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Trump and Chaos



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Once again, the political world is agog over new, ‘shocking’ revelations about the Donald Trump presidency. With excerpts from Bob Woodward’s new book, ‘Fear: Trump in the White House’, being leaked, and an anonymous op-ed in the New York Times supporting some of the book’s major premises, there is, once again, talk of impeachment, this time focusing more on the mental state of the president.

This entire bruhaha brings up many questions, which this writer will attempt to answer.

Is any of this new?

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No. This is business as usual in the Trump White House. The chaos surrounding this administration is obvious to anyone who follows any news; even aficionados of FOX news must surely have gleaned that all is not well at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. With contradictory announcements, multiple bizarre tweets, top advisors arriving and departing with lightening speed, and trusted allies shunned, surely it's clear to everyone that something is rotten in the state of D.C.

Where is the Republican opposition?

Hiding under their desks, hoping the storm blows over while they still have their high-paying, low responsibility jobs. South Carolina Senator Lindsay Graham has basically said 'so what?' to the NYT op-ed. House Speaker Paul Ryan declined to comment on the book, other than to say that he didn't provide Woodward with any information; Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell did the same.

Wouldn't one think that, perhaps, the nation's 'leaders' would show some concern about this? It isn't as if there aren't piles of public evidence that support the idea of major dysfunction in the White House. Like an ostrich when it senses danger, do they simply bury their empty heads in the ground, hoping it will all blow over?

We all know, of course, that politicians on both sides of the aisle will only take a 'brave' stand once they have measured the direction of the political winds, and consulted with the special interest groups which are their true constituency. With the GOP base still gaga over their racist, misogynist, homophobic, xenophobic president, they are grabbing onto his tattered coattails for all they're worth.

Was the NYT op-ed a real picture of reality?

In the 'through-the-looking-glass' world of U.S. politics and governance, it is never a good idea to seek reality. That anonymous writer praises some of Trump's 'accomplishments'. We will digress for just a moment to review them.

(1) "Effective deregulation". What this actually means is that protections for the public against air and water pollution have been relaxed, resulting in increased profits for big corporations, and increased cancer and other diseases for the common man and woman (you know, those people like you and me who pay taxes and vote, for whatever that's worth).

(2) "Historic tax reform". One wonders how 'historic' this actually was, since during the administration of George W. Bush the rich also got a huge tax benefit. Again, for the common man and woman? Not so much.

(3) “A more robust military”. The U.S. spends more on the military than the next eight largest nations combined. The infrastructure is collapsing, public schools are in shambles, health care is beyond the reach of most citizens, and a university education leaves students with tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt. Was the military not sufficiently ‘robust’ under the presidency of Trump’s predecessor, Barack Obama, when seven nations were being bombed, and troops were in Afghanistan and Iraq? Are not hundreds of military bases threatening the world, with hundreds of thousands of soldiers manning them, sufficiently ‘robust’?

Is Trump going to purge the White House to remove the leakers?

Why not? Employment in the current administration is a revolving-door anyway, so why not simply increase the speed? According to preliminary reports, Trump has accepted the proclamation by Chief of Staff John Kelly, widely considered one of the ‘adults’ in the room (heaven help us), that he didn’t provide information to Woodward. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s declaration of unbreached loyalty has also been accepted.

We will note, however, that what Trump accepts and believes today has no bearing on what he may accept or believe tomorrow; actually, we must look at the present minute, not the day, and consider the next one. So, Kelly and Pompeo are naïve indeed if they consider their positions in the administration safe. But if they are fired, just think of the books each will write.

With the Republicans so cowed by Trump, will the Democrats unite to stop the madman president?

The chances of this happening, even should they gain majorities in the House and/or Senate with the November elections, are slim and none. Doing so would demonstrate courage and statesmanship, something that has been lacking on either side of the aisle since at least the presidential campaign of George McGovern (1972, just in case you were wondering). And that wasn’t a typical circumstance (please remember Lyndon Johnson, much as we’d all like to forget him).

Lastly, are we actually doomed?

Probably. As much as this writer likes to consider himself an optimist, he doesn’t see any positive outcome from the current mess the U.S. has gotten itself into. Perhaps Trump will be removed from office; then the country and the world will be stuck with Mike Pence as president, someone less disturbed but certainly as dangerous as Trump. If Trump manages to muddle along and run for re-election in 2020, it’s highly possible that the Democrats, hardly the saviors of anything at all, will repeat their colossal mistake from 2016 and again

nominate someone who has a snowball's chance in hell of being elected. And with Donald Trump as the opponent, that should be difficult to do, although the Democrats managed it two years ago.

Yes, this writer will continue to vote for third-party candidates who have no chance of winning, because the Democrats and Republicans have arranged things so they maintain their stranglehold on public office. Yes, Democrats in the mold of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez will continue to topple long-term, entrenched Democrats, but will be silenced or marginalized by the party's power-brokers. And yes, the oligarchy that masquerades as a democracy, an illusion perpetrated by members of the oligarchy for their own benefit, and not believed much outside of U.S. borders, will continue to run the show.