

The Perilous State of America's Republic

If the United States cannot, in Lincoln's words, "bind up the nation's wounds," and re-emerge as a strong democracy, the end of Western Civilization is in sight.

by Conrad Black



Americans should know how perilous their democracy has become. The majority of Donald Trump's voters already believe the presidential election was rigged, and there is no doubt that suspect voting changes, attributed to the requirements of voting in a pandemic, have created large anomalies in five states that made a great many such votes impossible to authenticate. Untold numbers of ballots arrived at a time and in a manner that incites the inference that they were

substantially fraudulent. The numbers of votes involved in Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin are undoubtedly adequately numerous to have influenced the election.

The courts have failed to address the questions raised by this disturbing pattern of votes confined to only five states. Some of the responsibility rests with President Trump's counsel, who often have demanded remedies out of all proportion to the complaints alleged. They seem only now to be getting around to an attack on the constitutionality of unverifiable voting on a large scale in the four or five suspect states, which stand out like pike-staffs among the others where all went smoothly.

The refusal of the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the appeal from the state of Texas, joined by 18 other states, is an outright abdication. Of course, Texas and its co-petitioners have perfectly adequate standing to demand that all states, in choosing a president, conduct their elections credibly enough to assure the whole country that the Constitution has been followed in filling the nation's highest offices. For the Supreme Court to take the position, as it did, that it could not hear the election challenge case because Texas and the others did not have the standing to challenge how another state conducts its presidential election is completely spurious in the circumstances. Where the courts don't exercise their jurisdiction, a vacuum arises which is likely to be filled by lawlessness, and potentially, even violent lawlessness.

The United States has become a country where a majority of Americans—people of good will from both parties—believe presidential elections are not conducted honestly. (Think back to the contested election of 2000.) An overwhelming majority do not trust the media, which, in political matters, is effectively a totalitarian enterprise slandering the Republicans and censoring criticism of the Democrats.

The Supreme Court has declined to opine on the most important question that possibly can be legitimately brought before it, and the criminal courts approve approximately 98 percent of prosecutions, over 95 percent of those without a trial, such is the corruption of the plea bargain system that enables prosecutors to extort false inculpatory testimony with no consequences to itself or the untruthful witnesses who are granted immunity from prosecution for perjury.

Crime rates are skyrocketing across the country, and last summer "peaceful protests" against civil rights abuses tore apart cities across the country, killing approximately 50 people, injuring 700 police, with looters, vandals, and arsonists (not protesters) committing billions of dollars of property damage. The Democrats made no reference to this at their convention; almost all of these riots took place in Democratic-governed states and cities, and the elected leaders of those cities largely identified with the rioters and responded by reducing police funding. Again, the clear trend is to lawlessness.

The treatment of the controversy surrounding the financial relations of presumptive President-elect Joe Biden and his family with Russia, China, and Ukraine in particular, raises further disquieting questions. The severity with which practically all of the media and social media denounced and ignored suggestions of potential misconduct by former Vice President Biden and his family, including suspending the Twitter account of the *New York Post*, the country's oldest newspaper, and of the White House press secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, is indicative of the undemocratic tendencies of the media and it helps to explain why professionally conducted surveys uniformly show that fewer than 15 percent of Americans trust the media. A free press is an indispensable pillar of a functioning democracy, but is now in the United States a despised, corrupted, and shriveled facsimile of the reliable and fearless media a vibrant democracy requires.

There is certainly room to question the conduct of Attorney General William Barr in unilaterally deciding that no mention should be made of the grand jury criminal investigation that has been conducted into these matters for over two years, enabling the media barely six weeks ago to suppress the story in a manner replicative of dictatorial regimes. There is no doubt that the existence of that investigation was a material fact in determining how people voted, and if Barr had emphasized the presumption of innocence, it would have been appropriate to reveal it to allow voters to make an informed decision.

There was widespread concern prior to the election that whatever the result, there could be a violent response. That has not occurred and the ostensibly defeated candidate, who has plenty to suspect in the result, has focused entirely on judicial review. This has been a farce of continued recounts in Georgia of unverifiable ballots, of courts eagerly declining jurisdiction, disputing standing, pusillanimously addressing process, or in the numerous instances provided for them by the president's under-prepared counsel, dismissing less than rigorously composed complaints from the Trump campaign. Such a treatment of such a well-founded concern about the functioning of the electoral system can easily lead to violence.

In this case, President Trump will continue to focus his entire effort on encouraging his 74 million supporters to concentrate on reforming the election laws of the delinquent states, strengthening the Republican Party in midterm and state elections, and carrying the country against a thoroughly discredited opponent in four years. Allegations against Trump of incitements to violence, like accusations against him of racism and sexism, were never anything but complete falsehoods, and it will be recorded that he has conducted this campaign and its aftermath with admirable restraint. And he will have done so in the face of the greatest provocations any

candidate for his office has ever had to endure, in both 2016 and 2020.

It is one of the great ironies of modern times that the world owes chiefly to the United States the spread and comparative success of democracy and of the free market, and yet the United States is not now one of the world's better-functioning democracies. All through this election year we heard spokespeople for both parties repeating the tired pieties about the "greatest country in human history." By some measures it certainly is, but it now appears not really to be a functioning democracy and not really to be a society of laws. It is almost chaos, and not a chaos produced by this president, though he has not been a source for serenity.

Americans will have to do more than sing their magnificent anthems, repeat patriotic platitudes, and ignore the threats of minority groups to burn society down, while they "reimagine law enforcement." Those conservatives who shared most of Trump's views but became irrational in their hatred of him, and those nominal Republicans who have worked like termites to undermine him, will bear a heavy responsibility for the spectacle of incompetence and venality and of indulgence of national self-loathing that the present Democratic party embodies as it returns to office. If the United States cannot, in Lincoln's words, "bind up the nation's wounds," and re-emerge as a strong democracy, the end of Western Civilization is in sight. It remains the indispensable country, and as Richard Nixon said in 1970: "No power on earth can . . . defeat or humiliate the United States, except the United States." The whole world is watching as vital history is made.

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