

A *Warning*: A manifesto of the pro-war “Resistance” in the American state

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4 December 2019

On September 5, 2018, the *New York Times* published an op-ed by a “senior official” in the White House, entitled “I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration.”

The anonymous author of the piece revealed that “many of the senior officials in [Trump’s] own administration are working diligently from within to frustrate parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations.” The “adults in the room,” he claimed, are leading a “two-track presidency.”

In that op-ed, he revealed that “there were early whispers within the cabinet of invoking the 25th Amendment, which would start a complex process for removing the president.”

In other words, members of the executive branch had discussed a coup to remove a sitting president, which they pulled back from only because “no one wanted” a “constitutional crisis.”

One year later, the same unnamed official, whose identity is known to the *Times*, has published a book elaborating on themes elucidated in the editorial. *A Warning* is currently #1 on the *New York Times*’ nonfiction bestseller list.

The author, “Anonymous,” has been publicly identified as Guy Snodgrass, the US Navy commander who served as the communications secretary for the Department of Defense under Gen. James Mattis. Posting a report of his alleged authorship on Twitter, Snodgrass cryptically mused, “the swirl continues.”

If the allegation is true, it would have ominous implications. It would mean that the *New York Times* gave the military an opportunity to denounce a president as “amoral,” “impetuous,” “petty” and “ineffective,” and to all but advocate his removal via unconstitutional means.

Notably, Snodgrass claims to be the author of perhaps the most important military document produced under the Trump administration, the unclassified summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy, which declared that “Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in US national security.”

We do not know whether Snodgrass is the author of *A Warning*, but the themes of the National Defense Strategy

document are consistent with the emphasis of the book.

A Warning makes one thing abundantly clear: the “Resistance” to Trump’s policies within the state, which is the basis of the Democrats’ opposition to him, centers on claims that Trump is insufficiently aggressive in defending and expanding America’s imperial interests against Russia and China.

A Warning argues that “America’s dominant role on the international stage is at risk today,” but Trump is “not positioning us to strengthen our empire of liberty.” It continues: “Instead, he’s left the empire’s flank vulnerable to power-hungry competitors” with his “isolationist, what’s-in-it-for-me attitude toward the world.”

The allegations continue:

The president lacks a cogent agenda for dealing with these rivals because he doesn’t recognize them as long-term threats. He only sees near-term deals. “Russia is a foe in certain respects. China is a foe economically... But that doesn’t mean they are bad,” the president said in one interview...

What he doesn’t see, especially with China, Russia, Iran and North Korea, is that their governments are programmed to oppose us...

The United States is taking its eye off the ball with China, and our national response has been ad hoc and indecisive under President Trump. We have no serious plan to safeguard our “empire of liberty” against China’s rise. There is only the ever-changing negotiating positions of a grifter in chief, which will not be enough to win what is fast becoming the next Cold War. President Trump is myopically focused on trade with China, which is only part of the picture...

In a July 2018 interview, the president was asked to name America’s biggest global adversary. He didn’t lead the list with China, which is stealing American innovation at a scale never before seen in history, or Russia, which is working to tear our country apart.

And on and on.

In response to such concerns, the writer makes clear that sections of this staff were contemplating an extra-constitutional coup to replace Trump by declaring the American president mad and therefore “unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office,” in the words of the 25th Amendment to the US Constitution, which outlines presidential succession in the case of a presidential disability.

A back-of-the-envelope “whip count” was conducted of officials who were most concerned about the deteriorating situation. Names of cabinet-level officials were placed on a mental list. These were folks who, in the worst case scenario, would be amenable to huddling discreetly in order to assess how bad the situation was getting... I froze when I first heard someone suggest that we might be getting into “Twenty-fifth territory.”

Among the figures noted in the press as possibly amenable to such an endeavor were former Defense Secretary Mattis, former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, former Chief of Staff Gen. John Kelly and former National Security Adviser Gen. H.R. McMaster.

The writer describes what the removal of the president via the 25th Amendment would look like:

Removal of the president by his own cabinet would be perceived as a coup. The end result would be unrest in the United States the likes of which we haven’t seen since maybe the Civil War. Millions would not accept the outcome, perhaps including the president himself, and many would take to the streets on both sides. Violence would be almost inevitable.

If Trump is “removed from office... and he refuses to go... He will not exit quietly—or easily... It is why at many turns he suggests ‘coups’ are afoot and a ‘civil war’ is in the offing.”

One does not know whether the author has really had a change of heart about overthrowing the American government in a coup, or, if he is a military person, he fears a court martial for treason. In any event, he concludes, “In a democracy we don’t overthrow our leaders when they’re underperforming. That’s for third-rate banana republics and police states.”

How reassuring...

After only three paragraphs weighing in on the merits of the impeachment proceeding, the author concludes, “One option—and one option only—stands above the rest as the ultimate way to hold Trump accountable”—to unseat him in the 2020 election.

Politically, the author appears to be an anti-Trump Republican. He urges his “fellow Republicans” to vote for a centrist Democrat if one is nominated—as long as the candidate is not a “socialist.”

Two “warnings” are to be drawn from this book:

First is the enormous crisis of democracy in the United States, which has degenerated to the point where cabinet officials, most of whom are or were military officers, abetted by the media, discuss a coup as a legitimate means to resolve policy differences. The president, meanwhile, repeatedly threatens to say in office past the two-term constitutional limit, and effectively asserts unlimited and dictatorial executive powers.

While the threat posed by Trump to democratic rights is immense, no one who opposes war and attacks on democratic rights can have anything to do with the aims and intentions of the author of this book. Behind his pilfered, cobbled-together quotations—he calls Plato an American historian—and his ridiculous attempt at gravitas, he is a bloodthirsty advocate of imperialist war.

The Democrats, who have upheld this man and people like him as the “adults in the room” and the antipode to Trump, are infected with the same poison.

The struggle to remove Trump and to hold him to account for his real crimes will have nothing to do with people such as “Anonymous,” or the Democratic impeachment campaign that is totally aligned with his pro-war agenda.



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