

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم
بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

FEBRUARY 9, 2018

by PAUL STREET
12.02.2018

We the People, Trumped by Constitution and Capitalism



Donald Trump has been struggling with historically unmatched low approval ratings – in the middle and high 30s for the most part – across most of his presidency. That is hardly surprising, given the ridiculous Boss Tweet’s relentlessly racist, sexist, plutocratic, eco-cidal, narcissistic, childish, and militantly un-presidential behavior. Like Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush before him but on a significantly bigger scale, Trump has made a laughingstock out of the United States. Trump’s disgusting and idiotic conduct in the

White House is all too obviously consistent with Trump's disgraceful history since long before he became a serious presidential candidate.

The Yippies joked about running a pig for president in 1968. Forty-eight years later, the Republicans ran one and it won. And now it wants a big military parade!

In my last *Counterpunch* essay, I wrote about how the deadly buffoon in the White House has retained a remarkably durable if small base of support among 35 to 39 percent or so of the population. Here I want to examine a different question: how does the Insane Clown President get to keep his position atop Superpower despite his epic unpopularity and his obvious and shameful unfitnes (see Michael Wolff's surprisingly masterful book [*Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*](#)) for any complex and demanding job?

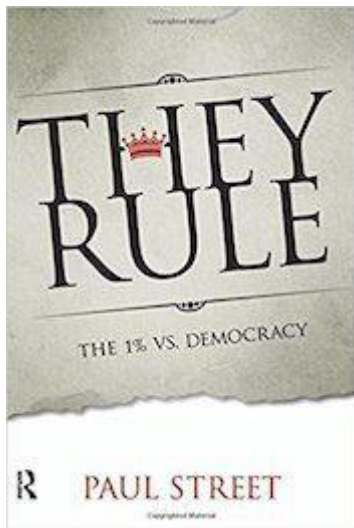
Part of the answer lay in the deeply undemocratic nature of the United States; political institutions, a reflection to no small extent of the nation's enduring captivity to the intentionally anti-democratic and wildly anachronistic Constitution crafted by the nation's slave-owning and powdered-wig wearing Founders [to protect the propertied "elite"](#) from the property-less and property-poor majority in 1788, when the Bourbon dynasty still reigned in France.

Confronted with a national government as stupid, loathed and dangerous as the Republican-led one in Washington right now, citizens and leaders in any reasonable parliamentary democracy today would conclude that the head of state had failed to create a functional governing coalition. They would call quite sensibly for new national elections. Here in the U.S, however, demanding new elections marks you as a lunatic. The sacred 1788 charter mandates that qualified voters go to the polls to select presidents (well, Electoral College representatives) once every four years, national senators once every six years, and House representatives, once every two years. As George W. Bush's White House spokesperson [Dana Perino explained](#) in March of 2008 when asked if the citizenry should have "input" on U.S. foreign policy: "*You had your input. The American people have input every four years, and that's the way our system is set up.*"

Perino was on all-too-strong constitutional ground. Never mind that U.S.-Americans don't select the president by majority popular vote (more on that below) or that the only two viable major-party presidential candidates on offer to We the People once every four years are always both committed to the same corporate and military state most of the populace hates. Forget that that U.S. presidential campaigns usually revolve around candidate-centered differences of image, "character," and branding, not substantive matters of policy.

The fact remains that the Holy Constitution says that the populace gets to vote for a U.S. president in a voting booth for two minutes or so once every 1,460 days. That's your "input," peon. Don't like it? Too bad. Constitution Says! Go live in North Korea!

You can advocate Trump's constitutional impeachment (by the House) and removal (by the Senate). Trump has certainly given Congress grounds for both, but the barriers to removal are very high. The two chambers of Congress, the House and the Senate, are



both under the control of the president's nominal party, the Republicans, and the Republicans have been determined to get everything they can from a weakened and stupid Trump when it comes to advancing their radically regressive, racist, eco-cidal and arch-plutocratic agenda. It takes just a simple majority in House to impeach but two-thirds of the Senate to remove a president. We've had two presidential impeachments (Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton) in U.S. history but no removals, though the evil nut-job Richard Nixon (who Trump thinks was "framed") would have both impeached and removed had he not resigned first

And what would the impeachment and removal of Herr Donald give the nation under the U.S. Constitution but the presidency of arch-right-wing [Christian fascist Mike Pence?](#) There's a case to be made for impeaching and removing Trump anyway, but Pence's constitutionally ordained ascendancy is certainly a negative incentive.

Another constitutional path for removal runs through the 25th Amendment, on grounds of incapacitation or incompetence, faces similar problems. But this is a chimera. Under the amendment, Trump's lapdog Veep Pence can join with a majority of the Cabinet to inform Congress that Trump (who Pence has been obsequiously lauding from day one) is unfit for the job. Then Pence becomes "acting president" so long as Trump doesn't object. If Trump insists that he's able to discharge the duties of the office, then Pence and the Cabinet have four days to tell Congress he's wrong. Congress has 21 days to decide

whether the president is up the job. If they decide he isn't, two-thirds of both the House and the Senate can vote to make the vice president the president.

Fugghetaboutit. You can read Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury* book over and over. Yes, it's full of evidence that the Dotard-in-Chief is widely considered to be a "fucking moron" (the non-disavowed opinion of Trump's Secretary of State) and abject "idiot" by many if not most of his closest associates. But 25th Amendment removal is not happening, short of a medical emergency (which could happen in light of the president's diet and exercise habits).

And, again, who really wants to the grinning homophobic evangelical right-wing freak Mike Pence in the Oval Office?

Part of why removal is so difficult and unlikely has to do with something the slave-owning Founders foolishly thought their shiny new aristo-republican scheme of government would pre-empt: the emergence of political parties (which actually began to form in the U.S in connection with the debate over the enactment over the Constitution). If the House was under the control of the Democrats, it seems likely that Trump would be impeached – as Bill Clinton was by a Republican-controlled House. But it isn't. It's run by the Republicans. So is the Senate, where the Republican majority is much smaller but but where two-thirds of the body's votes are required to constitutionally defenestrate a POTUS.

Congress's "check and balance" power to remove an egregiously, even absurdly bad president doesn't mean that much Congress is under the control of the same party to which the president belongs.

Since its hallowed Framers fantasized that they had devised a miraculous form of republican rule so perfect as to prevent the rise of parties, the Constitution's system of "balanced government" makes the U.S. state distinctively susceptible to recurrent bouts of gridlock, paralysis, authoritarian override, and general democratic dysfunction when its finely adjusted institutional triplet – executive branch, Congress, and judiciary – is infected by the virus of partisan politics.

Political institutions matter.

But let's step back a bit. Why, one might ask, is the Congress, along with the presidency under the control of the Republicans, a party that is approved by just 29 percent of the U.S. populace, making it even less popular than the widely loathed Trump? The most obvious answer to that is that the awfulness of the deplorable, dollar-drenched Dems, the nation's

neoliberal and Inauthentic Opposition party – a topic that I and other left writers have addressed and documented on countless occasions here and in other portside venues.

Last Tuesday night, the corporate Democrat and apparent presidential hopeful Hapless Joes Biden (who was considered too old to run three years ago) got along warm interview with Democratic cable news host Chris Cuomo (son of longtime Democratic New York governor Mario Cuomo) on CNN. After the Cuomo-Biden lovefest, the grammatically challenged liberal CNN commentator Dana Bash told liberal CNN host Anderson Cooper that “One of the interesting things that he [Biden] said to Chris Cuomo was defending his rabid liberalism....” Cooper interjected to say, “he described himself as a progressive.” Bash responded: “Exactly, however, he also said ‘that doesn’t mean I can’t talk to working-class voters.’”

Besides the curious word choice “rabid” to describe Biden’s “liberalism” – a reference to his past support as a U.S. Senator support for gay marriage and women’s right – note the revealing curious *dichotomy Bash and Cooper shared between being a “progressive” and being able to talk to the working-class*. It speaks volumes about what’s happened to the Democratic Party across the ling neoliberal era. How have things reached the point of right-wing absurdity where Democrats seriously understand connecting to the working-class as a challenge to one’s “progressivism”? For modern-day privileged and smooth-talking Democrats like the talking heads at CNN and MSNBC/MSDNC, the “working-class” (and here of course they really mean the white working-class) is inherently reactionary and culturally backwards (anti-“progressive”), working-class politics and class struggle are abhorrent, and “progressive” really means middle-class identity politics.

According to historian Nancy Fraser in [a brilliant reflection](#) published (in *Dissent*, [unfortunately](#)) not long after Trump’s election Hillary Clinton’s ignominious defeat marked “The End of Progressive Neoliberalism” – that is, the defeat of “an alliance of mainstream currents of new social movements (feminism, antiracism, multiculturalism, and LGBTQ rights), on the one side, and high-end ‘symbolic’ and service-based business sectors (Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and Hollywood), on the other.” This “real, if perverse political alignment,” Fraser explains, “developed in the United States over the last three decades and was ratified with Bill Clinton’s election in 1992” (and then reauthorized with Obama’s two terms, she might have added). Under its terms, “progressive forces are effectively joined with” financial capitalism, lending “charisma” and “gloss” to “policies that have devastated manufacturing and what were once middle-class lives.” While trumpeting outwardly progressive ideals like diversity and empowerment, the Clinton-

Obama formation “bears a heavy responsibility for the weakening of unions, the decline of real wages, the increasing precarity of work, and the rise of the two-earner family in the place of the defunct family wage.”

By Fraser’s account, “progressive neoliberalism” was “rejected in toto” by Trump’s deindustrialized and rural white voters. For these “left behind” Americans, including not just “industrial workers ... but also managers, small businessmen, and all who relied on industry in the Rust Belt and the South, as well as rural populations devastated by unemployment and drugs ... the *injury of deindustrialization was compounded by the insult of progressive moralism, which cast them as culturally backward*. Rejecting globalization, Trump voters also repudiated the *liberal cosmopolitanism* associated with it (emphasis added).”

Clearly, though, leading elite Democrats and liberals haven’t quite gotten the news of supposedly “progressive” neoliberalism’s defeat. They continue to be ensnared in its wealth-pleasing absurdities. Watch MSNBC and CNN to see the syndrome and its associated “progressive moralism” and “liberal cosmopolitanism” still riding high – with a strong overlay of manic, diversionary, and imperial Russophobia.

“Another notable revelation of the Biden interview,” Glenn Kirk writes me with properly sardonic meaning from Virginia. “was old Joe’s statement that he believes it’s time for the Democrats to ‘move towards the center,’ claiming they’re too far the left now.” That’s “left” taken there to pretty much mean little more than those who support basic and elementary things like gay marriage, full citizenship for Dreamers, and the Paris Climate Accords.

What a ridiculous and pathetic farce the Inauthentic Opposition Party is.

What’s it all got to do with the Constitutionally ordained institutions? More than you might at first think. Why are the Democrats so awful? The “dismal Dems” (Doug Henwood’s phrase) are every bit as corporatized and sold-out to the financial plutocracy and its military empire – to the capitalist class and system that emerged out of national development under the rule of the propertied elite the Founders worked so brilliantly to protect – as the Republicans. This is thanks in part to the outrageously outsize role that big-money campaign contributions play in determining the outcomes of the nation’s evermore absurdly expensive elections.

And that role is attributable in part to the holy Constitution. The Founders created the Supreme Court as a critical, *presidentially appointed-for-life check on the popular will*. And in two landmark decisions, *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) and *Citizens United* (2010), the

high court has ruled (in total violation of majority public opinion) that private campaign contributions are “free speech” and that there are no “constitutional” limits to be set on how much the rich and powerful can invest in the giant organized bribery project that is U.S. campaign finance.

What, you and most other U.S.-Americans don't agree with those horrific high court decisions? That's nice. The Constitution says they might get reversed some day when some of the justices quit or die and you use your two minute once-every-1460-day moment in a presidential voting booth to help get the Electoral College to install a POTUS who might agree with most of the citizenry that private money needs to be taken out of public elections and who might be able to get a Supreme Court Justice who shares that opinion past the multi-millionaire Senators who have to approve Supreme Court appointments under the blessed 1788 charter.

Don't like it? Tough, because “that's the way our [their?] system is set up.” You need to read the Serenity Prayer again, apparently.

It isn't just about campaign finance. Concentrated wealth controls the nation's two leading and militantly capitalist political organizations in numerous other and related ways that go beyond just the funding of elections (for elaboration, please purchase and then read my indispensable 2014 book *[They Rule: The 1% v. Democracy](#)*). That concentration of wealth and hence of power is the consequence of the capitalism that was precisely the handiwork of the very propertied masters who were explicitly protected against the “wicked” masses by the Constitution, for whose framers' democracy – popular sovereignty – was the ultimate nightmare.

Of course, it isn't just in the United States that electoral politics is a capitalist-manipulated and anti-democratic farce. As [Howard Waitzkin noted](#) in last November's *Monthly Review*:

“Since the origins of so-called democracy during the Athenian empire, *elections have remained the tool of rich and powerful elites*. Capitalism has only magnified the inherent class characteristics of electoral processes...With rare exceptions, what Karl Marx and others called ‘bourgeois democracy’ prevails throughout the world. Such democracy enacts a symbolic ritual of voting. As the great left-wing Canadian politician Tommy Douglas put it, *mice vote for white cats or black cats, but never for mice*. So the problem we face now is not just Trump as neofascist, racist, sexist, and xenophobe, but rather a system that assures its elected leader will be Trump as lion or Clinton as lioness—*either way a representative of the feline class*. It is this system that must change, not the

candidates who become the anthropomorphized symbols of the system. And decades before Douglas, according to Vladimir Lenin, Marx described the same process less metaphorically: *‘Every once in a while, the oppressed are allowed to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class will represent them and oppress them’*” (emphasis added).

Indeed. Still, the U.S. is home to some very distinctive and peculiar (dare I say “exceptional”?) limits on the restricted concessions to popular “input” permitted by “bourgeois democracy.” Look at the skewered, right-leaning U.S. Senate apportionment regime we owe to the absurdly venerated Founders. In an open violation of the core democratic concept of “one person, one vote” (majority rule), the Constitution gives all U.S. states the same number of U.S. Senators (two) regardless of wild variations in population size between the states. Thanks in no small part to this rule (justified in the name of “equal suffrage for the states”), the widely hated GOP holds the Senate even though Democratic candidates for the U.S. Senate outpolled Republican opponents by 10.5 million votes in November of 2016. The 2 percent of Americans who live in the nation’s nine smallest states have the same amount of [senatorial representation](#) as the 51 percent who live in the nation’s nine largest states. Wyoming, home to more than 586,000 Americans, holds senatorial parity with California, where more than 39 million Americans reside. Due to “a growing population shift from the agricultural interior to crowded corridors along the coast,” historian Dan Lazare explains, “it is possible now to win the majority of the U.S. Senate with just 17.6 percent of the popular vote.”

How farcically anti-democratic and anachronistic is that? The openly undemocratic U.S. system of federal Senate apportionment is a great boon for the ever more absurdly right-wing and racist Republican Party, which reigns practically unchallenged by the more “cosmopolitan” and “multicultural” Democrats in the nation’s disproportionately white rural regions and states.

Equally absurd is the holy Founders’ explicitly anti-democratic Electoral College, which replicates the Senate’s over-representation of under-populated states and denies U.S. citizens – residents of the world’s self-declared homeland and headquarters of “democracy” – the right to directly elect their constitutionally hyper-powerful president. The outrageous Trump is the fifth POTUS to ludicrously sit atop the U.S. “democracy” after losing the popular vote in the presidential election.

And then there’s the House of Representatives, where the widely hated Republican Party enjoys a 47-vote majority even though it outpolled the Democrats by just over 1 percent in

the 2016 House elections. This reflects the widespread geographic manipulation of House district lines in such a fashion as to unduly advantage the Republican Party. This partisan-geopolitical gerrymandering process is led by the nation's mostly Republican-controlled state legislatures. And this is in accord with the federalist principles laid out in Article 4, section 1 of the sacrosanct U.S. Constitution, which proclaims that "The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof..." Effectively, this means that state legislatures are granted primary authority to regulate federal elections, including how their congressional district lines are to be drawn.

It is true that Article 4, Section goes on to say that "the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Place of Chusing Senators." Technically, then, Congress is the ultimate authority, and may supersede state laws on how districts are drawn. It has in fact done this in the past, requiring (in 1967) single-member districts (compelling voters to elect only one candidate to represent their district) and forcing states to enhance racial and ethnic minority groups' representation. The federal courts have interpreted the Constitution to require that House districts hold roughly equal populations. Still, Congress has never mandated a congressional redistricting process, something that has left states free to draw districts in accord with partisan considerations. We are currently awaiting a key Supreme Court decision on some extreme cases of Republican gerrymandering in North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Maryland. Maybe our appointed-for-life judicial masters will throw us a glint of democratic hope.

Even with the Trump-tainted GOP finding approval from just 1 in 3 Americans and with Republicans 17 percent less enthusiastic than Democrats about voting in the 2018 mid-term elections, it is not inconceivable that the rightmost of the two parties could retain its hold over the House in 2018 and 2020.

It isn't just about gerrymandering. As [Ari Berman notes in a recent *Rolling Stone* essay](#) titled "How the GOP Rigs Elections," many of the nation's Republican-controlled states have passed "harsh...voting restrictions, passing laws that make it harder for Democratic-leaning constituencies to register to vote and cast ballots." The fact that they can do that is partly about the idiocy of the Democratic Party, which has excessively neglected state-level politics for years. It is also about the constitutional federalism of the U.S. – the absence of any reasonably centralized and democratic electoral rules for the nation.

The state-level Republicans don't distort just national politics with gerrymandering and voting restrictions, of course. They also entrench their power far beyond their popular

support at the state level. Take Wisconsin, ground zero for state-level right-wing electoral distortion. “In 2012,” Berman writes:

“Obama carried Wisconsin by seven points, and Democratic legislative candidates received 51.4 percent of the statewide vote, but Republican candidates won 60 of 99 seats in the Statehouse. Under the Republican map, the number of safe GOP seats in the 132-member [Wisconsin state] legislature increased from 55 to 69, and the number of swing districts decreased from 24 to 13. It’s a practically foolproof system: No matter what happened nationally, Republicans would maintain control of state politics.”

Now, both the Republican and Democratic parties – aptly described by Upton Sinclair in 1904 as “two wings of the same bird of prey” – are corrupt and corporate. What about third and fourth parties? Most U.S.-Americans have long and consistently told pollsters they support the existence of viable third party that could seriously contest for elected offices.

Here, again, the core governing institutions matter. Among the many barriers to such a party taking hold we must include the Constitutionally ordained power of the U.S. Supreme Court, which has consistently supported steep state- and federal-level barriers to third party formation.

Another barrier is the federal law requiring that congressional districts be [single member](#). “First-past-the post” all-or nothing elections in which second- and third-place parties and candidates get no representation militate against third party formation since upstart parties are unlikely to win such an election their first or second time out (especially when big money speaks as loudly as it does in the U.S.) and voters tend to fear that voting for a third or fourth party will end up being a de facto vote for their least favorite of the two terrible, corporate-plutocratic major parties.

Third party development requires proportional representation (through cumulative voting or preference voting), whereby say 20 percent of the vote translates into 20 percent of representation, in combination with multi-member districts.

I’ll lay off the framers a bit here. There’s nothing in the Constitution that either prohibits proportional representation or mandates single-member districts and there are some forms of multi-member districting and proportional representation in existence at the state and local levels in the U.S. Repeal of the single-member district requirement passed by Congress in 1967 would violate no discernible language or intent in the U.S. Constitution. But enough about the nation’s horrid and outdated political institutions. What about the nation’s capitalist ruling-class, leading Constitution-advocate Alexander Hamilton’s

contemporary progeny, including an upper thousandth that possesses as much wealth as the bottom U.S. percent? Why doesn't it act to sweep the ludicrous Hair Fuhrer – surely a great black eye for Brand USA into history's proverbial dustbin? Why doesn't it pull the plug on the disgusting Twitter-addicted pig who so befouls the nation at home and abroad? Part of the answer is that it is getting things it wants from Trump. As [Chris Hedges recently argued on Truthdig](#), in a passage that merits lengthy quotation:

“The problem with Donald Trump is not that he is imbecilic and inept – it is that he has surrendered total power to the oligarchic and military elites. They get what they want. They do what they want. Although the president is a one-man wrecking crew aimed at democratic norms and institutions, although he has turned the United States into a laughingstock around the globe, our national crisis is embodied not in Trump but the corporate state's now unfettered pillage.”

“Trump, who has no inclination or ability to govern, has handed the machinery of government over to the bankers, corporate executives, right-wing think tanks, intelligence chiefs and generals. They are eradicating the few regulations and laws that inhibited a naked kleptocracy. They are dynamiting the institutions, including the State Department, that served interests other than corporate profit and are stacking the courts with right-wing, corporate-controlled ideologues. Trump provides the daily entertainment; the elites handle the business of looting, exploiting and destroying... He is useful to those who hold real power in the corporate state, however much they would like to domesticate him.”

“Trump's bizarre ramblings and behavior also serve a useful purpose. They are a colorful diversion from the razing of democratic institutions. As cable news networks feed us stories of his trysts with a porn actress and outlandish tweets, the real work of the elites is being carried out largely away from public view. The courts are stacked with Federalist Society judges, the fossil fuel industry is plundering public lands and the coastlines and ripping up regulations that protected us from its poisons, and the Pentagon, given carte blanche, is engaged in an orgy of militarism with a trillion-dollar-a-year budget and about 800 military bases in scores of countries around the world.”

Exactly. Trump hands key levers of state power to a smash-and-grab capitalist and military oligarchy that is happy to steal as much wealth and power as it can while eviscerating the last institutional remnants of popular sovereignty. Call it primitive, late-capitalist disaccumulation. As an added benefit, the daily Trump circus distracts the distraught ex-citizenry, the hapless and desperate rabble, from the great accelerated top-down financial and imperial enclosure of We the People's last remaining public goods and commons.

Besides distraction and diversion there's the despair. Trump may also help hasten foster public cynicism and apathy and a related hopeless sense that the government is beyond redemption. This promises to reduce citizen engagement by telling Americans that politics are stupid and hopeless.

Would the nation's capitalist and professional class elites like Trump to behave in a more "presidential" fashion? Probably, As Hedges notes, "It would help the brand." But, Hedges adds, the bipartisan neoliberal state-capitalist establishment and the media have lost whatever ethical weight they might have once possessed to alter Trump's conduct

"The press, along with political and intellectual elites, spent decades championing economic and political policies that solidified corporate power and betrayed and impoverished American workers. The hypocrisy and mendacity of the elites left them despised and distrusted by the victims of deindustrialization and austerity programs. The attempt to restore civility to public discourse and competency to political office is, therefore, fruitless. Liberal and establishment institutions, including the leadership of the two main political parties, academia and the press, squandered their moral authority. And the dogged refusal by the elites to address the engine of discontent—social inequality—ensures that they will remain ineffectual."

Along the way, the establishment get to blame the idiocy of Trump, [quite inaccurately](#), on the "white working-class."

Here I would add only that there are questions about how much the corporate elite really care about "the brand" ("brand USA") anymore. Upper 1 Percent "[Richistan](#)" residents live in a global capitalist order. They may occasionally join U.S. politicians in making standard obligatory comments about the bedrock value of America's middle-class and why it should be supported. But the cold truth beneath such rhetoric is that "America's ruling class doesn't care. They've moved on, having successfully created a world where the middle-classes in China and India offer far more opportunities to get rich." So [wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists Donald Barlett and James Steele](#) six years ago.

In 2011, a U.S.-based CEO of one of the world's largest hedge funds told [The Atlantic's Chrystia Freeland](#) how one of his fellow executives had argued that the hollowing-out of the American middle class didn't really matter" in comparison to the money to be made in more rapidly developing states. The chief financial officer of a large U.S. Internet firm told Freeland that Americans foolishly "demand a higher paycheck than the rest of the world...It may sound harsh, but maybe people in the middle class need to take a pay cut."

“I can get [workers] anywhere, in the world” Allstate CEO Thomas Wilson told the 2010 Aspen Ideas Festival. “It is a problem for America, but it is not necessarily a problem for American business.”

The United States’ elite business class holds no particular attachment to the people, communities, health, or even competitiveness of the U.S. as such. That’s why Robert Reich advised policymakers seven years ago “not to be seduced into thinking that the interests of big business are the same as the interests of the American economy, or, for that matter the interests of American workers.” [As Reich told the “P”BS NewsHour](#), “most Americans just simply are not part of the global economy in terms of prosperity any longer.”

In the [immortal words of George Carlin](#):

“You know what they want? Obedient workers... People who are just smart enough to run the machines and do the paperwork, and just dumb enough to passively accept all these increasingly shittier jobs with the lower pay, the longer hours, the reduced benefits, the end of overtime, and the vanishing pension that disappears the minute you go to collect it. And now they’re comin’ for your SOCIAL SECURITY MONEY. They want your fuckin’ retirement money. They want it BACK. So they can give it to their criminal friends on Wall Street. And you know something? They’ll get it. They’ll get it ALL from you sooner or later — ‘cuz they OWN this fuckin’ place. It’s a big CLUB. And YOU AIN’T IN IT. You and I ain’t in it.”

Elite U.S. capital is not anymore nationally bound than it is morally constrained. Its agents are brazenly global players who have been perfectly happy to observe and enhance what Noam Chomsky had rightly called “a process of [U.S.] de-industrialization and de-development.”

Big “American” capitalists could give a flying fuck over plant-closings in Ohio, opioid epidemics in West Virginia, climate change-driven super-hurricanes in Texas and (especially) Puerto Rico. *They’ve moved on.*

Trump exploited white nationalist resentment of capitalist globalization inside the U.S. to get elected but he is himself thoroughly enmeshed in global capitalism and so are the elite financial interests who permeate his White House and who worked with their fellow plutocratic and globalists “populists” and “nationalist” in the Republican Congress to pass an epic, arch-regressive, deficit-ballooning, last-ditch grab-and-go tax cut for the wealthy Few and the already super-opulent financial and corporate sectors. The tax cut furthers the “de-development” of the U.S. on numerous levels.

The super-rich don't care. And even if they did, they've "squandered [too much] moral authority" (Hedges) across the long neoliberal era and the New Gilded Age to call off the oligarchic plundering of the nation, the world, and livable ecology. Perhaps they think they can escape to other parts of the universe (like the alien capitalist rulers portrayed in John Carpenter's cult-classic movie *They Live*) before the planet they've despoiled becomes finally uninhabitable.

Could Trump be gone before the next presidential election and inauguration? Sure. It's still possible. *If* Robert Mueller has an extraordinary amount of ammunition from his Russiagate/money-laundering/obstruction-of-justice inquiry, *if* the Democrats can overcome the unlevel electoral playing field to take back the House and make big gains in the Senate, and *if* enough big capitalists and military elites decide they've gotten everything they can from the "useful idiocy" (Hedges) of Trump before it all goes sour, impeachment and even removal or resignation are not completely unimaginable. I'd give Trump a 25% chance of being impeached by the U.S. House, a 5% of being removed (after House impeachment) by the U.S. Senate, and a 40% chance of being convinced not to run for re-election in 2020.

Listening to the "progressive neoliberal" idiocy of Joe Biden, CNN, and MSNBC, and to hopelessly bourgeois-identity-politicized nothingness of Trump- and Russia-obsessed campus-town (Iowa City) Democrats, however, I find it all too plausible that the Insane Clown President could wrangle a second term. Never underestimate the miserable nothingness of the Inauthentic Opposition Party.