

From [Democracy Now](#) | Original Article

**AMY GOODMAN:** This is *Democracy Now!*, [democracynow.org](#), *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Amy Goodman, as we continue our conversation with award-winning investigative journalist Allan Nairn. I asked him to talk more about his assessment of the opening months of the Trump presidency.

**ALLAN NAIRN:** It's not just the Trump presidency. It's a right-wing revolution, which has captured control, up to this moment, of the presidency, the House, part of the Senate and now the Supreme Court. And if they abolish the legislative filibuster in the Senate, which they may, then they will have total, absolute control of all branches of government and will enter a radically new phase beyond anything that's happened so far, because there will be absolutely no constraints on what they can do. The only constraints could be if they trip over themselves, as they have on some occasions up to now.

Trump brought in a collection, a coalition, of broadly rightist elements—racists, neofascists, the Republican establishment, the Koch brothers, oligarchs, all sorts of elements with their own very well-defined agendas for radical change in the U.S. Now, some points of those agendas clash, so that's caused some of the problems—for example, on the repeal of Obamacare. But on 80 percent of things they agree, and they're moving forward. They've already systematically started repealing constraints on pollution, constraints on police forces, that have been—had previously been placed under federal supervision because their involvement in killing of civilians, often with racist motivations. They are moving to give Wall Street and corporations complete license to commit crimes. Under the Obama-Clinton establishment, these corporate figures, when they committed crimes, would often end up having to pay a big settlement. They'd have to pay some billions of dollars to the Justice Department. Under Trump, not only will they not be criminally prosecuted, they won't have to pay civil settlements, and they'll be encouraged to do their worst. A very effective part of Trump's campaign was saying—linking Clinton to Goldman Sachs. The Trump White House and government is stocked with Goldman Sachs people as no government ever before, even exceeding the Clinton team, which is—which is saying a lot.

On the international front, it's not as if Trump is being digested by the security establishment.

It's that Trump is pushing the security establishment to become even more violent, to use cruder, less subtle tactics. Already, he has moved away from one key element of U.S. policy overseas, which is hypocrisy. The U.S. has always supported—the basic U.S. policy for decades has been, in country after country, to support the military and security forces as the primary U.S. interlocutors, but then, on top of that, to also support, when it's convenient, when there's no dangerous candidate, an elected government that can give some veneer and also some local social stability, and also, while on the one hand handing arms and training and political cover and intelligence to the armies and the security forces and the death squads, using the other hand to admonish them, saying, "Oh, that massacre you just did, using our weapons, using our training, you shouldn't have done that massacre. That was a little—little bit excessive." This is one reason why you often find resentment from U.S. clients regarding this hypocritical approach of the U.S., which is, after all, fundamentally supporting them. Trump strips away the hypocrisy. He continues to give the arms and the training and the intelligence and the political cover. But he does away with the aspect that the Obama administration, in particular, specialized in, was the hypocrisy, the criticism.

For example, when el-Sisi and the army seized power in Egypt, after two massive massacres of opponents, supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, roughly a thousand people in each massacre, John Kerry said that they had moved to implement democracy. After the army and el-Sisi seized power in Egypt and did two massacres of roughly a thousand people each, of opponents and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, John Kerry said they had moved to implement democracy. The Obama administration continued military and intelligence aid to the el-Sisi government, but they cut some of it back, in protest of these massacres, and they made some human rights criticisms of the government.

Trump comes in, and he changes the approach. He revokes the criticisms. He fully restores and says he intends to increase the military aid, and he welcomes el-Sisi to the White House, embraces him, says they agree. And he does this, by the way, three days before he criticizes Assad, who for years worked with the CIA. The CIA would send abductees to Assad for interrogation and torture. Trump criticizes Assad and said he's going after him, and then later he does bomb Syria. But Trump welcomes el-Sisi to the White House, and giving him the message, "Go for it. The U.S. is totally behind you. We are not going to criticize you."

It's the same approach to Israel. One reason why Israel and the Netanyahu administration is so delighted with Kerry—with Trump. Obama pushed through a massive, largest-ever weapons and aid and training package for the Israeli military, as the Israeli military was in the midst of tightening the repression in the West Bank, after they had, not too long before, done a massive

slaughter with their air attack on Gaza. Obama did that. But at the same time he wagged his finger at Israel on certain issues, like settlements. Trump comes in and says no more finger wagging, and, to boot, we're going to try to increase the military aid that props up the Israeli state even more, and we're going to align politically with the elements in Israel, the settler elements, who are constantly attacking and berating Netanyahu for being too soft on the Palestinians. That's who Trump's new ambassador to Israel represents. And in country—

**AMY GOODMAN:** I mean, David Friedman was approved. He was his bankruptcy lawyer. He now is the new U.S. ambassador to Israel. And he raised money for the settlements.

**ALLAN NAIRN:** And he openly aligns with the political elements in Israel who want expulsion and even more killing of the Palestinians. And this is the new Trump policy in country after country after country around the world.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Well, can you talk specifically about the environment? I mean, talk about the Trump Cabinet, from Rex Tillerson, the former CEO of ExxonMobil, being secretary of state, to the Oklahoma attorney general—Oklahoma, which is now rocked by earthquakes—

**ALLAN NAIRN:** Yeah.

**AMY GOODMAN:** —which it never had in its past. It's this—now has become the state of fracking. But the Oklahoma attorney general, Scott Pruitt, who sued the EPA 14 times, now head of the EPA, to Governor Perry, head of the Energy Department, who sat on the board of Energy Transfer Partners, that owns the Dakota Access pipeline.

**ALLAN NAIRN:** Right. Well, Trump has essentially sent subversives into the Cabinet, atop the agencies, to dismantle, destroy the agencies. In the words of Steve Bannon, to—how did he put it? To deconstruct the administrative state. Gorsuch, the new Supreme Court justice put in by Trump, his mother, Anne Gorsuch, was Reagan's EPA administrator. She was one of two such Cabinet appointees sent in by Reagan to dismantle their respective departments. The other was the head of Interior. When I say "dismantle," I mean dismantle all aspects of their work and regulations that run counter to the interests of corporations and polluters and may be favorable to the interests of what are seen as liberal or Democratic interest groups. Reagan only did that with two agencies:

EPA

and Interior. During the—when Rick Perry ran for president, he got in trouble, because, although he was openly touting similar dismantling of various government departments, including education, unfortunately for him, he couldn't remember the whole list, so everybody laughed at him.

Now, with Trump in—and not just Trump, but Trump and the whole radical Republican rightist establishment—they're trying to do it with every department, every department that has within its mission any kind of service to the poor, service protecting the rights of working people, protecting the rights of protesters, protecting the rights of women, or that has within its work any kinds of projects or regulations that inconvenience corporations and rich oligarchs. This administration is trying to dismantle those functions of government across the board. It is systematic. It is sweeping. And Bannon is entirely right when he makes the claim that it's revolutionary. You know, he compared himself to Lenin, kind of a Lenin from the other direction, from the radical right. And it's true. They are engaged in a truly revolutionary project. And it has to be stopped.

What you might say is the good news is that history is moving in a much faster pace now. Events have speeded up. Bigger change is possible faster than it was before. So it is conceivable that if there's enough resistance from the streets, if there's enough activism within the many corners of the system where concessions can be won, especially at the state and local level, especially within the Democratic Party, that's backed up by mass disruption from below, it might be possible to reverse some of these revolutionary steps from the right, perhaps sooner than would have been the case in the slower historical conditions that prevailed before Trump.

But we're in the midst of this massive crisis. And, you know, the damage assessment is months from coming in. We have just seen a tiny fraction now of the people in this country and

overseas who are going to die preventable deaths as a result. For example, they're going after programs run by the Agriculture Department and others that feed hungry kids in the United States. They want to kill them. They're also going after programs in the U.S. foreign aid budget that feed starving people overseas. Now, the U.S. government does lots of bad things, but it's also the case that the U.S. still is, to a certain extent, a democracy. And over years and years of struggle, activists have won certain concessions. And there are thousands upon thousands of passages in laws and programs within government that are the result not of corporate dictates, but of pressure from below, pressure from racial justice and labor and human rights and women's rights activists, consumer rights, environmental justice. There have been victories won over the years, very hard-fought. And lots of these are put into legislation. They're put into the functions of departments. And what Trump and the Republican coalition are trying to do is rip them out systematically, dismantle them systematically. And that's what's underway now. And many, many thousands of extra people will die in the U.S. and overseas as a result.

**AMY GOODMAN:** You have an enormous irony, where here you have President Trump accusing the Obama administration, President Obama himself, of surveilling him, of wiretapping him, yet, at the same time, in Congress, they roll back privacy protections, the whole internet privacy act that has now been written into law. Can you talk about the significance of this, which would seem to join right and left?

**ALLAN NAIRN:** Yeah. I'm actually a little surprised that the—what I guess is the—maybe the majority of the population, or at least the majority of younger people in the United States, who essentially live their lives online, are not completely up in arms about this, are not storming Washington about this, because what they've done is they've made it easier for online private, profit-making corporations to sell the most intimate details of your life. You'd think people would object to that.

But what it also shows is that much of this new government's agenda is strictly corporate. Strictly corporate. Now, the Democratic Party is, of course, also dominated, at its elite level, by corporations and the rich, but the Democratic Party also has as its base all sorts of working and poor and activist constituencies that are against those corporate interests and the rich. And they fight it out. And the outcome of those fights is Democratic policy. In the new order, with this Trump Republican administration, it is straight corporate. And the only resistance that those corporations get is if some aspect of their agenda happens to clash with, impinge on the program of, say, the racists or the neofascists or a rival corporate faction. For example, the Kochs have disagreements with other oligarchs on various issues. But those are the only constraints on corporations. There is absolutely no constraint within this new Republican

governing coalition from working people or poor people, even though Trump is making a big play to working people by addressing, in a way that the Democrats should have, but they never did, the realities that the U.S. working class has been gutted by the decades upon decades of bipartisan neoliberalism that was embraced by Obama and Clinton.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Finally, can you talk about Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller, their position in the White House, what they represent, the talk of the infighting between them and Jared Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law?

**ALLAN NAIRN:** Well, Bannon comes from Goldman Sachs. Miller comes from the most openly racist part of the anti-immigrant movement, and after that, from the office of then senator, now attorney general, Jeff Sessions, one of the most openly racist—racist politicians in Washington. I was actually a little—I've actually been a little surprised that Bannon has lasted this long, not for any political reason, but just because a few weeks back they put him on the cover of *Time* magazine, and they started talking about him as the real president, and you wouldn't think Trump would tolerate that kind of thing. Whether he stays or goes matters in a certain sense, because he's obviously a very powerful adviser, but all it really matters for is the balance of the competing radical-rightist interests within the administration. So, for example, if the Bannon and the neofascist, racist people are edged aside a bit, maybe that means more power for the Koch brothers' philosophy. Or maybe that means more power for the mainstream Goldman Sachs philosophy. Or maybe that means more power for the radical, intolerant religious right faction. Or maybe that means more powerful for whichever company or foreign interest made the biggest indirect payoff to Trump and his family that particular week. Whatever.

But the point is—the larger point is that that's what this administration, and this Republican group that now controls Congress, consists of. All of these radical factions that mean increased suffering and increased death for the majority of people in this country and overseas, they are now in there. They are now inhabiting the state. And they sometimes clash among themselves. But whoever wins those internal clashes, the loser is poor people, working people, people who are targets of discrimination. And also, another loser is the chance to reverse these radical changes they're making, because they're—they're very strategic. They're trying to set it in stone. And now with a majority on the Supreme Court and perhaps the impending lifting of the legislative filibuster in the Senate, they will have the power to set it in stone, and a near absolute power within the federal establishment system.