

United States: Donald Trump, Lumpen Capitalist [2018]

Tuesday 12 November 2024, by [FARBER Samuel](#) (Date first published: 19 October 2018).

The most important thing about Donald Trump isn't his psychological condition — it's that he's a capitalist. And a particular kind of capitalist at that: a lumpen capitalist.

Contents

- [A Career of Skullduggery](#)
- [Trump's Lumpen Friends](#)
- [Trump's Capitalist Friends](#)
- [The Rise of a Lumpen-Capitalis](#)

Nobody is quite sure how to understand [Donald Trump](#).

A group of twenty-seven American psychiatrists and mental health experts made a long list of personality disorders — narcissism, delusional disorder, paranoia, unbridled and extreme present hedonism, and more — shortly after he came into office. Some might be accurate. But psychological designations aren't the best way to wrap your mind around Trump. To fully examine him as a political actor, we must root his personal characteristics in the US social structure.

Trump is a capitalist. That isn't a surprise to anyone. But he is a particular kind of capitalist: a lumpen capitalist.

A Career of Skullduggery

In his *Class Struggles in France. 1848-1850*, Marx wrote that the finance aristocracy of that time “in its mode of acquisition as well as in its pleasures, is nothing but the *rebirth of the lumpenproletariat on the heights of bourgeois society.*” Marxist scholar Hal Draper clarified that Marx's “finance aristocracy” did not refer to the finance capital that plays an integral role in bourgeois economy, but to the “vultures and raiders” who swing from speculation to swindling and who are the near criminal or extralegal excrescences from the body social of the rich just like the “lumpen proletariat” proper are excrescences from the poor.

Marx referred again to this upper-class “lumpen proletariat” after the fall of the [Paris Commune](#) in 1871, as enjoying their leisure in “the Paris of the Boulevards, male and female — the rich, the capitalist, the gilded, the idle Paris, now thronging with its lackeys, its blacklegs, its literary *bohème*, and its *cocottes.*”

The essence of Trump's lumpen capitalism is expressed in many ways, beginning with his shady, illegal (or bordering on the illegal) financial operations. “Normal” capitalists will often take illegal shortcuts in pursuit of profit — like avoiding paying taxes, violating government regulations, illegally smashing union drives — all in the course of managing otherwise “normal” capitalist enterprises.

For lumpen-capitalist Trump, however, those shortcuts are the principal strategy for his profit-making.

Examples of this abound, starting with the skullduggery that pervades his financial operations. “Normal” capitalists may regularly borrow money from banks and other financial institutions to run their businesses; they only resort to bankruptcy occasionally, usually as a last resort. But as the “king of debt,” Trump’s businesses have gone into bankruptcy no less than six times, five times for his casinos and once for New York’s Plaza Hotel.

According to business historian Gwenda Blair, in 1990, Trump secretly met with representatives of several big American banks to find a way out of his staggering \$2 billion in bank debt that included personal liability on guarantees and unsecured loans amounting to \$800 million, as well as more than \$1 billion in junk bonds on his casinos. As Blair put it, in less than a decade, Trump had become what Marie Brenner in *Vanity Fair* [called](#) the “Brazil of Manhattan,” with annual interest payments of approximately \$350 million exceeding his cash flow. Only two of his assets, his half of the Grand Hyatt Hotel and the retail component of Trump Tower, had at that time any chance of making a profit.

The lawsuits against his Trump University have further exposed the extent of his shady financial operations. He founded this for-profit “university” with a couple of partners in 2005 to offer courses in real estate and asset management among other subjects. It was not accredited; neither did it give grades, confer university credits, or grant degrees. A few years after it was founded, it was investigated by the New York Attorney General and sued for illegal business practices. Two class-action suits were also filed against it in federal court, alleging that its students were the victims of misleading marketing practices and aggressive sales tactics. After he was elected president, Trump paid the victims \$25 million and settled the case, even though he had repeatedly promised not to do so.

Like Trump University, these types of institutions typically have very poor records in degree completion and job placement but are efficient machines for exacting profits off the fat of the federal government’s loans and subsidies to their overwhelmingly poor and minority adult students. After the Obama administration’s attempts to curb some of their worst abuses, Trump’s administration sharply went the other direction: under the direction of Secretary of Education [Betsy DeVos](#), it has given them the green light to proceed with their fraudulent practices.

His Trump Foundation is another case in point. As the *New York Times* wrote in a recent [editorial](#), “the Trump Foundation, is not a generous and ethical charity, but just another of his [Trump’s] grifts.” As the editorial pointed out, the largest donation reported by the foundation, for the amount of \$264,631, was used to refurbish the fountain in front of Trump’s Plaza Hotel in New York City. Other questionable activities included its 2013 illegal contributions to the reelection of Pam Bondi, Florida’s attorney general.

On October 2, 2018, the *New York Times* [published](#) a devastating investigative report on Trump debunking his claim that his father Fred Trump had “only” lent him \$1 million to start his business career. In fact, as the report shows, Donald Trump received from his father at least \$60.7 million, (\$140 million in today’s dollars). The report also details the numerous dubious and outright illegal ways in which Donald avoided paying hundreds of millions of dollars in gift and estate taxes.

Most telling of Donald’s character is the finding that he tried, in 1990, to take total control of his then-eighty-five-year-old father’s business and fortune behind his back. Donald’s attempt was foiled by Trump Sr himself, who, with the help of his daughter, federal judge Maryanne Trump Barry, had him legally stripped from any attempt to take over his father’s businesses. According to sworn

depositions by members of the Trump family, Fred told them that Donald's takeover would put "his life's work at risk," and that he feared his son would use his father's businesses as collateral to rescue his failing businesses.

There are strong indications that Trump's serious financial difficulties have pushed him to the margins of the financial world and to money laundering as a source of capital. As John Feffer pointed out in "[Trump's Dirty Money](#)," there was only one institution left, Deutsche Bank, willing to give him credit — which led Trump to begin relying on questionable characters and networks, creating baroque financial arrangements involving shell companies, using pseudonyms on contracts, and hiding his tax returns. And, in financial activities highly suggestive of money laundering, Trump started to use large amounts of cash to purchase huge properties — as much as \$400 million since 2006.

Much of this cash, Feffer wrote, came from the sale of his properties to Russian oligarchs. A 2017 *Reuters* investigation discovered that Russian buyers purchased nearly \$100 million in condos in Florida from Trump, and a Russian-Canadian billionaire invested millions into a Trump property in Toronto, including the payment of a \$100 million "commission" to a Moscow fixer to attract other Russian investors.

In 2018, a Russian oligarch paid \$95 million to Trump for a Palm Beach mansion that Trump had bought four years before for \$41 million. In addition, Feffer indicates, Trump has made similar deals with known Kazakh money launderers, corrupt businesses in India, and a shady casino operator in Vietnam. Even his Taj Mahal casino was on two different occasions — in 1998 and 2015 — accused of violating anti-money-laundering laws.

Trump's Lumpen Friends

Trump's lumpen-capitalist character is not only expressed in his pursuit of gain, but also in the kinds of friends and associates he has surrounded himself with, and to whom he is attracted by commonly shared activities and values evincing a predatory orientation to the world devoid of any consideration besides how to benefit oneself and one's friends.

One example of Trump's choice of friends is David J. Pecker, chairman of the tabloid company American Media Inc. (AMI) and publisher of the *National Inquirer*, the leading organ of the gutter press in the United States. Before the 2016 elections, AMI bought the rights to Playboy model Karen McDougal's story of her adulterous affair with Trump in order to ensure it did not ever see the light of day. Besides exposing Trump and Pecker's shared predatory attitude towards women, this clearly violated campaign finance laws.

Another notable example was Roy Cohn, one of Trump's best friends and avowed mentor, a veritable example of a lumpen bourgeois (since, strictly speaking, he was not a capitalist.) Roy's notorious role as a legal hatchet man for Senator Joe McCarthy's Red witch-hunting, may have distracted public attention from his subsequent nefarious activities. Cohn's biographer Nicholas von Hoffman cites one of his law partners describing him as "a person who was totally free of the rules," so "whatever he wanted at any given moment was the right thing," an expression of Cohn's predatory lumpen make-up.

Von Hoffman and even Sidney Zion, a paid apologist for Cohn, have shown Cohn as a great manipulator of people for whom the exchange of favors was the currency of his realm. In addition to having legally represented the Mob, Cohn socially consorted with them. He was indicted for jury tampering in 1963 and was disbarred six weeks before he died in 1986 for unethical and

unprofessional conduct that included, tellingly, misappropriation of clients' funds, lying on a bar application, and pressuring a client to amend his will. Typical of his lack of principles, he was a homophobic gay man (he died of AIDS) who publicly came out against allowing gays to be school teachers.

Trump knew all of this about Cohn. And yet he brought him into his inner life as friend and mentor. Business historian Gwenda Blair quotes Eugene Morris, Cohn's first cousin and a prominent New York real estate lawyer, to the effect that "Donald was attracted by the fact that Roy had actually been indicted." And he used Cohn's legal services, tellingly, to sue the US government for damages in retaliation for having charged him with engaging in racially discriminatory rental practices in the apartment buildings he owned.

Michael Cohen, Trump's former close friend, personal attorney, and fixer is another case of Trump's tendency to surround himself with lumpen-bourgeois associates and friends. Cohen's life is a rich trove of what lumpen capitalism is about. After graduating from Cooley Law School in Michigan, he became a hard-edged personal-injury lawyer. His 1994 marriage brought him into contact with immigrants from the former USSR and into the taxi industry, where he made millions through the purchase and sale of medallions.

But a big break came from his buying and selling buildings in highly suspect circumstances. Just in one day, in 2014, he sold four buildings in Manhattan for \$32 million in cash, three times what he had paid for them no more than three years earlier. The owners of the limited liability companies that bought the properties from Mr Cohen are unknown; so is the reason why they agreed to pay such high prices, although Cohen claimed that the sales were in cash to help the buyers defer taxes in other transactions. However, Richard K. Gordon, director of the Financial Integrity Institute at Case Western Reserve University law school, who once conducted anti-money-laundering efforts for the International Monetary Fund, stated that if he had been the bank, he would have either refused the transaction up front or rated Cohen as extra high risk.

Cohen then became involved in the construction of a Trump Tower in Moscow with Felix Sater, a Russian immigrant friend with whom Cohen and Trump continued to work even after it was revealed that Sater was involved in a stock manipulation scheme involving Mafia figures and Russian criminals. (Eventually, Sater pleaded guilty and became an informant for the FBI and other intelligence agencies.)

Cohen also had business dealings with companies that operated on the fringes of the medical field. Although it is unclear what role he played in those companies beyond having helped them to register with state authorities, two doctors listed in the incorporation papers as being involved in the businesses, Aleksandr Martirosov and Zhanna Kanevsky, were accused of insurance fraud with the different medical practices they operated. Martirosov was also charged with grand larceny and Dr Kanevsky with state racketeering charges, both as a result of an investigation into phony accidents and medical claims.

The above information about Cohen is based on an exhaustive investigative report [published](#) by the New York Times on May 5, 2018. This report also revealed that in 1993, Mr Cohen's father-in-law pleaded guilty to evading federal reporting requirements for large cash transactions (because he cooperated in a related case, he was sentenced to probation.) Dr Morton W. Levine, Mr Cohen's uncle, a family practitioner, provided medical assistance to members of the Lucchese crime family, which according to an FBI agent "aided their illegal activities." Anthony ("Gaspipes") Casso, a Lucchese underboss "regarded Levine as someone who would do anything for him." Dr Levine also owned El Caribe, a Brooklyn catering hall — in which Michael Cohen long held a small stake before the 2016 election — that for decades was the scene of mob weddings and Christmas parties, while

two of New York's most notorious Russian mobsters kept their offices there.

The *New York Times's* investigative report also pointed out that both of Mr Cohen's taxi partners (Symon Garber and Evgeny Freidman) had a history of legal troubles. Each has been made to pay over \$1 million for overcharging their drivers, according to the New York State Attorney General. Former business partners also accused them of forging signatures, stiffing lawyers, and dodging debt-collection efforts. Cohen's taxi businesses in New York and Chicago owe more than \$375,000 for a number of tax, insurance, and inspection problems, and fourteen of his fifty-four cabs were suspended.

Trump's chosen retinue of friends also include celebrities whose personal characteristics reveal a great deal about who he is. One of them is rapper Kanye West, who Ta-Nehisi Coates [wrote](#) is, like Trump, a persistent bearer of slights, narcissistic, and shockingly ignorant; his remark suggesting that the hundreds of years slavery lasted were an indication of the slaves' own preferences is emblematic of his (and Trump's) contempt and lack of empathy for the victims of oppression. Another is former boxing champion Mike Tyson, a Trump hero known for his drinking, drug use, legal problems, and rape conviction. As Charles M. Blow [averred](#) in the *New York Times*, Trump counts his flirtation with rich rappers and athletes as proof of his egalitarianism. True to his lumpen make-up he takes up, as Blow writes, the coarser side of these celebrities whose thrall he is in and repackages their qualities behind a wealthy businessman's face.

Trump's Capitalist Friends

True to his lumpen predatory inclinations, [Trump](#) has an almost precapitalist, pre-democratic relation to government office, whereby his person and the office are merged into each other, and political office is there for him to benefit himself and his friends. Trump's political conduct is as an impediment to the most important political function of the capitalist state: acting as a unifier and arbiter of the capitalist class.

Trump has been a chronic breaker of the "normal" rules of political comportment essential to the function of being a trusted and reliable arbiter to intra-capitalist conflict. He refused to publicize his tax returns and place his financial and real estate holdings in a so-called blind trust, routine rules of the system that both Republican and Democratic officeholders have adhered to for many years. He has ignored many of the political rules of the game, especially those that maintain the "civility" regarded as essential to political stability and the harmonious alternation in power between Republican and Democrats.

A blatant example of this lack of "civility" was his call for the imprisonment of rival candidate Hillary Clinton and the encouragement of his followers' call to "lock her up." All professional politicians lie, but Trump's chronic and blatant lying in the most easily verifiable matters has broken the mold of regular politicking and subverted the moral authority of the presidency among large numbers of Americans. He has instilled a bullying atmosphere in politics, often justifying illegality and often resorting, as Joan Walsh [pointed out](#) in the *Nation*, to mobster language, as when he complained about the practice of "flipping witnesses" to implicate the top bosses in the criminal hierarchies and when he denied that White House Counsel Don McGahn was "a John Dean style rat."

Capitalists mistrust Trump, not because they see him as morally lacking, but because they see him as an arbitrary, unpredictable, and unreliable wild-card president who, like his friend and mentor Roy Cohn, does not accept any rules except those that he finds expedient at any given moment. Even though US capitalists have for the most part benefited from his presidency, they see him not only as not part of them as a class, but also as an outside political actor with whom it is impossible to come

to a mutual understanding of what to expect from each other, in contrast with previous presidents from whom they could predictably expect to abide by their mutually constructed relationship.

That is one of the major reasons why much of the elite media like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* went into outright opposition to Trump, itself unusual in US politics except perhaps during Nixon's Watergate period.

That is why, before it became clear that Trump had won the Republican primary race in 2016, most capitalists refused to support him. Many of these capitalists also refused their support because of his racist and anti-immigrant provocations which they saw as a threat to the economic and political system's stability; or, as with the capitalists involved in agri-business and Silicon Valley, because they supported the legalization of at least short-term immigrant labor. (In fact, on August 22, 2018, dozens of American executives who are members of the Business Roundtable delivered a letter to the secretary of Homeland Security expressing their "serious concern" over the administration's [immigration policies](#), particularly those affecting the applications for, and renewal of, H-1B visas for skilled foreign workers and their spouses.) Large numbers of capitalists did not support him either because of his advocacy of protectionism, a policy advocated primarily by the executives of ailing industries such as coal and steel.

According to a [2018 study](#) by Thomas Ferguson, Paul Jorgensen, and Jie Chen, in 2015 (the year before the 2016 general election) the Trump campaign attracted financial support from firms in ailing industries like steel, rubber, machinery, and others that expected to benefit from Trump's protectionism. It also received, at that early stage, money from individual capitalists like corporate raider Carl Icahn, a virtual pariah to mainline firms in the Business Roundtable and Wall Street; and from a minority of Silicon Valley capitalists (who for the most part strongly supported Hillary Clinton) including Peter Thiel, a known figure in the industry, and several executives at Microsoft and Cisco Systems who contributed, respectively, more than \$1 million and approximately \$4 million to the Trump campaign.

Still, by the end of August 2016, by which time Trump had obtained the Republican nomination, no chief executive of a Fortune 100 company had donated to his campaign. This was in contrast with the 2012 presidential campaign, when according to the *Wall Street Journal*, nearly a third of Fortune 100's CEOs had by then supported Mitt Romney Republican candidacy. As [reported](#) in *Fortune* magazine, during the 2016 primary season nineteen of the nation's largest hundred companies had contributed to the campaigns of Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio. For her part, Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton had received twice as many donations from Fortune 100 executives than President Obama did in 2012.

It is true that after Trump won the number of delegates in the Republican primaries necessary to obtain the presidential nomination, an increasing number of capitalist firms began to contribute to his campaign hoping to propitiate Trump's goodwill should he be elected president. Thus, according to Ferguson et al., the run up to the Republican Convention brought in "substantial new money, including, for the first time, significant contributions from big business."

Apart from mining (especially coal companies, which continued to support Trump), the new contributors included Big Pharma, worried by Hillary Clinton's talk about regulating drug prices; tobacco, chemical companies, oil, and telecommunications — particularly AT&T, which had a major merger pending with Time Warner. The Ferguson et al. report notes that money also started to come in from executives at big banks (Bank of America, J.P. Morgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, and Wells Fargo), and even from some Silicon Valley companies that had not previously supported Trump, like Facebook, that contributed \$900,000 to the Cleveland Host Committee for the Republican Convention.

Yet, in the end, as reported by Ferguson et al., total spending on behalf of Trump's election from all sources totaled a little more than \$861 million compared with the \$1.4 billion raised by the Clinton campaign. With the possible exception of 1964, the Clinton campaign surpassed any other campaign since the New Deal and obtained financial support reaching "far into sectors and firms that have rarely supported any Democrat." Undoubtedly, Hillary Clinton, not Trump, was the presidential candidate supported by the majority of the capitalist class (notwithstanding Trump's improved record in capitalist fundraising after the Republican Convention).

Capitalist support for Trump increased substantially after he took office. His right-wing tax policies and even more extreme right-wing policies of drastic [deregulation](#) in the key fields of the environment, labor, and consumer protection have won over large sections of the capitalist class. The American capitalist willingness to support Trump's administration is not only due to his tax cuts and deregulatory policies, but because his regime coincides with a continued cyclical economic expansion.

While the majority of capitalists may be opposed to Trump's tariffs and [trade wars](#) with China and the European Union, they are muted in their opposition to the administration because, and as long as, profits continue to rise. But they don't trust him and cannot build with him a relationship with mutually agreed rules.

His extreme political behavior has forced them to at least take some distance from him, as happened in August 2017 after white supremacists [gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia](#) for a show of force that left one person dead and several others seriously injured at the hands of the white supremacists. Trump's reaction, pointing to violence on "many sides," provoked widespread indignation. Many CEOs felt forced to resign from Trump's manufacturing council: Kenneth Frazier of Merck Pharmaceuticals, Brian Krzanich of Intel, Kevin Plank of Under Armour, Inge Thulin of 3M, and Scott Paul, the president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing.

Sophisticated pro-capitalist organs of information and opinion, especially those ideologically committed to laissez-faire economics, are uneasy with the support that American business are affording — grudgingly or ungrudgingly — to Trump. An emblematic example of this queasiness is a May [editorial](#) of the Anglo-American *Economist*, titled "The Affair" and subtitled "American executives are betting that the president is good for business. Not in the long run."

Recognizing that for capitalists tax cuts, deregulation, and potential trade concessions from China outweigh the unclear costs of weaker institutions and trade wars, the *Economist* contends that "when it comes to gauging the full costs of Mr. Trump, America Inc. is being short-sighted and sloppy." "The country's system of commerce," holds the editorial, "is lurching away from rules, openness and multilateral treaties towards arbitrariness, insularity and transient deals."

As the *Economist* sees it, the expense of re-regulating trade could even exceed the benefits of deregulation at home. This might be tolerable except for the unpredictability of the Trump era, particularly Trump's tendency to show off his power with "acts of pure political discretion." It is this unpredictability that concerns the *Economist* most.

The Rise of a Lumpen-Capitalist President

How did it happen that a US president with such a problematic relationship with the capitalist US ruling class emerged, and managed to be elected, president? And even more so when paradoxically, he, a capitalist, had far weaker ties to the US capitalist class as a whole when he assumed office in January 2017 than had been the case of Obama, Clinton, Bush father and son, Reagan, and Carter.

The explanation goes back to the impact of the crisis created by the great economic recession of 2008. This recession came on top of the long-lasting effects of the growing deindustrialization that American workers suffered and about which the Democratic Party, whether under Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, or Barack Obama, did nothing significant to ameliorate their plight.

The paradigmatic case was West Virginia, a heavily Democratic state with a coal mining-based economy and the once politically powerful United Mine Workers Union (UMW), that was [disregarded by the Democratic Party](#) when the coal mining industry began ailing, bringing unemployment and underemployment and leading to a turn to the Republican Party. A similar pattern was followed in 2016 by states like Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. The loss of these states sealed the defeat of Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign.

By 2016, in the United States as a whole, millions of American families that had witnessed rising living standards and social mobility in the "glorious thirty years" between 1945 and 1975 no longer expected their children — saddled with heavy debts if they make it to college — to do as well as they did. Jobs had become increasingly limited to the low-wage, nonunion sectors such as logistics, call centers, hospitality, and health care, while the good, often technical jobs for the most part required postgraduate education. This situation is the economic and social background to the growth of the [opioid epidemic](#) within white and, increasingly, minority populations.

Donning the garb of authenticity in claiming to stand for the people — not a difficult task in confronting Hillary Clinton — Trump promised much-needed change to the victims of the crisis, including many of those who had voted for Obama and who were abandoned by him and his party. Trump offered [protectionism](#) as a solution to the problems of American workers. He [courted](#) the support of white Americans, sometimes dog whistling, sometimes openly espousing racist, nativist, and chauvinist views. Astutely, he assured voters he would leave Social Security and Medicare intact, social programs which more overtly neoliberal politicians like Paul Ryan have threatened to cut for some time. In doing so, he appealed to the large number of white Americans who erroneously thought that they had completely paid for these benefits through their lifelong individual contributions, in contrast to the "welfare" programs that the non-respectable poor supposedly get at the expense of the respectable middle and working class.

Trump also benefited from the Republican winner-take-all primary system originally designed to get an establishment candidate like Jeb Bush quickly selected instead of a prolonged period of competition that the Republican leadership feared might have hurt the party's chances. In the absence of his Republican opponents uniting around one candidate, or of a runoff system to assure a majority for the winner, he was able to obtain the nomination with only a plurality rather than a majority of Republican primary voters.

Trump's election and his presidency brings to the fore the old question of whether and how the capitalist class rules. Capitalists directly own and administer the economy, which they privately own. But they do so under circumstances any individual firm has little control over, such as national and international competition. That comes under the control of the state, which in light of the separation between the economy and polity that generally characterizes capitalist systems, particularly democratic ones, the capitalists don't control directly but by means of complicated mechanisms.

In "normal" circumstances, these mechanisms include "tailing" after the political parties in power while trying to promote and defend their interests through a variety of means, both negative — the threat and reality of [capital flight](#), refusal to invest, and other forms of capital "going on strike" — and positive, such as campaign contributions, lobbying, and media campaigns.

Crises imperil the complicated control that the capitalist class has attained in "normal"

circumstances. They create the conditions that facilitate the rise of external class and political agents to run the political system, ultimately on behalf of the ruling class but not on ruling-class terms. Under extreme crisis, such as that of Germany in the late twenties and early thirties, Nazism — to a considerable degree rooted in German lumpen elements, although many of these were purged by Hitler in the Night of the Long Knives in the summer of 1934 — was such a political agent protecting the survival of capitalism and its powerful capitalists, not in the capitalists' terms but in the Nazi's own terms. It is as if the Nazis had said to the capitalists: "We will provide you domestic political stability and let you make profits, but you have to pay the price of our barbaric rule."

Trump is another political external agent. But he is not a fascist and has not tried to introduce fascism in the United States — his rule is not based on, among other things, fascist squads and the secret police seizing the unions, opposition media, and political parties, or eliminating elections. He has certainly carried out a set of vicious anti-working class, anti-poor, racist, sexist, anti-immigrant, and anti-environmental policies. The crisis that facilitated his election was not of the same dimension and significance as the German crisis of the thirties or Italy in the early twenties. By those standards, it was instead a mid-range crisis based to a considerable degree on the impact of the great recession of 2008 and the preceding decline of income, living standards, and substantial growth of inequality in the United States.

So far Trump has managed to retain the loyalty of the overwhelming majority of Republicans. The alliance of religious conservatism and white nationalism that Trump built may turn out to be more solid and enduring than the Republican neoliberal-religious alliance that preceded it. The irony is, of course, that Trump is more ruthlessly implementing a neoliberal program — certainly not in international trade where he deviates from the neoliberal Republican line, but in what counts a lot more: dismantling tax and regulatory policies, particularly in the areas of labor, environment, and consumer protection, accompanied, in his particular case, by the old racist emphasis on reducing civil and voting rights.

Samuel Farber

P.S.

• Jacobin. 10.19.2018:

<https://jacobin.com/2018/10/donald-trump-lumpen-capitalist-class-elections>

• Samuel Farber was born and raised in Cuba and is the author of numerous books and articles dealing with that country. He is a member of Jewish Voice for Peace and supports BDS.