

The Rush to Judgment in the Moore Case

It has the trappings of a partisan hit job.

by Conrad Black



It is hard not to look upon the Roy Moore imbroglio as another well-timed hit-job from a familiar and well-practiced source – the same people who thought they had destroyed the Trump campaign by releasing the Billy Bush tape from eleven years before, and, when that didn't finish Trump off, tried the nuclear option very late in the campaign by shopping to the media the Steele dossier, which the Clinton campaign had commissioned, with its salacious and seditious elements. The dossier was so extreme in its allegations and so thoroughly unsupported and unverifiable that even the most rabid Democratic mouthpieces wouldn't touch it.

They could only get a nibble from Yahoo before the election, despite Democratic senator Harry Reid's publicly writing to the well-traveled FBI director, James Comey, who was sitting on the dossier like a toad. The Clinton campaign engaged

retired British spy Christopher Steele and sent him on a denunciation-buying tour of the Kremlin, with a thickly packed wallet, and worked hard to get it into the hands of the FBI and the media. Their choice of media recipients confirmed the general belief that their most slavish influential media supporters were the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, CNN, and Yahoo. The omission of MSNBC must be a hurtful reflection on its ratings for Joe Scarborough, Mika Brzezinski, and Rachel Maddow.

I don't like Moore as a candidate; I think it is outrageous for any candidate for a serious office to flourish a firearm at an election meeting, and some of his comments, especially about gays, have been completely unacceptable for a candidate for the U.S. Senate. I have no problem with his putting a large and unauthorized monument to the Ten Commandments in the court-house rotunda as chief justice of Alabama, and the removal of him from that office for doing so is reprehensible. His opponents were inviting him to seek a high electoral office, and his most sophisticated opponents were ready for him. With the other earmarks of a well-planned assault, disposing of Moore and slicing the Republican Senate majority to a knife-edge, the Democrats and their media allies left it to just one month before the runoff election.

Moore has denied the allegations, but some of the answers he gave to Sean Hannity on Fox News about "dating teenage girls" when he was in his thirties were unimpressive. It is an issue because of the acute sensitivity to physical harassment of women and even greater public outrage about any form of abuse of minors. Both are well-founded and justly righteous public attitudes. Their application in this case is mitigated by the absence of authoritative corroboration, any seriously alleged pattern of repeated misconduct (as in the Weinstein allegations), and the fact that the alleged incident is violently denied by the former chief justice of the state, occurred 38 years ago, did not involve any direct physical

grope or probe, was not reported to law authorities (and was not necessarily illegal if it happened at all and certainly is not actionable now) and was given instead to the trusty first battery of reliable Democratic artillery in the media. (After the Watergate character assassination, the *Washington Post* holds that status permanently, like the nuncio of the Holy See being the dean of the diplomatic corps in all countries that attended the Congress of Vienna.)

It is a reasonable supposition that most people in public life have something not much less embarrassing than this in their backgrounds that remain unknown, one form of misconduct or another. It is also true that even if this incident occurred, as long as it was not repeated, it does not disqualify Moore from being a senator, if he has had 38 subsequent years of unexceptionable sexual and romantic conduct. However, the Democrats and their media allies can usually be relied upon to drum up some sort of after-outcry of the long-silent aggrieved, and they started to come out of the woodwork on Monday. If further accusers are credible, Moore is doomed. If it looks like an orchestrated take-down, he may have a chance. Obviously, if Moore is likely a serial sex-criminal, he must be stopped.

As I wrote above, I don't like Roy Moore as a candidate, but I don't like premeditated political character assassinations either, and in a parallel of the fact that impositions on underage girls by grown men should be punished, if there is proof that they occurred, electioneering by severe partisan defamation unleashed at critically timed pre-electoral moments should not be rewarded with success. They have not been with the Steele dossier, which Kimberley Strassel correctly described in the *Wall Street Journal* on November 10 as the greatest political dirty trick in American history. The great investigation of Trump-Russian election collusion was just Hillary Clinton's instant excuse for her electoral defeat, and the entire country has had to pay for this nonsense, which may

stumble on to some financial or impropriety missteps by secondary individuals, but is basically just a long-running smear job against Trump, instigated and launched by his scheming and sulking opponent, who may now, finally, be facing her own special counsel.

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The president can't get involved in the Moore affair. If the cascade of subsequent allegations is plausible, his candidacy will be overwhelmed, and his withdrawal will have to be secured and a mighty effort made to write in the name, probably, of his unsuccessful primary opponent, Luther Strange, on the ballot, or the governor persuaded to defer the date of the special election again while the Republicans get another candidate. The fact that John McCain ran for the tall grass and said Moore had to go on the basis of the first allegation alone, like the absence of support for Moore from the Republican Senate leadership (which, along with the president, supported Strange), is unsurprising, but not much attention should be paid to it. (Mitch McConnell is entitled to some revenge.) If the Republicans lose the Senate seat, scratch it up to a poor candidate, abetted by an unscrupulous opposition. With no lack of sympathy for the alleged victims, it is no consolation and will serve no purpose to rake over Bill Clinton's peccadilloes again. But like the judge-shopping to find flakey leftist judges to attack the president's rights in immigration, hoping Trump would ignore them and facilitate impeachment talk, the Democrats are trying to bait him again, into the misogyny issue, another complete fabrication.

At some point, this practice of denunciation being insuperable and due process just an irritant and a useless antiquity, like an appendix – as it has been in the Weinstein and Moore cases – will have to stop, if the U.S. wishes to retain any

credibility as a society of laws. This status is badly impaired already by the 99 percent conviction success rate of U.S. prosecutors, 97 percent without a trial; but if the current controversy over Trump-Russian collusion does not lead to a sharp rebuke of the Democratic party and a clean-out of the FBI, for allowing the phantasmagoric Steele dossier to become the basis for a monstrous defamation of the president and his administration by the frenzied anti-Trump media, the United States will have justly lost that status.

The election of the government of Virginia was a setback for the president, but not a representative one, given that the Republican candidate was a rich Bushie lobbyist who kept his distance from Trump, and considering also the role of the Charlottesville riot, which was exploited to the hilt by outgoing governor Terry McAuliffe (a dyed-in-the-wool Clintonian) and Charlottesville mayor Michael Signer (a charter member of the anti-Trump Resistance). It is possible to overthink that type of off-off-year vote; it need not portend much more than did the election of Republican John Lindsay as mayor of New York in 1965 (though the founder of National Review, William F. Buckley Jr., having gained 13 percent of the vote in that election, made the best victory speech). Though it has died as the phony issue it was (about whether Trump condoned Nazis and the KKK), it lingers yet, unpleasantly, in the minds of Virginians. If – as seems likely, though there has been no shortage of despairing commentators – the Republicans pass a tax cut and reform bill, and economic growth continues at between 3 and 4 percent, barring a foreign-policy debacle, the Republicans will do well at the polls next year, despite current analysis of voting trends.

The president's Asian trip has gone well. The South Korean leader, President Moon Jae-in, seen as an antagonistic leftist when he was elected, is in lock-step with the president; relations could not be better with Japan, and Chinese

president Xi Jinping claims to agree that a nuclear-military North Korea is as unacceptable to China as to the U.S. There was progress on trade, and though the president could be less declarative about the banefulness of multilateral trade agreements, an aggressive stance as a starting point in these matters can't produce worse results than the suavity of his predecessors has in the same area. All those who loudly claimed that Trump would embarrass America abroad have been proved mistaken. The hypocrisy of those who claimed he would mortally antagonize China, and now accuse him of kowtowing to the Middle Kingdom, is exposed, like those who said his tough talk with Little Rocket Man would make things worse, and he is perfectly correct that constructive relations with Russia, if attainable, are preferable to a resumed Cold War with a diminished Russia. This fake collusion charade must not get in the way of the pursuit of the U.S. national interest.

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