

On Global Capitalist Crises: US Neocons and Trump's Economic and Social Agenda

Part III

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Mohsen Abdelmoumen: How to explain why the influence of neocons in the US continues despite changes in presidents and administrations?

Jack Rasmus: The neocons represent a particular right wing radical social and political base in America that has existed for some time. In fact, it's always been there, going back at least to McCarthyism in the early 1950s, and even before. This is a radical ideological right, even pro- or proto-fascism base in the US. It was checked by the great depression and world war II temporarily but quickly arose again in the late 1940s with the advent of the cold war and China's successful war for independence. It formed around Barry Goldwater in the 1960s. It arose again in the 1970s with Nixon. When Nixon was thrown out, it reorganized and set forth a plan to take over the American government and political institutions. It even developed position papers and internal proposals how this takeover might be achieved.

Ideologues like Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and others assumed positions of power in the Reagan administration. Their movement took over the US House of Representatives in 1994 and vowed to create a dysfunctional government that would be blamed for gridlock and give their more radical proposals a hearing as to how to break the gridlock and govern again in their interests. We saw them reassert their influence when Cheney was made vice president in 2000. He was actually a co-president, and perhaps more, as George W. Bush, was the publicized president but really a playboy figurehead. Cheney and his radical right ran foreign policy, giving us Iraq and setting the entire Middle East afire in its wake. This radical right is also behind the decline of democratic and civil rights since 2000, using the 9-11 events as excuse to push their anti-democratic agenda. The Koch brothers, the Adelman and Mercer families, and scores of others are the moneybags in their ranks. They

funded the teaparty movement that has since entered the Republican party, terrorized the party's moderates and driven them out of office and the party itself. Without them, their money, their grass roots organizations, their control now of scores of states' legislatures, their stacking of judgeships across the country, the Trump phenomenon would not have been possible in 2016. Ideologues like Steve Bannon, John Bolton, Navarro, Abrams, Miller and others are now running the Trump administration and its domestic (immigration) and foreign (trade fights, Israel, No. Korea, Venezuela, Iran) policies.

The point is they've always been there, a current in US politics below the radar, but since 1994 aggressively asserting itself and penetrating US institutions with increasing success—aided by media like Fox News and their analogues in radio and on the internet.

Mohsen Abdelmoumen: Trump made promises of employment during his election campaign and was elected on the slogan “America first” by the disadvantaged classes, especially in rural areas. Isn't Donald Trump the president of the rich in the United States? What is your assessment of Trump's governance?

Jack Rasmus: That assessment must first distinguish between governance in the interest of whom? It's been a disaster for working-class America. All Trump's promises of bringing jobs back is just a manipulation of concerns by workers of massive job losses and wage stagnation due to offshoring of US jobs and free trade. While Trump talks of bringing jobs back, he opens the floodgates to skilled foreign engineers and workers taking more jobs based on H1-B and L-1 visas, covered up by cuts to unskilled workers entering from Central America.

Trump is a free trader, just a bilateral free trader not a multilateral one. Trump's trade offensive is about the US reasserting its hegemony in global markets and trade for another decade as the global economy weakens. It's a phony trade war against US allies. Just look at the deals made with South Korea, the exemptions given for steel and aluminum tariffs, the go slow and go soft with Japan and Europe. Contrast that with the increasingly aggressive attack on China trade relations—which is really about the US trying to stop next generation technology development by China in AI, cyber security, and 5G wireless. These are technologies that are also the military technologies of the 2020s. The neocons and military industrial complex in the US, along with the Pentagon and key pro-military chairpersons in Congress, want to stop China's tech development. It's really a two country race in tech now, with almost all the patents roughly equally issued by China and the US and everyone else way behind. So the trade war has delivered nothing for the working classes except rising prices now, and even for farmers who are the losers (but they're given direct subsidies to offset their losses, unlike working families that have to bear the brunt of the tariff effects).

Look at the tax legislation of 2018 and the deregulation actions of 2017 by Trump. Who benefited. Business got big cost cuts. The rest of us got higher taxes to offset the \$4 trillion actual Trump tax cuts for business and investors and wealthy households. US multinational corps got \$2 trillion of that \$4 trillion. And households will have to pay \$1.5 trillion in more taxes, starting this year and accelerating by 2025. In deregulation, we get the collapse of Obamacare and accelerating premiums, while the bankers got financial regulations of 2008-10 repealed. As far as political 'governance' is concerned, what we've seen under Trump is widespread voter suppression, gerrymandering by his 'red states' to help him get re-elected next time, the approval of two conservative judges to the US Supreme court engineered by Trump's puppy, McConnell, in the Senate. Then there's the now emerging

attacks on immigrants, including jailing their kids, and the attacks on womens' rights that was once considered unimaginable.

Politically Trump has been engineering a bona fide constitutional crisis. He's appeared to have gotten away with the Mueller investigation which should have led to his impeachment but hasn't. He continually undermines US political institutions verbally. He clearly is moving toward bypassing Congress and governing directly by 'national emergency' declarations, refusing to allow executive branch employees to testify to Congress despite subpoenas, ordering the launching of a new McCarthyism by ordering his Justice dept. to start investigating opponents, etc.—i.e. all of which were the basis of Nixon's impeachment.

In short, Trump's governance has been a disaster for working-class America, immigrants of color, small farmers and even manufacturing companies, but a boon to far right and white nationalists whom he publicly supports. It's been especially beneficial to wealthy households, businesses and investors, moreover. And maybe that's the most important reason why the capitalists still tolerate him and let him remain in office. If they really wanted to impeach and remove him from office they could find a way. But he's delivering for them financially and economically. He's 'good for business', in other words. But so was Hitler.

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