

Fiasco of Linking Immigration Reform and Foreign Aid Signals Need for Leadership in the Congress



by Conrad Black

The fiasco of the attempted linking of minimal immigration reform with substantial assistance to Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan, and the murder by the Russian government of the leader of the democratic opposition, Alexei Navalny, coming within a few days of each other, require some American congressional leaders to show some leadership.

The attempt to link immigration, specifically the inundation of the southern border with millions of illegal so-called migrants, to the urgent need for military assistance for Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan seemed to some a clever tactic by the Republicans.

It would supposedly require the Democrats finally to do something about the southern border unless they wished to face the opprobrium of leaving Ukraine substantially defenseless against the Russian invader and Israel under-equipped to deal with the Hamas terrorists, and Taiwan in a continued state of unnecessary vulnerability to the People's Republic of China.

In fact it was irresponsible. The accompanying polemical excesses that America couldn't afford the 6 percent of its military budget taken up by Ukraine and the closing up of the southern border at the same time were both arithmetic and policy nonsense.

Amid all the wailing about the billions of dollars going to Ukraine, almost unspoken was that approximately 90 percent of it comes in fact to the defense production industries of America to supply Ukraine.

The Republican strategists might reasonably have assumed that the Democrats would try to turn the tables on them by offering a tokenistic immigration reform that, if rejected, the Democrats would try to parlay into an allegation that the Republicans were trying to throw Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan to the wolves while only masquerading as having any concern about the outrageous and unsustainable levels of illegal entry across the southern border.

They could not have reasonably assumed that the now decrepit and misguided Republican leader of the Senate, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, would join forces with the Senate Democrats and jointly sponsor an insane measure that would attach to the long-awaited assistance to the three needful countries an immigration bill that implausibly purported to restrict illegal migration to slightly under 2 million per year.

It would not have been easy to predict that this would become practically the last stand of the Never Trump Republicans before President Trump takes the Republican presidential

nomination. It was also difficult to foresee, though there were some signs of it, that Mr. McConnell, long a legendarily astute fox of Senate tactics, would take leave of his senses and promote this absurd measure.

We are now down to tawdry gamesmanship. The Republicans proposed a stand-alone measure for Israel that ducked the other issues. It deservedly failed. The Democrats have now passed through the Senate an aid package for all three countries, which is in the House. Mike Johnson, who was assured of a rocky ride when he was elected speaker in October, adjourned the House while contemplating this conundrum.

Before doing so, the speaker at least succeeded in gaining the impeachment of homeland security secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas, which has no chance of leading to his removal from office by the Senate but will at least give Republicans ample opportunity to put before the country the monumental negligence and dishonesty of the administration on this issue. And it did repair the embarrassment the speaker suffered by being unable to effect the impeachment on the first attempt.

It is time for the Republican leadership, including Mr. Trump, to demarcate clearly their Ukraine objectives. The official murder in custody in Siberia of the Russian democratic opposition leader, for no offense except courageous respect for elemental human rights, has reminded the world of what we are facing with the Putin regime.

It is at the midpoint of Russian historical standards of despotism between Ivan the Terrible and Stalin and Gorbachev and Yeltsin, at about the level of Khrushchev and Brezhnev and the gentler tsars. It remains true that if it were successful, the Western Alliance would be exposed as a paper tiger, the West in decline.

This would just be the start of Mr. Putin's campaign to make

himself the modern Peter the Great and regain the European components of the Soviet Union and, if possible, to reassert influence over the former satellite countries, the repeal of the Cold War. Any such event would be a catastrophe for the West.

The administration's breezy "whatever it takes" (in Ukraine) is completely unacceptable. It is perfectly in order for the Republicans to attach to any Ukraine aid measure requirements for comprehensive monitoring of the disposition of the funds voted.

If for any reason this money is not voted, and the great heroism of the Ukrainians these two years in fending off an adversary four times as large and promoting the continued eastward movement of the Western world, the geopolitical damage will be enormous and the responsibility borne by the Republicans will effectively disqualify them as a serious foreign policy alternative administration.

Franklin D. Roosevelt and his foreign policy entourage, including future presidents Truman and Eisenhower, established that a continuing American presence was necessary in Western Europe and the Far East to prevent those regions from falling, as they almost did in World War II, entirely into the hands of anti-democratic governments and leaving the Americas, as Roosevelt put it, "prisoners in this hemisphere ... fed through the bars of our cages by the un pitying masters of other continents."

The correct defense of America and its legitimate interests and allies begins in Central Europe and South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. Any derogation from that concept, and particularly one induced by failed parliamentary tricks and blunders in Washington, would be a disaster for the Western world and a terrible defeat for America.

For all the failings of the incumbent Democrats, on this issue

they are defending America and its allies and the Republicans should be extremely cautious about trying to game them with a policy of indefensible ignorance persuasively disguised as a serious effort to resurrect the southern border.

We are long past the point where those issues should be linked. The Republicans should start by stripping away the phony Democratic pretense that what is going on on the southern border has anything to do with immigration.

Immigration is people arriving under the Statue of Liberty and elsewhere, inscribing their names and beginning a new life pledged to become participating and law-abiding citizens of the United States. What is happening on the southern border is a cynical and negligent attempt by Democrats in search of permanent masses of malleable votes with the complicity of Republican employers seeking cheap labor, to maintain an invasion of America.

It resembles nothing so much as the barbarians driven in the fourth and fifth centuries from Eastern Europe and Central Asia into the Western Roman Empire with the Huns at their back as they swarmed into this infinitely more advanced civilization and greedily plundered it. These new invaders are less numerous and for the most part less malevolent, but they are invaders, not migrants, much less immigrants.

Speaker Johnson should allow the aid to the threatened countries to pass and take his chances with the unworldly lunatics in his own party. The Republicans should produce their own immigration reform bill, bearing no resemblance to the fatuous imposture of Senators Schumer and McConnell.

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