

Every day, I like many others, not only Democrats but many Republicans, are horrified by some new example of America's declining reputation. Two weeks ago, in Davos at the World Economic Forum, Mr. Trump spoke about his plans to take over Greenland, with force if necessary. While subsequently backing off the use of force, the damage to NATO was already done. He denigrated most of our European allies, criticized our nearest neighbor and ally Canada, and aired the dirty laundry of practically everything American blaming his predecessor Joe Biden as well as the current Fed Chairman Powell while at the same time extolling his own personal virtues and those improvements that he claims mostly falsely to have made. In criticizing our NATO allies he went so far as to challenge NATO's steadfastness claiming that the Europeans would not come to the rescue of an attacked US. This was soundly contradicted by NATO's Secretary General Mark Rutte who reminded him of Afghanistan saying that "for every two Americans who paid the ultimate price, there was one soldier from another smaller NATO country [including Denmark] who did not come back to his family."

Equally egregious Mr. Trump also said in a message to Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, that he no longer feels obliged to think only of peace after he was not awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year. Trump blamed Norway for not giving him the prize. Can we imagine any previous president, or for that matter, any other outlandish ruler of a developed country, using as the basis for a policy, a foreign policy at that, citing such a childish narcissistic basis?

Trump's 2025 National Security Strategy trades the leadership of the rules based international order for regional hegemony in order to address urgent threats in our hemisphere. Obtaining Venezuela's oil, regardless of his ill advised divorce from sustainable energy, is hardly an urgent threat

compared with Russia's invasion of Ukraine or China's plan to attack Taiwan. Trump is pretty tough when it comes to bullying weaker nations, Venezuela, Cuba, Greenland, Denmark, but a pussycat when it comes to facing Vladimir Putin and Xi Jin Ping.

And domestically problems with the use of ICE continue to make the headlines. Instead of detaining and deporting only the "worst of the worst" as originally claimed, the agents are also rounding up other immigrants including those in the asylum seeking process showing up for court dates or supervisory check-ins as well as refugees with temporary protective status.

Well before the Renee Good and Alex Pretti killings, there were many complaints filed on behalf of Minnesota protestors. One protestor whom a video showed that he had pushed another protester away from an agent attempting to make an arrest, and who held up his arm to urge other protestors to stay back was claimed to be leading the crowd, detained, shackled, jailed and later released. On another occasion an innocent bystander who was standing six feet away from agents, heard officers say "Get back" and "Take her down." Several agents grabbed her, pulled her to the ground, and handcuffed her when she was face down in the snow. Witnesses said she had not physically resisted, taunted, or threatened any agents. She was taken to a federal building, shackled and some of her clothes removed and her wedding ring cut off. The defense claimed that she had tried to push an ICE officer out of the way. She was released, told she would be charged with obstructing a federal officer, but she was never charged.

We've all viewed many times the videos of the killing of Renee Good in Minneapolis in early January. While there may be some question about the details of exactly where officer Jonathan Ross was standing when he fired the first shot, it looked to many if not most of us that Mrs. Good was

aiming her car away from, not at, him. Regardless, it surely warrants a very thorough investigation. However, we were originally told by the Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche that the officer was clearly within his rights of self defense and that they don't just go, out and investigate every time an officer is forced to defend himself---"We investigate when it's appropriate to investigate... "So, no, we are not investigating. And if there comes a time when we need to, we will, but it's not now," Blanche added.

Then of course only a week ago, there was another unnecessary killing by ICE officers in Minneapolis, many videos and articles of which we have all seen. While the details may still be in question, there is no evidence that Alex Pretti threatened an officer with a gun, yet he was shot many times while being held down by several ICE officers.

And though getting most of the attention regarding ICE transgressions, Minnesota is not the only location. Senator Chris Murphy on a fact finding mission to Texas, also a week ago, attended an asylum seeker family's court hearing the temporary results of which favored them with the judge seeing merit in their case and merely scheduling their next routine hearing. They and their lawyer, however, were concerned about them leaving the courthouse. ICE agents were present and waiting outside. Murphy stepped in, escorted the lawyer and the family out of the building and, as Murphy anticipated, when confronted with a US Senator, ICE backed down. In the ensuing discussion, one of the ICE officers admitted that they "don't just target criminals; they are looking to lock up everyone, even legal immigrants."

Then again, when advised that certain immigrants, specifically those in the agricultural industry, Trump said that "They have great people working for them who have been working for them for 25 years. They are almost like a member of the family, and I don't want those people thrown out of the country." Go figure!

Richard Haass in his “Home and Away” newsletter sees the answer as “an ICE that is of law enforcement and not paramilitary, better and trained , wears no masks but does wear body cams, and is accountable and that operates within instead of around the 4th amendment” protecting individuals against unreasonable searches and seizures. Just as my newsletter goes out, there are some guardedly optimistic signs that this may happen.

Collectively and individually, we are becoming immune. Congress, the prime check and balance on the President, continues to shirk its responsibilities although some of the Republicans are finally weighing in. We don’t hear much if anything from so many others of influence including retired military officers, billionaires with financial leverage, and the legal profession and their bar associations at all levels, local, state, and national. The three Democrat ex-presidents are finally starting to speak up, but we haven’t heard anything from George W. Bush.

Robert Rubin in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece criticized business leaders for accepting a president with a campaign of political retribution and who pardons his loyalists who break the law, indiscriminately threatens adversaries and NATO allies, attacks universities supporting scientific research, uses tariffs as a weapon with no economic justification, and undermines the rule of law. But he could also be talking about any of us who are not protesting at least in some fashion.

Shalom Auslander made a provocative comment in a New York Times article “They were Ordinary Germans. We are Ordinary Americans” — “Past or present it’s not the leaders who disappoint. It’s the led”--- talking about any unbothered Americans who go about their normal

lives in 2026 as the country is “descending into fear-induced psychosis at the hands of an autocrat.”

Let’s get back to what we the people can do. Edward R. Murrow, the iconic American war correspondent and newscaster during WWII said that “No man can terrorize a whole nation, unless we are all his accomplices.”

Two months ago I devoted the entire newsletter to issues of character and using these issues when we next evaluate the qualities of candidates. I’d certainly double down on this, but let’s see if we can enumerate what else I/we the people can do. We address this frequently, but it all bears continuously repeating.

Email your US Senators or Representatives focusing on the major issues tearing us apart. Tell them to open dialogues across the aisle to encourage those who always support their party line to support the Constitution and their constituents instead. While this should really go for whichever side you’re on, Dan Rather commenting on one side in his newsletter “Steady” said that “congressional Republicans want power regardless, it seems, of the cost. It is a Trumpian irony that the cost is the systemic erosion of any and all power Congress once wielded. They are capitulating themselves out of a job. So even if they manage to hold on to their seat, they are giving away any power that seat once held.”

Getting back to regional hegemony—Trump does make a good generally acceptable case for us controlling the defense of Greenland--- more US bases to monitor Chinese and Russian activity and expansion of his “golden dome” missile defense project. But all of this is already available to us by the 1951 treaty with Denmark giving us carte blanche to expand our military presence essentially in any way we see fit. --- building ports, runways, launch sites and radar stations. There is no

need to seize Greenland from our friend and close ally Denmark. According to James Kirchick's opinion piece in the January 20 Times, Denmark relative to the size of its economy is "the most generous donor to Ukraine's military defense....and in the war in Afghanistan Denmark suffered more fatalities per capita than any other NATO ally apart from the United States. It was one of only a few NATO members...to join the United States in the initial invasion of Iraq.

I continue to stress civics education and media literacy as the answer in the long run to all of this, but for now let's continue to focus on educating ourselves about the issues by viewing or listening to both sides of the issues from reliable sources, doing our own fact checking, in order to open discourse when possible with others of opposing views. And by all means, tune in to Karoline Leavitt's press conferences (considered a reliable source for MAGA Republicans). Even the most anti-Trump voter must admit that she makes a good case for practically everything Trump says or does. She's well-spoken and presents Trump's positions regardless of the facts in a very compelling way. Most of us have friends and perhaps even some family members who do not share our views, and in today's political climate we tend more and more to shy away from discussing politics when we should be doing just the opposite. In most cases, we would be safe in presuming that we are in agreement with these friends and family on some aspects of the issues--as part of the war on drugs, we need to go after the drug cartels in Mexico and Venezuela---immigration was out of control and needed drastic action---we need some control over Greenland for our national defense ---we favor destruction of Iran's nuclear capabilities--- at least some of our NATO allies have not been paying their fair share financially---most American patriots would not like to see Mark Kelly court martialed , and so on. There are plenty of opportunities over a beer or a cup of coffee to refer to today's news. Open the conversation like this: "I'm all in favor of getting rid of the worst of the worst as Trump and ICE are successfully doing, But I have a serious problem

detaining those already approved to go through the asylum seeking process. What do you think?" Or, as suggested in a column the other day in our local "News Times of Danbury," when greeted with a casual "how are you", be truthful, reply "I'm heartbroken over what's happening in my country" and hopefully open a conversation. What better time than today's turmoil and Trump's declining approval ratings to speak up.

If you are not already doing so, participate in Hands Off, No Kings, and other rallies in or near your town. They are effective...were getting more supporting car horns and fewer negative hand gestures every week.

Mark on your calendar the next No Kings protest on March 28 even if you must travel a distance.

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