

Democrats Repeat the Mistakes of 2016

by Conrad Black



As we get to the midpoint between the last presidential election and next year's midterms, all political sides are expending extraordinary effort to ignore the 900-pound gorilla in the formerly smoke-filled room of American politics. This, of course, is Donald Trump.

The Democrats are still outwardly pretending Trump has gone and that his support has evaporated. They also pretend they can hobble him with vexatious litigation and, if necessary, destroy him again by raising the Trump-hate media smear campaign back to ear-splitting levels.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), even as she finds the ground shifting beneath her feet over the administration's [incontinent spending ambitions](#), is seeing her effort to promote the January 6 trespass at the U.S. Capitol as an outrage on the scale of Pearl Harbor and 9/11 overshadowed by the Afghanistan disaster and the cascade of other blunders and improvidences of the Biden Administration.

Apart from a few veteran and some recently recruited NeverTrumpers joining in the tired pieties about the regrettable January 6 episode, the Democrats appear to be repeating the mistakes of 2016. They hope formerly mainstream Republicans who failed to repel the GOP base from supporting Trump will have better luck this time.

It remains true that a large group of Republicans (and no small number of Democrats) basically agree with most or all of Trump's policies but regard the man as a distasteful carnival

operator whose "Trump University" and health care plan (consisting of urinalysis and vitamins for a healthy quarterly fee) are simply not acceptable for a holder of the great office of president of the United States. Many have implied by their ambiguity that they could live with Trump again if his manners improved and his tactics became less bombastic. The acid test being unwisely applied to Trump's acceptability as a rehabilitated candidate is his humble acceptance of the legitimacy of the election of Joe Biden as president.

There are two serious problems with this criterion, which even the *Wall Street Journal* seems to embrace. The first problem with the requirement of a full recognition of the unassailability of Biden's legitimacy as president is that former President Trump and his scores of millions of supporters don't accept that that is true. The second problem is that it probably is not true.

There are more serious concerns about the integrity of the 2020 presidential election than any in the history of the country except the Hayes-Tilden contest of 1876. That controversy was addressed by a bipartisan commission voting on an exact party split, which was accepted by the candidates under three conditions posed by the Democratic candidate, Governor Samuel Tilden, and which were accepted and honored by General Rutherford B. Hayes.

No one knows who really won in 1960 between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Nixon declined President Dwight Eisenhower's urging that he demand a comprehensive review of the many extremely close states. Nixon has received little credit for taking the position that such a state of uncertainty could be destabilizing to the country at a critical moment in the Cold War.

A similarly uncertain situation played out in the 2000 election between George W. Bush and Al Gore. That year, the U.S. Supreme Court shut down the decisive Florida recount and

the state officially went to Bush by 537 votes out of 5.8 million cast, but no one will ever know whether he was the real winner or not. In 2020, there were more than 40 million mailed or harvested ballots usually mixed in after the polls closed with normally cast ballots and, therefore, unverifiable. About 45,000 votes in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Michigan would have flipped the election to Trump.

The former president was foolish to claim that he had actually won a majority of the popular vote, which is nonsense. But no fair observer can begrudge Trump his severe state of irritation at the extremely suspect abnormalities that afflicted the vote in six states that were clearly targeted for unusual alterations of voting and vote-counting procedures ostensibly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is also easy to identify with the ex-president's profound disappointment that the judicial system declined to judge on their merits any of the 19 lawsuits that specifically challenged the integrity of the voting or vote-counting process, as opposed to taking up an individual or a small number of apparently improperly treated ballots.

Moreover, it appears to have been the political decision of the Supreme Court not to put itself in the position of having to try to reel back and possibly overturn a presidential election. In doing so, the justices may have spared themselves a full-on assault to expand the court. They remain fully armed to deal with unconstitutional legislation, which seems to be the core of the radical Democratic program that the administration hopes to jam through on a strained reconciliation bill as the window narrows before they likely lose their paper-thin congressional majorities next autumn. Again, Trump is to blame for warning of the problems of ballot harvesting but having no adequate team on the ground to record and film its operation and to launch legal challenges forcefully starting on the day after the election.

All of this leaves the Democrats relying on anti-Trump or at least non-Trump Republicans to impose upon the Republican presidential candidate selection process for 2024 an unacceptable condition. Despite the gathering chatter that Trump's base support is receding and that too many Republican officeholders are afraid of his ability to make or break their performance in the midterm elections next year, the obvious but rigorously unrecognized facts are 1) Trump can take the nomination of his party easily if he so wishes, and 2) the unspeakable shambles of the incumbent administration is making his return to office simpler and more probable every day.

In the early blush of optimism that the dreadful Trump meteor had passed, the Democratic character assassination squads inside the docile media outlets set upon Florida Governor Ron DeSantis as Trump's most likely successor . As it dawns on the always losing NeverTrumpers, an angry and unscrupulous minority within a minority, who see the strength of Trump within his party every day, some are trying to build back DeSantis as someone who would enact most of Trump's policies, enjoy Trump's goodwill, but who is *not Trump*. Others, like Representative Alex Gonzales (R-Mich.) are alienated, seeing, as former Arizona Senator Jeff Flake did, that "it's the president's party now," that is, it's Trump's party and seems likely to remain so.

The great effort to stamp out any questioning of the legitimacy of the last presidential election has failed. The attempt to perpetuate the Trump-hate smear and legal harassment campaign is sputtering to an end, even as the John Durham inquiry, advancing at the speed of wet cement on a slight grade, has begun its indictments of those responsible for turning the intelligence services and the FBI into arms of the Democratic National Committee-Clinton campaign dirty tricks division. The fantasy that Trump's support is eroding or that his comparative silence does him anything except good, will probably be vaporized at the first encounter with the

voters.

The daily failures of the Biden Administration show no signs of letting up, nor does the damage from unsustainable levels of illegal immigration, intolerable levels of urban violent crime, aggressively rising inflation, the COVID Tower of Babel, and constant pressure from America's foreign enemies as the Biden regime stumbles from continent to continent. Such an inexorable procession of failures drives masses of voters into the arms of the chief political alternative, with increasing disregard for the fineries of the alternative president's sense of etiquette.

Unless the administration has a miraculous infusion of competence and aptitude, or some alternative Republican appears as a messianic *deus ex machina*, or a relatively silent Donald Trump commits an act of electoral suicide that is a hydrogen bomb escalation on his most egregious *faux pas* to date, then America and the world should start preparing for Trump's return. As Bismarck said of Disraeli, "*Das ist der Mann.*" He is not easily recognizable as the standard-bearer of the Grand Old Party, but in these steadily more distressed circumstances, he is the man.

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