CHAPTER 2

Divergent Approaches to Critical Minerals Derisking: A Comparative Analysis of Biden and Trump's Policies

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Introduction

The political landscape of the United States of America (US) is largely represented by the Republicans and the Democrats, two dominant parties with contrasting views representing a fault line in US policy discourse. This partisan divide considerably shapes domestic and foreign policy approaches, including those related to critical minerals (Kennedy, 2010). Polarity manifests in divergent policy preferences and priorities on several issues that affect the development and management of public policy, like resource extraction, environmental and trade regulation and international cooperation on critical mineral resources (Flecther, 2025). This chapter assesses the different approaches of President Joe Biden (Democrat, 46th President) and President Donald Trump (Republican, 45th and 47th President) on critical minerals derisking, an important matter of US national security and economic competitiveness.

Technological advancements and energy requirements have led to an escalating demand for critical minerals, resulting in an increasing focus on the sustainability of supply chains and resource governance. The source identification, extraction and processing of the critical minerals are linked to energy production, defence, transportation and communication technologies. The challenge is how to ensure effective, reliable and responsible resource procurement. Critical minerals are concentrated in a few countries, which means that the supply chains are susceptible to vulnerabilities in those countries. These vulnerabilities include political, social, economic and other factors that can destabilise countries. This is

also compounded by the need to ensure responsible resource governance and uphold human and labour rights and environmental standards. History shows that when responsible procurement has been ignored, the results have been mass suffering of entire populations. Understandably, the US and the European Union (EU) deem it important to protect their supply chains or explore new ones (Von der Leyen, 2023). The US, which is the focus of this chapter, has, over time, recognised these supply chain risks and developed mitigatory strategies with varying emphasis and strategies depending on the administration in office. This research contrasts and analyses the policy divergence and convergence of the Biden and Trump administrations' approaches to securing the vital critical mineral supply chains against vulnerabilities.

Background

Derisking is a financial risk management concept that has gained new significance as a 'buzzword' in global politics in recent years (Kelly and Wester, 2025). In the realm of business, it refers to managing risk relationships through more careful strategies or termination. Section 6215 of the US's Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA) of 2020 defines derisking as actions taken by a financial institution to stop or limit business relationships with certain customers, instead of managing the associated risks. Considerations of profitability, reputation and perceptions, risk aversion, regulatory compliance and sanctions often drive this. An example of derisking is how 'Global financial institutions are increasingly terminating or restricting business relationships with remittance companies and smaller local banks in certain regions of the world' (World Bank, 2016: 1). The key attribute of derisking involves avoiding, rather than managing, high-risk relationships, which tend to incur higher monitoring and compliance costs. At the same time, risk is not always detrimental; it can also be associated with higher profits. However, high risks introduce vulnerabilities that the entity may not be able to sustain, hence the need for derisking. Furthermore, derisking has a checkered history in its association with anti-laundering and anti-terrorism efforts, where it has been accused of overreach by way of

'terminating or restricting business relationships indiscriminately with broad categories of customers rather than analyzing and managing the specific risks associated with those customers' (Cave, 2023: 1).

In terms of contemporary geopolitics, the related term decoupling precedes the term derisking. Bradsher (2018) observed that decoupling gained traction under President Trump's first term to describe attempts to break up the close links in China–US economic pillars, mainly in high-tech industries, and bring back jobs to the US. The US and Europe have been concerned about derisking their supply chains for some time. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (2023) popularised the term in geopolitics. Subsequently, Cave (2023) believes that the term 'derisking' reflects the West's evolving approaches when dealing with a rising China, being seen as a more acceptable term, unlike 'decoupling', although China believes that there is not much difference between the terms. China dominates global value chains in a time of global polycrisis, the convergence of multiple and interconnected crises (Lawrence et al., 2024). This situation has, over time, understandably unsettled Western countries like the US as well as the EU, which began to seek to derisk or create alternative supply chains that they control (Zhou, Crocket and Wang, 2023). Nevertheless, unlike decoupling, derisking is seen to be more diplomatic and surgical. Zhou et al. (2023: 1) underline that Western derisking is based on a faulty approach in which China is the risk when, in their view, China's policies 'have been primarily aimed at addressing internal challenges and policy priorities in China rather than dominating, weaponizing, or causing disruptions in global supply chains'. In this observation, the author advises against confrontational strategies, as these may undermine rational policymaking and lead to disruption.

China is part of a bigger political economy conversation about the US's domestic and global economic dependencies. Economic dependencies can be identified in various strategic areas that can be used as geopolitical leverage by other countries (Sullivan, 2023). These areas of supply chain vulnerability include energy, health accessories, critical minerals and semiconductors. Newman and Farrel (2023) believe that derisking is a code for a new economic security state that marries traditional security and free-market economics, thereby reshaping global politics. The US

has adopted the EU's language of derisking as 'the process of managing the vulnerabilities generated by an interdependent world,' preserving a functioning international system and dealing with problems starting with the most urgent (Newman and Farrel, 2023: 1). The definition of derisking in this chapter is the review and termination of business relationships largely viewed as dependencies, mainly critical minerals dependency, that have developed over time, from which the US feels that its economic and national security have become vulnerable.

As the US fought the war on terror and its economy faltered in the 2008 depression, it became increasingly clear that the US was greatly vulnerable, and this alarmed policymakers. When COVID 19 lockdowns were introduced in 2020, supply chains became a big issue. Barner (2023) notes that the pandemic fueled e-commerce trade and stretched supply chains, resulting in glitches such as port congestion and closures that publicly highlighted the precariousness of the US supply chain. The US would immediately respond with an Executive Order on America's Supply Chains.

China continued to expand its commerce, and the US and other Western countries aimed to catch up, resulting in intensified geostrategic competition. China is the world's leading importer and exporter of critical minerals and their derivatives. Rising demand and projections for increased future demand have led to a global race for resources and markets. China's surplus production of US$1 trillion in 2018 and US$1.8 trillion in 2023, which is being termed 'overcapacity', resulted in increased Chinese global exports and entrenchment of 'global market concentration in key sectors and deepening supply chain dependencies' (Kelly and Wester, 2025: 1). In the wake of global derisking, several non-Western regions have found themselves caught between China's overcapacity and global derisking, like in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries (Kelly and Wester, 2025).

One of the key presidential debate issues from the 2008 election onward was how to bring industry and jobs back to America. Domestic and foreign policy came to be linked together. But how had the US put itself in a position where it felt that it was vulnerable? There was a sense of

agreement amongst Democrats and Republicans that neoliberal policies of the Washington Consensus were responsible. President Trump, in 2025, blamed the policies of the past 50 years. The US Secretary of State, Jake Sullivan (2023), under Biden, identified four factors that have affected the US political economy. Firstly, a weakened industrial base due to limited public funding, with preferences for the private sector and liberalisation based on the mistaken belief that markets allocate capital productively. This resulted in factors like finance being more privileged than critical sectors such as infrastructure and semiconductors, leading to entire supply chains being moved overseas. Unfortunately, the COVID 19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine war of 2022 revealed the limitations of this thinking, as it became obvious that these supply chains can be weaponised. Secondly, it was believed that economic integration would make countries peaceful, cooperative, and more compliant with a rules-based order, but instead, the realities of geopolitical and security competition proved otherwise. After experiencing a surge in Chinese exports from 2001, US leaders have come to accept that China continued to support the private sector, while the US did not. Thirdly, there was a recognised need to accelerate climate change investments for job creation, cost reduction and innovation. Fourthly, significant levels of inequality damaged democracy as gains from the system did not reach the middle class. Sullivan (2023: 1) concluded that a 'new Washington consensus' should build industrial capacity, resilience and inclusiveness both domestically and abroad in 'a foreign policy for the middle class'. This involved making public investments in skills and sectors that are foundational to the US economy and national security.

At a conceptual level, derisking, as applied by the US, is characterised by tension between nationalism, internationalism and interdependence in a realist sense. Republicans and Democrats somewhat agree that the application of liberal moral and legal norms to politics, industrialisation, trade and security has fallen short, although there is no consensus on the nature of these failures and the path forward. Liberalism in its variants, republican liberalism (cooperation among democracies) and liberal institutionalism (the role of institutions in achieving liberal views), has been replaced by varying degrees of realist thinking (Heywood, 2015).

Perspectives on both sides emphasise that the key aspect of US relations should not centre on unchecked moralising, but rather highlight the centrality of power and self-interest, viewing states as selfish (egoistic) and competitive, reflecting structural constraints of a state-centric nature in international relations. In this new consensus, national interest and power, not moral principles, guide state behaviour. For Morgenthau (1954), politics is an immutable factor of the international system and functions according to principles of power, such that public policy should aim to address issues of national interest and power. It is this reasoning that compels realists to reject 'universal moral principles that supposedly apply to all states in all circumstances' (Heywood, 2015: 60). Waltz (1979) highlights the importance of self-help (that states should primarily depend on no one else but themselves), the security dilemma (the uncertainty and suspicion about other states' intentions) and relative gains (maintaining or increasing one's state's position relative to others) in establishing a balance of power. This balance of power is best maintained in a bipolarity and becomes disrupted by multipolarity, which Waltz (1979) refers to as neorealist stability theory. When one power appears to have an advantage over others, it unsettles the other powers, and the dominant power becomes destabilised when its dominance is threatened or when the number of great powers increases, thereby raising the likelihood of great power rivalry and conflict. The complexity of polycrisis requires great powers to have a well-crafted grand strategy to avert an imperial overreach situation (straining of a powerful nation) because of extensive commitments and responsibilities (Kennedy, 2010). Derisking is, in essence, driven by realist concerns.

This study contributes to the conversation by showing how long the US has been grappling with this issue of derisking, with no real changes. It can help understand the radical approaches of the second Trump administration, the nature and structures of international relations, and how it is not easy for states, even great powers, to change national and international governance. The current world order has taken years to develop, and hasty attempts to immediately change things at this stage may reveal insights for nations on how to understand and address global derisking.

Methodology

This research is qualitative and involves a trend analysis of the statutes and policies of President Biden and President Trump's critical mineral derisking discourse in the US. Data was collected from the Federal Register database on https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/executive-orders, a daily publication of US Federal documents that allows the public to access and comment on official documents (National Archives, 2025). This was complemented by additional primary and secondary documents from the White House and various media outlets. The research identified and grouped the statutes and policies into Executive Orders (EOs), policies and initiatives, legislative efforts and investments and partnerships. Subsequently, a comparative analysis of the grouped data identifies and discusses the divergences and convergences in critical mineral derisking between the two presidents. In this analysis, the research also emphasises extracting the implications of these policies. This comparison is particularly interesting at this stage, because President Trump's term of office is separated from President Biden's one-term interlude. This may indicate policy continuation and discontinuation, considering certain ideological differences between the Democrats and Republicans, as well as the personalities of the leaders.

First Trump administration's approach to critical minerals derisking

President Trump issued EOs and policies relating to derisking in his first term (2016–2020). The President invoked the Defence Production Act (DPA) in 2017 to 'secure the supply of an array of products deemed critical for national defense … [and] support domestic mineral extraction and refining, authorizing federal investment in critical mineral projects' (International Energy Agency, 2024: 1). In his first year as President, Trump signed EO 13817, *Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals*. This EO stated that dependency on imported critical minerals, domestic mining permit delays and weak domestic geological and geophysical surveys expose the US 'economy and military to adverse foreign government action, natural disaster, and other events that

can disrupt the supply of these key minerals' (Trump, 2017: 1). The EO encourages 'private-sector domestic exploration, production, recycling, and reprocessing of critical minerals, and support for efforts to identify more commonly available technological alternatives to these minerals', to reduce dependency, improve national security, and 'technological superiority and readiness of our Armed Forces' (Trump, 2017: 1). This was to reduce dependency, find new sources by improved exploration and licensing of mining and processing and recycling of critical minerals, and find alternatives to minerals.

On 30 September 2020, President Trump signed EO 13953 *Addressing the Threat to the Domestic Supply Chain from Reliance on Critical Minerals from Foreign Adversaries and Supporting the Domestic Mining and Processing Industries*. The wording of this EO shows a heightened sense of response to vulnerabilities in critical minerals supply chains. It identifies that, because of the previous EO, the US had listed 35 minerals as critical minerals essential to US economic and national security, and 'vulnerable to disruption', because:

> For 31 of the 35 critical minerals, the United States imports more than half of its annual consumption. The United States has no domestic production for 14 of the critical minerals and is completely dependent on imports to supply its demand (Trump, 2020: 1).

The EO also shows suspicion over the motives and operations of some of the global actors in the supply chains:

> Whereas the United States recognizes the continued importance of cooperation on supply chain issues with international partners and allies, in many cases, the aggressive economic practices of certain non-market foreign producers of critical minerals have destroyed vital mining and manufacturing jobs in the United States (Trump, 2020: 1).

President Trump was more direct in his wording about the US's dependence on China, noting that:

> Our dependence on one country, the People's Republic of China (China), for multiple critical minerals is particularly concerning. The United States now imports 80 percent of its rare earth elements directly from China, with portions of the remainder indirectly sourced from China through other countries. In the 1980s, the United States produced more of these elements than any other country in the world, but China used aggressive economic practices to strategically flood the global market for rare earth elements and displace its competitors. Since gaining this advantage, China has exploited its position in the rare earth elements market by coercing industries that rely on these elements to locate their facilities, intellectual property, and technology in China. For instance, multiple companies were forced to add factory capacity in China after it suspended exports of processed rare earth elements to Japan in 2010, threatening that country's industrial and defense sectors and disrupting rare earth elements prices worldwide (Trump, 2020: 1).

Apart from rare earth elements, in EO 13953, President Trump is dismayed by the US's dependence on foreign sources, mainly China, for barite (75 per cent dependency), gallium (100 per cent dependency) and graphite (100 per cent dependency), all used in high-tech technologies like semiconductors. As a result of this identified dependence on foreign adversaries, President Trump declared that it constituted 'an unusual and extraordinary threat, which has its source in substantial part outside the United States, to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States' and declared 'a national emergency to deal with that threat' (Trump, 2020: 1). He notes the need to enhance domestic 'mining and processing capacity' to firstly reduce US 'dependence on minerals' from countries without 'appropriate minerals supply chain standards, leading to human rights violations, forced and child labour, violent conflict, and health and environmental damage' and secondly, to foster 'a healthier and faster-growing economy for the United States', create jobs and thus enabling a 'Buy American' approach. President Trump's first term derisking approach was increasingly aggressive (Trump, 2020: 1).

Biden's approach to critical minerals derisking

President Biden introduced two EOs related to critical minerals. Firstly, EO 14017, *American Supply Chains*, was signed on 24 February 2021 and directs the Defence Secretary and government agencies to identify risks and make suggestions towards strengthening supply chain resilience, including 'critical minerals and other identified strategic materials, including rare earth elements' (Section 3) (Biden, 2021b: 1). The EO also upholds President Trump's first term's critical mineral EO.

Secondly, on 31 October 2021, EO 14051 *Designation to Exercise Authority Over the National Defense (sic) Stockpile* was signed. It streamlined efforts by both public and private enterprises for acquisition, release and sustainability of the strategic and critical materials of the National Defence Stockpile for 'resilient, diverse, and secure supply chains to ensure our economic prosperity, national security, and national competitiveness' (Biden, 2021a: 1). This EO reinforced other legal provisions such as the Strategic and Critical Materials Stock Piling Act, the National Defence Authorisation Act, and the United States Code.

On 27 November 2023, Biden established the White House Council on Supply Chain Resilience. EO 14123, *White House Council on Supply Chain Resilience,* signed 14 June 2024, strengthens the cabinet-level committee's capacity to coordinate executive actions towards resilient supply chains. Resilient supply chains were described as including domestic factors and close coordination with allies:

> … greater domestic production; a diverse and agile supplier base; built-in redundancies; a reliable transportation system; secure critical infrastructure; adequate stockpiles; safe and secure data networks; reliable food systems; and a world-class, globally competitive American manufacturing base and workforce. Close cooperation on building global supply chain resilience with allies and partners who share our values will foster collective economic and national security, encourage innovation, and strengthen the capacity to respond to and recover from international disasters and emergencies (Biden, 2024: 1).

President Biden used the Defence Production Act of 1950 to secure domestic battery supply chains and overseas manufacturing (International Energy Agency, 2024). He pushed for the updating of the critical minerals list, resulting in the 2022 US Geological Survey (USGS) *Critical Minerals List (CML)*. President Biden signed Section 7002(a)(2) of the Energy Act of 2020, a bipartisan law enacted at the end of Trump's first term to produce the *Federal Register*, Department of Energy Critical Materials List (Stone, 2025). These lists identified minerals essential to US economic and national security, and which are vulnerable to disruption.

President Biden also initiated several policies and initiatives targeting critical minerals derisking through local production and international cooperation. He pushed for the reform of the US's Mining Law of 1872, which is over 150 years old, by establishing an interagency working group, which submitted some recommendations (Ward-Herzik, 2023). The Supply Chains Disruptions Task Force was established in June 2021 to address short-term supply chain disruptions in the US. At an international summit in Europe, Biden advocated for transparency, diversity, openness, predictability, security and sustainability as key pillars of resilient supply chains and announced a programme called Li-Bridge as a US public-private initiative 'committed to accelerating development of a robust and secure domestic supply chain for lithium-based batteries' (Weinstock, 2022). President Biden also established the National Blueprint for Lithium Batteries (2021–2030), developed by the Federal Consortium for Advanced Batteries, led by the Departments of Energy, Defence, Commerce and State. The US vision for lithium batteries was laid out as:

> By 2030, the United States and its partners will establish a secure battery materials and technology supply chain that supports long-term U.S. economic competitiveness and equitable job creation, enables decarbonization, advances social justice, and meets national security requirements (Granholm, 2021: 5).

The National Blueprint for Lithium Batteries aimed, to provide a coordinated approach to ensuring a domestic supply of lithium batteries

and accelerating the development of a robust and secure domestic industrial base (Granholm, 2021: 5).

While the blueprint is publicly available, the subsequent Lithium Battery Strategy (2023–2030) developed by the Department of Defence was not publicly released.

Under President Biden, several domestic and international investments and partnerships were initiated. The Department of Defence's Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment programme awarded a contract of US$35 million to process heavy rare earth elements in the US at Mountain Pass Rare Earth Mine in California (Webster, 2023). The US Department of Energy funded a US$140 million Demonstration Project, it described as 'America's first-of-a-kind critical minerals refinery' (US Department of Energy, 2022: 1). These are smaller sums considering that in Zimbabwe alone, China invested about US$2.79 billion for lithium resource production (Sanchez, 2023). However, about US$3 billion was allocated for investment in material refining and battery recycling under the US$1.8 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Biden also introduced the US$891 billion Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which was voted for by all Democrats and rejected by all Republicans in the US Congress. The Act aimed to incentivise domestic mining and processing of critical minerals, climate financing, healthcare measures, tax reform and introduced electric vehicle mandates and motor vehicle subsidies to strengthen American supply chains; facing international criticism for violating World Trade Organisation subsidy rules (Podesta, 2024). The EU, UK and South Korea retaliated with their own domestic subsidies, resulting in a subsidy competition (Stokes, 2024). They were not happy with suggestions that Biden's US was protecting 'foundational technologies with a small yard and high fence'—, protecting its industries while making it difficult for foreign entities (Stokes, 2024: 1). Nevertheless, the second Trump administration paused funding for the climate parts of the Act through an EO.

The multi-country Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) was established in 2022 to diversify critical minerals value chains and trigger investment by reputable mining companies. It includes Australia, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, the

Republic of Korea, Sweden, the UK, the US, and the EU (US Department of State, 2025). Upon his exit in December 2024, Biden made it his crowning achievement to secure the Lobito Corridor Railway deal with G7 countries, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Zambia, and to sign Memoranda of Understanding with the DRC and Zambia (Soy, 2024). President Trump may take a more unilateral approach to these arrangements.

Second Trump administration's approach to derisking

President Trump left office in 2021 when the global critical minerals rush was just beginning after the pandemic. When he returned to power in January 2025, President Trump intensified and accelerated his derisking strategies in general, including those related to critical minerals. Of the 143 executive orders Trump issued between January and April 2025, about seven directly affect critical minerals.

On his first day of his second term, 20 January 2025, President Trump signed two EOs directly related to critical minerals, that is, EO 14154 and EO 14156. The first executive order, EO 14154 *Unleashing American Energy,* sought to unleash American energy from 'burdensome and ideologically motivated regulations' that affect energy (including critical minerals) production (Trump, 2025a: 1). This EO disbanded several associations (for example, the American Climate Corps), revoked over thirteen Biden EOs and cancelled several programmes and contracts linked to climate, environmental and energy initiatives. Some examples include the elimination of 'electric vehicle (EV) mandates' and terminating the Green New Deal by stopping the disbursement of funds under the Inflation Reduction Act or the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Trump, 2025a: 1). Trump criticised the laws as socialist and hampered by diversity, inclusion and equality provisions and paused billions of funding in 2025, resulting in several lawsuits (Fletcher, 2025).

The EO provides for several changes and new initiatives in support of energy and critical minerals, including rare earth elements production, access and efficiency for employment creation and strengthening supply chains. It calls for the removal of 'undue burdens on the domestic mining

and processing of non-fuel minerals' (Trump, 2025a: 1). Federal agencies are directed to prioritise critical minerals projects, identify regulatory barriers, and 'assess whether exploitative practices and state-assisted mineral projects abroad are unlawful or unduly burden or restrict United States commerce' (Trump, 2025a: 1).

The second executive order is EO 14156 *Declaring a National Energy Emergency* of 20 January 2025 which decried the inadequacy of 'The energy and critical minerals ('energy') identification, leasing, development, production, transportation, refining, and generation capacity of the United States' because of 'the harmful and shortsighted policies of the previous administration' (Trump, 2025b: 1). As a result, the US was seen as having an unreliable, undiversified and unaffordable supply of critical minerals, creating a threat to national security and economic stability. The state of emergency declared made provisions for rapid responses to resolve the energy deficiencies by affirming the 'integrity and expansion of our Nation's energy infrastructure', completing all authorised 'infrastructure, energy, environmental, and natural resources projects', and facilitating 'the supply, refining, and transportation of energy' (Trump, 2025b: 1).

The third executive order is EO 14241, *Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production* of 20 March 2025, issued on the basis that 'it is imperative for our national security that the United States take immediate action to facilitate domestic mineral production to the maximum possible extent' (Trump, 2025c: 1). This EO provides for certain priority projects, a structure to make recommendations on issues to resolve under the Mining Act of 1872, identification of the land use for mineral projects and sets out to accelerate private and public investment in minerals.

The fourth executive order, EO 14285 *Unleashing America's Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources,* of 24 April 2025, adds directives for the exploration of seabed critical mineral and energy resources (Trump, 2025d: 1). The fifth executive order, EO 14262 *Strengthening the Reliability and Security of the United States Electric Grid* of 8 April 2025, connected reliable US electricity to resilient supply chains (Trump, 2025e: 1).

The sixth executive order, EO 14272, *Ensuring National Security and Economic Resilience Through Section 232 Actions on Processed Critical*

Minerals and Derivative Products of 15 April 2025, called for the US Department of Commerce 'to determine the effects of imports of any articles on U.S. national security' (Trump, 2025f: 1). This EO observes that the US's dependence on foreign processed critical minerals and derivatives is a threat to US economic and national security.

> The United States' manufacturing and defense industrial bases remain dependent on foreign sources for processed critical mineral products. Many of these foreign sources are at risk of serious, sustained, and long-term supply chain shocks. Should the United States lose access to processed critical minerals from foreign sources, the United States' commercial and defense manufacturing base for derivative products could face significant shortages and an inability to meet demand (Trump, 2025f: 1).

President Trump established the *National Energy Dominance Council* because 'It shall be the policy of my Administration to make America energy dominant'. Energy dominant is not defined in the EO, however, it had been used by Trump in his first term in 2017, and then Department of Energy Secretary Rick Perry stated:

> An energy dominant America means self-reliant. It means a secure nation, free from the geopolitical turmoil of other nations who seek to use energy as an economic weapon… An energy dominant America will export to markets around the world, increasing our global leadership and our influence (DiChristopher, 2017).

According to the EO, this is achieved by:

> By utilizing our amazing national assets, including our crude oil, natural gas, lease condensates, natural gas liquids, refined petroleum products, uranium, coal, biofuels, geothermal heat, the kinetic movement of flowing water, and critical minerals, we will preserve and protect our most beautiful places, reduce our dependency on

> foreign imports, and grow our economy—thereby enabling the reduction of our deficits and our debt (Trump, 2025f: 1).

These EOs related to critical minerals concentrate on accelerated efforts to undo the 'damage' or policies of the previous administration and define, simplify and implement critical mineral support. There have been increased commitments to financial support through federal grants and tax incentives supporting domestic production capacity. After an emphasis on domestic production, under Trump, the US has pursued critical minerals supply chains through bilateral agreements with source countries like Australia, Canada, China, the DRC and Ukraine.

Discussion

The two presidents (Biden and Trump) have made critical minerals derisking a key part of their administrations, although their approaches differ. The themes under focus include domestic production and job creation, international cooperation, environmental and social considerations, and legislative and regulatory frameworks. There are important similarities and differences between the two. In terms of similarities, both share a profound realisation of the necessity of securing critical mineral supply chains for economic stability and national security; both aim to reduce dependence on adversarial nations and foreign nations in general; and both promote domestic production of critical minerals as fundamental to national competitiveness and stability. In terms of differences, President Biden was for more international cooperation and diplomacy, while President Trump was more unilateral and protectionist; Biden included environmental sustainability and social responsibility concerns with economic growth and national security, while Trump was for the economy and national security; Biden used Congress for regulatory frameworks, while Trump mainly used executive authority and regulatory changes.

The derisking approaches of these leaders have long-term positive and negative implications for the US critical minerals industry and supply chain. The positive effects are likely to be increased domestic production,

reduced dependence on adversarial nations, job creation and economic growth. This means more secure supply chains, reduced risks from disruptions and geopolitical tensions and new opportunities as domestic production increases. The negative effects could include increased costs of critical minerals due to higher labour, environmental, and investment standards; short-term supply chain disruptions during the transition to domestic production; and environmental impacts if regulations are rolled back. In the long term, the efforts at derisking may result in supply chain resilience, innovation and competitiveness and change global market dynamics.

The unfortunate reality is that despite significant efforts to derisk, the tide has yet to meaningfully turn in favour of the US, and there are signs of desperation and impatience within the country. Domestic production has remained a distant dream in US policy, as policymakers have failed to reform the systems within projected timelines. Most of the executive orders demonstrate urgency with phrases like 'in the next 10 days' or 'next 100 days'. Such wording reveals a lack of discipline and explains policy inconsistencies that undermine continuity. Biden built upon Trump, but also reversed many of Trump's efforts, while Trump's second-term initiatives have dismantled almost everything associated with Biden. Barner (2023) also notes that some of the derisking structures excluded pertinent procurement experts, highlighting a deficiency in understanding the comprehensive relational and network knowledge necessary to build supply chains and attract essential skills.

The two presidents' diverging approaches to derisking reveal a deeper problem about the fracture between the Democrats and Republicans, and how to interpret the crisis of the neoliberal state that both sides acknowledge. Biden's neoliberal domestic and multilateral approach led back to nationalism and unilateralism. The rational and irrational fears regarding China indicate why others have invoked Thucydides' Trap and neorealist stability theory to explain the US's reactions to the possibility of taking an equal or subordinate role alongside China (Allison, 2017). Trump's reaction to disengage from Biden's tenets raises the question: Can the US afford to move away from multilateralism and overlook environmental, social and human rights considerations? President Trump

thinks so, by using 'common sense' and quick-fix approaches. However, the US cannot isolate itself while maintaining access and control of critical mineral supply chains. There are signs of disdain or mixed messages about other countries, undermining perceptions of the US as a reliable and trustworthy business partner. China's supply chains took time to build partnerships with both friends and foes, establishing contacts and rapport, building networks, creating infrastructure, relocating equipment, attracting the right skills, and addressing context-specific political economy issues. The Chinese carefully selected their allies, remained steadfast with them, and opted not to interfere in their internal affairs as a long-term strategy. While focusing on the domestic market is crucial, China has both domestic and overseas supply chains. However, given the nature of critical minerals, vast overseas supply chains provide more volume and access to minerals concentrated in a few locations. For instance, the DRC has the world's largest cobalt deposits, South America is rich in lithium resources, and Zimbabwe possesses the world's largest hard-rock lithium deposits.

Grand strategy, a long-term, high-level policy of plans, principles and behaviour guiding a nation's domestic and foreign policy, could be the missing link of the US de-risking strategy (Silove, 2017). For a country that wants to catch up with another country that it depends entirely on for critical minerals and has an annual overcapacity of approximately US$1.8 trillion against the US deficit of US$36 trillion, as discussed before, the US must think in terms of grand strategy. While neorealism emphasises self-help, the security dilemma, and relative gains over direct confrontation, the required strategy may instead be a patient but steady build-up of power. Grand strategy plays a role, however, the key is to avoid what Kennedy (2010) termed imperial overreach or overstretch by trying to do everything at once. In an era of polycrisis, the US cannot and should not try to be everywhere and do everything or make enemies or friends of everyone.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that the US has been trying to de-risk for over a decade. The biggest challenges to the process involve divided approaches on how to do this. The internal capacity to begin domestic production is hampered by skills shortages, bureaucratic delays, the need to restructure the government and attract local and international investments into the domestic industries. The Biden and Trump administrations show that the issue of critical minerals is an American priority, however, they differed on priorities, methods and values. While both agree that liberal approaches brought the US to a state of vulnerable supply chains, they differ in terms of the intensity of this understanding. For Biden, it is about a renewed focus on domestic investment with considerations of inclusivity, environment, sustainability, innovation and international cooperation to create jobs, maintain competitiveness and secure supply chains. For Trump, Biden's considerations represent burdens that delay domestic production, economic growth and national security. The second Trump administration's first four months in power reveal an administration in a hurry to secure the US's critical supply chains, removing what it considers limitations, maintaining what it considers works, and aggressively pushing forward. In this rush, the US has treated both friends and foes alike in reviewing its supply chains. Despite the attractiveness of ad hoc strategies, they tend to be short-term. The biggest takeaway from this chapter could be that securing supply chains is not only about what is being done, but also how it is being done. The most significant quality of this approach is predictability and long-term plans, principles, and behaviours that unite the nation as part of a consistent grand strategy.

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