

Impeachment and the Imperial Presidency

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***Donald J. Trump** is the third president in American history to face an impeachment trial in the United States Senate. He stands accused by Democratic members in the House of Representatives of abusing power and obstructing Congress.*

In reality, Trump is being impeached because he crossed an unspoken red line in American politics by deliberately sticking his thumb in the eye of the Washington establishment. He did so by winning an election he was not supposed to win defeating two political dynasties along the way, the Bush's and the Clinton's. He threatened to 'drain the swamp' and fight political corruption when he took up residence in the White House. He promised to end unnecessary and costly wars in the Middle East. Most egregiously, he pledged to seek peaceful relations with Russia once elected. Finally, he said some nasty things about Mexicans, Muslims, the media and the ruling class that exposed several fault lines in American society that those in power would prefer remain hidden from view. In short, Trump polarized the United States in ways that threaten the stability of the political order while simultaneously perpetuating the economic and social inequalities protected by the political establishment he attacked.

It is therefore necessary to examine the historical events that brought Trump to this ignominious moment in his presidency and to expose the real reasons for his impeachment. It is also wise to assess the part played by Trump, his accusers and defenders in perpetuating a pattern of lawless behavior that contributes to a ubiquitous chronicle of American state criminality.

The 2016 political season was to be a time of harvesting for **Hillary Clinton**, a dogged politician who labored as First Lady in the shadow of her husband Bill Clinton during his two terms as president and who subsequently launched an independent political career, first as a junior Senator from New York and second as Secretary of State, a position she dutifully accepted as a consolation prize after having been defeated in her first bid to become the Democratic party nominee for president in 2008 by the charismatic upstart from Illinois, **Barak Obama**. Secretary Clinton was widely favored to win the presidency in 2016 over the presumptive Republican party nominee, **Jeb Bush**.

Enter **Donald Trump** who, in the pursuit of ever growing fame and fortune, launched a presidential campaign designed primarily to advertise 'Brand Trump'. To his own surprise and that of his advisors, Trump gained enormous traction at political rallies by exploiting people's hatreds, fears and prejudices, a skill once practiced to great effect by one of his mentors, **Roy Cohen**, who served as chief counsel for the infamous Senator from Wisconsin, **Joseph McCarthy**.

Trump realized very early on that significant sectors of the American population felt as

though they were thrown overboard 35 years ago by the leaders of both political parties who continually promised to provide phantom jobs and trickle down prosperity. What actually trickled down during the neo-liberal economic era ushered in by Ronald Reagan in 1981 and continued to a greater or lesser degree by his successors was unemployment, poverty and despair.

Large sectors of the working and middle classes watched helplessly as corporate America outsourced their jobs to China, Mexico, Indonesia and beyond, destroyed their unions and turned the American dream into an unending American nightmare, all the while proceeding to create social conditions south of the border that flooded the country with undocumented immigrants who were desperate to find jobs. For their part, the migrants were fleeing the consequences of globalized free trade agreements, drug wars, coup's and insidious reincarnations of political repression that turned their countries into living hells. These foreign infernos were primarily ignited by the same [American corporatocracy](#) that was responsible for creating the economic and social devastation that ravaged the United States, all in the service of transnational capital accumulation.



Trump proceeded to manipulate the deep seated discontent of American workers by promising to “Make America Great Again.” He said he would return jobs to this country, rebuild its infrastructure and rid the homeland of illegal immigrants, gangs and drugs. Trump’s right wing populist rhetoric was carefully scripted by the ultranationalist **Steve Bannon**. Bannon’s demagoguery worked to perfection against the hapless Clinton who, mired in scandal, attached those same American workers as “deplorables.”

Being an accomplished huckster, Trump never intended to make good on all of his rhetorical promises, but in his zeal to win, he violated the unspoken rules of political etiquette by airing America’s dirty laundry. Psychologically, Trump functioned as the American id.

During a lengthy campaign and much to the horror of the political establishment, Trump had the temerity to tell [Jeb Bush](#) during a Republican presidential debate that his brother led the country into the Iraq war based upon lies. He told [Hillary Clinton](#) during a nationally televised debate that if he were president she would be in prison for destroying 33,000 emails under subpoena by Congress. He called the mainstream media an enemy of the people. He stated openly that [NATO was obsolete](#) and America should get along with [Russia](#). And he told the American people that if elected, he would wrest their government back from the clutches of a corrupt ruling class. Trump had the audacity to say these things because he is independently wealthy, could finance his own campaign for the Republican nomination, and being a bona fide member of the owning class, had apparently become discontented with the politicians that serve as the hired help of his class and had decided, being a supreme narcissist, that if elected, he could do a better job of running the country himself.

The results of the election shocked the political establishment. On November 8, 2016, Donald J. Trump was elected as the 45th President of the United States. Trump pulled off one of the most remarkable upsets in modern American political history because he tapped into an enormous sea of anger and hatred that exists within vast swaths of the American wasteland.

From the moment he became a serious candidate for president, a covert operation was set in motion by Clintonite loyalists within the national security autocracy, the democratic party and the corporate media to prevent him from winning the election. Once that project failed, a second phase of the operation was launched. Here, the operatives had two objectives. Firstly, to depict Trump as an illegitimate president thereby securing his removal as the chief executive of the ruling class. Secondly, to effectively block his peace initiative with Russia. The first phase of the covert operation produced FISA-gate and the second phase produced Russia-gate, Ukraine-gate and impeachment.

The [covert operation](#) was reportedly organized by **John Brennan** at the CIA, **James Comey** at the FBI, **James Clapper** at the NSA and **Hillary Clinton** and her cronies in the Democratic Party. Their fabrications were printed as truth by the New York Times and the Washington Post and broadcast uncritically by CNN, ABC, NBC and CBS. It is crucial to remember the CIA's [Operation Mockingbird](#) in this context. A special counsel, Robert Mueller, was appointed to investigate 'Russian interference' in the 2016 election and possible 'collusion' with the Trump campaign. When the investigation failed to prove collusion, a CIA 'whistleblower' was produced to level additional accusations of official misconduct involving Ukraine. **Chairmen Adam Schiff** and **Jerry Nadler**, along with **House Speaker Nancy Pelosi** took up their posts in Congress to investigate Trump's interaction with Ukrainian **President Zelensky** and quickly moved to orchestrate impeachment proceedings that have resulted in a Senate trial.

The litany of sensational revelations seemed unending. Leaked conversations of Trump bragging to Billy Bush about grabbing the private parts of women; salacious stories emanating from the infamous Steele dossier about Trump having sex with urinating prostitutes in a Moscow hotel; illegally obtained FISA warrants used by the FBI to surveil the Trump campaign; charges that Russia hacked computer servers in the DNC to obtain the Clinton emails, subsequently giving them to Wikileaks for publication; accusations that Trump collaborated with Julian Assange and Wikileaks in leaking the Clinton emails to discredit his opponent; the firing of FBI director Comey by Trump to obstruct justice; the withholding of foreign aid to pressure the president of Ukraine to investigate Joseph Biden, a political rival, thereby jeopardizing the integrity of American elections and national security.

The most serious allegations leveled against Trump are not supported by facts. No empirical evidence has ever been presented to prove any of the numerous allegations involving Russian state interference in the 2016 presidential election.

Julian Assange maintains that the Clinton's emails were leaked by a non-state actor, not hacked. The emails revealed, among other things, that Clinton voiced a public policy for voters while advocating a private policy for Wall Street donors and that Clinton's campaign staff frantically sought ways to discredit rival **Bernie Sanders**. Clinton subsequently colluded with the DNC to subvert the candidacy of Sanders during the 2016 Democratic presidential primary. The emails also revealed that her campaign staff worked vigorously to respond to criticisms that while Secretary of State, Hillary participated with husband Bill in a

'pay for play' [influence peddling operation](#), more commonly known in legal circles as racketeering, that was set up through the Clinton Foundation.

Furthermore, the [Steele dossier](#) was exposed as a fraud and credible [legal scholars](#) have demonstrated that Trump's activities with Ukraine do not rise to the level of 'high crimes and misdemeanors' as required for impeachment by the U.S. Constitution.

What the American people are witnessing is an ongoing attempt to reverse the outcome of the 2016 presidential election by removing Trump from office through impeachment. The probable results of this strategy do not bode well for the Democrats. In all certainty, Trump will be acquitted in the Senate trial, thereby strengthened, not weakened in his bid for re-election. The Democrats chose the path of impeachment because they have no genuine oppositional politics with which to defeat Trump.

Consequently, what is on display in Washington is the spectacle of one faction of the American political establishment using the constitution as a legal weapon against the other faction in a very public struggle for control of U.S. empire.

What remains largely unexamined during the impeachment saga are the real crimes, as opposed to the alleged crimes, that have been committed by Donald Trump in the service of that empire. A central part of this drama is the complicity of both his accusers and defenders in the commission of those crimes.

Firstly, Donald Trump would never have had the opportunity to seek a criminal investigation of his presidential rival if not for the fact that former Vice President Joseph Biden had been involved in corrupt activities while serving as Barack Obama's point man in Ukraine. Biden's activity entailed actually [threatening Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko](#) with cancellation of \$1 billion in U. S. loan guarantees if Poroshenko did not fire Ukrainian Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin who was investigating corrupt practices of the natural gas firm Barisma Holdings, a company on whose board of directors sat Biden's son, Hunter, at a cost to the company of \$166,000 a month.

Secondly, Joseph Biden would not have been involved in these activities had not the Obama administration engineered a coup d'état in the Ukraine in 2014 to oust the pro-Russian government of Victor Yanukovych who had refused to come under the domination of the EU and IMF. U.S. involvement in the coup was revealed, in part, by leaked conversations of Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs [Victoria Nuland](#) who, along with U.S. **Ambassador Jeffrey Pyatt**, helped legitimate the post-coup government by selecting its Prime Minister. Nuland's 'guy' was **Arseniy Yatsenyuk** who imposed IMF austerity on Ukraine once Yanukovych was removed. Nuland also revealed that the United States had invested [\\$5 billion](#) in anti-government activities in Ukraine.

Nuland's husband is **Robert Kagan**, a prominent neoconservative who was instrumental in creating the Project for the New American Century, a think tank whose members advocated preemptive and unilateral 'war on terror' as a pretext for global interventionism. Kagan, along with several other neoconservatives, is also the author of a [policy document](#) that directly challenges Trump's 'America First' military strategy with one of aggressive interventionism. Kagan's brother Fredrick, worked as a fellow in the [American Enterprise Institute](#) in 2007 where he wrote a policy paper that was instrumental bringing about a massive troop surge during the war in Iraq. The neocons are consistent advocates of military interventionism and they dominate thinking in the foreign policy establishment of

the United States. It is in this context that the firing of National Security Advisor John Bolton can be understood. Bolton is a virulent neoconservative who consistently advocated war as the policy of first choice in Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela to annoyance of Trump who does not want to risk re-election by starting new wars of choice. Bolton's testimony is now sought by Senate Democrats in the impeachment trial as they attempt to discredit Trump on Ukraine.

The coup in Ukraine touched off a civil war in that country that the United States converted into a proxy war with Russia. The Obama administration initially withheld lethal military aid to the Kiev government in 2014 but quickly reversed course in 2015 and signed off on a congressional aid package that approved \$50 million in lethal military aid in 2015. Between 2016 and 2019 that aid increased to \$850 million. To date, the United States has sent [\\$1.5 billion](#) to Ukraine in security assistance. The Obama administration also falsely accused Russia of invading Ukraine when the latter annexed the Crimea and began arming separatist forces in the Donbass region in response to U.S. actions. Therein lies the centrality of sending military aid to Ukraine for the U.S. foreign policy establishment. Trump stands accused by Congressional Democrats of endangering U.S. national security by temporarily withholding that aid. Trump eventually released \$400 million of military aid to Ukraine yet the accusation underscores the need for impeachment in the eyes of Democrats.

Thirdly, Trump advocated détente with Russia. For the neoconservatives and liberal interventions in the American foreign policy establishment, strategy in the Ukraine is part of a larger project that has been undertaken to subjugate Russia. Part of the EU deal rejected by Yanukovich stipulated Ukrainian military coordination with NATO, a pact that would have further extended the military arm of the EU to the doorstep of the Russian Federation. Militarily confronting Russia began with the expansion of NATO eastward under Bill Clinton in 1999; the withdrawal from the ABM treaty by Bush Jr. in 2001; the placement of anti-ballistic missile defense systems in Romania in 2016 and Poland in 2018 by Obama; and the imposition of economic sanctions, expulsion of diplomats and seizure of Russian diplomatic properties in the United States by Obama in 2018. Collectively, these policies have contributed to a calculated [new cold war](#). Hence, the targeting of Trump who wanted peaceful relations with Russia. Hence, Russia-gate and its spin off Ukraine-gate. Hence, impeachment.

U.S. foreign policy has been structured to prevent the emergence of a global rival from the Eurasian land mass after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The architect of that policy was [Zbigniew Brzezinski](#), President Carter's National Security Advisor. Brzezinski was also the mastermind of the Russian 'bear trap' that induced Soviet intervention into Afghanistan in 1980 by arming, training and deploying the '[Islamic Mujahideen](#)', out of which sprang Al Qaeda. Trump will not be allowed to deviate from aggressive anti-Russian policy. This is particularly true in the Middle East.

In assessing policy in the Middle East, it is important to note that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), is an offshoot of Al Qaeda that is presently being used as a justification for U.S. troop deployment in Iraq and Syria. Ostensibly the troops are deployed to fight ISIS, but in reality they are there to secure the region's oil resources and protect the apartheid state of Israel. As such, Trump's regional policy directly conflicts with that of the Russian, Iranian, Syrian and Iraqi governments that actually fight ISIS. Trump's order to assassinate Iranian General Suleimani, who coordinated the fight against ISIS puts a lie to U.S. claims that it is fighting a 'war on terror' against the Islamic State.

Although Trump has indicated that he is against wars of regime change in this region, his policies are likely to provoke the very wars he claims to oppose, especially if he follows the advice of **Secretary of State Mike Pompeo**, yet another neoconservative warmonger.

Trump's missile strikes in Syria and the illegal military occupation of Syrian oil fields; Trump's green light for the Turkish invasion of Syria; Trump's withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear agreement (JAPOC); Trump's imposition of economic sanctions on Iran; Trump's extrajudicial assassination of General Suleimani; Trump's massive arms sales to Saudi Arabia; Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognize Israel's annexation of Syria's Golan Heights; Trump's support for the dictatorship in Egypt; and Trump's [drone war](#) in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia, constitute genuine war crimes and crimes against humanity for which he should be removed from office. But Trump is not being impeached for any of these crimes because they are crimes committed in furtherance of empire.

Furthermore, Trump has committed these crimes with the full support of Congress, the largely symbolic and non-binding War Powers Act Resolution of 2020 notwithstanding.

It was Congress, in a vote that included 188 Democrats, that approved Trump's \$738 billion military budget in 2020.

It was the Senate that ratified Trump's \$500 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia in 2017. The majority of those billions are used by the Saudi's to buy weapons from Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, General Dynamics and Boeing so as to wage war in Yemen. It should be noted that members of the House and Senate own an estimated [\\$5.3 million](#) worth of stock in the defense industry raising a visible conflict of interest. Consequently, it is no surprise that the Senate confirmed former lobbyist for the defense contractor Raytheon, Mark Esper as Trump's Secretary of Defense in 2019 without a hitch.

Additionally, the den of Congressional thieves continues funding for the war in Afghanistan at a cost of [\\$45 billion](#) per year, approved a \$38 billion military aid package over 10 years for Israel in 2018 and overwhelmingly extended key provisions of the [Patriot Act in 2019](#), with significant support coming from the Democratic party of lesser evilists, thus illustrating their support for the rampant militarism underlying American state criminality.

Unrestrained militarism is a crime against peace. Aggressive preparation for war leads to actual war. America's Imperial President and its venal Congress are guilty of waging war on humanity, a monstrous reality that is hidden behind the charade of impeachment.

The battle over Trump's impeachment is a power struggle that will decide who will lead the American empire. It is not a fight involving the abuse of power as much as it is a fight involving the exercise of power. The outcome of that fight will determine which faction of the American political establishment will employ Imperial state power to advance a vicious global empire that relentlessly elevates the rights of property over the rights of people to the detriment of all humanity.

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