

As Donald Trump's campaign limps towards election day, held together primarily by " [emailgate](#) "

and Islamophobia,
it still touts his Washington-outsider status as his essential qualification for the presidency.

His [main attack ads](#) paint Hillary Clinton as the consummate insider riddled by pay-to-play scandals and ties to every major special interest. The US media has also been slow to scrutinise Trump's career to reveal his connections to corporate lobbying.

On October 24, Trump received his [first major US city newspaper's endorsement](#) from the Las Vegas Review-Journal. Republican casino magnate Sheldon Adelson [covertly purchased](#) the paper to influence Nevada politics.

The depth of the ties between Adelson and Trump reveal the falsity of Trump's corporate-outsider persona. Camp Hillary have inadvertently allowed this myth to take hold, preferring to play defence on Clinton's myriad scandals rather than attacking Trump on his own ties to special interests.

In fact, it is Trump's [extensive participation](#) in the casino industry that has shaped many of his core beliefs about taxes, global trade, and the role of government.

Lottery and casino gaming are two of the [United States' big businesses](#) . And yet while it is an open secret that the US government is in cahoots with big pharma, big oil, and the big banks - who use their influence to make sure new laws don't disrupt shareholders' bottom lines - their colleagues in the gambling lobby often slip under the radar.

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The American Gaming Association may be a relative newcomer on K Street, the home of Washington's lobbyists, but its covert political power is on an even footing with the National Rifle Association.

Unlike guns and drugs, gaming in the US enjoys widespread [bipartisan support](#) : the anti-tax Republican establishment appreciates the casinos' and the lotteries' capacity to generate state revenue, overlooking their evangelical base's moral outrage. And Democrats deflect minorities' and women's concerns over gambling's social cost by earmarking lottery revenues for disadvantaged communities.

Trump's business tactics

Trump's lifelong connections to the gaming industry and the sway it has given him in state capitols reveal both to whom he is indebted and what core values define his business practices.

In the 1980s, Trump grew his casino business, deflecting criticisms about his reliance on overleveraged debt, by deploying political and alleged [mob connections](#) .

The Trump Taj Mahal Casino is illuminated at dusk in Atlantic City, New Jersey, 2014 [Reuters]

He also ensured that regulators in New Jersey denied his competitors the chance to do the same. He has on [numerous occasions](#) funded media campaigns to smear the reputation of Native American tribes that were attempting to open casinos in the New York City metropolitan area.

These practices offer a taste of the economic policies which Trump is now proposing on a global scale - stifling competition through monopolistic market capture.

Blocking competition is a tried and tested pattern for Trump. When his initial casinos failed to

Donald Trump: Welfare queen of the casino economy

Written by Administrator

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turn a profit, [he practised](#) stock manipulation, leveraged buyouts, and engaged in other [questionable activities](#) to buy out competitors and shore up his monopoly over Atlantic City gaming.

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In 1993, he also [testified](#) that Connecticut's Pequot tribe did "not look like [real] Indians" hoping that they would not be granted tribal sovereignty to open Foxwoods casino - correctly predicting that doing so would decimate his Atlantic City ventures.

In short, over the decades, Trump has been the brazen bully of a monopolistic cartel, winning the plaudits of the likes of Sheldon Adelson.

Zero-sum logic

So what do Trump's competition-suppressing practices in Atlantic City tell us? They certainly shed light on why he believes the US is getting "screwed on trade" - and that making "America Great Again" necessitates high tariffs on the Chinese.

He sees America's prosperity as akin to a gambling cartel's monopoly - upheld via restricting access. Trump also preaches another philosophy that derives from the milieu of the casino: the worldview that one is either a winner or a loser.

As the hustlers' saying goes, "If you can't spot the sucker, then you're him", and in his businesses in Atlantic City, Trump became an expert at spotting and exploiting suckers: he [bankrupted his investors](#) (whose money he lost) and his contractors (who he defaulted on).

His outrageous promises that he will force Mexico to pay for the wall and demand that the US' NATO allies spend more on defence are not mere bluster - they epitomise Trump's "transactional" philosophy learned and perfected in his own casinos.

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So it seems that decades of mimicking the darker tactics of the casino industry have indelibly informed Trump's political instincts.

Those who dismiss Trump's rhetoric as mere populist bravado, clinging to the notion that he does not really intend to build a wall or start a trade war, are guilty of both misreading and dangerously underestimating him.

Twisted as it may be, Trump possesses a coherent world view and when you investigate his back story, it's obvious where he nurtured it.

But unfortunately for Trump and the many Americans hoodwinked by him, the gambling industry's tactics won't wash elsewhere.

Winning in the real world cannot be achieved by sheltering US firms from competition or stiffing our allies with the NATO bill.

Real world economic policy must grow the global pie by forging coalitions - conceding various "gains" to trading partners, and even opponents, in the process.

Trump doesn't see an interconnected world characterised by trust and win-win relationships, he sees diplomacy as akin to the avarice and zero-sum logic of the gaming tables.

Trump's background as a bully of the casino lobby provides a shockingly accurate picture of how he is likely to govern.

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