

Trump Has Not Flamed Out

He's doing fine and holding his support as the Democrats look ever more foolish.

by Conrad Black



Inveterate and predictable Trump-disparager E. J. Dionne declares the state of the Union to be “petrified” (on the weekend), and cites as illustrative of the complete intellectual and temperamental deficiency of the president, by the standards of his great office, that he has twice, some months apart, tweeted with satisfaction that the Dow Jones Industrial Average had passed upwards through 25,000 (nearly a 40 percent rise since his election). In other days and on other subjects, Mr. Dionne has built a serious reputation, and as a Quebecer, I am always grateful to encounter a prominent American who speaks French. I cite him only as illustrative of the predicament of the Trump-disparagers. Of course, they are endlessly repetitive and take outrageous liberties claiming to mind-read the president. But Trump’s enemies have two real problems. Irritatingly, he is generally successful, but a much

more daunting problem is the Democrats.

Trump has not flamed out, and despite his infelicities and whoppers and some other innocent but sometimes irksome peculiarities, all predictions of his immediate, overwhelming, awe-inspiring self-immolation on a scale to make the worst horrors of the Old Testament seem like gentle stories to read to sleepy children, he has done quite well. Russian collusion and all the other roadmaps to impeachment have just devoured the Democrats and their docile media in a maze of defamatory nonsense. Never in American history has so much super-righteous and accusatory verbosity been wasted on such a complete, mocking fiction. Inspector Clouseau was Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot compared to the Democratic dragoons of impeachment: Schiff, Nadler, Warner, and their noisy claue of over-televised juniors and media enablers. None of them (including Mr. Dionne) would have predicted two years ago that the U.S. would today have more jobs to fill than unemployed, that China would be seriously discussing reform of its trade practices, or that North Korea would be seriously discussing denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Since President Lyndon Johnson passed the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, the American political system has failed every major challenge except ending the Cold War (which did not really require much from Congress except to vote the defense budgets). The political process fumbled abortion into the lap of the courts and failed to address comprehensively immigration, health care, trade deficits, and maintenance of the nation's infrastructure, and embarked on hare-brained environmental excursions, while the whole society was atomized

into proliferating sub-groups of the militantly aggrieved. This is the great problem of Trump's enemies: Their truisms and pieties about the shocking state of America are bunk: they are real only when one contemplates the official opposition, not the administration.

There is plenty to find unattractive about the president, and there is certainly room to disagree with most of his policy positions. But he has avoided the endless and fruitless wars for which George W. Bush will be remembered, and the feckless defeatism and irresolution of the dissolving Red Lines of Obama, and its midwifery of ISIS. And he has avoided the economic disasters and flatlined growth of his two predecessors. Trump has wrenched America out of the insane self-improvement of the Paris Climate Accord and is finally facing the scandal of illegal immigration, the insurrection of "sanctuaries," and the attempt to prevent the census from ascertaining the number of citizens in the country, as the Constitution requires.

The alarm of the political class that Trump assaulted three years ago is so consuming that the process of defeating this terrifying interloper, now that impeachment has vanished like a bad smell, is a contest for the headship of all the opposition to Trump. What we are witnessing is not the organization of a thoughtful and plausible alternative to Trump, such as Bill Clinton and Barack Obama would have attempted, possibly successfully. It is the race to the bottom, the deep dive to find a catchment for all the dissatisfaction with Trump, no matter how unrepresentative and reflexive and extreme.

The great Democratic party, which has contributed some of the country's most talented and noble leadership (though not for

more than 50 years), is racing toward a mass suicide in support of open borders and unlimited and undocumented immigration, a 70 to 80 percent top tax rate, the effective abolition of private health care, and now the post-abortion enlightenment of awaiting the full birth of infants before determining if they are fit to allow to live, as in Plato's times. No one who pauses for ten seconds to consider these matters could imagine that a Democratic presidential nominee sporting this Brobdingnagian albatross around the neck like a collar of distinction could win a single state. Against such an opponent, if the president wanted to campaign in the District of Columbia, he might even carry the nation's capital, which he lost two years ago to Mrs. Clinton by 91 per cent to 4 per cent.

At least in 1964, when the Republicans were tempted by Barry Goldwater, who, despite romanticization of him (and he was a decent and patriotic man), was hiding behind state's rights as an excuse to deny the full emancipation of African Americans, Nelson Rockefeller almost headed him off with a serious centrist alternative. And in 1972, when George McGovern advocated stratospheric tax rates, iron-fisted affirmative action, the busing of tens of millions of schoolchildren far from their neighborhoods in pursuit of racial balance, and an end to the Vietnam War more humiliating to the United States, as the *New York Times* pointed out, than Hanoi was asking for, Edmund Muskie and Hubert Humphrey and others fought hard for a moderate alternative.

In this heaving phalanx of Democratic candidates, the only ones I have heard that do not sound, in policy terms, like they need serious psychiatric examination and drastic remedial therapy are former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, Ohio senator Sherrod Brown, and Minnesota senator Amy Klobuchar. Michael Bloomberg is in his upper seventies, has had a brilliant business and philanthropic career, and was the successful thrice-elected head of a large and complicated

jurisdiction. He has his limitations too, and his affectations about climate are humbug and some of his shots at the president are a little unbecoming (from one New York billionaire to another), but he would be a good candidate, and if elected, I think a competent president. I don't often agree with Sherrod Brown: He's drunk too much of the Kool-Aid on taxes, climate, teachers' unions, and elsewhere, but he has stayed fairly clear of completely foolish policy advocacy as a seven-term congressman and three-term senator from a large state. He's no world-beater, but the country would survive him in one piece. Senator Klobuchar may be a bit more promising, but I haven't seen much of her. Perhaps a couple of the others among the vast horde of candidates would make good presidents; nothing much was expected of Lincoln, either Roosevelt, or Truman, and pleasant surprises do happen. But I wouldn't count on one from this astonishingly unprepossessing congeries of politicians.

Some might imagine that Joe Biden would be adequate, but he wouldn't. He isn't smart enough to be president; he's almost never right about anything; the president is correct that he essentially gets 1 or 2 percent in a contest with serious people, and no one who did what Biden and Ted Kennedy did to Robert Bork should be entrusted with any serious public responsibility.

The Democratic commentators can go on havoring and whingeing about Trump, as E. J. Dionne did this week, but if someone doesn't emerge soon in the center of that party, they are going to receive an unforgettable (and probably salutary) trip to the electoral woodshed. It's not the end of the world. Four years after the Goldwater fiasco, the Republicans won, and four years after the McGovern debacle, the Democrats won, but it took first Vietnam, and then Watergate, to produce those results (in very tight elections). Please, Democrats, try to be serious.

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