

Ruling class conflicts in the US target inner circle of Trump White House

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3 March 2018

The past week has seen an unprecedented escalation of the conflicts within the American ruling class, with the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CNN, NBC and other leading corporate media outlets acting as the spearhead for a campaign to cripple the Trump White House.

Trump's inner circle—his son-in-law Jared Kushner, his daughter Ivanka, his close personal assistant and communications director Hope Hicks—have been the principal targets of leaked reports from the FBI and other intelligence agencies. These led Tuesday to the downgrading of Kushner's security clearance, the resignation of Hicks Wednesday, and the revelation Thursday that the FBI's counterintelligence unit had opened an investigation into Ivanka Trump's overseas business activities.

Press reports throughout the week have focused on Kushner, heir to a billion-dollar real estate fortune. The *Post* reported Tuesday that at least four countries, identified as Mexico, Israel, Qatar and China, had discussed using Kushner's business activities as leverage with the Trump White House. The *Times* published a report Thursday on how two financial institutions made large loans to Kushner real estate operations in 2017 shortly after their CEOs met with Jared Kushner at the White House over financial and tax issues.

The *New York Times* published Wednesday and Thursday an extraordinary, two-part, 3,000-word statement by its editorial board denouncing the White House role of Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, focused on the nepotism of the Trump White House.

It has, of course, not been difficult to implicate the Trump administration in various corrupt and nepotistic themes. However, from the *Times*, and the sections of the ruling class for which it speaks, such criticisms are

thoroughly hypocritical. Trump is a product of the American ruling class; his own personal and financial history exemplifies the financial oligarchy, for which corruption, insider-dealing and nepotism are standard business operations.

NBC News reported Thursday that the Mueller investigation into alleged Russian intervention in the 2016 presidential election had begun to scrutinize whether Kushner's "business discussions with foreigners during the presidential transition" shaped White House policy. The network cited claims by witnesses that Mueller investigators had asked about Kushner's business contacts with investors from Turkey and Qatar, among other countries, contacts which could have no direct relation to the question of the alleged Russian hacking or other efforts to assist Trump during the 2016 elections.

Finally, the *Washington Post* carried a report on its web site Thursday night headlined, "'Jared has faded': Inside the 28 days of tumult that left Kushner badly diminished." The article described an atmosphere of mutual suspicion driven particularly by the Mueller investigation. "Some of his administration colleagues are just more reluctant to have conversations with him or in his company because they're not sure if he's a witness or a target of the Mueller investigation," one unnamed official told the *Post*.

The targeting of those closest personally to Trump indicates that the political warfare in Washington has reached an unprecedented level of intensity. It is necessary to cut through the personalized and sensationalized elements in the factional warfare in Washington to grasp the real underlying driving forces of this conflict.

As a result of his ever-expanding investigation into the White House, Robert Mueller, the director of the

Federal Bureau of Investigation during the first twelve years of the “war on terror,” has become the most powerful man in America. Mueller exemplifies the vast and sweeping powers that the state intelligence agencies are assuming in conjunction with the Democratic Party’s conspiratorial drive to undermine or remove Trump.

As the WSWS has previously explained, the Mueller investigation originated in the opposition of sections of the military-intelligence apparatus, backed by the Democratic Party, to any softening of the anti-Russian national security offensive undertaken in the second term of the Obama administration, particularly in relation to US intervention to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Russia’s main Mideast ally, and the US backing for the fascist-led coup that overthrew a pro-Russian government in Ukraine.

The conflict has broadened, however, to a considerable range of foreign policy issues, including this week’s widespread backlash, both internationally and in Wall Street circles, over Trump’s declaration Thursday that he intends to impose tariffs of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on imported aluminum, followed by tweets celebrating “trade war” as a positive good.

There is not the slightest progressive or democratic content to the campaign by the Democrats, the media and the intelligence agencies to cripple the Trump White House and, if possible, create the conditions to force Trump to leave office. They have not objected to Trump’s ferocious attacks on democratic rights, his witch-hunting of immigrants, his attack on social programs like food stamps and Medicaid, or his militaristic threats against North Korea, Iran and China.

On much of the Trump agenda, particularly the tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, the slashing of health, safety and environmental regulations on business, and the record levels of military spending, there is bipartisan agreement in the ruling elite.

But there is mounting concern that Trump is too erratic a figure to be relied on as the “commander-in-chief” of American imperialism, particularly under conditions of a growing movement from below, from the American working class, to oppose the policies of big business and both of the political parties that represent and defend corporate America.

It is no accident that the media frenzy against Trump

has accelerated during the week that the class struggle in America has exploded to the surface in the state of West Virginia, with the powerful statewide strike by 30,000 teachers and school workers in defiance not only of the Republican governor and state legislature, but state Democratic politicians and the union leaders allied to them.

Trump became president only thanks to the electoral votes of states like West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan, where deindustrialization and the destruction of jobs and living standards discredited the Obama administration and the Democratic Party’s pretense to defend the interests of working people.

The conspiratorial methods of a palace coup being used to settle scores within the ruling elite are contrasting ever more directly with the working class’s turn to class struggle. It is the fear of such an independent movement spreading and taking on a mass, nationwide character that impels sections of the ruling elite to seek a reorganization or restructuring in Washington so as to bring in an administration that will be stronger, more competent and even more ruthless in its attacks on both the foreign and domestic opposition to American imperialism.



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