

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نپاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

MELVIN GOODMAN

26.01.2025

## *The Return of Donald the Destroyer*



Photograph Source: Office of Speaker Mike Johnson – Public Domain

Our concern with the politics, policies, and propaganda of Donald Trump underplays the central question of his presidency: Is Donald Trump psychologically fit to be president of the United States? In Trump's first term, psychiatrists and psychologists warned that our dangerously disordered president was a threat to domestic and international security. The erratic behavior of Trump as a candidate in 2015-2016 and as a president in 2017-2021 led to the ethical principle known as the "duty to warn" of the danger he represented.

Trump's malignant narcissism was well established in his first term as he claimed that he knew more than anyone else and that only he could fix our problems. Trump's demonization of the press and his opponents as well as his treatment of minorities and his handling of immigration issues pointed to paranoia. His separation of immigrant families demonstrated

the lack of empathy that accompanies narcissism. His lack of impulse control was particularly worrisome in a nuclear age that presents no real checks and balances on a commander-in-chief's role regarding the use of nuclear weapons. It is the combination of paranoia and impulse control that is most worrisome because it can lead to destructive acts.

As a result of his performance as president, Trump faced an unusual level of public criticism from his own appointees, including chief of staff John Kelly, secretary of state Rex Tillerson, national security adviser H.R. McMaster, and even director of national intelligence Dan Coats. The criticism by Tillerson, McMaster, and Coats cost them their jobs, and they were replaced by loyalists at the time, such as Mike Pompeo at the Department of State, John Bolton at the National Security Council, and John Ratcliffe as director of national intelligence. Most of his first term appointees refused to support his efforts to gain a second term. Trump will not be facing questions of loyalty in his second term because—without exception—his current appointees have paid fealty to him.

In his first term, Trump declared war on governance, intelligence, jurisprudence, diplomacy, law enforcement, public service, and fact-finding, particularly in the scientific community. But there were “adults in the room” who were able to challenge and even moderate his worst impulses. There will be no “adults in the room” this time as Trump has appointed individuals who are also impetuous and authoritarian. The vision of “America First” animated Trump's first and second inaugural addresses. This time around Trump also has claimed that divine intervention saved him from an assassin's bullet so that he could “make America great again.”

Trump stated that he would be a dictator on Day 1 and he was true to his word. In addition to pardoning 1,600 criminals from the January 6th riots, Trump issued an unconstitutional immigration order denying birthright citizenship, a violation of the 14th amendment of the Constitution that guarantees citizenship to anyone born in the United States. Trump also restored the order from his first term that created a new classification for federal civil servants—Schedule F—that would end civil service protections and allow him to remove tens of thousands from the federal payroll.

High-level officials at the Department of Justice and the Central Intelligence Agency are particularly vulnerable. On Day 1, Trump replaced the leaders of three of the most important U.S. attorneys' offices in addition to removing key career officers at the most important divisions of the Department of Justice. This marked the beginning of the weaponization of the DoJ. These steps point to the democratic crisis that the nation is facing from a new director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Kash Patel) with an enemies list and a new

director of national intelligence (Tulsi Gabbard) anxious to prove her loyalty to Donald Trump. Patel and Gabbard still face confirmation.

Meanwhile, Trump's appointees have already taken steps that range from counterproductive to just plain petty. The incoming national security adviser, Michael Waltz, who does not require congressional confirmation, ordered all hands out of the White House situation room by noon on January 20th before Trump had even completed his oath of office. The situation room is occupied by more than one hundred personnel who are not political appointees. Many of them are on loan from the intelligence community to deal with sensitive international crisis points. As a result of Waltz' order, they won't be in position to brief the incoming staff. Presumably, this was Waltz's way of demonstrating fealty to the new president.

A particularly petty act was the removal of General Mark Milley's portrait from the Pentagon's prestigious E-ring hallway that features portraits of all former chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This was done only several hours after former president Joe Biden pardoned Milley. Trump has suggested that Milley could be executed for treason because of his call to his Chinese counterpart to reassure him that the United States was "100 percent steady" in the wake of the January 6th insurrection. The Pentagon refuses to say who ordered the removal of Milley's portrait, which has contributed to fears among high-level generals and admirals that a massive shake-up will soon be underway. Pete Hegseth, still awaiting confirmation, has stated on numerous occasions that there are too many four-star generals and admirals and that nobody is above review. Like Waltz and Patel, Hegseth will be anxious to prove his loyalty to Trump.

The fact that Trump's disturbing inaugural address was given on the holiday to honor Dr. Martin Luther King adds to the anxiety that so many of us feel. The rule of law means nothing to Donald Trump, who seems committed to breaking long-standing traditions and institutions. Trump's idea of law and order is to pardon insurrectionists who threatened to kill Vice President Mike Trump.

The fact that he has a loyal MAGA following, a Republican Party that supports his every move, and a pliant Supreme Court point to the emergence of a far less democratic United States of America. One of the basic questions in the study of history is whether individual leaders shape history or whether historic forces shape individual leaders. I believe that we will soon get an answer to that dilemma, and it will not be reassuring.

JANUARY 24, 2025

Melvin A. Goodman is a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and a professor of government at Johns Hopkins University. A former CIA analyst, Goodman is the author of [Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA](#) and [National Insecurity: The Cost of American Militarism](#), and [A Whistleblower at the CIA](#). His most recent books are “American Carnage: The Wars of Donald Trump” (Opus Publishing, 2019) and “Containing the National Security State” (Opus Publishing, 2021). Goodman is the national security columnist for [counterpunch.org](#).