

At This Precarious Point in US History, Trump Is Part of the Solution



Donald Trump speaks to supporters in Des Moines, Iowa, on Jan. 15, 2024. (John Fredricks/The Epoch Times)

by Conrad Black

An old friend in the publishing business in New York, with whom I had worked in publishing my biographies of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Richard Nixon, wrote me recently declaring his opposition to Donald Trump and asking me how Trump “fitted into (my) theory of history.”

The following is my reply.

“Trump doesn’t particularly fit into my theory of history other than that it is perhaps the most striking fact of

American history that when a chronic need arises for a change of leadership to deal with urgent national problems, that leadership does arise and it rarely appears to have been recruited by a typecasting studio. Abraham Lincoln was reviled as a gangling yokel and itinerant country lawyer (though he had built one of the largest personal practices in the United States). There were widespread reservations that Franklin D. Roosevelt was a lightweight as well as the victim of a handicap that would make it impossible for him to execute the office he sought. [Clark Clifford](#) was far from the only person who described Ronald Reagan as 'an amiable dunce,' but Reagan was very successful.

"By 2016, half of the American public was angry and felt underserved or disserved by government. The average per capita [increase in GDP](#) had gone from 4.5 percent in the last six years of Reagan to 3.9 percent under Clinton, 2.1 percent under George W. Bush, and 1.6 percent under Obama. Practically the entire lower half of income-earners felt the government was pandering to yuppies while giving free fiscal lunches to its supporters in Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and Hollywood. The only prominent person in the country who saw this was Donald Trump.

"His unutterable hucksterism and his stylistic infelicities have been challenging, but he has been a political genius in two distinct ways. He gained the presidency through celebrity, and is the only person in the history of the country to be elected president without ever having sought or held either an elected or unelected public office or a high military command. He changed parties seven times in 13 years and when he saw his opportunity, almost everyone in the country split their sides laughing. Once in office, he riveted the post-Reagan country club Republican Party right on top of traditional Democratic fiefdoms of people of modest incomes, especially ethnic minorities, and won them over by traditional William McKinley-Calvin Coolidge capitalism: tax incentives for investment in comparatively poor districts.

"Despite a greater level of harassment and obstruction than any president has ever endured, Trump effectively ended

unemployment, ended illegal immigration, ended oil imports, ended NATO freeloading, ended North Korean missiles being fired over the home islands of Japan, made the greatest advance in peace in the Middle East since Camp David, and ended all talk about China imminently surpassing the United States economically and as a world power.

“The combination of his novel method of election with his achievements as a quality builder and as an instant television celebrity who devised a new form of programming and led his prime time slot in the ratings every week except one for 14 years, all make him a president who achieved more prior to his inauguration than any other holder of that office, except those who contributed vitally to the founding of the country and its institutions (Washington, Jefferson, Madison), and those who victoriously commanded great armies in just wars (Grant and Eisenhower). A case could also be made for Herbert Hoover because of his distribution of relief in Europe during and after World War I and his establishment of a worldwide engineering company. That is six out of the other 44 presidents.

“In human terms he has shown a determination that has enabled him to persevere through to the point where he is now the clear favorite to be re-elected, despite an avalanche of fanatical animosity and defamation and the almost complete perversion of the justice system into an arm of the dirty tricks division of the Democratic National Committee. Very few other presidents could have come through such an ordeal.

“The post-Reagan bipartisan system was a corrupt log-rolling, back-scratching operation in which both sides came to bat, but in a 95 percent Democratic city that was driving the country always to the left in a steadily more corrupt version of buying the votes of the lumpenproletariat while despising them and ladling tax and other preferments to the rich friends of the regime. The ultimate decay of that system has been this frenzy of spurious prosecutions. If Trump’s enemies succeed in

subduing him by this method, it will not be the end of the United States as a great power, but it will be the end of the United States as a reputable constitutional democracy.

“If he is cheated again, with millions of unverifiable and harvested ballots not cast by the people who ostensibly signed them, then you are in the late Roman Republic, with a political system as decrepit as the U.S. criminal justice system, [which convicts](#) 98 percent of the accused—95 percent of those without trial—and has given the United States, with 5 percent of the world’s population, 25 percent of its incarcerated people, 12 percent of the adult male population.

“This is where Trump fits into my historical conceptions: The United States has risen from 2 1/2 million citizens and three quarters of a million slaves on the Atlantic shore to one half of the entire economic product of the world, a nuclear monopoly, and immense prestige in just two long lifetimes from Yorktown to 1945, chiefly because of leadership when it was needed. (Its leadership in 1945 was as high as at its founding: FDR, Truman, Eisenhower, Marshall, MacArthur, Nimitz.)

“It wasn’t just the common law and the English language that has made American history so much more successful than those of any other former colonial country (except, to scale, Canada and Australia). It is the magic and ineluctable process by which improbable people suddenly emerge to deal with grave crises. LBJ was required to end segregation and begin the long and terribly difficult process of establishing racial equality. He was an incompetent war president. Richard Nixon was required to extract the United States from Vietnam while preserving a non-communist government in Saigon, triangulating great power relationships, and restoring American nuclear superiority with the greatest arms control agreement in the history of the world. He was implausibly sandbagged over the nonsensical Watergate affair. Ronald Reagan was needed to clean up altogether after Vietnam, Watergate, and the inanities of the Carter presidency.

“After Reagan, America was hosted by the Chinese, set out to turn Iraq into the state of Connecticut and gave two thirds of it to Iran instead, left half of the American people out of the country’s economic progress, and did nothing while a bunch of Americo-phobic delusional extremists took over the national political media, the academy down to kindergarten, the moronocracy of Hollywood, big sport, and the new oligarchy of get-rich-quick software nerds in their 20s. America needs deliverance, and Donald Trump is all you have now.”

My friend replied: “I am unable to reconcile my admiration for your scholarship with your political perspective on Trump.”

That is the current American malaise. But Trump, however improbably, is part of the solution.