

The Plan behind the Apparent Madness of Trump's Decisions in the White House

By: Dr. Abdullah Robin

During Donald Trump's first week as US president, he enacted controversial campaign pledges sending shock waves around the world. Exactly as promised, Trump banned entry to the US from seven Muslim countries for 90 days and suspended refugee admissions for 120 days, he began repealing and replacing 'Obamacare', he cancelled the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement, and he ordered the building of a huge wall on the Mexican border coupled with arrogant promises that Mexico "would pay for the wall", even though the Mexican president refused this and cancelled his planned visit to the US. Furthermore, much of the rhetoric from the White House during this first week was wild, and US policy toward China, Russia, Europe and international organizations such as NATO and the UN is in doubt.

The most visible agenda of the new administration appears to be the white Christian "America first" nationalism of the 'alternative right', while the traditional conservative Republican agenda that dominates the US Congress takes second place. Trump has established supporters close to the alternative right at the heart of the White House. These include his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who ran Trump's online media campaign and whose Orthodox Jewish upbringing helped to protect Trump from charges of anti-Semitism during the election campaign. The White House Senior Advisor Kellyanne Conway, and the chief strategist Stephen Bannon represent the alternative right even more openly. They were appointed on the same day to lead the Trump campaign and have a long association with Robert and Rebekah Mercer, who were major donors behind Trump's campaign. Robert and Rebekah Mercer also fund an 'alternative right' media site called *Breitbart News*, whose editor was Stephen Bannon before he was appointed to Trump's campaign, and they issued a statement to the Washington Post in October, which warned of an "apocalyptic choice that America faces on November 8th. We have a country to save and there is only one person who can save it. We, and Americans across the country and around the world, stand steadfastly behind Donald J. Trump."

The White House is now dominated by a faction that threatens traditional conservatives on key issues such as globalization, free-trade and Russia. An example of the tension in the Republican Party came after Trump's joint press conference with the UK Prime Minister, which left open the possibility that sanctions against Russia might be lifted. Later, Republican Senator John McCain, who is chairman of the Armed Services Committee, demanded: "For the sake of America's national security and that of our allies, I hope President Trump will put an end to this speculation and reject such a reckless course." What, therefore, is holding the conservatives and the alternative right together when much threatens to divide them?

Clues can be found in a book, published a couple of weeks ago, by Richard Haass, who is the president of the highly influential, bipartisan "Council on Foreign Relations." Richard Haass is critical of Trump's rejection of free trade and globalization, and yet his book, "A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order" explains that the world is becoming more dangerous and multi-polar and that the US will need a new version of the current concept of sovereignty. Formerly, intervention in a sovereign state was justified only on the basis of human rights, but now Haass argues that globalization mandates a greater right to intervene in the affairs of other states.

The rhetoric of Trump is dangerous according to Richard Haass, but perhaps it serves Haass's vision, as the chaos Trump is creating by challenging noisily the 'old order' could put the last nail in the coffin of 400 years of Western theories of statecraft since the Treaty of Westfalia, and a new order could be built upon the ruins of Trump's 'alternative right' adventure if it is taken over from him at the critical moment. More likely, the aware US politicians and capitalists are working to gradually realign Trump's administration and the traditionalists to their own vision and will compromise over free-trade. The current edition of *Foreign Affairs*, which is a policy magazine of the Council on Foreign Relations, indicates a bold engagement with Trump. The article by Doug Bandow, entitled: "Trump and U.S. Alliances" is particularly relevant where it says: "Trump should adopt a more ambitious agenda. He should call on other nations not just to do more on their own behalf but also to take over responsibility for their own defense."

*** Written for *Ar-Rayah* Newspaper - Issue 115**