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Introduction by Robert Jervis

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Introduction by Robert Jervis, Columbia University

Anyone reading these reviews will already be familiar with the basic picture of the Donald Trump White House that Woodward presents, and even if they have not read the book most will be able to recite at least a few of the choice anecdotes. But our two reviewers highlight points that need emphasizing. They are well placed to do so. Sir Lawrence Freedman is one of the world's leading authorities on international security and how governments make decisions involving war and peace, having written numerous academic studies, the official history of the Falklands war, and having served as a member of the Chilcot commission that analyzed British behavior before and during the Iraq war. Derek Chollet has not only written about national security issues, but served for six years at high levels in President Barack Obama's State Department, White House, and Pentagon.

Like most observers, they find Woodward's portrayal of how policy is made in the Trump White House both appalling and accurate. As Chollet, who was interviewed for Woodward's *Obama's Wars*,¹ notes, Woodward "is meticulous, diligent, and careful to get it right." As someone who Woodward interviewed for *Veil*,² I would add that his reputation for being a skillful reporter is well earned—before I saw him, I had decided what I would reveal about the post-mortem I had written for the CIA about the fall of the Shah of Iran, but through intelligent and gentle probing, he got me to say a good deal more. As both reviewers note, however, Woodward's skill as an interviewer comes with defects as well—his account is heavily indebted to those who are his sources, leading to both possible biases and, as Freedman points out, to "large chunks of the story [being] skated over when there is no dialogue available because Woodward has not been able to talk to enough of the key characters." Even if Woodward's account is accurate, it is also incomplete, perhaps to the point of being misleading. Europe, for example, hardly figures in *Fear* at all.

Our reviewers note that the picture presented in *Fear* is more startling in some of the specific anecdotes than it is in its general portrayal. This is not surprising because Trump "does not keep his innermost thoughts to himself" (Freedman), and "the Trump in the Oval Office is the same guy as the one speaking before a packed audience in a mid-sized arena" (Chollet). The very fact that what you see is what you get is noteworthy and part of Trump's appeal.

Trump has questioned many of the verities of American foreign policy in a way that disturbs Washington insiders and foreign policy experts, and Chollet believes that "it's not that Trump's questions are inherently wrong," but that they are not part of a thoughtful process. To take one example that Woodward does not, Trump's reported question of "What good are nuclear weapons if you can't use them," is a very good one.³ Unfortunately the answer—or, rather, answers—are complicated and disputed, and Trump has neither the patience to sit through prolonged discussions of them nor the administrative skill to design a process where

¹ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

² Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012).

³ See, for example, Alex Shephard, "[Minutes | News and Notes](https://www.newrepublic.com/minutes/135787/donald-trump-reportedly-nuke-curious)" (blog), *The New Republic* (website), 2016, <https://www.newrepublic.com/minutes/135787/donald-trump-reportedly-nuke-curious>; or Matthew J. Belvedere, "Trump asks why US can't use nukes: MSNBC," *CNBC*, 3 August 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/08/03/trump-asks-why-us-cant-use-nukes-msnbc-joe-scarborough-reports.html>.

they would be hashed out. The potential value of asking naïve questions is great, but the fruits can only be gathered by a president and an administration that are disciplined.

Fear highlights the conflict between Trump and the permanent government, abetted by high-level political appointees, but it is worth noting that this phenomena, although carried to extremes under Trump, is a constant feature of American government. Every president at least since Franklin D. Roosevelt has complained vociferously that his subordinates do not carry out his directives and that slow-rolling, if not sabotage, is often the order of the day. Similarly, White House aides often decry the back-stabbing that characterizes the process and the difficulties in setting a consistent course. But just as the extent of the turnover among top officials is much greater in the Trump administration than in its predecessors, so too is the disorganization and the high-level resistance. Perhaps it is at a point where a quantitative difference becomes a qualitative one. The impact of this on the substance of American foreign relations and the patterns of world politics, however, are beyond Woodward's ken, and we will have to await other investigators and subsequent events.

Participants:

Robert Jervis is Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics at Columbia University and Founding Editor of ISSF. His most recent book is *How Statesmen Think* (Princeton University Press, 2017). He was President of the American Political Science Association in 2000-01 and is the founding editor of the International Security Studies Forum.

Derek Chollet is the Executive Vice President of The German Marshall Fund of the United States. He served in the Obama Administration at the State Department, White House, and Pentagon, most recently as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

Lawrence Freedman was Professor of War Studies at King's College London from 1982 to 2014. He was the official historian of the Falklands Campaign and a member of the official UK Inquiry into the Iraq War. In addition to his most recent book, *The Future of War: A History* (PublicAffairs, 2017), he published *Strategy: A History* (Oxford University Press) in 2013.

Essay by Derek Chollet, The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF)

Bob Woodward's *Fear* is Washington's version of a blockbuster beach book: it is a fast read, at times gripping, often entertaining, and completely horrifying. The characters are two-dimensional, the plot is thin yet easy to follow, and the writing spare. It sold over one million copies in its first week. Like a good James Patterson book, the chapters are short and the action is quick. There are surprise twists. There are cliffhangers. And there are scenes you can't forget.

The problem, of course, is that this isn't a work of fiction or even (like Patterson's most recent thriller, written with Bill Clinton) something loosely based on reality.¹ Woodward has written as reliable an account we have thus far of life inside the Trump White House, showing in fine detail how a president with authoritarian instincts, amateurish management, and scant understanding of how the government works tries to operate in a democratic system. If you care about the future of the American republic, this is a scary book. As the title suggests, that is the point.

Over four decades, a Woodward book has become one of the presidency's rituals, like the State of the Union Address or pardoning a turkey at Thanksgiving. Woodward is such a fixture in the presidential firmament that he has become a character of his own, and some of the more distracting parts of this book are when he steps into the story to quote himself from an appearance on one of the Sunday talk shows. Yet he is widely respected—and yes, feared—for his dogged reporting and ability to get insiders to talk.

As a writer, Woodward has always attracted his share of critics. He has been dismissed as a “stenographer” and the “literary equivalent of C-SPAN 3.”² But as a journalist, he is rarely proven to be wrong. I was one of those government officials who spent a few hours talking with Woodward for one of his previous books (*Obama's Wars*, published in 2011)³, and can attest that he is meticulous, diligent, and careful to get it right.

Woodward will make scholars uncomfortable with his use of anonymous sources—although it is not too difficult to figure out that he spent a lot of time talking with former Trump officials Steve Bannon, Reince Priebus, Gary Cohn, Rob Porter, as well as Trump's former lawyer John Dowd and Senator Lindsey Graham. Moreover, Woodward misses too many opportunities to zoom out and place the revelations he has unearthed into a broader perspective. Nevertheless, his book is an indispensable resource for anyone who wants to understand the Trump administration's inner workings. With vivid anecdotes and juicy quotes, Woodward paints a portrait of presidency unhinged. To get a sense of what *Fear* offers, let's consider a few illustrative examples.

“I've had these views for thirty years” (138).

¹ Bill Clinton and James Patterson, *The President Is Missing: A Novel* (New York: Little Brown and Company/Knopf, 2018).

² Jill Abramson, “Bob Woodward's meticulous, frightening look inside the Trump White House,” *Washington Post*, 6 September 2018.

³ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

That is Trump's response to economic adviser Gary Cohn, whom Woodward depicts as a beleaguered former Wall Street titan fighting an endless struggle to talk the president out of his nostalgic views about the American economy, especially manufacturing and trade. Trump may be an opportunist and erratic, but he does have a coherent worldview that is relatively straightforward and has been largely consistent over time (one of the earliest and most insightful analysts to point this out was Brookings Institution scholar Tom Wright⁴).

Trump seems impervious to learning. One veteran intelligence official who has briefed him once told me that Trump has the most severe confirmation bias he has ever experienced—and a core theme of Woodward's story is how the rarely Trump deviates from what he has always believed. What is revealing about this quotation is that Trump seems to acknowledge his worldview is rooted in things that may have been once true but may not be anymore. But no matter: the reason he sticks to his views is that he has always had them.

"It felt like we were walking along the edge of a cliff perpetually" (xx).

That's Rob Porter, the White House staff secretary (normally a more anonymous position given its responsibility for process and paper flow) who is shown on the front-lines trying to block Trump's erratic instincts, whether by encouraging him to dial down the tweets or blocking him from abruptly withdrawing from trade agreements. Woodward's book could have been entitled "Trump at War with His Advisers," as nearly every page depicts the President's top aides working to control his impulses, quash bad ideas, and steady things.

This is an uphill struggle, as Trump keeps reverting back to his disorderly instincts and long-held views. "Nothing is dead until it's buried around here," Trump's first chief of staff, Reince Priebus, is quoted as saying (164). But these aides knew what they were getting into—and whether they were blinded by wishful thinking or their ambition (likely both), this is the same Trump we've known all along, showing the same predilections and policy impulses. This is the president that all of Trump's opponents—in the 2016 Republican primaries, the Democrats in the general election, and the "Never-Trumpers"—warned about. Now, after taking positions in the Trump Administration when many others did not, they are trying to portray themselves to journalists like Woodward or in anonymous *New York Times* op-eds as the "adults," the "resistance," or the "steady state." Yet while claiming they are saving the country, in fact they are most interested in saving themselves.

What is revealing is that most of these characters had left their positions by the time Woodward's book hit the shelves. Porter, whom Woodward portrays heroically, was forced to leave when two of his ex-wives went public with credible allegations of physical abuse. This had held up his security clearance, and although Woodward does not report this, one of the reasons senior White House officials had resisted his leaving for so long despite mounting evidence was that they saw him as one of the few restraining influences on Trump.

*"F*ck it, pull it back and put it in Portland!" (106).*

This is what Trump said he wanted to do with U.S. THAAD missile defense system instead of deploying it in South Korea. To be clear, no one was proposing putting the THAAD in Portland or anywhere else in the US.

⁴ Thomas Wright, "Trump's 19th Century Foreign Policy," *Politico Magazine*, 20 January 2016.

But Trump could not get over the fact the U.S. would put the system near Seoul—and keep nearly 30,000 US troops there—without the South Koreans footing the bill.

If anyone needs any further evidence of what Trump means by “America First,” Woodward provides an abundance of it. As Trump sees things, the U.S. has been ripped off by other nations, it has been exploited by unfair trade deals, its security partners are all free-loaders, and there is no such thing as allies, only transactional relationships. Trump’s go-to insult for military leaders and economic advisers trying to convince him differently is to label them “globalists,” as in this salty description of Gary Cohn: “I always knew Gary was a f*ing globalist” (335).

Trump’s skepticism of longstanding U.S. military commitments is no secret, and Woodward provides numerous examples of Trump questioning the wisdom of NATO, the Iraq War, allied defense spending, the war in Afghanistan, and U.S. troops in Korea. He sees the U.S. force presence around the world as a matter of protecting allies, rather than being about pursuing American interests. It’s not that Trump’s questions are inherently wrong: Barack Obama also asked hard questions about the wisdom of adding troops to Afghanistan and expressed frustration about allies as “free riders.” The difference is he did so as a careful decision-maker, not as someone following a grievance he had carried for decades.

In all of these debates, Trump frustration with—and many instances, outright disdain for—the advice of senior U.S. military leadership is striking. Trump loves to bask in the glow of martial glory, but he does not think much of the military advice he gets. He’s constantly barking about how military officials don’t “get it” and how he knows more than they do (the depiction of H.R. McMaster, who was never a good fit for National Security Adviser, is especially brutal).

According to Woodward, Trump’s treatment of the military was one of his attributes that most alarmed his first Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson. Things have hardly improved since the events Woodward describes; recently Trump described Defense Secretary James Mattis with the ultimate insult, as “sort of a Democrat.” It was not meant as a compliment. Of all the hypocrisies of the Trump era, the fact there has not been more outrage about his treatment of the military—or that he has not once visited troops in Afghanistan or Iraq—is one of the most galling. Imagine how many pundit heads would explode if Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton had spent so much time watching television or golfing without once meeting U.S. troops in the field.

“They’re in violation, and you need to figure out how the argument is going to be made to declare that” (131).

Trump never made a secret of his disdain for the Iran nuclear deal. Yet he never could articulate a coherent reason why, other than that it had been a central piece of Obama’s legacy. Woodward shows that despite a lot of talk about using U.S. leverage to revise the deal to make it stronger, Trump never seriously considered doing anything other than pulling out. Based on no evidence, he remained convinced that Iran was violating the agreement—and as the above quotation from Trump makes clear, he ordered his advisers to manufacture a reason to prove him right. They never could, so the U.S. simply withdrew from the deal because it was “bad.”

So whether it is Iran, North Korea, or Syria, what we see is a foreign policy guided more by presidential impulse and assertion than facts and strategy. Woodward offers no evidence of any discussion about what the U.S. would do once it had followed Trump’s wish, and what it would do differently to address the real

threat from Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. All that matters, it seems, is whether things appear "tough." This is not a means to an end. It is an end itself.

"You've got to show strength" (281).

According to Woodward, this is Trump's response to those advisers who worried that calling Kim Jong-Un "Little Rocket Man" was over-the-top, and it perfectly sums up a core attribute. Being strong is Trump's obsession. For him, this takes the form of crude schoolyard machismo, where one asserts dominance by calling people names and pushing them around. In terms of policy, this means an emphasis on hard power—which has translated into a higher defense budget and primacy on military tools of statecraft. It also means putting a premium on acting "decisive," always going for the high drama and manufacturing the biggest spectacle.

There is another element of what Trump means by being strong—being disruptive. Trump sees the benefit of keeping everyone guessing; the more uncertainty the better. Some have tried to explain this as a result of Trump being an experienced negotiator, as though he has closely studied Thomas Schelling. But Woodward makes clear that for Trump, disruption is not a strategy. It is something intrinsic to him. Disruption is his nature.

Having "to show strength" also helps explain Trump's affinity for leaders with a similar perspective. He clearly enjoys spending time with autocrats rather than democrats. Trump is attracted to partners who in his eyes seem "tough" and "can deliver." After reading Woodward, there is no need to guess why Trump seems so biased towards governments in Russia and Saudi Arabia, or why he would profess love for the likes of Kim Jong-Un. In each of these regimes, he sees something he can relate to—or aspire to achieve.

"This was no longer a presidency" (252).

This is how Rob Porter, the person who spent as much time at Trump's side as anyone in the White House, described things in the aftermath of Trump's atrocious response to the deadly white nationalist rally in Charlottesville. From the harrowing first weeks of the Administration, dominated by the chaotic implementation of the Muslim travel ban, to the endless cycle of staff chaos, the running bureaucratic battles over trade deals, and the out-of-control roller coaster of policymaking towards North Korea, the presidency Woodward describes is unlike anything American democracy has seen.

For scholars of American politics and foreign policy, Woodward's book will not change many views of Trump. Anyone who has ever watched or read transcripts of any of Trump's rallies will find many familiar themes and rants. The Trump in the Oval Office is the same guy as the one speaking before a packed audience in a mid-size arena—the only difference is that in the White House, he is not surrounded by a crowd screaming "lock her up."

So one wonders how we will remember *Fear*. Will we think of it like Woodward's first book *All the President's Men*,⁵ as a whodunit about the unraveling of a presidency and a democratic system of accountability that

⁵ Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, *All the President's Men* (Simon and Schuster, Reissue Edition, 2014).

triumphed in the end? Or instead, will it be remembered as a snapshot of the moment that sparked the unwinding of American democracy itself?

Essay by Lawrence Freedman, Kings College London

Donald Trump's reckless rollercoaster of a Presidency has been a riveting spectacle, thrilling some while terrifying many. This has already led to numerous books describing how he won the 2016 election, to his own surprise, and the chaotic transition leading up to the inauguration.¹ The chaos continues. Bob Woodward, the veteran journalist who has written extensively on recent Presidents, has added his contribution to the list.

One problem for an investigative journalist is that there is not a lot left to investigate. Trump was far more secretive in his business dealings (where there is still more to be uncovered) than he has been in his Presidency. He does not keep his innermost thoughts to himself. Instead he shares them daily on Twitter. His closest advisors have all urged him to stop tweeting so much or at least think twice before he presses the send button, but this is his 'megaphone,' his means of staying in touch with his base 'without any filter' (206), feeding their grievances and aggressions, proclaiming his achievements, and denigrating his enemies. His tweets are the foundation of his political career. They are often impulsive, normally hyperbolic, sometimes venomous and regularly use superlatives in an inappropriate fashion. But they rarely reveal guile. Their authenticity delights the base but frustrates those looking for hidden depths. None of his depths are hidden.

Another problem for a new book may be a degree of outrage fatigue. The tale Woodward tells is now all rather familiar. Perhaps jaws have already dropped so far that they can no longer be set to their original position. Damning stories that might have finished the careers of other politicians appear daily, yet Trump never bends. We now know the man—coarse, profane, narcissistic, incurious, with a limited attention span, prompted more by Fox News than professional briefings, careless of facts, indifferent to convention, demanding loyalty from others while offering none in return, demeaning his staff and turning them against each other, raging when things go wrong and always blaming anybody but himself. A big meeting with all the key foreign policy players in July 2017 was summarized as the President lecturing and insulting the entire group, who were in return "extremely concerned about his erratic nature, his relative ignorance, his inability to learn, as well as what they consider his dangerous views" (226).

Those views, of course, are about allies and alliances, which he dislikes, and tariffs, which he loves. Trump described his advisers as wanting "to protect everybody—that we pay for" (124). Allies coping with democracy impress him less than leaders displaying raw strength, even if this runs into dictatorship. He shows contempt for anything suggesting weakness. He never admits to error or shame, and when challenged always goes on the offensive. This was the advice he gave Judge Brett Kavanaugh when his nomination for the Supreme Court struggled in the face of credible allegations of past misbehavior. And who is to say that it is not a winning formula. The 'Fear' of Woodward's title is the foundation of his power—the fear of Trump's own wrath or that of his base.

¹ See, for example, Michael Wolff, *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*, (New York: Henry Holt, 2018); Omarosa Manigault Newman, *Unhinged: An Insider's Account of the Trump White House* (New York: Gallery Press, 2018); Rick Wilson, *Everything Trump Touches Dies: A Republican Strategist Gets Real About the Worst President Ever* (New York, Free Press, 2018); Craig Unger, *House of Trump, House of Putin: The Untold Story of Donald Trump and the Russian Mafia*, (New York: Dutton, 2018); David Frum, *Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic*, (New York: Harper, 2018); *James Comey, A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership* (New York: Flatiron, 2018).

Another title might have been ‘Exhaustion,’ for there is something relentless about Trump and Trumpism. The bullying, bombast, and bluster is incessant. Opponents slink away, lacking the mental resources to continue the struggle. They retire hoping for a Democratic Congress, or Special Counsel Robert Mueller or New York prosecutors to identify Trump’s legal vulnerabilities and provide relief. Exhausting too for those who allow themselves to be persuaded to work for Trump. They all seem to end up diminished by the experience, even to the point of criminal records. Some have found a form of nobility through internal damage limitation. They rely on his forgetfulness about his past demands, whisk away calamitous memos from his desk, and push process as a means of procrastination. For this they get no thanks and eventually a point comes when they are also overcome by exhaustion. They can cope no longer, so they leave to tell journalists like Woodward about their awful experiences

Woodward’s books have always benefitted from access to ‘deep background sources’ who tell their stories at length, often to the point where their identities require little guesswork. Their recollections are normally represented as dialogue, so one must assume either good memories or good records of their own. Woodward presents them with little accompanying analysis. This means that the story is very much the one that his interlocutors want told. Unsurprisingly, their role in events tends to appear in a favorable light. (A good example of this is Senator Lindsay Graham.) Those who keep quiet may find their reputations damaged. A further problem with this approach is that the dialogue gives the book the feel of a script for a soap opera. It is a succession of vignettes that move at a fast pace between a few plot lines. The reader never gets bored. But large chunks of the story are skated over when there is no dialogue available because Woodward has not been able to talk to enough of the key characters.

Moreover some of the obvious sources are figures who have left the White House—Gary Cohn of the Council of Economic Advisers, the ubiquitous Steve Bannon, Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, Staff Secretary Rob Porter, and lawyer John Dowd. As these characters bow out they take their bit of the drama with them. The book ends with Dowd explaining to Trump that he should not testify before Robert Mueller because he would be bound to perjure himself. This suggests that Trump was then gearing up to answer Mueller’s questions under oath. He has yet to do so. Woodward ends with the departure of a source but the story goes on.

Accounts such as this are always going to be interim, but even within Woodward’s timescale he leave a lot out and many assertions appears dated. A big example is the strange story of how Trump came to fall in love with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Woodward’s account is all about the belligerent first stage of the relationship—the acceleration of North Korea’s nuclear and missile program, the exchange of insults between the two leaders, Trump wondering about pre-emption and assassination, his advisors fussing as he suggests embarking on a trade war with South Korea in the middle of this crisis, and almost releasing a tweet announcing that the dependents of U.S. military personnel would be withdrawn from the South, an act that it was known would be taken in the North as warning of an imminent attack (301-302).

Woodward can obviously be forgiven for not recounting the full glory of the second stage of this bizarre relationship—the April communiqué between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Kim that opened up a prospect of peace, unification, and denuclearization, the June summit in Singapore between the two, or even

Trump's recent explanation that his love is based on the 'beautiful' letters written to him by Kim.² But the reader of this book who is unaware of these events would be completely taken aback. Yet it was evident in 2017 that Moon Jae-in was trying to pursue his own unification agenda and defuse the tension between the South's major ally and his major adversary. He used the February 2018 Winter Olympics to get a conversation going with Kim and to arrange a display of unity with a joint North-South team. All Woodward says about the Olympics is that "the pressure campaign on North Korea was effectively put on hold' while the games took place," (308) which is lazy. Moreover, the talks leading to the April communiqué and the Singapore summit came in early March. By the time Dowd resigned as Trump's lawyer, which is when Woodward signs off, it was evident that something was up. He reminds us that when his hapless Secretary of State Rex Tillerson suggested in October 2017 that some sort of diplomatic initiative with the North might be possible Trump undercut him by tweeting that he was "wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man" (282). It might have at least been possible to note that by the time the book went to press Trump appeared to be reversing himself. Trump's agreement to meeting with Kim was reported on 6 March.³

Part of the problem here is that although Woodward writes extensively about foreign policy he does not actually appear to have talked to any foreigners, or even cranked into the story line any material that might help explain how foreigners reacted to these events or tried to influence them. On the Korean case, for example, President Moon is only mentioned urging Trump not to end the KORUS Trade agreement and being belittled by Trump, but we learn nothing about his diplomatic initiative or the nature of his later communications with the White House.

The voices of other leaders are only faintly heard if they impinge on the internal struggles for influence within the White House, which is not very often. Trump's son in law Jared Kushner, for example, gets credit (if that is the right word given later developments) for pushing the case for meeting with the Saudis and the importance of his friend Mohammed Bin Salman for Trump's first overseas visit, but we learn nothing of what happened at the actual summit or what this meant for the war in Yemen. Yemen is only referred to by reference to the hunt for Islamist terrorist but not to the Saudi role in its horrible civil war. Israel gets a mention because, with Saudi Arabia, it was hostile to Iran and delighted to see President Obama's policy reversed but there is nothing on Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the U.S. embassy or for that matter Kushner's much vaunted peace plan. There is no reference to the Palestinians.

Perhaps even more astonishingly the index contains no citations for any of the three M's of European politics—Macron, May, and Merkel. Trump's relationships with all three were difficult for different reasons. German Chancellor Angela Merkel in particular suffered most from Trump's conviction that Germany got the benefits of alliance without paying for them. British Prime Minister Theresa May, despite her efforts to forge good relations immediately after the inauguration, has got little in return. The unwillingness of all three to go along with Trump on some of his major initiatives—such as Iran, Jerusalem and Climate Change provides a striking indication of the reluctance of others to follow where Trump wishes to lead. Justin Trudeau of Canada also fails to make it into the index. This is despite the effort Trudeau, long with French

² 'He wrote me beautiful letters and they're great letters. We fell in love.' Trump at rally in West Virginia, 'Trump on Kim: Tough Talk ... 'And Then We Fell in Love,' *New York Times*, 30 September 2018.

³ "Trump accepts offer to meet Kim Jong In," CNN, 9 March 2018.
<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/08/politics/donald-trump-kim-jong-un/>.

President Emmanuel Macron, put in early on to establish some sort of rapport with Trump, while irritating him at the same time by being so clearly on the side of the ‘globalists,’ espousing all those liberal values against which he had run in his campaign.

On Trump’s pet subject of trade the absence of foreigners makes the description of events curiously lop-sided. It is largely presented as a continuing battle between Gary Cohn and Rob Porter against Trump until exhaustion set in. When those two left, Trump got to work doing just the damage Cohn warned about. As an aside we can note that the advisors most in tune with Trump’s inner feelings—Peter Navarro on trade, and Stephen Miller on immigration—have managed to stay the course better than those who spent their time resisting him.

Russia appears more often, largely because of its role in the 2016 campaign. The Mueller investigation and Trump’s intense frustration with its persistence is understandably a vital if unsurprising part of Woodward’s story, but this also impacted on foreign policy. We learn of Trump’s irritation that this cloud hanging over him made it hard to repair relations with Russia but nothing about how this affected the management of the Ukraine issue or the extraordinary to-and-froing with Congress about tightening sanctions on Russia. In one throwaway sentence we learn that “Russia had privately warned Mattis that if there was a war in the Baltics, Russia would not hesitate to use tactical nuclear weapons against NATO” (132). But we are told little more about the background to this threat or the circumstances in which it was made.

The book ends abruptly, so there are no conclusions about the Trump effect on international affairs. It is interesting to see how the President feels trapped at times. The weight of military and expert advice telling him he has no choice but to stick with Afghanistan pins him down even though he trusts more the judgment of four young enlisted soldiers. He reported this to Bannon who reported it to Woodward: “Totally corrupt. The people are not worth fighting for ... NATO does nothing. They’re a hindrance” (124). It is also important to note that he is far more interested in doing deals than prolonged standoffs, however threatening his rhetoric. Other countries have no choice but to do what they can with him—but recently we have seen the South Koreans, Mexicans, and Canadians get their trade deals sorted with some but not massive concessions. And of course there is the case of Kim, where Trump continually misrepresents North Korean promises.

Maybe one of the advantages in living in an imaginary world is that your deals are also as you imagine them to be, and so you can be satisfied with outcomes that would have been denounced had they been negotiated by anybody else.