

An electoral draw, but as always, astonishing theatre

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by Conrad Black



It was like a children's prize day as everyone claimed victory on election night in the United States, and everyone had won something. The Blue Wave that would have shaken President Trump's authority and legitimized the frenzied assault on him by the Democrats and their national media echo chamber did not happen, as the president gained several Senate seats to secure his judicial nominations and authority in foreign policy. He also had the pleasure of seeing off the last of the vocal Never Trumpers in his own party and now exercises more control over the Republicans than has any previous leader of that party since Ronald Reagan, if not Dwight D. Eisenhower. The Democrats can certainly celebrate their narrow takeover of the House of Representatives, but they will have to sort out the

problems between the Trump-hating Resistance and those who want to work in the system.

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The Democratic Old Guard in the Congress, Chuck Schumer, Dick Durbin (Senate minority leaders from New York and Chicago) and likely returning speaker Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco, are radically uncharismatic. But as survivors, they know the hazards of letting slaving impeachers like incoming committee chairpersons Gerry Nadler, Maxine Waters and Adam Schiff call the tune. (Those three, and a number of other Democratic congressional eminences, are completely unfeasible.)

Trump's wisdom in not overly disturbing the Justice department may now be demonstrated. Robert Mueller's absurd sinecure of an investigation of nothing (officially Trump-Russian collusion) that periodically indicts a new batch of randomly selected Russians who will never appear in the United States, can burble silently on like a torpedo going around in circles, and be invoked by the president to ignore any investigations the rabid Democratic partisans in the House may launch. The fiasco of the Clinton impeachment showed how unimpressed the country is with unfounded attempts to criminalize policy differences, and Trump now has an iron control of the Senate (where Clinton had to deal with a nasty Republican majority).



U.S. President Donald Trump leaves a press conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 7, 2018. Jim WATSON / AFP

Now that the president has fired the attorney general and can confirm a replacement who is not emasculated on Russian matters, the administration can proceed to the indictment of all leading members of the Clinton campaign and the Obama

justice department who appear to have incriminated themselves by lying to Congress or the FISA Court, including Hillary Clinton, Loretta Lynch, and agency heads John Brennan, James Clapper, and James Comey. This may happen anyway, but it certainly will if the Waters-Nadler-Schiff faction is unleashed. Trump has been put to extreme inconvenience by these spurious investigations and he can, if he wishes, exact a terrible vengeance. His moderation should not be presumed.

It will be a silent relief that there can be no possible claim that these elections, which had a high turnout and on which an astounding \$5 billion were spent, were tampered with by foreigners. It is the final bust of any attempt to pretend that Donald Trump isn't a real president, even as it wears out his effort to drain the swamp whose denizens, in both parties, he ran against. Also noteworthy is the failure or even demise of the former Democratic icons. President Obama bombed out in Indiana, as Oprah Winfrey did in Georgia, and Homeric Democratic efforts to crack Florida and Texas, where Trump himself campaigned hard, failed. (The sophomoric performance of the shirt-sleeved ex-president, claiming the economic boom was his, was especially painful.) The Democrats will have to live with Trump and his domination of the Senate, and Trump will have to change his playbook if he wants anything done in the next two years except the confirmation of judges and the unfettered execution of his foreign policy (matters where the House of Representatives has no jurisdiction).

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There is a chance that the president and the bipartisan leadership in the Congress will actually try to reach compromise solutions of the great problems that their American constitutional system, for all the reverence paid to it, has failed to address. Immigration, health care, infrastructure,

gun control, deficits and abortion issues are terrible problems and controversies that no configuration of administrations and congresses has been able to deal with. The collective government of the great United States of America has failed to govern in these matters. The last such wrenching issue that was successfully dealt with by the people elected to solve the nation's problems was civil rights in the piping first two years of president Lyndon Johnson's term, more than 50 years ago.



House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Representative Ben Ray Lujan celebrate the Democratic Party takeover of the House of Representatives at a midterm election night party on Nov. 7, 2018, in Washington, D.C. Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images
Trump is not a partisan – he changed parties seven times in 13 years before his election, and his only interest is to be a good president and to be seen as one. He is a brilliant negotiator, and in the same spirit in which he probably provided the margin in re-electing “Lyn’ Ted” Cruz in Texas and his candidates for governor and senator in Florida and a number of other states, and is conducting a courteous relationship with “Rocketman” Kim Jong un, he can certainly deal with the shopworn and half-palsied Democratic congressional leadership. It is down to them now; they have won enough to deal from some strength with the president, and he has conserved enough to do the same with them. The country has generally liked gridlock, and abruptly removed the Congress from the party of the past three presidents (Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama), never having conferred control of the whole congress on Reagan or Bush (senior). Pelosi preached unity on election night, and Trump thanked the country for the results and they allegedly spoke cordially by telephone.



Supporter Marie Rice reacts as it is announced that U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz had won his race during his election night gathering in Houston, Texas, on Nov. 6, 2018. Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

The American political system ineluctably addresses great problems when they have to be addressed and elevates leaders from improbable provenances when it needs them. It is not impossible that the next two years will be a productive time. Continuation of the attempt to destroy Trump by Clintonian dirty tricks and tuning up the Orwellian media hate campaign would lead the Democrats to complete disaster in two years. However appalled Canadians may be by the vulgarity, corruption, hucksterism, maudlin posturing and outright demagoguery of the American political system, the national American genius of the spectacle, and of attracting the rapt attention of the world to their astonishing orgies of political theatre, has been demonstrated once again.

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