

Smooth Sailing Ahead for Trump

The times are good and his opponents are not.

by Conrad Black



The full proportions of the debacle that awaits the Democrats next fall is starting to penetrate their complacent disdain and revulsion toward President Trump. Rank-and-file Democrats are so ecstatic at the arrival of a known candidate whose views on principal policy issues cannot be invoked by Republicans to frighten children into eating their breakfast cereal that they have accorded Joe Biden a levitation in the polls. Biden is a shopworn, moth-eaten, malapropistic journeyman about whom, when asked to assess him as a potential president, former bipartisan defense secretary and CIA director Robert Gates took four seconds to emit: "I don't know." In the land of the Ocasio-Cortez sound-alikes, a track-

worn perennial candidate is king. Given how verbally accident-prone Biden has been throughout his nearly 50 years of public life, his present formidable lead in the polls against an immense field of candidates should be seen as the fulfilment of Democratic yearning for someone who would not alarm the voters in policy terms. The only other such candidate is the relatively unknown Amy Klobuchar. All Americans, even the president's most strenuous supporters, should be comforted that the majority of Democrats can still think and count. It is a party infested with lunatics, but not controlled by them. This is in the same reassuring category as the Mueller investigation's conclusion that no one in the United States colluded with Russians to influence the result of the 2016 election.

Beneath the initial success of the Biden campaign, the Democrats are sharply divided between those who are still trying to place their bets on the presidential unsuitability of the incumbent, those who seek a radical *démarche* to the left and over the political cliff, and those trying to get back to essentially the old slightly-left-of-center coalition of Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson. President Clinton, and even, with a stretch, Mrs. Clinton, were also in that tradition, but the ominous approaching clouds of investigative curiosity about the Clinton Foundation and the malodorous ethics of the 2016 Clinton campaign have caused the Clintons' party to stampede from under them.

Even Barack Obama, who was cozily settling into a good 30 years as a respected ex-president, is already in the crosshairs of the investigation, conducted against the Clinton campaign, of illegal espionage on the Trump campaign through fraudulently obtained FISA warrants and planted agents and sting operations. The rabidly Trumpophobic texting between former FBI agent Peter Strzok and FBI lawyer Lisa Page reveals that "the White House" was closely monitoring the investigation of the Trump campaign, which raises the question

of the involvement of the former president in illegal surveillance. Obama's name is still bandied about with respect by most of the Democratic candidates, especially Biden ("Barack and I . . ."), and he is still better esteemed by most Americans than the other ex-presidents. But apart from the admirable and necessary shattering of the bar of color, his entire legacy has been discredited: the mad obsession with unproved climate alarmism, the foolhardy Iranian nuclear treaty, and the Obamacare shambles.

Going back to the Humphrey-Mondale tradition represented by Klobuchar (also a senator from Minnesota), or the Clinton-Obama Democrats without the Clintons or Obamas, Biden will avoid a disaster at the polls: All good Democrats and the bipartisan Trump-haters could vote for either, but they won't be a majority. Answering the sirens on the left and nominating Sanders or a kindred leftist spirit, however, would enable Trump to surpass Richard Nixon's record plurality of 18 million in 1972 (in an electorate of 77 million, against next year's likely 140 million). Apart from working out where the party is and what it seeks, the Democrats are going to have to come to grips with three facts that, combined, should make this president insuperable in 2020.

The first is that he will have the comparative moral high ground once the investigation of the Clinton campaign gets going. The Democrats and their media choristers have grown hoarse and risible with their endless screeching and whining about the president's character. He lost money in the 1980s, as everyone knew, though most of it was non-cash items of the type that accrues in property development (where depreciation, a non-cash loss, is heavy). The egregious Don Lemon's opener on CNN ("The president of the United States is a fraud and a con-man") didn't fly. He's still the wealthiest person in the history of the presidency, the only serious businessman to hold that office, and his comeback from his financial difficulties was a triumph: Napoleon at the Beresina, not the

(rightly) forgotten bankruptcies of the elderly Thomas Jefferson or the young Harry Truman.

The second important fact to consider in the electoral equation is that this president is a fierce combatant. He is not in the Ford-Bush-Dole-Bush-McCain-Romney school of gentlemanly Republican presidential candidates who could win only with a cunning manager such as Lee Atwater (G. H. W. Bush in 1988) or Karl Rove (G. W. Bush). In a brilliant column in *RealClearPolitics* on Monday, Frank Miele recounted the extent to which Trump is employing the playbook of Saul Alinsky, supreme tactician of the Democratic Left, in attacking the Democrats. Mr. Miele credits Trump with the use of Alinsky's Rules 3, 4, 8, 9, and 13: "Go outside the expertise of the enemy," "Make the enemy live up to its own . . . rules," "Keep the pressure on," "The threat is more terrifying than" reality, and "Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it." Miele cited as illustrative the threat to send illegal immigrants to sanctuary cities, something that caused the *New York Times'* Tom Friedman to agree that there was a crisis at the border and the liberal vocalist Cher to tweet asking that such people not be sent to Los Angeles. Miele cited Trump's attacks on the media as maintaining the pressure, and as examples of picking the target, he mentioned his denigrations of "Low energy Jeb Bush," "Crooked Hillary," John McCain, CNN, NATO, illegal immigrants, Congress, Democrats, Michael Cohen, Robert Mueller, Robert Corker, James Comey, Kim Jong-Un ("Rocket Man"), and George "Mr. Kellyanne Conway." He could also have mentioned Senator "Pocahontas" Warren. Trump's nomination-campaign references to Senator "Lyin' Ted Cruz" may have contributed to the closeness of the reelection battle Cruz had with the arm-flapping nitwit Beto O'Rourke, whose presidential campaign, as predicted, has sunk without a trace. The Democrats thought they had an Alinskyite opponent in Richard Nixon, but he only tolerated "dirty tricks," and tactically was more sportsmanlike than history has generally recognized. The Democrats have, evidently, no

idea how to deal with this president, and their moral crusade against him is about to be swamped by the unmasking of the skullduggery and chicanery of the Clinton and Obama Democrats in 2016.

The last fact that the Democrats have not begun to deal with in the effort to unseat the president is his extraordinary success. The economic performance is phenomenal, and the pathetic attempts of President Obama to claim credit for the economic recovery, like his fatuities about "the magic wand," will be mocked with vicious hilarity. The success of this president in proclaiming a border emergency and doing something about it will be noted. So will Speaker Pelosi's claims that Trump's tax bill was a "disaster" of "doggy-do" and that immigration is "a fake crisis" and a border "wall is immoral." The president is almost sure to win the tussle with North Korea because he has privately made it clear that if Kim resumes progress toward a deployable nuclear ICBM, the three-carrier U.S. task force offshore will eliminate all of North Korea's nuclear facilities and decalibrate the artillery targeted on Seoul.

And in the trade dispute with China, where even the Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer sides with the president, the U.S. cannot lose. China's tremendous economic progress is based on debt-financed infrastructure, dumping cheap goods abroad, especially in the United States, and requiring industrial-intelligence disclosure from sophisticated foreign companies that seek access to Chinese markets. Everyone agrees that China cheats and ignores World Trade Organization rulings, and practically every trading nation in the world applauds the U.S. president's stance in this dispute. Eighty percent of the U.S. GDP is domestic commerce, and with a year to reorient itself, it could practically end all imports. China is a debt-ridden house of cards built on what is still a 40 percent command economy, rotten with official corruption in a country with few natural resources and 300 million people who still

live as their ancestors did a thousand years ago.

Barring something completely unforeseeable, this president will have a stronger argument for reelection next year than any president since Richard Nixon in 1972 after his extraordinarily successful first term, if not Franklin D. Roosevelt's double reelections in 1936 and 1944.

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