

# As November Looms Ominously for Democrats, Trump's Best Course Is Moderation



by Conrad Black

As the initial slight lift that President Biden achieved in the polls following the Russian invasion of Ukraine has subsided and his standing with the public continues to erode, the midterm elections are looming ever more ominously for the Democrats. The only weapon they have had for five years has been Trump-hate, from pompous condescension to almost hysterical claims of treason and insurrection.

Now, it is all fading and the Democrats are naturally being held accountable for the performance of the administration and the Congress, which in almost every respect have been catastrophic. The deliberately induced and sustained disaster on the southern border, with practically unlimited numbers of

people, many of them undesirables, pouring illegally into the country, has only declined in emphasis as it has been superseded by other crises.

The last stand in defense of the indefensible Green New Deal is in the president's unctuous assertions that Vladimir Putin is responsible for skyrocketing energy costs, and not his own flight from energy self-sufficiency, which the previous four presidents had striven with ultimate success to achieve. All polls indicate that the overwhelming majority of Americans recognize that this is bunk and it requires demiurgic feats of imagination to see how the current high rates of inflation may possibly be reduced before the election.

There has never been any mandate for the Biden administration's assault upon America's oil and gas industry and now that the realities of almost 100 percent year-over-year inflation in the cost of gasoline have carpet-bombed the country, and administration spokespeople, unrepentant, have told consumers to stop grouching and make greater use of electric cars and public transit, the public has checked out and turned off the lights.

Public concerns about rising violent crime rates in most of urban America, smoldering grievances about the comprehensibility of the Covid policy, which has now tapered down to victimization of the sector of the population most defenseless against bureaucratic idiocy – the still masked 5-year-old preschoolers – and the incoherence of an almost perpetually befuddled president are all sheltering behind the daily news of the war in Ukraine and the fumbling of the administration between righteous purposefulness and the Pentagon spokesman, John Kirby, hawking about what the Kremlin might consider “escalatory.”

No argument is ever really heard for confidence in this administration or this Congress, except the tired autocue monotone about the dangers of a return of President Trump. It

is increasingly obvious that Speaker Pelosi's January 6 committee has absolutely no evidence damaging to the former president and no purpose except damaging the former president.

Even Mr. Trump's supporters welcome a rest from Mr. Trump, whose absence makes the heart grow fonder, and his opponents are naturally grateful for his absence. And in that comparative absence, there is nothing to moderate focus on his successor, floundering every day in every public policy area, foreign and domestic.

In offering President Zelensky the opportunity to flee his country as the war began, Mr. Biden showed that he subscribed uncritically to the egregious Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, General Milley's confident assurance that Kiev would fall to the Russians within three days.

That attitude was evident in the flip-flop about facilitating the transfer of 50 30-year-old Polish warplanes to Ukraine and the continued use of Russian good offices in facilitating the outright surrender to the Iranian nuclear military program, and has incited the inference that the administration doesn't want to seem to be doing nothing, but is more concerned not to aggravate the Kremlin than to spare Ukraine Russian reoccupation.

Nobody, anywhere on the political spectrum, is suggesting the insertion of American forces into the war, but the Russian invasion is so monstrously illegal and is now being conducted so gratuitously barbarously, and the Ukrainian resistance is so heroic and skillful, there is a clear consensus in the country and in the Congress to raise the ante in supplying the defenders the sinews of war and the public is less impressed with Mr. Putin's desperate bilge about World War III than Mr. Biden is.

As Winston Churchill said of the gallant Finns resisting Stalin's invasion in 1940: "Only the Finns are showing the

world what free men can do," and as President Roosevelt said to an almost united country at the end of 1940: "We must be the great arsenal of democracy."

Ukraine's performance as a self-governing democracy these 30 years has been undistinguished; but in this war Ukraine represents democracy and the rule of international law and Russia remains an aggressive, racist, quasi-totalitarian, and profoundly corrupt dictatorship.

Russia in all of its history has never enjoyed one day of what anyone in the West would call good government, and it is always necessary to distinguish this important country and eminent culture from the horrible and misguided government that has afflicted the indulgent masses of Russia for almost all of their history.

The Biden administration lurches each day from expedient to expedient following the war news bulletins, raising rich electoral possibilities for the Republicans. Yet as Trump-hate subsides, the former president also faces a number of potential problems that have been unflatteringly highlighted by the recently published book of the former attorney general, William Barr.

Mr. Barr's take on his former boss was generally fair comment but with a couple of nasty exceptions. He is wrong to say that Mr. Trump defeated himself, as Mr. Barr also stated that he was quite possibly defeated by unconstitutional changes in the voting and vote-counting rules of several swing states.

Mr. Trump warned about the dangers of ballot-harvesting but failed to do anything about them before the election and after the election allowed Rudolph Giuliani to run a hopeless Mickey Mouse barrage of unfeasible legal challenges.

Mr. Barr effectively excuses the judiciary's abdication on all of the substantive constitutional challenges to the election. The former head of the Department of Justice served up a

serious injustice to the president whom he served in writing that he defeated himself.

Mr. Barr was right to say that he pays no attention to Mr. Trump's present disparagement of him because, as Mr. Barr points out, that is Mr. Trump's opinion of everyone who isn't subservient to him. He writes nothing but the truth in saying that in policy terms Mr. Trump's administration was both sound and successful, and that if he is the Republican nominee in 2024, despite their differences Mr. Barr will vote for him.

The former attorney general, though, is trying to suck and blow at the same time: Mr. Trump may have been impossible and often churlish and boorish. He was, though, a good president and he was probably cheated of the presidency and no one who has not experienced being deprived of so great a prize unjustly should be quite as cavalier in his condescension as Mr. Barr is in his book.

With that said, Mr. Trump and his comments on Ukraine and other matters should be more careful to avoid endless recitations of what he did and what he would do if he were president: it reminds many people of why they voted for his opponent, whatever their present regrets.

Even though Mr. Trump expects to be back as president, he should try to achieve the moral authority ex-presidents enjoy if they speak with moderation. If he were just a little more careful and less abrasive, nostalgia for his return could become irresistible, which is presumably his objective.

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