

Trump's Momentum Toward 2024 Is a Case of the Office Seeking the Man



President Trump at a campaign rally on April 27, 2023 at Manchester, New Hampshire. Spencer Platt/Getty Images

by Conrad Black

There now seems to be a double inexorability as the campaign for next year's presidential election gets seriously underway. On the one side, despite the most fervent ambitions of the Republican Never-Trumpers and anti-Trump independent voters, it is practically impossible to see anyone breaking his lock on the Republican nomination.

The Democrats have no more indictments to conjure out of legal contortions and gymnastics and fictions and it should be possible for Mr. Trump's lawyers to defer all these cases until after the election. The indictments will fade in their electoral significance other than as indicative of the

corruption of the legal system and the temporary degeneration of the Democratic Party into a perennial dirty tricks operation, a monument to Saul Alinsky and not Jefferson, Madison, FDR, or JFK.

The other inexorability, much less advanced but firming up every week, is the pressure on President Biden not to seek reelection. A moment's reflection on the vigor with which Presidents Clinton, George W. Bush, Obama, and Trump pursued reelection is enough to demonstrate the complete inadequacy of the incumbent's claim to another four years as president. His diction is so slurred and his syntax so complicated, it is often difficult to understand him.

Up until now, the Democratic Party bosses who resuscitated Mr. Biden four years ago and parachuted him into the nomination while fastening the Sanders socialist program around his neck and unctuously dismissing the 2020 Black Lives Matter urban riots as understandable post-George Floyd African-American righteousness and illustrative of Trump chaos, have indulged Mr. Biden on the assumption that he could defeat Mr. Trump, again.

"Biden defeated Trump before, there's no reason why he couldn't do it again," is the conventional wisdom spouted by Washington commentators who should know better. Leaving aside for the moment the question of the authenticity of the 2020 election result, Mr. Trump is clearly more popular as an underdog facing a corrupted justice system than he was as an incumbent president steeped in Covid and Democratic-enabled urban rioting.

Mr. Biden, after two and a half years of millions of illegal migrants flooding into the country, the green terror, government induced inflation, and the deterioration of America's international position, most spectacularly in the Afghanistan debacle, and after four years of mental and physical attrition, is not the candidate of 2020. Then he was

the quiet, reassuring, good-natured, moderate adult-in-the-room Joe Biden whom it was possible to hide in his basement throughout the campaign because of the pandemic.

Almost all polls now show Mr. Trump either leading Mr. Biden or running within one or two points of him, which would give Mr. Trump the election because the Democratic majorities in California and New York are larger than the Republican majorities in Texas and Florida. In these circumstances, and with the ever more damaging evidence of the Biden family influence-peddling operation that has been widely conducted for more than a decade, there seems to be a second inexorability: that the powers that be in the Democratic Party will discard their leader.

Mr. Biden served their ends four years ago and has fronted the lurch to the left sponsored by Senator Sanders and his acolytes. He has been rewarded with the highest honor that can be conferred on the loyal but geriatric partisan placeman, in this case, in Cromwellian terms, "a decayed servitor."

In order to avoid the unfeasible misfortune of a Harris presidency, which would make her almost an invincible candidate for the nomination, the president should be induced to announce his retirement fairly soon after the new year in order for his party to be able to stage a few primaries and produce a semi-presentable candidate.

The argument that both Messrs. Biden and Trump are too old has just been a false effort to create an equivalence between them, as presidents and in their physical and mental condition. There have been many examples of people who have served successfully in high public office in their 80s, (Adenauer, Gladstone, Tito, Cardinal Fleury, various popes, including Celestine III and Leo XIII, and the Venetian doge, Enrico Dandolo).

Even in his prime, Mr. Biden fantasized about many aspects of

his own past and was never more than banal and laborious, other than in his occasional lapses into outright wickedness as in his assault upon Supreme Court nominee, Judge Robert Bork, in 1987.

Assuming the Democratic bosses successfully ease Mr. Biden out and dispose of Vice President Harris in the primaries if she runs in them, the most likely nominee is Governor Newsom of the crumbling state of California. Governor Whitmer might get some votes because of her gender, certainly not because of her performance leading Michigan. Governor Shapiro of Pennsylvania would be better, partly because he is less well-known but has been more sensible than Mr. Newsom or Ms. Whitmer.

The governor of New Jersey, Phil Murphy, doubtless would imagine he could be a viable candidate, but he scraped to reelection and has lumbered himself with an impossible record in education matters. None of these people is any world-beater, and nobody will be able to defend the record of the current administration.

The theory that any so-called fresh Democratic face would make short work of Mr. Trump in an election is just another anti-Trump fable, like the widely agreed-upon lie most recently respectabilized by the distinguished political organizer and commentator Karl Rove in the *Wall Street Journal* on August 31, that President Trump's concerns about the 2020 election have been fairly adjudicated.

Mr. Rove knows as well as anyone that the judiciary at all levels declined in 2020 to judge on the merits all 19 of the constitutional challenges to the changes in voting and vote-counting rules supposedly to accommodate Covid voting and that created millions of unsolicited mail-in ballots, about which concerns were raised that they were not verifiably cast by the people who ostensibly filled them out.

At this point, Mr. Trump should be the modest favorite, but he

could strengthen that status and make it the third inextorability of this early election campaign if he put on a charm blitz. All those who know him personally know him to be capable of it. There would be an end to disparagements of opponents and a gradual adoption of Ronald Reagan's 11th commandment not to speak ill of a fellow Republican.

Mr. Trump could lead a return to civil discourse in the exchange between the presidential candidates, whoever the Democrat may be. He could confine references to the past election to saying that he believed he was defeated by the use of harvested ballots that were not authorized in several swing states by the state legislatures as the Constitution requires and that the courts refused to hear these actions and leave it at that. He has a substantive program for the future and the Biden administration presents a vast open goal for the Republicans to score in; if he plays his cards right, Mr. Trump will win.

Assuming those indictments of him that higher courts allow to proceed are deferred until after the election, Mr. Trump, without over-stressing it, can benefit from an election that is in part a referendum on the political abuse of the justice system and the intelligence agencies. Played properly, he is not only the likely winner, the office is almost inexorably seeking the man.

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