

Trump and Thanksgiving

By Bruce Bawer

We're always living in history, of course, but there are times when we're more aware of it than usual.



In the years after 9/11 – two terms of Bush, and then two terms of Obama – America seemed increasingly adrift. Or, if not adrift, then in the process of being transported by some ungovernable

current toward a thoroughly undesirable destination.

Supposedly because of 9/11, we were fighting and funding two wars that increasingly seemed to have little or nothing to do with 9/11. Indeed, as 9/11 receded further and further into the past, and yet continued, in a way, to define America in the 21st century, more and more of us found ourselves feeling, whether or not we were willing to admit it, that – despite President Bush's fatuous statement on the evening of September 11, 2001, that the terrorists had lost – the terrorists had, in some sense, won.

For whatever else we knew or didn't know or were confused about, we sensed that we were living in a very different America from the one that Al-Qaeda had attacked on that late summer's day. It was an America infected, to an extent not seen since the 1930s and then again in the 1960s and early 70s, by radical ideology; an America torn by racial divisions that we thought we'd overcome; an America that sought answers but didn't see any sign of them in either of our major

political parties, which in one election after another could seem almost indistinguishable in their platforms and priorities.

Then along came, of all people, Donald Trump.

Who could have expected that he would make all the difference? After all, he'd been around for a long time. He was a fixture of my New York childhood. Long before *The Apprentice*, my aunt wrote him fan letters – I think because she admired what his building projects had done to help bring a dying city back to life. (In response to her first letter, she got an autographed picture.)

Me, I never had any strong opinions about him one way or the other. When he announced for president in 2015, I thought it was a publicity stunt. He was good at publicity stunts. But as I watched him knock off one opponent after another in the GOP debates, I was increasingly impressed.

Eventually it got to the point where I realized that I'd never been so emotionally involved in a presidential race. Yes, I'd cheered Reagan's victory over the sanctimonious Carter, whom I'd despised at first glance. I'd stood in a long line to vote for Clinton in 1992, because I despised the Bushes and because I'd believed in Clinton's soon-to-be-broken promises to gay Americans.

But Bush (senior) v. Dukakis? Bush (junior) v. Gore? Bush (junior) v. Kerry? Honestly, how much light was there between any of these pairs of mediocrities? And however much one despised Obama, how excited could one get over the alternatives, McCain and Romney?

The advent of Trump was an eye-opener. It made me, and millions more, realize there was a possibility of a real choice. We were so accustomed to politicians who sounded alike – and who didn't sound anything like human beings – that we responded to Trump as if to an electric shock.

He was human. He was real. He wasn't one of the careerist hacks we'd become used to when election time came around. He was a billionaire who'd dipped his toe into these dirty waters because he saw that America was headed in the wrong direction and realized that things were getting too urgent for him *not* to do anything about it.

He actually spoke about problems that we, the voters, were concerned about – and that presidential candidates before him had rarely if ever touched on. In fact, by talking about certain issues he reminded us that, damn it, these were the things that mattered to us. And he made us realize that candidates before him, all of them members of the political establishment, had deliberately diverted and deceived and divided us by speaking repeatedly of non-issues – of matters that they could use to inflame us but that really had no impact whatsoever on our own everyday lives or the future of our children and of our country.

I, for one, had never felt so strongly about a politician before. (The closest I'd come was with Rudy Giuliani.) And Trump's presidency confirmed my belief in him. When they came after him with the Russia accusations and other transparent attempts to bring him down, I knew at once that it was all nonsense. And when he purportedly lost in 2020, I didn't buy that either.

Now he's headed for another term, and instead of surrounding himself with cabinet picks who are predictable Deep Staters, he's assembled a Dream Team of brilliant, fearless Americans from outside the Beltway most of whom, like him, are people who, if they were selfish, would never go near government work, but who, because they're genuinely patriotic, are every bit as determined as he is to drain the swamp and hand the country back to its rightful owners.

Elon Musk, Vivek Ramaswamy, Kash Patel, Pete Hegseth, Pam Bondi, Tom Homan, Tulsi Gabbard, Elise Stefanik, Mike

Huckabee, Jay Bhattacharya: to ponder an administration consisting of names like these is to see something that looks not like a typical presidential team of recent years – composed of conventional insiders with what in Norway, where I live, are known as A4 résumés (think of the decidedly non-stellar George H.W. Bush’s stellar-looking CV) – but that looks more, dare I say it, like (dare I say it?) the Founding Fathers.

Like millions of other Trump supporters, I look forward to seeing him and his splendid, determined team take apart what needs to be taken apart and build what needs to be built. I look forward to seeing them restore to us an America that would be recognizable to their great predecessors who ratified the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. And I look forward to the day when our relatives and friends who’ve confidently parroted the villainous, insipid media rhetoric about Trump being a sexist, a racist, and a Nazi will finally be forced by the sheer weight of reality to snap out of their delusions and recognize that the man whom they despised and rejected so intensely has turned out to be one of the Republic’s great presidents – a deliverer of peace and prosperity and a champion of freedom.

On this Thanksgiving, I’m extraordinarily grateful for the prospect of that glorious redemption.

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