

Chaos in the Imperial Big House

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“The Trump experience has plunged corporate ideology and war rationales into disarray.”

Donald Trump, the arch racist usurper of the Republican Party, is tearing the ruling class consensus to shreds, inflicting bigger shocks to the imperial system by accident, impulse and ignorance than any conceivable “progressive” elected U.S. president could achieve on purpose. In the space of a few weeks, Trump has 1) threatened to disrupt corporate global supply chains through his [in-out stance](#) on NAFTA; 2) forced Washington’s European junior imperial partners to reconsider their subservience to U.S. foreign policy and their vulnerability to U.S.-controlled financial institutions in the wake of Trump’s rejection of the Iran deal and his tirades at the G7 summit in Canada; and 3) discarded 70 years of Uncle Sam’s “Comply or Die” dictum towards North Korea, thus consigning the whole “axis of evil” designation to the dustbin.

Trump is not causing chaos in the imperial Big House because he wants to hasten the demise of U.S. imperialism. He is an intellectually and emotionally retarded spawn of super-privilege trying to stamp his orange imprint on history — “Trump did this, and it was the greatest thing ever!” — like the big “T” on the those buildings he doesn’t actually own. The man, literally, knows not what he does — and, therefore, cannot be counted on to repeat himself, or to follow through on any action with logic and consistency, for good or ill. However, the net effect of Trump’s crazed foreign policy has been to raise urgent questions, among foreign elites and general populations alike, of U.S. fitness for global hegemony. Trump’s behavior could deliver a *coup de grace* to an already severely frayed global capitalist consensus on U.S. world leadership, significantly weakening the potency of U.S. imperialism — even as Trump aligns more closely with the Israeli apartheid state and the Gulf monarchies and conspires to force regime change in Venezuela.

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Domestically, the Trump experience has plunged corporate ideology and war rationales into disarray, even as his administration (with Democratic help) has delivered the biggest corporate tax windfalls and military budgets ever.

Contradictions abound — but, of course, the accumulation of contradictions is what ultimately erodes the whole edifice. Donald Trump, incapable of perceiving beyond surface appearances, thinks a “strong” foreign policy means blood-curdling threats. So he threatens North Korea with “fire and fury.” When Kim Jong-un comes to the table with his South Korean partner, as they collaborated to do, Trump believes his threat has worked, and that the U.S. acted from strength. And then he agrees to “[leave the past behind](#)” and to enter what will become years-long negotiations on “denuclearization,” with “security guarantees”

for the North, while immediately halting U.S.-South Korean military exercises that Trump called “provocative.” Trump looks forward to an eventual withdrawal of troops from the South. “At some point I hope it will be, but it’s not right now.”

If the leader of North Korea — the original “pariah” state demonized and placed beyond the pale of U.S.-decreed legitimacy — is now just another negotiating partner, and U.S. troop withdrawal from the South is a principled goal, then the “axis of evil” era is over and the rationale for U.S. troops and bases virtually everywhere in the world collapses — as is well understood by U.S. imperial strategists, who are in deep distress.

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So are the Democrats. Since Trump won the GOP nomination, they have become overt partisans of the War Party. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, a former co-chair of the Progressive Caucus, sounded like some cracker mistress in the Big House, [carping](#) that Trump had “elevated North Korea to the level of the United States while preserving the regime’s status quo.” Pelosi showed her racist, imperialist inner core, recoiling at the very idea of equality among nations and peoples, and condemning Trump for appearing to abandon the goal of regime change in the North. (See [Ajamu Baraka](#), “[The Democrats Out-Right the Right on North Korean Summit](#).”)

Pelosi and her House minions have long voted to fund Republican and Democratic wars, while pretending to be peaceniks. Trump’s capture of the GOP presidential nomination drew them out of the closet, in full armored gear, screaming “Russia, Russia, Russia” like banshees — a clear indication of crisis among the Democrats’ ruling class masters.

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Trump campaigned in 2016 for normal relations with Russia, an end to the U.S. regime change offensive, and opposition to so-called “free” trade, thus uniting most of the ruling class against him. It turned out that Trump’s wholly unexpected appeal for peaceful relations with Russia did not deter huge majorities of Republicans from voting for him in the primaries and the general election. The political conclusion was inescapable: If white Republicans were not wedded to the permanent war agenda — or cared more about maintaining white supremacy at home than funding endless hostilities abroad — then where was the mass constituency for the bipartisan War Party? If Trump’s “deplorables” weren’t wedded to the War Party, then who was?

Trump’s surprise election threw the bulk of the elite, the corporate media, the military-industrial complex, and the spooks of the intelligence agencies, into panic, as they confronted a crisis of legitimacy for the Warfare State. Now firmly aligned with Hillary Clinton and the Democrats, their response was to pre-empt Trump’s threatened *rapprochement* with Russia with a massive anti-Putin campaign. The elites realized they had to recreate — on the fly, with no factual basis — a war fervor that no longer existed among the masses of people, through Russiagate. In the chaotic process, they have further delegitimized virtually every U.S. institution, all the while putting the onus for the damage on the Vladimir Putin.

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(They have even made the term “oligarchs” a household word — one that can just as easily be applied to the U.S. ruling class as to Putin’s rich friends in Russia. In the long term, this is not a good thing for rich capitalists, as a class.)

Trump has vacillated on “free trade,” speaking out of whichever side of his mouth works quicker. But his ambivalence and profound ignorance have put the NAFTA negotiations in total disarray. According the [New York Times](#), Trump sent “a 24-year-old deputy to meet with a delegation that was expected to include representatives from more than 50 of the largest American companies and organizations, including Walmart, U.P.S., the Walt Disney Company, General Electric, General Motors, Caterpillar and Boeing” — the titans of industry to whom both corporate parties pay homage, but whom Trump is disrespecting, big time. Corporate supply chains affecting trillions of dollars and millions of (mostly Global South, super-exploitive) jobs hang in the balance. The National Association of Manufactures, whose pronouncements were gospel to Republicans and most Democrats in previous eras, can’t make a NAFTA wheel turn in Trump’s administration. Much more crucially, the advent of Trump has revealed the stark reality that *there is no mass base for “free trade”*— a euphemism for allowing the ruling class to do whatever they want with their money and everyone’s jobs. Support for “free trade” is an illusion conjured by the two corporate parties, who are writhing in a crisis of legitimacy.

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But such crises don’t bring down the system, on their own. Only a people’s movement can do that.

The real crisis for the War Party arrives when masses of people show up in the streets to demand an end to the Permanent Warfare State.

The real crisis for the Black Mass Incarceration State arrives when the targeted population no longer recognizes the legitimacy of the police, and moves to resist and replace the cops with their own security forces.

The real crisis for the Lords of Capital arrives when the people demand [nationalization of the banks](#) and the permanent dethroning of finance capital, the actual ruling class.

Trump, of course, wants none of that. But, under his presidency, the contradictions of late stage imperial capitalism are becoming both much more intense, and more obvious to folks on the ground. And that’s scaring the hell out of the ruling class — which will make them a lot meaner.

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