

Trump is Winning

He is the clear choice for conservatives.

by Conrad Black

As I suggested when I gave readers a rest from me five weeks ago, the Republican convention successfully celebrated the complete rejection of the post-Reagan Republican party. The Bushes, McCain, and Romney weren't present or mentioned, or much missed. Cruz, as I wrote in my last piece here, and the otherwise amiable John Kasich made asses of themselves, and opinion has moved on. (It was not entirely sane for Kasich, who did not utter a negative word about any other Republican during the primaries, and on his one winning night advised his countrymen to "hug a stranger at the mall" – which advice, if followed, would have quintupled the number of assault charges in the country – and to "take a widow to dinner," to stay away from the Republican convention in his home state, Ohio.)

The Democratic convention's orgy of self-praise and joyous continuity generated enough jollity for the Trumpophobic media to open up a five- to seven-point lead for Mrs. Clinton. But Donald Trump already has the 40 percent of Americans who share Archie Bunker's dislike of political correctness, vote-buying with welfare, fiscal incontinence, and a feeble foreign policy, and there has been no further need to serve them up more raw meat. So he has just disappointed, week after week, the frenzied media lynch mob that had implied he was a racist, a misogynist, an inciter of violence, a vulgar buffoon, a member of the Flat Earth Society, an advocate of an automatic firearm for every white seven-year-old American, and probably an enemy of fluoridated drinking water.

Of course, it was almost all nonsense, and as Trump has been uncontroversial, it has been Mrs. Clinton who has made the gaffes (Trump's followers – now half the voters – are "deplorables") and has incited concerns about her health as

well. Peggy Noonan, who doesn't much care for either candidate but whose innate fairness and seasoned expertise as a judge of political talent prevent her from joining the chorus of the hysterics, detected (on September 5 in the *Wall Street Journal*), as the Clinton lead eroded, that anxiety (over Trump) was less negative than depression (at the thought of the return of the Clintons). I think that is only half the story.

She is probably correct that anxiety about a candidate's performance in office is less destructive to a candidate's chances than the depression induced by, in this case, thought of another binge of the Clintons at the public trough, pandering to the aggrieved with the money of those who work for a living, flat-lining the economy with new taxes, and entrenching the dictatorship of political correctness. But an acceleration in the tilt of the scales in Trump's favor is already under way because Trump the nominee, unlike Trump in quest of the nomination, is not saying anything worrisome or even in questionable taste.

The amiable husband and father of an exemplary family has, like a skilled driver shifting gears, deftly recalibrated. He was very plausible in his meeting with the president of Mexico, and now appears as he does to those who know him: good-humored, sensible, and moderate, if not altogether self-effacing. The unutterable rubbish of Democratic claims that he is temperamentally unsuited to high office (like the Republican revelations that 1968 Democratic vice-presidential nominee Edmund Muskie had repeatedly torn his cottage telephone off the wall in anger) has vanished without a trace or an echo. The Clinton campaign is being exposed every week as a tired pastiche of faded feminism (when Hillary was, as Trump pointed out, the greatest facilitator of male sexism in U.S. political history), an undistinguished tenure of high offices, and the enforced conventional wisdom, already punctured to shreds by Barack Obama's insurgency eight years

ago, that it is somehow Hillary's right and her turn. Her whole campaign was Trump-scare and Trump blundering; it isn't happening, and the nation is turning its disappointed eyes on her.

This campaign of "my turn" might have worked against someone representing the inanimate submissiveness of the also-ran Bush-McCain-Romney loyal opposition. But it is unlikely to work on an heir to strong Republican-party leadership, however outside the mold he may be stylistically. To follow the apparently disinterested soldier-statesman, Eisenhower, and the agile bridge between the Goldwater Right and the Rockefeller Left, Nixon, and the artist of Morning in America, Reagan, comes now the man who will recapture the party of Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt from the faint and ineffectual dissenters from the Clintons and Obama of the post-Reagan years. The one bright moment of Marco Rubio's presidential campaign was when he departed, after being drubbed by Trump in his home state, and said he and the others had all "missed the tsunami" of resentment at what the Bush-Clinton co-regency had done to the country. (They aren't really dynasties; they were incidental upon Reagan's retirement at 77 and Ross Perot's splintering of the Republican vote to the benefit of Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996.)

The pyrotechnics of the primaries, like smoke over a Civil War-era battlefield, is now clearing and reveals Trump in possession of much of the center of the field. Clinton has the Left, but not all the forces of discontent, given Trump's robust pan-ideological iconoclasm. The intelligent Right is slowly crumbling in its huffy apostasy. It is increasingly unclear why George Will and Bill Kristol left the ship, certainly not from nostalgia for what George Will derided 25 years ago as George Bush the elder's "tinny arf . . . of a lapdog." These men and their brainy and articulate little cohort are now in an open boat on the great ocean, like Captain Bligh (except they disembarked voluntarily), with

nothing but a few oarsmen and a compass. They are eventually going to ask themselves why have they done it.

My dear and very intelligent friend Laura Ingraham pointed out on her LifeZette site last week that there is [for serious conservatives to sit out](#) an election between Trump and Clinton. “Most of the members of the mainstream press are simply [Mrs. Clinton’s] puppets. . . . [With] five liberals on the Supreme Court . . . she can interpret any statute or rewrite any regulation as she sees fit. . . . If [she] uses the IRS to go after political enemies . . . the press would cover it up, and the courts would do nothing to stop her#...#What’s to prevent her from bringing in as many new immigrants as she wants . . . from using the Clean Air Act to impose her climate-change policies on the country, or interpreting the tax laws to punish companies she doesn’t like, or reinterpreting the Obamacare legislation however she wants, or changing any federal regulations in ways that advance her political agenda?” The same questions are raised about redistricting, fiddling voting laws, imposing new school curricula, and doing unimaginable things with the prisons (even though they surpass the visions of Dante already). Laura answers her own questions: “Literally nothing. . . . That’s the world you would wake up to on Nov. 9 if Hillary Clinton is elected president, a world where your constitutional rights, your state and local governments, and your country’s military would all be in the hands of a single angry liberal.”

This is not the United States where an overwhelmingly Democratic Congress rebelled against an immensely popular Franklin D. Roosevelt who had just won the greatest landslide in the history of contested U.S. presidential elections, in 1937, and rejected his plan to add more Supreme Court justices. The dangers to a conservative with a Clinton victory are obvious, whatever the peppier conservatives think of Donald Trump. Donald is no Franklin D., but it is one of the piquancies of American democracy that groups and institutions

are sometimes rescued by those they vehemently oppose. FDR saved the capitalism most of whose titans of finance reviled him; Nixon salvaged the Democrats' war in Vietnam, and they crucified him and handed Indochina to Hanoi and Pol Pot. However deficient his conservative credentials, Donald Trump is the last line of defense for America's conservatives from a cruel fate, though not one that their purblindness has not somewhat invited.

The fact, which as far as most of the media is concerned, dares not speak its name, and which infuriates the Right, is that Trump was never very far off the center, apart from on a few trade deals and illegal immigration, which the leadership of both parties kept punting forward with their cowardly twaddle about "comprehensive immigration reform." And as daylight illuminates the post-convention battlefield, Mrs. Clinton is still in an unspontaneous, unsought embrace with the Eugene Debs of the new century, Bernie Sanders. Both nominees did the necessary to keep their parties out of their own end zones, but to capture the center that always decides American elections, Trump has only to modulate the polemics, not really change course. Clinton has to walk backwards on her hands toward the center while dragging a cartload of ethical and legal baggage and ardently praying for a Trump relapse into reactionary gaucheries – exacting acrobatics, even for a lady in a neon pantsuit. Trump has no further need of the tactics the Democrats assumed would drive the moderate majority into their arms. There is no evidence that Mrs. Clinton yet realizes that she can't rely on her opponent to discharge a verbal blunderbuss into his own cloven feet. Her vast train of bearers and beaters and cheerleaders and silent helpers, Bushies, Cruzites, the Sanders Left, the Hollywood clique, the largely leprous press corps, President Obama (in one of the most hilariously cynical professions of affectionate continuity in American political history) – all have only eight weeks to escape oblivion.

It certainly could happen, but it is not now likely.

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