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United States

# The Trump Moment

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**Editor's Note:** In 2017, during the first year of Donald Trump's presidency, the Belgian ecosocialist Daniel Tanuro wrote *Le moment Trump*, a portrait of Trump as well as a prescient reflection on what to expect from the man and his ascendancy. We recently discovered the book in the original French and were startled to find something written so early in Trump's first term that still seems fresh today.

We volunteered to translate this book into English as Trump threatens a return to power. It's full of insights into the Trump phenomenon that we have found evocative and worthy of consideration seven years after it was written. Revisiting the first year of the Trump presidency brings back chilling memories and inspires reflection on what has changed since 2017 and what remains the same.

In 2017 there was nothing like Project 2025, the detailed Heritage Foundation-scripted blueprint for a rapid far-right makeover of the United States in the event of a second Trump term. But even in 2017, Tanuro explored why and how the personality of Trump made him an ideal candidate to pave the way for an authoritarian power grab by the extreme right.

Readers who want to cut to the chase may wish to begin with the fourth chapter of the book, which contains Tanuro's reflections on Trump's place in history, and the conclusion, which sets out four strategic conceptions for fighting Trumpism — with or without Trump as its avatar.

System Change Not Climate Change is pleased to make this important book available free of charge, thanks to Daniel Tanuro's generosity. Please also share it with others, especially any in your circles who still feel that a second Trump term would in any way benefit the people of the United States — or anywhere else.

To download the book as an EPUB or PDF file, go to the [original version of the article](#).



## Foreword by Daniel Tanuro to the English Translation

When Ted Franklin and Maura Stephens contacted me to offer to translate and publish *The Trump Moment* I was surprised, honored, and enthusiastic. Surprised, because I did not imagine that this little essay, written in 2017 at the request of a modest publisher — since disappeared — would one day emerge from oblivion. Honored, because it is rather flattering, for a French-speaking author who is not a specialist in the United States, to note that his work, seven years later, has been discovered across the Atlantic by activists, to the point that they deem it useful to disseminate it in their country, to support their fight for ecosocialism. Enthusiastic, because this translation gives me the opportunity to contribute modestly to their important fight.

The fact that this English translation is produced and edited by the team of System Change Not Climate Change is of particular importance to me. Indeed, the planet is burning, biodiversity is collapsing, the darkest prospects of climate change are irreversibly materializing before our eyes. Hundreds of millions of poor people suffer from it in their flesh (not only in the South but also in the North) — and this is, alas, only the beginning.

In this dramatic context, Trump is the clearest expression of a monstrous trend at work everywhere in the ruling classes: rather the death of millions of innocent people than the exit from fossil fuels; rather barbarism than the slightest breach of the dogma of maximum profit; rather the cataclysm than the just degrowth essential to “take care” of the Earth and humans, in social justice, democracy, respect, and the right to asylum. From Argentina to the Netherlands, from India to France, from Great Britain to Russia, from Israel to China, this repugnant neo-Malthusianism is a universal trait of the extreme right.

“*The Trump Moment*” will be published online in the midst of the battle against the threat of Donald Trump’s return to power in the November 2024 presidential election. However, this is not a simple repetition of history, and even less a farce. Despite the candidate’s obvious complicity with Vladimir Putin’s neo-fascist regime, his proven coup attempt, his conviction for sexual assault and another for fraud (as well as multiple other cases that he has managed to quash or postpone), Trump is more dangerous today than he was in 2016. The Republican Party serves at his beck and call, the majority of Supreme Court justices cover for him, the Heritage Foundation is providing him with a turnkey reactionary program and an army of candidates ready to implement it, and an increasing number of big capitalists support him. Finally, his mass base remains very mobilized around his hateful xenophobic, racist, and sexist speeches.

Until very recently, a range of factors — including Joe Biden’s age — allowed Trump to hope to win by betting demagogically on legitimate social discontent with the Democratic Party’s version of capitalist policies, both on the national and international scenes. The specter thus grew of a victory resulting from both the mobilization of far-right voters and the abstention of the working class, as in 2016.

At the time of publication, Joe Biden’s withdrawal in favor of Kamala Harris seems to have changed the situation. The difference in form is obvious. The Democratic running mates adopted an adversarial, ironic, and even joyful tone versus the Republican ticket, which Biden couldn’t have mustered. “Kamala brings back joy,” Harris’s running mate, Tim Walz has declared repeatedly. Indeed, Harris and the good-natured Minnesota governor, with his popular joviality, appear to embody the reassuring opposite of the anger, fear, and contempt stoked by the duo of Trump and Vance.

The turn towards a dynamic, offensive (rather than defensive) campaign of the Democrats was probably thought out in general terms behind the scenes before July 21, 2024. Joe Biden’s withdrawal was the necessary condition for its immediate emergence. This is, after all, how the ruling class rules when it rules. But even ruling-class political strategists seem to have been taken by surprise at the force of the eruption that occurred after Biden finally stepped aside. It seems that the upbeat spirit of the Harris-Walz campaign, having gestated behind the scenes, was

ready-made for Biden's abdication.

It should go without saying that a change of tone does not make an actual political alternative. The fundamental goal of the Democratic strategists is most certainly to continue the neoliberal and imperialist policies of the outgoing president. For them, there is no other way. But the substance and the form are not separated by a totally watertight wall, especially when electoral mobilization requires making pledges to the working classes. This dialectic appears in Harris' vigorous pleas for reproductive rights: As a man and a life-long Catholic, Biden had a less militant, less passionate tone. Such righteousness also appears in Harris and Walz's denunciation of the violently anti-union proposals in "Project 2025," crafted for Trump by the Heritage Foundation.

Hope is thus rekindled that Trump will be beaten in November — a goal in itself. But, as we say in French, the carrots are not cooked. This is why trade unions, feminist and gender-rights organizations, community representatives, climate activists, defenders of migrant rights, and other popular forces cannot ignore the challenge to mobilize against Trump.

At the same time, we should have no illusions. Kamala Harris' embarrassed silence on US complicity in Netanyahu's genocidal and ecocidal war against the Palestinian people testifies to this. The same kind of strategic challenge arises in many countries: how to collaborate in the united front for the electoral defeat of the far right while continuing to strive without concessions for an ecosocialist, feminist, internationalist, radically democratic alternative worthy of the name.

We can meet the moment only by building power at the grassroots, in the social movements, to promote from these a broad political recomposition.

*August 12, 2024*

*To download the book as an EPUB or PDF file, go to the [original version of the article](#).*

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