

Selectivity in Trashing Trump

Exclusive: Around the United States, massive demonstrations have protested the inauguration of Donald Trump, but there is a danger that the anti-Trump forces could block the positive elements of his message, writes Robert Parry

By Robert Parry

To say that Donald Trump is an imperfect messenger for some reasonable messages doesn't do justice to the word "imperfect." But he is right to note that Official Washington has gone far off-track in recent decades and that the Establishment needs shaking up.

For instance, in his Inaugural Address, President Trump made clear that he would break with the orthodoxy of neoconservatism and liberal interventionism that has led to endless wars in the Middle East and a dangerous New Cold War with Russia.

Trump declared: "We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world, but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first. We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example. We will shine for everyone to follow."

That sentiment reflects a traditional U.S. approach to the world, followed by America's first presidents who warned against "entangling alliances" and articulated best by President John Quincy Adams who said in 1821 that while America will speak on behalf of liberty, "she has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when conflict has been for principles to which she clings, as to the last vital drop that visits the heart.

"Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy."

Over the past several decades – even after the end of the Cold War – American presidents have violated this founding precept as they repeatedly went abroad "in search of monsters to destroy."

These missions – designed and advocated by Washington's dominant neocons and their liberal-hawk sidekicks – have not only wasted trillions of dollars and cost the lives of thousands of U.S. soldiers but the projects have failed to improve national security, have led to massive bloodshed in the targeted countries and have undermined global stability.

No Accountability

Yet, it has been a sign of Official Washington's disconnect from reality that the architects of these failed endeavors have escaped accountability and indeed have solidified their control over the foreign policy establishment and the mainstream news media.

Despite the bloody fiascos in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine and other unfortunate countries where the neocons and liberal hawks have prescribed "regime change," these esteemed know-it-alls have systematically pushed aside all rivals, including old-school "realists" and peace proponents.

The confirmation gauntlets that have confronted Trump's nominees for State, Defense and other national security posts have revealed a near-unanimous bipartisanship in favor of a continuation of neocon/liberal-hawk orthodoxy, demanding pugnacious approaches toward Iran, Russia, Syria and China.

So, while there is a great deal to worry about from President Trump and his administration – particularly an apparent hostility toward climate-change science, disdain for minority rights and the embrace of right-wing law-and-order nostrums – there could be a new opening for conflict resolution and a return to traditional diplomacy. Already, there has been a housecleaning at the State Department, where the biographies of some of the most prominent neocons, such as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, have disappeared.

Trump's Secretary of State-designate Rex Tillerson is regarded as a pragmatic businessman who has little patience for the destructive "regime change" strategies of the neocons and liberal hawks. However, because of that and Tillerson's desire for better relations with Russia, many Democrats and some Republicans appear eager to block his confirmation and force Trump to pick someone more acceptable to the neocon/liberal-hawk foreign policy establishment.

Reasons to Resist

Progressives and Democrats have every right and reason to express revulsion at Trump's crude remarks about women, Mexicans and others – and to resist Trump if he pursues the failed environmental, economic and domestic policies of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. But there seems to be an attitude of rejecting everything associated with Trump.

On Friday when I was moving among protesters on the outskirts of Trump's inauguration, I noticed a large number of signs denouncing Trump's interest in détente with Russia. There were repeated references to Russian President Vladimir Putin and to the CIA's unproven claims that Putin approved the release

of Democratic emails showing the party hierarchy's hostility to Sen. Bernie Sanders and revealing the contents of Hillary Clinton's paid speeches to Wall Street and some pay-to-play features of the Clinton Foundation.

This CIA-initiated narrative that Putin somehow rigged the election for Trump has become an accepted wisdom not only in Official Washington but among much of the Democratic Party and within the progressive movement. Little interest is shown toward the lack of evidence provided by the U.S. intelligence community and the dubious reasoning involved, since it would have been a huge gamble for Putin to have interfered in the U.S. election and then faced the likely outcome of an angry President Hillary Clinton seeking revenge once she took office.

There's also a logical inconsistency in portraying Trump as a Manchurian candidate, since the idea of putting such a secret agent in the White House would involve the person talking tough *against* Russia during the campaign – to garner political support – rather than declaring publicly a desire for better relations with Russia, a position that was widely viewed as harmful to Trump's chances.

Trump never hid his interest in avoiding a costly New Cold War with Russia and took a rhetorical beating for it, both during the Republican primaries and during the general election. That would not have been the approach of a true Manchurian candidate.

A Current Danger

But the current danger for Democrats and progressives is that – by bashing everything that Trump says and does – they will further alienate the white working-class voters who became his base and will push away anti-war activists.

There is a risk that the Left will trade places with the Right on the question of war and peace, with Democrats and progressives associating themselves with Hillary Clinton's support for "endless war" in the Middle East, the political machinations of the CIA, and a New Cold War with Russia, essentially moving into an alliance with the Military (and Intelligence) Industrial Complex.

Many populists already view the national Democrats as elitists disdainful of the working class, promoters of harmful "free trade" deals, and internationalists represented by the billionaires at the glitzy annual confab in Davos, Switzerland.

If – in a rush to demonize and impeach President Trump – Democrats and progressives solidify support for wars of choice in the Middle East, a New Cold War with Russia and a Davos-style elitism, they could further alienate many people who might otherwise be their allies.

In other words, selectivity in opposing and criticizing Trump – where he rightly deserves it – rather than opportunism in rejecting everything that Trump says might make more sense. A movement built entirely on destroying Trump could drop Democrats and progressives into some politically destructive traps.

[For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Neocons: the Anti-Realists](#)" and "[Yes, Hillary Clinton Is a Neocon.](#)"]

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](#)).
