

Mr. Trump Closes In on the Nomination

Those who initially saw the Trump candidacy as an exercise in buffoonery and exhibitionism, and gradually accepted it as an insurgency, now see it as an attempt to hijack and ravish the Republican party and even to hoodwink the entire electorate. The alternative interpretation has been that Donald Trump, though a billionaire, had the genius of expressing public grievances in an Archie Bunker style that mocked political correctness and was popularly seen as plain talk from the only candidate not in any way complicit in the terrible blunders of America's political class since the end of the Cold War. He was also a successful businessman and impresario, not, in fact, a blue-collar clock-puncher, though he talked like one. No one can deny that Trump saw an opportunity and revealed the existence of a massive voting bloc that all the experts, led by the Bush-Clinton joint incumbency that held great offices for eight straight terms (1981-2013), missed altogether.

Trump alone recognized the significance of a few basic numbers, such as the percentage of Americans who think government officials are largely crooked – which increased between 2000 and 2015 from 30-something percent to 50 to 60 percent, depending on whether they are Democrats, independents, or Republicans. In the same period, the percentage of Americans who thought the federal government was run by a few big interests increased from about 50 percent to about 70 percent. (*Economist/YouGov* is the source for these numbers.) Economic data reveal that the middle class has been stagnant in wealth and purchasing power over that period, and the lower income groups, FDR's famous "one third of a nation," feel acutely threatened by the more than 11 million illegal entrants to the country and by trade pacts that they see as having exported traditional industrial jobs and as having

imported unemployment.

Those collectively responsible for governing the country through the last 20 years, as these ominous levels of public discontent accumulated, showed no apparent recognition of the gathering storm. Marco Rubio, as he graciously departed the race, called it a "tsunami none of us saw coming." Future historians of American politics will probably be astounded that the political system ignored the 900-pound gorilla of illegal migrants in the country and imagined that such an immense number of unskilled entrants could be tacitly accepted. This replicated the general legislative cowardice about abortion, which was at least eventually dumped into the incapable lap of the courts. When so great an issue as the huge number of illegal migrants is simply ignored, it doesn't solve itself. There is room for dissent on how best to manage the problem, but the country was relieved and grateful that Donald Trump finally rubbed the nose of the political class in this monstrous, bipartisan, multi-branch failure of government. The spurious effort to present Band-Aid legislation as "comprehensive immigration reform" just increased public anger.

Of course, and at the least, Trump is going to have to alter his proposal of expelling 11 million people and then determining which of them are fit for readmission. Any such selection procedure will have to take place before they are expelled, as those who deserve to be readmitted don't deserve to be expelled. And a country with the authentic traditions of respect for human rights that the United States claims cannot uproot and forcibly remove across international borders such a large number of people without causing immense moral revulsion and social chaos in the United States and Mexico. The sooner Trump formulates his commendable recognition of the problem in realistic terms, the better.

The somewhat related issue of Muslim immigration also must not be dealt with as cavalierly as Donald Trump has spoken of it.

The refusal of the administration to use the phrase "Islamist extremism" is disgraceful, but it is not much progress for Trump to say all Islam is an enemy of the United States. Some Islamists are; many Muslims are unconvinced of the virtue of the sweet land of liberty, but the great majority of the world's 1.4 billion Muslims are not filled with hatred toward America. Trump should not lump the kings of Jordan and Morocco and the presidents of Indonesia and Egypt in with the terrorists, though he has a point in saying that the American leadership should respond more vocally as well as effectively to the routine disparagements and incitements to Americophobia of the leaders of Iran, whom President Obama is trying to sell to the country as incipient allies. In the most benign light, Trump's reflections on Islam can be likened to Ronald Reagan's famous reference to the Soviet Union as "an evil empire," in 1983. It might be time to abandon unilateral verbal disarmament, but Reagan made it clear that he was speaking only of Soviet totalitarianism, not of all Russians or members of Soviet nationalities, nor of the non-Soviet Communists such as China and Yugoslavia.

The latest events in this extraordinary campaign, last week, illustrate and magnify the confusion of it. The stupidity of the far left is demonstrated by MoveOn.org, the lobotomous Sandersesque agitprop organization that routinely tries to disrupt Trump's rallies. Trump is indeed, as the editors of *National Review* and others have complained, not very conservative. If the complaint of MoveOn.org and its left-wing allies had to do with policy matters, they would more sensibly deploy their infantile tactics against Ted Cruz. Trump favors universal medical care (as much as possible of it in the private sector) and is the only candidate in either party, except for Bernie Sanders, who recognizes American responsibility for the humanitarian disaster in the Middle East. In its blunderbuss reflexive reaction, the far Left has tried to harass Trump while leaving Cruz and the slightly less conservative Rubio almost alone; and Cruz gained nothing by

blaming the distasteful confrontations on Trump.

One of Trump's talents is to harness the rage and fear of the low-income and marginal groups by his Archie Bunker routine, while maintaining contact with the party's moderates and the vast center of American politics by having relatively uncontroversial views of most issues except illegal and Muslim immigration. Regularly, throughout the entire life of the Trump phenomenon, skeptics have foretold that the latest gaucherie or belligerent Trumpism would capsize his campaign. It was widely predicted that his apparent ambiguity about low-grade counter-violence against demonstrators would cause voters to desert him in large numbers. It obviously did not happen on the Ides of March, and it may be assumed that more people were concerned about the Left's attempt to intimidate him than about his commendation of those who did not turn the other cheek to the "hooligans" (to use the customary terminology of dictatorships). Instead of Trump's seeming – as Mitt Romney and some others have tried to portray him – a fascistic manipulator of mob violence, his somewhat unnerving references to "energizing" bouts of violence have rather been seen like the threats of the forerunner of Archie Bunker, Jackie Gleason's immortal bus driver Ralph Kramden, to punch his long-suffering wife (Audrey Meadows): "To the moon, Alice!"

The Trump ceiling has risen steadily: He wouldn't get past 25 percent, then 30, then 35, and on Tuesday, in four-candidate races, he passed 40 percent in all the primaries except Illinois (39) and Ohio (36), where the state's governor, John Kasich, won. The *Economist*/YouGov poll found his support among Republicans, for the first time, over 50 percent (53). Other polls revealed that, if he is the nominee, 30 percent of Republicans would consider voting for a third party. There won't be a third-party candidate; it is an insane idea. Practically all of the 30 percent will vote for Trump over Clinton, and Trump pulls in more disgruntled Democrats and

newly motivated independents than he loses grumpy Republicans. In Lyndon Johnson's famous expression, the frontlash is greater than the backlash. On Tuesday night, Trump was humorous and reasonably conciliatory and spoke nothing but the truth when he said that he had been deluged by more negative media than "any candidate in history." Even at the end of a big night for him, Fox's Megyn Kelly was trying to float the idea that banning a reporter from the press contingent at Trump's address on primary night, in a club he owns, for writing a hit piece on his campaign manager, was a violation of the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of the press. Again, the voters will overwhelmingly support Trump: He has been excessively pilloried in the media, and most of the country is delighted that he doesn't truckle to the political press that most Americans regard as part of the corruption and complacency of the elites that have misgoverned the country for decades.

The *Wall Street Journal* and others claim that the Kasich victory means that Cruz and Kasich will mount serious challenges to Trump in different states – Cruz in the more conservative ones, Kasich in the Midwest and Northeast – and thus produce the one remaining hope for stopping Trump. As I wrote