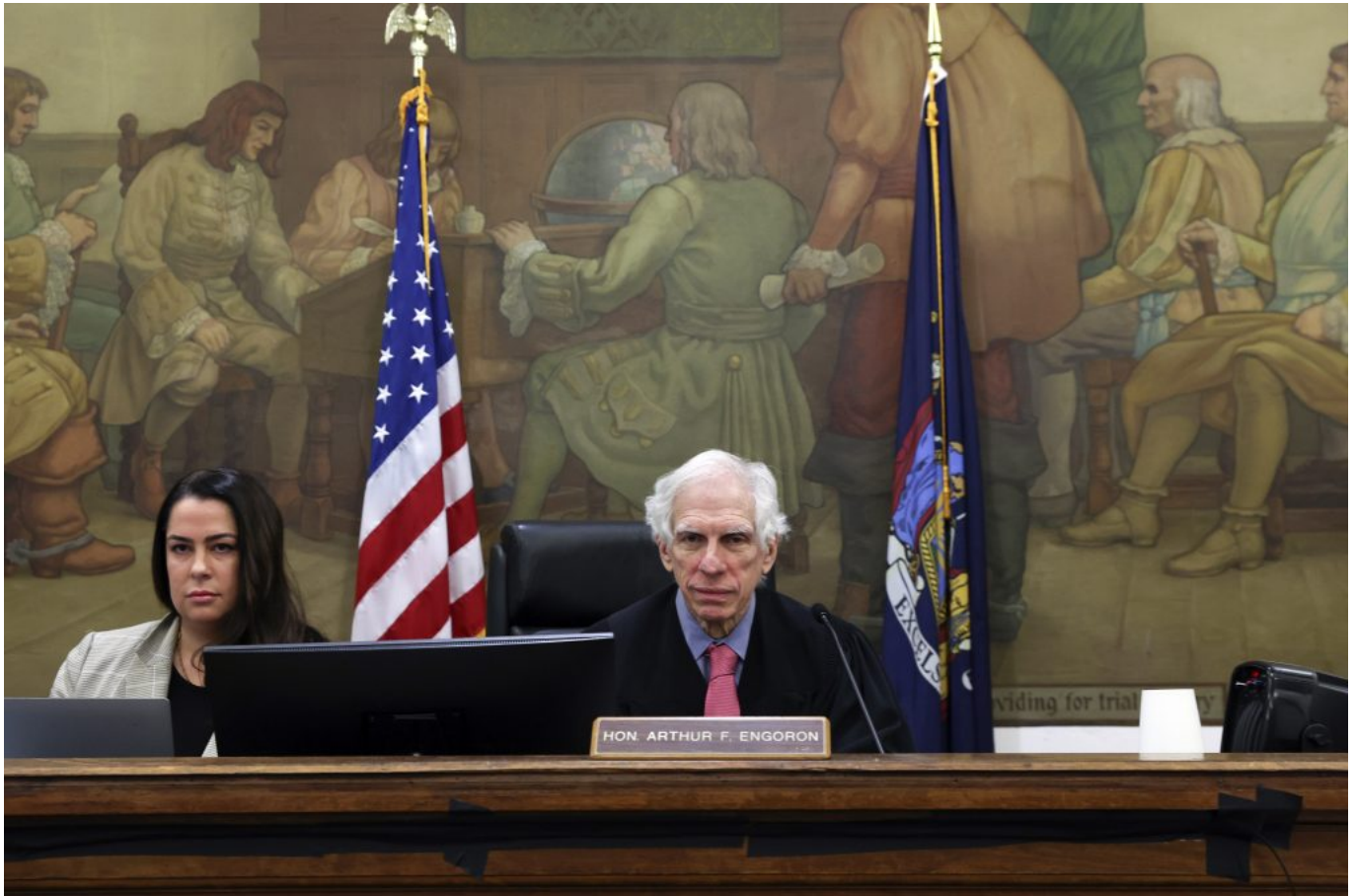


Democrats, Plunging Toward Election Day, Find Themselves Caught in a Trap of Their Own Making



by Conrad Black

The strategists of the Democratic presidential campaign find themselves, just over seven months before the election, caught in a trap that they created for their chief opponent. Instead of executing important policy changes or offloading the incumbent national office holders – who are closely identified with failures in all important policy areas, inflation, immigration, environment, crime, peace in the world – they placed all their bets on a scandalous manipulation of the justice system to strangle President Trump.

With each new wildly implausible batch of criminal and civil charges, Mr. Trump added to the lead he had already achieved in the polls because of the across-the-board policy failures of the Biden administration. A steadily greater number of Americans has been more appalled at this perversion of the justice system, invariably accompanied by a Wagnerian chorus about no one being "above the law" (meaning beyond the ability of the Democrats to deform the law into an instrument of partisan harassment), than have been irreconcilable with another Trump presidential term.

Thus, the principal chosen method for winning the election, despite all polls showing that the administration is a policy failure, the legal assault upon Mr. Trump, has caused an improvement in his position in the polls. Historians of the future will undoubtedly wonder what possessed the Democrats to imagine that such a blatantly unjust strategy could possibly succeed.

To support the credibility of these ludicrously partisan charges, the Democrats have had to torque up their rhetorical attacks on the former president literally to the point of frequent unflattering comparisons of him with Hitler. It was only three years ago that Mr. Trump ended, in questionable electoral circumstances, a four-year term as president, and nothing that occurred in that time would justify for an instant any comparison between him and the most evil person ever to lead an advanced Western country.

Historians of the future will also wonder what mad departure from the normal precincts of common sense possessed the Democrats to think that they could succeed politically with the current sleazy attempt to seize large individual real estate assets of the former president in settlement of a grotesquely enlarged bond to enable him to appeal an absurdly engrossed fine for an offense about which no one complained, and which possesses no criterion of statutory or precedented wrongdoing.

The surest possible antidote to increasing the ranks of the Trump-haters is to abuse the judicial and prosecutorial systems so egregiously that the billionaire former president becomes an underdog and haters are placated, or neutralized, or even disarmed by the spectacle of cowardice and moral bankruptcy of this tactic.

Judge Arthur Engoron would have done much better to produce a penalty that a sane and reasonably impartial person could take seriously. This was such a hideous mockery of due process and abstract justice that it was a gilt-edged invitation to a man of Mr. Trump's histrionic talents to convert into another drop-box of votes. Only those so febrile with Trump-hate already will not be repulsed by a fraud of such proportions.

It has been my contention throughout that none of the criminal cases will get to trial before the election, because of their inherent vulnerability and the rich variety of dilatory exceptions available to the defendant. And almost certainly none of them will get to trial after the election.

While the customary press clique of lawyer Trump-slayers continues to gambol and wallow in their praise of the Democratic strategy of abusing the ability to prosecute as a political technique, I cannot imagine why, as they could see that they were going to be reduced to this extremity, the Democrats didn't strike earlier when they might have been able to produce pre-election trials that their performing marionettes in the national political media could represent as impartial exposes of Mr. Trump's alleged turpitude.

As it is, the average of polls gives Mr. Trump a 2 percent to 3 percent lead in the overall vote. In practice, as most polls except for Rasmussen and Trafalgar are conducted by universities and media outlets with a left-wing bias, the real number is probably about 5 percent. If the Democratic margin in California and New York over the Republican margin in Texas, Florida, and Tennessee, about four million votes for

almost equal numbers of electoral votes (82 and 80), Mr. Trump is leading in the other 45 states by about 11 million votes.

The Democrats are trailing all the swing states, though Pennsylvania and a couple of the others are within the margin of error. The Democrats will not be able to harvest and stuff their way to victory against such an authentic popular headwind. This unprecedentedly dishonest reelection bid by the Biden administration has assisted in generating a good deal of flippant talk at home and abroad about the decline of America.

I think that it is an unfortunate confirmation that America is, compared to most advanced western countries, an unusually corrupt jurisdiction with an extremely one-sided criminal justice system and an addiction to civil litigation that is a serious encumbrance of the country's economy.

And the role of money in American politics is in many respects pernicious, but the American constitutional system makes reform practically impossible and past attempts at electoral finance reform have, in fact, made matters worse. In its unique and inimitable way, though, the United States is undoubtedly a democracy, and as a state whose sovereignty has not been questioned since the Civil War, it possesses as tenaciously as any nation or people in the world the perfect right to govern itself as it wishes.

It is the vigorous national sense and independent spirit of the population, not the integrity of the political system, that is the chief criterion in whether a nation is rising, declining, or on a plateau. By this yardstick, the strength of the United States is undiminished. At the height of its power, Rome was no great pillar of political virtue.

Greece, at the height of its civic courage and comparatively democratic originality, was incapable of rising above the level of a group of squabbling city states and islands and was constantly quarreling amongst themselves, and was a sitting

duck for the Macedonians, and then the Romans, and it was only by blind luck that those powers regarded Greece benignly.

Disgraceful, though it is, this prodigy of illegality and corruption now being plumbed by the Democrats is in its way, a reassurance that America is not decadent. If it was, the long-ruling, but palsied and inept bipartisan elite that hates Mr. Trump because he is a mortal threat to their incumbency, would be much more easily disposed of.

All countries flourish under inspired leadership, like America under most of the presidents between FDR and Reagan. It is another confirmation of the enduring strength of America that it has so well survived the comprehensively inadequate and ineffectual government of the current administration.

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