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## Donald Trump not a ‘free market conservative,’ critics say

Call him a populist, views ‘erratic’

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Donald Trump’s political and economic philosophies are starting to come into sharper focus, and some Republicans say the presidential candidate is shaping up to be more of a populist than anything else.

Chris Edwards, director of tax policy at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute who previously served as a senior economist on the congressional Joint Economic Committee, said Mr. Trump’s economic views are “erratic.”

“It seems to me he’s not a ‘free market conservative’ because his impulse is to find what he thinks are problems — like China trade — and to top-down fix them with force from Washington,” Mr. Edwards said.

“His strong support of eminent domain is another example of how he believes ‘experts’ can top-down fix economic problems, in this case city planning experts,” he said. “But he also doesn’t fit into the “big business conservative” camp either. Rather as you know, he’s a populist, and thus he opposes TPP for example.”

Mr. Trump opposes the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a free-trade agreement with Pacific Rim nations, and has talked about slapping tariffs on cars imported from China and Mexico. The New York billionaire also has stuck by his support for eminent domain and expressed a willingness to have the government pick up the tab for a universal health care system.

Last week, he provided more insight into his thinking when he told a crowd in Iowa that he is with taxpayer money being used to prop up the wind industry.

“I’m okay with subsidies, to an extent,” he said. He later elaborated that the nation needs to get away from its reliance on energy sources from the Middle East and said “they are going to have to do a subsidy.”

The debate over the government’s role in economics has raged for decades within the Republican ranks — including during the eight years of President George W. Bush, who some argue cleared the way for President Obama’s big spending way by creating a new entitlement in Medicare Part D and muscling through 2008 bailout of Wall Street, angering free-market conservatives.

Mr. Trump has talked favorably about the 2008 emergency bailout fund called the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP — though he expressed doubt over whether it would work.

This year, he has laid out policy papers arguing in favor of “fair trade” and an overhaul of the tax code that slashes individual tax rates as well as the corporate rate, cutting it to 15 percent. He has railed against the national debt, while vowing to protect entitlement programs, and called for an overhaul of the immigration system that protects American workers and their wages.

David McIntosh, president of the Club for Growth, which has attacked Mr. Trump on the campaign trail, said that former reality television star leans more toward Mr. Bush than he does free-market conservatives, but suggested he is in a category all his own.

“That’s being to unfair to George Bush, because Donald Trump is much worse than that,” he said. “He is definitely not a free marketer.”

Mr. McIntosh called Mr. Trump a “panderer,” pointing to his support for wind subsidies and a federal fuel mandate that has boosted Iowa’s all-important corn market is emblematic of his views.

“It all comes down to if he is in charge, government is a great thing. If he is not in charge, it is not a great thing,” he said.

Bruce Bartlett, a historian who served as a domestic policy adviser to President Reagan, and in the Treasury Department under President George H.W. Bush, said he is at a loss for what to think about Mr. Trump’s thinking.

“I honestly have no idea what his economic ideology is,” Mr. Barlett said. “It seems to be completely random, totally inconsistent and changeable on a daily basis. I have no idea what to say about such a person.”