

Donald Trump, the survivor, will make a great president

By Conrad Black

The renomination of Donald Trump makes him only the second president who could win nonconsecutive terms. This induces me to return to my annual attempt to explain to Canadian Trump-haters the sources of the present stark division in American politics. In 2015, Donald Trump was almost the only prominent American who detected the level of discontent in the lower half of American income earners. Donald Trump had been polling comprehensively across the United States for years. He saw the political implications of these figures and concluded that the bipartisan consensus in Washington was failing a steadily larger number of Americans.

The former president has fought the lefty media, a corrupt federal government and a politicized judicial system – and looks poised to win



His public personality was of the Leo Durocher and Cassius Clay genre of tough and brash speaking and frequent exaggerations, in the manner of New York developers.

To many, it was a caricature of the ugly American: boastful, bellicose and a braggart. This is at considerable variance with his charming and endlessly entertaining private personality, but it does appeal to a great many Americans who are aggressively annoyed about their condition. Americans were largely sympathetic to Trump's critique of post-Reagan American politics: the federal government was composed entirely of Democrats in an entirely Democratic city where Democrats and Republicans who were almost indistinguishable from Democrats in policy terms politely exchanged incumbency as the country steadily drifted left, but with sweetheart arrangements for Wall Street, Hollywood and Silicon Valley. So comfortable and complacent were the ruling elites, they had no concept of their own vulnerability. In eight consecutive presidential terms, from 1981 to 2013, one member or other of the Bush or Clinton families was president, vice-president or secretary of state. The nation's highest offices were being handed back and forth between two families that rose to high office because George H.W. Bush was rewarded by Ronald Reagan for losing the race for the Republican nomination in 1980, and because Bush allowed the charlatan Ross Perot to hive off 20 million Republican votes in 1992, elevating the Clintons.

As a man who made billions of dollars as a quality builder in one of the most competitive markets in the world, and who has a successful television show that garnered high ratings in a prime time slot in the United States every week for 14 years, and who successfully executed a political strategy of gaining election as president by the endless pursuit of celebrity and notoriety, even by unutterable acts of hucksterism and flimflam, exploiting the American star system and genius for the spectacle, he had objectively achieved more prior to being inaugurated than any previous president of the United States except those who contributed invaluable to the founding of the country and its political institutions, or who victoriously commanded great armies in just wars: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Ulysses S. Grant, Dwight D. Eisenhower and possibly Herbert Hoover for his relief work in Europe during and after the First World War.

His opponents were so horrified and incredulous at his election in 2016 that they never conceded his right to govern or even to be taken seriously as a party leader. President Barack Obama and then vice-president Joe Biden, as well as Hillary Clinton, surely knew that the Clinton campaign had aimed to corrupt the National and Central Intelligence Agencies and the FBI with intelligence of a pastiche of defamatory lies fabricated by an ex-British intelligence agent. They all likely knew the allegation that the Russian government and the Trump campaign colluded in 2016 was a falsehood and yet they hobbled the Trump administration for years with a spurious investigation. When Trump asked the president of Ukraine if the Bidens had behaved with financial probity in his country, seeking an honest and not a partisan response, he was impeached but ultimately acquitted by the Senate. We now know that the Bidens conducted an international influence peddling operation for years, which, whether it was legal or not, was, to say the least, unseemly.

In office, Trump virtually eliminated unemployment, reduced taxes and petroleum imports, almost ended illegal immigration, shaped up NATO, which had degenerated into a freeloading "alliance of the willing" where the Europeans treated the United States as a great St. Bernard: they held the leash and gave the orders while the U.S. did the work and took the risks. He revived economic growth and there was no more talk of China imminently surpassing the United States as the world's greatest economy. It was certainly a record that deserved re-election but he was defeated by the rabid hostility of the American national political media, because moneyed Americans donated nearly twice as much money to the Democrats as the Republicans could raise, because the FBI helped muzzle social media outlets after the intelligence establishment claimed the allegations against Biden's son was Russian disinformation and because the COVID pandemic was invoked as the excuse to dramatically increase mail-in voting and vote-harvesting, the constitutional objections to which went unchallenged by the courts.

This is why Trump convened a very large crowd on Jan. 6, 2021, and asked them to demonstrate "peacefully and patriotically." The Democrats accused him of attempting to incite an insurrection (by unleashing lunatics swaddled in American

flags and dressed up like Wagnerian operatic characters to wander aimlessly in the halls of the U.S. Capitol). They assumed that the dreadful meteor had passed, but he returned and his opponents' next gambit was a scandalous abuse of the prosecution service to hurl a farrago of spurious criminal charges at him. He has withstood all of this, and an assassination attempt, and is now heavily leading all polls and betting odds and has executed one of the greatest political comebacks in U.S. political history. He has established himself as a very formidable historic political phenomenon. The Democrats' only election argument is that Trump is a menace to democracy, which is tawdry and absurd, and the vintage Saul Alinsky tactic of accusing your enemy of the misconduct of which you are yourself guilty. It is also difficult to invoke after last weekend's near tragedy, and the subsequent calls for moderation. Biden has run a terrible administration and has broken down personally and is about to be discarded. Trump has his infelicities, but he is a capable executive, has had an excellent convention and is now probably unstoppable. He will be a good president. Canadians should outgrow the nonsense they have gullibly ingested and sharpen their perceptions.

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