

The campaign over the “unfitness” of Donald Trump

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The publication of Michael Wolff’s insider account of the early months of the Trump administration, *Fire and Fury*, has become the occasion for a media firestorm powered by allegations that Trump is mentally unfit to be president. Media pundits and Democratic politicians have cited the book’s portrayal of Trump to claim that the president should be declared incompetent. The result of such a maneuver, in the unlikely event it could be accomplished, would be a President Mike Pence.

In his usual fashion, Trump added fuel to the fire. First came his heavy-handed threats against the author and the publisher, seeking to suppress the book, and his imprecations against former campaign manager and White House counselor Stephen Bannon, now head of the fascistic *Breitbart News*, who served as the principal source for Wolff. This was followed by imbecilic tweets in which Trump celebrated his supposed intellect, describing himself a “stable genius.”

Wolff’s *Fire and Fury* is typical of the gossipy fare produced by this longtime chronicler of the foibles (and fables) of the Manhattan upper class. Nothing in his account of the Trump White House comes as a shock. That the real estate con man and television reality show host is an egomaniacal blowhard with a short attention span and an aversion to reading is neither surprising nor remarkable. It does not distinguish Trump from thousands of other American CEOs.

The furor over the Wolff book is a continuation and extension of the efforts of the Democratic Party, backed by much of the media, to engineer Trump’s removal through the methods of Washington intrigue and scandal-mongering. The charges of mental “unfitness” supplement the ongoing campaign around the investigation headed by Special Counsel Robert

Mueller into allegations of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia during the 2016 elections.

Given the political configuration in the House and Senate, Trump’s Democratic opponents think it unlikely they can impeach him. They have increasingly focused on an alternate pathway, the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, which allows the vice president and a majority of the cabinet to remove a president deemed by them to be incapable of fulfilling his duties for reasons of health, including mental health.

In an appearance Sunday on the NBC News program “Meet the Press,” Wolff made clear the political purpose of his book, claiming that the 25th Amendment to the Constitution was the stuff of daily discussions within the Trump White House, with top aides commenting on whether a particular statement or action by the president would put them in “25th Amendment territory.”

There is not the slightest progressive or democratic content to this campaign to remove Donald Trump from the presidency on the grounds of alleged mental incapacity. It is only the latest attempt by the ruling class opponents of Trump to hijack the growing popular opposition to the right-wing policies of his administration and divert it into safe channels.

The Democrats avoid raising issues that would have popular resonance and appeal in any way to the growth of opposition to war, domestic repression and social inequality. They would like to orchestrate Trump’s removal by the methods of a palace coup, without the intervention of American working people.

There is a fundamental class difference between opposition to Trump among working people and the opposition to Trump of Democratic politicians, sections of the corporate-controlled media and elements within the military-intelligence apparatus.

The ruling class opposition to Trump centers on issues of foreign policy, in particular, objections to any lessening of the ferocious anti-Russian stance adopted under Clinton and Obama. This is joined with a deeper concern that the president's erratic and provocative conduct is undermining the world position of US imperialism and making it more difficult for him to rally public support in the event of war or a major social crisis at home.

Hence the character of the criticisms directed at Trump by the Democrats, from the anti-Russia campaign, to the allegations of sexual harassment, to the current furor over Trump's alleged mental incapacity. All are aimed at undercutting Trump's support within the state, the political establishment and Wall Street. None are aimed at winning support from working people.

The Democrats have made preparations to call demonstrations across the country in the event Trump fires Russia investigator Mueller. They made no such calls to mobilize against the passage of Trump's massively unpopular tax bonanza for the corporations and the wealthy. Nor have they made any appeal to popular opposition to his travel ban against Muslims and refugees, his persecution of immigrants, his cozying up to the fascist alt-right or his threats of nuclear war in Korea.

While Trump is portrayed as an evil interloper, his policies of militarism, tax cuts for the wealthy and austerity for workers only continue and intensify the program of the American financial aristocracy, prosecuted by Democratic and Republican presidents over the past four decades.

The deepening political crisis in the United States—which has reached a level of intensity that dwarfs Watergate, the Iran-Contra affair and the Clinton impeachment—has an objective social character. It is the product not of Trump's incapacity or the embittered feelings of the Democrats he defeated in the presidential election, but of the social contradictions within American capitalism.

Economic inequality has reached the point where three US billionaires own more wealth than the poorest 60 percent of the American population. The living standards of the great majority of working people have stagnated or declined for more than 40 years. American youth have grown up under conditions of endless

imperialist wars abroad and deteriorating social conditions at home. There is mass disaffection with both capitalist parties, neither of which offers the slightest prospect of progressive change.

The frenzied character of the conflict within the ruling elite is only one of many signs of an impending social and political explosion in the United States. But the removal of Trump through the methods of scandal-mongering and conspiracy would contribute nothing to the political education and mobilization of the working class. On the contrary, the efforts of the Democrats and their media supporters are aimed at blocking any independent movement from below that would threaten not only the Trump administration, but the corporate-controlled two-party structure and the capitalist system as a whole.



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