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Trump’s NATO circus finds an unlikely hero in Erdogan, as Turkey’s rise signals a new era – and a sharp rebuke to a rogue Netanyahu.



Can there be anything more farcical than the recent visit of the NATO Secretary General to the White House? Mark Rutte’s embarrassing presentation of what a wonderful “daddy” Donald Trump is to the free world was surely a cast-iron confirmation that the main role of this NATO boss is to be a snivelling sycophant to the U.S. president – a tradition going back since the creation of the defence organisation, but one which Trump has taken to a new level.

By Martin Jay

This comical Dutch sphincter boy was fooling no one, though, when he leapt from his seat and went to the charts printed on huge boards. Trump had obviously come up with the idea, and Rutte had little choice but to oblige with the ruse, designed to impress journalists. Trump is so stuck in the 1980s, where corporations used these

large boards in presentations, that he thought they might do the job in illustrating what a change he has made to the alliance and its members.

Yet the truth is, like almost all of Trump's claims about himself and his achievements, that it was a falsehood. In reality, NATO has never in its history been more divided than during Trump's second term in office, as the old model of the U.S. leading it – like a West African dictator complete with vulgar gold epaulettes – is outdated and ineffective. Macron, Starmer and Merz have all shown a lucid resilience to being dictated to by Trump, and the Iran fiasco demonstrated this. Even the diminutive Meloni of Italy, the mouse at Trump's feet, showed us all how petulant Trump can be in the face of a lack of sycophancy from EU leaders, when he recently showed her how easy it is for him to humiliate her via social media, after she "begged" him for a photo op. The very fact that this was so important to her also demonstrates how self-serving and shallow EU leaders are, and what their priorities are in the face of failing economies, immigration crises, and the implosion of the EU.



The real power Trump has over them is via these platforms, which respond well to his interaction. But this is where it starts and ends, and in many ways the constant insults that Trump chucks their way is part of why and how EU leaders will not succumb to bullying and are happy to play the belligerent pupils in the class with Trump at the blackboard. Never before has there been a stronger argument for an EU army and an EU "wing" of NATO – an old idea which was parroted by a French general to me in Brussels in 2007 – than today, though. Trump has created a dysfunctional defence outfit which no longer jumps when a U.S. president clicks his fingers, and so the NATO summit due soon will almost certainly also be a farce on a new level, as behind the scenes many EU leaders will wonder how long such preposterous meetings can go on, when nothing is really achieved except a party atmosphere of sorts and photo ops. Even EU summits in Brussels generate news beyond the hype, but NATO is rapidly becoming a white elephant which few can really explain or justify.

Not for Recep Erdogan of Turkey, though.

This is a NATO leader who actually benefits from its membership and the servile, outdated role members are expected to adopt at the feet of the U.S. president. Recently, at a press conference in the White House, a Turkish journalist clearly asked a planted question to Trump about Erdogan, giving Trump the opportunity to talk about Turkey's military strength and how soon this NATO country will have its much-coveted U.S.-made F-35 fighter jets. How did this new turn of events come about, given that the U.S. was hesitant before about trusting the Erdogan administration not to sell the secrets of the jet to America's foes? Simply due to the stoic refusal of Netanyahu to accept Trump's orders to stop fighting in Lebanon, Trump is finding that he needs a regional ally to threaten Israel, and Erdogan fits the bill perfectly. While Trump supports Erdogan on all levels while refusing to listen to Bibi's complaints about the Turkish leader's threats (dismissing them out of hand), we are seeing the beginning of a new relationship between Washington and its oldest and most important ally in the region.



There is no question that a division is apparent, and that Bibi is going to be a thorn in the side of the Trump administration, and that we are entering an unedifying phase between the U.S. and Israel – which has happened a few times in post-war history and is not exactly a phenomenon. Trump needs to show he is the master and that Bibi is the serf, and he will do that geo-militarily by arming Turkey to the teeth and allowing Ankara to continue with its acerbic narrative towards Israel. Erdogan may well prove to be useful to Trump, as he has good relations with Iran and, ironically, if the Turkish leader was going to take any side in the recent conflict, it would have been with Tehran. According to Trump himself, Erdogan chose not to as a personal favour to him, and so Trump is now grateful for the gesture and happy to help Erdogan move forward on the controversial F-35 deal while sticking two fingers up at Bibi.

Trump recently even went as far as to suggest that the Syrian army would be more effective in Lebanon at fighting Hezbollah than the IDF – another coded message to Netanyahu that Trump has options to effectively accelerate Bibi's corruption charges against him, which are presently on hold. NATO is apparently not an entirely useless outfit after all, as it allows Trump to use its publicity machine to further his own personal grievances, but all with the aim of creating a peace deal with Iran, while clipping the wings of an out-of-control Israeli leader who has lost his mind, killing civilians left, right and centre in Gaza and now Lebanon.

You have to go back to 1982, when a U.S. president told the Israelis that what they were doing in Lebanon was morally perverse and probably war crimes, as IDF soldiers then stood over a genocide in two Palestinian neighbourhoods in Beirut while Christian white supremacist Lebanese militiamen literally hacked to pieces women and children in Sabra and Shatila – many of them Lebanese women clinging onto their ID cards with their blood-soaked hands.