



Written by [Charles Scaliger](#) on March 7, 2016

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Dump Trump, or Promote Him?

Roman military leader and co-dictator with Julius Caesar, Marcus Licinius Crassus gave us the word “crass” (which in Latin means “thick,” “broad,” or “fat”). Crassus was the wealthiest man in Rome; it was his predatory ambition that, in combination with Caesar’s military genius, helped to overthrow the Roman Republic and bring about the rise of the empire. For those of us fortunate not to live in the time of the Caesars, Crassus’ career is an object lesson of the perils of conferring the scepter of political power upon those who have enriched themselves by exploiting the machinery of the state.



Right now, all eyes are on the campaign of outspoken billionaire real estate mogul and entertainer Donald Trump. The popular appeal of “the Donald” is understandable: He is unafraid to taunt the mainstream media or say outrageous things about Rosie O’Donnell and other perennial objects of right-wing scorn. He also has spoken strongly against policies of the last Republican president, charging, for instance, that the Bush administration’s claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction prior to our invasion was a lie. In this and other ways, he has firmly positioned himself as an anti-establishment candidate. But his crassness is also undeniable. Trump is as foul-mouthed and venal a figure as has ever defaced the American body politic, as even a quick YouTube search will disclose. He has not shied away from dropping the “f-bomb” and other, even fouler epithets in public addresses, and has boasted in his own writings of his womanizing and libertine lifestyle. He has made much of his fortune selling vice — gambling and exotic dancing in particular — in his casinos.

Leaving aside matters of character and conduct, Donald Trump’s conservative credentials are, as we shall show, a mixed bag, regardless of what his fan base now believes. A President Donald Trump, for all the bluster and outrageous conduct, would probably be little different in substance than many of the GOP establishment politicians he rails against.

On the Way Up

Donald John Trump was born in 1946 in New York City to multimillionaire real estate mogul Fred Trump. His father, using the resources of a company he founded with his mother (Donald Trump’s paternal grandmother, Elizabeth), made hundreds of millions of dollars building apartment buildings, houses, and supermarkets all over New York City, taking advantage of the postwar economic boom and a growing new American middle class hungry for home ownership.

Donald went to college at Fordham University for two years before transferring to the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business, which offered one of the few programs in real estate studies. Young Donald Trump was determined to follow his father into real estate; he worked at his



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father's company, Elizabeth Trump & Son, during college, and was already quite a wealthy man by the time he graduated, having amassed the equivalent of more than a million dollars in today's money.

After college, Trump at first continued at his father's company, helping to build or revitalize middle-class urban rental properties. In 1971, however, Trump — whose tastes ran to more flamboyant extremes than his buttoned-down, old-school father — moved to Manhattan to embark on his long career of building extravagant skyscrapers. Hotels, office buildings, and glitzy apartment towers were (and remain) his chief stock-in-trade, but by the early '80s, he had also become interested in the potential of casinos for their supposedly constant and inexhaustible revenue streams. He purchased casinos and hotels in America's two gambling meccas, Atlantic City and Las Vegas, and — despite considerable setbacks in these investments (his Taj Mahal Casino, acquired in 1988, was bankrupt within two years, and the restructuring of that and other debts run up from other ill-advised investments exhausted much of the fabled wealth Trump had acquired during the first two decades of his career) — he remains a major figure in the gambling industry.

By the end of the '90s, Trump's financial fortunes, battered by years of setbacks, began to revive, and over the last 15 years, his real estate empire has prospered as never before. In 2001, the Trump World Tower, a 72-story behemoth near the United Nations headquarters, was completed, eclipsing the 58-story Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue completed in 1983. Even more impressive is the Trump International Hotel and Tower, a 1,389-foot, 98-story hotel and residential tower in Chicago which, when completed in 2009, became the fourth-tallest building in the Western Hemisphere.

In addition to "real-estate mogul," Donald Trump has worn many other hats, especially in recent years, when he has become an entertainment fixture as a professional wrestling impresario, a TV reality-show host for the wildly popular show *The Apprentice* (for which he received a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame), and an owner of beauty pageants such as Miss USA and Miss Universe. His knack for self-promotion is evident in publicity stunts such as his infamous shaving of fellow pro-wrestling impresario Vince McMahon's head at Wrestlemania XXIII, and in his signature catchphrase, "You're fired!"

Donald Trump has been married three times. The first marriage, to Ivana née Zelníčková, lasted from 1977 until 1992 and produced three children, Donald, Ivanka, and Eric. However, in 1990 Ivana found out that Trump was having an affair with an actress and former beauty queen, Marla Maples. After a series of public spats and confrontations that delighted the tabloid press, Ivana sought a divorce, which was finalized in 1992 with Ivana receiving a generous portion of Trump's assets.

Trump married Maples in 1993 after having a daughter, Tiffany, with her, but they separated only four years later and were divorced in 1999. The fact that Trump dated model Kara Young during the mid-to-late '90s may have had something to do with his separation and divorce from Maples. His current wife, Melania née Knauss, a Slovenian model, met Trump in 1998 at a fashion show. The two were married in 2005 after a courtship of many years, and have one child together, a boy (Barron) born in 2006.

Like all successful Americans, Donald Trump's career was soon noticed by the government, and attempts to separate him from his gains, ill-gotten or otherwise, began when he was still a young man. In 1973, the Justice Department accused Donald Trump and his father of discriminating against blacks in their rental practices in violation of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. It was, in fact, the second such action undertaken by the Justice Department; the first, which attacked a realtor and developer named Samuel J. LeFrak, who controlled around 15,000 rental apartments in New York City, had been resolved



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quickly, in 1971, with LeFrak acquiescing to allowing black families to be moved into rental units. The New York Urban League, the advocacy group that had pushed the Justice Department to go after LeFrak, was not satisfied with the outcome, and urged the Department of Justice to go after the Trumps.

The Trumps turned out to be less pliant than LeFrak. Donald Trump told the *New York Times* — in his first appearance in the pages of that newspaper — that the charges were ridiculous, and vigorously denied any discrimination of any kind. Two months later, the Trumps sued the federal government for \$100 million, and the legal battle lasted for two years. In 1975, the Trumps finally settled, with the resulting agreement imposing more severe conditions on them than on LeFrak, presumably as punishment for their intransigence. The Trumps agreed not only not to discriminate, but also, according to a triumphalist *New York Times* piece written at the time:

Trump must give the New York Urban League a weekly list of all vacancies in Trump buildings here, and must also give the league's Open Housing Center three days in which to provide qualified applicants for every fifth vacancy in those Trump buildings where blacks currently occupy fewer than 10 percent of the apartments.... Betty Hoeber, director of the Urban League's Open Housing Center, said that the Trump agreement "looks very good" and appeared better than the agreement with LeFrak. The Open Housing Center's allegations of discrimination had played a major role in prompting the Government to move against both companies.

Donald Trump had been brought to heel by a familiar combination of race and poverty agitators and their allies in Washington race-baiting for political gain. It was no doubt this two-year legal tussle that taught Trump the true cost of doing business in post-capitalist America. It may well have been the event that diminished his enthusiasm for the traditional Trump family business of building middle-class rentals, and inspired him to look at corporate real estate and gambling casinos as areas of endeavor less likely to attract the attention of government scolds. Trump certainly learned the need to purchase political favors and access, regardless of party affiliation, and has — as Trump the Candidate has not been shy to admit — spent lavishly on politicians from both parties ever since.

Views — Up, Down, and All Around

What, then, are Trump's beliefs and core principles and how, if at all, do they set him apart from the rest of the GOP field? Much has been made of Trump's partisan malleability; he was a Democrat until 1987, a Republican from then until 1999, and a Reform Party member for two years, until 2001 — when he reverted to the Democratic Party for eight years — and has been in the Republican fold from 2009 to the present. He was a supporter of Ronald Reagan, but considers Bill Clinton to have been a better president than either of the Bushes. He has donated heavily to both Republican and Democratic candidates, and has given as much as \$250,000 to the Clinton Foundation. He even suggested, in a 2008 blog post, that Hillary Clinton would make "a great president or vice-president."

Allowing for changing personal opinions (Ronald Reagan, after all, began his political life as a Democrat) and given the ideological proximity of the respective elites in both major parties, such tergiversation is not entirely surprising. The old canard about there not being a dime's worth of difference between the GOP and Democrats may not apply at the grassroots, but it remains an accurate characterization of the "limousine liberals" among the Democrats vis-à-vis their close ideological kin, the "country club Republicans" and "RINOs" driving the GOP agenda.



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Trump's own policy positions in 2016 are often contradictory, with some aligning fairly close to genuine small-government constitutionalists, and others cut from the same political cloth as those of the GOP establishment insiders he so freely castigates.

Trump is unapologetically pro-Second Amendment, and gun rights are featured prominently on his campaign website. "The Second Amendment to our Constitution is clear," says Trump's policy position. "The right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed upon. Period." Those are, to be sure, reassuring sentiments after eight years of Obama — and in stark contrast to the bitter anti-gun rhetoric issuing from the Clinton campaign. Trump's policy advocates requiring all states to honor one another's concealed-carry permits, and inveighs against gun bans and magazine bans and limitations, and even identifies the Second Amendment as "America's first freedom" since "the Right to Keep and Bear Arms protects all our other rights." The Second Amendment, Trump reminds us, "doesn't create that right — it ensures that the government can't take it away." And he observes, correctly, that no other country has a Second Amendment or anything like it.

So far, so good. But although Trump's views on this important issue, at least, align quite closely with the Constitution, they are not in perfect harmony. Trump does not oppose the system of national background checks for gun buyers in place since 1998 — he only laments that it does not work as efficiently as it should. He also implies that further measures should be taken to prevent the mentally ill from having access to firearms.

These are both positions that align well with the GOP establishment mainstream. Never mind that federal background checks constitute infringement, or that a mental health standard (whatever that might ultimately mean in the courts) would require massive violations of privacy (and, quite probably, of the rights of many people incorrectly ruled "mentally ill") — Trump, like most other GOP candidates, has no qualms about continuing the already suffocating regime of controls on the purchase, sale, and ownership of firearms, most of which was put in place during the Clinton administration.

Trump's other most forceful policy positions have to do with immigration. He has pledged to "fix" the illegal immigration problem by building a "big, beautiful wall" along our entire southern border, and to round up and deport the millions of illegals already here. Furthermore, he has proposed a moratorium on immigrants from Islamic countries such as Syria, citing the danger of terrorism. On a campaign website comparatively laconic as to positions, Trump's position paper on immigration is well thought-out and detailed, and proposes to right many glaring wrongs in our broken immigration system. Trump contemplates, among other things, defunding "sanctuary cities" (something the Paul Ryan-led House has so far refused to do), ending birthright citizenship, enhancing penalties for overstaying visas, a requirement on employers to hire Americans first, and even a moratorium on the issuance of green cards.

Further, he expects Mexico to pay for the wall he wants built to separate the United States and Mexico. Mexico, as he points out indignantly, has long had official policies supporting illegal emigration to the United States, and has taken advantage of American laxity in enforcing immigration laws for decades, sending many of its poor (whom the bankrupt Mexican welfare state can no longer support) and its criminally inclined (whom the corrupt Mexican courts and law-enforcement system no longer care to deal with) to El Norte, where they become the burden of U.S. taxpayers. It is no secret that Mexico's official disdain for the United States is rooted partly in its continuing resentment for the outcome of the Mexican War — and the desire on the part of many Mexicans to repopulate and eventually regain



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territory lost to the United States. Given the political realities, it is doubtful that anything short of an act of war (such as an embargo, the freezing of Mexican assets in the United States, or outright military action) could persuade the Mexican government to pay for a wall that would prevent it from being able to export its problems to Gringolandia. Trump's proposal to build a wall and enhance border security may have some merit, but his plan to mulct the money out of the Mexicans is pie-in-the-sky demagoguery.

On tax reform, "the Donald" has more good tidings for the majority of Americans and American corporations groaning under the yoke of heavy progressive income and corporate taxes. Trump wants to cut taxes and greatly simplify the tax code — such that individuals earning \$25,000 or less and couples earning \$50,000 or less will pay no income tax at all, and the top corporate tax rate will drop to 15 percent. As the plan itself says:

When the income tax was first introduced, just one percent of Americans had to pay it. It was never intended as a tax most Americans would pay. The Trump plan eliminates the income tax for over 73 million households. 42 million households that currently file complex forms to determine they don't owe any income taxes will now file a one page form saving them time, stress, uncertainty and an average of \$110 in preparation costs.

While it is true that only a very few ultra-wealthy had to pay the income tax when it was first enacted, it is disingenuous to claim that it was "never intended" to be a general tax. In point of fact, a "heavy progressive income tax" has always been one of the central tenets of socialist dogma because it is such a potent tool for wealth redistribution. Of course, the onus has landed squarely on the middle class, not the rich; they have stayed one step ahead of the taxman by devising loopholes not available to the hoi polloi that allow them to shield their wealth from the tax collector. To be sure, the Trump plan also pledges to close all such loopholes, and to restore sanity and simplicity to the tax code.

There's just one problem: Nowhere does Trump propose a workable way to implement cuts, for in order to enact meaningful tax reform, deep cuts in government spending would be required. Yet the Trump plan requires us to believe that closing loopholes, offering incentives for repatriation of wealth held overseas, and an end to tax deferments on overseas earnings will fix America's finances.

Would that it were so simple. The income tax has grown in direct proportion to the federal government during most of the 20th century and into the 21st, to its present mind-numbing contours. Merely cutting taxes without corresponding cuts in Big Government — which Ronald Reagan once tried — will cause deficits and debt to rise vertiginously, creating political pressure to raise taxes again in the future. Trump's tax reform plan, as laid out, will doubtless bring welcome relief to ordinary Americans in the short run, but will soon have Democrats and Big Government types in general baying for a resumption of tax hikes to cover budget shortfalls, as happened in the '90s, and the long-term outcome will leave Americans more heavily taxed and regulated than ever.

In point of fact, Donald Trump's position papers give little evidence that he has any interest in cutting the size of government at all. Even with his discussion of gun laws, his position, as we have already seen, favors enforcing existing laws, not eliminating any of them. His approach to tackling the immigration crisis involves the creation of new laws and regulations, not the elimination of unconstitutional federal government handouts to citizens and non-citizens alike that — among other things — incentivize illegal immigration.



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Candidate Trump's other chief selling point is China's unfair trade practices. China, according to Trump, is guilty of currency manipulation and other machinations to maintain an unfair advantage in trading with the United States. In particular, Trump accuses China of various "brazen violation[s] of WTO and international rules" and of hiding behind a "Great Wall of Protectionism." Trump promises to bring the recalcitrant Chinese to heel and force them to abide by the rules of the WTO, restoring a "system of truly free trade and floating exchange rates like a Trump administration would support."

But the WTO, or World Trade Organization, is the biggest of Big Government programs. Inaugurated in 1995, the WTO was created by international socialist elites as the trade ministry of an eventual global government. Of all institutions of international government, it is without doubt the most powerful, having already forced the United States on several occasions to change its laws and trade practices because of complaints about "unfair trade advantages" lodged by other nations in Europe and elsewhere — the very same sort of grievances Trump is airing against the Chinese. What Donald Trump therefore advocates is using the machinery of world government against China — and thereby strengthening the WTO by precedent in future actions it may take against the United States. The proper solution is to withdraw from the WTO, not empower it. But like most of the world's wealthy who do business across international borders, Trump supports the WTO and the rest of the UN-centered international system — as long as it can be made to work for his advantage.

China's Sins

In truth, what are China's sins? "Currency manipulation," or currency wars, only became possible for the first time when the governments of the world went off the gold standard in the 1930s. Prior to that time, international trade had always been reckoned in terms of gold and silver, of which the world's currencies were merely convenient measurements. Any government that attempted to inflate its currency relative to its actual holdings of precious metals soon saw trade go elsewhere. That system needed no international arbiters, and provided a powerful check against the ability of governments to debase their currencies and impoverish their citizens. The moment that check disappeared, all governments began to manipulate their currency supplies, in part to disadvantage trade competitors, creating instant political pressure for a world trade and financial authority to regulate trade and money supplies. The first iteration of this was created at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, which gave birth to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the predecessor to the WTO, first took effect in 1948. These three international organizations were tasked with regulating and controlling international trade — and would be completely unnecessary were the world to return to a precious-metal standard. They were and remain capstone projects in the international socialist agenda, and are without doubt the most potent and successful module of the nascent world government.

With trade and currency now falling under international, not national authority, tariffs have become a hiss and a byword, because they allegedly hinder "free trade." What is meant by such doublespeak is that they are in reality an impediment to trade managed by the international authorities. The American Founding Fathers viewed tariffs as the least intrusive — and therefore least objectionable — form of taxation because, as imposts on luxuries imported from abroad, they tended to fall disproportionately on the rich, and left everyone else alone. They intended the operations of the federal government to be funded almost entirely by tariffs, thus obviating the need for direct federal taxation except perhaps in times of war or other national extremity.



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Until the inauguration of the permanent income tax in the early 20th century, tariffs paid for most of what the federal government did. When the permanent income tax and other federal excises such as corporate taxes were created, American elites began to disparage tariffs as impediments to free trade — when in reality, they were the financial glue that held the constitutional republic together.

When Candidate Trump criticizes the Chinese for levying tariffs “unfairly,” what he is really criticizing is a robust exercise of sovereignty upon which our own government once depended, and a return to which would be a necessary prelude to restoring limited constitutional government. But because Trump — like nearly every other Republican candidate — supports the international trade and monetary order, the Chinese are instead held to account for not kowtowing to the international system erected by globalist elites the way America is expected to do.

That said, Donald Trump has gone on record opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), seeing it as too advantageous for Japan and China. But — as with his opposition to Chinese trade practices generally — it is much more probable that his opposition is grounded not in principle but in a desire to “get a better deal” for the United States vis-à-vis everybody else; this is pragmatism, not principled leadership.

In foreign policy generally, Trump appears to hew to the favored neocon line of continued intervention in the Middle East. On *Meet the Press* last August, Trump expressed an interest in sending in ground troops to fight ISIS. He has also forcefully opposed Obama’s nuclear deal with Iran. And he favors bringing back waterboarding. Overall, though, his primary emphasis in questions of foreign policy has been economic, not military.

Characterizations Aplenty

Across a wide range of social and moral issues, Donald Trump is difficult to characterize. He has come out as pro-life in this electoral campaign, while admitting — as he told interviewer Tim Russert in 1999 — that he has been pro-choice in the past. Before the Iowa Caucus, a coalition of pro-lifers urged Republicans to vote for “anyone but Donald Trump,” warning that he cannot be trusted to be a pro-life president. Central to their concerns is the power Trump would wield in nominating Supreme Court justices. Trump’s sister, Maryanne Trump Barry, a New Jersey judge whom Trump has said would make a “phenomenal” Supreme Court Justice, was part of a three-judge panel of the 3rd Circuit Federal Court of Appeals that struck down New Jersey’s partial-birth abortion ban in 2000. Barry’s contention was that the New Jersey statute’s language was too vague and might be construed to ban all abortions. It is worth noting, however, that the decision of the panel was unanimous, and that one of the other two judges — Judge Samuel A. Alito — has been on the Supreme Court since 2006, thanks to President Bush’s nomination. From the evidence, then, Donald Trump is somewhat pro-life — just like the rest of the GOP establishment — and can be expected to appoint Supreme Court justices who will be billed as conservatives but will prove otherwise when issues such as abortion come to the fore.

With regard to healthcare, Trump opposes ObamaCare — but only because he thinks some other government-sponsored healthcare system would be better. As recently as 2000, he was openly advocating universal healthcare, and more recently, has praised single-payer systems in both Scotland and Canada — while denying, when pressed, that he wants single-payer (i.e., fully socialized) healthcare for the United States. What he does want is a mystery — he has characterized it as a “private system without the artificial lines around every state” — but he has so far offered no forceful promises to repeal



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ObamaCare along the lines of candidates such as Ted Cruz. As Trump told *Newsmax* in August 2015, he still wants healthcare for everybody — just not ObamaCare.

The most vexing feature of Donald Trump is that so little is known about his positions on a wide range of significant issues, especially which (if any) government programs he would cut to make way for his promised tax cuts. Trump appears to view political leadership much as he does his business ventures — as a distillate of deal-making. The problem is Washington already brims with expertise on cutting deals, which is why the ship of state has resolutely refused to change direction. But for our country to reverse direction, business as usual will not suffice. Given his resumé, there are grounds for skepticism that Donald Trump is the right man for the job. For as in the Roman Crassus' time, there exists a class of ultra-wealthy, hereditary elites, who have been raised up with the craft and the will to wield the power of the state to enrich themselves, plutocrats whose primary concern is not the commonweal but wealth, power, and prestige. Such was Crassus; will Donald Trump be any different?

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