



By: **Ferry Biedermann**

The impact of Trump's winning streak



Things appear to be going very well for Donald Trump, going into the second year of his second term as US president. He has had a string of successes and good luck that has helped him to project himself as a winner, which appears to be a defining preoccupation at this point.

In his first term he was often seen as being stuck in Washington politics or restrained both by more experienced advisers and international allies. In his second term, Trump is unbound and bent on – often literally – stamping his name on history.

This will affect both how his policies reshape the United States long-term and how his influence will be felt internationally. Not least in how his brand of politics – now seen as winning – will be copied and emulated abroad.

For this, the impact of his current policies need not even be consequential or long-lasting, it just needs to be highly visible and dominate the news cycle.

The abduction of Venezuela's president, **Nicolás Maduro**, and his wife, will probably do more for Trump's image than for real change on the ground.

The current anti-regime demonstrations in Iran, only very partly and speculatively spurred by US sanctions and last year's bombing, also make him look strong and on the right side of history.

Weather on Greenland, Ukraine, Gaza or any other international issue, Trump speaks and the rest of the world quakes. It's a projection of power beyond that attempted by any recent American president and beyond the scope of any of the country's rivals.

Add to that the pyrotechnics of tariffs, the threats to NATO, Europe and Canada, and a pattern of not just bullying but of emphatically and performatively needing to come out on top is emerging.

The politics of winning

The international picture is mirrored domestically. Muscular and highly visible policies, such as putting the National Guard on the streets of American cities, the ICE crackdown, the DOGE exercise, prosecutions of perceived adversaries, the One Big Beautiful Bill, even remodelling the White House and adding his name to the Kennedy Center, all point to one overriding aim: establishing him as a winner.

This extends into the remarkable level of cashing in on his presidency that he and his family and associates are openly doing.

He is erasing traces of his less than successful record as a tycoon by making the presidency into an extension of his business interests and turning huge and visible profits.

For American politics this works on manifold levels. First of all, it satisfies his base, even the personal enrichment. These are people who admire money and the seemingly lunatic schemes to get it, such as the Elon Musk-promoted Dogecoin and, of course, Trump coin.

Secondly, even if later in his term some of these domestic policies unravel, encounter more resistance or backfire, the immediate aim is to ride high for the November midterm elections.

November is still some way off, but for now, the Trump playbook appears to be successful

Despite the Democrats holding the edge over the Republicans in the **polls**, this seems to be working. When looking at likely outcomes, the House is still a toss-up and might very well remain Republican. The Senate is not even in play for the Democrats.

True, November is still some way off, but for now, the Trump playbook appears to be successful.

Longer term, the current manic and hardball drive to make a mark might partly serve both

to consolidate and hide the much more drastic and enduring changes that he made in his first four years.

Chief among these is his packing of the judiciary, including the Supreme Court, and his tax-cutting package, now made permanent by the One Big Beautiful Bill.

The latter will lead to underfunded federal government spending for decades to come, much in the way California's Proposition 13 did at the state level from the 1970s onwards.

This will further decrease people's support for a government structure that has less money to support its citizens with things such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, poverty relief, etc.

Testing the Trump effect abroad

Internationally, we might see a reversal of the anti-Trump effect on foreign elections that was marked by crucial Liberal and Labor wins in Canada and Australia at the outset of his second term.

The first test might come very soon, with **Portugal's presidential elections** on Sunday. It will very likely mark the first time that a far-right candidate, Chega's André Ventura, will proceed to the run-off.

Significantly, the explicitly pro-Trump Ventura was the only major candidate in Sunday's polls not to condemn the capture of Maduro.

Still, Ventura's chances in the second round are, for now, not rated highly, and the impact of Trump on the eventual outcome of the election is doubtful.

As far as the EU is concerned, that could be different in one of the most consequential races in Europe this year: Hungary's parliamentary elections in April.

The openly Trump-supported Viktor Orbán is facing an unexpectedly stiff challenge from the EU-supported Péter Magyar

Here, the openly Trump-supported **Viktor Orbán** is facing an unexpectedly stiff challenge from the EU-supported Péter Magyar.

For the first time in 16 years, Orbán is significantly trailing the opposition, and he can be expected to pull out all stops to overturn this deficit.

Part of this could be a state visit by the US president in the immediate lead-up to the elections. Orbán's meeting with the president in Washington in November is said to have shored up his support somewhat.

Trump's recent shows of strength could help Orbán convince voters that their best bet of being on the right side of the Ukraine conflict still rests with him. But other domestic issues might this time outweigh the importance of Trump's backing.

A defeat for his ally in Hungary would put a serious spanner in Trump's policy towards the EU. Conversely, it would remove a serious EU irritant.

Netanyahu remains a firm ally

While the looming 2027 presidential elections in France can have an even larger impact on the EU if the far-right comes out on top, this is less likely to be affected directly by Trump's influence.

The French on either side of the political divide are no fans of Trump.



Like Trump, Netanyahu has staked his fortune on being seen as a winner, despite a huge national security failure

One country where Trump might play an outsize role in this year's election, and where his actions, especially in the Middle East, could have an effect, is Israel.

Despite tensions, Benjamin Netanyahu remains a firm ally. The American president has even called for him to be pre-emptively pardoned in his **corruption trial**.

Trump is also seen as having been crucial to bringing home the remaining hostages in Gaza. His continued support for Netanyahu is bound to affect the final tally.

Were the US to be effective in supporting the demonstrators in Iran, or undermining the regime in some other way, this would generate additional support for him and Netanyahu.

Like Trump, Netanyahu has staked his fortune on being seen as a winner, despite a huge national security failure, being mired in corruption charges and at the price of demolishing his own country's institutions and democratic system.

Each in their own way has been remarkably successful in spinning some losing propositions into a Teflon sheen of invincibility. The question is how long this can last and what will happen to their countries and the world in the meantime.