



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Is there a strategy for Trump's Asia tour?



US President Donald Trump is embarking on a major Asian tour at the end of this week, encouraged by several significant diplomatic successes and further encouraged by the perception that his restrictive trade policy is yielding results.

However, the upcoming meetings with Asian leaders may confront him with a different reality: what Trump regards as historic diplomatic achievements, for which he believes he was unjustly denied the Nobel Prize, have not particularly impressed his counterparts in Asia.

Moreover, a trade policy based on conflict through tariffs rather than agreements is not the path that the growing Asian economies wish to follow, even if it means distancing themselves from the American market and investors and seeking alternatives within their own region.

The unpredictability that characterises Trump's second presidential term is clearly evident in the days leading up to his **Asian tour**.

Although this is strategically his most important trip abroad since the start of his term, there have been no timely, official announcements regarding the tour, including the topics and objectives the American leader intends to pursue.

This raises the question of whether Trump and his administration have any coherent strategy towards Asian partners, or whether everything will be left to spontaneous decisions, improvisation, a tendency to make short-term deals, and a focus on generating the most favourable publicity.

Self-confidence

Trump is embarking on a journey marked by self-confidence as a diplomat and even more so as a deal-maker. He will visit Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea, energised by the recently agreed end to the conflict in **Gaza**, as well as the expectations surrounding

upcoming **talks with Vladimir Putin** aimed at paving the way to ending the war in Ukraine.

However, the much-publicised ceasefire in Gaza, announced in the presence of numerous world leaders in Sharm el-Sheikh, remains far from fully implemented, with ongoing conflicts and many unresolved issues regarding its implementation.

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Even greater uncertainty surrounds the forthcoming round of Trump-Putin talks, with few optimistic that the Budapest summit will mark a turning point towards peace.

Therefore, Trump's diplomatic self-confidence, coupled with frustration over missing out on the Nobel Prize, is unlikely to impress his Asian counterparts.

Their primary concern is the problems within their own region, particularly regarding security and, even more so, international trade, where they view Trump and his policies as the main source of disruption.

Hopes and caution regarding meeting with Xi

Arguably the most important aspect of Trump's tour is his meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, expected next week in South Korea during the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.

The meeting between the leaders of the world's two largest economies has not yet been confirmed, nor are the topics for discussion clear. However, there are numerous issues – certainly too many to be resolved, even openly, in a single meeting.

"I have a very good relationship with President

Xi of China," **Trump said** last Sunday. Yet, even if the personal relations between the two leaders are indeed positive, the weight of the issues burdening the two countries exceeds what can be resolved through good personal relations alone.

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If a meeting between Trump and Xi does take place, it will occur under the shadow of the American president's latest threat to impose additional **tariffs of 100%** on Chinese imports as early as 1 November, should Beijing not relinquish control over the export of rare earths.

Should the meeting occur, the American president has high expectations—"I think we're going to end up having a fantastic deal with China. It's going to be fantastic for the entire world."

However, among the United States' partners in East Asia, there is understandable concern that, if US-China negotiations do not yield results, they will face even greater difficulties, caught in the conflict between the two largest economies on which they depend.

Expectations of the new Japanese Prime Minister

The new Japanese Prime Minister, Sanae Takaichi, is also focused on the anticipated meeting between Trump and Xi. She will make her debut on the major diplomatic stage and meet with Donald Trump next week.

Her status as the political heir of the late Shinzo Abe, a close ally and partner of Trump, will benefit the new prime minister in this context.



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However, pragmatism will require the new prime minister to seize the opportunity and, in her discussions with Trump, possibly initiate a review of the agreements she has inherited.

This refers to the agreement from July, under which Japan, facing the threat of increased export tariffs, agreed to invest **\$550 billion** in the American economy.

Speaking at the end of September during the campaign for the leadership of the LDP, Sanae **Takaichi** stated that the future Japanese government, regardless of its leader, would implement the agreement with the US. However, regarding the obligation to invest \$550 billion in America, she added, "If in practice something comes up that's really unfair and hurts Japan's national interests, we must speak out firmly, and there is also the possibility of renegotiation."

One of the uncertainties surrounding Trump's upcoming tour arises from unofficial suggestions that, while in the region, he could also meet with the leader of North Korea, **Kim Jong Un**.

Although the chances of such a meeting are currently low, the unpredictability and improvisation characteristic of Trump and his administration mean that this possibility cannot be entirely ruled out.

At present, Trump has an interest in meeting the North Korean leader. Media coverage of

such an event would be highly valuable to him, serving as evidence that he is a genuine global peacemaker and that he was undeservedly denied the Nobel Peace Prize, which he reportedly took hard.

At the same time, with another meeting with Trump – following the two meetings during the previous term of the American president – the isolated North Korean leader would return strongly to the global spotlight as an acceptable interlocutor.