

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2017/02/07/trump-in-the-white-house-what-you-see-is-what-you-get/print/>

Trump in the White House: What You See is What You Get

By Roger Harris

February 7, 2017



Donald J. Trump may be many things, but coy is not among them. What you see is what you get.

Last week we got renewed sanctions against Iran, tweets dissing Arnold Schwarzenegger and other grave matters of state, and most shocking of all the NYT story “president takes hair-growth drug.”

Meanwhile, top State Department officials and the First Lady have evacuated Washington. And Israel, it's rumored, will nominate Trump for the Noble Peace Prize.

Consolidation of the Neoliberal State

As hard as it is to accept, Richard Nixon was the last liberal president in the New Deal tradition. Since that time hardly a major piece of progressive legislation has emerged from Washington.

Jimmy Carter gave us the first tentative pushbacks with privatization and deregulation, harbingers of the prolonged death throes of liberalism. The floodgates were opened with Ronald Reagan. The neoliberal torrent accelerated with Bill Clinton. His NAFTA and "ending welfare as we know it" were rollbacks best accomplished by a Democrat, because resistance would have been greater from a Republican. The trajectory continued with Bush and then Obama seamlessly carrying the neoliberal project forward.

The neoliberal state is replacing the last vestiges of the New Deal. The latter took some responsibility for social welfare. In effect a pact that capital would rule but workers would be bribed with a small cut of the spoils of their labor. Under the neoliberal order, social welfare is relegated to private charity and the fetters are unhitched to untrammelled deployment of wealth.

The state does not wither away under neoliberalism. The security, military, surveillance, and other coercive functions of the state are boosted. What is jettisoned is governmental regulations over capital. This is paralleled by a rush to privatize formerly state functions, including the military. Private contractors such as XE Services (formerly Blackwater) now help fight the empire's wars. Even spying (a.k.a., "intelligence") is being outsourced.

Most importantly the neoliberal state takes on the function of the "collective capitalist." After the 2008 financial meltdown, Obama went to Wall Street, said he was the only thing standing between them and the pitchforks, and told the bankers that the state would carry their water. This is an important development – the socialization of risk for finance capital.

The neoliberal state needs to play this role because of the inherent contradictions and volatilities of finance capital, including its reliance on fictitious profits leading to bubbles and then bursts. Hence, the US government handed over some \$12 trillion (equivalent to 67% of the US's GDP in 2016) of nearly free money to the banks under Obama's quantitative easing program.

Obama-Trump Transition

With each successive neoliberal president, we see a trajectory characterized by **continuity and intensification** of the neoliberal project. This is disastrously illustrated by Trump's recent executive order closing the US borders to certain nationals from seven Muslim countries, which in turn was based on Obama's Terrorist Prevention Travel Act of 2015.

Yemeni-American Abdulrahman al-Awlaki was killed in an Obama-ordered drone strike in 2011. He was 16 years old. A week ago, his 8-year-old sister and 29 others perished in Trump's first drone strike.

If you're apprehensive about Trump's finger on the nuclear trigger, remember that the trillion dollar arsenal is Obama's legacy. Obama's Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's support for privatization may prove to be a warm-up act to Trump's Betsy DeVos.

What we are seeing is Trump, not reversing Obama, but intensifying the neoliberal project. We should expect more aggressive privatizations, deeper tax cuts for corporations and investors, further militarized police, and greater deregulation for the financial sector. Multilateral "free trade" agreements will be scrapped, but they will be replaced by bilateral agreements. Notwithstanding campaign rhetoric about better deals with NATO and Russia, US imperial hegemony will remain the touchstone of foreign affairs.

There is little to take comfort from and every reason to resist.

Hidden in Plain Sight

Analysts warn that Trump's recent failed attempt at a "Muslim ban" was a "headfake" or a "shock event" diversion. They argue that what was really happening behind the scenes is that Trump is engaging in a "self-serving, dangerous consolidation of power" with his shuffle of the National Security Council (NSC) giving the unsavory Stephen Bannon a seat at that table.

We may not be fans of Mr. Trump, but the Electoral College declared him the winner. That is how he came to power. And, yes, he is putting awful people from his camp into appointed positions that had been previously occupied by Obama's slightly less unpalatable appointees. This should not come as an alarming surprise.

Besides, the NSC is not this nice agency designed to protect the good and welfare of American's civil liberties. It's not like the post office, which delivers Valentines to your grandmother. The NSC is an instrument of the US empire.

The brouhaha over Bannon is an internecine conflict among the ruling elites over governing the empire. The former head of the far-right Breitbart News isn't taking the place of the likes of say Noam Chomsky in this dog fight.

The Dark State Rises

Meanwhile something is emerging, which should be even more disturbing.

The FBI, CIA, and DIA have all intervened into recent US electoral politics. Last June in anticipation of a Hillary Clinton victory, a memo by State Department officials criticized their current commander-in-chief for not sufficiently provoking a third world war with Russia over Syria. What is happening here?

While we're hyperventilating about an unpopular but constitutionally designated president, agencies which are supposed to be under the control of the elected civilian authority are ever more boldly surfacing in plain sight forwarding their private agendas. Although not unprecedented, these nether creatures are becoming more untethered.

Bureaucrats under a democracy are supposed to implement policy, not dictate it. The deep state is shaping up to be something more than a dismissible conspiracy theory.

Democrats Attack Trump from the Right

A treacherous liaison is consolidating between neo-conservatives and putative liberals in Beltway land over the fear that chaos abroad may be somewhat abated under Trump. Robert Kagan led the neocon establishment to support Hillary Clinton in the Democrat's big tent, extended to encompass the most jingoistic elements of the Washington consensus. Recall this was the same liberal-neocon cabal that steered the US in 2003 into the now never-ending Iraq War.

Democratic Senator Chris Coons attacks Trump's pick for Secretary of State and former ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson as not being gung ho enough about NATO. Liberal talking head Rachel Maddow is apoplectic about Trump's supposed softness on Russia. A new McCarthyism is ascending, and it is not coming from the Republican side of the aisle this time around.

The litany of threats to our social welfare and civil liberties posed by Trump in the Oval Office is unfortunately nearly endless. Doubly unfortunately is that the Democrats have chosen to include attacks on Trump from the right based on, for instance, unsubstantiated claims of Russian interference in the presidential election.

Dual Character of the Anti-Trump Movement

Not all opposition to Trump is progressive. Some fear Trump will not be a sufficiently effective, reliable, and faithful servant of the US empire abroad and the super-rich at home. The anti-Trump movement has a dual character, unlike more clearly grassroots movements such as Black Lives Matter.

On one hand, the opposition to Trump represents righteous outrage of many Americans against the repressive nature of what is shaping up to be the Trump presidency. But also within that movement is the Democratic Party posing as the alternative to Trump. Not all anti-Trump activists by any means support the Democratic Party. However, the Democratic Party and its sympathizers are working to capture the anti-Trump movement for their partisan purposes.

The neocon/Democratic alliance with its adventurist US foreign policy and corporatist agenda is no antidote to Trump's toxicity. A movement independent of the two parties of capital could emerge if the angry anti-Trump resistance were to progress to sustained organizational forms. If that doesn't happen and the anti-Trump movement simply results in returning Democrats to office, the neoliberal trajectory to an ever more naked capitalism will lurch on.

It's a barbaric system and now we have a barbarian romping in the White House.