

Democrats Beware: Trump is Endowed With a Strength Only Adversity Can Create

CNN debate emerging as a turning point in modern American politics.



President Trump at a campaign rally on April 27, 2023 at Manchester, New Hampshire. Spencer Platt/Getty Images

by Conrad Black

The appearance of President Trump on CNN on Thursday was a turning point of modern American political history. The dream-world of dirty tricks and self-delusion in which the Democrats and other Trump-haters prevalent in the national political press and among the Bush-McCain-Romney-McConnell Republicans, was blown up and sunk like the outer ships on Battleship Row at Pearl Harbor. The questioner, Kaitlan Collins, elegant,

articulate, and argumentative, with impeccable anti-Trump credentials going back to rude dust-ups at Trump presidential press conferences, was rolled over by her guest as if by an Abrams tank liberating the Donbas.

Peggy Noonan, who had already been writing about Trump as if her hair were on fire, almost gave up in the Wall Street Journal on Saturday. She and other fully paid-up industrial league Trump-haters could acknowledge his talents as a comedic performer and his ability to be the evocator and the voice of a vast swath of the American lower middle and working classes who felt left out of the last generation of American material progress, and practically unrepresented in the White House since Ronald Reagan. But she and others, cowering in fear of Mr. Trump's forensic and histrionic talents, are effectively advocating a boycott of him.

"Once again, (CNN) has made Trump real." She reproached the network for giving him "this solo boost, to reenact so showily all the careful respect they showed them in 2016" (which CNN never did) and complained that "he was addressed as Mr. President," even "after January 6."

Every president, past and present, receives and deserves that courtesy, but this discloses the Trump-hate theory that he is the Elephant Man of presidents, always to be tormented, spuriously investigated and falsely charged, because of his indifferent manners.

American politics is not a social cotillion, and presidents are not chosen by typecasting studios. She objected that the New Hampshire audience "wasn't Governor Sununu's broad GOP." I suspect that many people are tired of hearing Mr. Sununu, who trails Mr. Trump by 30 points in presidential polls in his own state, pronounce that Mr. Trump can't win.

Ms. Noonan also made the point that Trump "lied... over and over. It's what he does. Dogs bark, bears relieve themselves

in the woods." In fact, he rarely lies; he does engage in what he himself calls "constructive hyperbole." This is New York real estate developer-tycoon exaggeration. In Mr. Trump's first big deal he raised up a sheaf of papers and told a press conference "I have a signed agreement" to redevelop the Commodore Hotel.

He did; he just didn't tell them that at that point it had been signed by him alone. Four critical facts are left out of this and other anti-Trump critiques of what was conceded to have been a triumph for him that reestablishes him as the most likely next president. Even the Democrats seem to concede that more phony indictments would just backfire like the Stormy Daniels nonsense.

Mr. Trump's oft-repeated complaint about the 2020 election has not "been probed and adjudicated," as Ms. Noonan contends. The real issue is the tens of millions of unsolicited mail-in ballots sent to voters, raising concerns about ballot harvesting. Rudy Giuliani's trick-or-treat operation unfortunately gave Mr. Trump's opponents the ability to claim that his grievances had been judged in court.

The courts at every level were unsympathetic to the lawsuits filed to challenge the constitutionality of the voting and vote-counting changes adopted in the swing states supposedly to facilitate voting during Covid. To some extent Mr. Trump has himself to blame for not challenging these changes in the states as they were made. Yet the Noonan view of Mr. Trump's complaints, propagated with locked arms and sealed ears by the entire press appears to be, in Napoleon's phrase, "lies agreed upon."

That was why he called for a large gathering of his supporters in Washington on January 6, 2021. The ship had already sailed as the courts don't alter the apparent result of a presidential election, just as, until now ex-presidents were not indicted. He called for peaceful demonstrations and there

seems little doubt that he had cautioned Speaker Pelosi and the mayor of Washington that hooligans could be present masquerading as his supporters. Mr. Trump's claim that he offered the speaker and the mayor National Guard reinforcements has been contested but not refuted. The FBI director, Christopher Wray, has confirmed the absence of any connection between the trespassers and vandals and the Trump campaign. These are the relevant facts. Mr. Trump's complaints about 2020 will not be erased by denials, even with scatological references to bears.

The Trump-haters also fail to recognize that the principal offenders in matters of political ethics are those who gave us the Steele Dossier and presented it as the authentic findings of the intelligence agencies, and the high officials who signed false affidavits seeking illegal F.I.S.A. telephone intercepts of the Trump campaign and transition office; those who lied under oath, and unlawfully removed and leaked confidential information while conducting an improper investigation of an incumbent president.

The former FBI director, James Comey, said 245 times of these matters only a few months after they occurred that he did not recall them. Mr. Trump's enemies fabricated a Russian collusion story that they knew to be false. And they frivolously impeached him twice, the first time over an expression of curiosity about the Bidens' financial activities in Ukraine which we now know to have been justified. Nothing that Mr. Trump has done or said remotely approaches in its evil implications the enthusiastic Democratic recourse to the false criminalization of politics and corruption of non-political government agencies.

The Trump-haters also duck their responsibility for inflicting this horrifyingly incompetent administration on America and the world. Mr. Trump effectively ended oil imports, unemployment, and illegal migration, with minimal inflation. Now, illegal crossings of the southern border have risen to

10,000 a day. The movements of China all over the world show how quickly American weakness is exploited. The administration deserves credit for supporting Ukraine and insisting that it will defend Taiwan if necessary, but the Afghanistan debacle emboldened China and has shaken the Western Alliance.

Inflation, skyrocketing urban crime, and the green terror in pursuit of Secretary Kerry's infantile vision of America as a rainforest punctuated by windmills are all disasters. The Trump-haters never stopped for a moment to consider how much better off America would be if Mr. Trump's reelection had not been stolen. And none of them seems to have the least self-consciousness about the fervor with which they sold Mr. Biden as an "adult in the room with a steady pair of hands." The scale of that misrepresentation requires no elaboration.

The last great failing of the Trump-hate perspective is that it fails to recognize how much stronger a candidate Mr. Trump is now. No seeker of that office has been more beset by such a campaign of profoundly illegal harassment and obstruction, and, unlike his earlier practice, he rarely says or puts out anything his enemies can sink their teeth into.

Those berating CNN for giving him their shrunken audience are really not complaining about the exposure, but about the fact that he made such good use of it. If he returns as president, he would do so with the strength that adversity alone can give. His opponents are not his peers.

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