

# Democrats Underestimate Trump at Their Own Peril

The president's enemies have not figured out how cunning he is, because he doesn't seem cunning—at first.

by Conrad Black



**It is almost unbelievable** that the Democrats have allowed themselves to be so completely out-maneuvered by President Trump in the coronavirus and economic crises. They are all calling for an indefinite protraction of the economic hemorrhage, with unemployment increasing by hundreds of thousands every day, even as the incidence of the virus declines.

The Democrats started out with every advantage: the crisis came out of the blue and burst over the administration. As soon as there was any hint of how aggressive and dangerous the virus was, the anti-Trump press went wild—frightening the public with visions of a bubonic plague that threatened the life of everyone despite the fact that approximately 98

percent of people under 65 who get the coronavirus, survive it.

At first, Trump was a bit blasé about “the flu.” But then, as he noted the potential scope of the problem and stopped direct flights from China on January 31, he was accused of “racism” and “xenophobia” by those pendants of the Democratic *weltanschauung*, likely presidential nominee Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.).

As drastic forecasts of immense numbers of fatalities started tumbling out of ostensibly credible centers of epidemiology, the new refrain was that Trump was a moronic enemy of science. For a brief shining moment, his supposed complacency about the coronavirus was linked to his skepticism about the dire threat of climate change.

With the one as with the other, the advocates, as they build hysteria, reflexively referred to a solid phalanx of “97 percent of experts agree . . . ” etc. And with the one as with the other, this is bunk. As new data comes in, forecasts become less dire—or, to put it in computerese, garbage in, garbage out.

Trump appointed the soon-ubiquitous doctors Anthony Fauci and Deborah Birx to his coronavirus task force and swaddled himself in scientific legitimacy. (Technically, it’s the vice president’s task force but you would not know it to watch the daily press briefings.) The Democrats shifted fire to demand a total economic shutdown—from six (New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio) to 18 months (Ezekiel Emanuel, Biden’s economic advisor and brother of the egregious former mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel).

Smiling like canary-stuffed house-cats, all the leading Democrats and their media amplifiers repeated the lengthy shutdown mantra and unctuously declared this was the president’s responsibility because he hadn’t been able to test

practically the entire country. It was Trump's fault not to foresee the greatest pandemic scare in a century, and not to know that previous administrations had left him a public health system little prepared to deal with it.

## **Democrats Do What Democrats Always Do**

Demonstrating the executive decisiveness that he displayed for 15 years pulling huge audiences on his television program, Trump prevailed on the private sector to produce impressive quantities of medical supplies and to devise and manufacture on only a few days' notice, easily administered and quickly reporting coronavirus tests. (Great Britain, one of the world's medically sophisticated countries, has to send all its test samples to Germany for evaluation.)

Trump made up for the shortcomings of his predecessors very quickly, sent giant hospital ships to Los Angeles and New York, and had the Army Corps of Engineers turn the Javits Center in New York into a 2,500-bed emergency hospital in less than a week.

Billy Graham's son, Franklin, set up an emergency tent hospital, by invitation, in Central Park—and was accused by the mouthy Left (one faction for which, it really is “the city that never sleeps”) of trying to evangelize New York City. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo was calling for absurd numbers of ventilators, and Trump responded at once and generously—to him and everyone else—as all conceded, including normally strident critics among the Democratic governors.

The administration had produced an immense financial assistance package that the Democrats tried to encumber with unfeasible amounts of pork for their political constituents and then tried holding up the increased payroll assistance aid that is popular, much needed, and moving quickly.

Just as the national Democratic leaders were getting into a

familiar chorus of a lengthy coming shutdown, throwing up huge numbers of grumpy potential Democratic voters, Trump arranged for his scientific task force and a host of leading figures in every conceivable field, from baseball players to religious leaders, to agree on a multi-stage normalization plan. Trump told a press briefing that the president's authority in such matters was "total." In fact, it is a constitutional grey zone when he acts under the National Emergencies Act; as the vice president diplomatically stated at one of the press meetings, the president's authority is "plenary."

But if it were tested, by state governments and, in some matters of individual liberties, by citizens themselves, it is not clear where the Supreme Court would come down. The fluttering Democrats swiftly ventilated back to life the theory that the country was in a "constitutional crisis." They hadn't tried this one since Carl Bernstein was exhumed from his Watergate waxworks about 18 months ago, to announce that Trump was mentally unfit to govern and the 25th amendment to the Constitution would have to be invoked to remove him. (Both "crises" swiftly evaporated.)

## **Setting the Stage for Restarting the Economy**

Having thus set the stage with incitements for the Democratic governors to oppose him, Trump produced his normalization plan, and 22 states with adequately minor coronavirus occurrences are encouraged to start de-escalating the emergency, including some large states, such as Texas and Missouri.

The media was obliged to publicize the mayor of Louisville, Kentucky, who ticketed people driving to their church parking lot and remaining in their cars, listening to an Easter Sunday service from within on a radio, and the dissidence of local police chiefs who declined, when called about neighbors having

an extra car in their driveway, to raid the denounced home to root out an unauthorized visitor.

Every informed person has always known that there was no way of wiping the virus out until a vaccine is developed. There are about 600 coronavirus-related unemployed for every fatality to the disease. The economic consequences of the shutdown are unsustainable and already completely excessive in over 20 states. A partial return to work was bound to be necessary long before there was a vaccine and testing everyone is no answer—it isn't possible in less than about six months and, in any event, a person could pass the test one day and be infected the next.

There has never been any option but to stop the virus's momentum, shelter the immune-challenged as thoroughly as possible, and go cautiously back to work as generally as possible, while assuring access for those who need them most, to useful therapies. Hydroxychloroquine (which the anti-Trump media has ignored because it might be a useful antidote and the president mentions it), and injections of antibodies provided by the scores of thousands of known survivors of the virus are but two of these being developed.

But the president has flipped the table: he has met the public health challenge and is "flattening the curve." And he has met the economic challenge with an imaginative economic package and now with a scientifically economic validated restart.

The Democrats—in a year when they can't do anything right except sandbag Bernie Sanders, when they defended the infamous Chinese performance for a long time, and upheld the corrupt leadership of the World Health Organization—are still calling for Americans to hide like moles, whatever the financial hardship and the danger of starvation, severe economic loss, and public demoralization.

Probably because of his gaucheries (such as reading the media

an extensive supportive excerpt from an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* on Sunday), Trump's enemies have not figured out how cunning he is, because he doesn't, at first, seem cunning. In 10 weeks, with the inadvertent collaboration of his enemies, he has turned the political aspect of this crisis almost completely around, and is tweeting Democratic governors calling for their states to be "liberated."

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