

The Political Economy of Trumpism: The Growth of Racist Authoritarianism, Dangers and Possibilities

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Format, three parts: 1) US Political Economy and Trump victory; 2) Trump agenda and what has happened; 3) Possibilities. Questions and discussion after each part.

1) U.S Political Economy and Trump victory

A. Further concentration of economy, significant increase in jobs since 2011, unemployment rate is back down to 2006-2007 rates although many have given up looking for work and not considered unemployed. Wages although growing slightly since 2015 are still lower than before financial crisis; profits have been more than restored so not crisis for capital in the short run. Inequality of income and wealth similar to 1920's. Blacks, Latino and Native American families earn about $\frac{3}{4}$ of white families and have poverty rates two to three times higher than whites; although there are many poor whites, especially in small towns and rural areas. Period now of economic stagnation but not recession or economic depression. Capital is winning the class war!!

B. Election, results, why?

1. Voting not at historical low--higher than 2012, but lower than 2008 election. Generally low turnout in U.S. Slightly over 40% didn't vote in 2016. Hillary Clinton had almost 3 million votes more than Trump. Trump had 46% of the vote. Libertarians (right-wing economics) 3%, and Jill Stein of the Greens, 1%. Greens ran a very poor campaign, not good organizers. Because whoever wins each State gets all of what are called the electoral votes, Trump got 306 to 230 for Clinton. Common left position, e.g. Chomsky, was in that states that are close, to vote for Clinton, a corporate centrist, and in states where Clinton or Trump were sure to win, e.g., California or Texas, to vote for third party like Greens. In this perspective, that although Clinton was a neoliberal, Trump was much more dangerous. Second position-- Most anarchists and others on left said they couldn't vote for Clinton.
2. Why did Trump win? He is an authoritarian businessman and billionaire. He had very little corporate support before election and ran as an-establishment populist which has appeal. Clinton represented the corporate establishment in a period of increasing loss of legitimacy of the state and corporations, a period of polarization but also possibility. She was a weak candidate for 2016. There was not a major realignment of the population as most of Trump's vote came from those who voted Republican in last few elections. For example, he

continued to have large majority support from white Evangelical Christians who are an important part of the base of the Republican party. The Vice-President, Mike Pence is a right-wing evangelical Christian. Gains by Trump compared to past recent elections among whites with no college degree, often from areas in economic decline, deindustrialization. Racism is important factor. Small support for Trump from Latinos and especially Blacks although they have also faced severe economic problems such as gentrification, declining unionization, declines in public services. Many whites, fear change in country to a majority non-white one in less than 30 years. Trump did better among men than women but surprisingly among white women got slightly more votes than Clinton although his physical assaults on women were very public. “Make America Great Again” to many meant not only family wage jobs and American dream but also white and male dominance, fear of multiculturalism, Trump played into this enough to win.

3. Sanders campaign significant! Sanders is an ex socialist and honest social democrat, he is not corporate controlled. He tapped effectively into a progressive discontent that is major and a legacy of 2011 Occupy. In the Democrat primaries, Sanders got 13.5 million votes, over 40% of the vote in spite of active opposition by the Democratic Party establishment. Many of these 13 and a half million are active in the protests against Trump. Sanders helped legitimize ideas like revolution and socialism although he isn't either one of them. Has formed an organization since, “Our Revolution” that is mainly electoral. Weakness of Sanders among African-Americans and Latinos although support by majority of young Latinos and a lot of support among younger blacks. Sanders, I believe would have beaten Trump, there was a lot of enthusiasm for him, little for Clinton. Sanders, if elected, would have accepted role of been of empire, not anti-imperialist but would have been a break with the victories and growing electoral support for the right in much of Europe and Latin America, e.g. France, Argentina, Chile.

- C. Final point in this intro—U.S. population has been moving to the left politically, especially younger people. Evidence are polls. Support for universal health care, stop climate change as a priority, significantly raise the minimum wage, free education, tax the wealthy, LGBT rights are majority positions and growing. People under 30 and African Americans prefer socialism to capitalism even if idea of socialism is vague.

Questions?

II. Dangers of Trump Agenda, and what has happened so far.

TRUMPIST AGENDA

- A. Looking at Cabinet, Trump's statements and history to figure this out.
 - 1) Although Corporate America supported Hillary Clinton, Trump's commitments to lower corporate taxes and taxes on wealthy, to cut government regulations has gained

- him a lot of corporate support since the November election—Five executives or former executives of Goldman Sachs in cabinet or in major positions in Trump administration. Although Trump may not support international “trade” deals like NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States) or Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), Trump administration supports strongly unrestricted movement of capital across borders. His economic nationalism was part of his appeal but limited program in this regard.
- 2) Increase in extractionism, for drilling, building pipelines! Coal and oil industry supported and strongly support Trump, e.g., Rex Tillerson head of Exxon-Mobil, biggest U.S. corporation, now Secretary of State. Together with appointing climate deniers and lobbyists from energy companies into key government positions dealing directly with environment, very, very dangerous.
 - 3) Further privatization, e.g., public parks, building of wall with Mexico will be outsourced to private corporations, ending all support for public radio and television, for the arts, further supporting corporatization of internet, growth of private prisons, etc.
 - 4) Turn back limited reforms in health care, environment, worker health and safety, of consumer protection from finance capital (eliminate the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and reduce minor restrictions of the Dodd-Frank financial reform legislation from Obama administration); lower taxes on wealthy and corporations which will increase inequality of wealth and income.
 - 5) Increase in militarism—many top military people in government, more than normal—real danger of war with Iran, many of his advisers pushing for it—a real danger although biggest promoter of this, National Security Adviser Flynn was forced out, divisions on Russia, increasing anti-China rhetoric.
 - 6) Restrict and demonize immigrants, particularly Latinos—mainly those from Mexico and Central America, and Muslims. 11 million undocumented immigrants, $\frac{3}{4}$ like Mexican and Central American. Also demonizing Black community as violent, criminal, dangerous and responsible for their own poverty. His call for law and order, is coded racism. Reasons--His ignorance and appealing to a white base whose economic problems he cannot and will not address.
 - 7) Wants to destroy public sector labor unions, private sector already down to 7% of potential union membership. Public sector unions still have big membership, 1/3 of government workers and major source of money for Democrats.
 - 8) Delegitimize further major institutions, i.e., the courts and judiciary, media, universities. Ignoring many laws such as Trump and his wealthy cabinet and advisers not selling off their corporate stock although they are supposed to. Part of agenda for an increasingly authoritarian rule with many fascist elements- charismatic leader, white nationalism, scapegoat the “other”, wants to criminalize protest. Fascists in government with influence and close to Trump such as main adviser Steven Bannon.
- A. What has happened in Trump’s one month in office? Inauguration, January 20th, 2017.
1. Much of his agenda stalled so far although very uncertain and dangerous next few years.
 - a. Trump’s popularity has declined, could not be reelected if referendum or new election now, even against Hillary Clinton. He has far less support than any

President after one month in office. Stock market has risen showing capitalist acceptance of Trump.

- b. Courts so far have limited his anti-refugee agenda of barring everyone from seven majority Muslim countries although new attempts this week.
 - c. No large-scale deportations of undocumented immigrants although increased raids of undocumented who were not vulnerable under Obama, e.g., those committed of any minor crime. A lot of fear in immigrant communities, especially Latino. One dangerous aspect is that immigration police, two branches of Homeland Security know that Trump administration supports increased arrests. They are increasing raids on homes and arresting undocumented immigrants, although not yet on a massive level and not at workplaces like in past. The Trump administration and Homeland Security are committed to making deportation easier and quicker with less recourse to challenge deportation orders by immigrants. Some local police are cooperating more with Homeland Security, the immigration police, although they are often restrained by city and State governments. Police are also less worried about being disciplined for police brutality and police departments and feel less constrained about federal government intervention.
 - d. So far, no attempt to end health care reforms of Obama that were very flawed but still provided better and more access to health care for over 20 million people. Still ongoing danger.
 - e. Hasn't yet withdrawn from global climate treaties but has ordered building of two major pipelines, Keystone XL and Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL)
 - f. Pretty strong support from most of Republican Party. They have majority in Congress.
 - g. Divisions within establishment of Trump cooperation with Russia, opposition from CIA, many generals, Democratic Party has limited big foreign policy changes.
 - h. Has not been able to significantly restrict reproductive rights although trying to defund Planned Parenthood and appoint a new Supreme Court Justice, who is anti-abortion.
 - i. Trump administration and agenda has not consolidated, instability, daily scandals, e.g., non-confirmation of Labor Secretary, resignations. There is strong Democratic Party opposition, much stronger than to Reagan, Bushes. Because of some Republican Party opposition to two politically extreme advisers and cabinet nominee, Trump has replaced them with more establishment Republicans, i.e., head of National Security Council, Secretary of Labor.
 - j. Trump still totally committed to this right-wing agenda.
2. Growth of fascist and white supremacist groups.
- a. Growth in membership-rebranding themselves as alt-right, e.g., remove swastikas and Klu Klux Klan (KKK) crosses, more coded language, "white identity", instead of white supremacist or white nationalist; many spokespeople, leaders today are college educated. Superficial changes but are still white supremacist and many are armed.
 - b. Increased attacks on Muslims, Blacks, Latinos and Jews—institutions such as Mosques and Synagogues, and people of targeted groups.

Very dangerous period, war, growth of racism and legitimization of patriarchy. Trump administration is not going to deliver on economic promises and hopes. That will be opportunity for a possible growth of left but also danger of further demonization of feminists, immigrants, the other, towards fascism to keep his base or war. **Wouldn't call U.S. fascist now.**

Questions!

III) The Resistance, Possibilities of radical social movements and for the growth of the Left

- A. As already mentioned, I think movement to the left of U.S. population as a whole, particularly those under 30, certainly on issues such as immigration, climate change LGBT but also economic.
- B. Protests to Trump agenda have been huge and are continuing—on many levels, variety of tactics and ideologies of participants. Daily rallies and demonstrations, many quite large. Today, February 20th on national holidays, significant demonstrations in many cities, called, “Trump Is Not My President”. Direct actions against Trump, his cabinet when they are in public; or are chased from public places like schools, e.g., Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education; to mainstream media calling Trump a liar who continually is spreading false information, to actions by many local and state governments in support of immigrants, to judges ruling against Trump executive orders, to government workers speaking up and signing petitions, to no business as usual.
- C. Many social movements are continuations of growth in activism before Trump
 1. No DAPL (Dakota Access Pipeline) -major ongoing struggle, has brought together issues of native sovereignty, right to clean water, and climate change for those who want to stop the pipeline not just move it. Tens of thousands have gone to Standing Rock, big spiritual component, large veteran support, actions all over country in support of Standing Rock, e.g., to get banks and cities to not extend credit, loans to Energy Transfer Partners, the company that owns and is building the Pipeline, or to demand cities, universities, pension funds to sell stocks they own from these companies and banks. Successful in Seattle, also largest pension fund in country, Calpers may follow. Many different levels of protest at Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, encampment continues although immediate police repression, clearing of the camp is about to happen. Another example! In Olympia, Washington State in November, 2016 blocking for week of train loaded with fracking materials for North Dakota oil fields. Perhaps, most significant is major unity and support by 325 Native American Nations (tribes). Protests are continuing. The no DAPL Movement, often calling themselves, Water Protectors, is electrifying and continues even facing major repression.
 2. Climate Change—major change in consciousness to understanding climate change as major threat to survival and major policy changes cannot be postponed. Probably the major issue and organizing on college campuses is demand for

universities not having investments in fossil fuel corporations. Huge demonstration planned in Washington, DC for April 29th, 2017 for keeping fossil fuels in the ground. Increasing connection between liberal climate justice groups with Native American nations (tribes) and with environmental justice movement, groups that central environmental racism and class nature of environmental crisis.

3. Black Lives Matter (BLM) —continuing, increasingly developing a program beyond the very important one of opposing police brutality and criminal injustice system; such as anti-poverty, more employment, gender justice, immigrant justice. Major role of Black women including lesbian women in BLM; it is between a network and actual national organization, strong support in prisons for it.
 4. \$15 an hour, mainly service and fast food workers, mainly young, supported by a major union, Services Employees, but often with some autonomy by these non-union worker, quite militant, direct action. They have won rise in wages to \$15 in many cities, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco although \$15 an hour will not happen immediately, it is being phased in. Significant as national minimum wage is \$7.35 an hour although many cities and states have a higher minimum wage than \$7.35. This social movement, including its electoral component at local level is continuing.
- D. In the streets, mainly beginning or growing substantially after January 20, 2017.
- 1) January 21st, 2017, day after inauguration--4 million participants in women's march throughout country; many participants to left of organizers, numbers way beyond expectations, many signs and banners not only about women's equality and for reproductive rights but also for immigrant, racial and economic justice. Probably largest progressive protest in U.S. history.
 - 2) Response to Trump attempt to ban visits or entry as residents from seven mainly Muslim countries, resistance has been major and inspirational—closed airports by sitting in, support by NY taxi drivers union, direct action, emboldened judiciary to prevent this racist policy from being carried out. Spread mainly by word of mouth and social media. When protests like these and women's march are much larger than predictions of mobilizers, sign of real and major social movements emerging. There will be a new reactionary anti-Muslim executive order by Trump on refugees this week with possibly even larger protests in response-- victory is definitely not permanent.
 - 3) Immigration—Last Thursday, February 16th—Day Without an Immigrant! Many immigrants, hundreds of thousands, not only Latino didn't work and maybe an equal number of youths didn't attend school. So far smaller than similar call in 2006. This last week increased deportations have started and proposals that will increase and speed deportations in a major way if put into effect have been announced by Homeland Security and Trump, although with major demonstrations against them. Development of networks to hide immigrants is increasing, beginning of taking sanctuary in supportive churches, e.g., Denver, a long tradition in U.S. Many cities and a few States are developing non-cooperation strategies in spite of threat of losing federal government funds.

Possibility of millions striking, protesting on May Day which in U.S. since 2006 has meant marches for immigrant rather than labor rights. Hopefully this May 1st, labor and immigrant movements combine and also incorporate in a major and non-token way the unorganized and other social movements. Some discussion of general strike on May Day.

- 4) Major direct action such as disruptions against Trump nominees, e.g., the Trump appointee to be ambassador to be Ambassador to Israel, Friedman; the confirmation of the racist Attorney General, Sessions; and against the Secretary of the Treasury, former executive of Goldman-Sachs, Mnuchin. Not restricted to these.

E. Nature of resistance

- 1) Many people new to protests in the streets involved, quite diverse, racially and age wise.
- 2) Often one issue but increasingly participants are making connections between the key issues of the interconnected Trump agenda.
- 3) Democratic Party wants to take control, for example to organize the tactics and determine the message in protests against Republican Congressional members, almost all of whom totally support Trump agenda and policy proposals but so far the Democrats for the most part and the non-profits do not control the widespread and growing resistance.
- 4) Really exciting, probably largest numbers in the streets since 1970's. Chance of really major social movements and upheaval demanding more than defending Obama neoliberalism and going back to Democratic Party politics and policies. There will be outrages by Trump administration every day, e.g., ending minor bank reforms such as Dodd-Frank, continuing attacks on women, immigrants, Muslims, the poor, LGBT, on public space, the climate, etc. So demonstrations and other forms of resistance will continue although size may be difficult to maintain.

F. Limitations and Possibilities

- 1) Major problem is lack of sizable organizations with good politics! This makes it hard to sustain protests and develop successful campaigns, to deepen critical analysis by participants and to connect the issues.
- 2) Protests so far although very, very important, are mainly defensive in nature, e.g., to reduce attacks on immigrants, protect reproductive rights, protect the environment, against pipelines, etc.

Possibilities now exist to grow and deepen social movements especially as Trump's economic program does not and will not improve people's lives. Chance today to educate and share a different analysis of causes of economic inequality and injustice and to develop solutions and to build progressive movements; need to reach out to new protesters and beyond those who identify as radical or anti-capitalist or left.

3. Need to connect issues, develop a program and vision that maybe is not fully anti-capitalist but is a step in that direction and speaks to climate justice, economic equality, anti-fascist and anti-neoliberalism and for civil rights, immigrant, racial, gender, environmental and economic justice; developing and winning non-reformist reforms. These are reforms that improve people's lives, deepen understanding and popular critique of capitalism, that lead to further demands and build the capacity to further undermine capitalism. A new labor movement is necessary, social movement unionism rather than business unionism. By social movement unionism, I mean unions that are real social movements, not staff driven, not staff driven and controlled, that are independent of the procapitalist Democratic Party, and who strongly support and join with social movements that further economic and social justice, and go beyond the narrow interests of their members. We also need to build a radical organization or organizations deeply embedded in the social movements that have an electoral component but are not primarily electoral. Otherwise the mass resistance we are seeing will decline and be incorporated into the Democratic Party and into reformist one issue politics. In any case, it may be difficult to maintain the current level of resistance but let us not underestimate the significance of what is going on in the United States today.
4. I am more optimistic about the possibility of growing social movements that are increasingly anti-capitalist than I have been in many years. It is a very dangerous period but also one of radical and liberation possibilities. The alternatives are destruction of much of the human race through climate change or environmental destruction or war, or a humane and ecological and participatory socialism.

Questions?

Thank you! Si Se Puede!