

Donald Trump's Assault on Both Parties Will Make America Better

by Conrad Black

It is not such a surprise that Americans have elevated Donald Trump to the headship of their country. It was improbable at first, because of his raucous personality, and the fact he had never held public office or a high military command (the almost invariable qualifications for a nominee).

He financed his own campaign, avoiding the endless demeaning roundel of fundraisers, (and doing quite well selling silly hats and T-shirts). It was also apparently unpromising because he was attacking the entire entrenched leadership of both parties, the Clintons, Obamas, and Bushes, OBushtons, as I called them here last week, and because he was opposed by and deliberately incited the escalated hostility of the national media, and the officious polling organizations.

The whole Trump campaign was audacious because it relied altogether on a broad swath of all socioeconomic groups – it was not a coalition based on pitching to the particular desires of voting blocs. As Trump said on election night, and as his wife had stated in several speeches recently, it was a movement, a mighty national rejection of the prim, robotic flimflam that disguised a corrupt failing system and feckless leadership behind the façade of “bridge-building, inclusiveness,” and self-abasement in the world.

Two premises undergirded the whole enterprise: that the party elders and their apparatus in both parties were castles made of sand and sawdust, and that a majority of Americans were so concerned about the first period of outright decline in American history and when the economic well-being of the

middle and working classes had deteriorated outside the downdraft of normal cycles, that they would vote for a purposeful strategy put in plain and politically incorrect language.

These were bold conclusions, and even in the aftermath of their thunderous validation, those who right into election night counting were complacently expecting Trump to be sent packing back to his demi-monde of golf clubs, condos and low-brow television, are divided between those who wonder if they had completely misjudged or misheard or just missed what was happening, and the imperishables.

The latter group, including a number of the conservative intellectuals who stormed out of the Republican party and noisily slammed the door behind them, are claiming to be prophets who will be honoured, are proud of the martyrdom they have (unintentionally) chosen, and warn darkly of Trump's authoritarian tendencies. Such tendencies are less pronounced in the president-elect's character than in the personality of his chief opponent, and the whole concept is nonsense, given the robustness of the constitutional strength of the legislative and judicial branches of the U.S. government. (All three branches have performed poorly during the past 20 years, which is ultimately why Donald Trump will be the next president, but they are at least proficient in ensuring they are not overrun by the other branches.)

What made Trump such a long shot was the tenacity of the pompous certitude of entitlement of the political class. This is always a dangerous attitude in a country that actually holds free elections. Donald Trump was well known to the public before he started his campaign. He had the means to finance the campaign, used the social media and the conservative talk shows and bloggers to counter the mainline media and exploited their ignorance and malice to gain

popularity from the wide section of the public that resented the bias and condescension of the Clinton News Network (CNN) and its ilk.

He knew, from polling and from echelons of the public that he encountered in his entertainment business, that the Archie Bunkers of America were angry and numerous, and that they were decent, plain-spoken, patriotic people, not ignorant slobs in need of guidance from my esteemed but disoriented friends such as (to pick two names out of a distinguishedly full hat) George Will and Fareed Zakaria.

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Those who have been routed should have seen it coming. Trump thundered into the nomination race, cleaned up most of the primaries, routed 14 candidates, including five serious governors (Jeb Bush, Chris Christie, Mike Huckabee, John Kasich, Scott Walker), and three prominent senators (Ted Cruz, Rand Paul, Marco Rubio). And is credited with raising the Republican primary vote by 60 per cent in four years.

His entire campaign was an assault on everyone in both parties who was complicit in the blunders of the past 20 years: the soft early response to terrorism, the housing bubble and financial crisis and great recession; the admission of 12 million illegal and unskilled migrants, the disastrous Iraq war, 15 million dropouts from the workforce, immense trade and budgetary deficits, and a doubling of national debt in seven years to produce one per cent economic growth.

Given their lengthy intertwined involvement in high government office, the Bushes and Clintons were both obvious targets for Trump's uproarious billingsgate, and his political incorrectness shattered many taboos and enjoyed a much wider appeal than had been thought possible for many months. He debunked global warming (more or less accurately) as a leftist

attempt to hobble capitalism and incidentally destroy the coal and oil industries, and reviled U.S. President Barack Obama and former secretary of state Clinton for their inability to mention "Islamic extremism."

His attacks in the crowded Republican debates were often brutal and personal: Sen. Rubio's slight stature and tendency to perspire, Bush's alleged lack of energy, Sen. Cruz's claimed ethical lapses, even Carly Fiorina's (unexceptionable) appearance; it was often gratuitous and unseemly but none of his opponents had any idea how to deal with it. He tapped a tremendous volcanic lava pool of public anger at poor government that has produced the first absolute and comparative decline in American history. Historians of the future will wonder how the political class imagined it could admit so many migrants without taking effective measures to control the southern border, and merely babble garrulously on, year after year, about "comprehensive immigration reform."

The wellsprings of public anger and frustration were not exploited by Trump alone. He took half the Republicans, the democratic Marxist Bernie Sanders took almost half the Democrats, and the runner-up Republican contender, Cruz, took 30 per cent of the Republicans on a campaign of tearing down the federal government from the far right.

In the circumstances, it was no mean achievement for the two nominees to emerge still broadly within the political centre, despite Trump's polemical flourishes about illegal immigration.

No informed person could be unaware of the depth of America's problems, but the governing elites who were collectively responsible for the steady proliferation of those problems did not see what they had wrought. American democracy is undermined by corruption and misinformation, but it is still vital and healthy on election day. A clear choice was presented and the people have spoken.

The score is Donald Trump and the clear and free plurality of the public 1; the authors of the economic debacle, the immigration disaster, the foreign policy fiascos and catastrophic wars and humanitarian crisis, and gross fiscal mismanagement and the deterioration of almost everything in America, 0. This is as it should be, and the alarmists are fools, as the positive response of financial markets to Trump's economic growth program illustrates.

America and the world will be the better for it, Donald Trump spoke elegantly and generously on election night and I predict that, though there may be some stylistic lapses, he will be a successful president.

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