

Looking at the “Trump Regime”: Flailing Trumpsters Upset a Hijacked Nation

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The Trump Gang, hardly two weeks in the White House, is giving strong, petulant signals that it is hijacking the checks and balances of our democratic institutions. Coupling the Boss's easily bruisable ego, marinated in infinite megalomania, with ideologues harboring objectives that would have frightened Nixonites and Reaganites alike, a runaway train is leaving the station.

After unexpectedly winning the Electoral College but decisively losing the popular vote, Trumpsters are wasting no time. They are undermining the efficacies of the civil service, the Congress, the media, organized labor, and soon the federal courts, while already betraying desperate Trump voters (many of whom cast a vote *against* Hillary Clinton) with their version of the imperial corporate state, led by corporatists and militarists.

Looking at the Trump regime clinically, there is a method to their madness. Striving to govern early by a stream of poorly written Executive Orders (dictates), their basic message to all is “get with the program or get out.” Building on past precedents of presidential lawlessness, Trump wants to rule by directives and tweeted dictates against any challengers. Temperamentally, he has little patience for governing in a democracy and thinks he can rely on showmanship, bluster and bullying.

Those latter traits, however, harbor a most dangerous vulnerability to outside provocations – foreign and domestic – which in turn could unleash furious, reckless, impulsive lashing out by Trump himself.

Start with stateless adversaries abroad engaged in long and violent struggles in their backyards with the US. They will capitalize on the perception that the Trump administration's recent travel ban is an attack against all Muslims. These dangerous actors will use Trump's latest Executive Order as the ultimate recruitment tool. This will inevitably lead to a more dangerous world for Americans and refugees alike and could provoke a vicious cycle without discernible restraints.

One terrorist attack in this country and Trump becomes a bellowing monster throwing rules of law, free speech and other serious protections of health and safety for the people to the winds.

It is questionable whether Donald Trump, so self-obsessed and without impulse control, realizes that our militarily powerful country has much more to lose than our suicidal opponents and that we should not be trapped and embroiled in such an escalating vortex of destruction. As a friend said, “He's playing into their hands.”

Where will the restraints on him come from? Presumably from his Secretaries of Defense, State and Homeland Security backed by a vocal professional civil service with no ax to grind. Already a thousand U.S. diplomats at embassies abroad have signed a petition pointing to the dangers of his Executive Order.

Trump is constantly attacking the media, sometimes as a general institution, other times naming reporters in his disfavor. He's gotten about as much juice out of that regular eruption as he can. The mass media made him with staggering amounts of free airtime and print space. He then turned on them, because for The Donald, "Enough is never Enough." Bruised, some of the media will cower. But many will assert themselves with penetrating coverage.

He'll give them plenty of material with his lawless Presidential actions and his conflicts of interest (plus violation of the Constitution's Emoluments Clause). And his unyielding ownership of business assets in the U.S. and around the world present countless potential conflicts of interest.

What of the Congress -a place driven by fear, insecurity, constitutional abdication and suddenly rising protests? Trump has given high-level positions in his government to five major Republicans from the Congress and the wife of Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell (Rep. KY). They all have their circles on Capitol Hill. Still, the Republicans will not borrow heavily for capital investments in infrastructure that Trump wants for jobs.

Should Trump's already historically low level in the polls start sticking to the Republicans headed into the 2018 elections, look for pushback from members of the GOP to save their own skins.

The labor union leaders have gotten themselves in a quandary. Having supported either Hillary (mostly) or Bernie, they're not getting tickets to the White House to watch the Super Bowl. Trump knows how to game unions from his real estate and gambling businesses. He is reminding them that 30 to 40 percent of their rank and file voted for him and he's not reluctant to call out the leadership on this sensitive point. Furthermore, he knows they like his construction jobs proposal and his criticisms of job-destroying trade agreements.

Trump has the unions in a cross-fire for the time being. For their part, organized labor chiefs also know that he has appointed the most anti-labor cabinet in modern times. These people include Alan Puzder—a chain restaurateur, probably becoming Labor Secretary, who is blatantly anti-union and anti-higher minimum wage and fair labor standards—and billionaire Betsy DeVos, the Education Secretary bent on breaking the teacher unions. Also watch out for another anti-worker Supreme Court Justice.

Lunging from one eruption and outrage to the next, it seems that the Trumpsters are grabbing the country and racing together toward the cliff. The question is: Who goes over the cliff first?

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