

Michael Wolff's 'Fire and Fury' Will Do More to Polarize Than to Analyze

Michael Wolff's new book attacking the Trump White House has taken the nation by storm. Not only is it the best-selling book in the nation (judged by sales on Amazon), but it surpassed 1,000 reader reviews on Amazon within the first few days it was released. What will the lasting effects of this salacious, tell-all book be?

In my view, the book will do nothing more than deepen the polarization surrounding our president.

His critics will find detailed proof of their very worst imaginations: There is a dangerous, ignorant monster in the White House!

His defenders will find detailed proof that the president's enemies will do whatever they can to remove him, backed by the left-wing media.

But first, a disclaimer: I haven't read Wolff's book, nor do I plan to.

But I didn't read any of the "hit-piece" books attacking Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama either. They're not my style, and my plate is already full.

But I've read enough excerpts from the book, followed enough news coverage of the book, and, perhaps most importantly, watched how the "average person" is reacting to the book. (By "average person," I refer to people responding online who are not professional media or part of the political crowd.)

For Trump's critics, their worst suspicions are confirmed. He is not fit to be in the White House.

Furthermore, the fact that he didn't even want to win, let alone expect to win (that is, according to the story put forth in Wolff's book), explains a lot of his failures.

For William Saletan, writing on *Slate*, this makes sense of it all: "*Fire and Fury*, Michael Wolff's book about chaos in the Trump administration, tells some curious tales. It suggests Trump didn't know who former House Speaker John Boehner was, even after Trump had golfed with him and had repeatedly tweeted about him. It says Trump used to offer hookers to men while letting their wives listen in on speakerphone. Stories like these sound too juicy to be true, and Wolff has a history of embellishment. But there's good reason to believe Wolff's thesis: that Trump and his campaign aides never expected him to be president. That theory explains nearly everything about Trump's disastrous tenure."

Yes, for Saletan, "the unifying theory that Donald Trump never actually wanted to win" is, as the headline states, "What Michael Wolff Got Right About Trump."

So, Saletan recognizes there are blatant falsehoods in the book. (Indeed, in a remarkable admission, Wolff himself tells us at the beginning of the book that some of the quotes and stories in the book are patently false, although he doesn't identify which ones he's referring to.) Yet he believes Wolff's narrative that Trump never wanted to be president and certainly never expected to become president. His campaign was just another ego-driven, PR move.

For Saletan, this makes sense of Trump's alleged incompetency: He was completely unprepared to be president because he never expected to be president.

As for Trump's most extreme critics, every word of Wolff's book is gospel truth. The more salacious, the more certain!

In stark contrast, to Trump's most ardent defenders, not a word of the book is true. In fact, the book is just an

exaggerated picture of the left wing, anti-Trump media. It's all fake! And since his opponents cannot defeat him fairly, they will lie and defame in order to destroy.

But for many supporters of Trump, this is not simply an emotional response. It is a rational response.

How can an incompetent fool accomplish so much in one year? How can he do so much good when he is so bad?

Writing on *Breitbart*, John Note states that, after Trump's highly successful first year, Wolff's book "gives off the unmistakably stale aroma of last season's fake news" and the narrative it puts forth of dysfunctional chaos "in no way corresponds with actual results, with the rubber we have already seen meet the road, to a little thing I like to call ... reality."

Indeed, "A mentally unsound man-child overseeing an administration crippled by anarchy will not see a record number of his appellate judges confirmed, will not oversee the successful passage of the most important tax reform in 30 years, will not annihilate ISIS without adding a single boot on the ground."

Precisely so.

Yes, "In just 365 days, Trump has turned around a stagnate economy, exploded the number of manufacturing jobs; seen black and Hispanic unemployment drop to record lows; opened up two oil pipelines (and all kinds of exploration); enjoyed victory after victory in the Supreme Court in pursuit of his immigration priorities; seated a spectacular Supreme Court justice; negotiated a \$250 billion trade deal with China; brought North Korea to the negotiating table from a position of strength; expertly managed the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital; untangled us from stupid deals known as TPP and the Paris climate accord, and a whole lot more.

“These are not the achievements of a lunatic as portrayed by an immature and irresponsible media still bitter over losing a presidential election.”

Nolte’s words will resonate with Trump’s supporters, while Trump’s sometimes ill-advised tweets and responses provide additional fuel for his critic’s fire.

In the end—and quite unfortunately, at that—while Wolff will make a lot of money, his book will not help us understand President Trump and his administration any better.

We simply have no way of knowing who’s telling the truth and who is not. (Do we believe Wolff or do we believe the people who are coming forward now and saying he made up stories about them or misquoted them in his book?). And because of this, we gain no real insight into the man and his White House.

The net result, then, of Wolff’s bestseller will be further polarization and deeper distrust, with Trump’s critics further distrusting him and Trump’s supporters further distrusting his opponents.

Had Wolff given us an accurate and reliable account, be it one that criticized or one that commended, he would have done us a great service. But by mixing truth with fiction—by his own admission—he has only deepened the divide.