

Trump may lose, but he's not defeated ... despite the media's efforts

America's greatest contemporary failure is the media. Its debacle and that of its polling affiliates in the election is only the latest in a long sequence of profound American media failures and breaches of public trust

by Conrad Black



The noisy and elaborate pretense of the United States' and foreign media celebrating that the Trump era has ended and that he is finished as a political force and that he should do the adult thing and just concede and vanish is the latest chapter in the conduct of the real loser in this election: the American, and by imitation the foreign, media (including Canada's). Joe Biden is the most likely winner and can hardly

be claimed to have lost. Donald Trump seems to have lost, subject to judicial reviews of the proportions of ballot-harvesting, but his policies have been ratified, his party gained in the Congress and throughout the country, he raised the Republican vote by 10 million, none of the dire predictions for his administration or expectations of a landslide defeat by Trump-haters occurred, and Trump commands, by far, the largest personal following of any American politician, exceeding Barack Obama by tens of millions of votes and the Clintons by scores of millions.

The media may take credit for the Biden victory, as it conducted the campaign; almost no one voted for Biden, an undistinguished and bumbling wheel-horse who was on his way to the political glue factory until he was rescued by the Democratic party elders to prevent a victory by Marxist Sen. Bernie Sanders. The media's credit for that is mitigated by the terrible failure of the phony polls and predictions of a great repudiation of Trump, and the further erosion of public trust in the media to levels that are far below those enjoyed by the president it laboured so relentlessly to destroy.

The latest manifestations of the profound sickness of the American media (and no Canadian should imagine that ours is much better) have been from historian Jon Meacham and CNN's veteran reporter Christiane Amanpour. Meacham is a rather banal liberal historian who plowed Newsweek magazine under the sod with a news-free business plan that no sane editor would have endorsed, and has managed to sell himself to the Bushes as their family historian. He demonstrated his Trump-hate bona fides two weeks ago by calling the president a "lizard of white privilege," and, though an employee of MSNBC, wrote Joe Biden's "victory speech." This was too much even for MSNBC, which fired him as a commentator (doubtless only for a few weeks). Amanpour presented footage of Hitler's infamous Kristallnacht of 1938 on its 82nd anniversary last week, in which scores of Jews were murdered, thousands injured and 200

synagogues destroyed. She cited it as a warning, and compared it to Trump's unspecified conduct. Former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt described it on its 40th anniversary as, "The beginning of our national descent into hell" – the murder of 12 million people in death camps and the unleashing and barbarous prosecution of the most terrible war in history. Amanpour offered no elaboration on what this horrible massacre had to do with Donald Trump.

The media-anticipated great blue Democratic election wave was not even a ripple. The much-vaunted Russian interference didn't happen. The violent accusations against the postmaster general of voter suppression bandied all around the Trump-hating media never occurred either. America's greatest contemporary failure is the media. Their debacle and that of their polling affiliates in the election is only the latest in a long sequence of profound American media failures and breaches of public trust. They were eager accomplices in the propagation of the monstrous falsehood that there had been criminal collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign in 2016. Some were willing collaborators but most were witless dupes in constantly circulating lurid calumnies about the president's alleged treason. When that malignant canard floundered into oblivion there was scarcely a word of self-criticism in all the press of the United States. The New York Times passed off a virtual janitor in the Homeland Security Department as a senior White House official anonymously defaming the president in their pages. Joe Biden, on the night before the election, repeated the total falsehood confected by the editor of the Atlantic magazine that the president had described American war dead as "suckers and losers."

The national American media almost never reported that 80 per cent of coronavirus sufferers are afflicted also by other life-threatening ailments, or that even as more and more people are infected, 99 per cent of them recover and are thereafter immune for at least some period, or that a great

many who have contracted the coronavirus in the United States and other advanced Western countries have yet to be reported, which means that these countries are a good deal closer to a state of what is inelegantly called "herd immunity" than has been reported. Even in such an electoral Armageddon as this, with millions of ballots to be recounted, American newscasters of all persuasions are constantly, as if to reassure themselves, announcing that America's electoral and justice systems are, wait for it and brace yourselves, "the envy of the world." The U.S. is a half-jungle; it is magnificent in its way, and operates on a scale the world has not seen since the height of the Roman Empire, but it repels much of the world. That doesn't matter; the United States is a democracy and the Americans can run their country any way they want and it's no one else's business; but the imputation to the rest of us of being prostrated with envy of American life is a fantasy.

The new administration, if there is one, will be a rickety coalition ostensibly headed by a doddering chief. Within his coalition are all those hostile to Trump, from racially diverse hooligans pretending to be civil rights crusaders to Democratic Marxists, and including the detritus of the old Democratic base in the working and lower-middle class and the academics, and of course, the imperishable if almost suicidal media. But Trump is not politically dead; his worst fate is to lose office by a hair's breadth as his policies succeed, and he is the unassailable chief of a new Republican party that he has built out from the golf clubs and limousine liberals and farmers and a few reactionaries and the nondescript remnants of post-Reagan Republicanism. Trump has tapped heavily into the working class and the minorities by directly improving their standards of living, while strengthening the capitalist and free market credentials of his adoptive party with lower taxes and deregulation and renegotiated trade deals. (He hardly qualifies as a party loyalist, having changed parties seven times in 13 years waiting for the right moment to storm

Washington and the right vehicle for his ambitions.)

If Joe Biden takes the oath, his will be a regime of irreconcilable contradictions, in a gridlock imposed by the crafty Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Trump can do what he wants – the Republicans are his party now. He has inspired scores of millions of Americans fed up with the corruption, hypocrisy and injustice of the ever-self-celebrating American political system. But there was always a doubt over whether his supporters would be as numerous as those whom he offended by his often irksome public personality. He allowed this election to become less of a choice between him and a very uninspiring opponent, and instead a referendum on the straight question: “Do you like Donald Trump?” That question could arise again, but the self-diminished media won’t be able to perform a protracted bloodless assassination again.

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