

How Trump Can Succeed

He has policies that might well seize the political center.

by Conrad Black



The preliminaries of the Trump presidency are ending, and difficult though it is to appreciate, the atmosphere is lightening somewhat. It is a little early to opine on the Trump foreign policy, but his first three visits from other government leaders have gone well. He did brilliantly saying publicly to the British leader, Theresa May, that “a strong and independent Britain is a blessing to the world” – a stirring contrast to Obama’s threat, delivered in London, to put Britain “at the back of the queue” if it left the European Union. The conversations with the Japanese prime minister, Shinzo Abe, seemed to go well also, as have conversations with the Chinese president. Comparisons between the Trump references to “America First” and the pre-war isolationist movement led by Colonel Charles Lindbergh have died away, as has most of the alarmist nonsense about Donald Trump. It is no longer possible to frighten the children of America with suggestions that Trump is a reckless warmonger. The exchange

with Canada's Justin Trudeau was virtually a love-in. It remains to be seen what will come of the "notice" that departed national security adviser General Michael Flynn gave the Iranians, but the president will pick his time and send a starkly different message to the groveling to Tehran of his predecessor.

The absurd overreaction to the executive order on admission of people from seven terrorist-wracked or terror-sponsoring states, which have been identified as such by President Obama, is subsiding. The administration will practice enhanced screening at point of processing, and may issue a new order; and presumably, when the vacancy is filled and cant and emotionalism have subsided, will ask the Supreme Court for a reference on the constitutional point of the president's prerogatives in immigration matters. The partisan publicity-seeking mischief of the Washington State government and a Seattle federal judge cannot be allowed to stand, even on a moot point (if the present order is superseded).

The allegations of racism have died in all but psychotic political environs; the bunk about misogyny finally vanished altogether with the joint meeting on Monday with Canada's Trudeau to promote women executives. The succeeding fatuity about Trump's being an autocrat has wobbled away as he has indulgently abided by the antics of the Seattle district judge and the flaky Ninth Circuit in San Francisco (a court that has seen 86 percent of recent appeals from it to the Supreme Court meet with success). His cabinet is inching through the confirmation process, protracted by mindless Democratic obstructionism. The Democrats must have scraped the bottom of the barrel with Schumer's sniveling over the entry ban, Elizabeth Warren's threats of individual vengeance on all 52 senators who approved Senator Sessions as attorney general, and Representative Maxine Waters's attack on Trump for tolerating the Russian "invasion of Korea." The Democrats have almost run through the Saul Alinsky playbook of demonization

and harassment, and the president's children and a grandchild are the latest targets, but no significant part of public opinion will support such sleaze. (It seems like only yesterday that Hillary was saying "When they go low, we go high.")?

The reality that Trump is president, is not going to be impeachable, and is substantially unstoppable, is seeping into the Democratic mind. There is now a health-and-human-services secretary (Tom Price) sworn to remake Obamacare and extend it; an education secretary (Betsy DeVos) who opposes the teachers' unions and supports private alternatives to the state school system they have desecrated; and a Treasury secretary (Steven Mnuchin) who will present a comprehensive reform of taxes. A director of the Environmental Protection Agency who is skeptical about climate change (Scott Pruitt) appears safe enough for confirmation, though a labor secretary (Andrew Puzder) who is critical of much of the union leadership, while being supportive of working people, might have a rough ride.

But the great political battle is about to shift to the attempted enactment of Donald Trump's long-promised legislative assault on what he considered the rottenness of the entire political governing class and system. Health-care reform and tax reform are the first priorities, and comprehensive bills, if adopted, would erase what little there is of a domestic Obama legacy and improve upon it, and would incentivize the return of trillions of dollars of retained profit of American companies overseas, sharply reduce corporate-income taxes, and reduce taxes on modest incomes.

American corporate-income taxes are the highest of any advanced country, and it is a testament to the leftist dogmatism or simple complacency of the mainstream American media that there was so little agitation over the last 20 years for revisions to the tax code that would promote reinvestment of earnings in the United States. Historians of the future will wonder how the United States managed to be

both overtaxed and chronically debt-ridden. There has been no shortage of advice from intelligent economic commentators, such as Martin Feldstein and Larry Kudlow, about how to structure tax reform, and the consensus of Republican economists seems to be that it is so complicated that it should be divided in two – with a stimulation of some cuts, fiscal enticement of repatriation of foreign profits, and an infrastructure fund now; and more-comprehensive reform later.

With great trepidation, I think that the momentum of the election victory and the installation of such a radically reformist Cabinet must be exploited while the Democrats are still reeling, and torn between impressing their base in Hollywood, the media, academia, the militant feminists, and minorities (an awkward coalition of rich and poor with only patches among the working and middle classes) and bridge-building with the moderate-conservative majority. While the extreme acrimony of the late campaign and the antagonism between Trump and the conventional media have ensured that there has been no honeymoon, there is still novelty and the expectations of the Trump supporters. The president is running well ahead of the Democrats in the polls, has twice the approval rating of the Congress, which has risen since the end of gridlock, and three times the approval rating of the media. If he can produce a tax system that enriches the lower-income families while spurring business reinvestment, he can generate 3 to 4 percent economic growth, which would itself reduce the deficit by \$400 to 500 billion a year. Some taxes on elective spending and transactions would eliminate the rest of the deficit. This appeared to be the carrot he held out to a group of visiting bankers a few days ago – some higher taxes on Wall Street but sharply reduced regulation. Most of Dodd-Frank and much of Sarbanes-Oxley, and a great deal of additional superfluous regulation, should go.

The Obama war on business and the (Hillary) Clinton ambition to flatline the economy by making the voting majority of

Americans members of some category of benefit recipient would go with it. It will be a mighty accomplishment if Donald Trump can bring the country back from Obama's plan to "spread the wealth around" by increasing the size of the public sector and forcing more people into forms of welfare, and refocus it on the entitlement of people to their incomes, as surely as they are entitled to enjoyment of their property – tempered only by the need to provide what the government must have to function, as opposed to buying votes with public money and inciting class warfare. If at the same time, or right on the heels of it, he can produce a health-care plan that is universal, but based on tax credits for those with adequate incomes, and assistance for those who do not, he will have ended 20 years of stagnant, mainly gridlocked government. He will also coopt the entire center of the political ground. At the same time, he will have assisted the moderate Democrats to regain control of their party and make it again a centrist reform party capable of governing without reducing the country to shambles, as it did under LBJ, Carter, and Obama. At that point, the popularity of the administration will cow even the more overwrought sectors of the media.

The confected hysteria is subsiding, and Democrats must now face the fact that many of their cherished mistaken policies are about to be torched and the ashes dispersed over the country. Schumer, Pelosi, and the rest will soon have to decide whether to make a course correction, and show some tactical maturity, or hurl themselves like grieving widows in colonial India on the funeral pyre of the fools' socialist paradise they have been promoting for 15 years.

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