

Fear: Trump in the White House

Bob Woodward, **Fear: Trump in the White House**, New York, Simon and Schuster, 2018, pp. 448.

Reviewed by: Ms. Farazi Batool*

Bob Woodward's recent book 'Fear: Trump in the White House' is an important piece of literature on Trump's Journey in becoming a President of USA. Along his journey, the book also sights about his ability of decision making and childish short attention span and refusal to read briefing papers. It is an important book not only because of presidential appropriateness of Trump but also because of the author. The Woodward has written or co-authored eighteen books and his dogged investigative reporting led to Nixon's resignation. The book is based on interviews and discussions which has played both negative and positive role. Author's introductory account of his "hundreds of hours on interviews with first-hand participants and witnesses of these events" has shown his time and determination to complete this book (p. xv). The author has broken other major stories as a reporter and associate editor of The Washington Post; and won two Pulitzer Prizes. His work has been factually unassailable.

'Fear' predominantly aimed at the general reader, at the international level, who is interested in American politics and privileged functions of White House. The book can be divided into three parts starting from pre-election campaign to the zenith of elections and finally to the Trump introduction to the world as a rigorous leader. The book has forty two chapters in which author outstandingly arranged the events chronologically. The book ends during mid-2018, at the time of the resignation of Trump's lawyer John Dowd. The author named this book after the conversation with Donald Trump in March 2016 when Trump was still a presidential candidate. He clings to the words of Trump about real power which is *fear*.

Author has described how Trump became a President of the world's powerful state while overlooking his discreet decision-making abilities

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and new White House regime and also the appointment of his team. The very first page of the enthralling prologue is the story of president's closest adviser Gary Cohn, who was a top economic advisor and director of the US National Economic Council. He deliberately removed and hid a letter dated September 15, 2017, from President Trump to President of South Korea in which the former meant to terminate the U.S.–Korea Free Trade Agreement. Author portrayed the fact since the beginning as the book depicts a White House submersed in dysfunction.

The author starts book by writing about the phone call conversation between Steve Bannon and David Bossie which happened back in 2010, in which Bossie was convincing Bannon about meeting with presidential candidate Trump. Bannon disbelieved that Trump can't be a President but finally able to meet him personally (p. 15). After six years when Bannon was reading the New York Times, he didn't believe that Trump was a presidential candidate against Hillary Clinton (p. 23). Bannon called Trump and ask him for a meeting the very next morning as he believes that despite the negative image Trump can defeat Clinton (p. 25). Bannon presented the strategy to Trump and affirms that they can win the race. Later, Bannon became a CEO of Trump's presidential campaign and successfully defeated Hillary Clinton with his effective strategy. The book supports this bracing assessment in a chronological trajectory, from the arrival of Bannon to lead the campaign in 2016 to the resignation.

Author described the standpoint of Trump on various foreign policies, including China, North Korea, Middle East, Iran and Afghanistan. For instance on Afghanistan, Trump had been against Afghan war for many years even before his presidency (p. 107). For him, the Afghan war is no benefit to the US that's why he decided to withdraw certain troops from Afghan lands. However, the author has shown the discord face of the other top officials including McMaster who are in favour of adding more troops to Afghanistan. The author also has described how Trump was generally against the ideologies of his predecessor. For instance, there are several situations like Iran Nuclear Deal which is mentioned in the book where Trump's decision affects the expectations of many officials, aides and advisors. Same is the case with Trump and Kim Jong Un relations which got personal, however, Trump

expressed it an honour to meet Kim under the right circumstances (p. 234). In such situations, the author expressed Trump as a free thinker who is never afraid of expressing his ideas and views. Woodward also constructs a discourse that Trump is very concerned and having reservations on most of US trade agreements with other countries. He believed that buying cheap goods from other countries has led to unemployment in the USA. However, most of the officials including Gary Cohn object to this approach of Trump as he continues to convince the president that people now prefer working in an office rather than in industries or factories (p. 124).

Author further explored the concerns of White House officials and advisers among themselves. He describes how McMasters expressed his concerns about Mattis, Tillerson and Porter (p. 181). As this book covers wide outlook of specific tenure of Trump in White House, the author did not restrict his book to revolve around only Trump but it also covers the broader aspect of inter-relations of officials and their decisions which has affected the Trump presidency.

The book ends on the resignation of Trump's lawyer John Dowd who was helping Trump on the Muller's investigations. Dowd asserts that Trump is inept of testifying since he does not know or remember some of the details (p. 285). Furthermore, he strongly counsels President against testifying or responses to any of the questions. He upholds that all the questions already have answered since Trump's staff gave their responses (p. 290).

'Fear' is an imperative book not only because it raises questions about the basic fitness for the president's office which Trump lacks but also the overall administration of White House which has a bewildering assortment of individuals who are meant to serve the American constitution while also serving the president. White House officials are more concerned with garnering personal or political advantage rather than upholding democratic ideals and promoting the public interest. The book has raised so many questions on the presidency of Trump until March 2018.

However, Trump himself was not interviewed which is a two-sided story as both blame that there was not an official request. The book articulates a zero-sum view of global politics as it was one-sided only.

However, the book is a captivating read for anyone who wants to understand White House politics and current scenario.