

As with many sequels, there will be [many things](#) we've seen before in Trump's second term. If you hated the original Trump Administration, you won't enjoy watching the same thing the second time around. But there are a few additions to the cast and some new construction on the set. I talked about areas of continuity in my last post. Today, I'll talk about some possible new twists.

**Better Organization.** Trump didn't expect to win in 2016. He and his crew were completely unprepared to take over the government. This time, we have Project 2025 and similar efforts that will provide a blueprint for the new Administration. ON the other hand, if anything many of Trump's nominees are less qualified than their earlier counterparts, meaning they may be do poorly at implementing their missions.

**Environment & Energy Nominees.** Trump's choice for EPA Administrator has only a 14% lifetime score on environmental issues, which is terrible in objective terms but actually not too bad for a House Republican. The pick to head DOE made his fortune in fracking, not a good sign, and the pick to head Interior is a fossil fuel enthusiast but not a climate denier. Overall, the appointments are marginally better than last time.

**RFK, Jr.** Environmentalists no longer consider RFK one of them, but he may still see himself as a friend of the environment. He's likely to simply be a source of chaos in the health care realm that he now focuses on. But there's a chance he could promote some types of environmental measures, especially relating to toxics and water quality.

**Elon Musk.** Musk seems poised to play a major role in the Trump administration, at least for as long as two gigantic egos can manage to coexist. Musk seems like a mass of contradictions, but he believes in climate change and has a huge financial stake in EVs and battery storage. That could result in some mellowing of Trump's energy policy, at least on those issues. On the other hand, Musk's DOGE project seems designed to smash regulatory agencies like EPA.

**The IRA.** Biden left behind him the IRA and two other laws devoting hundreds of billions of dollars to clean energy and related measures. Some bits will surely be cut, but it seems unlikely that there will be radical cutbacks - there are just too many people and investments relying on the money. More generally, clean energy is cheaper and much more prevalent than it was when Trump first became President. Those developments will shape the setting in which Trump is operating.

**The Resistance.** Trump isn't the only one who is coming to the game with more experience and better organization. The many states and environmental organizations that

fought him the first time will be better prepared and organized this time.

**The Judiciary.** The federal courts, especially the Supreme Court, are more conservative than they were when Trump took office. As he moves through his term and makes more appointments, they'll become yet more conservative. That would suggest a much more favorable judicial environment.

**Legal Doctrine.** While the judiciary is more favorable to Trump, legal doctrine isn't. *Chevron*, which expanded deference to agencies, has been overruled and can't help defend changes in regulations. The Supreme Court has also come up with something called the Major Question Doctrine, which specifically targets drastic shifts in agency policies and seems a possible threat to some of Trump's more radical proposals. We don't know how a more favorable judiciary and less favorable legal doctrine will combine.

**The Upshot.** While Trump's second term will be a great case study for political scientists, the environment may be in tatters by the end, with longterm consequences for the planet as a whole. If I were a Martian, I would find Trump's return to office a fascinating societal experiment. Since I happen to live on this planet, I'm very worried. longterm global consequences.