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## **If Trump was a dictator, he was a miserable failure**

By Steve Bakke  February 17, 2021



All that's happened the last year seems cruelly connected and inevitable – a societal “perfect storm.” A virus came calling that was determined to have its way with us, and it has. Then came looting, burning, and rioting lasting months, with precious little pushback from numerous state and local governments. Billions of dollars of damage to tens of thousands of homes, businesses, statues, and government buildings. Hundreds of government buildings were destroyed by fire or irreparably damaged.

Woven into all of this was a presidential election for the ages, an attack on the Capitol, and a president who survived two foolish impeachments. Trump was a consequential president whose popularity came from delivering on promises – something not often seen. Nevertheless, he's paying a price for his reckless, outrageousness style.

I was paging through articles, reports and notes from the last several months and came across several items that are typical of the confused lack of common sense that exists today – much of it fueled by hatred and fear of “Trump the 45<sup>th</sup>.” I've chosen two unrelated items to discuss.

First is an October editorial in the Minneapolis StarTribune by New York Times' columnist Thomas Friedman (“A plea to Trump voters: Don't re-elect this man”). While gratuitously acknowledging the legitimacy of supporting Trump based on policies (Gee, thanks Tom), Friedman nevertheless showed his elitist stripes by declaring: “None of that resonates with me.”

Friedman's tortured central theme was: “Our President is not just a policy robot. He's also a role model.” With that statement Friedman put his finger on the essence of a very real dilemma faced by conservative voters, i.e. Trump's popular conservative policies often collided with his outrageous style.

Friedman was perfectly comfortable, giddy even, asking us to disregard Trump's accomplishments. Once he found an excuse to ignore Trump's successful policies, it became

easy to preach to the rest of us. But Friedman's motivation is obvious. He simply hates Trump, and conservatives see through his twisted logic.

Recognizing that Trump suffers from the human condition, i.e. possessing significant flaws, I'd turn Friedman's twisted logic around by pointing out that the President isn't just a role model, his most important obligation, and success, was promising and delivering on conservative policies.

My other example takes us in a different direction. Several months ago, CNN's Christiane Amanpour played the "Hitler card." She described Trump's equivalency to Hitler using these words: "This week, 82 years ago, Kristallnacht happened. It was the Nazi's warning shot across the bow of our human civilization that led to genocide against a whole identity and in that tower of burning books, it led to an attack on fact, knowledge, history, and truth. After four years of a modern-day assault on those same values by Donald Trump, the Biden-Harris team pledges a return to norms, including the truth....."

My reaction starts with recalling this comment: "If Trump was a dictator, he was a miserable failure." But that's mostly just a clever statement. I kept watching for something more insightful and effective, finally coming across an article in *The Patriot Post* by Douglas Andrews, "When all you have is a Nazi hammer..."

Andrews recalled a 2017 National Review article by Kyle Smith in which the author commented on the irresponsible nature of the "Trump-is-like-Hitler" topic. Smith made this interesting comparison: "Hitler murdered 11 million; Trump has murdered no one. Hitler invaded the sovereign states of Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Free State of Danzig, Denmark, France, Guernsey, Hungary, Italy, Jersey, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, San Marino, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia; Trump has invaded no sovereign states. Hitler lied about Jews being the source of Germany's misery; Trump lied about ratings for "The Apprentice," his Electoral College victory being the biggest since Ronald Reagan's, and whether anyone else had been on the cover of Time more than he."

We could go on finding examples of Trump's imprecision, but Smith's article put it in perspective. I'm inclined to repeat the simplistic conclusion stated earlier: "If Trump was a dictator, he was a miserable failure."

My point is simple. When faced with a difficult candidate choice, particularly when there's a clash between policy and style, the decision should be all about policy preferences. One should ask no more of a conservative than to decide on that basis. And conservatives should commit to deliver nothing less. I did, and I'm proud of it.