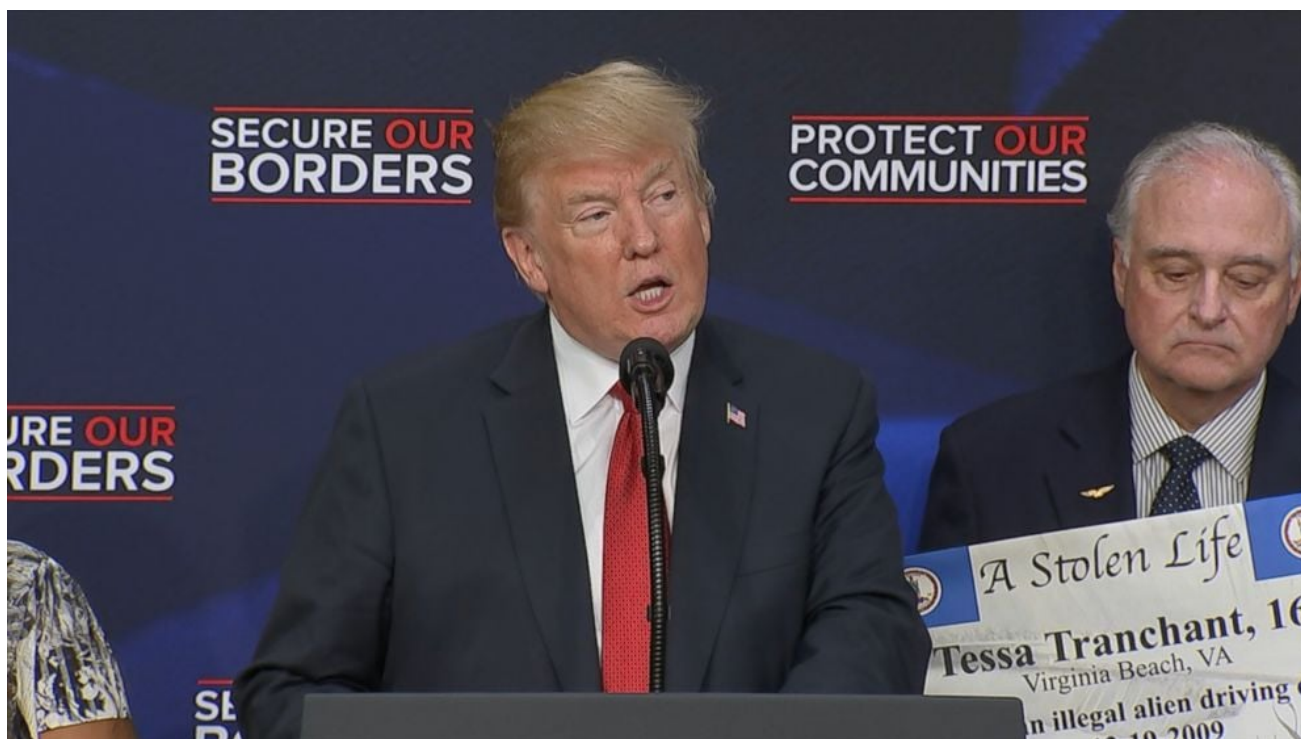


Trump is grating, but he's a true leader – and America needs him

Despite his liberties with the truth, Trump has amassed the most faithful record of modern U.S. presidents in doing what he promised to do

by Conrad Black



I was just reminded of Canada's odd view of the United States by returning, for I think the third or fourth time, to Steve Paikin's *The Agenda* on TVOntario, to respond to his questions about my recent book, *Donald J. Trump, A President Like No Other* (embarrassed descent to crass self-interest: please buy it). It is widely thought, and believed by most Canadians, that we know the United States better than anyone because we are so close and in many respects similar, to Americans. It is true that Canadians understand the American national character and tastes better than Europeans do. But we have no great

aptitude to judge the United States in its role as an immense nation functioning at a level of influence on the world that had never been imagined to be possible prior to America's emergence as a great world power a century ago, or the United States today as the world's only superpower, rising to face the challenge of China, as it did to threats of Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and in economic terms, corporate Japan. In these respects, only the small community of America's geopolitical specialists know what it is like to be the United States.

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Steve Paikin is always well-informed and polite and I was delighted to be reminded that I was his very first guest on *The Agenda*, 13 years ago. (The program will be aired on Tuesday.) Paikin faithfully reflects the feed from the national U.S. media, which is almost entirely hostile to President Trump, because they are at war. Trump attacked the entire political class, including all political factions of both parties, the immense corruption in American government, the bias of the national media, and the ludicrous interventions of Hollywood airheads masquerading as the political conscience of the nation. Trump called for the reassertion of the American national interest and the public sensed this. An annual trade deficit of \$865 billion could not be tolerated. Nor could the steady inflow of 500,000 to a million illiterate migrants a year from Central America and Mexico, or a Western Alliance where the United States paid most of the bill for everyone, guaranteed everyone's national security, and got little but carping, whining and hypocrisy from its so-called allies. Germany has been the greatest power in Europe since Bismarck unified it in 1871. Chancellor Angela Merkel could have wielded enormous power on the continent, as a kind of Bismarck-in-drag, if you will, but instead she spends almost nothing on defence, appeases Russia in Ukraine

while buying its natural gas, and has admirably but unwisely, admitted over a million refugees from the Middle East and Africa in the past three years.

Of the leaders of the world's important countries, only Trump and France's Emmanuel Macron in the West, and Shinzo Abe in Japan (in lockstep with the U.S. out of fear of North Korea, as America's allies customarily are when they are frightened by anything) are rather purposeful. Germany and Britain are dithering and there is some danger of the disintegration of the governing coalitions; Italy is politically in shambles even by its unusual standards, and the electoral jury has begun its deliberations about Justin Trudeau. Trump will get no credit from his "allies" and other foreigners for doing it, but he has saved us from the self-impoverishing insanity of the Paris Climate accord chimera, and an unholy coalition of old-time Greenpeace-type conservationists with Marxist wolves in sheep's clothing like Naomi Klein. He has bullied and enticed the North Korean leader (Kim Jong Un) into contemplating whether he wants respectability, prosperity and security, or the U.S. Navy to smash his military sites, including everything relevant to his nuclear military program. Despite the cavils of the Trumpophobes, including formerly serious political publications like the now unrelievedly slipshod *Economist* of London, and despite his liberties with the truth, President Trump has amassed the most faithful record of modern American presidents in doing what he promised to do. His record is impressive, even if his public utterances sometimes are not: tax cuts, deregulation, surging economic growth, reducing oil imports, and a foreign policy that is assertive but not reckless. Apart from my friend Adrienne Batra, editor of the *Toronto Sun*, and some of my readers, I appear to be practically the only person in Canada who recognizes that.

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I commend to skeptical Canadians the comments in a recent London interview of the greatest foreign minister of any Great Power in the 20th century, Henry Kissinger. He said that President Trump “is a phenomenon that foreign countries haven’t seen before ... Liberals and all those who favour (Hillary) Clinton will never admit that he is ... a true leader ... After eight years of tyranny (of declinists and willful fantasy), ... every country now has to consider two things: One, their perception that the previous president, or the outgoing president, basically withdrew America from international politics, so that they had to make their own assessments of their necessities. And secondly, that there is a new president who’s asking a lot of unfamiliar questions. And because of the combination of the partial vacuum and the new questions, one could imagine that something remarkable and new emerges out of it ... Trump puts America and its people first ... When he boasts that he has a ‘bigger red button’ than Kim Jung Un does, he transcends the mealy-mouthed rhetoric of the past, thereby forcing a new recognition of American power.”

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Henry Kissinger

The American and Canadian and European media can afford the luxury of judging the Trump phenomenon by its often grating exterior, but the geopolitical facts are as Henry Kissinger described. Thuggish charlatans like Putin are made to look strong by the weakness of Obama and fragile governments in Britain and Germany, but the U.S. is withstanding the domestic pressure to drive Putin into the arms of China and Iran, and is gathering strength to resist the challenge to the West presented by China, even if the population of the West is still steeped in snobbery toward Trump and his followers as a gang of loud-mouthed boobs.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets with U.S. President Donald Trump at the G7 leaders summit in La Malbaie, Que., on June 8, 2018. Justin Tang/CP

Justin Trudeau, with Kinder Morgan, the tariff theatrics, and even marijuana, is starting to look like a leader, while Andrew Scheer did not last week, by dumping Maxime Bernier from the shadow cabinet over his long-held and publicized objections to the heist of supply management (a 270-per-cent tariff to protect Quebec and Ontario dairy farmers that President Trump has highlighted). If the Trudeau government is gulled by imitative and reflexive Canadian revulsion against Trump into escalating the prime minister's public joust with him, he will have missed the opportunity of a magnificent Canadian national policy. They will be difficult times because of the economic power of the United States, but if the government combined protectionism with a move to reduce foreign private-sector ownership in Canada equitably, without discouraging foreign investment, to make Canada a more transparent and less corrupt enterprise state than the U.S. while effecting innovative reforms in justice, taxes, health care, social assistance and other key areas, increasing its investment in cultural activities, and building its military strength and status in the Western Alliance, he could be a great prime minister. If he is not prepared to seek such an exceptional destiny as that, Justin Trudeau should quietly leave it to the specialists to get the best deal they can from the Americans without breaking any more crockery.

Either scenario may work for him, but something irresolutely in the middle – superficially nationalistic but really just abrasive to Trump while still pushing natives, gender and eco-extremism – will not work and would be very hazardous, for him and for Canada.

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