The Daily Dish

What Price National Security?

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> *If a nation values anything more than freedom, it will lose its freedom; and the irony of it is that if it is comfort or money that it values more, it will lose that too.*
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> > *– W. Somerset Maugham*

As a candidate, President Trump opposed the purchase by Japan's Nippon Steel of some U.S. Steel operations as a threat to national security. As president, he reinforced this position with a review by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States. Not long thereafter, Nippon Steel acquired U.S. Steel. All national security concerns evidently vaporized with a payoff to the administration in the form of a "golden share" in Nippon Steel.

After a series of reviews, Congress and the Trump Administration concluded that TikTok posed a national security threat and passed into law the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act, which in part required Beijing-based ByteDance to divest ownership of TikTok. Without any apparent finding that overturned the national security findings about TikTok, the president has on three occasions simply chosen to order his minions to not enforce the law while he searches for the right group of cronies to buy the app. National security? Who cares? Let's make a deal.

As president, Mr. Trump banned the export of Nvidia's H20 chip to China, citing – you guessed it – national security concerns. A few months later, those threats were tossed to the curb and Nvidia was allowed to sell into China – in exchange for giving the administration

15 percent of the revenue from those sales. See Jeffrey Westling's insight here.

The pattern is telling. President Trump makes no effort or pretense that the national security concerns are inappropriate. He just sells out the country and trumpets it as another "art of the deal" moment.

This is typical of the president's principles-free approach to policymaking, but more dangerous. If people start to believe that the national security concerns were never real, why should they take any future claim seriously? If they start to believe presidential deal-making is the road to economic prosperity, they will have bought a ticket on a Putinesque train to hell.