

The Never Trumpers' New Strategy

The 25th Amendment was not designed for a situation such as this one.

by Conrad Black



The Never Trumpers seem to have retreated, more or less in unison, to the last trench before they throw down their arms and run backwards for their lives: They are now invoking the 25th Amendment. This indicates that they realize the impeachment movement has failed. There is no evidence to impeach, and various unctuous congressional-committee poseurs have acknowledged that they are reduced to the Steele dossier. That source was not respectable enough to make the press in months of circulation and even Bob Woodward, who didn't hesitate to fabricate utter garbage about President Nixon, called it a "garbage document." It was reviled universally for the synchronized-urinating-Muscovite-prostitutes nonsense, and languished until it was all that was left. Eventually, one dares to hope, the full story of this unutterable nonsense will come to light. The man behind it, Christopher Steele, was

hired by Fusion GPS, a generally leftist and disruptive organization, and paid by anti-Trump Republicans. When their cause was ground to powder in the Republican primaries, the flickering Steele torch passed to the Clinton campaign, and in about September, the FBI, under the Caesarean direction of James Comey, began funding Steele and interviewing his sources, who were at one remove from Steele, through shadowy intermediaries – Steele reported hearsay extracted from other hearsay, not the results of rigorous intelligence-gathering.

The FBI was intimately familiar with this Keystone Kops file several months before the first of three affirmations, on January 27 of this year, by Comey to President Trump that Trump was not a suspect in the Russian-collusion investigation. Comey has confirmed to the Congress that he did give those assurances to Trump and that they were accurate. This incites the inference that he continued with and needlessly prolonged the Russian-collusion inquiry, at least insomuch as it involved the President, at the same time he whitewashed Clinton. And the Steele dossier is now the tottering last soldier standing in the Democratic denial therapy over the election result. Therefore, many influential Democrats, official and unofficial – including the deranged anti-Trump faction in the national media – have taken up the 25th Amendment, which could not possibly have the slightest applicability here. Donald Trump is not Julius Caesar (not that Caesar deserved what he got), and his congressional enemies are not a group of conscientious objectors to a tyranny that has usurped power. The 25th Amendment provided for the incapacitation of a president, such as occurred with Woodrow Wilson in 1919 from a series of strokes, not a parliamentary cabinet revolt that dumps a prime minister, from time to time, in Britain, Australia, and Canada.

The relevant section of the 25th Amendment provides that if the vice president and a majority of “the principal officers of the executive departments” and two-thirds of both houses of

the Congress agree that the president is physically or mentally incapable of exercising his office, he shall be replaced by the vice president until he is able to exercise it or there is an election in the normal course and a new president is elected and inaugurated. This measure was invoked only by Ronald Reagan (once) and George W. Bush (twice), in each case when they were having colonoscopies, and only for a few hours. The idea that it could have the slightest chance of being invoked and sustained against Trump (assuming the president does not have a serious health crisis) is another indication of the almost suicidal desperation of those terminally afflicted by Trump derangement syndrome.

As the unfathomable idiocy of the Russian collusion fades into Special Counsel Mueller's trying to protect his protégé and successor, James Comey, from being exposed for his misconduct toward both presidential candidates, and to keep FBI witnesses out of congressional hearings, the Never Trumpers have started to lose control of the Trump-is-evil narrative. They have fallen back to a redefinition in use of the 25th Amendment to make incapacity to govern synonymous with disagreement with the liberal political class that has ruled America since the Reagan era and whose failures and pretensions caused the aggrieved people to carry Donald Trump to the leadership of the Republicans and on to the White House. The criminalization of policy differences almost shattered the division of powers and the efficacy of the federal system during the Watergate affair and after, in the Iran-Contra and Whitewater episodes. Now, the successors to those assaults on the presidency are trying to take a precarious device used up to now only during presidential rectal examinations under sedation, to adapt it as a method of sidelining Trump in favor of his vice president.

Even some benign and reasonable people who seek to be fair, and do give the president a chance, are inconsolably shocked by the president's outbursts of unseemly spontaneity, and have

concluded that he cannot succeed as president. Recourse to the 25th Amendment would not remove Trump: It would be like the madness of King George III, and he would be writing Congress every month demanding to have the full exercise of the presidency back. The whole concept, spiked up by Tennessee senator Bob Corker's outrageous reflections on Trump's mental stability, is touted now by *The New Yorker* magazine, still feverish with Obama deprivation. It is too preposterous to bear thinking about it further.

Another indication of the extremis in which the OBushton Regency Emeritus is now floundering is the apparent full-immersion death plunge of credibility Hillary Clinton has taken in her trip to England. In a foreign country, as if it would not be reported at home, she ascribed her electoral defeat to widespread American misogyny and Russian hacking, WikiLeaks, and other interventions, and to the animus of James Comey, unremembered now for having spared her a criminal trial. None of it makes much sense and is overshadowed anyway by the sudden collapse of a giant Hollywood façade. Harvey Weinstein was expelled from the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences, and fired from his own company, which seems to be about to go into liquidation, just two weeks after a *New York Times* exposé of his alleged rape and harassment of many star-candidate actresses. The idea of waiting for a trial to determine whether someone is guilty of a crime is as obsolete as assembling some evidence when proposing the impeachment or removal for reason of incompetence of a president one disagrees with or finds distasteful. Whatever the truth about Weinstein, Hollywood instantly produced a full marquee of consummate hypocrites, wailing their surprise at what all of them have apparently known for decades. Here again, Weinstein beneficiary Hillary Clinton oozed shock and outrage, as if her husband had been *Good Housekeeping's* husband of the century.

Donald Trump is so hyperactive, so unflaggingly energetic, and so determined and resourceful that no outsider knows when he

is play-acting for a purpose, letting off steam; being serious; or being silly. Having chastised the Republican leaders of the Congress as inept (deservedly), he this week embraced Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, and had a pal-in ceremony with him while effortlessly answering questions from all comers in the press in the White House Rose Garden for 45 minutes. It was a boffo performance: Trump was equable, fluent, and in close agreement with the Senate leader. The president seemed very calm and sensible. The productive session with Schumer and Pelosi about DACA (people who were brought illegally into the country as minors) and the debt ceiling a few weeks ago, while unleashing Steve Bannon to attack Republican senators and promote primary opponents and the Trump agenda but leaving the president with plausible deniability, appears to have mellowed formerly standoffish senators. The long chicken game between the Congress stalling Trump and the president holding their feet to the fire to avoid being portrayed as ineffectual seems to have Trump well embarked on the passage of his tax bill, doubtless with a few amendments, but with the core of simpler and lower taxes unaltered.

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The 25th Amendment is as insane a step to consider as was the effort to produce a materially changed vote in a recount in Wisconsin, and as was the national advertising campaign to change the minds of a few members of the Electoral College pledged to Donald Trump. Millions were spent reaching a few people around the country and Hillary Clinton, whose campaign bankrolled the effort, lost more electoral votes from it than Trump did. We seem to be living in a time of routine recourse to mad political nostrums. Hillary Clinton has become so esoteric that her claim to lead the Never Trumpers is in jeopardy. As I mentioned above, she was in London this week, promoting her book (a labored recitation of her blameless victimhood in her loss of the election last year). The British

generally would believe anything absurd about America and especially its new president, and she trotted out her explanation of her election defeat as the responsibility of everyone except herself. Certainly, she implied, the skill of Donald Trump had nothing to do with it, and public discontent with policies she espoused had nothing to do with it either. That section of the people that she had not infamously consigned as “deplorable” simply “had” to stay strong for three more years and then, all together, they would expel the miscreants. The victorious candidate in the last election lost no time in urging her, for his sake if not the country’s, to run again for president.

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