

When the Trump Coup-Makers Cometh

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So what did you think a U.S.-styled “soft coup” would look like? What we’re seeing regarding the intended removal of President Trump is not that much different from what has happened in dozens of other countries, whether Iran in 1953 or Ukraine in 2014 or Brazil in 2016. This one just has a few extra American touches.

Like other coups, there are often vague and unproven accusations leveled against the target and his or her entourage. Even though hard evidence is usually lacking, “process crimes,” such as making misstatements to prosecutors or obstructing justice, are developed as a substitute under the popular saying: “the cover-up is worse than the crime.” Whatever the case, a complicit media then trumpets alleged wrongdoing into grave and impeachable offenses.

And, if you had any doubts about what is looming, you should read Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne Jr.’s [op-ed](#), entitled in print editions “A quick end would be better,” which states:

“There is really only one issue in American politics at this moment: Will we accelerate our way to the end of the [Trump story](#), or will our government remain mired in scandal, misdirection and paralysis for many more months — or even years? ...



President Donald Trump delivering his inaugural address on Jan. 20, 2017. (Screen shot from [Whitehouse.gov](#))

“Nothing could be worse than slow-walking the Trump inquiries. The evidence is already overwhelming that he is temperamentally and intellectually incapable of doing the job he holds. He is indifferent to acquiring the knowledge the presidency demands and apparently of the belief that he can improvise hour to hour. He will violate norms whenever it suits him and cross ethical lines whenever he feels like it.”

The History of Coups

As this American coup against Trump progresses, one commonality of coups around the world - whether "hard coups" of military tanks or "soft coups" of "constitutional" removals - is that the coup's target is not some perfect human being. He or she has likely made political mistakes or cut some corners or had associates who lined their pockets.

But the difference between those misdeeds being treated as politics as usual or becoming the stuff of "scandal" has more to do with the interests of powerful interests - a domestic "deep state" or an outside "superpower" - than any evenhanded pursuit of justice.

To say that Trump is an imperfect messenger for whatever populist message he thinks he's carrying stretches beyond the breaking point any normal definition of the word "imperfect." Indeed, Trump may be the perfectly imperfect messenger.



Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in a photo believed taken in 1951. His nationalist government was overthrown in 1953 in a coup organized by the United States and Great Britain.

Yet, what's really at stake in any coup is power and the direction that a country will take. In the case of Donald Trump, there appear to be several factors at play: he is regarded by many establishment figures as too incompetent and uncouth to serve as America's President; he also defies the neoconservative orthodoxy over U.S. foreign policy; and perhaps most significantly, he doesn't believe in the New Cold War, which will assure the Military-Industrial Complex years of expensive new weapons systems by making Russia the new/old "enemy."

There is, of course, some truth to all these concerns. Trump is an egotistical buffoon who doesn't seem to know what he doesn't know. Often his brain doesn't connect to his tongue - or his Twitter fingers. He is more a Kardashian "reality star," saying stuff to get attention and to attract eyeballs, than a sober leader who holds his cards close and chooses his words carefully.

Though many Americans voted for him because they viewed him as a no-nonsense businessman, he was actually someone who ran what amounted to a family business without the kind of accountability that often comes with managing a large public

corporation.

Puffing up his own importance, Trump even has bragged about his impunity. During the 2016 campaign, he was revealed as the kind of jerk who boasts about grabbing women by the “pussy” and getting away with it because of his star status and personal power.

So, yes, Trump is both incompetent and uncouth. But he is hardly the first president to bring unseemly personal baggage or an inadequate skill set into the Oval Office. Bill Clinton was known as an insatiable hound dog preying on vulnerable women, and George W. Bush was shockingly unqualified for the demands of the presidency.

While Barack Obama had the intellectual skills and behaved commendably in his personal conduct, he had little experience in managing a complex organization – and it showed in some of his disastrous personnel decisions, such as [appointing the hawkish Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State and keeping Bush loyalist Robert Gates](#) as Secretary of Defense.

In other words, Trump’s skill limitations were not by themselves disqualifying. With the proper advice and a modicum of self-control, Trump could have performed acceptably as Chief Executive. But he failed to recruit wise advisers and couldn’t discipline either his tongue or his Twitter fingers.

Even staunch Trump supporters whom I’ve spoken with wish he could have parked his large but fragile ego at the White House gate rather than bringing it into the Oval Office.

Foreign Policy Dissent

Still, Trump’s larger vulnerability was his failure to accept the foreign policy parameters prescribed by the neocon-dominated Establishment. He started out insulting powerful neocons by challenging their self-exculpatory narrative of the Iraq War – that it was a great idea sabotaged by poor execution but then salvaged by the “surge” before being betrayed by Obama.

Trump also belittled some of the neocon champions, such as old-lion Sen. John “No Hero” McCain and rising star Sen. Marco “Little Marco” Rubio. It would have been a neocon dream to have the 2016 campaign a match-up between Marco Rubio and Hillary Clinton, but the former fell to Trump in the primaries and the latter lost to Trump in the general election.

But Trump’s greatest sin was his refusal to buy into Official Washington’s big-ticket Russia-bashing, the goal of making Moscow an implacable enemy that then required massive new spending on both propaganda (supposedly to combat Russian “propaganda”) and military projects (including NATO expansion up to Russia’s borders and new weapons systems to deter Russian “aggression”).



Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on May 1, 2011, watching developments in the Special Forces raid that killed Osama bin Laden. Neither played a particularly prominent role in the operation. (White House photo by Pete Souza)

Despite his simple-mindedness (or perhaps because of it), Trump couldn't understand why the United States had to demonize Russia when he saw many areas of possible cooperation (such as the fight against terrorism).

Trump and a few of his advisers were so out-of-step on the "Russia thing" that Official Washington developed a new groupthink that the only possible explanation was that Trump and his team must be somehow on the Kremlin's payroll. Any alleged "connection" to Russia - no matter how tenuous or seemingly innocuous - became front-page news.

For instance, retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn's speakers bureau negotiated a relatively modest speaking fee of \$45,386 for him to address the tenth anniversary of RT, the Russian network, in December 2015, with RT even whittling down his fee - and that [speech became a major cause celebre](#).

On Dec. 29, 2016, after the election and as the national security adviser-designate, Flynn [took a phone call](#) from Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak while Flynn was on vacation in the Dominican Republic, and Flynn later offered an incomplete account of the conversation, which the National Security Agency knew because it had intercepted the phone call.

Instead of people shrugging their shoulders and giving Flynn the benefit of the doubt, Obama's holdovers in the Justice Department literally [made a federal case out of it](#), invoking the archaic and virtually-never-used 1799 Logan Act (which bars private citizens from negotiating with foreigners) and then advancing the absurd argument that somehow the discrepancies in Flynn's recollection made him vulnerable to Russian blackmail to get Trump to fire Flynn.

Then, Trump's alleged suggestion to then-FBI Director James Comey that Flynn was a good guy who had served his country and had suffered enough - and that it might be best to "let it go" - has now become the latest argument for impeaching Trump.

In Deep Water

Whether he knows it or not, Trump is now in very deep water and has no idea how to dog-paddle back to the shore. His aides seem to think that a nine-day foreign trip will do him good, but it is more likely to make him grovel before Saudi King Salman and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, knowing that any offense that those leaders might take would simply expedite Trump's political doom.

Trump is surely in no position to tell the Saudis to cut out their covert funding for Al Qaeda and other Sunni terrorist groups - or to insist that they stop bombing Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East. Nor could Trump dare challenge Netanyahu on the Israeli abuse of the Palestinians, the Prime Minister's obstruction of the peace process, and his blatant efforts to manipulate U.S. politics in favor of bloody neocon interventions across the region. Trump will be the desperate supplicant hoping for a reassuring pat on the head.

There is one - and perhaps only one - winning move that Trump has left. He could authorize CIA Director Mike Pompeo to prepare for release U.S. intelligence information regarding turning-point moments in recent years, such as the truth about [the 2013 sarin incident](#) in Syria and the 2014 Malaysia Airlines shoot-down in eastern Ukraine. [See [here](#) and [here](#).]



President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at joint press conference on Feb. 15. 2017. (Screen shot from Whitehouse.gov)

If - as I'm told - the Obama administration systematically misrepresented the intelligence on those catastrophes to register propaganda gains (against the Syrian government in 2013 and Russia in 2014), the U.S. government's internal information could shift those key narratives in more peaceful directions.

But whatever the truth is, Trump could shift his own image from a compulsive liar who disdains facts into a champion for transparency and honesty in government. He could turn the tables on The New York Times (which has set itself up as the great hero for Truth) and The Washington Post (which has fashioned a new melodramatic slogan, "Democracy Dies in Darkness"). He could point out their hypocritical lack of aggressiveness in challenging the Obama administration's excessive secrecy.

Trump would also give his dispirited supporters something to rally around. Many blue-collar voters backed Trump because they thought he was at least addressing their economic fears of lost work and lost status, while Hillary Clinton – in their view – treated them with disregard and disdain, even calling many of them “deplorables.”

But Trump’s promises of recovered jobs were largely hollow. Whatever improvement Americans might be feeling in their pocketbooks, it is more the result of Obama’s careful economic management and the normal recovery from Bush’s Wall Street crash and the Great Recession than anything Trump can or will do.

So, revealing hidden truths – where the American people may have been misled – would not only be the right thing to do for democracy, it also could be the smart thing to do. When the Establishment coup-makers come for Trump – as they now almost certainly will – he can at least say that he tried to do something to return the U.S. government to the American people.

That might not save his presidency but it would at least elevate his purpose and possibly create some positive legacy to attach to the Trump name. As the situation stands now, Trump appears headed for a humiliating exit that won’t just strip him of the presidency but would strip away any luster for the Trump brand.

In other words, his impulsive foray into politics might not just make him one of the most reviled U.S. presidents in history but take down the Trump businesses, too.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, America’s Stolen Narrative, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

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