

Is Trump Really President?

By [Dr. Jack Rasmus](#)

Global Research, May 05, 2017

[Jack Rasmus](#) 1 May 2017

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These are strange times in American politics. And stranger still is the emerging character of the Trump presidency. Events are appearing with growing frequency, raising the question who is really running the White House and the US government? Is Trump really the President?

Trump sits there on the second floor, spending late evenings into early mornings tweeting to the world. In itself, that's politically weird. But even more strange is what he's tweeting and the next day fallout.

We hear about the aircraft carrier task force in Asia that was reportedly steaming at full speed to the North Korean coast a few weeks ago, only to learn soon after it was actually headed in the opposite direction to Australia. Did Donald imagine that? Was the US Navy informed or requested by its titular commander in chief to turn around and go north...and then didn't? Was Trump's command to go north perhaps countermanded by some head of Naval operations, or maybe someone else in the White House or government? Or did he just imagine it all and never even informed the Navy to head to Korea? All the possibilities are strange. Very strange.

And then there was the tweet by Trump that his big budget was going to be announced in a few days. It wasn't even prepared. Government bureaucrats had to quickly slap something together in a couple of pages to provide to the press.



Trump did it again, tweeted announcing his big tax cuts. Again the bureaucrats were caught off guard and had to throw some general outline together and issue it to the press. All this happened after it was generally known that the tax cut proposals were not going to be developed until late summer, and that the Obamacare Repeal bill had to go forward first. The Obamacare repeal was a necessary prerequisite for the general tax cut. Its \$592 billion in tax cuts for business and investors had to come first. Until it was resolved, it made no sense to publicize elements of the yet bigger tax cuts of trillions of dollars more scheduled to follow. But Trump tweeted it anyway, and the bureaucracy jumped, putting something

down on paper. Who's communicating what to whom? Is Donald just lobbing electronic policy missiles out of the second floor of the White House, hoping some bureaucrat will catch them before morning?

Or perhaps Trump is being allowed to sit up there on the second floor of the White House and do his tweet thing, while others actually run the government. By others, perhaps it is vice-president Pence in charge, working with some inside committee of key cabinet officers and the intelligence spooks in the NSA-CIA-FBI?

Is Trump being allowed to 'play at President' for public consumption, while the generals, spooks, and Goldman Sachs financial pirates run the show?

It's hard to believe that the members of his administration and the government State bureaucracy knew in advance of Trump's recent tweets welcoming Philippines President, Duterte, to the White House. Or that Trump would tweet recently that he's willing to meet with North Korea's president, for whom he, Trump, had great respect. You can imagine the political constipation that comment caused the spooks and the generals in charge of State, Defense, and National Security.

Last November 30, 2016 this writer wrote a piece predicting that Trump the right wing populist would be successfully 'tamed' by the political elites of this country that really run the show. I laid out some ideas how that would be accomplished. (see my blog, jackrasmus.com). But I didn't think it would happen so fast and so easily.

The past month has witnessed Trump doing a total 'about face' on virtually all his right wing populist proposals during the election. He's backtracking so fast it's a wonder he hasn't tripped over himself. (Check that, he has). What explains his 180 degree turnabout?

Was his talk of right wing populism during the campaign all political election hype? Tell the people whatever they want to hear to get elected, and then go do whatever the moneybags really running the show want from you—which is big tax cuts, massive across-the-board deregulation, end the taxation on Obamacare and we don't care what happens to the rest of it, give us some infrastructure spending deals that resurrect wheeling-dealing commercial property investments with big tax loopholes, and just tweak and rearrange existing free trade treaties.



So what we actually got so far from Trump during his first 100 days is government by 'executive orders'—i.e. repealing environmental protections, gutting immigrants' rights, going after sanctuary cities, opening up national monuments and parks to mining and cattle exploitation, subsidizing killer coal companies, attacking consumer protection, smoke and mirror changes to H1-B skilled worker import quotas that haven't changed, gutting K-12 education and shifting funds to private schools from public, opening up offshore drilling, and so on. But elsewhere it's been a wholesale

retreat from his election positions, proposals and promises. Here's a short list:

Trump does a reversal on China, from declaring it a currency manipulator to offering it major concessions at the Mar-a-Lago meeting, in exchange for help with North Korea. One wonders if China's offshore islands expansion is also part of the deal.

From NATO is a waste of money and unnecessary, Trump shifts to NATO is the great bulwark against Russia. From Putin the great leader to Putin is responsible for Syria using poison gas—of which still no proof thereof by the way. (Is it true, or is it all in that great American tradition of 'yellow cake' (2003), 'babies thrown from incubators' (1990), 'tonkin gulf' (1965), 'the war on drugs' (Panama invasion), 'Soviets are in Grenada', and 'remember the Maine' (Spanish-American War) incidents that always precede and justify US going to war).

From Mexico is going to pay for the wall, to there'll be no wall (latest per Homeland Security Secretary). From dumping NAFTA, to 'I'm not going to terminate NAFTA' (Trump quote).

And then there's Trump's staged press conferences with companies like Carrier Corp., indicating they're not going to export some jobs to Mexico for now (as they continue to plan to export still others at the same time). And the list of companies announcing jobs they intend to hire in the US without saying when, or that they already had planned to hire them anyway prior to the press conference.

From cancelling the TTP free trade deal (already killed in Congress), to declaring a reopening of the TTIP free trade deal with Europe. And what about the silent deal Trump struck with Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, when he was here? It's been leaked that Japan will pick up the lead on the TPP renegotiations and the US will join it later. Or Mexico's recent offer to the US to just apply the TPP terms to a new 'reform' of NAFTA by Mexico and the US? Watch both these back door free trade resurrections, they're coming too.

And what about Trump's organizational about face, with right wing ideologue Steve Bannon banished from the National Security Council and pro-Russia general Flynn banished from the government?

What I also find interesting is the intense media attack on Trump—focusing on his Russia connection, his tax returns, nepotism in the White House, his companies' benefiting (a violation of the emoluments clause of the US constitution) and calls for impeachment in Congress—all of sudden all the above have disappeared from view in the media front page. They've been put on the back burner in Congress and the press. And there's no more damaging leaks coming weekly from the intelligence spooks either. Instead, what we hear is talk about 'now he's coming around', beginning to appear presidential! Is all that just coincidental? Hmmm.



Is this a presidency where the Donald gets to sit on the second floor of the White House and do his late night tweets, and the bureaucrats scurry the next day to clean up? Where Donald is brought downstairs to the oval office for Executive Order signings or occasional reporter interviews and then trotted back upstairs? Is it a presidency where he makes his late night calls to his moneybag friends, like the billionaire Mercers and others, to find out 'how am I doing guys'? While the rest of the representatives of the economic and political elite run the show?

Is this a Trump presidency, or a government by Generals-Goldman Sachs-Pence, with son in law Kushner functioning as intermediary between them and the Donald? A government of second floor tweets and first floor executive order signing events?

The quality of the American presidency has been in steady decline for decades. From the crook Nixon to the inept peanut farmer, Carter; from the movie-actor, camera friendly Reagan to the morally sleazy opportunist Bill Clinton; from know-nothing George Bush to the super-cautious false progressive Obama; and now to the fake right populist, blowhard, tweety-bird called Donald Trump.

We're going to need a lot of luck to get through the next three and a half years folks!

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