



OP-ED COLUMN

Arizona House of Representatives

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Tariffs Aren't the Problem—They're the Plan

Op-Ed by State Representative John Gillette

I've spent my life studying strategy—not just the battlefield kind, but the kind that wins wars before they're even fought. I served 35 years in the military, from SWAT to counterintelligence. I know tactics, I know the long game, and I know when a plan is unfolding right before our eyes. And let me tell you: what Donald Trump is doing with tariffs isn't chaos—it's calculated.

The media can't stop pushing the "tariff roller coaster" narrative. Search for that phrase and you'll find nearly every major outlet parroting the same lines: instability, economic doom, global panic. But none of them are asking the real questions—like why these moves are being made, or what the bigger picture is. Instead, we get shallow takes from people who've never cracked open a strategy manual in their life.

To understand what's happening, you need to zoom out. Way out.

Let's go back to Richard Nixon, when U.S.–China relations started to thaw. Since then, American politicians—both Republican and Democrat—have caved to the illusion that China could be a "partner" in global progress. What we got instead was a calculated adversary bent on global dominance. Bill Clinton, for all his political savvy, accelerated China's rise by pumping money and trade deals into their economy. And the Bushes did nothing to stop the bleeding.

Trump is the first President since Nixon to slam the brakes—and then shift into reverse.

China currently holds around \$850–930 billion in U.S. treasuries. Why would a competitor buy up that much of our debt? Because it makes us dependent. That's the game: loan us the rope to hang ourselves, then collect interest on the gallows. But here's what the media won't tell you—we're facing a \$9–10 trillion debt refinancing window, and President Trump knows that better than anyone. When he adjusts tariffs, he's not just making trade moves—he's leveraging power in advance of that negotiation. And it's working.

The Department of Defense's Instruction 4245.16, issued in January, orders an accelerated production of U.S. defense materials. That's not a coincidence. That's preemptive mobilization. Add in the quick, decisive strike on Houthi rebels in Yemen—testing Iran's response—and it's clear: we're projecting strength, not just abroad, but at home. This is strategy, not stumble.

And the results? Immediate.

Within days of the initial tariffs, Ford, GM, Hyundai, and U.S. steel producers started bringing jobs and operations back to American soil. The market rebounded, with the Dow showing its biggest rally since November 2023. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's markets dropped the most since 1997, and the Chinese yuan plummeted nearly 7%. That's not volatility—that's tactical pressure.

So what's next? When we sit down to refinance that mountain of debt, the U.S. dollar will be stronger, the yuan weaker, and China will have lost their grip. We'll renegotiate on our terms, not theirs. Trump isn't playing checkers. He's executing a multi-domain strategy—economic, military, informational, and diplomatic. In the military, we call it DIME: Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic pressure. Trump is using all four—simultaneously.

Even CNN, begrudgingly, reported lower consumer prices and positive market shifts. That's because tariffs, used correctly, work. They forced the issue. They exposed the global dependency on American consumption. We are, whether you like it or not, the Walmart of the world. If we stop buying, the global supply chain stutters.

Now let's talk about the big picture.

The Liberation Day Tariffs were not a one-off headline—they were a signal that a coordinated campaign is in motion. Across the board, we're seeing aligned economic policy, tough domestic corrections, and foreign posturing that all reinforce the same message: America is back in the driver's seat. We've tightened border security, revamped federal procurement policy, rebalanced energy independence, and weaponized trade tools—not to punish, but to reassert control over our national interest.

The totality of these moves—economic, domestic, and foreign—has given us a strategic edge we haven't seen since the Reagan era. Together, they form a deliberate ecosystem of pressure, incentive, and deterrence. While the media fixates on the latest tweet, the administration is reshaping the chessboard.

Critics scoff at "Trump's unpredictability." But unpredictability, when used correctly, is a weapon. It makes your enemies flinch, miscalculate, and fold. That's exactly what's happening.

So to the mainstream pundits, to the panicked investors, to the perpetual doomsayers: sit down. Think. Look at the full board. This isn't economic incompetence, it's strategic disruption. And it might just save the Republic.

John Gillette is a Republican member of the Arizona House of Representatives serving Legislative District 30 in Mohave County. He is Chairman of the Federalism, Military Affairs & Elections Committee. Follow him on X at @AzRepGillette.

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