

Donald Trump, Security Threat

di Paul Krugman



Donald J. Trump  

@realDonaldTrump

Because of Tariffs, easily and quickly applied, our National Security has been greatly enhanced, and we have become the financially strongest Country, by far, anywhere in the World. Only dark and sinister forces would want to see that end!!!

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To update [Samuel Johnson](#), these days national security is the last refuge of a scoundrel. According to Donald Trump, anything he doesn't like is a threat to national security. Question his clearly illegal tariffs? You're a dark and sinister force trying to undermine America. When the New York Times [reported](#) on signs that age may be taking a toll on Trump's stamina, he [denounced](#) the reporting as "seditious, maybe even treasonous."

But some of America's allies — and many of us here at home — are becoming increasingly open about saying that the real danger is coming from inside the White House: Trump himself has become the biggest security threat facing the U.S. and, indeed, all the world's democracies.

On Wednesday a new [report](#) from Denmark's military intelligence service contained the most explicit statement of the growing alarm. It pointed out that, under Donald Trump, America is no longer acting like a friendly partner:

The United States uses economic power, including threats of high tariffs, to enforce its will, and no longer rules out the use of military force, even against allies.

Without a doubt, Denmark's concerns have been heightened by Trump's repeated assertions that he wants to "get" Greenland, which is a Danish territory. In August the Danish government [summoned](#) the head of the U.S. embassy to protest about "covert influence operations" in Greenland undertaken by Americans with ties to Trump.

However, Denmark is certainly not alone in raising concerns and acting on them. Several of America's closest traditional allies, including Canada and the UK, have [reportedly](#) acted to limit intelligence-sharing with the U.S. One cited concern is the risk of being complicit in unlawful acts or war crimes arising from the deadly strikes on boats in the Caribbean.

Sotto voce, it's also clear that the Canadians and the Europeans are alarmed by the presence of Putin sympathizers and conspiracy theorists like Tulsi Gabbard, the Director of National Intelligence, in sensitive positions within the Trump administration. After hearing the [leaked tape](#) of Steve Witkoff's fawning and borderline treasonous conversation with Yuri Ushakov, Putin's foreign policy adviser – in which Witkoff coached him on how to manipulate Trump -- who would want to share sensitive information with this American president?

More broadly, in a world of growing geopolitical conflict, it has become increasingly clear whose side the Trump administration is on — the side of Trump's personal interests, grudges and biases. Trump's new [National Security Strategy](#), released last week, made this dynamic clear. There was no condemnation of Russian aggression against Ukraine and hardly any mention of the US rivalry with China. Yet it lambasted Europe and openly supported right-wing extremist parties that are trying to undermine European democracy.

Trump's proposed "peace plan" for Ukraine not only reads like a Russian wish list, but it also uses some [odd phrasing and syntax](#) suggesting that it was translated from a Russian original. Moreover, the [Wall Street Journal](#) reports that the plan includes a number of undisclosed appendices that would unlock frozen Russian assets and bring Russia's economy "in from the cold," effectively ending the sanctions Putin has faced since he invaded Ukraine.

As odious as Witkoff's actions were, they revealed the truth of the matter: Trump's foreign policy is not about securing the safety and well-being of the United States. It's

about playing to Trump's ego, about appealing to his incessant psychodrama of domination and sycophancy. Anyone who believes otherwise is living in La-La-Land. This betrayal of America's security interests extends to Trump's international economic policy and his clear misuse of tariff laws. Under [Section 232](#) of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, a president is given considerable discretion to impose tariffs to protect industries deemed crucial to national security. And national security tariffs are legal under international law.

The Trump administration has, however, made a mockery of Section 232, using it to justify tariffs on many goods that have no conceivable relationship to national security. In October, for example, Trump imposed Section 232 tariffs on [upholstered furniture](#) and kitchen cabinets. In Trump's mind America would be put at great risk if it were dependent on foreign suppliers of new sofas in the midst of an international conflict.

Even as he imposes 50 percent tariffs to limit the menace of Chinese kitchen cabinets, Trump has decided to allow China to buy the advanced Nvidia semiconductor chips that power many AI models. Bear in mind that the U.S. lead in cutting-edge technology is one of our few advantages in geopolitical competition with China, and this gift to the Chinese has been strongly criticized by every genuine national security expert that I know. (Our other big advantage used to be that we had so many strong allies, but Trump has ended that.)

Yet Trump is now, for a modest fee, letting the Chinese have access to our most advanced semiconductors. As the Wall Street Journal — not exactly a left-wing rag — [put it](#),

The Indians struck a better deal when they sold Manhattan to the Dutch. Why would the President give away one of America's chief technological advantages to an adversary and its chief economic competitor?

But the answer is simple: Trump doesn't care at all about national security, or for that matter America's national interests. Instead, it's all about him: reportedly Trump took the decision to allow the Chinese to have the advanced Nvidia chips after personal lobbying by Jensen Huang, the CEO of Nvidia. Clearly Chinese exporters of furniture and kitchen cabinetry need to get coached by Steve Witkoff.

Just to be clear, I am not a free trade purist. I am not saying national security should be ignored or underplayed when setting economic policy. On the contrary, in a world in which China is arguably the world's leading superpower, in which Putin feels free to launch a war of conquest on Europe's doorstep, national security considerations are critically important. In fact, it's arguable that the twin threats from China and Russia have rendered the US far more vulnerable than at any other period in our lifetimes.

Yet the biggest threats to U.S. national security aren't coming from Beijing or Moscow. They're coming straight out of the Oval Office.