



# The EU–US trade deal: The start of a ‘Trump submission syndrome’ pandemic?

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From the beginning of his political career in 2016, US President Donald Trump has provided us with some of the most unbelievable quotes, projects and promises, which have redefined American conservatism and given populism a new face more generally.

His most recent brainchild (even though it was really that of his administration, but they do say that greatness is contagious) is the invention (or discovery) of a new mental disease: ‘Trump derangement syndrome’ or TDS. No, this is not an officially recognised medical condition; it is a pejorative term used by the US president to discredit his adversaries’ arguments and demonise those who dare to oppose the MAGA movement (Hoffman 2025).

Nevertheless, Trump’s supporters have called for the matter to be studied and funded. Representative Warren Davidson from Ohio, for example, introduced the ‘TDS Act’ earlier this year, calling on the National Institutes of Health to conduct a real, scientific study on this ‘toxic behaviour’ that has ‘divided families and caused disdain all over the country’ (Davidson 2025).

However, this article does not intend to explore the Trump administration’s scientific exploits and knowledge of modern medicine but rather to discuss another new sociological/psychiatric concept, and to analyse it through the lens of the EU–US framework trade agreement: ‘Trump submission syndrome’ or TSS as ‘experts’ call it. It is unclear to whom the credit for such an avant-gardist term should be attributed, but undoubtedly political consultant and ex-presidential counsellor David Axelrod was one of the first to

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use it. On 8 June 2025 he posted on X: ‘They talk about Trump Derangement Syndrome. But the real challenge we face is TSS: Trump Submission Syndrome. Members of Congress, surrendering their authority out of fear; law firms, prizing their business ahead of their oath, as advocates, to the law; universities, forfeiting their principles and independence, only to be further attacked’ (Axelrod 2025).

If we consider this a serious psychological condition, it might be time to start worrying since it may have developed into an intercontinental pandemic. From the moment of Trump’s arrival in the White House, he has spared no one his unconventional political bullying, setting tariffs like normal people change their socks, and pursuing a loud and aggressive foreign policy in his fight against this China-led world of ours. If you follow the news, you will know that a much-anticipated meeting between Trump and EU representatives, including Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maroš Šefčovič, was held in July at Trump’s Turnberry golf resort in Scotland. Millions hoped that Europe would put all its cards on the table in order to remove the announced tariffs and get a better deal, but it seems our dear representatives might have been contaminated by the highly contagious TSS on encountering the president’s entourage (McCool 2025).

To keep it brief, the US and EU representatives reached a framework agreement which, in the words of the Commission, will ‘reinvigorate our economies’ and ‘reflects acknowledgement by the European Union of the concerns of the United States’ (European Commission, Directorate-General Trade and Economic Security 2025). The main points to focus on are the US’s willingness to reduce all previously imposed tariffs on EU products from 30% to 15%. Exceptions to this include cork, aircraft parts, pharmaceuticals (although this exception remains undecided) and chemical ingredients, which will only be subject to the traditional Most-Favoured-Nation impositions set by the WTO. In return, the EU must annul all tariffs imposed on US products, and it has until 2028 to buy a total of \$750 billion of energy and \$40 billion of artificial intelligence chips from the US. Furthermore, the EU will commit to investing around \$600 billion in US companies during the same period. EU member states must also agree to increase their procurement of US military products. Finally, concerning the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism tariffs imposed on carbon-heavy products imported to the EU, the Union has also agreed to reduce constraints on US goods (European Commission, Directorate-General Trade and Economic Security 2025).

This seems, therefore, to be quite a blow for transatlantic commercial relations. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer defined this as the birth of a new international order, the ‘Turnberry System’, coming to replace the ‘unsustainable Bretton Woods’ system (Scott 2025).

He must be right; after all, who needs the outdated economic practices of ignoramuses such as Keynes, Smith, Friedman or Locke . . . The Bretton Woods system built the way to the ‘golden age of capitalism’, fostered growth in the post–Second World War era, and encouraged trade through the creation of the International Monetary Fund and the WTO, but does any of that really matter?

All in all, what does this non-legally binding framework mean, precisely? Are there winners and losers? In the eyes of his voters, Trump is the undisputed winner; he has finally sealed the 'biggest deal' of them all and made Europe pay for it. Similarly, stocks in Asia and Europe seem to have increased because there is now at least some sense of stability; 15% tariffs are not ideal, but do at least offer a conservative baseline. US energy producers have hit the jackpot, as has the aviation industry; the former will see deposits of several billion US dollars into their bank accounts from the European Commission, while aircraft producers will be relieved of tariffs.

American consumers, however, will pay the price, as a bottle of Montepulciano will now cost an extra \$15. Similarly, car makers in Germany will also suffer: they are already dealing with strong competition from Chinese electric vehicle manufacturers and will now lose millions on exports to the US. The most significant blow, however, targeted European solidarity. The already politically divided member states will now have to vote on a deal that affects their individual interests and about which they each have their own opinions (Fitzgerald and Geoghegan 2025).

Maroš Šefčovič's take on the matter seems to be quite positive and encouraging; he recently praised the White House for reducing the previously imposed 30% tariffs, noting it was a 'crucial step' (Alipour 2025).

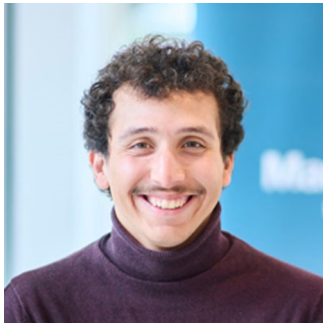
There is, however, some positive irony to these circumstances. US car manufacturers might find themselves in a sort of self-inflicted financial pain. At first sight, they look like the winners, since the EU has reduced tariffs on US car imports from 10% to 2.5%, but American cars are mostly assembled abroad, in Canada or Mexico, countries which are now subject to 25% tariffs when exporting to US soil. The US consumer will now have to choose between an American car made by Mexicans with a 25% price increase and a beautiful Audi that has only increased in price by 15%. Talk about a snake biting its own tail . . . (Fitzgerald and Geoghegan 2025).

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