

# YARVIN ON TRUMP AND HIS HENCHMEN

The introduction to this series should be read first. It has the index to all posts in this series.

Yarvin has written several substack posts on Trump and his henchmen since the inauguration. In *Barbarians and Mandarins* (BM) he reacts to the first six weeks. In *Actually You Shouldn't Van People* (Van) he says it's a mistake to pick up non-citizens on the street and throw them in vans. He criticizes Trump's tariff/trade actions here (M1) and here (M2), calling these policies "mercantilism". He just thinks they're being done wrong,

There's a sense of unease in all of them, a sense that things aren't happening as he expected. That seems to be one aspect of this WaPo piece.

## Grading Trump's administration

BM is about 6K words. My first step was to chop out the repetition, the "jokes", the snotty remarks about "libs", and the other irrelevant material. That left me with about 2K words, and I was being generous. He starts by awarding Trump a C-. He says the new administration has two types of people: Barbarians, people who have no experience in DC, and Mandarins who do.

The Bs want to destroy, the Ms want to run things, but neither has the capacity to make the hard decisions about what should be done. Lacking a plan to guide them, they become grifters. Mandarins, he says

... have no strategy: no plan and no endgame. Since action without strategy is ineffective and ineffective action is a gift, the Mandarins are the most convincing grifters of all.

He explains why this is so, perhaps hoping to

help them see the Yarvin way.

He approves of Trump's use of laws and agencies in ways they were not intended

Second, existing infrastructure cannot be relied upon to work or even be controlled. Generally the right first assumption is that it needs to be hacked—made to operate in an unusual way that its designers, its previous operators, or both, did not expect. (The metamorphosis of USDS into DOGE will be the gold standard here for many years.)

I note that this is what Trump and his henchmen have been doing with the tariff law, the Alien Enemy Act, and other laws. Also, courts mostly hold that this is permitted by law and the Constitution.

He uses the assault on government support for science as an example. He says that scientists want power first, and that good science is their secondary goal. The new team, both the Bs and the Ms, are slashing around wildly with no regard to what the new ideology wants.

He says this violates his theory of how kings rule. Slashing funding for scientists makes them angry and makes them hate the new ideology he ascribes to the administration. He says scientists are not happy about the way science funding is managed. The goal should be to make them happy by restructuring that funding. Then they will see that the new king loves and protects them, and they will respond with love. He doesn't explain how this overcomes their personal demand for power.

#### **Van**

In BM, written on March 7, there's a passing mention of the great work the new administration is doing on the immigration front, but he says it's not enough, and then inserts his concerns about having state governments, apparently because he doesn't like federalism. In Van,

written April 2, he addresses the reality of ICE tactics:

I refer to the recent news of surprise visa revocations, immigration detention, etc, for a few immigrant grad students, professors, etc, clearly low human capital individuals, who have committed various retarded, if hardly unusual, misdeeds—like writing a pro-Hamas column (probably plagiarized, certainly banal) in the lame student newspaper.

He thinks these tactics are bad. He has no moral or principled objection to any of ICE's tactics. He just thinks they will backfire on the whole project, create enemies, and destroy support. I stopped reading Van at the point where he explains that Hitler had a theory behind the Holocaust, a theory that is utterly wrong and revolting.

### **Mercantilism**

M1 and M2 are generally supportive of tariffs, but not the way they're being used. He blames this on the Bs and the Ms. This is from M2:

Trump always has the right reflexes. But a reflex is not a plan. It is not his job, but the job of his administration, to translate reflexes into plans. While executing with great energy and enthusiasm, the administration has had a rocky start in this translation.

These two posts are absurdly long, so I didn't read them to the end.

### **Discussion**

1. What the hell did Yarvin think would happen when Trump took power? Was he not paying attention during the last Trump presidency? Did he not notice Trump's insatiable greed, his indifference to policy, his willingness to walk along with anyone who flattered him adequately? Didn't he notice that Trump doesn't like

competent people, that he ignores them or fires them? Did he think Trump would suddenly take an interest in policy when every reporter and his own staffers said Trump wasn't willing to read anything?

Is Yarvin that naive? That credulous? That desperate?

2. Yarvin is supposed to be some kind of computer genius. Has he never watched a large enterprise change its computer system? You don't rip out the old system and then build a new one. You don't tear out an old system and put in a new one overnight. You run them side by side long enough to be sure there aren't any glitches that will poison your employees and customers. Or, you test and retest, and then replace little sections one or two at a time. There's a plan, there's testing, and there's careful attention to outcomes.

Now he's concerned that people who took his advice to burn everything to the ground are making big mistakes?

3. I think there are problems with our current structure. Yarvin writes about some of them, but never in any sensible context, or with an actual idea about an effective change. For a reasonably sensible discussion see this by Jonathan Chait in The Atlantic. There's a lot to think about in this article, even for lefties. Among other things, Chait complains about delays caused by citizen activists. He does not point out that the rich and their corporations use the same tactics to delay or overturn rules preventing toxic discharges and other horrors. These delay and destroy tactics have hamstrung government action on almost every front.

4. I'm done with Yarvin. Apparently he thought the Trump team had a plan for remaking the United States in ways that would be better as Yarvin understands better. His lack of contact with reality is unbearable.