

The Success of Donald Trump

Donald Trump avoided a “shutdown,” the budget paralysis so feared by U.S. presidents because it erodes their popularity every time it happens. He managed to get some Democrats to abandon their opposition and vote for a bill that enables massive public spending cuts—something that goes against the very DNA of the party of Roosevelt, Kennedy, Clinton, and Obama.

In the same week, he announced the closure of part of the public media, a decision that, under normal circumstances, would have sparked outraged protests in the streets. The few demonstrations that did occur in recent days were against layoffs in the federal government led by billionaire Elon Musk. And they barely made any noise.

But perhaps what stands out the most to anyone with even a minimal knowledge of history is how Trump has managed to gain support despite his explicit rapprochement with Russia—one of the most resisted countries among Americans after nearly half a century of Cold War confrontation and a nation that Washington sanctioned over the war in Ukraine. Yet this move has generated little to no reaction among American citizens.

How does Trump manage to rally support while implementing unpopular measures and making decisions that would have been absolutely unthinkable not long ago—some of which are even impacting the country’s economy?



The answer is that Donald Trump has turned the United States into a national “cause.” Indeed, everything he does and says, explicitly or implicitly, is framed as an effort to restore the country to the global superpower status that, in his view, it has lost.

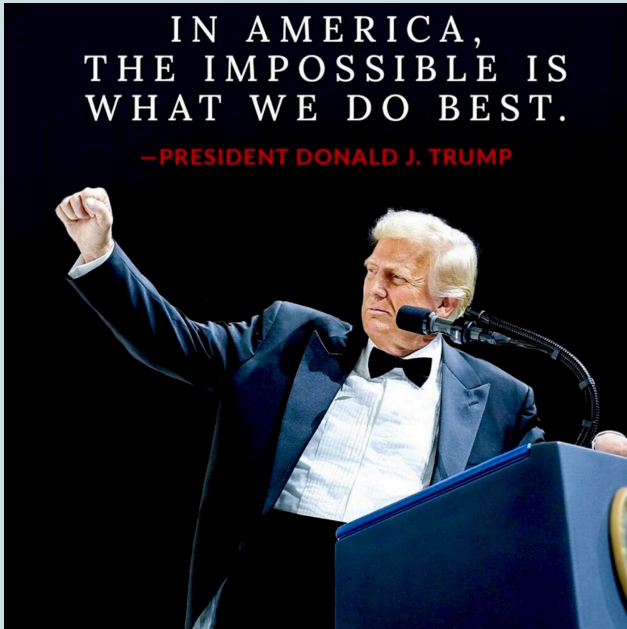
His message is similar to that of his first campaign, his first presidency, and the campaign that brought him back to the White House. But now, the Republican magnate has solidified this idea among a hardcore base of supporters united behind his slogan, “Make America Great Again.” He has turned an idea into a political movement, transformed a vision into a direction, and in the process, he has colonized the Republican Party and subdued many Democrats who fear the electoral consequences they might face in their districts if they appear too “oppositional” to such a popular and credit-laden president.

Trump is not subtle. He is openly encroaching on sacred rights in the United States, such as freedom of expression, which is protected by none other than the First Amendment of the Constitution. It is the First Amendment for a reason—because of the fundamental importance given to this right at the very birth of the nation.

The decision to limit certain media outlets’ access to White House coverage is a direct restriction on this constitutional principle. The financial blow he has dealt to public media through his budget cuts further exposes his goal: to minimize, and if possible, eliminate criticism of his policies. Because in the battle for the “cause,” anything goes.



[The Success of Donald Trump]



Source: www.instagram.com/realdonaldtrump/

On social media, these decisions—both symbolical and practically significant, as they restrict Americans’ access to information about the president’s actions—were celebrated by an army of bots, but also by ordinary citizens rallying behind this messianic leader. Let’s not forget that Trump believes God saved his life when he was shot in Pennsylvania so that he, in turn, could save the United States.

The media became enemies of Donald Trump, and now it seems that part of the information coming from the White House may be channeled through influencers—obviously, supporters of the president.

That doesn’t sound like a democratic practice. It isn’t. But Trump has once again succeeded in gaining the acceptance of many Americans in the name of the “cause.”

Always in campaign mode, he is reshaping the structure of the federal government. With logistical support from his latest ally, Elon Musk, he dismissed tens of thousands of officials. Worse still, he dismantled institutions on which thousands of people in vulnerable countries depended for access to medicine or food.



USAID, the premier U.S. aid agency, was not just a political influence tool for Washington. It was a life-line in many countries that relied on support from the world’s leading power, which, incidentally, owns the dollar-printing machine. That agency vanished in one of Trump’s first radical measures, executed by Musk.

The U.S. will no longer pay for other countries’ problems. The issue is that helping with those problems sustained the image of the U.S. as the beacon of Western democracy for decades. By withdrawing, just as it did from international organizations like the World Health Organization, it leaves a vacuum. The ability to maintain influence—direct or indirect—over lifestyles and democratic values fades away.

A similar pattern is emerging in the White House’s approach to trade partners who are also close allies of Washington, such as Canada and Mexico. The case of China is different because it is a rival power, and the rationale behind Trump’s trade policies is clear: pure competition.

However, Canada and Mexico are integrated into well-established supply and production chains, regulated by a trade agreement that has been in place for over 30 years. This agreement was renegotiated during Trump’s first presidency—when he called it the “greatest trade deal in history”—and includes periodic review clauses. The next one, before Trump blew it up, was scheduled for 2026.



[The Success of Donald Trump]



The goal is not only to “protect” American industry from countries that, according to Trump, have taken advantage of trade with the U.S.—which, to be fair, has a significantly unbalanced trade deficit with many nations. There is also a secondary, less explicit but equally important goal: projecting strength. To his electoral base, Trump presents himself as a leader in command, unafraid to confront enemies or break ties with allies in service of the “cause.” Notably, most of these conflicts are of his own making, so it would be surprising if he didn’t continue them.

The White House has also declared objectives to reclaim control of the Panama Canal and to acquire Greenland—an expansionist mindset reminiscent of past U.S. policies when it purchased territories from other countries. The stated reason is national security; the real objective is to increase influence in both regions. In Greenland’s case, unlike Panama, which is a sovereign nation, things could escalate further over time. The island’s geostrategic importance and its natural resources, increasingly accessible due to melting ice, hold significant value in Trump’s vision—especially given Russia and China’s growing presence in Arctic trade routes.



Trump, Greenland. - Source: Wikimedia Commons



“Terrorism Confinement Center” in El Salvador. - Source: Wikimedia Commons

Perhaps the pinnacle of this Trump-centered strategy occurred recently when his administration sent migrants accused of being part of the Venezuelan criminal organization Tren de Aragua to a prison in El Salvador.

This could have been seen as a standard bilateral agreement if it hadn’t been accompanied by a deliberate act of public humiliation. Upon arriving at the detention center—built by Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele to imprison gang members—the prisoners were subjected to the now-routine public shaming.

The public display of war prisoners during a conflict violates the Geneva Conventions. In this case, given that Trump invoked an 18th-century wartime law to declare these individuals enemies on U.S. soil, the comparison is entirely valid.

The clear message: the U.S. will do whatever it takes to achieve its goals, and threats—whether tariff-related, military, or legal—are endless.

Even Vladimir Putin’s Russia, despite Trump’s clear alignment with Moscow in an effort to end the costly war in Ukraine, has not escaped his tariff threats. That alone speaks volumes.



[The Success of Donald Trump]



Zelensky, Trump, and Vance meeting in the Oval Office of the White House in February 2025. - Source: Wikimedia Commons

In a staged spectacle designed for the cameras, Trump and his vice president, J.D. Vance, attempted to humiliate Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. This episode has been condemned by columnists, analysts, historians, and democratic leaders worldwide. Though it will be recorded in history books, it only serves to further erode the U.S.'s credibility as a reliable ally.

For two weeks, Trump suspended military and intelligence aid to Ukraine, allowing Russia to make significant advances in the Kursk region—an area where Ukraine had gained territory it hoped to use as leverage in future peace talks.



Vladimir Putin. - Source: Wikimedia Commons



Trump's pressure tactics succeeded in forcing Ukraine to accept a 30-day ceasefire and an agreement allowing U.S. companies to exploit its mineral resources as repayment for three years of military aid. The deal amounts to outright plunder, reminiscent of colonial times—especially considering that much of the financial assistance Ukraine received was funneled into U.S. arms manufacturers.

However, Trump cannot pressure Russia. He holds discussions with Putin in which Ukraine is notably absent, negotiating Ukraine's future as if he were its president. So far, the only concession he has secured from the Russian leader is a promise not to bomb Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Europe, weakened by internal divisions, ideological rifts among governments, questions about the EU project itself, Brexit, and a growing dependence on the U.S. for defense, is attempting to craft a new strategy for the future.

The continent is now working on an €800 billion rearmament plan aimed at strengthening its defense capabilities against the Russian threat. The exact strategy remains unclear.

Trump's handling of the Ukraine war once again destroys the idea of the U.S. as a reliable ally.

And while Trump's ability to influence global affairs is undeniable, destruction—of relationships, trade agreements, and international norms—is always easier than rebuilding.

His back-and-forth on tariffs has created turmoil that has not only disrupted global trade—forcing some companies to overstock while others cut contracts—but has also generated deep uncertainty in stock markets.

It's as if Trump had thrown a boomerang.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was the latest institution to release forecasts for this year and the next, and its conclusions are clear: Trump's policies will harm global economic activity.



[The Success of Donald Trump]



New York Stock Exchange. - Source: Wikimedia Commons

The projected global GDP growth has been revised down from 3.3% for this year, based on late 2024 data, to 3.1%. The U.S. lost 0.2 percentage points, falling to 2.2%. And in 2026, it will be even worse, with growth dropping to 1.6%. In 2024, the economy grew at a rate of 2.8%.

Canada will barely exceed half a percentage point, and Mexico is set to enter a recession—a word that is also increasingly heard in the U.S. and has the Federal Reserve on edge.

The idea we presented in the latest Latam Political Overview—that Donald Trump's United States is pursuing a new global order—remains in motion. With some setbacks. But with a president who continues to be aggressive both domestically and internationally. He is willing to “burn the ships,” as the saying goes, to reshuffle the deck and start over.



His Achilles' heel is the economy. The U.S. has mid-term legislative elections coming up. Trump promised to build the most powerful economy in history and put so much money in Americans' pockets that they wouldn't know what to do with it. This statement is almost literal.

But the outlook is far from promising.

Declining consumer confidence, the possibility of the country slipping into recession, and fears of rising unemployment in certain regions due to the abrupt decisions of the DOGE—the unconventional Department of Government Efficiency led by Musk—are all factors to watch in the coming months.

Trump doesn't have unlimited time to deliver results, and at the end of the day, voters' wallets always speak at the polls. ●



AI-generated image promoting the Department of Government Efficiency, published by the head of the department, Elon Musk. - Source: Wikimedia Commons

The information available in this presentation is for information purposes only. LATAM ConsultUs' information, recommendations, analysis, conclusions and ideas are merely its opinions, and consequently shall not be interpreted in any way as investment advice, offers or invitations to sell or buy or subscribe to any product or service. The use of information, recommendations, analysis and ideas of LATAM ConsultUs are the sole responsibility of those who choose to use them, and thus LATAM ConsultUs shall not be liable in any way for the financial and/or economic performance and/or in kind and/or in any amount over investments or trades carried out using the information, recommendations, analysis, conclusions and ideas provided by LATAM ConsultUs. The value of the products can go up as well as down as a consequence of market fluctuations. Latam ConsultUs cannot guarantee that the information contained in this presentation is precise, complete or timely since it is only accurate as of the date of publication; as are the prices of the products which are solely indicative, and they should not be relied on to provide advice to your clients. contactus@latamconsultus.com