

Fuming in the White House: The Bannon-Trump Implosion

By [Dr. Binoy Kampmark](#)

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Michael Wolff is laughing, if not gloating, all his way to the bank. Money bags are singing; bank accounts are being filled. Doubts about the free publicity his work on the Trump White House would receive would have abated with the tweeting complex that is the current and singular US president, one Donald J. Trump. Call something fake, and it's bound to sell. "Wolff's brand of journalism might be ugly," observe [Nausicaa Renner and Pete Vernon](#), "prioritizing access over accountability - but it's the perfect match for the Trump era."

It began with an [excerpt](#) in the *New York* magazine from *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*. Wolff's picture was not flattering, but hardly surprising. Trump did not expect to win, nor did his team. Losing, in fact, was the order of the day, and losing would be a springboard for eternal celebrity.

"Not only would Trump not be president, almost everyone in the campaign agreed, he should probably not be."

Strategist Steve Bannon naturally comes across as the bomb throwing desperado, cynical but determined. Special attention is given to his views of a meeting between Donald Trump, Jr. and various members of the Trump campaign with a Russian lawyer possessing electoral gold on Hillary Clinton. This, according to Bannon, was "treasonous and unpatriotic".

The link with Russia and the conduct of Don Jr. piqued Bannon's interest as relevant to possible money laundering. All bets were off on the Trump family, and Bannon went in for the kill.

"They're going to crack Don Junior like an egg on national TV."

Wolff's portrait prompted Trump to [take to the pitchforks](#).

"Steve Bannon has nothing to do with me or my Presidency. When he was fired, he not only lost his job, he lost his mind."

Bannon has to be distanced, isolated, estranged. Contributions were to be minimised, his legacy, obliterated.

"Now that he is no his own, Steve is learning that winning isn't as easy as I make it look."

Watchers of Bannon would have known that the president is deemed a historical weapon and accessory, less a person of his own mind and vision than an object of necessity. In the motor of history, actors are not, nor can they be, aware in terms of the disruption they cause, or the consequences that arise from it. The verbose German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel took one look at Napoleon and realised that before the world bestrode a World Historical Individual, a somewhat bombastic variant of the hero in history.

Bannon barely sports this view of Trump, though he regards him as a vessel of some use, an assassin of historical worth, the great destabilising figure who just might throw out everything, rot and all. Bannon sees the president as a “blunt instrument for us”. Whether he “gets it or not”, a view he outlined in [Vanity Fair](#) in August 2016, was less an issue for Bannon.

Since the miasmatic effects of the Wolff’s revelations, Bannon has taken a few backward steps. On this prickly road, he has adopted a position of contrition, buttering and even ingratiating the family he has, at points, regarded with scorn. (Blunt instruments can only rise so far.)

“President Trump,” he explains to [Axios](#), “was the only candidate that could have taken on and defeated the Clinton apparatus. I am the only person to date to conduct a global effort to preach the message of Trump and Trumpism; and remain ready to stand in the breach for this president’s efforts to make America great again.”

Bannon is hardly differing in his current approach, his meandering apologetics smoothing their way towards his sponsor. So he had a brain freeze, or, perhaps better, something of an ultra-patriotic meltdown. He issues a salient reminder that the Trump agenda is there to be embraced, and that he has been rather good in doing so, spreading it like an enthusiastic foot soldier through “national radio broadcasts, on the pages of Breitbart News and in speeches and appearances from Tokyo and Hong Kong to Arizona and Alabama.”

And what about those comments about Donald Trump, Jr. and the ever cloying Russian connection?

“My comments about the meeting with Russian nationals came from my life experiences as a Naval officer stationed aboard a destroyer whose main mission was to hunt Soviet submarines, to my time at the Pentagon during the Reagan years when our focus was the defeat of ‘the evil empire’ and to making films about Reagan’s war against the Soviets and Hillary Clinton’s involvement in selling uranium to them.”

His ire was not against the younger Trump of green folly but against Paul Manafort, devil incarnate, “a seasoned campaign professional with experience and knowledge of how the Russians operate. He should have known they are duplicitous, cunning and not our friends.”

Whether this papering over is of any effect is beside the point. Bannon and Trump are linked, bound by an insurgency that rocked, and continues to unsettle the furniture from the White House to the Pentagon. Washington continues being rattled and shaken. It is an unsettling event that is bound to continue beyond the relationship, Trump always an echo of the man who proved indispensable in jimmying the safe to the White House open.

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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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Kampmark](#)

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