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## Trump: reflections, regrets, and reality

Steve Bakke  January 3, 2023



The clock is ticking into 2023 as I write this. It's time to reflect, evaluate and predict. I'm motivated by this challenge from a smirking political adversary: "Now what do you have to say about that 'crazy' republican president?" It's entirely fair to ask that to a two-time Trump voter. And as a frequent Trump critic, I know that reflection adds value. I'll be objective, while acknowledging residual hints of bias in the corners of my analysis.

Trump elbowed his way onto the scene as a nouveau populist presidential candidate, rude and disagreeable. His conservative policies and "get-it-done" style overcame his antics, and he became our president. Decades of disappointing governing agendas and a growing conservative populist coalition combined to bring Trump victory. He became a modern-day ruffian Robin Hood, bringing misery to the "sheriff." Delivering on promises created a consequential presidency.

### *Mallard Fillmore by Bruce Tinsley, May 7, 2019*



Otherwise supportive conservatives often kept their distance because of Trump's antics. For example, his childish conjuring of names for republican opponents: Little Marco, Lyin' Ted, and Low-energy Jeb. I personally remain incensed by his "bleeding from wherever" reference in reaction to tough questioning from Fox News moderator Megyn Kelly during the GOP debates.

Absent Trump's early outrageousness, would democrats have dared stoop as low as they have in demonizing and investigating their hated opponent? And would Trump supporters have been so unfairly vilified in the manner of "The Scarlet Letter"? Perhaps not. Either way, Trump and his enemies dramatically lowered the level of political civility.

Don't be fooled when democrats cloak their behavior in self-righteous "save democracy" clothing. Their fear of Trump's populist appeal, often reserved for democrat candidates in past elections, was their motivation. Trump scared them politically, not patriotically or morally.

Trump has legitimate complaints. Consider the Trump/Russian election collusion charges resulting from the Steele dossier which was funded by Clinton's campaign. It's now acknowledged as fraudulent. Those inappropriate actions and phony information were partially responsible for foolish and unsuccessful impeachments. Add to that government agencies withholding potentially damning information from the infamous "Hunter laptop" which could have affected the 2020 election.



The number of accusations and investigations of Trump since 2015 is historic, and some believe he "asked for it." He certainly provided ammunition for his enemies. His foolish and divisive attempts to change election results and later his reckless conduct on January 6, 2021 ("J-6") are examples.

More historic are the horrific riots of J-6. A robust investigation was certainly justified. The democrat led committee hearings should have been a bipartisan project to understand all

aspects of the illegal riots and determine the role of those implicated. We should understand every aspect, from Trump's role to reasons why adequate security was absent. But the hearings were allowed to deteriorate into merely political drama focused only on Trump and his associates.

The J-6 hearings displayed classic hardball politics, yet were advertised as "definitive justice," and accepted as such by many Americans. Don't forget, the Committee was comprised exclusively of dedicated anti-Trumpers, only testimony damaging to Trump was publicized, and cross examination of witnesses wasn't permitted. Irrespective of who's to blame, the procedural flaws mean the investigation will go nowhere.

Trump definitely doesn't represent a morally superior political choice, and he never sought that status. An objective evaluation of Trump's negative reputation shows some complaints are richly deserved, many speculative, and others false.

When facing difficult or poor presidential election choices, the decision should focus on policy choices. One should ask no more of a conservative than to decide on that basis. And conservatives should commit to deliver nothing less. Therefore, if Trump faces the type of democrat opposition he's faced in previous elections, significant conservative support will inevitably result – probably mine included.

However, I'm 100% certain the nation shouldn't have to endure what repeating Trump or Biden candidacies portends. Republicans have great talent ready to step up. Journalist Salena Zito accurately observed that the populist coalition that elected Trump isn't motivated by resentment and grievance. While thankful to Trump for his popular policies and successes, the coalition wants to move on.

The country will be well served if the Trumps and Bidens make themselves politically scarce. And adding the Clintons would make the list complete.