

Why Trump is Destined for an Historic 2020 Win

by Conrad Black



Each week, as the thundering host of Democratic seekers of their party's 2020 presidential nomination scramble for attention and try to outflank their rivals to the left, that party rolls out a new policy proposal that lurches further away from where the solid center of American politics has always resided. The most transformative presidents, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, to adapt a sports metaphor, moved center-field, 10 yards to the left under Roosevelt, and 10 yards to the right under Reagan, but always between the 30-yard lines.

In the five elections between 1876 and 1892, the popular vote was always very close, and the Democrats actually led four times, losing in 1880 by only 2,000 votes out of 9 million cast (James A. Garfield defeated Winfield S. Hancock). Even so, their candidate was only victorious twice; both times with

Grover Cleveland. The Republicans ran as the party of Lincoln and Grant and victory in the Civil War, and kept expanding veterans' pensions more widely among their families. The Democrats prevented the emancipated slaves from voting in the South, states they won *en bloc*, while they rounded up immigrant and working-class votes with their political machines in the great cities of the North and Midwest. Thus the popular vote was deceiving, as the Democrats won almost all the votes in the South and the Republicans won safely enough in the North.

But policy differences revolved mainly around the tariff—the Democrats wanted lower tariffs to get lower prices for the working and middle classes and the Republicans wanted higher tariffs to promote domestic manufacturing growth and profits.

Democrats then departed the center of the political field starting in 1896, when they nominated for the first of three times William Jennings Bryan, a Nebraskan who promoted a radical increase in the money supply by issuing silver as well as gold-backed currency: bimetallism. The Republicans won the next four elections easily, and only lost in 1912 when Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft split the vote, enabling Democrat Woodrow Wilson to win. His margin was over 3 percent (570,000 votes), because of the unrepresentative margin in the South, but it was still a hair's-breadth election as he only won California (10 percent of the country's population) by under 4,000 votes out of 1 million cast in the state. Wilson won on his slogan "He kept us out of war" but delivered his speech to Congress requesting a declaration of war less than a month after he was inaugurated the second time.

The Republicans won the three elections in the twenties quite easily and then, with the Great Depression and World War II, the Democrats won five straight terms under Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman.

Since then, the parties have alternated two-term presidencies, with the exception that Democrats receive a single term with Jimmy Carter, and the Republicans three terms with Reagan-Bush (1981-1993); the election of George H.W. Bush may be seen substantially as a reward for the public's satisfaction with President Reagan. Thus, since Cleveland left office in 1897, there has only been one occasion when either party has not received at least two terms (Carter 1977-1981). Between Wilson and George W. Bush, the second term was one-sided, and usually a landslide: Coolidge in 1924 (25 percent margin), Roosevelt in 1936 (24 percent), Eisenhower in 1956 (15 percent), Johnson in 1964 (23 percent), Nixon in 1972 (23 percent), Reagan in 1984 (18 percent), and Clinton in 1996 (9 percent). George W. Bush and Barack Obama were narrowly reelected because—unlike FDR, Ike, LBJ, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan—they did not do especially well in their first terms.

For 2020, Democratic rhetoric and the conventional wisdom relentlessly inflicted on the country by the anti-Trump media clique holds that Trump should be easy to defeat, because his polls have never risen above 50 percent. This is meaningless chatter because it neglects to remember that Trump in 2016 was running against the Republicans as much as the Democrats. As someone who changed his party registration seven times in 13 years, Trump had no call on party loyalty. In the first six months of his presidency, the congressional Republicans sat on their hands and were not entirely averse to the voluminous musings about impeachment. In the only sensible sentence I ever heard from former Arizona senator and ardent NeverTrumper Jeff Flake, "It's the president's party now."

In 2020 there won't be a split such as that caused by Ross Perot to defeat the senior Bush in 1992 and probably Robert Dole in 1996; and Trump's record seems certain to be much more successful than Carter's, who had 20 percent interest rates, high inflation, unemployment, and taxes to deal with in 1980. Whatever happens with the current southern border state of

emergency, Trump is putting a border in place and has won that argument. The country wants a border, without government shutdowns. Trump has worked the “Mexico will pay for it” nonsense into the facts of more favorable trade arrangements and has kept faith with his followers, unlike the Bush “No new taxes” pledge in 1988.

Trump is not going to be running as an unsuccessful president as Carter did, or even as a marginally successful president as the Bushes and Obama did. He has delivered tax cuts and reform and great prosperity, as Reagan did, and he is the first president to deal seriously with illegal immigration and oil imports and nuclear proliferation to rogue states (Iran and North Korea), since those crises arose. He has refused to be stampeded by the eco-Marxists while doing nothing to backpedal on the environment itself, and has partially delivered on trade imbalances and will almost certainly reach a much improved trade arrangement with China.

Contrary to the assessments of Trump-haters who supposedly know something about the economy, such as Paul Krugman and the *Economist* magazine (which on the subject of Trump is as drivelingly hostile but not as amusing as *Vanity Fair* or the *Daily Beast*), this economy is not going to cool out appreciably in the next 18 months. As was mentioned here [last week](#), the Democrats are going to pay heavily for the disgraceful Russian-collusion red herring.

To return to the thought at the top of this piece, the Democrats now look more like the Republicans of 1964 (Barry Goldwater) and the Democrats of 1972 (George McGovern), as the reality sinks in that Trump has demolished the post-Reagan bipartisan tweedle-dee-tweedle-dum politics of sloth, a depressing “new normal” and foreign policy impetuosity (Iraq War) or defeatism (Iran, North Korea, Syria). In the aftermath of this shock, the Democrats are like a suicide case contemplating Russian roulette with all chambers loaded, and they are the ones loading in the cartridges: open borders, a

top personal income tax rate of around 70 percent, nationalized health care; legalized infanticide; a green policy that bans cars, airplanes, oil, coal, and bovine flatulence; and now reparations for African-Americans, and perhaps, says Senator Elizabeth Warren (0.5 percent American Indian), for the native people. Unless a sensible person like Michael Bloomberg or even Joe Biden—or possibly Amy Klobuchar or Sherrod Brown—gets hold of that party, the Democrats will self-inflict mortal wounds and give Trump the greatest plurality in history, (breaking Richard Nixon's record of 18 million in 1972).

In 1944, Roosevelt focused on the spurious claim of a Republican congressional candidate that the president had sent a destroyer back to retrieve his dog in the Aleutian Islands, while returning from his Pearl Harbor meeting with General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz. FDR's Republican opponent, Thomas E. Dewey, found himself running against the president's dog. In 1940, Roosevelt just had to recite the names of three reactionary congressmen: "Martin, Barton, and Fish," and the absurdity of the refrain helped to win him a third term.

Trump is no Roosevelt (either one), but the Democrats seem to be yielding to the ineluctable urge that possesses each party every other generation, to utter a primal scream of nonsense, get everything off their chest and out of their system, be dragged to the padded cell by the voters, and regroup back at center-field four years later. It may even be good for them—as therapy, not as government.

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