

Trump Can Still Prevail in the Midterms

The key is for the president to be comparatively cautious.

by Conrad Black



The current standing of the Democrats in the midterm election polls is a levitation. Their record when they had the administration was poor. Their official leader, former president Obama, bombed with his long-winded, self-serving monotone of historical revision at the University of Illinois two weeks ago and its dreary sequels in Orange County, Calif. He reminded America of why it put Donald Trump in the White House. The Democrats and their helpers have emptied their magazines at the opening of the mid-term campaign. Bob Woodward's novel is a wet kipper. Let him reveal his transcripts as he has threatened in response to those (including me) who have accused him of making up much of it, as has been his custom starting with Watergate, if not before. The takeaway on Woodward is his assertion that there is no

evidence of Trump-Russian collusion. Despite his long and baneful history of myth-making and defamation, Woodward has earned a commendation across the barricades for helping to dig the grave for the putrid corpse of that obscene fabrication. We are surely at the end of the "Let Mueller finish his work, we don't know what we don't know" school of maintaining a permanent cloud over whether Trump is legitimately the president.

The *New York Times* has amplified the chorus of chaos and madness in the White House to try to maintain the anti-Trump rage even though the imputations of criminality and illegitimacy have vanished. It is like a circus acrobat trying to leap from one trapeze to another at an impossible distance and with no safety net. No one cares how the White House functions as long as it does function, and the vagaries of the president's personality leave many uneasy and some censorious or even outraged, but there is no possible question of his sanity, mental competence, and physical stamina. This is a desperate last-ditch defense of the illegitimacy argument before the president's enemies have to fight it out with him in the old-fashioned way, as politicians and parties do in democracies, with competing personalities and programs. For ten years all the Democrats have had is the endless repetition of the mantra that they weren't George W. Bush and then that they weren't Donald Trump. Not being Trump was never a winning ticket, and now it is a passport to oblivion.

If his enemies and their media echo chamber can't go on blowing up a hot-air balloon of a controversy every week between now and Election Day, they will pay the price of trying to beat something with nothing. When the noise subsides, the country will reflect on how much better a condition it is in than it was at the last Election Day: Not just every conceivable economic indicator, and some progress on illegal immigration, but the absence of any plausible nuclear menace from North Korea and Iran, the relative

disengagement of the United States from endless, hopeless wars in places that have no relevance to American national security, the withdrawal from the Paris climate nonsense, in which Obama was going to impose the spending of trillions of dollars and dispense with millions of American jobs. He would have made the U.S. the only economically serious country in the world to meet such rigorous targets of carbon dioxide standards for no defined purpose except the feel-good self-righteousness of the scientifically gullible.

The key is for the president to be comparatively cautious – no Charlottesville statements that his enemies can falsely construe as soft on Nazism and the Klan; or border policies that can get Chuck Schumer simpering about the Statue of Liberty's bursting into tears; or border policies that get Nancy Pelosi fuming about comfortable accommodation for children brought illegally into the country being reminiscent of Third Reich death camps; nor even reflections on the lies politicized former security agency heads (former CIA director John Brennan in particular) have uttered in the partisan interest. A little serenity and the economic news will sink in. With the abatement of the public high-volume slanging-match the country will notice that it has gone past the tipping point and that the entire Trump-Russia collusion narrative was a disgraceful and monstrous smear-job. The president has handled the Kavanaugh affair very calmly and judiciously. Obviously Dr. Ford is not going to be taken as being as credible as the judge. Kavanaugh is reinforced by the recollections of the only supposed witness, who Dr. Ford said broke up the alleged assault, but who does not recall anything of the kind. The whole business is very fishy and there has not been the customary phalanx of fellow victims of the same long-concealed offender swarming out of the mists of antiquity, as have shaken or destroyed the careers of many rampant lions in the entertainment industry.

This president is paradoxical and will not be governed by the

usual election patterns; he has moved quickly to improve the morale and conditions of the country, as FDR was rewarded for doing in 1934. Without any new controversies to whip up into media orgies and festivals of the president's turpitude and uncongeniality, the argument to vote Democratic will be ground to powder by the Reagan test: Are you better off and is the country better off? There is no doubt that this is the question that will be in the minds of the voters if they cannot be distracted by another red herring conjured out of the president's reckless verbosity or some ill-considered initiative of the Justice or Homeland Security departments. To ask the question is to answer it. The same conclusion springs from reflection on the Democratic alternative: the even more decrepit fugitive from the fake-news catacombs than Woodward, Carl Bernstein, warning darkly of the "constitutional crisis" requiring application of the 25th Amendment to Trump for mental incompetence. The Resistance has sunk to this. To judge from his public utterances, Bernstein would not pass the 25th Amendment test himself, but he and his fellow tragedian choristers hold no position that justifies an act of removal. Their game is up, and the people will not be fooled; they will give the president his honeymoon, and the Democrats will have two years to produce some alternatives, people and policies, thinking again after a lapse of ten years in that once and long-great party.

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