

The Secret of President Trump's Abiding Support

The former president has nearly half the voters behind him because the source of the problem that preoccupies the country is not being addressed.



by Conrad Black

The reason the Trump problem that so preoccupies the country is not going away is that the true source of it is not being addressed. Mr. Trump's support is irreducible, not just because his administration was successful, but because half the voters, and the great majority of Republicans, believe that he was wrongly deprived of reelection.

Mr. Trump also horrified and frightened voters as no one has in the United States in living memory. Sociologists and mass-psychologists will devote a good deal of professional attention to why this was the case and the reasons will range from legitimate policy differences through personality aversion through the fears of threatened self-interest and from mere distaste to vulgar snobbery.

Richard Nixon had many enemies, though most of them affected a confected self-righteousness, but he did not threaten a complacent political establishment or transform the notoriety of a huckster into a charge to the White House, as Mr. Trump did. Nixon had been a prominent political figure for a whole generation and had run for national office three times before he was elected president.

Mr. Trump came rumbling up from the depths of dodgy finance, populist showmanship, reality television, and garish demagoguery. That many Republicans and all Democrats wished ardently to avoid him and then to be done with him is not surprising. They did not do it, though, by the rules that they professed to represent in their objections to him.

They tried to derail Mr. Trump with the defamatory fraud that he was a Russian agent, and then to remove him when he neutrally requested the facts of the Biden family's financial connection to Ukraine, which we have learned has been under [grand jury investigation](#) for some time already.

In 2020, Mr. Trump was defeated in an election marked by questions over whether millions of unsolicited ballots sent to voters were potentially manipulated to produce a hair's breadth election victory for President Biden. The courts largely rejected objections to the constitutionality of the voting and vote-counting changes that made the results questionable.

The entire press of the country with almost no discernible

dissent, fell in behind the fiction that Mr. Trump's claims about the shortcomings of the election were carefully heard out and negatively adjudicated in the rejection of the exaggerated arguments of Rudolph Giuliani and Sidney Powell, who was not even engaged by Mr. Trump.

As Mr. Trump often does, he made it easier for his opponents by failing to make his main challenge on the dangers of ballot harvesting, even though he warned about them. This is the problem Mr. Trump's enemies cannot recognize and cannot resolve: no one who looks at it seriously can be confident that 2020 was a fair election result.

In these circumstances, there is an unshakable body of voters who think Mr. Trump has not been treated fairly, and the only way to overcome that is to convince the electorate that Mr. Trump's administration was a poor one or that the current administration is superior.

These are impossible conditions to fulfill. The great majority of the Republicans and many others remember that Mr. Trump substantially reduced illegal immigration, effectively ended unemployment, did complete America's long march to energy self-sufficiency, reversed the excesses of green anti-capitalism, and ended the appeasement of China and Iran and North Korea.

Mr. Trump also caused America's allies to do a better job of burden-sharing with the United States. He cut the taxes of 87 percent of American taxpayers and he maintained inflation at a negligible level. Whatever his shortcomings, everyone knows the country was much better off under Mr. Trump than it had been under President Obama or is under Mr. Biden.

It hardly needs to be emphasized that the current president constantly raises doubts about his physical and intellectual fitness to execute his great office and that he deservedly gets failing grades in every important policy area.

The problems the Trump-haters have are that they cannot claim that Mr. Trump is morally and ethically unfit to be president since they are the authors of the most outrageous and unconstitutional assault on a president in the country's history and he is the victim of it; and they can't claim they have replaced him with a better administration.

They thought they had put Mr. Trump in the dumpster in 2020 because no president denied reelection after his first term has attempted to be reelected since Grover Cleveland in 1892 – Taft, Hoover, Carter, and George H.W. Bush dutifully withdrew from presidential politics. None of them, though, was dishonestly deprived of office and none of them was as successful a president as Trump.

The latest of these specious arguments of the Trump-haters that he really is finished, arguments more designed to raise their own morale than convince anyone listening to them, is that this latest indictment is serious and should make Mr. Trump ineligible for renomination, or at least reelection. If it was a serious charge made for nonpolitical reasons, it would achieve that objective.

Yet Attorney General Barr's claim that "Trump's toast," and Andy McCarthy's laborious recitation of the gravity of Mr. Trump's alleged offenses, and Peggy Noonan's almost prayerful act of faith that eventually the voters will see these to have been serious offenses, and Professor Jonathan Turley's confident statement that it is a strong indictment, will have no impact on the voters because it is all irrelevant and it is bunk.

If these charges ever get to court, it will be impossible to prove that Mr. Trump possessed the *mens rea*, the intent, to violate the Espionage Act, because he did not. The prosecutors will have to deal with the allegation that his co-defendant was effectively offered a judgeship if he would cooperate with the prosecutors, and Mr. Trump's lawyers from whom testimony

was effectively extorted will be hostile witnesses at trial.

No jury in the pro-Trump state of Florida would give a unanimous vote to convict on this mouse-trap of sanctimonious piffle. It will not be adjudicated before the election and much or all of it may be vulnerable to preliminary exceptions. Mr. Barr says that Mr. Trump would not have been charged if he had not "jerked the government around."

He seems not to recognize, though the voters certainly will, that in civilized countries the government does not try to send the leader of the opposition to prison for 400 years, especially when he is also the former chief of state, for "jerking around." The prosecutor and the motives for prosecution are seriously compromised. And the soft ride for the Clintons and Bidens is indefensible.

This prosecution has not moved the needle, because it is just histrionics designed to deny Mr. Trump a fair chance for reelection. That, plus his previous services as president and his formidability as a campaigner practically assure him renomination. The Democratic bosses must be almost at the bottom of their bag of dirty tricks; more of these rabidly partisan indictments will just sink the Justice Department further.

As long as the Republicans are up to scratch on ballot-harvesting, the Democrats will have to fight the election on the basis of who is the best candidate and which party has performed better for the country. It is not clear how they could win a clean election.

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