

One Year of Trump: The Defenders of Fictional Democracy

By [Dr. Binoy Kampmark](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

It seemed so much busier, much more manic and crowded than the one year that had passed. Since his inauguration, President Donald Trump continues to excite the same headlines and explosions that began even before he made it to the White House.

By the time he got there, there were protests galore at agendas yet to be implemented, decrees yet to form. There were women's marches, contradictory in their message (former flower power advocates joining hands with traditional military alliances, greying peaceniks wishing for a stable man, or woman, behind the nuclear option) while the President had yet to implement a single law. Many of the anti-globalisation protesters had disappeared into the woodwork or re-kitted themselves. Fine to be an anti-globalist, but *Trump*?

A year on, and the agenda in terms of making America great again is far from smooth. In certain cases, it is barely extant. The corporate jackals remain, even if their diet has slightly altered. (Trump prefers his own version of the capitalist menu, his own idea of the toxic swamp that bathes Washington's bureaucracy.)

The latter part of the first year started to see some traction. When Trump had any doubts, he attempted to simply dismantle what his predecessor had done, often failing. The opening salvos of 2018 have, however, been aggressive, laced with concerns from politicians across the aisle that Trump has forgotten, if, indeed, he ever knew it, the values of free speech, or the inner mysterious force that is the US constitution. For Senator Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), [Trump's attack on the press](#) had more than a generous shade of despotism, inspiring "dictators and authoritarians with his own language. This is reprehensible."

What is fitting here is to note the various viewpoints of those who claim that the US Republic is in some sort of anti-democratic free fall, tripping into an abyss that will see totalitarian impulses catch and grip.

Trump, it is true, is authoritarian, and, like many corporate boardrooms of the world, indifferent to the notion of the demanding demos. But so are his opponents, free marketers, Davos devotees and freeloaders. They are the water diviners rather than the democrats. They see chimeras and believe in the magical distribution of goods through the global economy, and care little whether these actually have any influence on populaces. Naturally, if they do, it must be positive.

This form of reasoning amounts to an obscenity, the sort happily trundled out by Thomas Friedman at the *New York Times* with apostolic confidence. As long as the person involved with the Nike production chain in, say, Vietnam, is earning just that little bit more, so be it. You, purchaser, are doing well and they are doing even better, even if [working conditions](#)

[are unsafe](#).

Nor does it matter whether that above-poverty-line person's vote might go to a more equitable distribution policy from a government he or she votes for. The foes here are clearly demarcated. Neutralising the power of such a government, unduly interested in the welfare of citizens, too keenly parochial, is an imperative of the global corporate system.

(It should be noted that the factions who wish to see Trump removed can be found across the security-state – apologists and incongruous defenders of the CIA and FBI – the free market wings of both the Democrats and the GOP, and a range of other deeply conflicted individuals who see sex in everything, the grope behind the statute, molestation behind the decree.)

Mechanisms such as [Investor-State Dispute Resolution](#) provisions in less than free trade agreements provide the historical context as to why Trump has proved so alarming to the orthodox creed. He should be one of *them*, but has embraced populism instead.

The nature of such provisions is clear, permitting unelected companies to sue states for lost profits. State policies that cut the share price can lead to arbitral proceedings. Such points become critical in the mixing of health and value: the pharmaceutical company has to square its product with keeping shareholders happy, wherever they might be. Democracy has nothing to do with it.

Statements on the democratic deficit, the erosion of democratic values in Trump's America, and such similarly inclined observations, are easy to come by. Few individuals better qualify for this confusion than [Lawrence Summers](#), who assumes that "internationalism" (note the economic underlining) is democratic, and that a stance against its predations is somehow against the commonweal. Calm the waters at Davos, urges Summers of Trump.

Summers was an economic architect under the Clinton administration who encouraged those hot house conditions which led to financial apoplexy at the conclusion of George W. Bush's tenure. [Deregulating markets](#) inherently implies placing the economy beyond the state and its representatives – a suitably anti-democratic rationale.

His distressing contributions to economic fragility were rewarded with a janitorial stint in the Obama administration. Having messed the stable of economic stability, Summers had to make amends, though this move was far from convincing. There were few fresh brooms in the wake of the subprime mortgage disaster.

Summers exemplifies the animating background to the Trump presidency, with the president promising to neutralise both egg head and boardroom manager. That Trump is disingenuous about this (capitalism is not bad as long it is managed by cronies) doesn't weaken that message, which obviously continues to resonate.

The Jekyll and Hyde nature of US politics means that those who claim to be progressive will still happily embrace a president, or presidential candidate, soft on corporatist America (the Clintons), or an enthusiast of extra-judicial killings and legal instruments permitting indefinite detention (Barack Obama). They are the interlopers who believe that the way to paradise on earth is via Wall Street and adopted aspects of the police state, even if Wall Street needs periodical strafing and castigating.

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Dr. Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He lectures at RMIT University, Melbourne. Email: bkampmark@gmail.com

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