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**ALLOUT
WAR**

THE PLOT TO DESTROY TRUMP

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UNPRESIDENTIAL

If we are going to be honest with ourselves in assigning blame for the unhinged assault on Donald Trump, we must start with the villainy of Never-Trump Republicans who opposed Trump's nomination, disapproved of his campaign and, in many cases, still resist his presidency.

This includes a vast array of prominent party figures, establishment conservatives, and moderates:

- Two former presidents (both Bushes)
- Five GOP presidential primary candidates
- Twenty-two former cabinet-level officials
- Twenty current and former governors
- Seventeen current and former U.S. senators
- Sixty-two current and former members of the House of Representatives

- Twenty-eight former State Department officials
- Sixteen former Defense Department officials
- Twenty-five former national security officials
- Fifty-seven conservative academics, commentators, and journalists

The editors of *National Review*, the granddaddy of conservative publications, devoted an entire issue at the beginning of 2016 headlined “Against Trump.”

“We sympathize with many of the complaints of Trump supporters about the GOP, but that doesn’t make the mogul any less flawed a vessel for them,” the editors of the magazine wrote. “Some conservatives have made it their business to make excuses for Trump and duly get pats on the head from him. Count us out. Donald Trump is a menace to American conservatism who would take the work of generations and trample it underfoot in behalf of a populism as heedless and crude as the Donald himself.”

The *Weekly Standard*, the voice of the neoconservative wing of the Republican Party, was equally harsh in its assessment of Trump.

“Arguably, the single biggest story of the 2016 presidential contest has been how Trump’s candidacy has divided the Republican Party,” wrote Stephen F. Hayes, the magazine’s editor-in-chief. Hayes accused Trump of “casual dishonesty” and alleged that such dishonesty was “a feature of his campaign. And it’s one of the many reasons so many Republicans and conservatives oppose Trump and will never support his candidacy. I’m one of them.”

No one attacked Trump more fiercely than two Republican politicians—Jeff Flake, the Arizona senator, who released a book criticizing the president, and Mitt Romney, the party’s 2012 presidential candidate, who, ironically, had asked for and received Trump’s endorsement in 2012. Romney delivered a jeremiad against Trump at the University of Utah during the height of the 2016 GOP primary campaign.

“I am far from the first to conclude that Donald Trump lacks the temperament to be president,” Romney said. “After all, this is an individual

who mocked a disabled reporter, who attributed a reporter's questions to her menstrual cycle, who mocked a brilliant rival who happened to be a woman due to her appearance, who bragged about his marital affairs, and who laces his public speeches with vulgarity.

"Here's what I know," Romney concluded. "Donald Trump is a phony, a fraud. His promises are as worthless as a degree from Trump University. He's playing the American public for suckers: He gets a free ride to the White House and all we get is a lousy [Make America Great Again] hat."

John Weaver, the chief strategist for the 2016 presidential campaign of Ohio's Republican governor John Kasich, was eager for Kasich to challenge Trump for the nomination in 2020. "Gangrene has entered into the body, and either you join in the effort to cut it out—to kill it—or you acquiesce to it," he said. "We can't stand by and allow racists, neo-Nazis, white supremacists, anti-Semites—whatever you want to call them—free rein in the public discourse. They cannot be normalized."

And Kasich, who refused to support Trump in the general election, and never missed a chance to take a shot at Trump, dropped hints that he was prepared to launch a primary challenge to the incumbent president in 2020.



Many people—I among them—scratch their heads in puzzlement over these attacks from the Right. What exactly do conservative and Republican naysayers have against Trump?

He is in favor of repealing and replacing Obamacare.

So are they.

He is in favor of cutting taxes and reforming the tax code.

So are they.

He is in favor of removing excessive regulations on business.

So are they.

He is in favor of securing America's borders.

So are they.

He is in favor of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

So are they.

He is in favor of repairing America's crumbling infrastructure.

So are they.

He is in favor of appointing "originalists" to the Supreme Court.

So are they.

He is in favor of school choice.

So are they.

He is pro-life.

So are they.

He is in favor of religious freedom and free speech.

So are they.

He is in favor of the right to bear arms.

So are they.

He is in favor of law enforcement and cracking down on crime.

So are they.

Yet his critics on the Right argue that Trump isn't a true conservative. They have an assortment of complaints.

They point out that when he was a businessman Trump contributed to both parties and that Trump himself changed his party registration. But so did Ronald Reagan.

They charge that Trump has no political experience; that he didn't pay his dues by working his way up within the ranks of the Republican Party. This is true, but Trump voters hold that to his credit. They resent a Republican Party that seems big on talk and short on action; they believe that a businessman, focused on results, may do better.

Some Never-Trumpers say they distrust him because on important issues like health care and abortion, he changed his opinions—even if he changed them in a more conservative way; and even if, as any honest reader could attest, Trump's three political books since 2000 were remarkably consistent and largely conservative.

Many other Never-Trumpers assert that Trump's stance on trade and foreign policy doesn't fit a conservative free trade and interventionist orthodoxy. But few conservatives have ever been free trade absolutists—Reagan wasn't—and outside of the neoconservative clique,

internationalism has never been a Republican article of faith. In fact, Trump's assertion of a realist foreign policy, guided by America's national interest, however bluntly expressed, is very much in the mold of traditional American conservatism.

On closer inspection, it seems to me that the major objection to Trump among establishment conservatives and Republicans has little to do with his stands on economic, domestic, or foreign policy. It is almost entirely about his manner, his style, and his appearance. I have heard many of Trump's right-wing critics complain about the way he dresses ("he doesn't button his jacket"), his hair ("a comb over"), his tan ("fake"), his manner of speech ("crude"), and his attacks on his opponents ("way over the top").

Trump offends their sensibility.

These conservatives and Republicans are put off by Trump's "vulgarity." They feel that their taste and manners are superior to his. They don't want to sound like snobs, so they settle on a code word to explain their anti-Trump sentiment: *presidential*.

Donald Trump isn't presidential.

There is truth to that charge. He *isn't* presidential.

According to my sources in the Trump campaign, after Mitt Romney's vicious attack, a fierce debate broke out among Trump's family, friends, and campaign advisers over what to do about Trump's lack of self-control and unpresidential behavior. Heated disagreement inside the campaign intensified when the primary race tightened, and a group of mega-rich Republican donors started pouring millions of dollars into anti-Trump commercials in Florida, which held its crucial primary on March 15.

Members of the Republican establishment—a good old boy network of donors, elected officials, local and state party officials, pollsters, advisers, and conservative pooh-bahs who thought they should run the show—were desperate to prevent Trump from winning the 1,237 delegates needed to claim the GOP nomination. (The prize in Florida was ninety-nine delegates.) They wanted to throw the nomination onto the floor of a contested convention in July, where they could pick a candidate more acceptable to them.

Some of Trump's advisers urged him to stop acting like an Alpha dog, drop the narcissistic me-me-me, refrain from counterattacking his opponents, and focus more on substance and policy. Others urged him to reach into his pockets and invest millions of his own money in TV commercials to answer the establishment's negative ads.

But Trump ignored their advice.

"Why should I change?" Trump told me during one of several phone conversations we had at the time. "I'm going to continue with the strategy that got me where I am."

One of his advisers added: "He's going to rely on Twitter, Facebook, and large campaign rallies, and he has no intention of pouring millions into TV commercials. As for becoming more presidential, let me quote Donald and you'll get the gist. He says and I quote, 'I don't want to be a jerk. I have to do what I have to do. If people attack me, I'm going to attack them even harder and they'll live to regret it.'"

With Donald Trump, what you see is what you get.

And some 62,979,636 voters liked what they saw.

To purchase the book, click [here](#).

