

Never Mind the Democrats, Trump Is the Man to Beat

Since the last election right up to the present, there has been the widespread view that Trump is an easy president to defeat. He isn't, and barring something completely unforeseen, he won't be defeated.

by Conrad Black



The Democrats are clinging to the inevitable pious fraud that Donald Trump is a compromised president because he was impeached.

The Democrats, after a spurious investigation in which the president had none of the constitutionally guaranteed rights of a defendant or the defenses available by precedent to presidents who are the subjects of such investigations, charged Trump with acts that are not impeachable. Then they

failed to adduce any evidence that the president had committed the acts with which they charged him.

Naturally, they have moved to the next stage, insisting there is an ineradicable blot on the president's record because he was impeached, with what amounts to a guilty verdict because the Republicans did not allow witnesses that the House, whose constitutional task it is to prepare the evidence for the Senate's trial, failed to call when it had the chance.

But the Democrats are left with their frivolous impeachment hanging around their necks like a toilet seat, an unruly squad of wildly implausible candidates, and the clock ticking as Washington awaits U.S. Attorney John Durham's views of the initial espionage conducted illegally on the Trump campaign and transition team. The electorate seems to be about equally divided on Trump the controversial personality: half are devoted followers, half find him somewhere in the range from distasteful to nauseating.

Continuing to hammer the purported truism that Trump is "the most corrupt president in American history"—the standard opening gambit of Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.)—will not provide the theme of a serious presidential campaign. With an expanding workforce, more job openings than unemployed, reduced taxes for more than 80 percent of taxpayers, lower incomes rising more swiftly than those of the proverbial one percent, and the stock exchanges having gained \$12 trillion in three years, (\$4,000 for every man, woman, and child in the country), Democrats will have to hire private detectives to find people who aren't better off than they were three years ago.

Despite all the predictions of imminent conflict and the alarms about resumption of the Korean War and a Mideast re-enactment of the Vietnam War in Iran, it is clear that those

countries have no alternative but to accept Trump's facilitation of their move away from deployed nuclear weapons if they want to see an end to sanctions and some economic assistance. Kim Jong-un has gone quiet during the proverbial decent interval before he agrees to a deal with Trump. The Iranians are trying to pressure Europe by ramping up the production of fissile material. But Europe, as even a second-grader who watches only CNN news would know, cannot ignore American sanctions on Iran and absorb the application of American sanctions on them.

Iran is boxed in and the massive public discontent that ripples frequently across that country could easily erupt into a general revolt. The security forces have already killed as many as 1,500 Iranians in the last year with live ammunition fired indiscriminately; the point of an uncontrollable explosion of that rancid theocracy cannot be far off. None of this opens up anything for the Democrats to shoot at and even these unelectable candidates are not going to start arguing on behalf of the ayatollahs against Trump.

The usual default position of the Democrats of denouncing the Republican regime of the country clubs isn't going to work either. Trump plays a lot of golf (at golf courses he owns) but a popular backlash against the Republican fat cats isn't plausible when Michael Bloomberg is spending billions of dollars to buy the Democratic nomination and their friends in Silicon Valley and Hollywood are still embarrassing themselves with their hysterical attacks on Trump.

Setting a course for the Democrats to begin patching together a winning strategy at this late date is a challenge, as the carpet they stood on for three years, of Trump's unsuitability for reasons of moral turpitude, has been pulled out from under them.

About 50 percent of the voters support Trump in almost any circumstances, and all the president has to do to be reelected is hold what he has now. The Democrats have a lock on the tens of millions of voters who will vote against Trump no matter what he achieves or what depths are plumbed by the opposition.

There is a daily demarcation in the approximately 10 percent of voters who are neither very pro-Trump nor very hostile to him, between those who are impressed with the country's progress more than they are offended by the foibles of the president's public personality. Unless he misplays things "bigly and braggadociosly," the president will continue to make inroads and inch up from his approximately 50 percent of voters now, toward landslide country of 60 percent, where Roosevelt, Johnson, Nixon, and Reagan were at their reelections.

If, having got off his chest his rightful contempt for Comey and his clique in the FBI and intelligence agencies, Trump conducts himself with a suave and serene confidence that reminds the country of how presidents in firm command of their office traditionally behave, some of the visceral hostility to his personality will evaporate. And if the Democrats continue to flail and flounder, Trump will start to enjoy the prestige that normally attaches to the successful holder of his great office.

The Democrats are now divided between the conventional center-left (Joe Biden and Amy Klobuchar), the new center (Michael Bloomberg), and the far-left (Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren). Mayor Pete Buttigieg is like an exotic bird who flies between the different options and never settles on one, but is likely to vanish into the ether in South Carolina. Biden is seriously damaged by the Ukraine allegations and is a notoriously tired and easily confused candidate. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) is game and bright and not frightening,

though rather humdrum, but she could at least hold the party together and lose honorably as the Republicans, apart from Reagan, have generally done between Nixon and Trump. Bloomberg is a competent man but an indifferent campaigner and is an unknown quantity until we see if the Democrats are so scared by the dangerous exposure of their position that they swallow their distaste at selling out to the greatest political moneybags in American history.

If Sanders hammers Warren badly in New Hampshire, she goes and he takes most of her votes and stands by to repel rich interlopers. If Biden doesn't regain any ground from the 360-degree debacle in Iowa, he goes too and Klobuchar, especially after her good showing in the New Hampshire debate, moves up to second place behind Sanders.

If Bloomberg pulls within 10 points of the top candidate in the principal Super Tuesday states (especially California and Texas), he has a good chance to take it. He would be a relatively strong candidate. He is an accomplished centrist, but he is no Donald Trump as a barnstormer on the hustings, and Trump will not be separated from his huge following nor denied recognition of his fine record in office.

If Bloomberg doesn't run strongly on Super Tuesday (March 3), he folds, Klobuchar becomes the only plausible alternative to Sanders, and probably loses with distinction, as Nelson Rockefeller did to Barry Goldwater in 1964. I believe Trump would take all 50 states against Sanders, though not the District of Columbia; 40 states against Klobuchar, and 35 states against Bloomberg.

Since the last election right up to the present, there has been the widespread view that Trump is an easy president to defeat. He isn't, and barring something completely unforeseen, and I don't mean Hillary Clinton or Michelle Obama suiting up for the big race, he won't be defeated.

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