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## PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE TRANSATLANTIC AGENDA

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The polls in the race for the White House show that the two main candidates, former President Donald Trump and the Democrats' Kamala Harris, are running neck and neck. The surprise effect of the assassination attempts on the former and the rapid nomination of the latter (following President Joe Biden's withdrawal) has subsided, and the presidential election is too close to call.

The battle continues in a few key states, and it looks likely it will be another case of the winner of the popular vote failing to secure the electoral college majority required to become president.

This Nota Internacional is the product of a collective effort on the part of the CIDOB research team to analyse the main issues on the transatlantic agenda that will surely be impacted by the result.

### **Introduction: Harris and Trump, the known and the unknown**

**Pol Morillas**, Director of CIDOB

Estimating the implications of the US presidential elections for the transatlantic relations recently, a senior European Union (EU) official paraphrased former US Defense Secretary **Donald Rumsfeld**: should Kamala Harris win, we will remain in the realms of "the known

unknown" while if Donald Trump clinches victory, we would enter "the unknown known".

We know that Harris stands for continuity in transatlantic relations as the Democratic Party sees them today. The alliance between the United States and the EU remains a fundamental pillar of the international liberal order. It is also the world's biggest bi-regional cooperation framework, both in economic and political terms and in terms of security and values. Western support for Ukraine was key to the failure of the Kremlin's initial intentions, but we know that assisting third countries is increasingly unpopular among certain sectors of the Democratic base, for whom helping disadvantaged communities comes before spending on foreign policy. Without having twisted Israel's arm over its regional offensive in the Middle East, the United States and Europe agree on the need for a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon. We also know that Harris is a champion of multilateral cooperation frameworks and of women's and minority rights.

What we do not know is to what extent Harris will depart from her predecessor's agenda. The vice president is no child of the Cold War, as Biden certainly is. In the pursuit of foreign policy, she tends to put US interests before ideological frameworks and before an outlook defined by the **democracy-authoritarianism** cleavage. Relations with the EU may increasingly pass through the strainer of economic protectionism and the transactionalism of US interests, with more or less explicit calls to increase the European contribution to NATO and defence spending, or for the EU's relations with China to fall in line with the de-risking agenda pushed by the White House.

Harris is also likely to seek to bolster "minilateral" partnerships with likeminded allies in the Indo-

Pacific, such as the Quad or AUKUS, to the detriment of broader and more multilateral regional cooperation frameworks. Divergence with the EU in specific regulatory sectors, from the climate agenda, energy and sustainability to technology and artificial intelligence (AI), may increase too.

As for Trump, we have no idea what his temperamental and unpredictable character might bring. We do not know how he means to end the war in Ukraine “in 24 hours” or, to put it another way, what terms he envisages for Ukraine’s capitulation in the territories occupied by Russia and the consequences of Trump’s cosy relationship with Putin or other “strongmen”. We are not aware of how he intends to secure peace with the Palestinians and Arabs when Republican Party foreign policy increasingly draws on messianic evangelist approaches in line with the “Greater Israel” concept.

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We are, however, familiar with the content of **Project 2025**, from which Trump tries to distance himself but which has become the handbook of the MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement: co-option of the entire administration by the movement’s faithful, a minimal state, extremely transactional foreign policy, contempt for multilateralism and partnership with nationalist and patriotic forces. In the EU, the parties on the radical right will feel vindicated by a victory for Trump. And the risk of disunity among the member states could mean jockeying among leaders from the bloc to be the first to go to the White House, or even a visit by Hungary’s Viktor Orbán to Trump’s mansion in Mar-a-Lago, congratulating him on his victory, or, perhaps, disputing the legitimacy of elections won by Harris.

### **Foreign and defence policy: elements of continuity**

**Pol Bargués**, Senior Research Fellow, CIDOB

In defence and foreign policy discussions, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump are more similar than they would care to admit, more than what is often acknowledged in **analysis and academic comparisons** and more than how the candidates define themselves.

Taking a conciliatory and normative tone, **Harris** champions the defence of democracy on a global scale, multilateralism and international relations predicated on respect for laws and rules. She accuses Trump of choosing isolationism, relinquishing the sense of responsibility, belittling allies and opting for unilateral action. Harris is proud of the leadership that President Joe Biden provides on foreign policy, highlighting his support for Ukraine. She vows to continue defending the country in order to safeguard the security of Europe, while stating that if Trump were in power, Putin would already be in Kyiv.

With a more strident, controversial and Manichaean tone, Trump espouses an **isolationist policy** that stands in contrast to the supposed liberal internationalism and cosmopolitanism of the Democrats, hence the “America First” and “Make America Great Again” mantras. Trump declares himself to be the most “pro-Israel” president in history and warns voters that Harris would

be the “most anti-Israel”. He regularly criticises the Biden administration’s lack of “**fierceness**” and constantly brags that he would resolve the Russia-Ukraine or Israel-Palestine conflicts “**in one day**”.

Yet Trump’s *fortress* America is not so different to that of

Harris, who boasts that for the first time this century the United States is neither involved in a war nor has troops fighting in any corner of the world. On defence, both candidates **agree on modernising the armed forces** (and on not wanting to increase them) and place great importance on deterrence in a world of competing powers. They have little to say about fragile or failed states, or about the threat of international terrorism, let alone about how their troops could assist in the reconstruction of nations and states in Africa or Latin America, a common feature of debates in previous decades.

Both Harris and Trump point to China as the main enemy. Harris believes that **China’s** influence is the “leading national security threat” while Trump, who already embarked on a trade war with Beijing in his first term, is now announcing that he will step up technological and industrial confrontation. Both **support Israel politically and militarily** and stand firm against Iran and its allies. Nor does the decision taken on Afghanistan divide them. As was clear in the presidential debate, they blame each other for the controversial troop withdrawal. Harris reproaches Trump for having negotiated with the Taliban in 2020; Trump is scathing about the deaths of a dozen US soldiers during the troop pull-out under the Biden administration in 2021. But they do not dispute the drawdown decision, and both are committed to steering clear of direct military intervention in the Middle East.

This is not to ignore the differences. There is significant disagreement over the Ukraine war, for example, even though both candidates criticise Vladimir Putin's expansionism. While Harris always underscores the need to continue supporting Ukraine for as long as needed, Trump, who acknowledges he gets on well with Putin, brags about his **plan** to end the war in 24 hours. There are also clear differences in manners and the cordiality shown to allies in Europe and NATO (which Harris acclaims and Trump questions).

As a marker, we cannot forget that during his presidency **Trump sought to destroy the liberal international order** and withdraw from multilateral agreements, which the Biden administration has wanted to restore. Ultimately, it is about observing how this world of mounting geopolitical confrontation shapes a major power in retreat: Trump and Harris share allies and villains, and they are inclined to pursue a cautious policy towards the outside world.

### **Competition with China: the devil is in the detail**

**Inés Arco Escriche**, Research Fellow, CIDOB

China is perhaps the presidential candidates' most important point of convergence. Republicans and Democrats are of the same mind on both the diagnosis (Beijing is a threat) and the general dynamics of relations (strategic competition). Whoever wins, there will be a continuation of the antagonistic approach to the Asian giant that increasingly permeates domestic debates and policies on the economy, technology or climate change. That said, there are significant nuances and disagreement reigns on the central issues and the strategies for competing with China.

While Harris has still to spell out her policy on China, in a 2023 **interview** she said that competition with Beijing "is about de-risking". The focus of a new Democratic administration will be on managing the rivalry by continuing the Biden administration's incisive strategy, directed at imposing tariffs and export controls in strategic sectors (including renewable energy, semiconductors or medical products) and boosting US industry through greater investment.

The "small yard and high fence" strategy devised by **Jake Sullivan** will be complemented by "broad coalitions" to coordinate with allies in response to Chinese assertiveness both on Taiwan and the South China Sea disputes. The choice of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as the potential vice president, someone who has extensive experience of China, also signals a

readiness to maintain an open dialogue and a certain pragmatism with the rival.

Trump's intent, meanwhile, is decoupling at any cost. For one thing, the former president aims to "secure strategic independence from China" by revoking its most favoured nation trade status and imposing 60% tariffs on all goods of Chinese origin, at the expense of an **estimated cost to American households of nearly \$2,600 a year**. For another, we may see a resurrection of measures similar to the China Initiative, which led to the near persecutory investigation of Chinese and Asian academics in US universities to prevent the theft of intellectual property. As the Stop AAPI Hate platform **points out**, these

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measures were discriminatory and fuelled an increase in racism against Americans of Asian descent.

Trump's isolationist and transactional approach will also impact relations with other international actors, including Taiwan. The Republican has already **warned** Taipei that it "should pay for its defence" and he **accuses** the country of "taking our chip business". But Trump's erratic rhetoric, with constant praise for Chinese President Xi Jinping, could reach new heights in a new, second administration, depending on his team. Figures such as Matt Pottinger, former deputy national security advisor, explicitly advocate for a regime change in China, while other voices that are contenders for the State Department post, like Elbridge Colby or Robert O'Brien, are opposed.

And what does Beijing make of it all? In the Chinese authorities' view, there are scarcely any differences between the two candidates: neither is good nor an unknown quantity. But given the adverse context and China's **risk aversion**, it may prefer the predictability of Harris to the volatility of Trump.

### **Technology: geopolitical consensus, regulatory question marks**

**Javier Borràs**, Research Fellow, CIDOB

The United States and the EU have taken different tacks on technology over the last few decades. The US model has been fundamentally optimistic, prioritising the free market and innovation. Europe's model, meanwhile, has been more sceptical, using the power of the state to counter that of the big tech companies. A third "**digital empire**", China, has arisen and generated



suspicion both in Washington, because of its impact on US hegemony, and in Brussels, because of its statist-authoritarian mould.

In the later stages of the Biden administration, however, there has been greater convergence between the US and European views. For one thing, the EU has “Americanised” its position towards Beijing by placing tough restrictions on exports of advanced hardware and limiting Chinese investment in cutting-edge technological sectors. In turn, the United States has “Europeanised”, with greater regulation of Big Tech and antitrust **lawsuits** against Google, Apple, Meta or Amazon.

What will it mean for this new US take on technology – more confrontational with China, more pro-regulation – if Kamala Harris wins the election or, on the other hand, Donald Trump is victorious? As far as technological competition with China is concerned, no matter who wins the policy pursued by Biden will remain intact. In a highly polarised United States, one of the few things Democrats and Republicans can agree on is support for fierce competition with China in which **technology plays a central role**.

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There are more question marks over the field of regulation. While Harris is thought to be ready to continue Biden’s policies, her **links** to Silicon Valley and her political tenure in the pro-tech California may indicate that while the battle with Big Tech will go on, it is not going to intensify. The mere implementation of her predecessor’s initiatives may be enough to satisfy a Democratic base that called for more regulation.

In the case of the Republicans, the situation is not so clear. Primarily, because of the unpredictability of Donald Trump, who has championed **less regulation** in some areas, but at the same time has repeatedly attacked firms from Silicon Valley. Nor does his candidate for vice president, J.D. Vance, offer more certainty. He has received support from tech figures such as Peter Thiel, while he has also come out **in favour** of “breaking up” Google. Although the Republicans have garnered support from the more “personalistic” and venture capital end of

**Silicon Valley** – Elon Musk, Marc Andreessen – most of the “corporate” side remains in the Democratic camp.

Over the next few years, the most important tech issue for the United States will be artificial intelligence (AI). In this field, geopolitical competition and regulatory effort converge. There is a fear that regulating AI too much will favour China, yet, at the same time, underregulating will trigger unexpected crises and inequalities. The United States sees AI as the **key** to staying ahead of China. But to do so, AI must meet the revolutionary expectations attributed to it, something over which there is **growing scepticism**. In addition, AI may once again stretch the traditional transatlantic ideological-technological divergence, with a United States (again) more open to the risks of AI and an EU more inclined to regulate it.

### **Trade: following Biden’s lead or tariff war**

**Patricia Garcia Duran**, Associate Researcher, CIDOB

The EU is one of the world’s major trading powers, along with the United States and China. According to **Eurostat**, in 2023 the EU exported and imported goods totalling €5.07tn (not including trade within the bloc). This was €417bn less than China and €271bn more than the United States. The biggest goods exporter in the world is China (17.5% of the total), the second biggest is the EU (14.3%) and in third place is the United States (10.5%). But the US is the world’s biggest importer of goods (15.9% of the total), followed by the EU (13.7%) and then by China (12.9%). For the EU, the United States is its chief customer and, therefore, it takes a keen interest in its trade policy.

Despite US importance in global trade and its traditional liberal approach, the last decade has seen a tightening of its trade policy. During his time as president, Donald Trump blocked new appointments to the World Trade Organization (WTO) appellate body, hamstringing its ability to resolve international trade disputes, which debilitated the organisation. He also entered into a trade war with China, raising tariffs above 20% and blocking technology exports. And he clashed with his allies, the EU included, over several products (such as steel and aluminium). It was a period fraught with trade tension.

In the subsequent Joe Biden presidency, America has maintained high tariffs and its control of

exports to China, as well as the block on the WTO's appellate body. It has, however, made up with its allies by reaching cooperation agreements such as the establishment of the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) with the EU or the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) in Asia, in support of strengthening the Western bloc.

Reviewing events since 2017 helps us to understand what might happen in the future, depending on who wins the upcoming presidential election. If Kamala Harris is victorious, things will remain pretty much as they are: the EU will be able to continue its close cooperation via the TTC and the United States will pressure it to be tougher on China. If Trump wins, however, the situation will be one of tension again, both globally and between the EU and the United States. The candidate has promised to raise tariffs to 60% on goods from China and to 10% for the rest of the world. He **has also vowed** a 15% tax rate for products that are "made in America" to attract investment from the world's biggest manufacturers. Trump intends to attack the foundations of the WTO and enter into a tariff and investment war that would also impact the EU.

### **Disinformation: political violence and alternative realities**

**Carme Colomina**, Senior Research Fellow, CIDOB

Americans are heading into elections that, according to Donald Trump, could be "rigged" even before they are held. The US deputy attorney general has warned of an "**unprecedented rise**" in threats to public officials and election workers, "from elected or appointed secretaries of state to volunteers" at polling sites. The Department of Justice has filed hundreds of lawsuits and warned of the risk this increase in threats of violence and actual violence poses to election security. According to a **Reuters/Ipsos poll**, two out of three Americans say they are concerned about the risk of political violence and election vengeance after November 5<sup>th</sup>, recalling the storming of the Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

The toxicity of the election debate in the United States echoes across the Atlantic: from **theories of supposed election fraud** to outbursts of **political violence** during campaigns; from the assassination attempt on Donald Trump at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, to the shooting that wounded the prime minister of Slovakia, Robert Fico, in May 2024. The strengthening of extremes, the hardening of language and verbal violence against adversaries mean election campaigns and political dynamics are more fraught, both in the EU and in the United States. Yet these transatlantic similarities are highly nuanced. First, there is the role that social media

play and differing conceptions of the limits of freedom of expression; and second, there is the matter of who is behind the disinformation contaminating the public debate.

Elon Musk's entry into the campaign as **guest of honour** on stage, cheerleading for Trump, and as an **interviewer** and spreader of fake news, symbolises what the EU means to curtail with its Digital Services Act (DSA). In the two years since Musk bought and renamed Twitter as X, he has posted or reposted 52 messages about noncitizen voting, which have reached nearly 700m views, according to a **Washington Post analysis**. In the circumstances, the European Commission has engaged in its own battle against Musk. Following a seven-month investigation, last July Brussels denounced the X platform, stating that the social media outlet's blue checkmarks for verified users are deceptive and in breach of the EU bloc's transparency and accountability requirements, in addition to failing to comply with advertising transparency rules. Yet, **despite the**

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**initial headlines**, the commission probe into "the dissemination of illegal content and the effectiveness of measures taken to combat information manipulation" remains ongoing.

Despite the legislation introduced in the EU, Brussels is well aware of **the battle for freedom of expression** raging in the United States and of the problems facing the Biden administration and all those who have tried to discuss the limits of online toxicity. **A Congress investigation**, led by a Republican, Jim Jordan, in late 2022 accused the Biden administration of forcing the major tech firms to censor conservative voices and gag Americans in general. Over the last few months, the European far right has begun to **echo those talking points** and there is a sense of an incipient risk of importing a divisive politicisation of the debate on disinformation to this side of the Atlantic too.

In addition, while the EU remains obsessed with **Russian interference** in the European debate, in the United States, even with Department of Justice accusations against certain campaigns linked to **Russia** and **Iran**, controversy over foreign influence that marked the 2016 campaign has been eclipsed by the volume of disinformation generated by actors at home and particularly by Donald Trump himself. The Republican candidate, who on the very day he took office in January 2017 coined the idea of "**alternative facts**" to mould his own narrative, has ended up embracing an "alternative reality" where **immigrants eat pets**, there are states in which it is legal to

abort after giving birth and where insult, discredit and hate speech form part of his estimation of the “other”, starting with his rival, Kamala Harris.

## Immigration: everything ends at the border

**Blanca Garcés**, Senior Research Fellow, CIDOB

Immigration is once again one of the hot button issues of the election campaign. It is hardly surprising if one considers that, according to the polls, it counts among the public’s chief concerns. It is, moreover, a topic that divides the electorate. While six out of ten Republican voters favour deporting undocumented immigrants, almost nine out of ten Democratic voters are of the opposite opinion, that is to say, they think they should be able to stay legally.

## The strengthening of extremes, the hardening of language and verbal violence against adversaries mean election campaigns and political dynamics are more fraught, both in the EU and in the United States.

It is hard to know what comes first, the polarisation of the electorate or the polarisation of the debate. The Republicans paint the Democrats as inept, accusing them of sparking a crisis at the border with their liberal policies. The Democrats argue that the Republicans’ “tough” policies fail to address the structural causes of migration and are contrary to the core values of the United States.

In terms of concrete measures, Donald Trump vows that if he is president, he will carry out mass deportations and end the right to citizenship by birth. Kamala Harris, meanwhile, says that she will continue to work towards passing a new act that restricts irregular entries (blocked in Congress by the Republicans until now) and facilitate lawful entry pathways.

There are also differences in what the two governments have done to date. The Biden administration, for example, immediately halted two of Trump’s policies: the one forcing asylum seekers to remain in Mexico awaiting the settlement of their appeals and the one separating children from parents arriving at the border irregularly. More recently, in June 2024, the Democratic administration recognised the right to remain and work of undocumented spouses of US citizens, a regularisation measure that would be unthinkable under a Republican government.

Where there have barely been any fundamental differences is, once again, at the border. Under pressure from a rise in irregular arrivals, which in

2023 hit a record annual high of over 2.4m attempted crossings, and from Democratic mayors in cities overwhelmed by the increase in arrivals from the south of the country, in June 2024 the Biden administration passed an executive order allowing, in pure Trump style, the immediate deportation of immigrants without the need to process their asylum requests.

This flip-flopping, or yielding at the border, is not exclusive to Biden. Remember that Obama deported more aliens than any other president before him. With an eye on the presidency, Harris too has moderated her positions, now championing the construction of the border wall, express asylum processes or deportation policies. “There must be consequences” for immigrants who cross the border irregularly, she recalled during the campaign.

If they win, immigration will remain an awkward issue for the Democrats. Whatever they do, it will be too little for some (immigrant rights defenders) and too much for others (proponents of a hard line on immigration). Meanwhile, Donald Trump

continues to gesticulate and make incendiary remarks. In his case, it makes no difference what he says and what he ends up doing. As in Europe, for voters of those who espouse populist and anti-immigration positions, rhetoric counts for more than actual facts. It is precisely this that means, on this issue at least, they have everything to gain.

## The United States and the multipolar geopolitics of the Global South

**Anna Ayuso**, Senior Research Fellow, CIDOB

Faced with mounting instability and international competition, demands are emerging from the Global South given the perceived stasis of the Global North. Neither the Trump nor Biden administration has had a clear strategy towards a group of nations they consider heterogeneous and lacking in cohesion. Trump, with his Manichaean division of the world into friends and enemies, identified them as a threat to be confronted. The Biden administration too has been wary of China’s attempts to style itself as the leader of the Global South in opposition to the liberal order. In the early years of his term, Biden tried to forge alliances by championing democracy and liberal values to check the advance of illiberal and autocratic regimes.

More recently, however, he has gradually been settling for a more pragmatic and less ideological stance,



pursuing a diplomacy of variable geometry based on strengthening common interests with the emerging powers of the Global South. This has resulted in a new approach, one that has seen the president, the vice president and the secretary of state engage in an enhanced round of contacts with Global South countries, as well as with regional bodies like the African Union (AU) or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

This strategy, of which Harris forms a part, seeks to strengthen economic ties based on mutual interest, rather than on ideological factors. The Democratic candidate represents a more open attitude towards the Global South, more multilateralist than Trump, as long as the national interest is not at risk. Harris has said that the United States will win the 21<sup>st</sup> century competition between major powers without abdicating global leadership. Trump, on the other hand, takes a more defensive and isolationist position, opposed to overspending on cooperation with third parties, unless it is to America's benefit. A clear example are the different approaches to the climate agenda, where the two candidates' positions are conflicting and have major repercussions for the Global South. If Trump returns to the White House, fresh **cuts for United Nations agencies** are probably on the way, as was the case in his first term, placing the multilateral system in jeopardy.

There are other fronts in US relations with the Global South with transatlantic implications. Many Global South countries do not share the position of the United States and its European allies on the war in Ukraine and reject sanctions on Moscow. They also accuse the West of double standards in the Middle East. The war in Gaza and its spread into Lebanon have compounded America's loss of prestige in the Global South, which extends to the West and the United Nations too, owing to their ineffectiveness.

The Democratic administration has come round to the possibility of a reform of the Security Council, something the United States had traditionally resisted. It agrees with the EU and the Global South on this, though with differences over the scope of the reforms, as demonstrated in the negotiation of the **Pact for the Future** adopted in September 2024. A fresh failure of the reforms would debilitate an already beleaguered collective security system, with collateral damage in NATO.

Other fronts open with the Global South are the growing demands for a **reform of the international financial architecture** and, more specifically, funding for the **2030 Agenda** and addressing the debt problem.

Negotiations at the Fourth **International Conference on Financing for Development**, to be held in Spain in 2025, will be compromised with an administration that is averse to multilateralism. Lack of progress in the reforms poses the risk of greater fragmentation of the financial system and the rise of alternative channels like those promoted by the **BRICS**. This is already reflected in the bid for the dedollarisation of transactions, which seeks to reduce reliance on the US currency and thus weaken its global position.

The continuation of a Democratic administration would mean a consolidation of the diplomatic approach, which favours multilateral governance like that promoted by the EU. A reissue of Trump, meanwhile, bodes greater confrontation with the Global South. But in either case demands from the Global South will continue to emerge and present a challenge to the status quo. Only a pro-multilateralism government in the United States will allow it to move forward with its partners in the reforms required to modernise the international system and make it more inclusive and effective, as the Global South countries are calling for.

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### **Climate change: breathing space or a fresh withdrawal from the Paris Agreement**

**Ricardo Martinez**, Senior Research Fellow, CIDOB

With 2024 poised to be the hottest year on record, the presidential elections in the United States are of transcendental importance for the global climate agenda. As the second largest greenhouse gas emitter after China, a victory for Donald Trump would probably mean abandoning once and for all the increasingly difficult goal of keeping global warming to 1.5°C below preindustrial levels. According to estimates made by **CarbonBrief** in early 2024, Donald Trump's return to the White House could spell an additional 4bn tonnes of US emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent by 2030 compared with Joe Biden's measures, a figure that matches the combined annual emissions of the EU and Japan.

A victory for Kamala Harris, meanwhile, would keep the climate agenda as a political priority. On rejoining the Paris Agreement in 2021, the Biden-Harris administration pledged a 50-52% reduction in the country's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030

compared to 2005 levels, exceeding the target set by the Democratic former president, Barack Obama, in 2015.

The cornerstone of the Biden administration's climate policy was the adoption of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Cast as the broadest package of climate measures in the country's history, it secured the approval of the Senate precisely thanks to Vice President Harris's tie-breaking vote. Despite her recent change of stance on banning fracking, the controversial method of gas and oil extraction, the Democratic candidate's record on the environment is unquestionable compared with the Republican, as shown by Harris's first steps as attorney general of California between 2011 and 2017, when she brought lawsuits against oil companies over environmental damage and irregularities.

Negotiations at COP29 in Azerbaijan will take place immediately after the elections, in an international climate deeply marked by two diametrically opposed scenarios. If Trump is re-elected, his campaign team has announced that he would expand domestic production of oil and gas and would withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement again<sup>1</sup> and even from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

## If the United States once again disengaged from international climate action, the EU could take on the mantle of global leadership, in cooperation with China.

With or without this decision, a second Trump administration would issue a dangerous signal of relaxation to the more reluctant hydrocarbons-producing countries, undermining both international climate support and the bilateral climate agreements with China. Likewise, given the EU's initiative of introducing a carbon tax on imports, transatlantic trade relations would be put under further strain.

In turn, if the United States once again disengaged from international climate action, the EU could take on the mantle of global leadership, in cooperation with China. With an America still far from reaching the emissions reduction goal it has set itself, a Harris administration, meanwhile, could, quite literally, provide some breathing space by redoubling efforts both nationally and globally in support of the energy transition required to fulfil the Paris Agreement.

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1. When Trump announced the decision to withdraw the country from the Paris Agreement in 2017, he said he had been elected to represent the people of Pittsburgh, not Paris. The decision was condemned by the mayor of Pittsburgh himself, who instead did pledge to honour the global climate goals, along with a further 406 American mayors.