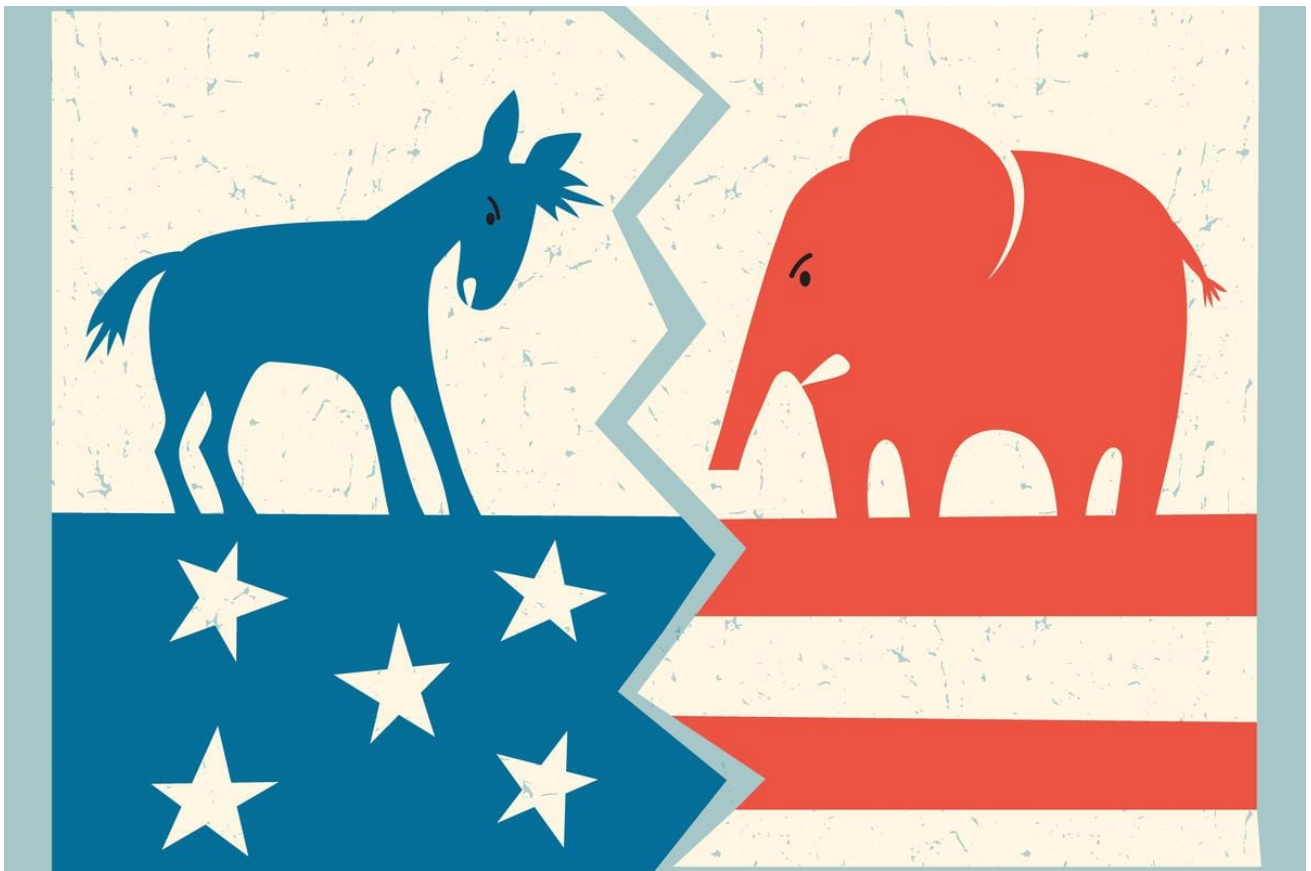


The Democrats, Not the Republicans, May Face Reconstruction After This Election

by Conrad Black



The admirable, (and convivial) Peggy Noonan, always the most civilized of the vast anti-Trump media gallery, again contemplated on Saturday (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 1), the post-Trump era, with the peppy confidence of Never Trump Republicans that it is about to begin.

Her column addresses the question of whether the post Trump Republican Party should be “burned down,” totally dismantled, as if that were a real option. The last major American political party to endure this fate was the Whigs, at the

onset of the Civil War and after all of its major figures had decamped to the new Republican Party.

She correctly attributed Trump's victory in the 2016 Republican primaries and in the presidential election, to public impatience over expensive and strategically disastrous wars, the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, a complete failure of everybody to deal with the endless inflow of penurious illegal immigrants across the southern border, and a general feeling among working and lower-middle-class Americans that they were being ignored by a bipartisan government of financial and celebrity elites.

This is reasonable and not overly difficult analysis, but it omits the failure of the Bush-Clinton-Obama era to generate economic growth. Per capita GDP growth declined from 4.5 percent in the bustling Reagan years steadily to 1 percent under Obama, with admonitions from senior administration officials that the country had to accustom itself to flatlined growth.

This was, in effect, an assault upon the American ethos of ever greater plenty and of unlimited rewards for honest hard work. The Noonan analysis also underplayed the national frustration at a loss of manufacturing jobs through trade agreements with ostensibly friendly countries, and a foreign policy that despite invincible military strength led to failures and self-eradicating redlines.

Trump's Decision to Run

Before addressing the pretended question of the fate of the post-election Republican Party, there was the usual anti-Trump mind-reading of the motives for his candidacy. It was a brand-building exercise, and Trump's program was allegedly assembled in mid-campaign by measuring the applause generated by various oratorical gambits as Trump proceeded around the country making flamboyant stump speeches.

In fact, Trump had been considering and exploring the possibilities of transforming high public recognition into the highest political office for 20 years since he recovered from his financial crisis. He did win two primaries as the progressive candidate in 2000, a party that included Ross Perot and the wrestler Jesse Ventura, (governor of Minnesota).

He changed parties seven times in 13 years looking for the right moment and the correct vehicle. He withdrew in 2000 after realizing that the original Republicans in 1860 were the only third-party in American history to become a governing party. He saw that he could not run against an incumbent in 2004 or 2012 and that in 2008 he had no chance of the Democratic nomination and the Republicans had no chance of winning.

The roulette wheel stopped in 2016 and he placed his bets. Brand building may have been the default position that he would have invoked, (doubtless profitably), but he had substantial and as events revealed, well-founded hopes for political success.

Testing crowd reactions is a more reliable and cheaper canvas of public opinion for someone who can pull large crowds spontaneously than employing the experts who infest Washington and overcharge all candidates for frequently erroneous guidance.

Appeasing Violence and Leaning on Pestilence

Obviously if Trump loses this election it will be by a relatively narrow margin and the Republican Party will be in perfectly good condition to reorient itself and will win again in four or eight years, especially as a Biden presidency can be confidently assumed to be a catastrophe.

That is the pattern of American politics and the Republicans will do much better than they did with Barry Goldwater in 1964 or the Democrats did with George McGovern in 1972, and in both cases the White House changed hands at the next election.

So the question of the Republican Party ending is nonsense and not only for the reasons the author gives: that the two-party system is a good thing, and that a Democratic White House and both houses of the Congress would do a good many bad things, and that Trump is destroying himself so nothing further need be inflicted on the Republicans.

Peggy Noonan had already written that the president has “produced a different kind of disaster” than the one he ran against. “The past six months Mr. Trump came up against his own perfect storm, one he could neither exploit or talk his way past,” referring to the pandemic, the economic contraction, and “prolonged sometimes violent national street protests. If the polls can be trusted, he is on the verge of losing the presidency.”

Certainly, he cannot talk his way past these problems but he is managing the pandemic and the economy quite well, and he can exploit in different respects all three of these crises.

Trump did not create them and the disaster that Peggy Noonan refers to was in fact a presidency that had a gold approval rating and was almost universally expected to be reelected prior to the onset of the coronavirus. As long as the polls have been judging the level of public discontent and not measuring candidates against each other, Trump was sinking. But as the process grinds towards election day he is recovering in the polls, and the Democratic effort to make the election a referendum on Trump is giving way to a choice of available alternatives.

[Epoch Times](#).