

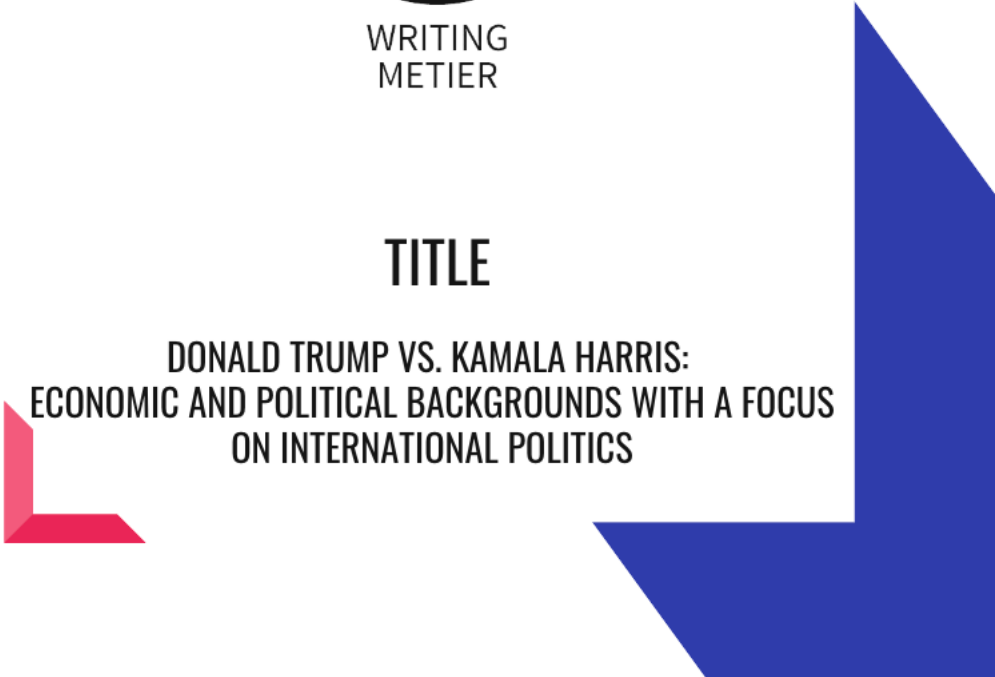


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Donald Trump vs. Kamala Harris: Economic and Political Backgrounds with a Focus on International Politics

Many politicians worldwide are known among the masses for their political ideology. Still, the two most well-known now are Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, who have different political views and leadership approaches. Trump, a businessman and the former president of the United States who previously had no political experience is an economic nationalist populist, and Kamala Harris, a current vice president and a politician with no business background, is progressive. The primary purpose of this essay is to compare and contrast their economic and political views, especially their part in international politics. This analysis will compare and contrast their overall political economy perspectives, specific economic policies implemented, political systems, and political attitudes toward international relations, distinguishing the two and noting how they influenced the perception of the U.S.

Firstly, the essay will take into account the economic activity. Ex-President Trump's economic experience stems from being an influential businessman and a real estate mogul. Earlier in his occupation, he ran the Trump Organization to develop his family's real estate enterprise into an international company and a conglomerate involving hotels, casinos, and golf courses. As president, Trump's economic policies represented his business orientation with a focus on the four principles: deregulation, reduced taxes, and protectionism¹. Of his significant accomplishments, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017² was his incredible creation in lowering the corporate income tax from 35% to 21%. He said they have been going for policies that will encourage investment, lead to employment, and overall growth of the economy.

Globally, Trump has a protectionism policy, especially regarding trade with China. His administration restricted imports from China by imposing tariffs on around \$ 500 billion of Chinese goods³. These actions were defended by Trump as needed to protect American

¹ Kirby, Jen. "Trump's Economic Policies: Protectionism, Low Taxes, and Coal Mines." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 9 Nov. 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/09/trumps-economic-policies-protectionism-low-taxes-and-coal-mines>.

² Tax Foundation. "The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act." Tax Foundation, Tax Foundation, 2017, <https://taxfoundation.org/tags/tax-cuts-and-jobs-act-tcja/#:~:text=The%202017%20Tax%20Cuts%20and,overhauling%20the%20international%20tax%20code>.

³ Lambert, Lisa. "Trump Threatens Tariffs on All \$500 Billion of Chinese Imports." Reuters, Reuters, 21 July 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/business/trump-threatens-tariffs-on-all-500-billion-of-chinese-imports-idUSKBN1KA18M/>.

workers and industries from what he classified as unfair trading practices, such as theft of intellectual property and manipulation of currency prices. His protectionism was also manifested through an America First policy where he sought to make America economically self-sufficient and not rely on imports from other countries on complex issues of economy and international relations.

On the other hand, Kamala Harris has a background in law and politics. She has liberal economic policies regarding power and status that focus on marginalization, labor, and justice. As the California attorney general and the U.S. senator, Kamala Harris advocated for increasing the minimum wage to enhance the healthcare systems and green energy investment⁴. She has recently criticized the presidential system, proposing methods of reducing wealth inequality and increasing government expenditure on social amenities. In terms of the global economy, Harris has a more liberal democratic economic outlook than Trump's America First policy. Harris favors multilateralism and wants to renew friendly terms with crucial U.S. partners, predominantly European and Asian countries. She has been pro-cooperative economy, supporting the notion of America rejoining the Paris Accord, which Trump withdrew in 2017. Harris also stressed the issue of climate change, which she considers a problem of the world's economy, which should be solved internationally.

Now, the essay will move on to political policies. Trump is experimented with an economic and political model characterized as populist and nationalist. He entered the presidential campaign as an outsider, promising to clean the Washington swamp and fight it. His words of attacks are on elites, bureaucrats, and the media he accused of serving the interest of Americans. Subscribing to nationalism, Trump's foreign policy was America first and disregarded the best interest of the international community and its allies.

On the foreign policy level, Trump's presidency was characterized as modern as it broke with diplomatic norms. The candidate withdrew from international agreements such as the TPP, which he described as damaging to the United States, and the nuclear deal with Iran⁵. Many of Obama's former allies in Europe were put off by Trump's nationalist "America First" approach. At

⁴ Harris, Kamala. "Policy Book: Economic Opportunity." Kamala Harris, Kamala Harris, Sept. 2024, https://kamalaharris.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Policy_Book_Economic-Opportunity.pdf.

⁵ Robinson, Kali. "What Is the Iran Nuclear Deal?" Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, 27 Oct. 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-iran-nuclear-deal>.

the same time, he was working to build a stronger relationship with unconventional allies like North Korea's Kim Jong Un and Russia's Putin⁶.

On the other hand, Kamala Harris leaned much more toward progressive views and an emphasis on social justice. Some of her political agendas include health care, the criminal justice system, and the environment. Harris also speaks engagingly on foreign policy issues, particularly multilateralism and diplomacy, rather than the unilateralism Trump would advance.

In international relations, Harris is okay with enhancing cooperation and rebuilding America's influence worldwide. She has also opposed Trump's policy to pull the United States out of agreements with other countries because it was a sign of the government losing its dominance. For instance, as a vice president, Harris has been trying to mend the relations between the United States, NATO, and EU, among other long-standing partners⁷. A foreign policy that her administration has practiced holds human rights and environmental conservation to become crucial standards and the restoration of particular international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Accord.

Regarding International Relations And Policies, Trump's relations with other countries were more informal and business-like⁸. He frequently looked at foreign policy in terms of the balance of payments and the burdens borne by the United States by its allies. His administration sought to renegotiate them, including the most uncertain and prominent one, replacing NAFTA with USMCA⁹. Trump also practiced restrictions on relations with some countries, such as Iran and Venezuela, and used economic pressure as a significant tool of diplomacy.

Undoubtedly, one of the most debated features of Trump's approach to international relations was his attitude toward autocrats. He admired leaders such as Jong Un and Putin while disparaging long-time friends such as Merkel of Germany. Trump also dumped America out of the Iran nuclear deal and increased sanctions on Iran, which made America even more

⁶ Fifield, Anna. "North Korea, Trump, and Kim Jong Un's 'Love Letters': A Diplomatic Gamble." *Foreign Policy*, Graham Holdings Company, 13 Aug. 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/13/north-korea-trump-kim-jong-un-love-letters-diplomacy-nuclear-talks/>.

⁷ Besch, Sophia, and Liana Fix. "A European Plan for Trump (and Harris)." *Internationale Politik Quarterly*, 4 Sept. 2024, <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/european-plan-trump-and-harris>.

⁸ Dijkstra, Hylke, et al. "Donald Trump and the Survival Strategies of International Organisations: When Can Institutional Actors Counter Existential Challenges?" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2022, pp. 182–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2022.2136566>.

⁹ McBride, James, and Mohammed Aly Sergie. "NAFTA's Economic Impact." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, 1 Oct. 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/background/naftas-economic-impact>.

secluded from the European partners who remained involved in the agreement. Another clear alternative to traditional US foreign policy in the Middle East was his decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move the US embassy there.

On the other hand, Harris has powerfully articulated multilateralism and diplomacy in her international policies. She supports the reassumption of the United States's participation in world structures like the United Nations organization and NATO. Harris has stated that international problems such as climate change, terrorism, and the current pandemic should be mutually tackled to find solutions. Since becoming VP, she has worked with Joe Biden to back America onto the global stage and renew bonds with traditional US partners.

Apart from Trump, who is more focused on individual bilateral deals, Harris sees the value in affiliation. For Middle Eastern issues, she backs diplomacy to solve problems – Iran, Israel, and Palestine. Harris has also advocated for better treatment of immigrants and returning the US to leadership roles by addressing the reason why people are fleeing from Central America. Her emphasis on climate change as a world matter makes her distinct from Trump, who rarely regarded it as a big deal.

As far as leadership styles and international perception are concerned, throughout all these years, Trump has been described as an erratic leader who does not follow standards and norms but relies on his personality. Sometimes, he was forthright, sending messages through social media, especially his X account, without passing through the regular media. This was okay with all his supporters but cost him popularity among most foreign leaders and diplomats since his approach was unpredictable and complacent.

Globally, Trump was a highly divisive figure of leadership. The same was true for his martial arts training – some thought he was brave for defying the norm, while others found his behavior chaotic. Trump's willingness to pull out of multiple international accords and his hostile approach with some close American allies, such as Germany and Canada, eroded America's image in the eyes of some of its more traditional friends. However, his backers claim that his policies that rejected global cooperation benefited the United States and that he wanted to reform the global economy.

On the contrary, Harris is more democratic in her decision-making process and focused on achieving agreement. As vice president, we've seen her try to heal rifts within the Democratic Party and even between the Democrats and Republicans. Her approach to international relations reflects a return to diplomacy and engagement, emphasizing multilateralism and cooperation.

Policymakers worldwide have welcomed Harris as the renewal of American foreign policy engagement and support for multilateralism. The policies she has adopted to address global issues like climate change and human rights are well embraced by leaders of different countries that felt forcefully locked out by the erstwhile President Trump's America First policies. Though Harris seems less contentious than wheeler-dealer Trump and agreeably diplomatic compared to abrasive Bolton, critics claim that it fosters America's defeatism versus emerging global competitors like China and Russia.

Hence, it is safe to say that, when looking at the economic and political experience, the two have opposite world views, leadership approaches, and international relations. The leadership style of Trump, with his populism and nationalism president, produced a more recklessly unilateral and transactional foreign policy and diplomacy with a significant shift away from multilateral efforts to protect America's self-interest. On the other hand, the progressive Harris manifests herself as a diplomat due to her strong belief in the collective strength of the international community. These current policies and leadership disparities establish and define future attributes of American participation in international relations as the political climate changes. Most importantly, their approach differential embodies fundamental questions about the United States' place in an increasingly globalized and emergent world.

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