

America's justice system – and the virtues of Donald Trump

Most Americans are as offended by the stylistic shortcomings of Donald Trump as most civilised foreigners are. But few foreigners are aware of the anger and fear among the American public that causes millions of people to overlook Trump's infelicities and support him. The United States is not accustomed to incompetent government that embarrasses it in the world and mismanages practically every major policy area. This impatience distinguishes Americans from many other nationalities, which are resigned to incompetent and dishonest government. Americans are disgusted by three Middle Eastern wars where the military has done well; but the political leadership delivered most of Iraq to Iran, after scores of thousands of casualties and trillions of dollars, and that created an immense humanitarian tragedy, while Iran's nuclear military programme has effectively been legitimised. Allowing 12 million unskilled people into the country illegally while exporting 60 million low-wage jobs, deliberately creating a housing bubble that brought on the greatest economic crisis in 80 years, and doubling in seven years the national debt accumulated in the previous 233 years of American independence, haven't gone down well either. This all comes on top of a collapsed system of state education, and a shambles of health care for 100 million Americans that Barack Obama's feckless tinkering has made worse.

Expect something different . . .

For a country that for two centuries had the steepest rise in importance and success of any nation in history, that in two long lifetimes rose from a few colonists to dominate most of

the world, and then led the West to the disintegration of America's only rival without a shot being exchanged between them, these years since the fall of the Berlin Wall have been a disaster. The country keeps turning the rascals out and getting worse rascals. It is terrible to see such a magnificent country brought so low. Many Americans find Trump's simulation of a politically incorrect comedian refreshing, as they look for someone completely different.

This charming man

Donald Trump's political virtues, which are understandably lost on most foreigners, are that he is not complicit in any of the public and foreign policy failings of the past 25 years and that he has an impressive record as an industrialist. He enjoys huge name recognition, is financing his own campaign and not milking the system to pay for it, and he has brought to the forefront the issues that most disquiet Americans: illegal immigration, anaemic economic growth and an almost complete failure of US foreign policy. He is attracting millions of disaffected Democrats and people who formally did not vote and had given up on the system.

Personally, I know him to be a generous, loyal and charming man, with no bad habits and a very attractive family. Apart from his attitude to immigration, he is a radical centrist, and it is absurd and indicative of its stupidity that the far left tries to disrupt his meetings and denounces him as an extremist, while intelligent conservatives lament that he is not conservative enough.

Ronald redux

The international response to the rise of Ronald Reagan was almost as hysterical as the reaction to Trump, and Reagan is now a candidate for Mount Rushmore. Trump's gaucheries are much more grating, and publicly, he is a caricature of a type

of ugly American. But despite his foibles, he would probably be a competent president.

The nomination is Trump's to lose now, but he could still do that if he doesn't raise his game. If he doesn't have a majority on the first ballot, he will implode and the Republican convention will choose its first dark-horse nominee since the Forties.

Let Navinder go

It is distressing that a British court has agreed to extradite Navinder Sarao to the United States. The claim is that he contributed to the "flash crash" of 2010. In the US justice system, prosecutors are free to intimidate witnesses with threats of indictment and routinely extort perjured testimony in exchange for immunities (including from perjury). They win 99.5 per cent of their cases, 97 per cent without a trial. That is why the United States has ten times as many incarcerated people per capita as the UK and other prosperous democracies, and why it officially has 49 million felons (including me, I am proud to say), and why Bernie Sanders, in the best part of his almost endearing, camp quest for the presidency, is right to call it a fascist system. No serious country should have an extradition treaty with the US; its justice system is a conveyer belt to its bloated and corrupt prison industry.

Only big beasts need apply

From this distance, it seems that the UK has not fared brilliantly in the post-Cold War years. Margaret Thatcher was sent packing, largely for a more co-operative attitude to Europe than most Britons have now, and as thanklessly as Churchill (1945) and Disraeli. Labour required three terms to squander the fiscal strength and international prestige that Thatcher and John Major had achieved (the only time Labour has

won consecutive full terms). From here, it seems that the present government, apart from a competent performance by the Chancellor and by Michael Gove, IDS and a couple of others, has faced in all directions on every big issue, well beyond the call of necessity for a minority government.

David Cameron seems to have gambled that an In/Out referendum, rather than just a mandate to renegotiate, would compel a vote to stay in the EU, and that he did not need to wring serious changes from Brussels. I find it hard to believe that the UK will submit to this flimflam on such a vital issue. Donald Trump, master of the deal (as I know from our very satisfactory association in Chicago), would have done better. So will Boris. Perhaps, as the Americans say, the office seeks the man.

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