

Trump Administration, Neocon or Isolationist? The Future Is All About Russia, Iran and China

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The best-case scenario has come about, which is to say the end of a world facing the specter of a mushroom cloud. With Hillary Clinton's defeat, we avoided a nuclear denouement stemming from a direct clash with Russia in Syria and an escalation of the conflict in Ukraine. Unfortunately the good news ends here. The chaos that originated in the United States following the election of Donald Trump does not augur well. The economic crisis has persisted for ten years, with no solutions in sight. Ignored and underestimated by the elite, it has become the engine of dissatisfaction with politicians, generating a wave of protest votes in the United States and Europe. The positive outcome, a break with the past, has degenerated into a period of apparent chaos and disorder, caused mainly by internal clashes between the leaders of the ruling classes.

No one can doubt that Trump was not the preferred candidate of the intelligence agencies (CIA and NSA especially), the media, and the Washington political consensus. This really needs no proof. But to say, on the other hand, that Trump is the man of some generals, many bankers and corporations, is to engage in an oversimplification that fuels further confusion surrounding the new administration.

The sabotage attempts against the new administration are quite apparent, directed mainly by the fringes of both the Democratic and Republican parties that are politically opposed to Trump, with help from the intelligence agencies and the media. This triumvirate of the intelligence agencies, the media, and the political establishment has already inflicted serious damage: the sabotage in Yemen; Flynn's early exit from the role of the National Security Advisor; the antagonistic relationship between the press and the administration; and an endless series of controversies over the role of NATO and trade treaties (such as TPP). This triad, directed by leaders of the Democratic and Republican parties, seems to be working at full speed to reach an unthinkable outcome after only one month, namely the impeachment of Trump and the appointment of President Pence to provide continuity for the policies of Bush and Obama in line with the American project for global hegemony.

Donald Trump, while not a fool, is attempting to repair the sabotage with errors and decisions that often worsen the situation. The decision to fire Flynn seems wrong and excessive, distancing him from his desire for detente in international relations, one of the Trump's most important promises.

To try and accurately hypothesize about the internal decisions and mechanisms made in the Trump administration would require excessive confidence in the authenticity of the information available. Certainly Bannon and Flynn appeared to be the core of Washington's

anti-establishment element and the major advocates of a rapprochement with Moscow. Following this line of speculation, Pence, McMaster (appointed to succeed Flynn), Mattis and Priebus seem to represent the neoconservative faction, the heart of the bipartisan establishment of Washington. The fact that they were appointed directly by Trump leaves us with two conclusions: an excessive confidence in Trump's own ability to tame the beast, or an imposition from above which presupposes a lack of Trump's control over his administration and over big decisions.

Figures like Rex Tillerson and Mike Pompeo arouse further confusion. While apparently confirming the policy of America First, and not necessarily giving a nod to the neoconservatives, they are certainly more digestible than anti-establishment figures like Bannon and Flynn.

The essential problem, especially for those who write analysis, is to find a rational and logical thread running through presidential decisions to be able to understand and anticipate the future direction of the new administration. To date, over just one month, we have witnessed some events that indicate a draining of the swamp, and others that indicated a full continuation of the Obama and Bush era.

Any hypothesis needs objective data and assessments confirmed by events. In my previous articles I have emphasized the clear distinction that must be made between words, actions (or lack thereof) with respect to the new administration. In Syria and Ukraine, the factions traditionally supported by the neocons (who are openly opposed to Trump) are experiencing a hard time. Poroshenko is becoming increasingly nervous and provocative (Putin, rightfully trusting no-one in Washington, has started the process of the Russian Federation recognizing the passports of the Donbass), attempting to involve Russia in the Ukrainian conflict. In Syria the situation improves every day thanks to the liberation of Aleppo and squabbling between Assad's opponents, which has resulted in a series of clashes between different takfiri factions concentrated in Idlib.

In both of these scenarios, European and American politicians, the intelligence agencies (guided by the CIA), and the media have joined in efforts to attack the new administration for not being friendly enough towards Kiev and also possibly opposing the arming and training moderate rebels in Syria. Pence's recent words in Monaco have served to reassure European allies on the future role of NATO and the United States in the world. Yet some changes already seem to be taking place in Syria, where it appears that the CIA has had to give in and end the terrorists' funding program. One of the deep state's emissaries and links with Islamic terrorism, John McCain, made a trip to Syria and Turkey to mediate and renew ties with the most extremist Wahhabis present in Syria. McCain's objective is to sabotage Trump's attempts to end support for moderate rebels in Syria (AKA Al Qaeda). McCain's efforts also aim for rapprochement with Erdogan, to push him back towards the deep state's cause and again sabotage the diplomatic efforts between Turkey and Iran and with Russia in Syria. The same effort was made in Ukraine by McCain and Graham a couple of months ago, inciting the army and political elites in Ukraine to ramp up their operation in Donbass. These are two clear indications of the intention to create problems for the new administration.

The bottom line is the chaos surrounding the new administration.

Trump lives on a dangerous misunderstanding: Is the President in control of events, or is he

at the mercy of decisions made at higher levels and against his express will? Observing Syria and Ukraine, it would appear that the intended rapprochement with Moscow is still on course. The toning down of harsh words against Iran, coinciding with the ouster of Flynn, further offers promise. Detente and the resumption of dialogue with Beijing seem to suggest that an escalation in the South China Sea and East China Sea will be avoided. The same is the case regarding the abolition of the TTP.

Yet the overall impression that we seem to get from the first thirty days is of an administration in chaos. Flynn's ouster is a blow to the rapprochement with Moscow. Having replaced Flynn with McMaster, a disciple of Petraeus who is a strong supporter of the 4 + 1 approach (Russia, Iran, China, North Korea + ISIS) as the main focus of foreign policy, seems to minimize the hope of an administration free from warmongering. The 4 + 1 approach is at the heart of the attempt at global hegemony so dear to the promoters of American exceptionalism. The possible entry of Bolton with an undefined role, the appointment of Pence as vice president, and the roles played by Priebus and Mattis suggest a return of the neoconservatives to the driving seat. But is it really so?

The impressions we can glean come from the previous experiences of Trump appointees, media publications, drafts from the CIA, and possible leaks from those betraying the administration. The perception that we can obtain as outsiders cannot be precise, possibly being the result of constant manipulation from the news media. What credibility left have newspapers, politicians and anonymous intelligence sources that over the past two decades have cynically moulded the public's perception of major wars and conflicts around the globe?

The question is how to be free from such conditioning in order to develop an accurate idea about Trump. Is Trump at war with the deep state? Is Trump a parallel product of the deep state? Is he an acceptable alternative for some of the deep-state factions?

Whatever the answer, we are facing an unprecedented clash between different mixes of establishment power. Certainly there are factions aligned with the thinking of the neoconservatives; factions linked to the new Secretary of State, the powerful former CEO of Exxon Mobil; factions with nationalist intentions pushing for an isolationist policy that seeks to abide by the principle of America First. If there is any certainty, it is precisely that we do not have any logical thread to divine Donald Trump's intentions. There are too many uncertainties with respect to the intentions expressed by Trump, with the influence of the warmongers in his administration, and with the ability of his loyal collaborators (Bannon above all) to stem internal erosion.

Basically there is a major lack of information. This results in excessive consideration and importance being placed on the words expressed by Trump, which are often at odds with each other and often in conflict with other ideas within the administration. At the same time we should especially observe actions (or non-actions) of the new administration, and following this logic we can line up some important events. Trump has already had two telephone conversations with Putin, one of which was particularly positive, according to White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer. There have been exchanges between Beijing and Washington, including a letter especially popular with the Chinese leadership; and Iran seems to have momentarily disappeared from the radar following Flynn's ouster. On the other hand, the additional sanctions on Iran are there to remind how the Republican administration will guarantee a negative stance towards Tehran. In this sense it is not surprising that the red carpet was laid out for Netanyahu on his visit to Washington.

Surely the absence of Trump at the Monaco conference is another important signal. The current president intends to continue to give priority to domestic over international politics.

For now we have to settle for a few crumbs of insight. In Syria the situation is improving thanks to the inaction of Washington; and In Ukraine Poroshenko has not found in the new administration the type of support he had been expecting to receive from Hillary Clinton had she won the election (a disappointment shared by the Banderists in Kiev and the Takfiri Wahhabis in Syria). The good news seems to end here, with a series of potentially explosive situations already in place. Western troops remain on Russia's border (the withdrawal of such a deployment would have demonstrated to Moscow Trump's genuine intention to dialogue, a concession, though that would have infuriated many members of the EU). The Saudis continue to receive important support for their campaign in Yemen. Constant threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continue unabated. And Trump's executive orders on the home front have inspired a strong domestic reaction.

These are disappointing policies adopted in the first thirty days by an administration that seemed so inclined to break with the past. As the days go by, and more people get appointed to the administration and others driven out, the picture that appears to be emerging is that of a grueling battle with the deep state, leading to significant concessions by Trump. McMaster, Mattis, Priebus and Bolton seem to reflect this. Or maybe not. Bolton will find himself in a much lesser role than had been potentially considered (Secretary of State), and McMaster could spell the way to rebuild the military and strengthen deterrence without having to resort to brutal force, which would remain a final choice for the POTUS.

The risk for Trump lies in being overwhelmed by the war machine that has directed US policy for more than 70 years. He will then have given up without even having had the opportunity to try and change the course of events, if this had been his real intention in the first place. The problem with this new administration is trying to understand what is imposed and what is the result of strategic thinking. It should not be excluded that the Trump strategy to hold together the base with respect to election promises by creating a smoke screen in which he is portrayed as a fighter against the deep state who must occasionally yield in order to maintain peaceful coexistence. It is important not to discard this hypothesis for a deeper reason: Trump has to demonstrate to his voters that he is altogether outside of the establishment, and the best way to demonstrate this is to be the target of the MSM, thus attracting the sympathy of all who have long lost faith in the authenticity of the disseminators of news and information. It is a fine tactic, but not exceedingly so. Will he continue to act like a victim during the presidency, continuing to put up an effective shield against criticism about unfulfilled election promises, particularly in foreign policy? Will his voters continue to buy it? We will see.

If the administration's actions in the future head in a direction similar to that of Obama or Bush, Trump cannot act like a victim, since it was he picked the closest people in his administration.

This again reminds us of the lack of information available to form an objective view, compounded by the fluctuations of the new administration.

There is a positive and important aspect to this situation. Tehran, Beijing and Moscow have increasing incentives to strengthen their alliance and not to question friendships; to forge ahead with projects that advance Eurasian integration. The election of Trump was accompanied by the grand strategic objective of splitting the alliance between China and

Russia. But fortunately, Trump has offered little hope of a dialogue with Moscow in this respect. The most important thing is that an escalation of confrontation that may have led to a nuclear exchange has been averted.

Paradoxically, we could be facing an extremely advantageous situation for the Eurasian continent, allowing for further integration, with Washington's continued adversarial stance (especially Iran and China in terms of trade sanctions and war) ensuring that valuable time will not be lost in excessive talks with the new American president. If Trump will maintain two key promises, namely to avoid a conflict and think about domestic interests (internal and economic security), then this will mean that the multipolar world in which we live will certainly have a better chance of stability and economic prosperity, which is the main desire of many countries, primarily China, Russia and Iran.

Trump's contradictions, when observing the intentions expressed during the election campaign and comparing them with appointments made to key posts, have alarmed and continue to cause concern, leaving Iran, China and Russia with little hope for future cooperation with Washington. The possibility of a joint dialogue without excessive demands seems to be fading, advancing the hope of an acceleration of Eurasian integration, giving little regard for the indecipherable intentions of the new administration.

A world order with responsibility shared between the US, Russia and China seems out of the question. Yet on the horizon there seems to be no signs of an imminent conflict for the purposes of imposing the old unipolar world order on the multipolar world. The possibility that Trump will fall back on a neocon posture is difficult but not impossible to imagine (after all, this is the United States, a nation that has for seventy years tried to impose its own way of life on the rest of world), but why exclude the possibility that even Trump could be converted to the religion of exceptionalism? After all, how much confidence can we place in politics? You already know the answer to that one.

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