

# [***Donald Trump Will End NATO and Make the World Unsafe for Democracy | Opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BCY-FXC1-JBR6-946W-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 1040 words

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**Highlight:** Trump continues to misunderstand the nature of the NATO alliance, which is not like some kind of Netflix subscription that Europeans have to stay current on or else the United States cuts them off.

**Body**

It was buried in the news by Special Counsel Robert Hur's political hit job on President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), but former President [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)—the overwhelming favorite to become the Republican Party's nominee for president—more or less [*invited*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-backlash-nato-funding-russia-ukraine-796f245e06d1a0f314e3b4bfdb793cc0) President [*Vladimir Putin*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/vladimir-putin?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s Russia to invade and destroy America's [*NATO*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/nato?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) allies if they don't "pay up." The episode was a stark reminder of why Putin spent so much time and energy running disinformation operations to help put our illustrious 45th president into power in the first place—he remains the single greatest living threat on Earth to the NATO alliance, and to the survival of liberal democracy.

Trump's most recent inflammatory comments about NATO were made on Feb. 14, when he celebrated Valentine's Day by recounting an almost-certainly apocryphal conversation he had with "one of the presidents of a big country" in Europe. Would the United States still defend them against a Russian invasion if they didn't "pay up"? Trump narrated his response to this unnamed Big Country Leader: "No I would not," he said. "In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want." By them, reader, Trump meant the Russians, and by "whatever the hell they want" he meant a Ukraine-style invasion.

Trump continues to misunderstand the nature of the NATO alliance, which is not like some kind of [*Netflix*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/netflix?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) subscription that Europeans have to stay current on or else the United States cuts them off. In 2014, the alliance determined that defense spending [*in NATO countries*](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=EU&most_recent_value_desc=true) should be 2 percent of GDP, a recommendation made in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea, not to Trump's bluster. Spending continued to fall well short of that goal throughout Trump's presidency, but is on target to [*hit it this year*](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_222664.htm#:~:text=He%20added%20that%20he%20expects,billion%20US%20dollars%20in%20defence.), largely as a reaction to further Russian aggression in Ukraine and the threat that Putin's Russia poses to democracy on the continent.

It is important to note that neither Trump nor the NATO secretary-general can compel countries to increase their spending, which is dependent on the decisions made by democratically elected leaders across the continent. Distant transnational elites forcing unwelcome policy changes on reluctant citizens is one of those things that the MAGA people are putatively opposed to, except when it suits their interests not to be. But this is all overthinking it anyway. Trump despises NATO, hasn't the foggiest idea how it works and wouldn't change his tune even if some aide informed him that our European allies are already doing exactly what he asked of them years ago.

Trump's latest indecency could not have come at a worse time, because this is already a perilous moment for Europe and the democratic world. Far-right populists are on the march across the continent from Slovakia to the Netherlands. Leaders with authoritarian predilections and plans are in power or threatening to come to power virtually everywhere. In Italy, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government [*has proposed*](https://www.politico.eu/article/melonis-dangerous-constitutional-change-in-italy/) that the leading party in any election should be entitled to 55 percent of the seats in parliament, eerily reminiscent of the "[*Acerbo Law*](https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v45/n15/john-foot/a-whiff-of-grapeshot)" that Benito Mussolini's fascists used to consolidate their power in 1924.

In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders' is putting together a coalition after his Party for Freedom (PVV) shocked the continent by winning a plurality of seats in the Dutch parliament last year. And in Germany, liberal democrats across the spectrum are raising the alarm at the [*strong polling position*](https://news.yahoo.com/poll-shows-far-afd-still-095634646.html) of the far-right Alternative For Germany (AfD), with some arguing that the party should be banned. The AfD might be only one scandal or governing disaster by the ruling Social [*Democratic Party*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democratic-party?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) (SPD) coalition away from taking power in a free and fair election.

While these parties differ in important ways, they are united by their disdain for the NATO project of fortifying Ukraine against the brutal Russian invasion launched two years ago, on Feb 24, 2022. They are almost uniformly hostile to the [*European Union*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/european-union?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), to NATO and in some cases to the United States itself. These pro-Putin stooges on the doorstep of power across the continent would dismantle NATO from within without Russia having to fire a shot. And while neither the alliance nor its historical conduct is beyond reproach or criticism, NATO is currently playing a critical role in defending a free Ukraine and preventing further democratic backsliding across Europe.

It is utterly disgraceful that any credible political figure in the United States is siding with NATO's saboteurs, let alone leading them. But that is the nature of ***politics*** in the United States in 2024. Trump's leading propagandist, [*Tucker Carlson*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/tucker-carlson?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), recently traveled to Russia to tape a fawning [*interview*](https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/91614)with Putin himself and figures on the American far right continue to express their admiration for the sclerotic, bigoted, vengeful autocracy that Putin operates. House [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) are still blocking military aid to Ukraine and it was recently [*revealed*](https://www.axios.com/2024/02/21/raskin-biden-impeachment-russia-intervention) that they used fake information brought to them by a Russian asset to conduct a year-long impeachment inquiry into President Biden.

Everyone might be tired of the "Russia, Russia, Russia," style of ***politics*** popularized by online 'resistance libs' but unfortunately for all of us, there really is a pro-Putin element staging a slow-motion takeover of one of America's two major political parties. NATO survived Trump's first term, when he was constrained by various advisors who repeatedly prevented him from doing the dumbest thing available to him at any given moment, but there would be no such guardrails in a second term. The Trump that America appears to be on the precipice of re-electing has better plans and more seasoned underlings ready to carry out his vision of cutting democratic Europe loose and feeding it to Putin's wolves.

We can't say we weren't warned.

*David Faris is an associate professor of political science at Roosevelt University and the author of* It's Time to Fight Dirty: How [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) Can Build a Lasting Majority in American ***Politics***. *His writing has appeared in* The Week*,* The Washington Post*,* The New Republic*,* Washington Monthly *and more. You can find him on Twitter @davidmfaris.*

*The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2352618/alliance-action.jpg)

**Graphic**

The Alliance in Action

Finnbarr Webster/Getty Images

Military vehicles are loaded on to the ship Anvil Point at Sea Mounting Centre, on Feb. 13, in Marchwood, England.

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