

STRANGER THAN FICTION

The Man in the High Castle is a story involving alternate reality.

It's an interesting, complex drama series. Simply, imagine Germany and Japan having won WW II, one of the many courses that history could have taken. It is not just a story about Americans trying to take back their occupied country, but about the nature of reality itself.

Right now, this concept seems more than just an intriguing story idea. We're experiencing an actual reality that seems as bizarre and unlikely as any fictional screenplay. And the star of this reality show has his own **high castle**, a skyscraper known as Trump Tower.

If anyone ever elected President, or, for that matter, any losing Presidential candidate, has ever behaved as outrageously during and after a campaign, it has been kept a secure secret. There are long lists of facts about him, past and present, that no one would have imagined would ever be acceptable to voters.

Facts, however, seem to have become unimportant in politics. Trump utters complete and obvious lies in public speeches without any care that they are believable, just to elicit the desired emotions in his followers. Whether they actually believe them, or are just willing to suspend disbelief doesn't matter. They act and vote as if they were hearing the truth.

The lies and inconsistencies add extra unpredictability to his true intentions on both foreign and domestic policy. However, his choices for cabinet and staff appointments give us some clues about his likely agenda.

The Trump appointments

(1) Environmental Protection Agency: Scott Pruitt, 48

The attorney general for the state of Oklahoma, Scott Pruitt, denies climate change is real. He is one of Big Oil's greatest allies. Pruitt viciously attacked the EPA and its efforts to stop air and water pollution, using talking points written by energy lobbyists to publicly attack Obama's Clean Power Plan. This is like putting an arsonist in charge of fighting fires.

(2) **Kris Kobach, Kansas Secretary of State, and member of the transition team.** He was the infamous architect of the anti-immigrant Arizona SB-1070, parts of which were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2011. He has said the new administration could push ahead rapidly on construction of a U.S.-Mexico border wall without seeking immediate congressional approval. He said in an interview that Trump's policy advisers had also discussed drafting a proposal for his consideration to reinstate a registry for immigrants from Muslim countries. He has also lead efforts to restrict voting rights under the guise of eliminating voter fraud. Kobach hosts a weekly radio program in Kansas City, where he has trafficked in conspiracy theories about President Obama and immigrants.

(3) **Foreclosure profiteer Steve Mnuchin, Treasury Secretary.** This former Goldman Sachs executive got rich running a foreclosure machine, kicking working Americans out of their homes using

techniques a federal judge called “harsh, repugnant, shocking and repulsive.” He foreclosed on well over 36,000 homes. Mnuchin’s number one priority is attacking the Dodd-Frank reforms reigning in Wall Street

(4) **Misogynist, racist Jeff Sessions, Attorney General.** A Republican-led Judiciary Committee deemed him too racist to confirm as a federal judge in 1986. Sessions would be responsible for enforcing the nation’s civil rights laws, despite a history of calling a black subordinate “boy,” joking about supporting the Ku Klux Klan, and calling the ACLU and NAACP “un-American.” His anti-woman agenda is so extreme he voted against reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act and said “I don’t characterize” grabbing women by the genitals “as sexual assault.

As Alabama Attorney General, a court found that “even having been given every benefit of the doubt, the misconduct of the Attorney General in this case far surpasses in both extensiveness and measure the totality of any prosecutorial misconduct ever previously presented to or witnessed by this court,” wrote James S. Garrett, a Jefferson County Circuit Court judge. The misconduct was “so pronounced and persistent,” Garrett wrote, that “it permeates the entire atmosphere of this prosecution.”

(5) **Wall Street billionaire Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce,** who made his money as a notorious “vulture investor.” The so-called “king of bankruptcy,” he offshored American textile jobs to China and Mexico. 12 coal workers controversially died at his mine in West Virginia. But he complains that the 1 percent is being picked on for political reasons. Ross is best known for investing in failing steel and coal firms and selling them for profit.

(6) **Vice President-elect Mike Pence** is a fervent denier of science and a religious zealot. He has advocated teaching intelligent design and creationism in schools. In 2000, he wrote that “smoking doesn’t kill,” in 2009 wrote against embryonic stem cell use, that global warming is a “myth,” that the earth is cooling and that there is “growing skepticism” among scientists about climate change—all the literal opposite of the truth. Instead of changing a law that would have stunted the spread of HIV, he advocated trying to cure homosexuality, resulting in the worst HIV outbreak in Indiana history.

[7] **Rex W. Tillerson President and chief executive of Exxon Mobil, Secretary of State.** He dismissed climate change with: “What good is it to save the planet...?”

He lobbied President Obama to lift sanctions against Russia for Arctic drilling.

Awarded Russia’s “Order of Friendship” by Vladimir Putin himself!

[8] **Secretary of Defense: James "Mad Dog." Mattis, 66**

A retired four star Marine general, Mattis commanded US forces in the Middle East and Southwest Asia from 2010 to 2013. He has said *“Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet.”*, *“Actually it's quite fun to fight them, you know. It's a hell of a hoot. It's fun to shoot some people.”*

A scholar of warfare, he is said to have a particular interest in the challenge posed by Iran. To become secretary of defense, Mattis would have to get a congressional waiver from a law that bars generals from serving as defense secretary for seven years after leaving active duty.

[9] Department of Education: Betsy DeVos, 58

A wealthy activist and Republican mega-donor from Michigan, she is an enemy of public education.

She advocates for charter schools and school vouchers, alternatives to local government schools, and the use of tax credits and vouchers to allow parents to opt out of the public school system.

Privatizing education gives an advantage to religious schools that are likely to deny evolution, and teach biased history. It will undermine public schools by using funds that should go to improve them

[10] Health and Human Services: Tom Price, 62

A tea party Republican Representative from Georgia, Price wants to repeal the Affordable Care Act, privatize Medicare, and cut Federal funds to Medicaid, and de-fund Planned Parenthood.

[11] Homeland Security: John Kelly, 66

The retired Marine general most recently led the US Southern Command, which covers US military operations in Central and South America, including Guantanamo. He wants to end “political correctness”, militarize the border with Mexico, and he favors using torture on detainees.

[12] Housing and Urban Development: Ben Carson, 65

So far the only African American named to Trump's cabinet. The religious conservative with no experience in elective office, opposes the goals of the Fair Housing Act, to diversify subsidized housing locations to neighborhoods with access to transportation, jobs and decent schools. showing distressing ignorance of HUD's mission, and of the history of housing segregation.

[13] LaborSecretary: Andrew Puzder, 66, whose company has been cited for overtime violations by ... the Labor Department

The chief executive of CKE Restaurants, which owns fast food chains Carl's Jr and Hardee's, is opposed to raising the national minimum wage. He also backs the increasing use of automated technology to keep labor costs down. The new secretary will be in charge of keeping Trump's promise to dismantle many Obama-era rules covering the vast work force of federal contractors.

[14] Transportation Secretary: Elaine Chao, 63

The Taiwan-born former US labor secretary under president George W. Bush also served as the deputy secretary of transportation in his administration. She was the first Asian-American woman to serve in the cabinet and is the wife of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. She doesn't seem enthusiastic about Trump's idea of a massive infrastructure investment. Chao is also one of 11 directors on the board of Vulcan Materials Company, which calls itself "the nation's largest producer of construction aggregates." Chao plans to leave that post should she be confirmed, but would get a stock payout in April 2018. Chao will also get cash payments

for the value of her stock in the industrial company Ingersoll-Rand, Wells Fargo bank and the Rupert Murdoch-owned News Corp media company beginning in January 2017.

[15] Ambassador to the United Nations: Nikki Haley, 44

As South Carolina's governor, Haley rose to prominence when she led efforts for the divisive Confederate flag to be pulled from the state's capitol following a 2015 massacre at a historic black church in Charleston. The daughter of Indian immigrants was sharply critical of Trump during the election campaign.

[16] David M. Friedman, nominee for ambassador to Israel a bankruptcy lawyer aligned with the Israeli far right, who has questioned the need for a two-state solution and has likened left-leaning Jews in America to the Jews who aided the Nazis in the Holocaust. In a statement from the Trump transition team announcing his nomination, he said he looked forward to doing the job "from the U.S. embassy in Israel's eternal capital, Jerusalem."

Through decades of Republican and Democratic administrations, the embassy has been in Tel Aviv, as the State Department insists that the status of Jerusalem which both Israel and the Palestinians see as their rightful capital — can be determined only through negotiations as part of an overall peace deal.

Mr. Friedman, who has no diplomatic experience, has said that he does not believe it would be illegal for Israel to annex the occupied West Bank and he supports building new settlements there, which Washington has long condemned as illegitimate and an obstacle to peace.

[17] White House Chief of Staff: Reince Priebus, 44

Head of the Republican National Committee, Priebus is a seasoned political operative who can build bridges between Trump and a skittish Republican leadership, particularly House Speaker Paul Ryan, a longtime ally.

[19] Small Business Administration: Linda McMahon, 68

The wrestling tycoon and two-time Republican candidate for the US Senate from Connecticut, will now be responsible for supporting America's 28 million small businesses, which employ around half the country's private-sector workforce. McMahon, a failed Senate candidate from Connecticut, was with her husband, Vince, one of Mr. Trump's biggest donors.

[20] Chief Strategist: Steve Bannon, 63

A key figure in Trump's victorious election campaign, Bannon served as executive chairman of Breitbart, a favorite news source of the so-called "alt-right," supporting racism and white nationalism. His appointment does not require Senate confirmation.

[21] CIA Director: Mike Pompeo, 52

A strident critic of the Iran nuclear deal, the hawkish Kansas congressman was elected in 2010 to the House of Representatives, where he was a member of the hardline Tea Party faction and one of the leaders of the controversial Benghazi Committee that targeted Trump's Democratic presidential rival Hillary Clinton. Pompeo is a member of the House Intelligence Committee

[22] National Security Advisor: Michael Flynn, 57

A top military counsel to Trump, the retired three-star general, a veteran of America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, has courted controversy with extreme statements that critics say border on **Islamophobia**, but has taken a more flexible line on Russia and China. The national security advisor is not formally part of the cabinet but is usually one of the president's most influential advisors.

[23]White House Counsel: Donald McGahn, late 40s

A former commissioner and chairman of the Federal Election Commission, McGahn represents "elected officials, candidates, national state parties, political consultants, and others on political law issues," as a partner at the Jones Day law firm in Washington.

[24] former Governor of Texas Rick Perry to head the Energy Department. That's one of the agencies Perry promised to eliminate -- but famously forgot the name of -- during the 2012 Republican primaries. Perry's not only unfit to lead the Energy Department, he's another climate-denying champion of Big Oil. Despite its name, the primary purview of the Energy Department is to protect and manage the nation's arsenal of nuclear weapons.

[25] South Carolina Republican Congressman Mick Mulvaney to direct the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The Freedom Caucus fanatic has rejected the inescapable truth that the United States of America would default by failing to raise the debt ceiling. Mick Mulvaney as the Director of Default Denial, risks an American—and a global—economic catastrophe. He has questioned whether the federal government should spend any money on scientific research, including medical research.

A combination of millionaires, billionaires, outsiders and even a few politicians who oppose the work of the very agencies they've been tapped to lead.

*Trump: “If you look at wars over the years—and I study wars—my life is war,” Trump was given five draft deferments during the Vietnam War. Fellow billionaire Richard Branson recounts a story in which Trump said he would “spend the rest of his life destroying the lives” of people he felt had betrayed him. In *The Art of the Deal*, Trump bragged, “I love getting even.”*

Trump has also pushed the discredited link between vaccination and autism, and appointed advisers who favor cuts to both NASA and the National Institutes of Health, which funds critical biomedical research.

The final popular vote total for this election is in: 65,844,610 for Clinton, 62,979,636 for Trump.

Of their total, 128,824,246 Clinton had 51.11%, 2,864,974 more votes than Trump

Counting minor candidates, she got 48.2% to his 46.1%

In the final count, Clinton surpassed President Barack Obama's 2012 total by 389,944 votes

Trump's claims of a "massive landslide victory" are belied by past statistics, which place his win at 11th narrowest.

If all the electors had voted in accordance with their states' results during meetings on Monday, Trump would have garnered 56.9% -- or 306 -- of the 538 available electoral votes. Two defections lowered his final share to 56.5%.

Hillary Clinton beat President-elect Donald Trump by 2.1% in the national popular vote. Her nearly 2.9 million vote advantage is the largest raw total among candidates who did not win the presidency. Only two others, Andrew Jackson (1824) and Samuel Tilden (1876) won by a larger percentage without also claiming the White House.

--*Cosmicrat December 23, 2016*