

What is American Trumpism?

Do the Orlando shootings vindicate Trumpism?

What does this question mean? While all we need is another ism in our political-economic lexicon, some have tried to define Trumpism: for instance, these guys who appear to have gotten cold feet. Maybe their computers were hacked, too; or maybe the sudden deletion of their entire site except for a rather mysterious farewell statement is explained here.

Trumpism is paradoxical. It implies an ideology, and Donald Trump is no ideologist; he's an empiricist, not a systematic thinker. He goes off what he sees, not abstractions. What the term Trumpism implies is the possibility of ideas separable from the man himself, and which might survive if his candidacy is sabotaged or if he loses in November. That makes it important. My reference to American Trumpism suggests that there might be other forms of Trumpism, populist equivalents, elsewhere around the world. This is confirmed by the Le Pens in France, Geert Wilder in the Netherlands, Joerg Haider and Norbert Hofer in Austria, Viktor Orban in Hungary, Jaroslaw Kaczynsk in Poland, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, and – indirectly – the “Brexit” movement in Great Britain.

My focus will be on the U.S., but we're looking, somewhat ironically, at a global rebellion against the coercive globalism being led mostly by corporations and a few “global-citizen” types whose view of the people left unemployed by their policies is an indifferent shrug: “let them find gigs” (which recalls an earlier one: let them eat cake).

One of the pseudonymous folks at the above site identified three components (sadly, no longer linkable):

- (1) Immigration policy that puts the interests of America and Americans first.
- (2) Foreign policy that puts the interests of America and

Americans first.

(3) Trade policy that puts the interests of America and Americans first.

The author who called himself Decius added, "Trump seems to grasp intuitively something our elites have forgotten or smugly deny: Politics is by nature particular." He might have added: left to itself, most actual free trade is local and also particular.

Before we expand on these remarks, a warning. What follows should be presumed dangerous! I am almost surprised if this essay is posted. It is clear: there are people who want this kind of discussion stopped. They will go beyond mere namecalling ("Trump's a racist, a xenophobe, a fascist, an Islamophobe"). I am grateful (1) I am semi-retired, with no employer trolls can email, to derail my career; and (2) for the extra layer of security on all my devices. Trump may be the biggest black swan globalists have yet encountered, in the U.S. at least. As I wrote last time, I think they and their many "useful idiots" scattered across the media and elsewhere are in abject terror. Their scare tactics are everywhere! For even if they thwart Trump himself, whether at the GOP convention or in November, the movement he's galvanized – and the issues his candidacy has brought to the surface of American consciousness – are not going away!

I suggest Trumpism has four elements we can pin down.

(1) A brand of conservatism that wants, first and foremost, to conserve the American nation – while CINOs (conservatives in name only) who dominated the GOP until Trump came along aren't interested in conserving anything; their interests are money and power.

(2) Calls for ending open borders policies that have cost American jobs and, it should now be clear in the wake of the Orlando shootings as well as others such as those in St.

Bernardino, Calif., place Americans' lives at risk. (The Orlando shootings raise additional issues I will defer to a separate article next week.) If one doubts the wisdom of border security, look at the costs of open borders in Europe where cities and towns have been overrun by unassimilable Muslims, courtesy of the pro-war foreign policy of U.S. neocons whose wars of choice have laid waste to their homelands, and the open borders policy of the disastrous (and hopefully doomed) European Union. Immigrants from Mexico are no longer assimilating into the U.S. No borders = in the long run, no nation!

(3) A pro-American foreign policy which eschews "nation building" that does not work and wars of choice that make Americans enemies. Fighting a war means intending to win it – which means not getting involved in unwinnable regional squabbles. Trumpism also promotes arrangements in which the U.S. aids other nations but insists that they carry their weight by paying us back; no more free lunches.

(4) Economic nationalism: which means trade deals and employment policies that favor Americans, not foreigners, and which favor all Americans who work for a living, not just a privileged elite whose "work" involves moving money around all day. Free trade in this view is a misnomer for controlled trade by elite-dominated corporations in partnership with governments (corporatism or "soft fascism"). The latter understand freedom as the freedom to do whatever increases their profit margins no matter who gets stepped on. Sometimes it's the American working class, as when factories close and go to Mexico for cheaper labor. Other times it is indigenous peoples elsewhere, as John Perkins shows in his Confessions of an Economic Hit Man (2004; new 2nd Ed. 2016).

Behind Trumpism, as Ben Boychun explains (he's one of those rare writers who, while opposing Trump himself, appears intent on getting the ideas right) following our friend Decius, is this kind of sentiment: " ... in the real world most of us

recognize the difference between a fellow citizen and a foreigner, or a friend and an enemy. Some people belong; some people don't. A country that can't tell the difference won't last long."

In other words, Trumpism does involve an us-versus-them perspective: a view of the world Enlightenment ideals of Universal Reason (UR) and Universal Human Rights (UHR) sought but ultimately failed to transcend. I find this saddening, but I didn't make the rules.

Like it or not, UR and UHR were creations of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP)-males, especially pivotal philosophers such as Kant who was among the first to dream of a global village, a "kingdom of ends." Kant's intellectual descendants wrongly assumed that peoples everywhere would welcome with open arms the Western world of positive science, market capitalism's economic and technological encirclements (material embodiments of UR), and so-called liberal democracy (that of UHR).

The results have been mixed. A few cultures have embraced some of these ideals and done reasonably well. Singapore comes to mind, although Singapore is no democracy! Others came into contact with Western systems and suffered near-irreparable harm, e.g., the Ladakhi about whom Helena Norberg-Hodge writes in her illuminating *Ancient Futures: Lessons of Ladakh for a Globalizing World* (1991, 2009).

But let's focus on the home front. How consistent has been its commitment to UR and UHR? Answer: not very. They've proven expendable when inconvenient!

The purveyors of political correctness (PC) abandoned them. They implied affording everyone the same rights and holding everyone to the same standards under the rule of law ("colorblindness," as opposed to, e.g., "racenorming" in law school admissions). They conflicted with men's and women's roles being interchangeable in military service.

They did not bring PC-friendly outcomes for minorities and feminists, in other words.

Hence the PC crowd restored a tribalism which tried to keep WASP-males out of its loop. When a radical academic (e.g.) argues that every ethnic group has its own consciousness, based on its members' own collective experience that can only be understood from the inside, they are expressing this new tribalism. Or when Justice Sonia Sotomayor was described as a "wise Latina," it was implied that her group identity was essential to her capacity to help decide Supreme Court cases "fairly" for her people.

Trump is hated for bringing WASP-males into this loop. He's just being consistent. Consciously or not, he employed the same tribalism to benefit a white guy, himself, by questioning the objectivity of a Mexican-descended judge (a member of a La Raza-affiliated law organization) to decide the Trump University case "fairly."

The other tribes have cried foul at the top of their lungs, as if WASP-males could be expected not to embrace the new tribalism eventually. Part of official PC dogma, as everybody knows, is that all WASPs are privileged. This is nonsense, of course, but it hasn't stopped white privilege from a leading mantra today. Another PC / multiculturalist dogma is that objectivity does not really exist but is a "WASP-male social construct." Never mind the logic of wondering if, in this case, PC / multiculturalist judgments can be objective, because logic too is a "white male social construct."

So does anyone still believe UR / UHR?

Libertarians as rationalist-individualists tend to believe them, following their ancestors, the classical liberals. Those who accept the mindset of Science (capital S) do. Think of guys like Richard Dawkins (emphasizing UR more than UHR). Or possibly Pope Francis (emphasizing UHR more than UR). You will

find progressives and so-called conservative Republicans paying them lip service. I used to argue from such premises.

The problem: nations that try to practice them while simultaneously embracing globalism, open borders and multi-ethnicity, end up divided and shattered, as groups with incommensurable cultural values battle over the spoils. "Diversity," contrary to the celebrated adage, is not "our strength." It's an academic fantasy. In the real world of flesh and blood masses who are not intellectuals or economic abstractions (homo economicus as a sort of walking utility-maximizer), diversity is threatening, divisive, and destructive – especially if one or more of the parties did not agree to the arrangement, its members stripped of control over their lives and culture.

Why? Expanding on Boychuk's remarks, peoples automatically distinguish between their own who are familiar and trusted, and those outside who are unknown quantities and not trusted – not without a lengthy period of vigilant observation. The outsider, who looks different, has different customs, believes a different worldview and speaks a different language, has to prove himself. This is not "racism" but common sense! Contact by outsiders could be a friendly overture or prelude to an invasion!

Nothing here precludes trade relations developing between different peoples, but will place natural limits on them and ensure that most trade will be local or at most, regional, among known quantities ... unless it is socially engineered to be otherwise, as corporate globalists have spent the past hundred years doing. Then you have accusations of imperialism, revolutions, wars, terrorism, false flag events, and the kinds of tensions (between rich, middle class and poor; between the sexes; between different regions and ethnicities) we have everywhere peoples are forced under vast, impersonal, technocratic structures of governance and economic domination against their will.

This also explains why ambitious trade negotiations like Doha stall and collapse. The bottom line: those involved do not trust one another. Where trust exists, documents thousands of pages long do not seem necessary. Says Francis Fukuyama in his magnificent treatise *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (1995): “people who do not trust one another will end up cooperating only under a system of formal rules and regulations, which have to be negotiated, agreed to, litigated, and enforced, sometimes by coercive means... Widespread distrust in a society, in other words, imposes a kind of tax on all forms of economic activity, a tax that high-trust societies do not have to pay” (pp. 27-28). Fukuyama was talking about nation-states, but his remarks surely apply to our globalized world. Corporate globalists learned from Doha that from the standpoint of their goals, transparency is a bad idea. Hence the secrecy of their more recent projects, the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Claims of conspiracy be damned!

Trumpism is a late American empire response to the division and distrust globalism and the PC / multiculturalist axis have sowed. While the latter see global economic growth, minorities rising to power, and angry white males fearful of losing their privileges, Trumpists see a hollowed out economy, a ruined educational system, and a shattered culture.

Trumpism also rejects as nonsense that “we are a nation of immigrants.” “We” are a nation of Anglo-Saxon settlers and their descendants who allowed immigration primarily for other Europeans willing to assimilate into a dominant culture: English-speaking, Christian in an organic sense built into community life and mores, based on the rule of law derived from English common law, embodied in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

This culture went on to build what indeed became the greatest civilization history had yet seen! Which then began to self-destruct!

Immigration-requiring-assimilation held sway until 1966, when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Kennedy-sponsored Immigration Act which made it more difficult for Europeans from similar cultures to immigrate to the U.S. and easier for peoples from the second and third worlds. The latter snowballed, and not simply under left-liberals' watch. President Ronald Reagan signed a similar immigration bill in 1986. The corporate world had grown more hostile to workers (recall Reagan's breaking the air traffic controllers' union a few years before). It was also becoming more materialist, as was the rest of the culture. The outsourcing of jobs to cheap-labor countries was picking up.

It is no accident that real, inflation-adjusted wages have been stagnant or falling since the Reagan-Bush years, that permanent jobs paying livable wages have gone overseas replaced by part-time "gigs," and that what was the largest financially independent middle class in history is shrinking.

Is there any wonder that Trumpists look to the past in order to build the future: a future that repudiates globalism, accepts a tribalism acknowledging WASP identity (rejecting PC because it rejects them), and proposes to Make America Great Again by putting Americans first in all things?

A few final, somewhat random notes are in order:

For what it's worth, slavery was the West's biggest blunder. Our ancestors should have eschewed it altogether. Only a fraction of blacks have successfully assimilated, and now that the rest have either succumbed to welfare-statism or fallen under the sway of the PC / SJW mindset, they are moving en masse in the wrong direction. Neither Trumpism nor leftism nor UHR nor anything else is likely to prevent this from ending badly!

Libertarians do not provide a real alternative. The Libertarian Party just nominated two cultural leftists (Gary

Johnson and William Weld) who favor open borders and “free trade.” Given the supposed unpopularity of both Trump and Hillary Clinton, this should be a banner year for the LP. But again it hasn’t caught on outside its own echo chambers. The reason, I think, is the sense that libertarianism is too academic and out of touch with the thinking of common people.*

Millennials’ support for Bernie Sanders, alongside recent polls suggesting that many are giving up on capitalism in favor of socialism – with neither term defined – indicate both their frustration with the hollowed out economy that may well have destroyed their parents’ livelihoods, as well as the need to rebuild education from scratch – and without its presently ludicrous price tag!

Declaring, as many pseudo-pundits doubtless will, that Trumpism is just intellectual fascism with a new face, misses the point entirely. Trumpism affirms white identity – indeed, (alpha) white male identity – alongside the other tribalisms. Did those of us who find it tempting want this result? No, but as far as I am concerned, it just makes sense as a response to the collapse of UR and UHR, as well as the hostility towards everything that build this civilization, including white men. None of this was our doing.

Trumpism rejects the dominant “neos” (neoconservatism, neoliberalism) as having run their course. The former has given us a destructive war machine. The latter, massive inequality, and among those who feel well off, a pseudo-prosperity based on debt. Places like Chile may seem like exceptions. I submit, having lived here four years now, that what prosperity Chileans have, has had its price. Chile, too, is controlled by a tiny elite. Although it’s a separate article, the fact that neoliberalism promised prosperity but has delivered rigid class stratification and ridiculously overpriced higher education that has become an increasing source of unrest here, particularly among the young. It is equally true that Michelle Bachelet’s center-left corporatism-

lite with its undeliverable promise of “free education” has worsened, not alleviated, the situation.

The two “neos” are flipsides of discredited worldview, rooted in the materialist view of the universe and of human nature, economics über alles, and the possibility of unlimited growth and expansionism no matter who gets hurt. This worldview should be repudiated before it does more damage. And no, UR and UHR do not fit into it, either, which is why they are losing ground on all fronts. Trumpists may reject them; the global elite has no interest in them either, but for a completely different reason: in helping accrue wealth and power, they are useless.

Donald Trump would not think these thoughts, of course. But we can, and we must.

*I used to think of myself as a libertarian (lower-case l). I voted Libertarian several times (e.g., in 1988 when Ron Paul ran on the LP ticket). When asked, I sometimes tell people that I did not leave libertarianism, it left me. I defended Constitutionally limited government, which Dr. Paul supported. Today, however, you’ll find libertarian writers who reject the Constitution as a mistake. Those who haven’t become anarcho-crazies who imply governing institutions can somehow be abolished on a large scale have embraced cultural leftism (some were there all along): pro-abortion, pro-gay marriage, etc.: often anti-Christian as many are also locked into materialism with all four claws.

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