

Trump Rises Above the Critics

His actions are sometimes unorthodox, but his success is undeniable.

by Conrad Black



It is not too early to speculate on what the national political media, and especially the high-brow conservative Never Trumpers, are going to do after this president is comfortably reelected. The Washington–New York–Los Angeles media threw everything they had against candidate Trump, nominee Trump, and the president, and they have lost everything they had. All surveys show that their audience/readership is sinking and their commercial economics are shriveling, and no reasonable person can fail to be disgusted with the endless malicious slanders and distortions by the Lemons, Maddows, Scarboroughs, Blitzers. It is exquisite that Trump has used the hard-left social media to outmaneuver the traditional media kingmakers and now nods approvingly as Senators Warren and Sanders and their allies attack the new media cartel, whose leading figures are almost

as hostile to the president as are those seeking the Democratic nomination against him next year.

Whatever anyone might think of the president's public personality, his progress toward his goal of radically altering the government and shattering or coopting the long-tenured OBushinton political establishment has been a relentless and unstoppable juggernaut. His candidacy was mocked, his chances of election were minimized, his ability to avoid impeachment was artificially maintained in doubt for over two years, and the idea that he will be easy to defeat next year is only starting to expire, strangled by facts. The country is prosperous and the attempt to orchestrate economic pessimism will be no more successful than all the bunk about misogyny, incitements to violence, "racially charged" demagoguery, corruption, treason, chaos in the White House, and the rest of it.

I don't read all the formerly highbrow conservative commentators assiduously enough to know where they are going, but their relevance has vanished, and it is not easy to see how they might come back. Almost all of them supported Reagan and were a loyal and skeptical gallery through both Bushes, and a fairly distinguished part of the opposition to Clinton and Obama. One of the many sadnesses in the premature death of Charles Krauthammer is that he was starting to light a path for intelligent conservatives to recognize the positive aspects of Trump's program and of his political achievement. *National Review* and *Commentary* have more or less made their peace with the administration and have carved out a very sustainable position of regular expressions of their reservations about the president's style and chapters of his career, but recognition of his successes when he has them and of the generally acceptable and sometimes courageous nature of some of his key policies.

They have at least acknowledged his legitimacy as president and the importance of his political strength and acumen. He

is, in short, generally accorded by them and their contributors the customary respect accorded the president of the U.S., without stifling their still serious reservations, many of them perfectly arguable. And they recognize that up to now, he has won every round, and that the Republican party in Washington, which for the first six months of this administration sat on its hands, neutral about whether he would be impeached or not, is now in the final stages of the awkward grace of conversion. Former Arizona senator Jeff Flake's one contribution to contemporary American political science was his resigned assertion, of the Republicans, as he retired from the Senate: "It's the president's party now." How ludicrous and pretentious now are the sniping from the sidelines of former Ohio governor John Kasich and a few others that they had "called out" Trump's "insensitivity," or whatever.

The rap that Trump didn't get everything he promised done in his first two years, when the Republicans had both houses of the Congress, is nonsense because most of the Republican legislators had no more use for Trump than did the Democrats who were promising "scorched earth" and "total resistance." This is the generally unrecognized point of these scores of retirements of Republicans from the Congress. They were almost all Never Trumpers, such as Speaker Paul Ryan and Senator Bob Corker (Tennessee), and from Trump's standpoint, they were a viper at his throat: RINOs (Republicans in Name Only) were worse than Democrats, not a band of party loyalists he could easily work with. The transformation in less than three years of Senate leader Mitch McConnell, from proposing to "drop [Trump] like a hot rock" to working closely with him for the Republican program and Trump nominees to government and the federal bench, is remarkable. So is the evolution of Senator Lindsey Graham (South Carolina), from being joined at the hip to John McCain and seeing the *Access Hollywood* tape as the "exit ramp" from the Trump candidacy to his current preparations as Judiciary Committee chairman to follow up on

the report of Justice Department inspector general Michael Horowitz and help create the proper ambiance for what should be a series of indictments of Trump's most reckless and perfervid enemies in the Obama intelligence and justice hierarchy.

It is hard to imagine the country, especially amid a cascade of damning indictments of prominent members of the former administration, turfing out a president who has produced a full-employment, minimal-inflation economy, energy self-sufficiency, and much-improved trade balances, and has grappled consequentially with the intractable problem of illegal immigration, while rescuing the country from the impoverishment of the Paris Treaty's green terror. And it is especially hard to see it when the alternative will be either a very shopworn and muddled if amiable journeyman or an outright red-diaper socialist. In the 2016 election, whatever else may be said of them, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump kept the ball between the 30-yard lines, which would not have been the case if their chief rivals, Bernie Sanders and Ted Cruz, had been the nominees. The 2020 election is shaping up as a 1972 rerun, with no Watergate to enable the crucifixion of the victorious Republican president. The Democratic party will learn the lesson and engineer a course correction, as it did after the great Reagan sweep of the 1980s.

But it is hard to see the comeback of the former lions of intelligent conservative opinion. I will not name them, as most are friends and, as far as I am concerned, will remain so. But very few of them have shown much disposition to realign or even to make an artful revisionist approach to the winning side. Even if their only motive were to regain influence or position themselves to return from the limbo they have placed themselves in – go-to useful idiots for the Dems to denounce Trump, and traitors to the continuing Republicans – most of them are thoughtful and articulate, and the country needs them. I refuse to believe that anti-Trump lunacy is an

incurable disease; it is certainly a boring and tenacious ailment, but it should pass when its carrier, the president, retires. Whoever ends up as his successor, that person will be, to take a phrase from Monty Python, "something completely different."

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