Despite Trump's tweets, mixed messages about NATO's Article 5, and troublingly positive attitude toward Putin, the facts on the ground show a robust and strengthening security relationship between Poland and the United States. The Trump administration has implemented — and in some cases strengthened — decisions initiated or taken by the Obama administration, such as further increasing funding for the European Deterrence Initiative. NATO stationed four battalion-sized groups in Poland and the Baltic states and the United States has placed an additional Armored Brigade Combat Team in Poland to operate throughout NATO's Eastern Flank.

Second, the reset in relations with Russia that many feared has not materialized. Although there is awareness in Warsaw that the administration initially planned to lift sanctions, the political price of a rapprochement with Russia was too high and is likely to happen any time soon. In addition, the rhetoric of Secretary James Mattis, Secretary Rex Tillerson, and National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster are reassuring for the region. Third, many in Poland appreciate President Trump's visit to Poland in July last year. His visit and the speech by the Warsaw Uprising monument was seen as recognition for Poland and its history. Trump's messages, for example on immigration, are also sometimes similar to that of the Polish government and resonate well with at least part of the Polish electorate.

There is also an expectation in Warsaw that the strong security relationship will continue in the future. The Polish government is likely to finalize several defense contracts with a big American component sometime in the near future. There are two concerns in Poland about the Trump administration. The first, rarely voiced in public, concerns the future of U.S. leadership — what effect will Trump have in the long term on U.S. standing in the world and on the rule-based international system that in the end is crucial also for Poland's security and prosperity? The second is that issues of values and the health of democratic institutions should be higher on the agenda of bilateral relations. But as long as Russia remains authoritarian and aggressive power, Poland will continue to focus on security.

## Doubts in Rome

*By Giovanna De Maio*

Despite the initial skepticism that followed the election of Donald Trump, it has been business as usual in relations between Italy and the United States. During Italian Prime minister Paolo Gentiloni's visit to Washington last April, and Trump's visit to Rome and the

G7 in Sicily in May, Trump stressed the importance of Italy's role in ensuring security in the Mediterranean and in anti-terrorism operations (Italy is the second-largest contributor of troops to the conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan). Nevertheless, Trump's ambiguous declarations about NATO, Libya, and the United States' role in international security structures produced a sense of uncertainty and cast doubts on the future of Italy's trust in its historical transatlantic partner.

Trump's statement at a press conference with Gentiloni last May that he did not "see a role for the U.S. in Libya" — Italy's highest foreign policy priority — led Italian officials to mentally prepare for a gradual U.S. disengagement from the region. To fill the gap, Rome is looking at cooperating with France and exploiting Russia's leverage to ensure peace and security in the country. Italy also just launched a military mission in Niger in accordance with American and French interests in the stabilization of the Sahel region. At the multilateral level, Italy did not welcome President Trump's decision on the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and joined other countries in a declaration against it at the United Nations.

The election of Trump has not produced a significant change in economic cooperation between Italy and the United States. Trump's decision to drop the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership has not produced much resentment — experts predicted some sectors of the Italian economy like agriculture and pharmaceuticals might suffer from U.S. competition. But Trump's renegotiation of NAFTA in a more protectionist direction is likely to have negative impact because 11 percent of Italian exports go to North America — the second-largest market for Italian products. If the United States were to withdraw from the Iranian nuclear deal, as Trump has threatened, it would also have repercussions for Italian business, which has benefited from the lifting of sanctions against Iran under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Whatever the outcome of the Italian election in the

spring, there is unlikely to be a dramatic change in the partnership with the United States. But it would be natural for Italy to seek other alliances to protect national interests in case the United States under Trump does disengage from the Mediterranean. In 2018, Italy holds the presidency of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe, which will be an opportunity to push for a debate on the Mediterranean. Moreover, Italy could explore the opportunity to play a more political role in Ukraine through supporting the Normandy format and perhaps pushing for the lifting of sanctions toward Russia, focusing more on the content of the Minsk agreement rather than in the principle of punishing Moscow for the annexation of Crimea.

## Relief in Asia

By Andrew Small

A year ago, the major powers in Asia viewed the prospects of a Trump administration with some trepidation — Tokyo worried about Trump's history of Japan-bashing, New Delhi was concerned that the nontransactional basis of its strategic partnership with the United States was in danger, and Beijing was anxious about a trade war and feared that the new president was ready to overturn convention in U.S. dealings with Taiwan. The worst of those fears have been allayed. The withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership still leaves the United States without a positive vision for trade in Asia and Trump's speech at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in November received a cold reception. But the imperative of dealing with a rising China ensured that U.S. coordination with friends and allies in the region has only continued to deepen: The administration's concept of a "free and open Indo-Pacific" privileges India and had its intellectual origins partly in Japan.

Yet Beijing has so far also been relieved. The new U.S. National Security Strategy describes China as a "revisionist power" using "technology, propaganda, and coercion to shape a world antithetical" to U.S. inter-

ests and values. China–U.S. competition is expected to intensify. But it has so far been tempered by the urgent need for cooperation in dealing with the North Korean nuclear program. Although allies in Asia have some apprehensions over evident personal eccentricities in the handling of such a high stakes risk, officials understand that much of the threatening language and unpredictability is deliberately cultivated and designed to put pressure on Beijing. The administration has also scored clear achievements at the UN Security Council and beyond in marshalling support for toughened sanctions.

However, 2018 is expected to be the year when things finally hot up on the economic front with China. Two major U.S. government investigations on steel and intellectual property theft report imminently and could lead to the imposition of punitive tariffs. Given that many U.S. partners share concerns on trade with China, there is considerable scope to pursue a common response with the likes of the EU and Japan. But if the administration decides to go down a non-WTO-compliant route — especially one that hits other trading partners as collateral damage — their fears over the impact on the global trade order may outweigh their fears about Chinese economic practices. The question of whether the Trump administration can build coalitions of countries alarmed about various facets of China’s rise will be almost a big a test as dealing with North Korea.

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