Opinion

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Verbatim

"He attacks his closest friends and neighbours who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with them in wars and other crises. And who does he cozy up to? Putin. You've got to be kidding me."

Ontario Premier Doug Ford says Donald Trump is cozying up to Russia, while punishing longtime allies such as Canada.

The Monitor

A 25% U.S. tariff on Canadian imports, coupled with equivalent retaliatory duties imposed by Ottawa on American goods, could increase the price of new vehicles in Canada by an average of $5,000 to $6,000. In the U.S., prices there are likely to climb by an average of US$2,600 (around $3,760) per vehicle.

J.D. Power

OBSERVER EDITORIAL

Ford wins early election, now it's all about Trump

Doug Ford's Progressive Conservatives came out of last week's election with a third majority government, losing three seats from 2022 but garnering 43 per cent of the vote, their highest total after the 40.8 per cent last time around and 40.5 in 2018.

The Liberals made some gains, to 14 from eight seats to regain party status, though they still remain in the wilderness to which they were banished in 2018. Their gain was the NDP's loss, as the party won just 27 seats and 18.6 per cent of the vote, down from 31 seats in 2022 and 40 in 2018, when they took 40 per cent of the votes.

Ford's early election call was cynical, banking on his popularity over the response to a bullying Donald Trump and coming ahead of any embarrassing revelations and investigations on the horizon.

The call for four years to match the term of Trump's presidency – at least in theory – was the singular message of the campaign, such as it was. It seems to have worked, as, if nothing else, Ford picked up a rare third majority.

With Trump having this week failed to waffle on plans for tariffs, Ford now has to deliver.

Removing American products from the LCBO and ripping up a $100-million contract for satellite internet with Starlink, a company controlled by Elon Musk are a good start. Ford is also musing about cutting off the electricity supply to the U.S. and withholding nickel supplies, and is calling on Saskatchewan to do the same with the likes of potash and uranium.

"We need to make sure America feels the pain," Ford said at a press conference as the tariffs took effect Tuesday.

The sentiment is right, but there will be pain on both sides. The impact to the Canadian economy will be widespread and costly. Likewise, any government supports that emerge if Trump's follies continue will be an even larger burden down the line at a time when deficits and debts should be tackled instead.

Back on the job for just a matter of weeks, Trump has wrought havoc to not only the economy and democratic ideals of his own country, but to the world at large. He's shown contempt for the law, fundamental rights, the post-war order largely orchestrated by the U.S. itself and even basic human decency.

Clearly, he has no regard for rational governance, being more inclined to appease and support Russian dictator Vladimir Putin than America's longstanding allies and partners.

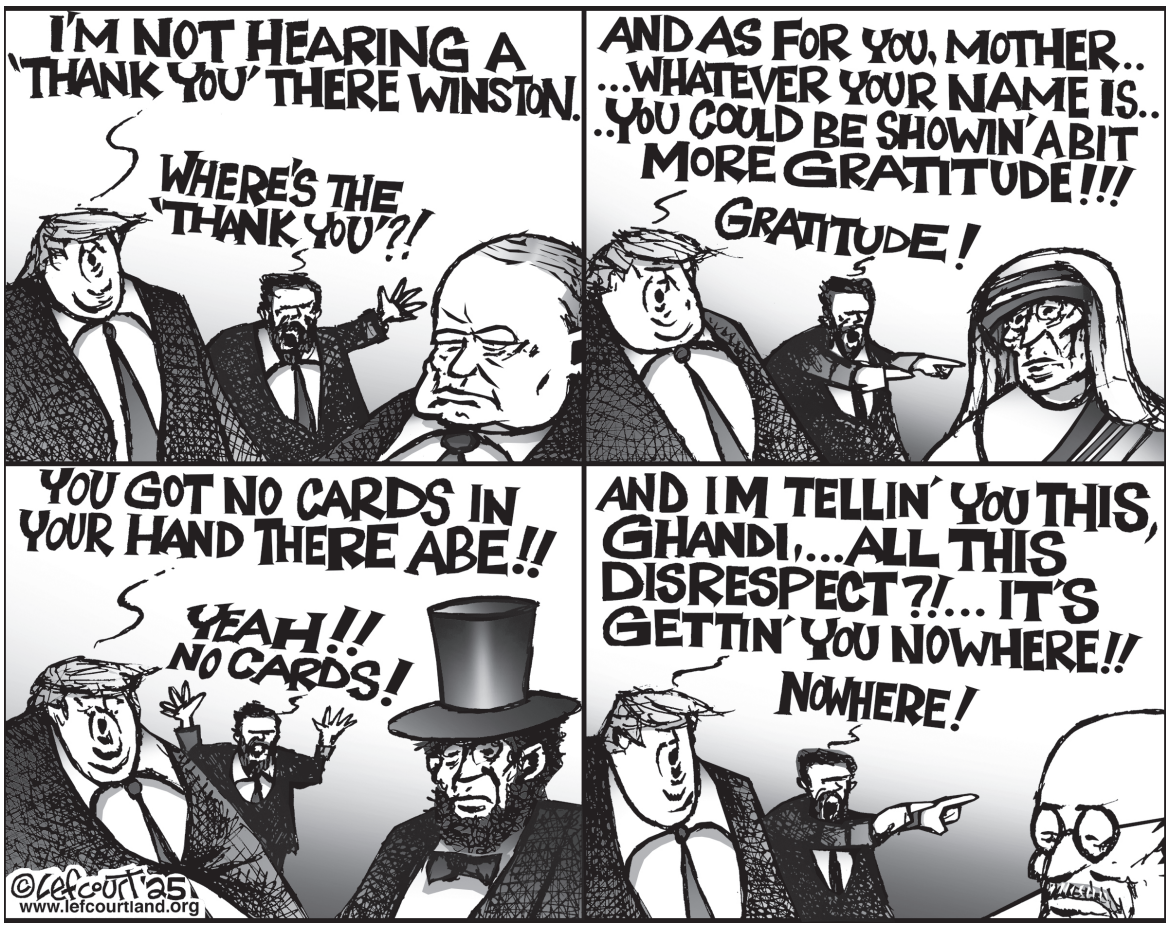
Trump has always been a would-be authoritarian. From the very start of his first term, he's praised and courted dictators. It's a list led by Putin, to whom Trump has repeatedly kowtowed. Then there's his love affair with North Korean dictator Kim Jung Un. He made overtures to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who's been eroding Turkey's democracy as he sets the stage for a dictatorship.

After losing to Joe Biden, Trump continued to court dictators, praising the likes of Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán and Argentinian president Javier Milei, the former's authoritarian playbook very much a part of Trump's current game plan and the latter the inspiration for DOGE and Musk's propensity for wielding a chainsaw.

Trump was certainly channelling Russian propaganda in his now notorious meeting last week with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky, a stark reminder of Trump's transactional mindset and his bullying nature.

Historical friendships and allegiances mean nothing to an administration intent on breaking things and profiting from the chaos that ensues, from crypto scams to the extortion the entire world sees on display.

It's in that environment that politicians on this side of the border have to function, trying to find footing on ground every bit as unstable as the man who occupies the Oval Office.



ANALYSIS OF CURRENT WORLD EVENTS

The late, great alliance that was NATO



GWYNNE DYER
Global Outlook on World Affairs

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) retired to its sickbed as soon as Donald Trump won the presidential election last November. It finally died last week in the White House, when Trump and Vice-President JD Vance launched a vicious attack on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky before the massed cameras of the American media.

Vance, who began the assault, never conceals his contempt for Ukraine. As he said in 2022, "I don't really care what happens to Ukraine one way or the other." But the attack seemed scripted and Trump joined in right away; there are grounds to suspect that it was a pre-planned ambush.

At any rate the confrontation ended with Zelensky and his team being told to leave the White House, and the sound of doors being metaphorically slammed shut resounded all across Europe. In fact, the doors had already been closing quietly for some time, as various Western leaders concluded that the United States is no longer really an ally.

As Germany's freshly elected Chancellor, Friedrich Merz, put it, one of his chief goals is to "strengthen Europe as quickly as possible, so that we achieve independence from the U.S.." He has realized that Trump is probably closer to Russian dictator Vladimir Putin than he is to the leader of any NATO country in Europe. Or to Canada either, for that matter.

Most of those leaders were in London on Sunday to welcome Zelensky back from his ordeal in Washington, and even King Charles III came out to greet The Man Who Stood Up To Trump. It was an unscheduled summit with no Americans present, and the real topic was whether Europe could be defended from Russia without American support.

Of course it can, at least in principle. The population of the European NATO countries (not counting the United States, Canada or Turkey) is 480 million; Russia has only 144 million people. NATO Europe's GDP is $21 trillion, compared to only $2 trillion for Russia. That should be enough.

NATO military forces in Europe outnumber Russian forces about two-to-one. The three million NATO troops in Europe serve in 29 different armies, so they may be less effective per person than 1.5 million Russian troops concentrated in a single army, but on the other hand most of the Russians are fully employed in trying to conquer Ukraine.

However, NATO Europe has many gaps in its capabilities due to the fact that there was a division of labour within the alliance. Some of the technically more demanding tasks, like manned and unmanned intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft, were largely outsourced to the United States long ago.

There are plenty of European fighter jets, for example, but far fewer of the tankers that would extend their range. Similarly, NATO Europe depends heavily on the United States for radar detection and jamming aircraft and for navigation and surveillance satellites. However, these gaps can be filled in a few years if the European countries are willing to spend the money.

What will be harder for post-NATO European countries to replace is the American nuclear deterrent. France and the United Kingdom have a couple of hundred nuclear warheads each, but they are under exclusive national control.

If the European NATO countries have really decided to build a new alliance that doesn't rely on the whims of

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