

# From Tribe, to King, to ‘Democracy’ to Mafia. The Criminalization of US Politics

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*The dramatic arrest of Julian Assange, hauled bodily from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, will be touted as an example of ‘rules-based’ politics, and yet his ‘crime’ is to have revealed the underside of modern democracy.*

The problem is no longer how political leaders come to power, but their growing tendency to adopt criminal behavior, closing their eyes to similar abuse by their people. Two hundred years ago, when asked by a citizen what the Constitutional Convention had come up with, Benjamin Franklin responded: “A republic, if you can keep it.” That warning appears to have been behind the ever-increasing American tendency to commit crimes and pursue suspects.

The country has been mired in legal battles decades before the election of Donald Trump. After being indicted for conspiracy to cover up the break-in of the Democratic Headquarters in Washington’s Watergate building by his ‘plumbers’ searching for embarrassing information on his Democratic opponents, President Nixon resigned in order to avoid impeachment. His Vice-President, Spiro Agnew also resigned over suspicion of criminal conspiracy, bribery, extortion and tax fraud. Did the nineteen seventies mark a turning point? Ronald Reagan’s ‘Morning in America’ didn’t quite make it through the nineties: Bill Clinton was impeached for lying about an affair with a White House intern, the long drawn out process mocked by Europeans, who knew that presidents are no different from other men when it came to sex. The Senate found him not guilty, and he remained in office long enough to attack communist Serbia, his affair with Monica Lewinsky well surpassed by Donald Trump’s hush money.

This may be the point at which the United States went from being a rogue nation bent on exploiting the rest of the world under the guise of democracy, to a mafia state.

In the two plus years since Trump was sworn into office, the media has devoted itself almost entirely to reporting each twist and turn of the investigation into whether he was being manipulated by an ‘adversary’. or ‘enemy’, (depending on the moment) for political reasons. Finding the idea that the real estate king was flattering Vladimir Putin in order to build a tower in Moscow less credible, (aside from the part about him offering a penthouse to President Putin, in standard you scratch my back I’ll scratch yours fashion) they cannot conceive that an American president should prefer deals to war. Hillary, after all, made no secret of her intention to take out Putin

According to the Wolfowitz security doctrine drafted in the late nineties, before GWB became president, and never [superseded](#), in order to maintain US world [hegemony](#) no nation is to be permitted to challenge America’s hegemony. Trump’s insistence on

friendship with Russia, together with his flagrant disregard for decorum, has taken the gangsterism that began with Al Capone's men shooting their opponents from the running boards of Ford Model T's to a whole new level.

Invoking legal decisions going back hundreds of years, while manipulating the accumulated 'swamp' of rules and regulations, the President has been able to place sycophants in key positions, preventing Congress and the Courts from fulfilling their role as 'checks and balances' on his power. Freaking out the security community, Trump hired his daughter and son-in-law as full-time consultants in the White House, although neither of them could pass an FBI background investigation. In the ultimate act of defiance, having pretexted audits to avoid releasing his tax returns before the election, as all candidates have done, the president continues to do so, his men in the the justice and revenue departments protecting him, as he — and the press (sic!) —. knew they would. The Attorney General, known for having opined that a sitting president cannot be indicted before being nominated, is seen side-stepping congress's questions about whether, when, and how much of the report on Trump-Russia relations will be released to the public.

In turn, as he implied to that same committee, J Edgar Hoover's FBI has acquired power Putin's FSB can only dream of, that of spying on the president.

While the political class is obsessed with Trump's relations with Russia, it is much less interested in the extraordinary amounts of money that his acolytes accumulated during the course of their careers. The fact that Paul Manafort, who was briefly Trump's campaign manager, was known to have previously worked for the 'pro-Russian' President of Ukraine (whom the US took down in 2014), is of much greater significance than the fact that he accumulated a small fortune while doing so. No one has yet come up with a plausible explanation as to why he was sentenced to a mere few years in jail for tax evasion.

For the Beltway, what counts is that the president seeks to imitate foreign 'authoritarian' rulers: Besides the Russian President, there is Turkey's Erdogan, who broke with NATO after seventy years to buy Russian military hardware; Duterte, who cleanses the Philippines of drugs by killing dealers, and most recently the elected president of Venezuela, disavowed for being unable to run the county in the face of US cyber attacks, to be replaced by a self-anointed, American backed 'acting president'.

The ability to act without having to secure the permission of others is the hallmark of both dictators and authoritarians; however their motivations differ. Dictators are usually after wealth, while revolutionaries, from Lenin and Mao to Castro and Chavez, broke with their class in order to impose policies that benefit the majority of their people.

In defense of authoritarians, if they knew about it, most Americans would be glad that Vladimir Putin didn't need permission from the Duma to rescue killer whales being held in appalling conditions by unscrupulous merchants. The same is true of his determination to avoid nuclear war, which is at the heart of the foreign policy that even a mafioso would support.

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