

## Dan Leahy's Book Outline On:

### ***Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump and the Storming of the Presidency*** by Joshua Green, Penguin Press, 2017

*When Bannon was in the White House, I was told this book was a must read. I just finished reading it. It's a quick and entertaining read, an insider's election travelog. Although the book is about how Trump got elected and Bannon's role in that, I wanted to list some dynamics that I think are still important to us now that Trump is in the White House and Bannon is back at Breitbart. I've listed four of these dynamics below.*

#### **1. Bannon: Mercer and the Anti-Clinton network.**

Green says Bannon brought two things to Trump's Campaign: A coherent nationalist ideology and an Anti-Clinton Network funded by Robert Mercer of Renaissance Technologies. How will this network continue to be funded and used now that Clinton is gone and Bannon is back at Breitbart? The network has four interrelated components:

**A. Breitbart News:** "Politics is downstream from culture" and "I want to change the cultural narrative" were some of Andrew Breitbart's favorite phrases. Breitbart understood that readers experience news "viscerally as an ongoing drama, with distinct story lines, heroes and villains" and, according to Bannon, created a "global center-right, populist, anti-establishment news site." (144). Breitbart died at age 43 in March, 2012 and Bannon took over this "old style attack journalism" site and, with \$10 million from Mercer, expanded his DC based operation to Texas (Anti-Immigrant ICE contacts) and London (Nigel Farage: Without Breitbart London, no Brexit).

**B. Global Accountability Institute.** Formed in 2012 in Tallahassee as home for researcher Peter Schweizer. Bannon said he should focus on "cronyism endemic to the Clintons" and between 2013-2015 Mercer gave several million dollars to GAI and out came Schweizer's Clinton Cash published by HarperCollins. Bannon: "...it's facts, not rumors, that resonate with the best investigative reporters." (142). Bannon: "We have a mantra... facts get shares; opinions get shrugs." (154). GAI used the "Deep Web" – to research the Clintons. The Deep Web is "the 97 percent or so of information on the Internet that isn't indexed for search engines such as Google and therefore is difficult to find."

**C. Glittering Steel.** Funded by Mercer and run by Bannon and Mercer's daughter, Rebekah Mercer, this is a film production company to influence politics and produce Christian themed movies liked those organized by Wilberforce Forum chaired by felon Chuck Colson. Glittering Steel did produce the movie version of Clinton Cash. It's also important to remember that Bannon, during his Hollywood years, did produce numerous films on his favorite themes and brought them to the Liberty Film Festival. In the 2004 In the Face of Evil (Reagan); 2006 Border Wars; 2010 Battle for America (T-Party); (2010) Generation Zero (financial collapse) & (2011) The Undefeated (Sarah Palin).

**D. Cambridge Analytica.** This was a Mercer owned, American offshoot of a British data company, Strategic Communications Laboratories. With Bannon on the Board and Rebekah promoting its use by funded political campaigns, Cambridge gave the network a "state of the art technology" allowing the Mercers "to build out an infrastructure for sophisticated

messaging and strategy that would be independent of the institutional Republican Party.”  
(134)

## **2. Bannon: Merging the Offline Alt Right and the Online Gamers**

Bannon seemed to have accomplished this merger just in time for the Trump election. It is worth watching how this continues to operate and affect national politics.

**The Online Gamers.** In 2005, Bannon left Hollywood, went to Hong Kong and joined Internet Gaming Entertainment (IGE), founded by Brock Pierce. IGE used a “supply chain of low wage Chinese workers” to play a video game called World of Warcraft published by Blizzard Entertainment. By continually playing the game, the Chinese workers produced a steady stream of virtual goods that IGE planned to sell to gamers for real money in the real world. IGE estimated this real-money trading was a \$1 billion dollar market. Bannon got \$60 million from Goldman and tried to get Blizzard to license the practice, but the gamers revolted against what they saw as an infringement on their game. Blizzard then refused to license this practice, IGE lost millions, changed its name, forced out Pierce and Bannon took over as CEO of the remainder, Affinity Media and holding onto three gaming sites: Wowhead, Allakhazam and Thottbot which were “doing 1.5 billion page views per month” in 2007 & 2008. (145). Bannon saw the power of the online gamer community as it dismantled IGE's effort to interfere with its game.

**The Merger.** When Bannon took over Breitbart in 2012 he wanted to attract the “online legions of mostly young men” believing that these internet masses could stoke a political revolution by fusing the online world of alienated gamers and the right wing outsiders drawn to Breitbart News. He connected the two worlds with Milo Yiannopoulos whose October 15, 2015 article was entitled: “How Donald Trump Can Win: With Guns, Cars, Tech Visas, Ethanol .... and 4Chan.” Trump cemented the relationship as he retweeted images of Pepe the Frog. (For more on how this online world now interacts with the real world of politics, read: Kill All Normies by Angela Nagle.)

## **3. Bannon: Traditionalism, Decline of the West and the War with Islam.**

How much of Bannon's world view will continue to rationalize Trump's policies is certainly up for question, but the direction of those policies remains the same.

**Traditionalism.** Bannon, like Pence, came from an Irish Catholic family, enamored with John Kennedy and the Democratic Party and both left the Party and the Church. Bannon's family left the Church after Vatican II reforms and joined the Tridentine Church, a Traditionalist expression of Catholicism. Bannon read Rene Guenon (Crisis of the Modern World, 1927) and Julius Evola (Revolt Against the Modern World, 1934) both authors lamenting the spiritual decline of the West and the rise of secular modernity. Putin's ideologist translated Evola's work into Russian. Whether Bannon is in the White House or not, the Traditionalist's values of masculinity, traditional authority, racial purity and the subordination of women fit well with Trump and Pence's policy direction.

**Decline of the West.** Green says Bannon sees the Destruction of the Order of the Knights Templar in 1314, as Islamic armies took over the “Holy Lands,” and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which ended Europe's inter-religious slaughter, as marking the spiritual decline of

the West. Bannon saw this decline deepen as the EU gained strength over sovereign nations and as Pope Francis, a “pro-immigration globalist” replaced Pope Benedict. He even set up a Breitbart Rome and worked with Cardinal Raymond Burke (no relation) to support Catholic traditionalists. (206). And, reflecting the last chapter of Green's book, “Afterword: Kali Yuga,” Bannon believes the West is passing through this 'dark age' “when tradition is wholly forgotten.” (A primer on this: *Against the Modern World* by Mark Sedgwick).

**War with Islam.** Green points to three events that reinforced Bannon's historical view that the West is in an on-going war with radical Islam. His experience as a Navy junior officer (1979-1980) aboard the Paul F. Foster during the Iranian hostage crisis led him to describe the Middle East as “the other end of the earth” and Iran as a place that “looked like the moon ... It was like the fifth century – completely primeval.” The second event was the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon which led him to turn Schweizer's portrait of Ronald Reagan into his film, *In the Face of Evil*. Bannon said his film was a metaphor, “a story about how a democracy takes on a radical ideology.” (85). The third event was the influx of Muslim refugees and migrants into Europe and the US which he described as the “civilizational jihad personified by this migrant crisis.” (207).

Whether Trump believes any of this or not, Trump's successful efforts to ban Muslims, halt the refugee program, authorize his militarists, Mattis, McMaster and Kelly to, in Mattis' word, “annihilate” cities like Mosul and Raqqa, and continue his verbal assault on globalists and free traders reflects Bannon's policy directions.

#### **4. Bannon: Economic Nationalism and America First.**

Green sees a merger with Bannon's nationalism and Trump's America First rhetoric. Green says Bannon sees the rise of nationalist movements across the world as a return to tradition. He quotes Bannon: “You have to control three things.... borders, currency, and military and national identity. People are finally coming to realize that, and politicians will have to follow.” (207). Trump seems to be following along. Trump's use of Kelly's DHS and ICE police to deport immigrants and his recent ending of the DACA program reinforce the idea of controlling borders, as does his continued rhetoric of building a wall. His bringing in Kelly as his Chief of Staff along with McMaster at Security and Mattis at Defense certainly highlight military control of both domestic and foreign policy.

Green's book, however, gives us important insights on Trump's relationship to national identity. He discusses when Trump met Bannon and took up his “populist nationalism” he had to give something up. Trump's NBC prime time television show *The Apprentice* which began in 2004 built a national profile dramatically different than any other Republican figure: “Trump was extremely popular with minority audiences.” (96). The show was seen as a triumph of “American multiculturalism.”

Trump gave up this “national profile” when he attacked President Obama with his “birther” campaign. What he got in return was a mobilized Republican base that was full of resentment and angry about illegal immigration. So just at the time the Republican Party was publishing its Autopsy Report on Mitt Romney's defeat suggesting the need to accommodate the needs of minority voters and advocating comprehensive immigration reform, Trump went in the other direction, became an anti-immigrant populist worried about foreigners taking over the country and won the Presidency. This is his and Bannon's national identity.

## **Green's Conclusions: Disorder and Confusion**

Since I believe Trump's Departmental Secretaries are efficiently implementing Trump's extractive policies, I don't agree with Green's conclusions about "disorder and confusion." I thought, however, I should state them. Green has three main reasons why Trump's administration "has so quickly fallen into disorder and confusion." (1) he thought he could rule by asserting dominance, but in fact he needs Congress. (2) He's adopting the Wall Street agenda he ran against with all the globalists in his administration (3) Trump is not a nationalist or advocate of any political philosophy – Bannon's language was just a "marketing strategy" for his brand, not a commitment to a set of policies.

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