

*Note: This is an article I wrote in December 2016 for the American web site Cannonfire. It provides more information on just how Trump came to power in the US than we might be able to cover in our panel discussion at the Global Greens Conference for those who are interested in the issue. – David Morris*

## **A Slow Motion Coup D'état**

With the alleged election of Donald J. Trump as president of the United States, have we just witnessed the final act in what comedian Bill Maher recently called, “a slow-motion right wing coup d’etat?”

Amid all the bloviating and lies that characterized his campaign, Trump does appear to have gotten one thing right...the election was rigged. The problem is, it's the Republicans who did the rigging.

They've been at it for decades and once Trump is sworn in and his first Supreme Court nominee is seated, all checks and balances will be gone. Thirty-plus years of right-wing subterfuge and guile will have paid off big time, although not necessarily in the way most Republicans intended.

The cult of Trump will be ascendant.

Should-be-president-elect Hillary Clinton once said that there was a “vast right-wing conspiracy” arrayed against her and her husband. These words elicited mainly sneers at the time, but can anyone seriously doubt them now? Let's take a quick look at some of the main elements of this “conspiracy” and see if you still think that Donald J. Trump is the legitimately elected president of the United States of America. All of them have been presented and analysed in much greater depth elsewhere – and links to a few articles about each of them are included for those who would like to start investigating further – but here is an attempt to outline them all.

### **Intensive Voter Suppression**

Back in 1980, leading right-wing Republican operative Paul Weyrich said,

*"Now many of our Christians have what I call the goo-goo syndrome. Good government. They want everybody to vote. I don't want everybody to vote. Elections are not won by a majority of people. They never have been from the beginning of our country and they are not now. As a matter of fact, our leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down."*

Ever since, the Republican party has engaged in a systematic effort to make voting more difficult for African Americans, young people, Hispanics and other groups who tend to strongly support the Democrats.

Especially since the Supreme Court trashed the Voting Rights Act in 2010, states with Republican governments have pulled out all the stops to keep as many likely Democratic supporters as possible off of the voting roles. No one knows exactly how many people have been disenfranchised through these efforts, but estimates of Democratic votes lost range into the millions. Trump's alleged margin of victory in Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Florida could easily have been erased if all those who should have been eligible to vote had been able to do so.

<https://www.thenation.com/article/did-republicans-rig-the-election/>

<https://www.thenation.com/article/the-gops-attack-on-voting-rights-was-the-most-under-covered-story-of-2016/>

<http://www.gregpalast.com/election-stolen-heres/>

## **Creation of an Alternative Right-Wing Reality**

Fox News, Breitbart, Alex Jones, the Drudge Report, Rush Limbaugh, home schooling, biblical literalism, well-funded right wing "think tanks" (or should we say propaganda factories), climate change denialism, fake news planted on social media – the list goes on and on. For more than 30 years, the right wing has undertaken a systematic and well-organized campaign to dumb down a large portion of the American electorate, destroy their capacity for critical evidence based thinking and leave them susceptible to the wildest sort of demagoguery.

The stage was set for Trump.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/21/fox-news-viewers-less-informed-people-fairleigh-dickinson\\_n\\_1106305.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/21/fox-news-viewers-less-informed-people-fairleigh-dickinson_n_1106305.html)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wired-success/201407/anti-intellectualism-and-the-dumbing-down-america>

[http://inthesetimes.com/article/15989/dumbing\\_america\\_down](http://inthesetimes.com/article/15989/dumbing_america_down)

## **Corruption and Weaponization of Christianity**

Back in the day, most fundamentalist Christians could be counted on to reject the theory of evolution, but also to think that Jesus meant it when he told his followers to care for the least among us and that it might be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get into heaven. Abortion, on the other hand, was nowhere on their radar as it wasn't touched on at all by their saviour.

How times have changed. Back in the 60s and 70s, right-wing Republicans and their wealthy backers realized that there was no better way to undercut support for the Democrats who were championing civil rights for minorities, the right to choose for women and a more equitable distribution of income and wealth than to paint them

as not only political opponents but as actual agents of the devil. Politically, their program has been an astounding success...but in the process any remote connection to the actual teachings of Jesus seems to have been lost.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-schaeffer/fundamentalist-belief-gro\\_b\\_4136458.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-schaeffer/fundamentalist-belief-gro_b_4136458.html)

<http://www.alternet.org/election-2016/rural-america-understanding-isnt-problem>

## **Demonization of the Media**

Along with the creation of their own propaganda organs, a core tactic of fascist movements is the discrediting and demonization of the mainstream (i.e. fact-based) media. Starting with Rush Limbaugh and Fox “News,” this has been a staple of the Republican playbook for years. Trump has, however, taken it to a whole new level, to the point where reporters trying to cover his rallies became concerned for their personal safety.

Such demonization is crucial if the voters are to be kept “safely” away from the truth about the people and policies for which they are voting.

<http://www.alternet.org/media/robert-reich-trumps-7-techniques-control-media>

[http://www.assassinationscience.com/Fourteen\\_Signs\\_of\\_Fascism.pdf](http://www.assassinationscience.com/Fourteen_Signs_of_Fascism.pdf)

<http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/trump-s-media-attacks-biting-hands-fed-him-n670256>

## **Demonization of their Foes, Especially the Clintons**

From the time Bill Clinton first stepped into the governor’s mansion in Arkansas, right-wing Republicans have regarded him – and his wife Hillary – as very serious threats and they have spared no effort or expense in their efforts to demonize them. The attacks in Arkansas were constant, but things really took off once Bill and Hillary moved into the White House. Remember Whitewater, the years-long multi-million dollar partisan witch hunt conducted by “independent” prosecutor Kenneth Starr which led to absolutely nothing but the opportunity for the Republicans to bring a trumped up impeachment charge against the president for lying about consensual sex.

Treatment of Hillary has been no better. In spite of the Republicans undying efforts to find something – anything – to charge her with over Benghazi, her private e-mail server or the life-saving Clinton Foundation, they have come up with absolutely nothing. What the right-wingers have succeeded in brilliantly, however, is in smearing Hillary’s reputation and painting her as “crooked Hillary” in the public mind.

That is the real scandal.

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2004/09/republican-noise-machine>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/24/opinion/sunday/is-hillary-clinton-dishonest.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/24/opinion/sunday/is-hillary-clinton-dishonest.html?_r=0)

## **Florida 2000 and the Judicial Coup D'etat**

If there had been a fair and complete count of all the votes cast for president in Florida in 2000, Al Gore would very likely have been the 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States. If the thousands of (mostly black) people who were improperly prevented from voting by Republican Secretary of State Katharine Harris had been allowed to cast their votes, he would certainly have won by a safe margin.

Due to the unprecedented – and seemingly unconstitutional – decision by a partisan majority of the Supreme Court – two of whom should have, by any standards, recused themselves due to conflicts of interest – we never had the chance to find out for sure. What we got instead was eight years of Bush buffoonery, 9-11, the Iraq war and near economic collapse.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jan/29/uselections2000.usa>

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.rci.rutgers.edu%2F~gpomper%2FFloridaRecount.doc>

## **The Weaponization of Social Media**

As just about every high school student knows, Facebook, Twitter and the like can be cruel places, but Donald Trump, his allies in the neo-Nazi alt-right movement and the growing army of professional Russian trolls have taken things to a whole new level. Cross them and you will pay.

As Trump knows better than anyone, social media is also the perfect way to bypass fact-checking and spread the most nonsensical conspiracy theories and drivel of every sort unfiltered to his gullible followers.

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/31/trolls-for-trump>

<http://motherboard.vice.com/read/understanding-trumps-troll-army>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/30/donald-trump-george-monbiot-misinformation>

## **Extreme Gerrymandering**

In almost every election, in state after state and at a national level, significant majorities of Americans consistently vote for Democrats – yet Republicans consistently gain large majorities in the House of Representatives and many state houses.

Why? Extreme – and probably unconstitutional – gerrymandering.

The practice of adjusting the borders of electoral districts to favor one's own side has long been an unfortunate feature of American political life, but in 2010 the Republicans activated a brilliant scheme to give themselves vastly more electoral power than their opponents. Called Redmap, the first stage of the plan was to pour massive amounts of money into elections for governorships and state legislatures in the year of the census and then use that power to shamelessly (and scientifically) redraw the districts in a way that had never been seen before.

The result? A right-wing stranglehold on the House and numerous state governments which has allowed unrestricted voter suppression, gridlock in Washington, and an endless series of partisan witch hunts.

So much for one man one vote!

<http://www.salon.com/2016/11/23/un-rigging-our-democracy-the-gops-unconstitutional-political-gerrymander-practices-finally-under-fire/>

## **Conspiracy to Undermine the Obama Administration**

The very night that Barak Obama was being inaugurated in 2009, a group of leading Republican lawmakers and operatives gathered in a Washington DC restaurant and decided that their priority would be to make him a one-term president by opposing and obstructing him in absolutely everything he tried to do. Unfortunately for the country, they stuck to this plan religiously throughout Obama's entire eight years in office. Of course, they then turned around and blamed all the suffering caused by their failure to go along with anything on the Democrats – and huge numbers of people believed them.

Working, as this effort did, so clearly against the interests of the American people, another word for it might be treason.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/25/robert-draper-anti-obama-campaign\\_n\\_1452899.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/25/robert-draper-anti-obama-campaign_n_1452899.html)

<https://ourfuture.org/20141103/will-the-gops-caucus-room-conspiracy-pay-off-on-election-day>

## **Corruption of the FBI**

Not since the bad old days of J. Edgar Hoover have we seen such blatant and unethical interference by the FBI into an American election as occurred this year.

FBI Director James Comey's unprecedented bad-mouthing of Hillary Clinton was bad enough in July when he announced that she had been exonerated in the private e-mail server non-scandal and then proceeded to do everything possible to undermine her credibility.

Totally beyond the pale, however, was his announcement ten days before the election that new evidence was being examined in the case – leading to the obvious assumption that it might be reopened – only to come back a week later, after all the damage had been done, and let us know that there was absolutely nothing there after all.

Shameful...and totally at odds with FBI policy.

Of course, Comey was not the only one causing trouble. After Comey's bombshell, it emerged that deranged Trump cheerleader-in-chief Rudy Giuliani was basically able to use the New York FBI office as a tool of his dear leader's campaign.

<http://www.alternet.org/election-2016/comey-effect-fbi-directors-meddling-election-dominates-news-while-clinton-focuses>

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/11/03/meet-donald-trump-s-top-fbi-fanboy.html?via=desktop&source=twitter>

## **Money in Politics**

The influence of money in politics has always been a problem in the United States, but the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United vs the FEC totally blew the roof off on all attempts to impose any sensible limits.

It seems that the only way now that you can be elected is to either prostitute yourself to big money interests – or else to be one yourself like Donald Trump. Either way, the interests of the middle class, let alone the poor, are way, way down on the priority list.

<https://www.publicintegrity.org/2012/10/18/11527/citizens-united-decision-and-why-it-matters>

<http://www.commondreams.org/views/2016/10/26/hey-hillary-problem-isnt-just-citizens-united>

## **The Cult of Trump**

Trump once famously said that he could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and still not lose any of his voters.

He was probably right.

He might not have shot anyone, but he was caught on tape bragging about being a sexual predator, numerous shady business dealings were exposed, he was shown to have defrauded customers and not paid his suppliers, he told one demonstrable whopper after another on a daily basis, and it didn't make a damn bit of difference to his fanatical supporters.

For those with a sense of history, his rallies were chilling affairs as he whipped his followers into a frenzy and skilfully directed their rage against blacks, immigrants, Muslims, the Clintons, the press, women he may well have assaulted, and anyone else that happened to get under his skin that day.

Chants of “Lock her up!” and “Build the wall!” filled the hall, protesters were roughed up and respected members of the press had to have police protection.

It’s hard to say if the whole scene reminds you more of cults of strongmen such as Idi Amin or Vladimir Putin, the horrifying political/racial cult of Nazism, or out-and-out pseudo-religious cults such as the Church as Scientology.

Take your pick.

The bottom line is that Trumpism shows all the signs of being a genuine cult.

In the long run, this could lead to disastrous results, especially when something doesn’t go the way the Donald wants and he urges his well-armed followers to take matters into their own hands.

<https://www.ft.com/content/39da343a-9f4b-11e6-891e-abe238dee8e2>

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/03/21/trump-obama-the-cult-of-personality.html>

## **Election Fraud**

Anyone with the remotest interest in facts knows that Trump’s and the right-wing’s claims of massive voter fraud – millions of individuals voting illegally – is complete nonsense. A recent in-depth university study found that out of almost one billion votes cast over a ten-year period, only 31 actual cases of such voter fraud could be found.

Election fraud, on the other hand, is a whole different matter.

For years investigative organizations such as the Election Defense Alliance and BlackBoxVoting.org and academics such as Princeton professor Andrew Appel have been warning about the relative ease of tampering with many of the nation’s electronic voting machines and the tabulators which compile the results. Numerous demonstrations have shown that their fears are valid, especially if insiders were to be involved.

Electronic voting systems are, in fact, considered so unreliable and subject to manipulation that in 2009, the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany forbade the use of computers to count the country’s votes, and ordered a return to the hand counting of all ballots in front of citizen observers.

The evidence suggests that there is good reason to be suspicious of the results of any election in which the final results reported vary greatly from the polls, especially the normally reliable exit polls. This is the standard the U.S. government itself recommends for evaluating if an overseas election might be fraudulent.

And which party has benefited from these statistical discrepancies here at home? Surprise, surprise, it always somehow seems to be the Republicans - and 2016 was no different. In the words of election integrity expert Theodore de Macado Soares:

*“According to the exit polls conducted by Edison Research, Clinton won four key battleground states (NC, PA, WI, and FL) in the 2016 presidential election that she went on to lose in the computerized vote counts. With these states Clinton wins the Electoral College with a count of 302 versus 205 for Trump. Clinton also won the national exit poll by 3.2% and holds a narrow lead in the national vote count still in progress.*

*“Exit polls were conducted in 28 states. In 23 states the discrepancies between the exit polls and the vote count favored Trump. In 13 of these states the discrepancies favoring Trump exceeded the margin of error of the state.”*

So can we state with certainty that Clinton’s loss was due to deliberate tampering with the voting systems in key areas?

The answer is no. That would take a serious investigation by the FBI...but they seem to have been too busy looking into Secretary Clinton’s e-mail server to be bothered by such a trifling matter as the basic integrity of our national elections.

Directly tampering with the tallies produced by electronic voting machines might be the holy grail of Republican efforts to prevent demographic realities from consigning them to the dustbin of history, but, so far at least, we have only circumstantial evidence that this has actually been happening.

Fortunately, a faint glimmer of hope has been given to us by Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein’s call for a recount/audit in the key states of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, and the massive public support it has received.

Needless to say, the Republican authorities in these states have already started doing everything they can to shut down or stymie the effort. As of the writing of this article, Wisconsin has just more than tripled the fee they will charge the Greens from \$1 million to \$3.5 million, and it is likely to go higher.

Worse, they are trying to arrange the recount so that it will be nothing more than running the same data through the same tabulators again in exactly the same fashion. Of course, this will tell us nothing - and that is, no doubt, the intention. Rather than this, what is essential is a full manual recount of all votes available in

any way on paper, and an in-depth forensic analysis by top-level impartial specialists of the voting machines and tabulators themselves, along with their installed software.

The Greens are trying to make this happen, but it is by no means certain they will succeed.

Let us pray that they do.

<http://www.alternet.org/election-2016/what-6-top-election-experts-are-saying-about-next-big-step-2016-recount>

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/11/22/election-data-screams-fraud/>

<http://codered2014.com/category/exit-polls/>

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1500319856>

<https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/debunking-voter-fraud-myth>

## **Vladimir Putin**

With the possible exception of the Trump cult, the conspiratorial elements listed above are not particularly new. Some of them even go back decades or more.

The 2016 election did, however, bring us an entirely new phenomenon, one that might be the most disturbing of them all.

I refer, of course, to the likely involvement of a hostile foreign power in an organized attempt to undermine and influence the outcome of a U.S. presidential election.

Such efforts are nothing new for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Back in the Soviet Union days, interfering in the elections of countries where there was some sort of communist – capitalist struggle going on was said to be a standard practice in the KGB playbook (as it also was, to be fair, in that of the CIA). In more recent years, the regime of ex KGB officer Putin is believed to have become increasingly active in this area, particularly in the realm of cyberspace.

Forbes and the Wall Street Journal have reported on Russian cyber-attacks on the 2012 election in Georgia and 2014 one in Ukraine. The Washington Post reported that Russia has conducted operations aimed at disrupting U.S. alliances and others designed to influence elections in Latvia, Greece, Italy and France with the apparent aims of discrediting the democratic systems of Western countries and creating the illusion of a moral equivalence between them and Russia's own authoritarian and corrupt system.

As is now well-known, U.S. intelligence is virtually certain that it was Russian players operating under Putin's orders who hacked the e-mail accounts of the DNC, Clinton campaign chairman, John Podesta and others and passed on damaging material to Wikileaks to be released at the worst possible times in an attempt to derail the

Clinton campaign and increase the chances of Putin BFF Donald Trump winning the election.

Much of the nasty, anti-Clinton troll campaign was also believed to have been carried out by paid Russian operatives and strong evidence exists that the Russians attempted to – and perhaps succeeded in – hacking the voter registration systems of several states and the computers of at least one major electronic voting machine manufacturer.

If true, either of these activities could have provided the Trump supporting Russians with a way to tamper with the actual vote count in his favour. This possibility is one of the main reasons why the Green Party and their supporters are so adamant that any recounts must be done by hand, rather than with the same potentially corrupted equipment.

<http://www.alternet.org/election-2016/green-recount-effort-poised-explore-whether-russia-hacked-vote-trump>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-37605992>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2016/07/28/russian-hacking-what-we-know-and-trump-doesnt/?utm\\_term=.edbdd4981842](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2016/07/28/russian-hacking-what-we-know-and-trump-doesnt/?utm_term=.edbdd4981842)

## **Conclusion**

The implications of all this are staggering.

If even a part of the theories put forward above are true, there is every chance that the person who was declared the winner of our 2016 election is not a legitimate president-elect, but a usurper.

A usurper who got where he is not just because of his own extraordinary skill as a con-man – perhaps the best in history – but through a long-term and carefully crafted and executed plan to subvert American democracy carried out by a group of right-wing zealots now aided and abetted by the government of a hostile foreign power.

If this doesn't qualify as a conspiracy, I can't imagine what does.

*By David Jay Morris*

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<http://cannonfire.blogspot.co.uk/2016/12/a-slow-motion-coup-detate.html>