

“FEAR”

Bob Woodward

Book Note by Dave Kraft

Bannon realized that Trump did not know the most rudimentary business of politics. Trump would not tone it down, and he attacked anyone who attacked him. After he won the election, It's finally dawning on him, Bannon recalled, that this is the real deal, This is a guy totally unprepared. Hillary Clinton spent her entire adult life getting ready for this moment. Trump hasn't spent a second getting ready for this moment. There are now 4,000 jobs to fill. Bannon would be “Chief Strategist.” Mattis spends time thinking things through; thinking through the problems.

Mattis said, I get paid to give my best military advice. They make the policy decisions. I'm not going to change what I think to placate them. If I don't have their confidence then I go. Mattis said that presidential speeches are not policy. Hicks was convinced that the media had “*Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)*.” Just play it by ear Bannon said to McMaster about the job offer. That was the Trump way, playing by ear, acting on impulse.

General Dunford was clearly rattled by Trump's impulsive decision-making style. Now the US was spending about \$50 billion a year in Afghanistan. Priebus said, why is the most important part. Why are we here (In Afghanistan)? Why are we doing this? What do you want to happen? And what exactly are we trying to accomplish? I guess you're right, Trump said several times. We could do that. But then he ignored most reviews or vetting and did what he wanted. Trump is a professional liar Cohn told an associate.

According to Mattis and Gary Cohn, Trump did not understand the importance of allies overseas, the value of diplomacy or the relationship between the military, the economy and intelligence partnerships with foreign governments. How does this administration establish its polity priorities and stick to them?

Tillerson said so that everyone heard it. Trump is an f...ing moron. For Priebus, six months into the administration he could see vividly that they had a fundamental problem of goal setting. Where were they going?

What was often lacking or delayed was an execution plan assigning responsibility and accountability. Endgame goals were fuzzy or unstated. The result was often weeks or months of delay.

Porter concluded that Trump liked to do things spur of the moment; to fly by the seat of his pants. He acted like doing too much advance preparation would diminish his skills in improvising. He did not want to be derailed by forethought; as if a plan would take away his power, his sixth sense. All presidencies are audience driven, but Trump's central audience was often himself. He kept giving himself reviews.

Most were passionately positive. Much of his brain was in the press box. In foreign affairs, it was about personal relationships.

On matters in which Trump had developed decades of opinions, arguments were pointless. Trump did not remember his own decision because he did not ask about it. He had no list—in his mind or anywhere else—of tasks to complete.

Priebus said that the president has zero psychological ability to recognize empathy or pity in any way. Bannon was a strategist in an operation that had none. Trump doesn't touch type or use a keyboard. Trump often made decisions with only one or two or three people involved. There was no process for making and coordinating decisions. Chaos and disorder were inadequate to describe the situation. Kelley said of the president, he's an idiot. It's pointless to try to convince him of anything. He's gone off the rails. We're in crazytown.

Trump heard about the conflicts. He liked aggressive disagreements. They smoked out a wide variety of opinions. Harmony could lead to groupthink. He embraced the chaos and churn beneath him.

Grievance was a big part of Trump's core, very much like a 14 year old boy who felt he was being picked on unfairly. You couldn't talk wit him in adult logic. Teenage logic was necessary. Many times he watched 6-8 hours of television in a day. Bannon felt he was not friends with Trump. Trump didn't have genuine friends. Mattis told close associates that the president acted—and had the understanding of a 5th or 6th grader.

Cohn concluded that Trump just loved to pit people against each other. The president had never been in a business where he had to do long-term strategic thinking. Trump's action and mounting threats on tariffs were jarring. Cohn thought that Trump had to know. But he's not man enough to admit it. He's never been wrong yet. He's 71. He's not going to admit he's wrong, ever.

But in the man and his presidency Dowd had seen the tragic flaw. In the political back-and-forth, the evasions, the denials, the tweeting, the obscuring, crying Fake News, the indignation, Trump had one overriding problem that Dowd knew but could not bring himself to say to the president: "You're a f...ing liar"