

## America First—Or America Forsaken?

**“He who rides a tiger is afraid to dismount.”**

An ancient Chinese proverb

We are riding a tiger, with Donald J. Trump holding the reins—steering us toward political ruin, economic chaos, and moral collapse. Even worse, he’s not alone; he’s running in tandem with Vladimir Putin. Together, they are transforming the global landscape, and unless America dismounts—and soon—we may all be consumed.

### When China Burned Its Ships

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, China was a maritime superpower, projecting strength and peace by commanding vast fleets of ships that reached the distant shores of Africa and Arabia. However, after the death of the reigning Yongle Emperor, China chose fear over vision. **Confucian elites dismantled the ships**, prohibited maritime expeditions, and severed China’s ties with the world.

The outcome was geopolitical irrelevance and centuries of stagnation. The lesson? **When a nation turns inward, it surrenders its future.**

Donald Trump is orchestrating America’s own “maritime disaster.” He is withdrawing from institutions like the **United Nations, NATO, WHO**, and many more that America helped create, thereby dismantling the very foundation that has prevented world wars for nearly 80 years. By eroding international alliances, undermining global cooperation, and replacing diplomacy with belligerence, he is repeating the actions of ancient China—leading America’s future into stagnation and doing so more swiftly with far more destructive tools.

### The Big Lie and the Collapse of Truth

Trump’s presidency isn’t merely weakening institutions; it is waging war on reality itself. His Big Lie—that he won the 2020 election—forms the cornerstone of how his followers, including Pam Bondi, the new Attorney General, and Kash Patel, the new head of the FBI, perceive him even today. This lie is not only false; it’s foundational. It defines who is loyal and who is a threat. It’s the dividing line between insiders and enemies, patriots and traitors. Truth no longer matters—only submission to Trump’s narrative is important.

Fact-checkers have uncovered the scale of Trump’s deceptions:

- **The [Washington Post](#) recorded 30,573 false or misleading claims** over four years, averaging **21 falsehoods per day**. This figure increased to **39 falsehoods per day** during his final year as President in his first term.

- **The Big Lie still prevails** in Trump land today. In short, Trump refuses to call a spade a spade.

These weren't random errors; they were strategic disinformation aimed at destabilizing trust in the press, the courts, the electoral system, and even the very concept of objective truth, favoring Trump's perception of the world. What Trump is constructing is not merely an alternative political movement. As historian Timothy Snyder points out, it is fascism, becoming bolder and faster every day. Trump has already shown what his presidential term will involve this time: purges of civil servants, loyalty tests, mass deportations, and retribution against judges, journalists, and generals who dare to question his actions.

Trump's total pardon of the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrectionists, with minimal objections from potential protesters, illustrates how deeply this narrative has entrenched itself. Now that he has pardoned his followers, Trump, who has also committed crimes himself, is threatening to prosecute those who oppose him. The point of these developments is that without truth, there can be no accountability. And without accountability, democracy deteriorates into a dictatorship.

## **Tariffs And Economic Delusion**

Trump's 'Liberation Day' and his economic policies resulted in disruption and chaos. His love affair with tariffs—arbitrarily imposed on both allies and adversaries—serves as the economic equivalent of turning off all traffic lights in a major city and expecting traffic to regulate itself. The outcome? Pileups, anger, paralysis.

Trump's policies have not strengthened America. They have fractured alliances, provoked retaliation, and reduced investor confidence. The markets have reacted accordingly, succumbing to the burden of uncertainty and economic hostility.

While strategic self-sufficiency makes sense in industries like vaccine production and other pharmaceutical technologies, Trump envisions a fantasy economy where Americans reclaim their factories and restore their manufacturing dominance. This represents a regression into a romanticized past, favoring those who have fallen behind in a competitive world at the expense of the rest of America, who have moved on to compete in areas where the country has strengths. It ignores the very foundation of American power and economic realities: the **division of labor**, **comparative advantage**, and **global interdependence**.

America has always thrived by excelling in its core strengths—pioneering technology, innovating in science and medicine, investing in higher education, and attracting global talent. It has fostered global growth and prosperity through mutually beneficial trade. Trump's isolationist retreat undermines all of these strengths.

## Putin, Trump, and the Authoritarian Bond

What makes Trump's trajectory even more perilous is his connection to Vladimir Putin. Both men lead their empires of deception with a mafia boss's expectation of loyalty. Both perceive truth as a threat to their power. Both regard neighboring democracies as threats to their rule. And both employ a politics rooted in coercion, intimidation, and grievance.

Putin's regime is built on historical lies, chief among them the myth that World War II began in 1941 when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Left unmentioned is Stalin's collaboration with Hitler under the **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**, during which they jointly invaded and dismembered Poland in 1939. The Soviet Union helped ignite that world war but was never held accountable for it at Nuremberg. Putin has exploited that lie to legitimize aggression in Ukraine, ostensibly to eliminate "Nazis." He praises Stalin, the Soviet leader who was also responsible for the 1932-1933 Holodomor, a genocide in which at least four million Ukrainians perished due to a man-made famine.

Trump also uses false narratives to justify authoritarian behavior both domestically and internationally. His threats to annex Greenland, Panama, and Canada, as well as extort Ukraine, are not accidental; they are precursors of what is to come.

## Ukraine: Betrayal of a Beacon

This convergence of Trump and Putin is nowhere more apparent than in Ukraine. In 1994, Ukraine gave up the **world's third-largest nuclear arsenal** in exchange for guarantees of its **sovereignty and independence**, formalized in the [Budapest Memorandum](#). Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom committed to safeguarding Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Today, Ukraine is suffering under the Russian assault. And Trump? Ignoring U.S. obligations established by the Budapest Memorandum and the commitment to support Ukraine for its relinquishment of nuclear weapons, Trump is shamefully attempting to extort Ukraine's mineral wealth, demanding inflated amounts for the repayment of past U.S. assistance. He downplays Ukraine's suffering while imposing tariffs on Ukrainian goods, even as he exempts Russia. His treatment of Ukraine is not merely shameful—it is complicit in [Russia's war crimes](#). He has aligned himself with the aggressor, and both must now be held accountable for their joint misconduct.

## **America and the Authoritarian Entourage**

Let us be clear: As Putin dreams of reestablishing the Russian empire and Trump envisions an American sphere of control unbound by law or diplomacy, the fate of Ukraine, Europe, Greenland, Canada, and even Panama is vulnerable to the whims of autocracy. If the world's remaining democracies do not unite now, they may very well fall one by one in the days to come.

## **Nero's Fiddle and Trump's Fire**

In the final chapter of his reign, **Emperor Nero** taxed the empire into ruin and **played music while Rome burned**. He ruled not with wisdom but with spectacle.

Donald Trump is a modern-day Nero, undermining American institutions for trivial grievances and his thirst for revenge. However, unlike ancient Rome, America's narrative is not finished. Americans still have a choice. Will they march further into a realm of American gangsterism—a deeper descent into crudeness, lawlessness, and the politicization of the legal system? Or will they reclaim the republic and once again lead the free world, not through fear and intimidation, but through purposeful leadership and integrity?

History is observing, and so is the future.  
Let's not continue to ride this tiger any longer.

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