

Trump is Winning the Great Game of American Political Football

Trump has gained full control of his party, has held at least 45 percent of the country solidly behind him, and is threatening to derail the liberal slide of post-Reagan America and to pulverize and convert or expel the “OBushinton” cadres of the political class.

by Conrad Black



What appears to be emerging from the Ukraine controversy is an epochal contest for the political soul and future of America.

It has been known from the morning after the last presidential election that Trump was planning an assault on the political conventional wisdom in policy matters. He and his followers—fully half the voters if the Libertarians and

Conservatives are added to the Republican total, and the Greens to the Democrats—didn't subscribe to the "OBushinton" consensus on the environment, tax levels, toleration of illegal immigration, trade policy, health care, education, nuclear non-proliferation and many other issues. They saw the 2016 election as an opportunity to attempt to use the presidency to effect radical change in all these areas.

The political class—which with minor variations to the right under George W. Bush, and a somewhat deeper turn to the left under President Obama, had held all the territory between the 30-yard lines on the political playing field since the retirement of Ronald Reagan—locked arms to repel the intruder.

The Democrats, both the Clintonians and the Obamans, who had composed their marginal differences opposite the Sanders charge from the left, prepared to obstruct and harass the incoming administration. The Republicans, both the Bush-Romney-McCain center and the Cruz right, sat on their hands in the Congress, with towering skepticism, and neither Speaker Paul Ryan nor Senate leader McConnell gave the new president any assistance at all.

Instead of the customary honeymoon, Trump was met by cries of "Impeachment!" well before he had taken the oath. The completely spurious Russian collusion and quasi-treason argument had been hurled into the arena after the failure of the Billy Bush tape of Trump's eleven-year old [lewd comments](#) on celebrities' right to grope women failed to knock him out. It was too late to determine the election result, so it was pressed into service to undo the election result. Despite Trump's astonishing win, his opponents who had thought him a freakish and nightmarish accident of the electoral system, were completely over-confident and were certain that they would take him down.

Trump had won the first quarter with the Republican nomination. He had won the second against all odds in the

election. With no political background, no network of trusted colleagues with public sector experience to draw from and fill the main government positions, and a hyperactively disloyal White House staff leaking and sabotaging, Trump still smelled a rat when Comey came to dinner and asked to be retained as head of the FBI while claiming the president was not being investigated (an outright lie).

When Trump fired Comey, suspecting (correctly) that Comey was the largest enemy agent inside the tent, Comey then illegally leaked his self-serving memo of the dinner conversation to the *New York Times* (through a friend) to assure the appointment of a special counsel on Russia where none was justified as there had been no offense unearthed. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was emasculated because of his bungled answer in his confirmation hearings to an innocuous question about having spoken to any Russian. The third quarter was underway. The Democrats of all shadings confidently awaited the demise of the president and the Republican leadership cooperated by giving the president a health-care turkey that was strangled by John McCain in practically his final act before turning his state funeral into a Trump hate-fest.

Trump fought back by getting the Republicans onside with his tax bill, getting it through, and forcing the issue on immigration by declaring an emergency and moving by direct executive action, and muscling the Mexican government on trade to secure its cooperation. In the mid-terms the Republicans gained one Senate seat but Trump lost three NeverTrumpers, and gained four Trump loyalists, and had already made his peace with the leadership. In the House, the Republicans lost control, but Trump had never had control with Ryan as speaker, and the Republican minority is now reasonably supportive of their leader.

Of course, Trump cooperated completely with the special counsel, even as he accurately described its antics as a witch-hunt, and contrary to the expectations of his enemies

who thought he would be a fighting bull obstructing justice at every turn. He outsmarted them again, replaced Sessions with the respected former Bush attorney general William Barr, and the tables turned. The score was Trump 3, the now endangered political class, 0. Barr appointed a special counsel to look into the attempt to deliver the 2016 election to the Democratic candidate and the immediately following effort to unseat the elected president. Ukraine is the fourth quarter, and this time, the establishment, back to the wall and likely facing indictments for felonies committed during and after the last presidential election campaign, is not over-confident. Sniggering at Trump as an illiterate and thuggish buffoon has given way altogether to almost hysterical hatred.

Trump has gained full control of his party, has held at least 45 percent of the country solidly behind him, and is threatening to derail the liberal slide of post-Reagan America and to pulverize and convert or expel the "OBushinton" cadres of the political class. Ukraine is the last stand of his enemies, as on his policy performance, they have no serious argument against his reelection. The media accomplices of the political establishment are observing an indecent silence over the evidence of the propriety of Trump's Ukraine conduct, (such as the transcript of special envoy Kurt Volker's comments that there was no hint of any exchange of negative findings about the Bidens' activities in Ukraine for the Trump administration's assistance to that country). The Justice Department's independent counsel opinion that there was no electoral value requested or given has been mentioned but is discounted because of the attorney general's supposed conflict of interest in already looking at these questions—i.e., he is doing his job. The outright lie of Democratic House intelligence committee chairman Schiff that he had not had advanced knowledge of the whistleblower is soft-peddled. The whistleblower is a leaker relying on hearsay of a conversation that has been made available to the public.

The administration proactively has revealed everything relevant and the Democrats are claiming that Trump asking Zelensky for the facts on Biden, separately from the promise of aid, and never trying to direct what those facts might be, constitutes soliciting an electoral intervention of value by a foreign power in a U.S. election. This is bunk, nonsense. Speaker Nancy Pelosi is afraid to have a real debate and call a vote, and there is no chance this klunker could lead to the conviction and removal of the president by two thirds of the Senate, even if Senators Mitt Romney (R.-Utah), Ben Sasse (R.-Neb.), and Lisa Murkowski (R.-Alaska), all burst out of the NeverTrump closet where they have been kicking and screaming for three years, (other than when Romney thought he was a candidate for secretary of state).

Some drama is being generated because the Bush Republicans resent Trump's trashing of them and are unctuously saying he was improper, though not impeachable in his conversation with Zelensky, and because even the relatively professional media love a crisis and the thought that the president could be in real trouble. If the media do not pull themselves together and start treating this burlesque professionally, they will suffer severe and durable harm. Whatever they do, the contrast will be vivid between this fabricated crisis and the long-awaited official and impartial view of the Democrats' conduct in and after the last presidential election campaign. Russians and Ukrainians didn't seriously threaten U.S. democracy; Americans angry about the results of it have done that, and the guilty will not hide for long behind this fatuous Ukrainian carnival of false righteousness. The system can punish venal politicians on election day; a national press corps that can't distinguish real from false assaults on democracy is an almost inoperable malignancy. The media is on trial now, not the president, or even his accusers—though some of them soon will be.