

Articles and Dialogues

Trump and Putin

January 16

Hello

I wanted to know how serious Trump is on his possible alliance with Russia. And whether it is possible?

What sectors of US capital would be in favor of this? What sectors of the State? What ideological sectors of the ruling class? Are there any sections of the international ruling class that wants this?

Has Trump's secretary of defense, James Mattis, said anything about this? What about the secretary of state?

What about what layers from below? Are there sections of American society that would support Trump on Russia? If so who?

Shemon

January 16

Hi Shemon,

Just read this from VOX.

Mattis sees Putin very differently than the new president does

Mattis is also a Russia hawk of sorts — a position that would potentially leave him at odds with the president-elect. During the campaign, Trump repeatedly [praised](#) Russian strongman Vladimir Putin as a strong leader and took positions — including endorsing Moscow's support for Assad in Syria and refusing to commit to defending NATO allies against a possible future Russian invasion — that are closely in line with the Russian leader's long-

held strategic goals. Putin, Trump [said](#) last December, is “highly respected within his own country and beyond.”

Mattis, echoing the [assessments](#) of most of the Pentagon’s top brass, has a sharply different assessment of Putin, whom he sees as a clear threat to both the US and many of Washington’s closest European allies.

According to an article by the US Naval Institute, Mattis used a [speech](#) to a conservative think tank last May to warn that Russia’s annexation of Crimea and continued meddling in eastern Ukraine was a “severe” and “serious” threat that was being underestimated by the Obama administration.

Putin, Mattis concluded, was trying to “break NATO apart.” Trump has threatened to fire generals who disagree with him, and there’s no area where the Pentagon’s uniformed brass differ from the president-elect more vividly than on Russia. With Mattis running the Defense Department, those generals will now have one of the loudest defenders imaginable. Whether Mattis goes to bat for them, and how Trump responds, remains to be seen.

Roni L.

January 16

My conspiracy theory is that Putin will draw Trump into conflict with China, implying it's Russia and the USA together, and he will actually be allied with China.

Robin M.

January 16

Let me add that during the VP debates, Pence clearly stated a very hawkish view of Russia. I think that only a small sliver of the US ruling class and the political-military establishment agrees with Trump. The rest are as puzzled by Trump's philorussianism as we are.

Wayne P.

January 16

I think that more than a small sliver of the establishment sides with Trump, although certainly a minority. I would not call Exxon et al a sliver.

It looks like Trump wants to pursue a hard line on. China, and ally with Putin vs China (and on trade, vs China and Germany). If that's really his line -- and who knows if he even knows if it is -- then much of capital will be alarmed at the prospect of a beggar thy neighbor trade war between the world's largest economies that will disrupt production and distribution chains.

In any event, I think that Putin will position himself to play both ends against the middle in the U.S. -China dispute.

By the way, Israel just bombed Damascus, pitting Trump ally Netanyahu against Putin ally Assad. There are many more such scenarios waiting to occur around Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, etc. It's easy to posture about alliances. Let's see what happens down on the ground.

Jack G.

January 16

Trump's views may represent only a minority of the U.S. ruling class, but I think Trump and a lot of his close advisors look at the world as a struggle to uphold the hegemony of Western (white, Christian) capitalism against an increasingly powerful Eastern (yellow, brown, black, Islamic, &c.) one. This is consistent with his own history of racism and his immigration proposals (and what 'normal' person would keep a copy of *Mein Kampf* on his nightstand?).

Peace,

Bill B.

January 17

I think that "puzzling" is way too nice of a term for Trump's Russoromance. The man is an idiot that has made pacts and dealings with anyone or country that furthers his ambitions to be the biggest blowhard to ever grace the American political scene. I doubt that he ever thought any of this out but now, in a more transparent forum, has to come up with something semi-coherent re: his Russia approach. I doubt seriously, even with the mighty Pence at his side (also a pathetic figure but with a bit more political polish) he will make any sense at all re: his own philosophy and material dealings both personally and as a representative (Hah!) of the American populace.

Brian O'K.

Democratic Socialists of America

Hello all,

In reading DSA today I wonder what you all think of the last paragraph of this piece? Is it not at least heading in the right direction?

Brian O'K.

<http://www.dsausa.org/election2016>

Hi Brian,

While I see what your getting about the last paragraph, I disagree with their overall strategy given this quote:

"Given the structural biases of the federal and state electoral system in favor of two major parties, much of this activity will come through insurgent campaigns in Democratic primaries".

Electoral politics will get us nowhere and will direct the movement we want to build into thinking that "good or better leaders are the solution". Does it make a difference who gets elected to the masses or oppressed and working people? Sometimes. Are there less attacks when democrats are in office? Sometimes. Are there

some good things that come out of the congress? Sometimes. But by and large, whether the democrats or republicans are in power, the capitalist class progresses and the working and oppressed classes decline. History has shown us that.

So while there maybe some good that comes out of elections, 90% of the time its mostly good for the rulers and the powerful. Obama may have done some small things to combat climate change but still gave oil leases to Shell, Exxon etc.. Obama gave some Hispanic young people the right to stay in the country but deported more Latinos than Bush!

Personally, I was glad that Obama was elected because he was an African American and could be an inspiration to younger African Americans. However, how did all that work out for Black folks? For working people in general?

Lastly, I wonder if Hillary got elected, would some of the same Goldman Sachs folks that Trump had hired be on her team?

While I know you agree with a lot of what I'm saying, I don't think the DSA would.

Take good care,
Roni L.

Trump's base of support?

January 27

Everybody,

An article on today's Slate.com website is worth looking at. (*The More Trump Hates, the More America Rejects His Hatred*, by William Saletan.) It makes it clear, I think, that Trump's hard core base is a lot smaller than his vote count, which itself was only 27% of the potential electorate. He thinks he has a mandate, and he doesn't. There is another interesting article, on politico.com (*Poll: Voters Favor Roe, Oppose Cutting Planned Parenthood Funds.*)

Ron T.

January 29

Interesting article, as is the one on Slate. Thanks. On the other hand, is anyone familiar with this from the organized misogynists?

<http://protestpp.com/locations/>

Defund PP Rally Locations – ProtestPP

Peace,

Bill B.

Trump's Muslim Ban & Protests

January 28

All,

The following was issued by the Taxi Workers Alliance (the radio reported that cabs were planning on boycotting JFK after 6pm yesterday and the Port Authority, which runs the airport, issued a public statement that people should seek alternate means of transportation to and from JFK):

NY Taxi Workers Alliance

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/blackrose.rosanegra/permalink/952646148170411/> 11 hrs

NYTWA STATEMENT ON MUSLIM BAN:

Professional drivers are over 20 times more likely to be murdered on the job than other workers. By sanctioning bigotry with his unconstitutional and inhumane executive order banning Muslim refugees from seven countries, the president is putting professional drivers in more danger than they have been in any time since 9/11 when hate crimes against immigrants skyrocketed.

Our 19,000-member-strong union stands firmly opposed to Donald Trump's Muslim ban. As an organization whose membership is largely Muslim, a workforce that's almost universally immigrant, and a working-class movement that is rooted in the defense of the oppressed, we say no to this inhumane and unconstitutional ban.

We know all too well that when government programs sanction outright Islamophobia, and the rhetoric of hate is spewed from the bully pulpit, hate crimes increase and drivers suffer gravely. Our Sikh and other non-Muslim brown and black members also suffer from anti-Muslim violence.

Today, drivers are joining the protest at JFK Airport in support of all those who are currently being detained at the airport because of Trump's unconstitutional executive order. Drivers stand in solidarity with refugees coming to America in search of peace and safety and with those who are simply trying to return to their homes here in America after traveling abroad. We stand in solidarity with all of our peace-loving neighbors against this inhumane, cruel, and unconstitutional act of pure bigotry.

Bill B.



January 28
Everybody,

That's a great statement from the New York Taxi Workers organization, which I believe the vast majority of the US population would support. We are watching the emergence of an amazing mass movement.

Ron T.

January 29

The court order and the mobilization's success is going to give a boost in the arm to the anti-Trump protests. People on this list know how victories can help movements grow...

The fast mobilization last night was impressive. Not only at the airport in NYC, but also at the court in Manhattan. There are protests today as well across the country.

I welcome and fully support the Taxi Cab worker's one-hour strike. I would consider most of those S Asian drivers as racists towards African Americans. I have personally witnessed it and discussed it often with random Black people. The support Uber and Juno etc get by Black people is consciously driven by this reality. So I see the strike as a semi-obvious reaction from a largely Muslim organization. It is good considering the lack of militancy of Muslims in the USA, however much work remains. We will see what cab drivers do when the next Black lives matter protest erupts.

Shemon

January 29

Good points, Shemon.

Chris H.

January 30

<https://cominsitu.wordpress.com/2017/01/30/terminal-showdown/>

Shemon

National Security Council Reorganization

January 28

I agree that the NY Taxi Workers made a great statement.

And to Rod's earlier email: Here's a link to a NY Times story that includes the National Security Council reorganization, although it isn't reflected in the article's headline:

Trump Toughens Some Facets of Lobbying Ban and Weakens Others:
<https://nyti.ms/2jJbiHP>

Jack G.

January 29

Everyone,

The Palmer Report article that Jack originally sent the link to contains its own link to the Washington Post, which has the following (fuller and more accurate) description of the NSC changes.

In a separate presidential memo, Trump reorganized the National Security Council to, along with other changes, give Bannon a regular seat on the principals committee — the meetings of the most senior national security officials, including the secretaries of defense and state.

That memo also states that the director of national intelligence and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will sit on the principals committee only when the issues to be discussed pertain to their “responsibilities and expertise.” In the previous two administrations, both were included as regular attendees.

This is the link to the full article:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-holds-calls-with-putin-leaders-from-europe-and-asia/2017/01/28/42728948-e574-11e6-a547-5fb9411d332c_story.html?hpid=hp_no-name_no-name:page/breaking-news-bar&tid=a_breakingnews&utm_term=.dceb05d4c850

We're not at the constitutional crisis stage yet (although to be this close after one week is pretty astonishing) but we are, thank heaven, seeing a major ratcheting up of resistance. Yes, the taxi drivers' statement is wonderful; video of the JFK demonstration is very impressive--it was LARGE, and coalesced informally over social media.

Trump has made a profoundly stupid move that presents his chosen immigration policy in the worst possible light. On the negative side, the levels of Islamophobia in the country are quite astounding. (In an exchange of posts on a quite unrelated topic--the old nonsense about whether Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare--a US writer responded to some anti-Trump comments from England by pointing out that Muhammad is the second most common baby name in England.) So Trump has a reservoir of support. On the positive side the mass response to Trump's provocation, even within a few short hours, has been deep going and broad.

Chris H.

Whither the Trump Administration? –A Dialogue

January 28,

So, will Trump agree to defer the implementation of his executive order re immigrants, as ordered by the judge, or will he insist on implementing it? And if he does insist on its implementation, who will the people charged with implementation (ICE, TSA?) obey?

We are (indeed) living in interesting times. It is finally (after so many decades of imperialist stability) really good to be alive. Amazing! We are seeing an anarchist-style movement (no one is "in charge") that is fighting under the banner of a de facto (all good things) liberalism. We'll see where it goes.

Ron T.

January 28

We'll see on Trump. Three options as I see it: 1) The coward/blowhard that didn't raise the wall when he went to Mexico; 2) The fool who will overstep boundaries to push through his orders; 3) The sly fox who will find an alternative winning hand. All seem plausible. I am hoping for, and betting on #2.

Rod M.

January 28

I am with you on hoping for #2, except that the key issue, I currently think, is, if Trump does try to overstep boundaries, what the elite, or sections thereof, will do to try to stop him. I believe that at least some Republicans (it might be only a handful at first) will, at various rates of speed, take steps to oppose Trump.

Ron T.

January 28

I agree. I think, however, those Republicans expected (cowardly hoped for) a longer ride.

Rod M.

January 28

Rod,

We'll have to see how the situation develops. The Republicans have a lot invested in their support for Trump, so it may take a while to play out. But they clearly have disaster on their hands, and it'll be interesting to see how they deal with it.

Ron T.

January 29

Well, they seem to be tripping over themselves in confusion. I don't know whether Priebus was deliberately dissembling On *Meet the Press*, or whether he is too confused by Trump's proclamations to be able to express anything clearly.

I think this round goes to you--Trump is plain stupid! Did he discuss the Executive Order with anyone but Bannon??? (And, if he discussed it with Kellyanne Conway, she is more stupid than I thought.)

Rod M.

January 29

The real problem with Trump (aside from his precarious mental state, his ignorance, his total lack of experience, and his inability to admit that he doesn't know what he's doing) is that he's not a politician. This in two ways. He has completely misjudged the political situation: he thinks he has a mandate when, in reality, his hard-core base is very small. He also doesn't understand the cardinal rule (actually, a triad of rules) of political tactics: (1) shore up your base; (2) win over the middle; (3) isolate your opponents. He has only done #1, but instead of winning over the middle, he has completely alienated it. As a result, we are seeing a historic fight over the identity of the country, i.e., the answer to the question (in the words of the old Paul Robeson/Popular Front song), "What Is America to me?" The vast majority of the people (including many who voted for him) do not share his (narrow-minded, mean-spirited, selfish, boorish, bullying, let alone racist, sexist, xenophobic) vision of the country. Instead of moving past his campaign rhetoric, he's doubling down on it. And he's so deluded that he doesn't see what's happening. I realize that I'm going against the perceptions of many people in our milieu, e.g., that Trump is wily, deft, "crazy like a fox," people who keep waiting for Trump to perform some magic trick (like the one that got him elected) that will reveal how brilliant he is. But he's not. He's a clod, a clown, a buffoon, who's gotten by in life by bullying, threatening, and bluffing. But that's not how politics work; he's no swimming with real sharks, and they're going to tear him to pieces. He's made one stupid, tactless move after another. His administration has only been in office for a week, and it's already in crisis. If the Republicans in congress and elsewhere don't start putting some distance between themselves and him, he's going to take them down with him. Actually, some serious fissures are becoming apparent.

Ron T.

January 29

I agree with you analysis of Trump. I have kept looking (being wary, one might say) for the possibility that he has some 'moxie.' It seems increasingly apparent that he is a political boob, on top of

everything else. It makes one wonder about what must really be going on in the heads and discussions of those around him.

I think the speed of crisis has been stunning, with a seemingly major defeat in the first week (and little success with Mexico, walls and import taxes). More than a dozen Republicans have come out against the Muslim ban, though to varying degrees and elements. And, of course, the size and scope of the protests has clearly demonstrated that Jan. 20 was just an initial display of muscle, not a one-and-out.

The major question that remains for me is whether Trump will overreach, i.e., take an outright authoritarian step in some manner. Being stupid, politically and otherwise, makes this as or more likely than being smart, though that doesn't mean it will happen. That said, I believe it will only lead him to getting creamed more quickly; as we agree, he does not head any type of fascist movement, nor is there any objective basis that would lead the elites to toss USA democracy (such as it is) out the window.

Rod M.

January 29

I think Trump may try to overreach, but he doesn't have the forces. I believe he just kicked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs off the National Security Council and put Bannon on. That's not the way to win over the military, especially after he's alienated the intelligence apparatus. Not a good way to lay the groundwork for a coup: no Brown Shirts, no Stahlhelm, no senior officers, etc., no support in the broader elite, while his base in the populace is older, isolated in rural communities and small towns, and on the defensive. (Where are his supporters at the airports?) I'm just waiting to see how long it takes for the Republicans to realize that the guy is hopeless, dangerous to the country, and dangerous to them.

Ron T.

January 29

Ron (and Jack, who is now cc'd on this),

1) I agree with what you say about a coup. When I speak of an authoritarian step, I am by no means speaking of a coup. There is much distance between 'democratic norms' and a coup (though Trump may be too stupid to recognize that one thing *can* lead to another.) So, my point remains.

2) I agree also about the Republicans. They can be characterized as originally believing, 'we can use this little corporal.' They are finding out in a hurry where that is leading. It is as almost as if we already have to start speculating on what the endgame will be.

3) I just heard a reporter who claimed to have spoken with 'someone high in the administration.' That person reportedly said that the decision to not let the relevant agencies review the Executive Order was deliberate. The interviewer was so stupid that he kept asking, 'let me get this right, the decision was deliberate,' and never got around to asking 'why?'"

I think why is a big question. To slip by? To create confusion and chaos? To divert? Something else?

Rod M.

January 29

I still see more ineptitude than deviousness in what's happened with the executive order, including after-the-fact explanations, rationalizations, etc.

Ron T.

January 29

I agree that ineptitude is ruling the roost. I don't think that rules out other things, even if they are inept missteps.

We may only have to wait weeks, days, hours to know...

Rod M.

January 29

I just have a couple of things to add:

First, it appears that Steve Bannon is leading the way, pushing to put as push through as he can as fast as he can. Bannon reportedly wrote the executive order on not admitting anyone from the seven named countries. A few days ago he told the NYT that the press is the enemy and "needs to shut up". I think that Bannon / Trump will keep pushing until they meet effective resistance. Millions protesting won't faze them -- they have each said that they can do what they want because "We won".

Second, thus far there hasn't been organized opposition from the bourgeois politicians. That's starting to change. The governor of Washington State gave a blistering anti Trump speech today at SeaTac airport. At least half a dozen Republican senators have issued statements opposing the executive order. There will be more battles in the courts. The state intelligence and military leaders are clearly worried. Several heads of tech giants have spoken out. Prominent sports figures are speaking out. .

The longer Trump bulls ahead, the more demonstrators will hit the streets, worrying the politicians still more. The Republicans would like to use Trump to push through their tax cuts, social service cuts, pork barrel handouts, etc. I don't think that they will stand back forever.

Jack G.

January 30

Thanks for these useful perspectives and information.

I agree with your take.

Specifically, I agree that the preponderant tide is one that will check Trump because of a combination of: 1) Democrats; 2) Bureaucrats; 3) Lawyers; 4) Increasingly determined protests; 5) Increasingly, over time, Republicans; and, 6) The lack of any real mandate for Trump's policies.

That said, if Bannon and Trump are holed up in a room running the show essentially by themselves, the possibilities for the unexpected are enormous.

Rod M.

January 30

In a possible sign of authoritarian measures, the Customs and Border Patrol agents at major airports refused to acknowledge the stays ordered by the federal judges against the Trump travel ban when congress people showed up at the airports with writs in hand. It's not clear whether these refusals were ordered from the top or were the result of confusion/honest mistakes, or whether this kind of behavior is meant to be temporary or permanent. I read somewhere that this is grounds for impeachment, although the Republicans in the House are nowhere ready to start such proceedings, especially over something as "small" as this.

Ron T.

January 30

I read a brief reference to this (at DFW); it did not make clear at whose direction this took place. I think it is possible, given the mass confusion, that it was local, not top down, even if 'mean-spirited' and perhaps not purely the result of honest confusion.

Either way, I think you rightly attach significance to even a small incident such as this, since such incidents can be part of/contribute to a 'slow build.' We will see.

Right now (press conference going on), Spicer is running line that we were just continuing Obama measures, along with 'what's the big deal over a little inconvenience.' We'll see how it flies, but of course on its own terms it backs off "I'm the big, bad, new leader."

Rod M.

January 30

Some of this failure is undoubtedly confusion, but a lot of it must be coming from the top. At a minimum, there could have been a clear directive to CBP to carry out the court orders.

At least one prominent Democrat --I think Chris Murphy, the Senator from Connecticut -- has already called the failure of border patrol to carry out the court orders a constitutional crisis. I think

that Bannon / Trump will push onwards unless they meet with substantial resistance from Republicans (not just McCain, Graham, Flake and a few others). Absent that, they will pull back a bit in one area (they've now stated that green card holders shouldn't be detained) but push more repressive measures in another. They say that the election is their mandate.

Jack G.

January 30

Whatever the specifics in each case, I think you are capturing the flavor and drift.

The NSC reorganization may be the most significant step yet; while it doesn't seem to be unconstitutional, it is nonetheless a break with constitutional 'norms.'

I would put the stance vis a vis the press in second place; again, not illegal/unconstitutional, but a level of threat and bullying that I think already exceeds Nixon/Agnew.

Rod M.

January 30

I agree with Rod. That's the direction. They are shrugging off the opposition: the millions who marched nine days ago; the tens of thousands who occupied airports this weekend; the outcries from the press (e.g., today's lead NYT editorial: 'Trashing America's Ideals and Security').

This isn't business as usual. They've thrown out the rulebook. They are attempting a blitzkrieg, and will continue pushing unless they are confronted by a force that they have to acknowledge. Bannon has called himself a revolutionary and said that his goal is to smash the state (he cites Lenin's 'State and Revolution' as a model).

Who knows how far things will go? As I've said many times, my crystal ball is out of service. But at the risk of being wrong once again, here's how i see things unfolding: They will issue executive orders draconian but vague, enabling them to do what they want

but to veer slightly if necessary (like now saying that green card holders won't be denied entry). They will try to pack the Supreme Court, and meanwhile will stonewall unfavorable lower court rulings as much as they can. They are already daring Congress to stand up to them. Ryan and McConnell have shown no inclination to do so. If there's enough pressure from below, if a significant number of politicians fear that they'll lose the next elections, if the deep state is sufficiently aroused, if corporate execs are sufficiently shaken, then there may be a showdown. And the longer that this goes on, the further they push, the more a movement from below will build and deepen, and the more likely that it will be met with harsh repression.

Jack G.

January 30

I am unwilling to make specific predictions at this point. I do think it is important that at least verbal opposition to the administration's policies is emerging from various sectors of the ruling elite, including those at the very top. For example, the (libertarian conservative) Koch brothers and their network (who are, or recently were, holding a conference of major supporters/donors) have come out against Trump's travel ban and have spoken openly about the dangers of "authoritarianism" from both the left (Sanders/Warren) and the right (without explicitly naming Trump). Also, major Silicon Valley tech firms have indicated their opposition to the travel ban, as have figures at several major banks, including Citi and Goldman Sachs. In Congress, John McCain has emerged as one of the staunchest critics of the administration on both the issue of the travel ban as well as Trump's stated intention to seek a rapprochement with the Russians. And, on the ideological level, Jennifer Rubin, conservative columnist at the Washington Post, has posed the issues in stark terms, pointing to the growing split within the conservative movement and arguing that the future of American democracy is in question. We'll just have to wait and see whether other brave souls within the Republican Party and (hopefully) in Congress have the courage and the principles to come out in opposition to Trump and his minions, who are obviously capable of doing a great deal of damage to US and global capitalism.

Ron T.

January 30

I think we all agree that we are speculating, but I also think we can also agree on certain things. I would list these as:

--Trump administration acting more quickly, boldly and precipitously than we might have imagined

--Mass opposition, as expressed in demonstrations, on Facebook, etc., has met, (or even surpassed) our expectations for where we might be at on January 30. It would seem that this has legs and then some;

--A level of chaos and dissension *within* ruling circles is developing rather quickly. This includes the elements that Ron points to within the ruling elites, both financial and political. This probably goes all the way into the Trump cabinet/advisors/inner circle, at some level (all the more so, if Bannon is emerging as the man behind the throne);

--Some of the actions of the Trump administration border on extra-legal, non-constitutional, though no single, outright 'state of emergency' type step has been taken. Whether such a step or steps will be taken is speculation.

--The center Democrats are coming from behind and are now taking some steps to get out front. They may make significant missteps in doing so.

--It is hard not to see Trump as colossally stupid. This is not a predictor of his future actions--it could mean that, having been burned, he reigns in a bit (consistent with the coward side of his personality); or it could mean (true to the reactive, bullying side of his personality) that he grows more aggressive.

I think Jack is right to point to the possibility, sooner or later, of significant repression as the yet-to-be-seen element that could jack (no pun) things up considerably. This could come in any number of arenas.

Rod M.

January 30

Acting Attorney General Orders Justice Dept. Not to Defend Refugee Ban <https://nyti.ms/2jMGnwG>

Jack G.

January 30

Yes, and State Department officials are circulating a memo of dissent that reportedly has been signed by over 100. Spicer says they should quit their jobs. Looks like the bureaucrats are leading the revolt at the moment. When you called it a majoritarian movement, Ron, I never thought it could be quite this majoritarian!

Rod

January 30

Here's another link of interest: Google employees staged a worldwide walkout today to protest Trump's anti-immigrant policies, and donated \$2 million to nonprofits working with refugees. Google donated a matching \$2 million.

<http://www.theverge.com/google/2017/1/30/14446466/google-immigration-protest-walkout-trump-googlers-unite>

Jack G.

January 30

Many of us repeatedly underestimated Trump. He is a belligerent and crude bully -- and a narcissistic borderline personality to boot. Although that's been well known (in the New York area at least) for 40 years, he nevertheless successfully manipulated, strong-armed, and stampeded the mass media throughout the election campaign, and he cowed his Republican opponents, relying on and taking (short term) direction from hard right agitator and strategist Bannon, son-in-law Jared Kushner, and world class obfuscator Kellyanne Conway. They (Trump, Bannon, Kushner, Conway) are doing the same now that he's in office -- pushing as hard as they can as fast as they can to establish facts on the ground.

As I indicated in my earlier post, they may now hit resistance -- it may even come soon -- but they haven't yet hit the kind of resistance yet that would give them pause. Millions in the streets alone won't stop them -- they say that they have a mandate because "We won" the election. Negative comments from Democrats and from John McCain, Lindsay Graham, and Jeff Flake won't stop them -- not so long as a Congressional majority supports them or sits on its hands. "Tsk, tsk" from Apple and Google won't stop them either. But that doesn't mean that they won't overreach (and they may be overreaching now). If there's enough of a surge from below (which has begun), and if the Silicon Valley entrepreneurs AND the Koch Brothers types AND a significant section of finance capital think that something must be done soon to prevent the bottom from falling out (and Trump's threatened tariffs combined with his draconian immigration policies could convince them of that), AND / OR if the deep state spooks are really spooked if he tries to follow through on his sometimes allusions to scuttling NATO, then I think that a showdown will be likely.

Jack G.

January 30

A former Republican Congressman from FLA, who spoke against Trump and then was defeated by Charlie Christ, just used the 'authoritarian' word.' He was speaking about a statement issued by Rubio, claiming that the State Department was 'ordered' by the Administration, not to speak to Rubio's Congressional staff.

Rod M.

January 30

Everybody,

A good analysis of the current political situation is available in conservative columnist David Brooks' piece in today's NY Times:

"The Republican Fausts"

Ron T.

January 31

Yes a good article. Pretty much the same view Bill Maher expressed in this week's show: all of our fates depend upon the integrity of Republicans-- and Rupert Murdoch, whose network controls the opinions of Trumpists.

Robin M.

January 31

I just read Brooks' column too. Yes, it's a call for Republicans to reject protectionism, bigotry, and to defend bourgeois democratic norms.

I do not agree that "all our fates depend upon the integrity of Republicans--and Rupert Murdoch". Let's be real: Rupert Murdoch? The Congressional Republicans?

Our fates depend first of all on our standing up together with millions of others. Which is starting to happen. That may set off events that convince those politicians and capitalists that have some backbone that they have to take action to prevent their system from collapsing. In fact, it's the mass demonstrations of the past ten days that have had the most effect in encouraging some politicians to start to speak up.

Jack G.

January 31

I take your point.

It may be our millions who turn the tide, who convince both Rupert Murdoch and the Congressional Republicans-- whichever of them have any shred of integrity, to stand up to Trumpism.

But they still hold the levers of power over all of us and persuasion over millions of malinformed people.

If they don't listen, if they are unmoved, then yes, our fates will be literally in our hands.

Robin M.

January 31

Robin and Jack,

I liked the Brooks article because, while I do not agree with his politics, I agree with a basic analysis of what's going on with the Republican Party.

Ron T.

January 30

A former Republican Congressman from FLA, who spoke against Trump and then was defeated by Charlie Christ, just used the 'authoritarian' word.' He was speaking about a statement issued by Rubio, claiming that the State Department was 'ordered' by the Administration, not to speak to Rubio's Congressional staff.

Rod M.

January 31

This is from Mozilla, the group that produces the Firefox browser:

Hello Jack G,

This past weekend the Trump Administration signed an executive order to temporarily suspend travel into the United States for individuals from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Libya. This is troubling for us as a community on many levels.

Mozilla is a global community of people sharing ideas and working together. We believe in opportunity for all, freedom of ideas, and that multiculturalism is crucial to building a true global community. This is why Mozilla has taken a public position against the US immigration ban.

Please read the full [statement from Mozilla CEO Chris Beard](#) below:

US Immigration Ban

Chris Beard January 28, 2017

The immigration ban imposed by Friday's executive order is overly broad and its implementation is highly disruptive to fostering a culture of innovation and economic growth.

By slamming the door on talented immigrants –including those already legally in the United States and those seeking to enter – the ban will create a barrier to innovation, economic development and global impact. Immigrants bring world class skills and expertise to build advanced technology that can improve the lives of people everywhere. The ban will have an unnecessary negative impact to the health and safety of those affected and their families, not to mention rejecting refugees fleeing persecution, terror and war.

The executive order ignores the single truth that we have come to know; talented immigrants have had outsized contributions to the growth and prosperity of the United States and countries around the world. Diversity in all of its forms is crucial to growth, innovation and a healthy, inclusive society.

We recognize the rights of sovereign nations to protect their security, but believe that this overly broad order and its implementation does not create an appropriate and necessary balance. It's a bad precedent, ignores history, and is likely to do more lasting harm than good.

It is a time of great change in the United States and around the world. It's our responsibility to stand up for our colleagues, our community and the values of open source and the open Web.

Thank you so much,
Mark Surman
Executive Director
Mozilla Foundation

January 31

Lots of stuff floating around about coups and martial law in NYC.

Here are three pieces that argue otherwise...

I think the academic Corey Robin's has been providing solid analysis. He emphasizes that this is a weak administration and that much of its stuff is bluster for now. The Executive Orders are largely paper tigers, but great media for his base.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2017/01/30/the-resistance-and-its-double/>

<http://www.anarresproject.org/dont-give-into-coup-fantasies-power-is-more-straightforward/>

<http://coreyrobin.com/2017/01/29/if-trump-is-a-fascist-he-may-be-the-most-backassward-fascist-weve-ever-seen/>

Shemon

January 31

Today, one Democratic senator used the word 'authoritarian,' and another (Blumenthal, I think, former AG of Connecticut) said, "We are careening toward a constitutional crisis." Also, a couple of recent polls gave Trump a favorable edge on immigration bans, though both were taken prior to the current context; arguably, there has been a rapid shift in overall public opinion.

A [Quinnipiac University poll](#) in January found that, by a ratio of 48 to 42 percent, voters supported "suspending immigration from 'terror prone' regions, even if it means turning away refugees from those regions." And a December [Politico/Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health poll](#) found that 50 percent of Americans favored "banning future immigration from regions where there are active terrorist groups."

Rod M.

January 31

Remember Wisconsin in March 2011? Huge turnouts throughout southeast Wisconsin converging on Madison. Strikes, student walkout, occupation of the Capitol. In the end, the labor leaders and the left Democrats convinced the masses to abandon the streets in favor of circulating recall petitions, all of which failed. And Scott Walker was re-elected. There are obvious differences with the current situation, but there are also parallels.

Jack G.

January 31

Good points.

On balance, I do think the differences are stronger than the parallels. I thought the Madison effort (which, for obvious reasons, I paid close attention to) was 'heroic,' at some level, yet defensive. The powers-that-be were easily or relatively easily able to stay united--and they had the power. Today's actions have an offensive, or near-offensive quality, based on two factors 1) Size, scope, depth of fightback; 2) Fracturing of elites

That said, you are right to point out that the rulers have the power; they can wait out protest, repress it, split it, or use some combination of all these approaches. And, as I mentioned in an earlier email today, we should avoid being too heady about who is on the anti-Trump side and who is not.

Rod M.

Apologies to Pastor Niemoller

January 30

First they came for the Muslims. I did not speak out because I was afraid of being called a terrorist.

Then they came for the Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, and Transgender people. I did not speak out because I did not want anyone to doubt I was a real he-man.

Then they came for the Latinos and for other immigrants. I did not speak out because my family hadn't been immigrants for two generations now.

Then they came for the women and their rights. I did not speak out because I wasn't a woman.

They they came for African-Americans and other People of Color. I did not speak out because I did not want to lose my white privileges.

Then they came for the union organizers, for the feminists, for the anarchists, communists, socialists, and pacifists. I did not speak out because I did not want to be labeled a "red" or called a "troublemaker."

Then they came for me. There was no one left to speak out for me.

So I learned. When they come for anyone, they come for everyone.

Whoever they come for, I will speak out. An injury to one is an injury to all.

Wayne P.

January 30

Or as Tom Joad said In Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*:

"Mom, wherever there's a cop beatin' a guy
For every hungry newborn baby's cry.
If there's a fight against the blood
Or hatred in the air.
Look for me Mom, I'll be there.
If there's someone fightin' for a place to stand
Needs a steady job or a helpin' hand.
If there's somebody strugglin' to be free
Look in their eyes Mom, you'll see me."

Brian O'K

January 30

I think the new version is:

First they came for the Muslims and we said not today
Motherfucker.

Shemon

January 30

Totally. See attached



Mike S.