

The Roots of US Right-Wing Hostility toward Europe



by Riccardo Alcaro

- The new US National Security Strategy of the second Trump Administration openly frames the EU's integration model as fundamentally at odds with US priorities.
- EU integration is cast as a deviation from "true" Western civilisation, depicting its inclusive and supranational model as a cultural threat.
- EU regulatory power of US tech giants reinforces the Trump Administration's drive to constrain Europe, increasing its vulnerability, but also advancing the case for strengthening the Union.

It was no secret that the Trump administration harboured deep hostility toward Europe. With the **new US National Security Strategy** (NSS), that hostility has been elevated to strategic principle: the main challenge is not the despotic and expansionist Russian regime, with which some accommodation is instead deemed necessary, nor China's party-state, which is expanding its global influence through control of critical supply chains – minerals, semiconductors and pharmaceuticals – requiring careful competition management. Instead, the US Administration's concern, besides the re-establishment of unchallenged US hegemony over the Americas, is to defend Western identity and civilisation. That, in turn, involves undermining European integration and delegitimising its underlying value system.

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Military weakness

Donald Trump is often described as unpredictable and opportunistic, lacking firm convictions. This is not entirely accurate. Since the 1980s, Trump has consistently believed that free trade harms the United States, that allies exploit American protection to spend less on defence and that power is exercised through coercion and intimidation.

These assumptions clash with the logic of European integration: the EU is an open economy that has benefited greatly from free trade; until recently it remained largely outside the defence sphere, relying on the US-led NATO; and its decision-making processes are designed to balance the interests of large and small states, as well as national and pan-European concerns, while its approach to external relations has been firmly rooted in multilateralism.

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This explains in a nutshell both Trump's disdain for Europe and his admiration for autocratic leaders like Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping, whose domestic power is uncontested and whose authority over foreign policy faces little or no resistance.

In these terms, the plan to significantly reduce the US military presence in Europe, shifting primary responsibility for conventional defence to European NATO members, might seem like a way for the United States to unburden itself of European free-riding and free up resources to confront the other major powers.

Yet this is only the part of the story most directly associated with Trump. The National Security Strategy – at least the chapter on Europe – reflects a broader ideological project whose main inspirers are Vice President JD Vance and his political and economic allies.

Cultural betrayal

While Trump is the figurehead of the American right-wing revolutionary movement generally associated with the MAGA moniker, he only partially shares the new right's ideological platform, which he has used more as a stepping stone to power than as a guide for governance. For its part, the right-wing nationalist movement has found in Trump the lever to overturn decades of liberal internationalist discourse and the key to unlock the government's gates, steering first US politics and then US policies toward nativism, intolerance and soft authoritarianism.

Trump's relationship with MAGA is instinctive and opportunistic, but Vance's is deliberate and coherent: the president's crude and sometimes vulgar online outbursts are framed in precise ideological terms by Vance's polished and articulate language. The former feels visceral dislike toward Europe; for the latter, Europe also evokes a kind of nostalgic regret: a community of states that, by pooling sovereignty in a system based on inclusion and diversity, has betrayed its historical, cultural and religious roots, weakening the sense of national community.

This Europe – or rather, this European Union – is depicted not as the result of democratic choices always reaffirmed over decades, but an operation by globalist and technocratic elites aimed at weakening national governments and opening the doors to immigration from countries deemed culturally incompatible with a white and Christian Europe, as the strategy notes when it claims that some countries may not even be considered European in a few decades.

This is why the National Security Strategy pledges support to European "patriots", meaning nationalist movements that share the nativist, reactionary and sovereignty-focused agenda of MAGA. These are the 'civilisational' forces with which the United States should ally under the banner of Western 'values' and 'traditions'. No wonder that Putin's Russia, a self-purported



champion of traditional Christian values and a self-declared enemy of progressive liberalism, has wasted no time in underlining its proximity to the vision espoused by the NSS.

Regulatory power

While the EU is openly disparaged as weak, US right-wing hostility also reflects fear of its latent strength. Among the EU's most vocal critics are major US high-tech companies, which have abandoned any pretensions to promote inclusivity and defend diversity and have instead become devoted Trump supporters. Partly opportunistic, due to the promise of low taxes and deregulation, this alignment also has an ideological dimension – at least for some.

One is Elon Musk, who regularly indoctrinates his millions of followers on X about the similarities between the EU and totalitarian systems. But it is also the case of Peter Thiel, founder of the data analysis company Palantir, which, like Musk's SpaceX, has developed a symbiotic relationship with the US federal government. Similarly to Musk, Thiel links spiritual decay and demographic decline and advocates an oligarchic vision of society in which power revolves around major tech monopolies. Unlike Musk, however, he maintains a low public profile, preferring to act indirectly through his close ties to Vance, whose political rise he has financed.

From this perspective, the EU is an obstacle because it has sought to impose strict limits on the use of personal data, monopolistic concentration in digital markets and the management of content on social media platforms. These initiatives are seen by major US tech companies as constraints on their business models and as drags on the accumulation of power that these models enable.

Accusations from the US right that the EU stifles innovation or censors free speech serve in fact to delegitimise resistance to a market model that is completely deregulated and concentrated in the

hands of a few dominant players. The political support that figures like Musk and Thiel provide to the Trump/Vance Administration turns these economic and regulatory tensions into a vehicle for political and ideological pressure, reinforcing the connection between tech lobbying and the strategy to thwart the EU.

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The struggle for Europe

The Trump/Vance National Security Strategy is not motivated by disinterest in Europe, but by the desire to subordinate it through the structural weakening of the EU and the political-cultural alignment of transatlantic right-wing forces. The project is ambitious, yet not unrealistic. After all, Europe has seen its dependence on the United States grow rather than diminish in recent years, a process accelerated by Russia's war of conquest in Ukraine. From support for Kyiv to European defence, from gas supplies to the provision of advanced technologies like AI, EU countries rely extensively on the United States.

However, the project also assumes a united American conservative front – which is uncertain after Trump, whose public approval is declining, leaves office – as well as European passivity or complicity. Right-wing parties are rising in several EU countries, but their electoral strength does not translate easily into influence over policy, as they have to face the scarce popularity in Europe of Trump and of the effects of his policies, from tariffs to the appeasement of Putin.

Trump's power-based foreign policy, even when its nationalist premises are shared, creates a demand in Europe for security and welfare that cannot be met through a relationship with the



United States that resembles that between vassal and overlord rather than followers and leader. In this sense, the Trump/Vance NSS has opened a space for a political fight in favour of a radical strengthening of the EU – not as a European

counteroffensive against the United States, but as a struggle for Europe itself. Hopefully, that space will not remain empty.

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