

# Great Again

by Conrad Black



One of the straws in the wind that indicates that the Never-Trumpers are becoming uneasy, as they are cantilevered out over the Grand Canyon while they try to attach credence to bad fairy tales about collusion and obstruction and unctuously incite thoughts of impeachment, is that some of the more sane commentators are asking for silence from the president's twitter account. The claim is that the president has only himself to blame for his feelings of a "witch-hunt," and if he were just quietly going about his business, the implication is that the atmosphere would become relatively serene. This is an implicit admission that the allegations and insinuations of presidential misconduct are unfounded.

There is room for legitimate discussion about whether Mr. Trump's tactics are optimal, but only those who truly believe that he is stark, raving mad could conceive that he would be speaking and tweeting about illegal surveillance, fake news, malicious media and partisan harassment, if none of it were happening.

The sane and civilized Trump-skeptics, such as Charles Krauthammer and Peggy Noonan, have no faith that there is any scandal lurking in the president's closet and just want it all to go away. Let him retreat from his tweets. It's a well-intentioned thought but there are some problems with it.

This is a war and the object of wars is to eliminate the enemy. Donald Trump effectively claimed that the corruption and incompetence of the Bush-Clinton-Obama era was a declaration of war on the national interest and an affront to the patience of the electorate, and he attacked the entire political power structure directly and in practically every policy area. Since there was no argument for the reelection of the Democrats after the strategic and economic and fiscal debacle of the Obama years, nor any very strong Democratic argument furnished by Mrs. Clinton's career, the only campaign, which was assumed to be a sure winner, was a smear job on Trump.

In modern American politics, this normally starts with charges of racism, sexism, authoritarianism, heartlessness to the disadvantaged and reckless war brinkmanship. Financial corruption is imputed as explicitly as possible. All of this against a backdrop of sneers and guffaws from the national media. It didn't stop, even after Kathy Griffin decapitated an effigy of Donald Trump, seven months after he was elected.

The war continues, and since Trump and his followers believe that they are rebelling against oppressively corrupt and incompetent government, and that they are responding to an assault on the presidency of unprecedented vitriol, at least since the Nixon era, the president doesn't feel that he is the one who should engage in unilateral de-escalation. Preemptive concessions (to unfriendly foreign powers) were among the Trumpers' many complaints with Obama. The Democrats and their media allies confected this scurrilous bunk about "the whiff of treason" (the *Times*' Nicholas Kristof), and an assault "on American sovereignty as great as Pearl Harbor or 9/11"

(the *Times*' Tom Friedman). Now they want Trump to stop complaining about the avalanche of defamation they have brought down on him.

Almost every weeknight at about 7 the *Washington Post* announces unnamed sources have discovered some new ratchet in the investigation of the president. These almost always are debunked, or at least simply vanish. With all the ill-will Washington can muster, a city that voted 96 percent against Trump, none of it can get any traction.

One of two things is going to happen. Either the Democrats, including all the major media outlets except Fox and the *Wall Street Journal*, are going to lower the volume and sanitize the innuendos, and teach self-muzzling to the most rabid slanderers on CNN and MSNBC, and a benign cycle of returning civility will start to unfold, or the legal and verbal skirmishing will escalate.

Everyone, including ex-FBI director James Comey, special counsel Robert Mueller, and deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein, has condemned leakers and anonymous sources (though Comey admits to having leaked his version of a conversation with the president to try to assure the appointment of a special counsel, an act of very questionable propriety). The Justice Department has not yielded its right to prosecute those who illegally leak and publish confidential government information. Comey had no business deciding whether Hillary Clinton should be prosecuted. His need not be the last word on the subject and her emails and the antics of the Clinton Foundation are not in Mueller's mandate. She and Comey are outright public suspects of wrongdoing. Former attorney general Lynch's efforts to suppress the Clinton investigation, like the Obama administration's questionable surveillance in the Trump Tower, and unmasking of confidential identities of those intercepted, are legitimate subjects of Justice Department curiosity.

It may finally have entered the thoughts of Trump's enemies that leading Democrats have more hanging out legally than Trump does. The whole political community should be disabused of its self-destructive addiction to the criminalization of policy differences.

If they have not taken complete leave of their senses, the Democrats will reverse course, and may have already started, after the appalling attempted murder at the congressional baseball practice and former House Speaker Pelosi's revelation that she prayed every night for Mr. Trump. (That spirit has not caught up with outgoing CBS anchor Scott Pelley, who blamed the shootings, by a Sanders supporter, on Republican policies. He personifies the collapse of media integrity and even makes Dan Rather look good.)

Whichever course this war takes, it should be the end of the omnipotent and capricious prosecutor in the U.S. Comey attempted to manipulate the outcome of the election and the post-election, and he and his close friends Mueller, and former U.S. attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, who framed Vice President Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, with false evidence, have all been recklessly fanatical prosecutors for decades. The presumption of innocence is in desperate need of resurrection. Mueller shouldn't be fired now, but packing his staff with aggressive Democrats is unwise. He has been put on notice that unlimited mission creep by a crucifixion squad will not be tolerated. (The president isn't the only official who can fire a special counsel.)

If Trump's accusers do not relent, he will force all these issues, as is his right. And the sudden solicitude about his distraction from his presidential responsibilities, which was precisely the reason for this scorched earth partisan assault on him, is doubly nonsense. Not only is it hypocrisy coming from the Democrats who are trying to distract him; the president possesses such super-human energy, it doesn't distract him. He is starting to enjoy it as the tables turn

and the public becomes cynical about endless false accusations that vanish in the night air, after the tele-jackals have squeezed the juice out of them.

Fist published in the