



**INSTITUTE of STUDIES**  
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## **The US election: What is at stake for Europe, Greek-Turkish relations and the Cyprus issue**

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English translation

*\*This text was translated from Greek by the team of the  
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## Analysis Paper

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## About the Author

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Prof. Filis was also elected as Senior Associate Member (SAM) at St. Antony's College of the University of Oxford (2007-2009) and has, at the same time, served as Member of the International Council of the Research Institute of European and American Studies. Subsequently, he became a researcher at the Center for Southeast European Studies (SEESOX) at the University of Oxford (2008 - 2010).

Moreover, he is a lecturer at the Diplomatic Academy, the Naval War School, the National Defence School and the National Security School in Greece. He has a large list of publications, with the most recent books/monographs/edited volumes being as follows:

- "The Future of History. How the war in Ukraine is changing the global landscape"
- "Assertive Patriotism. Anatomy of a Conversation That Never Happened"...

Prof. Filis is a member of the Greek-Turkish Forum and a corresponding member of the Institute of Energy of Southeast Europe (IENE). He is also an energy and geoeconomics advisor to the Hellenic Business Association.

## The US election: What is at stake for Europe, Greek-Turkish relations and the Cyprus issue

Every federal election in the United States has the potential to significantly impact the global economy, politics, and security due to the influential role the United States has played on the international political stage for at least the past 75 years. At this particular moment, with an interstate war raging for more than two years in the heart of Europe and the Middle East on the brink of a widespread regional conflict, the global economy is being shaken by stagflation and high prices, which, along with the energy crisis, are pushing millions of people closer to poverty every day. The elections on November 5th to elect the new President of the United States become the most crucial event, not only of the current year but also of the coming years.

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Numerous leaders and officials from Western countries agree on the critical nature of this electoral contest, attributing existential significance to it, as the future of the Western world and beyond is at stake in the election outcome. Essentially, the concern of European and other officials lies not only in the policies the new American leadership will choose to follow, but also in the ability of the United States to continue playing its leading role both within the West and globally, should the election result cause internal destabilization and turmoil. The two assassination attempts on the former American president and current Republican candidate for the U.S. Presidency highlight how polarized and divided American society is at this time, as well as over the past decade.

Specifically, the geopolitical stakes of the November 5th elections are particularly significant for the transatlantic alliance. In an unstable and precarious geopolitical landscape, where Kyiv is unable to halt the slow but steady Russian advancement on the



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Eastern Ukraine front, and is thus engaging in operational choices of questionable strategic soundness, any American leadership will face difficult choices and decisions to prevent a looming strategic defeat of the West against Russia, especially if the fears of a broader conflict in the Middle East with decisive U.S. involvement in favor of Israel are confirmed. It is certain that an American government under the current Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris, will attempt to continue the work of the Biden presidency to safeguard the transatlantic alliance and provide assistance to Kyiv. However, developments in the Middle East may require the commitment of more resources and lead—given the large but finite capabilities of the United States—to smaller and insufficient further support packages for Ukraine.

A victory for Donald Trump in the upcoming elections is expected to have negative consequences for Ukraine, as both the former U.S. president and his vice-presidential candidate, J.D. Vance, have criticized U.S. support for Ukraine, with Trump stating that if elected, he would end the war in Ukraine within 24 hours. It may not be allowed (even at the Congressional level) for Trump to completely terminate aid to Ukraine, but it seems certain that it will be drastically reduced. The reduction of American aid to Ukraine, due to a conscious Trump choice, or due to the limited capabilities of the United States to simultaneously support two war efforts in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, will inevitably shift the burden of supporting Ukraine to Europe. Trump's election poses the risk that Europe will be called upon to take on the support of Kyiv in its entirety or to a much greater extent than today, while in the event of Kamala Harris's election, U.S. European allies will be called upon to increase their assistance to Ukraine if the U.S. involvement in the Middle East requires it. In future decisions regarding Ukraine, the fatigue of some societies and leaders in Europe must be taken into account. Nevertheless, on October 9th, the EU gave the green light for an additional aid package worth 35 billion euros.

It is particularly interesting to examine the implications for the tense situation in the Middle East, where unfortunately rapid developments may occur before November 5th, and instead of the American elections shaping the actions of the involved parties, we may have the opposite, with developments in the region not only shaping but also determining

the outcome of the American presidential elections. This will happen as a significant portion of Democratic voters, especially younger ones, sympathize with the struggle of the Palestinian people and believe that the U.S. government should have done more to protect civilians in Gaza and to achieve a ceasefire agreement in the region.


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In the early days before and after Kamala Harris secured the Democratic nomination, the American politician seemed to desire, to the satisfaction of the aforementioned voters, a tougher stance towards Israel and the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, in an attempt to weigh the political cost of U.S. support for Tel Aviv both domestically and internationally. In a period where the Arab world and the global south are gaining increasing importance, the support and defense of Israel's military operations, with more than 43,000 civilian casualties, significantly weakens the West's argument about its fight against evil and defense of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Both the Biden administration and Kamala Harris's team understand the impact of the "demonization" of Washington's image and how it can be exploited by forces like China and Russia to strengthen their influence at the regional level. This apparent initial differentiation from President Biden's policy towards Israel and the adoption of a tougher stance towards the Netanyahu government seems to have been essentially overturned by developments, with Kamala Harris engaging in an awkward and uncomfortable balancing act as her future policy towards Israel and the Palestinian issue may critically affect her chances of being elected the 47th President of the United States.

On the other hand, Trump, during his first term, practically supported the Israeli government almost unconditionally on all issues, effectively undermining the two-state solution, which is the only path to a lasting peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. A generalized flare-up in the Middle East involving other regional powers, as well as a defeat of Ukraine and, by extension, the West in the war with Russia, will undoubtedly encourage revisionism and give momentum to authoritarian leaders worldwide. Here lies one of the most serious problems that a second Trump presidency could cause: through his actions or inaction, he may facilitate and strengthen those who challenge the current *status quo*. Beyond Trump's repeatedly documented admiration for authoritarian leaders, his "America First" policy agenda could cause



turmoil in regions where middle powers are increasingly focused on advancing their own goals.



In the immediate neighbourhood of Greece and Cyprus, from the Balkans to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, a potential collapse of the international order and the rules governing it will cause destabilization and encourage Ankara's revisionism and Moscow's interventionism in the internal affairs of regional states, as well as in existing and future conflicts.

If the United States further relinquishes its leadership role, either due to inability or unwillingness, forces competing with the West and seeking to revise the international system will undoubtedly attempt to fill the power vacuum. In the immediate neighbourhood of Greece and Cyprus, from the Balkans to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, a potential collapse of the international order and the rules governing it will cause destabilization and encourage Ankara's revisionism and Moscow's interventionism in the internal affairs of regional states, as well as in existing and future conflicts.

The continued American commitment is a decisive factor for the security of the transatlantic alliance, for maintaining stability in the Hellenic neighborhood, and for curbing Turkish revisionism. However, the scenario of the growing isolationist tendencies in the United States prevailing is considered likely in the event of a second term for Donald Trump in the White House. It is unclear how his future policy, if elected, will be affected by the two—so far—assassination attempts against him, as his initial, albeit vague, reaction was the promise to "unite" America and the world. However, based on his actions during his first term, Trump may not hesitate to reduce the U.S. contribution to NATO and withdraw troops from Europe and the Middle East, accelerating the American retreat from our region.

It is uncertain how Europeans could manage such a decision, as they would find themselves between a detached U.S. policy, an aggressive Russia, and an emerging China.

As in the past, an America that views its relationship with Europe as a transaction rather than an alliance of values and vision poses the risk of dividing Europe, especially as each European nation has a different perception of the Russian threat, a different approach to dealing with Moscow, and in some cases, unclear limits of resistance to cheaper Russian energy. Countries like Hungary and Turkey continue to maintain close ties with the

Kremlin despite the Russian invasion of Ukraine, while the rise of pro-Russian far-right parties in Europe means that in the future, centrifugal tendencies from the common positions of the Alliance may increase significantly.

On the other hand, the Cold War remnants that continue to exist within certain European countries and parts of the American establishment against Russia must be moderated, if only to avoid a direct confrontation between the world's two largest nuclear arsenals. As France and Germany are shaken, a strong and consistent transatlantic partnership becomes a necessary prerequisite for maintaining stability and security on the European continent.

Regarding Greek-Turkish relations, there are opportunities and risks, as the current situation gives both countries higher strategic importance for different reasons. Greece is a stable and reliable ally of the United States, with increased geostrategic significance in a region characterized by uncertainty and instability. Similarly, Turkey has gained a voice and has strengthened its role and influence in parts of the African continent, the Caucasus, and the Middle East, regions of increasing American interest, ultimately seeking to capitalize on its strategic importance. Both countries remain important for the implementation of energy projects of American interest and are loyal customers of the American arms industry, characteristics highly valued by Donald Trump.

Greece, with the Prespa Agreement and the highlighting of Alexandroupolis's strategic significance, has emerged as a strategic ally of the United States, with the latter appreciating Athens's ability to offer solutions to the region's security challenges in line with American interests.

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Both Harris and Trump do not seem to desire tensions between Athens and Ankara. However, if the United States enters a period of introspection, it may be unable to help avoid a new crisis in the Aegean. It is likely that a Trump administration would not engage in any potential resurgence of bilateral tensions between Greece and Turkey unless the situation escalates to such a crisis that the White House is called upon to intervene to prevent a military conflict. It is in Athens's interest to have direct and open lines of communication with the current U.S. president and key members of his team, such as the National Security Advisor.

Under President Biden, the United States has worked closely with Greece on energy and defense issues. At the same time, Biden has encouraged efforts to reduce tensions in the Aegean. In the event of Kamala Harris's election, it is estimated that she will continue her predecessor's policy, supporting dialogue between Greece and Turkey while continuing to engage Turkey, giving it room to play a larger international role.

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guarantor of the Western world, and it is estimated that he will reward Erdogan for choices he admires, regardless of principles and values. It is clear that with Trump, there will be no specific framework governing Greek-Turkish relations or the Cyprus issue. However, it is reasonable to expect that these relations will be influenced by developments in Ukraine, the Middle East, the Balkans, and North Africa. Certainly, the pro-Israel lobby, with which Trump is close, is currently highly displeased with Erdogan. It should be noted that during Trump's presidency,

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo supported a series of initiatives and actions—the 3+1 format, the EastMed Act, the Abraham Accords—that directly and indirectly gave Greece the role of a frontier state and supported energy projects involving Athens.

Undoubtedly, the importance of the upcoming elections is immense, not only for the United States but also for the entire planet, which is swirling in a period of multiple crises testing states, institutions, and citizens. American voters are called upon to make decisions with consequences that far exceed their own lives and daily lives, and perhaps, for the first time, a foreign policy issue (that of the Middle East) will contribute to the outcome of the presidential elections.

*\* This text was translated from Greek by the team of the Institute of Studies for Politics and Democracy.*

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