

President Chaos? Not Exactly

This is hardball politics of a kind the country has never seen before, the ultimate attempt to criminalize policy differences.

by Conrad Black



All the stops have now been pulled out in the necessarily unorthodox Democratic presidential campaign.

The Democrats are simultaneously blaming the president for blundering into the coronavirus crisis, (though how isn't explained beyond deficiencies of testing, which has nothing to do with prevention or cure); and with failing to extend the lockdown long enough (meaning until their election victory is secured by the resulting economic hardship). They accuse him of indifference to police racism, though his comments on the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis two weeks ago are identical to theirs, and of somehow being responsible for the extreme violence and destructiveness of some of the urban protests, but also of oppression and Bonapartism in threatening to use the armed forces to quell the violence if the Democratic mayors and governors don't deploy adequate

forces to contain the violence. Their latest trick is orchestrated anti-Trump statements by disgruntled former senior military officers.

There was never any question of just letting this one go as unwinnable, as when they renominated Adlai Stevenson to run against Dwight Eisenhower in 1956, or when conservatives nominated Barry Goldwater in an ideological revolt against Lyndon Johnson and the Kennedy Myth in 1964. The Democrats were never going to acquiesce this year in what has become the custom of alternating two-term presidencies.

The Democrats could never accept that Trump had really won in 2016; they found him so antithetical to everything that everyone in both parties in the post-Reagan OBushinton homogenized Washington believed good government consisted of, they would have to try everything to unseat and discredit Trump and banish him to a new category of aberrant presidencies—a freakish one-term nightmare. To this end, Democratic Party elders intervened to prevent the elevation of the Marxist Bernie Sanders and carried a faltering and effectively rejected Joe Biden, to the finish line. It was a crisp professional operation, but they haven't ended up with a very impressive candidate.

The imperative of partisan victory is based on more than distaste. They know Donald Trump is serious in his promise to drain the (bipartisan) swamp. The closest the country has come to a sweep-out of the political class since Andrew Jackson, (whom Trump admires), was Ronald Reagan whose "Eleventh Commandment" was not to speak ill of another Republican, and whose promise to dismantle government was only retained rhetorically after he had succeeded in massive tax reform and a recalibration of foreign policy that by the time he left office had practically brought the Cold War to a victorious conclusion. Ronald Reagan was a great president, but his revolution never got around to the Washington establishment, which condescendingly regarded him, in the words of senior

lawyer and LBJ's defense secretary Clark Clifford, "an amiable dunce."

Trump is less eloquent and less charming than President Reagan, and he wants to root out and destroy the self-serving placemen whom he considers responsible for flat-lining and demotivating the country and almost allowing it to be surpassed in world influence by China. Trump initially was greeted almost as frostily by Republican senators and congressmen as by Democrats. But John McCain (R-Ariz.) died, and Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) retired. Trump has since fired all three of the men Corker said he relied upon to prevent a national disaster—former Defense Secretary James Mattis, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and Chief of Staff John Kelly. Republican senators Mitt Romney (R-Utah) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), are still there and are hostile to Trump, though only nominal Republicans. At this point, however, Trump doesn't need them for a majority.

There is little doubt, especially after former Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's appearance at the Senate Judiciary Committee last week, that the Obama Administration's attempt to influence the election outcome and then to overturn it was the greatest constitutional crime in the history of the country. There was more legal justification for the insurrection of the Confederate states, several of which staged hasty referendums to justify their actions, than there can be found for the fraudulent counterintelligence investigation of the Trump campaign and the completely spurious, redundant, and malicious Mueller investigation.

Having started on this footing, the war between Trump and the post-Reagan OBushinton coalition had to continue to one side's political death. The Mueller fiasco was ignored by the 80-percent Democratic national media and last week Democratic Senate deputy leader Dick Durbin (Ill.), robotically repeated that the Mueller inquiry was justified. The Trump-treason myth

lives in the minds of his enemies.

The impeachment trial that followed was concocted out of unimpeachable acts that there was no probative evidence Trump had committed. This charade had barely ground to an end when the coronavirus crisis appeared. Improvising quickly, the Democrats opened a new front with the campaign that demanded the economic shutdown continue until there was a vaccine, and prepared to cook Trump as the Herbert Hoover of the 21st century, as the author of a mighty depression. Their media allies whipped up public fear to absurd levels illustrated by the spectacle last week of aggressive demonstrators brawling and throwing bricks and bottles with their quasi-medical face masks firmly in place. The demand for an extended lockdown only gradually subsided as an utterly fatuous follow-on regime took shape of testing practically the whole population, requiring the identity of anyone who tested positive for the virus and anyone they had encountered in recent weeks, chasing up those unfortunates, and purporting to require them to self-quarantine.

The riots following the Floyd killing have been played by the Trump-hating media to help establish the impression of Trump as President Chaos. The Democratic urban bosses who, in their enthusiasm for the COVID-19 shutdown, would not allow people to shop or go to church, now urged them to protest and crowd together, coronavirus be damned. As the well-intentioned protesters marched, the urban terrorists advanced, communicating by cell phone and with pre-positioned arms around over a score of cities, struck after dark, and pillaged and torched even the best shopping areas, moving like cyber-cats and for a couple of days running rings around the heavy-footed police.

The Democrats had to denounce the police in the spirit of George Floyd, but not completely demotivate them because looting and arson and murder are unpopular. New York's Governor Cuomo publicly quarreled with New York City's

hopeless Mayor Bill de Blasio. The Democratic Left started the cry to defund the police, just as the ravages of rioters peaked from coast to coast, and the Democrats' message of pure virtue in contrast to the stark evil of the administration was somewhat ragged.

When the president threatened to use the military if the mayors and governors did not employ the National Guard in sufficient numbers to assure the safety of their fellow citizens, the Democrats were ready with the charge of politicization of the military and heavy-handed suppression of basic freedoms. Given the Democrats' politicization of the Justice Department and the intelligence services and their zealous enforcement of the COVID-19 lockdown, this was incongruous, especially as the president was only promising the military *if* the governors and mayor didn't do their jobs.

The resourceful Democrats, however, managed another escalation with the retired military and the incumbent defense secretary all objecting that the military should not be unleashed on the American public, as if Trump were advocating a military assault on peaceful public demonstrations. Mark Esper, the defense secretary, presumably will be fired (with cause) when matters settle down a little. Many presidents, starting with Jefferson, have deployed troops within the country to restore order; we are discussing defense of the public's freedom from urban terrorists, not suppression of it.

Trump regained the momentum with the revelation of unemployment numbers ten million better than what had been anticipated, a clear indication of a bracing economic comeback. This is hardball politics of a kind the country has never seen before, the ultimate attempt to criminalize policy differences.

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