



Does Trump's National Security Strategy Really Put America First? Glenn Reacts

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Glenn Greenwald: Let's look at this new document. Again, I know it can sound bureaucratic, you know "the National Security Strategy", just some like boring bureaucracies coming from the Pentagon. In general, it's actually an interesting document, but in the case of the Trump administration, which is signaling major changes in a very blunt, direct way and explaining why – some good, some not so good from my perspective, but I think it's really worth understanding. So here is the document, it comes from the White House, the official title is the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. It's obviously intended to signal to Americans, but also to the world what the overarching strategy of American foreign policy is – what are we trying to achieve with foreign policy?

And here's part of what the intro says: What is American strategy? What is our strategy when it comes to foreign policy? What are we trying to achieve principally? Are we trying to spread democracy? Are we trying to free people around the world? Are we trying to vanquish dictatorships? Trying to steal people's resources? What are we trying to protect? Are we trying to protect Israel? Are we trying to protect Europe? What is our strategy when it comes to foreign policy? And here's what the Trump administration had to say, quote: "American strategies since the end of the Cold War have fallen short. They have been laundry lists of wishes or desired ends; have not clearly defined what we want, but instead stated vague platitudes and have often misjudged what we should want. After the end of the Cold War, American foreign policy elites convinced themselves that permanent American domination of the entire world was in the best interest of our country, yet the affairs of other countries are our concern only if their activities directly threaten our interests". It then goes on: "After years of neglect, the United States will reassert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine to restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere and to protect our homeland and our access to key geographies throughout the region. We will deny non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to position forces or other threatening capabilities or to own or control strategically vital assets in our hemisphere".

Now, this is a remarkably aggressive and expansionist view of foreign policy. I think that the first part of the Trump administration's critique of decades of bipartisan foreign policy is absolutely right. It's just been this hodgepodge, of, like, hey, there's a little war over here in Yugoslavia, why don't we go over here? Hey, why don't we spend hundreds of billions of dollars to take part in the fight over who controls various provinces in eastern Ukraine that have, as Obama said, nothing of vital interest to the United States? Let's go change the government of Libya. Why not? Even though Gaddafi has always done business with the United States, because Britain and France want us to. And it's just this one series of Intervention and wars and bombing and involvement in other countries without anyone having any idea how it affects the lives of American citizens, which is why I think Trump's 2016 campaign resonated so much.

At the same time, this idea that we control the entire hemisphere – that includes the Caribbean, North America, Central America, and South America principally – and that we're going to reassert this Monroe Doctrine from the early 19th century that basically says no other country can have any real input or presence in any country, not just bordering us, but any country in the entire region. This is a remarkably aggressive way of looking at the world. Because the reality is that a lot of countries in that region in Latin America and in the Caribbean have concluded that the United States is a very unreliable partner, or even not just unreliable, but oftentimes hostile. There are many, many countries in this region that the United States has militarily invaded, has removed their democratically elected government, has bombed, has destabilized. And a lot of these countries don't want to have a dependence on the United States, so they're seeking relations with other countries, especially China, but also Russia and others.

One of the main reasons why Donald Trump imposed sanctions and tariffs on Brazil was not because he's mad that there's censorship inside Brazil or that Bolsonaro was being persecuted. He couldn't care less for Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro's in prison. Trump couldn't care less. Trump's doing nothing. They're not even enforcing the sanctions they imposed. They're by all accounts about to lift them. What angers Trump is that Brazil now has a larger trading and commercial relationship with China than with the United States for the first time in Brazil's history. And that Brazil is a founding member of BRICS, intended to be an alliance led by China and Russia and India that will have a great amount of influence in this hemisphere – and with Brazil and Argentina, and if it joins, it won't under Milei, but it probably will at some point. And essentially what we are saying now is "no, all of you countries, dozens of countries, have no right to allow foreign militaries onto your soil, to orient yourself towards China – this is our property, this is our territory. We rule here, and nobody else does".

And if you're going to announce that policy you have to enforce it. Because if you don't enforce it, nobody will see as credible anything else that you're saying. And when I talked to Trump supporters about why they suddenly, out of nowhere, even though nobody called for it before, support a regime change operation in Venezuela – this is the kind of thing they say: "Oh, go read the Monroe Doctrine". No, the reality is Venezuela has been close to Russia historically. It's been close to China recently. It has relations with other countries because the

United States has suffocated it, has sanctioned it, has cut it off from the world. So now we're going to go and change the government of Venezuela to put in some puppet regime that is going to cause civil war and instability because of this new Monroe Doctrine or what's calling the Trump corollary of the Monroe Doctrine, that they all have to do what we tell them, they all have to cooperate with us. If you think that's ever going to lead to an alleviation of the posture of endless more regime change operations, it's not. It'll do exactly the opposite. And the fact that this is not just being asserted as academic theory but instead is accompanied by what is clearly a push by major officials of the Trump administration for war with Venezuela, for regime change in Venezuela indicated the kind of dangers this new doctrine possesses.

You have noticed, by the way, that the talk of Venezuela in the media has receded. It doesn't seem like it's ramping up into an imminent invasion or bombing campaign the way it did a couple weeks ago. They're still bombing these boats. And Trump again said today that every boat they blow up saves 25,000 lives, which assumes the boats are filled with drugs, assumes the boats are headed toward the United States, none of which they have evidence for. But even if it were the case, they've blown up 22 boats. So if every boat saves 25,000 lives, that means that they've thus far saved 575,000 American lives using Trump's math. Even though for all of 2024, the grand total of Americans who died from overdose deaths is 70,000 to 80,000, most of which was from Fentanyl, which has nothing to do with Venezuela. So if 70,000 to 80,000 people are dying from drug overdoses, how are they saving 25,000 people each time they blow up some dumb little boat in the Caribbean that they can't even show is coming to the United States? But anyway, this is part of the danger of this kind of a doctrine.

Alright, let's go on and let the Trump administration elaborate a little bit on what they mean. Because the second question is: "What do we want in and from the world?" And this is what they say, quote: "We want to ensure that the Western Hemisphere remains reasonably stable and well-governed enough to prevent and discourage mass migration to the United States. We want a hemisphere that remains free of hostile foreign incursion and ownership of key assets and that supports critical supply chains. We want to ensure our continued access to key strategic locations. In other words, we will assert and enforce a 'Trump Corollary' to the Monroe Doctrine".

All right. There's a lot of inconsistencies or contradictions within this statement, within this vision. Beginning with the first sentence, which makes a lot of sense, and I think should be a policy of the United States, which is "we want to ensure that the Western Hemisphere remains reasonably stable and well-governed enough to prevent and discourage mass migration to the United States". If you want to prevent mass migration to the United States, why are you choking off the economy of Venezuela and Cuba? Which is just miserating the population and motivating them to leave the country out of desperate desperation and come to the United States for lack of other alternatives. Wouldn't you want the Venezuelan economy to thrive? Wouldn't you want the Cuban economy to thrive so that people are incentivized to stay in their country and not come to the United States?

Beyond that, if you accomplish what the administration says is its goal, which is the removal of Nicolás Maduro from power and the implanting of some rich elite puppet government from Caracas, it's going to produce enormous amounts of instability and violence and civil war as happened every single time we did a regime change war. Look what happened in Syria, look what happened in Libya, look what happened in Iraq. Did that create stability? Nothing is better for drug cartels and instability, and it's also going to force people to want to leave Venezuela. There's going to be violence, there's going to be all kinds of economic suffering at least as bad as the one now, if not more so. So why not lift sanctions and let Venezuela and Cuba grow financially so that people want to stay and go back? We've been sanctioning these countries for decades that don't work to change the government, they just immiserate the population, which in turns leads them to want to come to the United States.

But also, I thought we closed the southern border. So what is the issue now with migration? Why are we involving ourselves in Latin American countries to prevent migration when we've already closed the southern border? Trump did promise that and fulfill that. He deserves credit, even if you don't agree with the policy for campaigning on a major promise and fulfilling it. That is one thing he actually absolutely did. So, how does this Monroe Doctrine, which John Bolton wanted in the first term to go and change the government of Maduro based on the Monroe Doctrine. And what about all the other countries now, Colombia and tons of others that are led by left-wing governments that don't want to be under the American thumb? What are we going to do to all those governments? We're going to just spend money deploying the military? This is something that sounds, I guess, intuitively like an American first policy, like, "yeah, we're going to rule the hemisphere for our benefit". But the amount of money that's going to cost, the amount of investment in military industrial corporations, the transfer of wealth to Raytheon and Boeing and Palantir, the amount of wars that's going to provoke, the CIA operations, the covert regimes, the instability. And none of that is going to serve the American people on whose behalf President Trump campaigned.

All right. Next part. "What are America's available means to get what we want? America retains the world's most enviable position with world leading assets, resources, and advantages, including the world's leading financial system and capital markets, including the dollar's global reserve currency, and an enviable geography with abundant natural resources, no competing powers physically dominant in our hemisphere". So this is the issue. The founders believe that we shouldn't even have a standing army because of how corrosive it is to the republic. They believe that a well-regulated militia should be maintained, and that when Congress authorizes war, which should only happen when a country is attacking ours, Congress declares war, the army is then conscripted, and then the president becomes the commander-in-chief. That was it. That was the vision. They didn't want a standing army. And one of the reasons we could do that is because of this enviable geographic position. Who's going to attack the United States? Who's attacking our homeland? And the Trump administration says, "oh, drug cartels and immigrants". But we cut off the border. And that is what I think most people believe that we should not go to wars with countries that aren't attacking us and a national security strategy that says that will be one that they can really get behind.

All right. Just a couple more of this. The next section is "The Strategy". And one of the first section headings is that we have a "predisposition to non-intervention". Which sounds good. We should be predisposed to not intervening militarily or otherwise in other countries. Why do we want to intervene in other countries? Why do we want to control other countries? We can't even manage our own. And this is what the paragraph says, quote: "In the Declaration of Independence, America's founders laid down a clear preference for non-interventionism in the affairs of other nations and made clear the basis. Just as all human beings possess God-given equal natural rights, all nations are entitled by, quote, 'the laws of nature and nature's God' to, quote, a 'separate and equal station with respect to one another'. For a country whose interests are as numerous and as diverse as ours, rigid adherence to" – And I want to say amen to that first part. The founders absolutely advocated for non-intervention. They didn't believe we should be going around controlling other countries or interfering in other countries.

Now, it's a strange thing to publish, as there's been a push by at least a lot of people in the administration to regime change Venezuela. And so you have to reconcile that. And here's how they attempt to do so with two paragraphs that completely negate everything that came before it. And they say this, quote: "For a country whose interests are as numerous and diverse as ours, rigid adherence to non-interventionism is not possible. Yet this predisposition should set a high bar for what constitutes a justified intervention". By the way, when we talk about what they can describe as "a rigid adherence to non-intervention", it doesn't mean pacifism. A pacifist would say we shouldn't fight even if a country attacks our country. Very few people believe that, no one's advocating for that. That's not what the foreign policy debate has been about. Interventionism is when you go and you intervene in other countries to change their governments, to change things in their society. Why can't we have a rigid adherence to non-interventionism? Obviously, again, the exception is if the country is attacking our country. That's what wars are for, to defend yourself. But that is an unfortunately a huge exception that they inserted into what otherwise would be a good paragraph.

Then they say this: "Balance of Power – The United States cannot allow any nation to become so dominant that it could threaten our interests. We will work with allies and partners to maintain global and regional balances of power to prevent the emergence of dominant adversaries". And then there's a paragraph here called "Flexible Realism". And this is what it says: "US policy will be realistic about what is possible and desirable to seek in its dealings with other nations. We seek good relations and peaceful commercial relations with the nations of the world without imposing on them democratic or other social change that differs widely from their traditions and histories. We recognize and affirm that there is nothing inconsistent or hypocritical in acting according to such a realistic assessment or in maintaining good relations with countries whose governing systems and societies differ from ours, even as we push like-minded friends to uphold our shared norms, furthering our interests as we do so".

Now, what that really is saying is like, yes, we are going to be very close allies with the world's most savage dictatorships – in Saudi Arabia, in Egypt, in Jordan, in the UAE, in Qatar, as well as all kinds of nations with very imperfect democracies or even autocracies. And I appreciate this candor that says we can't go around the world forcing every country to adopt a system of government that is identical to ours. It's respecting civilizational differences. Not every country believes what we believe. The Chinese believe something radically different than the Russians, the Russians believe things radically different than the Muslim world, the Muslim world believes radically different than the American world, and that's okay. That's okay. We don't need to go around with cultural imperialism or political imperialism and demand that every country adopt a Jeffersonian democracy. And we haven't, we've never done that. We've justified wars pretending that's what we're doing. We said we're going to do that in Iraq, we said we're going to do that in Vietnam, we said we're going to do that in Libya and Syria. We even say that that's what we're doing in Ukraine. Now we're going to say that we're going to do it in Venezuela. That is not the foreign policy of the United States. We don't care at all if other countries have dictatorships or democracies, nor should we. It's not our business. And I think it's refreshing to say it is not our business to go around the world dictating to other countries how they should manage their own affairs.

It then goes on to say, and this is about China. It's cut off here, but it says: "We intend to prioritize deterring a conflict over Taiwan, ideally by preserving military overmatch, is a priority. We will also maintain our longstanding declaratory policy on Taiwan, meaning that the United States will not report any unilateral change to the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. We will build a military capable of denying aggression anywhere in the First Island chain, but the American military cannot and should not have to do this alone. Our allies must step up and spend, and more importantly, do much more for collective defense". And then it goes on: "A related security challenge is the potential for any competitor to control the South China Sea. This could allow a potentially hostile power to impose a toll system over one of the world's most vital lanes of commerce. Strong measures must be developed along with the deterrence necessary to keep these lanes open, free of 'tolls', and not subject to arbitrary closure by one country".

Now, the Chinese were hoping that this approved relationship with Trump and the United States would get Trump to relent on this idea that our position is "Taiwan is its own nation" and kind of give in to this idea of the Chinese, or at least move closer to it. And it doesn't do that, but it really avoids using militaristic or bellicose language, threatening China like Joe Biden did over Taiwan. And makes clear that China is not really *the* priority. It is *an* objective, it is *a* priority to keep the ceilings free and clear. But the section on China reads very muted. Much more moderate and less antagonistic and provocative than the Biden administration talked about China.

Alright, the last section, or actually, we have two more sections, one on the Middle East and one on Ukraine. The one on Ukraine says this, and I think this is one of the things I think Trump deserves credit for – he has genuinely attempted to resolve the war in Ukraine. Not with the fairy tale in which a lot of Europeans and Republicans and Democrats in the US are

laboring that Ukraine is winning the war, and that way you can force the Russians to leave all of Ukraine – or whatever their fantasies and delusions are. But the reality is that Russia is winning the war. It now controls 23% of Ukraine's territory. It hasn't lost any in a long time. The chance is far greater that Russia will continue to gobble up Ukraine, then Ukraine will push out Russia. And all that's happening is Ukraine is being destroyed. The United States and Europe are sending billions and billions and billions of dollars. It's being stolen and embezzled by Kiev very predictably. And huge numbers of people are dying. That's it.

And I want to say there's this broader context, which is that the Europeans have gone completely insane when it comes to Russia. They really believe they're going to war with Russia. I mean, it's like it's 1963. The French and the British and the Germans talk about Russia, to say nothing of these little shitty, weak, irrelevant, tiny Eastern European countries like Estonia, that thinks it's important because they put people and officials in these bureaucracies in Brussels and the EU. Talk all tough about going to war with Russia as though they could. But the Europeans see Russia as this implacable enemy. And a lot of them are preparing for war with Russia. It's not rhetoric. If you listen to them, they really believe it. Even though their militaries are a joke.

Here's what Trump and the administration say about that, quote: "It is a core interest of the United States to negotiate an expeditious cessation of hostilities in Ukraine in order to stabilize European economies, prevent unintended escalation or expansion of the war, and re-establish strategic stability with Russia, as well as to enable the post-hostilities reconstruction of Ukraine to enable its survival as a viable state". I mean, that is the only rational thing there is to say about the war in Ukraine. It is in our interest, it's in the Ukrainians' interest, it's in the European interest, it's in the Russian interest to end this war as expeditiously as possible. And Russia is going to end up with Ukrainian territory. It already did in 2014, after the US helped foster a coup with Victoria Nuland and John McCain, a bunch of Democrats like Amy Klobuchar. And then in response to the Western-led coup in Ukraine, removing the elected president before his term expired because he was too quote-unquote leaning toward Moscow and replacing him with a government picked by Victoria Nuland. The Russians said: "You're not going to control Ukraine by running the other side of the border. And in response, we're going to take Crimea as a response, as a defense mechanism, against your influence". They're never getting Crimea back ever. Nor are they going to get back the provinces that they now control. And anyone realistic knows that.

But also the Trump administration is saying, why are we considering Russia an enemy? Why do we want hostilities toward Russia? It's better to work with Russia, to have strategic alliances and partnerships with Russia. It's a huge economy with lots of resources. Why are we choking them off from the world too? I'm glad to see the Trump administration saying this. And then, as for Europe, they say this, quote: "Our broad policy for Europe should prioritize: re-establishing conditions of stability within Europe and strategic stability with Russia. Ensuring Europe is able to stand on its own feet and operate as a ground of a group of aligned sovereign nations. Cultivating resistance to Europe's current trajectory with European

nations. Ending the perception and preventing the reality of NATO as a perpetually expanding alliance".

What is NATO even for now? Just keeps growing and growing and growing. It was designed to prevent communism, to fight communism in Western Europe. There is no more Soviet Union, Russia's no longer communist. NATO has done things like bomb Yugoslavia and regime change Libya, which obviously has nothing to do with the defense of Europe. NATO is archaic. It's outdated. The Europeans are worthless. Not saying the Europeans should be our enemies. But the idea that we need the Europeans, that we should pay for their defense, that we should subsidize their social net by letting them spend little money on defense so that we continue to protect them with our umbrella, those things make no sense. Meanwhile, the EU is imposing their censorship mentality in the United States trying to impose massive fines on acts, saying it's not for censorship, even though of course it is. And if Europe is really as anti-American as they like to beat their chest and seem, they should end their dependency on the United States. Stop using the United States to defend yourself and beat your chest and threaten to go to war with Russia on your own. I think that too is an important orientation.

END

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