

President Trump: Diplomacy and Democracy in America

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By the end of the first month of President Trump's Administration we are in a better position to evaluate the policies and direction of the new President. An examination of foreign and domestic policy, particularly from a historical and comparative perspective will provide insights about whether America is heading for a catastrophe as the mass media claim or toward greater realism and rationality.

We will proceed by examining whether Trump pursues diplomacy over warfare. We will evaluate the President's efforts to reduce US foreign debt and trade burdens with Europe and Asia . We will follow with a discussion of his immigration and protectionist policies with Mexico . Finally we will touch on the prospects for democracy in the United States.

Foreign Policy

President Trump's meeting with the leaders of Japan , the United Kingdom and Canada were largely successful. The Abe-Trump meeting led to closer diplomatic ties and a promise that Japan would increase their investment in automobile manufacturing in the US . Trump may have improved trade relations by reducing the trade imbalances. Trump and Abe adopted a moderate position on the North Korean missile test in the Sea of Japan , rejecting a further military build-up as the liberal-neo-con media demanded.

US-UK meeting, in the *post-Brexit* period, promised to increase trade.

Trump moved to improve relations with China , clearly backing the 'single China ' policy and proceeding to re-negotiate and re-balance trade relations.

The US backed the unanimous UN Security Council vote to condemn North Korea 's missile launch. Trump did not consider it a military threat or rising to the level of additional sanctions.

Trump's policy of reconciliation with Russia in order to improve the war against Islamist terrorism has been stymied. Led by the witch-hunting left liberal Senator Elizabeth Warren, neo-conservative militarists and Democrats pronounced Russia as the primary threat to US national security!

The rabid, ceaseless mass media blitz forced the resignation of Trump's National Security Adviser, Ret. General Michael Flynn, on the basis of an 18th century law (the Logan Act) that prohibited private citizens from discussing policy with foreign leaders. This law has never been implemented. If it were enforced, hundreds of thousands of American citizens, most especially the *big-wigs* among the 51 'Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations',

as well as the foreign affairs editors of all major and minor US media outlets and foreign policy academics would be on the 'chain-gangs' with convicted drug dealers. Never embarrassed by absurdity or by trivializing tragedy, this recent 'Tempest in the Teapot' has whipped up passionate calls by the media and Democratic Party operatives for a new '*Nine-Eleven Style Investigation*' into General Flynn talks with the Russians.

Trump's setback on his National Security Adviser Flynn has put the prospects for improved, less bellicose foreign affairs in danger. It heightens the risk for a nuclear confrontations and domestic repression. These dangers, including a domestic anti-Russian McCarthy-style purge of foreign policy 'realists', are exclusively the responsibility of the ultra-militarist Democratic Party-Neo-Conservative alliance. None of this addresses the serious domestic socioeconomic problems.

Rebalancing Foreign Spending and Trade

Trump's public commitment about rebalancing US relations with NATO, namely reducing the US share of funding, has already started. Currently only five NATO members meet the required contribution. Trump's insistence on Germany , Italy , Spain , Canada , France and 18 other members fulfilling their commitments would add over \$100 billion to NATO's budget - reducing US foreign imbalances.

Of course, it would be far better for all if NATO was disbanded and the various nations re-allocate these many hundreds of billions of dollars for social spending and domestic economic development.

Trump has announced a major effort to reduce US trade imbalances in Asia . Contrary to the claims, often made by foreign trade 'experts' in the mass media, China is not the only, or even the largest, among the 'offenders' in exploiting unbalanced trade with the US .

China 's current account trade surplus is 5% of its GDP, while South Korea 's is 8%, Taiwan 's 15% and Singapore 's is 19%. Trump's target is to reduce the US trade imbalances to \$20 billion dollars with each country or 3% of GDP. Trump's quota of \$100 billion dollars stands in marked contrast to the 'Asian Five's' (Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore) current trade imbalance of \$700 billion dollars in 2015, according to the International Monetary Fund.

In sum, Trump is moving to reduce external imbalances by 85% in order to increase domestic production and create jobs for US-based industries.

Trump and Latin America

Trump's Latin America policy is focused primarily on Mexico and to a much lesser degree on the rest of the continent.

The White House's biggest move has been to scuttle Obama's Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership, which favored multi-national corporations exploiting Chile , Peru and Mexico 's work force, as well as attracting the neo-liberal regimes in Argentina and Uruguay . Trump inherits from President Obama numerous military bases in Colombia , Guantanamo , Cuba and Argentina. The Pentagon has continued Obama's 'cold war' with Venezuela - falsely accusing the Venezuelan Vice President of drug trafficking.

Trump has promised to alter US trade and immigration policy with Mexico . Despite the widespread opposition to Trump's immigration policy, he lags far behind Obama's massive expulsion of immigrants from Mexico and Central America . America 's deportation champion was President Barack Obama, who expelled 2.2 million immigrants and their family members in eight years, or approximately 275,000 a month. In his first month in office, President Trump has deported just one percent of Obama's monthly average.

President Trump promises to re-negotiate NAFTA, imposing a tax on imports and enticing US multinational corporations to return and invest in America .

There are numerous hidden advantages for Mexico if it responds to Trump's policies with its own 'reciprocal protectionist' economic measures. Under NAFTA, 2 million Mexican farmers went into bankruptcy and billions of dollars have been spent importing (subsidized) rice, corn and other staples from the US . A 'Mexico First' policy could open the door for a revival of Mexican agriculture for domestic consumption and export; this would also decrease out-migration of Mexican farm workers. Mexico could re-nationalize its oil industry and invest in domestic refineries gaining billions of dollars and reducing imports of refined petroleum products from the US . With an obligatory import-substitution policy, local manufacturing could increase the domestic market and employment. Jobs would increase in the formal economy and reduce the number of unemployed youth recruited by the drug cartels and other criminal gangs. By nationalizing the banks and controlling capital flows, Mexico could block the annual outflow of about \$50 billion dollars of illicit funds. National-popular policies, via reciprocity, would strengthen the election of new leaders who could begin to purge the corrupt police, military and political leadership.

In sum, while the Trump policies may cause some short-term losses, it can lead to substantial medium and long-term advantages for the Mexican people and nation.

Democracy

President Trump's election has provoked a virulent authoritarian campaign threatening our democratic freedoms.

Highly coordinated and endless propaganda by all the major media and the two political parties have fabricated and distorted reports and encouraged elected representatives to savage Trump's foreign policy appointees, forcing resignations and reversals of policy. The forced resignation of National Security Advisor Michael Flynn highlights the Democratic Party's pro-war agenda against nuclear-armed Russia . Liberal Senators, who once made grand speeches against 'Wall Street' and the 'One Percent', now demand Trump reject working with Russian President Putin against the real threat of ISIS while supporting the neo-Nazis in Ukraine . Liberal icons openly push for sending more US warships in Asia to provoke China , while opposing Trump's policy of favorably re-negotiating trade deals with Beijing .

There are many hidden dangers and advantages in this partisan political warfare.

Trump has exposed the systemic lies and distortions of the mass media, confirming the distrust held by a majority of Americans for the corporate news media. The low opinion of the media, especially held by Americans in the economically devastated center of the country (those described by Hillary Clinton as the '*deplorables*') is clearly matched by the media's deep disdain for this huge portion of the electorate. Indeed, the constant media

chatter about how the evil ‘Russians’ had hacked the US presidential elections giving the victory to Donald Trump, is more likely a ‘dog whistle’ to mask their unwillingness to openly denounce the ‘poor whites’ – including workers and rural Americans – who overwhelmingly voted for Trump. This class and regional element goes a long way to explain the constant hysteria over Trump’s victory. There is widespread fury among the elites, intellectuals and bureaucrats over the fact that Clinton’s big ‘*basket of deplorables*’ rejected the system and rejected its coiffured and manicured media mouthpieces.

For the first time there is a political debate over freedom of speech at the highest levels of government. The same debate extends to the new President’s challenge from the enormous, uncontrolled police state apparatus (FBI, NSA, CIA, Homeland Security, etc..), which expanded massively under Barack Obama.

Trump’s trade and alliance policies have awakened the US Congress to debates over substantive issues rather than internal procedural quibbles. Even Trump’s rhetorical policies have aroused mass demonstrations, some of which are bona fide, while others are bankrolled by billionaire supporters of the Democratic Party and its neo-liberal expansionist agenda, like the ‘Grand Sugar Daddy of the Color Revolutions’ George Soros. It is a serious question whether this may provide an opening for genuine grass-roots democratic-socialist movements to organize and take advantage of the rift among the elite.

The bogus charges of ‘treasonous’ communication with the Russian Ambassador against Trump’s National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, while still a civilian, and the convoking of the Logan Act against civilians discussing foreign policy with foreign governments, opens up the possibility of investigating legislators, like Charles Schumer and several hundred others, for discussing US strategic policy positions with Israeli officials...

Win or lose, the Trump Administration has opened a debate on the possibilities of peace with a nuclear superpower, a re-examination of the huge trade deficit and the necessity to stand-up for democracy against authoritarian threats from the so-called ‘*intelligence community*’ against an elected President.

Trump and the Class Struggle

The Trump socio-economic agenda has already set in motion powerful undercurrents of class conflict. The media and political class have focused on conflicts over immigration, gender issues, and relations with Russia, NATO and Israel as well as intra-party politics. These conflicts obscure deeper class antagonisms, which grow out of Trump’s radical economic proposals.

President Trump’s proposal to reduce the power of the federal regulatory and investigatory agencies, simplify and lower taxes, curtail spending on NATO, re-negotiate or scrap multilateral agreements and cut the budgets for research, health and education all seriously threaten the employment for millions of public sector workers and officials across the country. Many of the hundreds of thousands of protestors at the women’s rallies and marches for immigration and education are public employees and their family members who are under economic threat. What appears on the surface to be protests over specific cultural, identity or human rights issues are manifestations of a deeper and more extensive struggle between public sector employees and the agenda of a privatizing state, which draws its class support from small business people attracted by lower taxes and less regulatory burdens, as well as private ‘charter school’ officials and hospital administrators.

Trump's protectionist measures, including export subsidies, pit the domestic manufacturers against multi-billion dollar importers of cheap consumer goods.

Trump's proposals for deregulated oil, gas, timber, more agro-mineral exports and major infrastructure investments are supported by bosses and workers in those sectors. This has provoked a sharp conflict with environmentalists, community-based workers and producers, indigenous peoples and their supporters.

Trump's initial effort to mobilize domestic class forces opposed to continued budget-draining overseas warfare and in support of market relations-based empire building has been defeated by the combined efforts of the military-industrial complex, the intelligence apparatus and their supporters in a liberal-neo-conservative-militarist political elite coalition and their mass supporters.

The evolving class struggle has deepened and threatens to tear apart the constitutional order in two directions: The conflict can lead to an institutional crisis and toward the forceful ouster of an elected president and the installation of a hybrid regime, which will preserve the most reactionary programs of both sides of the class conflict. Importers, investors and workers in extractive industries, supporters of privatized educations and healthcare, warmongers and members of the politicized security apparatus may take total control of the state.

On the other hand, if the class struggle can mobilize the public sector workers, workers in the commercial sector, the unemployed, the anti-war democrats and progressive IT entrepreneurs and employers dependent on skilled immigrants, as well as scientists and environmentalists into a massive movement willing to support a living wage and unify around common class interests, deep systemic change becomes possible. In the medium term, the unification of these class movements can lead to a progressive hybrid regime.

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