

## **Trump is taking a wrecking ball to U.S. alliances around the world**

*di Max Boot*

The “secret sauce” of American power in the post-1945 era has been the country’s network of alliances. The Soviet Union had satrapies in Eastern Europe, but few real friends. Russia doesn’t even have satellite states anymore, aside from Belarus. It does have an increasingly warm but still wary relationship with China. Beijing, in turn, is close to just a handful of other countries; North Korea is its [only treaty ally](#).

The United States, by contrast, has [51 treaty allies](#) all over the world. Advantage, America. But good news for America’s enemies: President Donald Trump appears intent on doing to U.S. alliances what he has already done to [the East Wing](#) of the White House. Let’s take a tour of the world to see the damage he is inflicting with his wrecking-ball diplomacy.

Start in Europe. Trump did possibly irreparable damage to the transatlantic alliance when he threatened to annex Greenland. In January, Denmark, a NATO ally, was getting ready [to fight U.S. troops](#) if they invaded Greenland. After backing off, Trump is now making fresh demands — such as guaranteeing U.S. troops access to Greenland even if it becomes independent — that Greenland officials view as a [major imposition](#) on their sovereignty.

Trump has also ratcheted up his attacks on NATO for not doing more to support the reckless war the U.S. and Israel launched against Iran. He focuses on countries such as Italy and Spain that have blocked access to their bases, while ignoring NATO countries such as [Britain and Germany](#) that remain major hubs of the U.S. war effort. He has even demanded that NATO countries reopen the Strait of Hormuz — a mission the U.S. Navy hasn’t dared to take on. In late March, Trump [said of NATO](#): “Why would we be there for them, if they’re not there for us?”

Since then, his administration has [announced plans](#) to withdraw 5,000 troops from Germany and canceled the deployment of a brigade to Poland, although Trump subsequently said he would send more troops to Poland, perhaps from Germany. There are also reports that the administration wants [to substantially reduce](#) the number of U.S. warplanes and warships committed to Europe in a crisis. Trump has [blocked new U.S. aid](#) for Ukraine, and hasn't condemned Vladimir Putin's recent [missile and drone strikes](#) on Ukrainian civilians — and now on [an apartment building](#) in Romania. He doesn't even call out Putin for [helping Iran](#) target U.S. forces. How could anyone have any confidence that, if Russia were to start a war with NATO, the U.S. would come to its defense?

Trump doesn't trash U.S. allies in Asia as much as he does our European partners, but he is undermining their security, too. All of America's friends in the region are threatened by China, so imagine how they feel about Trump [telling Chinese dictator Xi Jinping](#), at their recent summit, that Xi is a "great leader" and that "it's an honor to be your friend." As Richard Haass of the Council on Foreign Relations [recently said](#), the U.S. now has warmer relations with China than with Canada.

After his deferential meeting with Xi, Trump was critical of Taiwan for dominating the manufacture of high-end microchips and cast doubt on whether he would defend the island democracy. "The last thing we need right now is a war that's 9,500 miles away," [he said](#), inflating the actual distance by a couple thousand miles, while waging a war against Iran, 6,300 miles away. He then announced that a \$14 billion U.S. arms sale to Taiwan would be put on hold as a "[negotiating chip](#)" with Beijing.

The U.S. ability to deter China from attacking Taiwan was already degraded by the [dangerous drawdown](#) of high-end U.S. munitions used against Iran. Trump's comments about Taiwan further [raise the risk of war](#), and leave allies such as Japan, Australia and South Korea wondering if Trump will abandon them, too. Those countries are also grappling with [drastic drops](#) in their oil supply since Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump has been closer to the Persian Gulf rulers than to democratic U.S. allies, no doubt in part because of his lucrative business ties: Emiratis have [invested \\$500](#)

[million in his crypto company](#), Qatar has given him a [\\$400 million airplane](#), and a [Saudi firm](#) has partnered with the Trump Organization on development deals worth millions. But his war with Iran is imperiling America's Gulf relationships, too. The conflict has resulted in [major damage](#) to the Gulf economies because of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian attacks on oil infrastructure, and now Trump is signaling that he will cut a deal with Tehran that will leave it as a continuing threat to its neighbors.

Adding insult to injury, Trump said that if Oman, a U.S. ally, were to cooperate with Iran in charging a toll in the Strait of Hormuz, he would "[blow them up](#)." He also surprised U.S. allies by "[mandatorily requesting](#)" that Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar join the Abraham Accords with Israel. "I think they owe that to us, to be honest," [Trump said](#).

Even leaving aside the fact that Turkey, Egypt and Jordan already have diplomatic relations with Israel, what on earth is Trump talking about? He thinks that the Gulf states are in his *debt* for launching a ruinous war that they did not ask for? There is zero chance of Saudi Arabia, Qatar or Pakistan joining the Abraham Accords unless Israel charts a path to Palestinian statehood — something that is anathema to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

It's a good thing that the United States has such a close relationship with Israel. Because the way things are going, eventually that may be the only ally the U.S. has left.