

## The Deep State vs. President Trump

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Corporate media like CNN, MSNBC, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and elements within the intelligence community are singing from the same hymnal in denouncing and demonizing President Trump and are not at all subtle in suggesting that only impeachment can "save democracy." Democratic Party leaders hope to parley this into retaking the White House.

To be sure, Trump is a neo-fascist demagogue and his actions should be resisted at every step. However, this is not what's motivating most of these critics. To understand why that's the case, I highly recommend Mike Lofgren's book, *THE DEEP STATE: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government* (NY: Penguin, 2016). Lofgren began his Capital Hill career as a traditional Republican, serving three decades as a high level staff analyst for the House and Senate Budget Committees. He wrote the book after become totally disillusioned. His analysis and revelations are those of a consummate insider and, were I teaching an introductory course in American Politics, this book would be my primary text.

What is the Deep State? It's a hybrid network of structures within which actual power resides. It includes the military-industrial complex, Wall Street, hordes of private contractors whose sole client is the government, national security agencies, select (not all) members of the State, Defense, CIA, Homeland Security, a few key members of the Congressional Defense and Intelligence Committees, and so on.

Except for a handful of Congresspersons, Deep State members have not been elected and are accountable to no one. They profoundly influence virtually every domestic and foreign matter of consequence. D.J. Hopkins, another close student of this phenomenon, notes that "the system served by the Deep State is not the United States of America, i.e., the country most Americans believe they live in; the system it serves is globalized Capitalism." And they do so regardless of which party is nominally in control. Lofgren takes pains to point out that the Deep State is not a coven of diabolical conspirators. It has evolved over several decades to become the antithesis of democracy.

Why does the Deep State fear and despise Trump? First, his chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon, is a fervent disciple of capitalist economic nationalism. Further, his America is the "shining city on a hill," but where the dwellers are Christian white people. Deep State types are convinced Trump's skewed priorities will undermine the dominant role played by the U.S. in the global capitalist system from which they derive their power, wealth, and ultra-lavish lifestyles. We are witnessing a no-holds-barred clash between two warring camps.

Second, both the Pentagon and their arms-dealer friends are salivating over a new Cold War with Russia and will do anything to sabotage enhancing peaceful understanding between Washington and Moscow. This explains their hysterical Kremlin-baiting of Trump. Likewise, Trump sent chills through the Deep State when he voiced doubts about NATO as an archaic relic of the past, expensive and dangerously misused outside of Europe.

Third, Trump's erratic behavior, penchant for confrontation and unwillingness to be a team player

render him an unreliable caretaker of Deep State interests. They much preferred Hillary Clinton or even Jeb Bush. Trump was the "Frankenstein Populist" (Paul Street's term) who, shockingly, won the election. Now he threatens to unwittingly expose their "marionette theater" of contrived democracy. My sense is that if Trump does not satisfy the Deep State doubts about his trustworthiness, his days in office are numbered.

On the one hand, Trump's dramatic increase in defense spending may temporarily assuage the military contractors within the Deep State. On the other hand, this and other Trump policies will, ironically, severely exacerbate economic problems for many working class folks who voted for him last November. Their bitter awakening might well cause alienation and social disruption that no one in the upper circles of power wants to contemplate.

Finally, years ago, the bracing social critic and stand-up comedian George Carlin presciently described what's come to pass as we face the equally dangerous Deep State and Donald Trump. Carlin said, "It's a big club and you and I ain't in it. What do they want? More for themselves and less for everybody else. And they don't give a f--- about about you." Carlin believed that an aroused and politically savvy citizenry could ultimately prevail.

Carlin was right, but this requires a popular movement that offers answers to the failed policies of the Democrats and Republicans. It's not impossible, but we should harbor no illusions about what we're up against.

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