

Wall Street Journal

Wednesday, February 22, 2017, Page A15



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Updated Feb. 21, 2017 7:47 p.m. ET

Donald Trump comes to the presidency, it's safe to say, with a steeper learning curve than just about anyone who has ever held the position.



He's working hard at a job he likely didn't believe he'd have until late in the campaign. Give him credit. At least he appears upbeat and game for the challenge, abating one realistic fear. Calling him a failure at this point is ridiculously premature.

Even more ridiculous is to compare his troubles to Nixon's Watergate, for there is no president he resembles less. Nixon was a deeply rooted, connected part of the ruling establishment. He had been a congressman, senator and vice president. His Watergate sins were committed on his way to a landslide re-election. If Mr. Trump screws up his presidency, it will not be the way Nixon did—by presuming too much on his ability to control institutions and bend them to his will. More likely the opposite.

Mr. Trump is an unusual president in that, unlike any we can think of, he speaks only for himself. There is no army of Trump interest groups and loyalists and activists to respond to his command or suggestion. He does not have deep knowledge of policy, government or politics. He does not have longtime organizational ties.

Results do not flow: Nordstrom's stock is up since being bashed by Mr. Trump. If he tweeted tomorrow that the IRS ought to investigate Amazon—a threat he made during the campaign—nobody at the IRS would likely change a thing they were doing. Barack Obama would not have had to tweet a word.

What of the innuendo of Russian influence? Mr. Trump ran an unorthodox, idiosyncratic campaign. He also ran, unavoidably, an uneducated one—uneducated about whom not to take a call from, whom not to meet with, whom not to retweet. In this context, talk of “contacts” between his campaign and Russian intelligence probably means very little. Your columnist, he's pretty sure, also had contacts with Russian intelligence during the campaign, judging by the tone and curious diction of certain pro-Trump emails in his inbox.

The idea of Mr. Trump as Russian agent is one more failure of imagination by the media—a striving to believe that some hidden, sinister logic explains his rise (and also excuses Robby Mook).

Whether his presidency is a success or failure, the Donald Trump show is likely to remain, to an amazing degree, separate from the Trump administration show. Perhaps the latter will become the Jared Kushner show. It might become the Bob Corker show if Mr. Trump wisely reaches out (as another Republican president, Reagan, did) to a Tennessee senator to put a disordered White House on the straight and narrow.

A Trump administration need not devolve into chaos—its real challenge is how to make use of a unique asset, Mr. Trump himself, to power the coalitions that get things done in Washington. This possibility still exists.

The saddest part, though, is how quickly Democrats, following their loudest, ninniest voters, have decided to turn Mr. Trump into the Antichrist. One example: In 17 years of Howard Stern interviews, Mr. Trump appears never to have uttered a sentiment unfriendly to gays. He is a lifelong New Yorker. He was a regular at Studio 54. His mentor was a powerful gay attorney. In his convention speech, Mr. Trump offered himself as the defender of “LGBTQ citizens.” Yet many gay activists now join a parade of those pronouncing themselves oppressed by a Trump presidency. Why? Pure cognitive dissonance: Democrats have been busy twisting his admittedly rococo image beyond reason to fit their partisan needs.

Mr. Trump’s fundamental independence from party might have been, and still might be, an opportunity for the country. It perhaps merits eye rolling more than paranoia, but another obstacle is the deranged meddling of the bureaucracy. Recall that it began with FBI chief James Comey’s fatuous intervention in the election, clearing Hillary Clinton in the email controversy, unclearing her, and then clearing her again.

And now the so-called intelligence community shows itself unhealthily eager to traffic in claims about Kremlin influence in the election, to leak intercepts of Mike Flynn’s phone chats, to fill the press with vague insinuations of ties between the Trump campaign and Russian intelligence.

All this smacks too much of the little Walter Mittys of our overfunded, under-delivering intelligence bureaucracy trying to punish Americans for how they voted.

They are fools to do so. The election represents serious data from the world. Sixty-three million Americans were trying to get Washington's attention. We still hope for real achievements. At worst, Trumpian gridlock is probably better than Obama gridlock (look at the stock market). In the meantime, the body politic will listen to itself. In four years, thanks to Mr. Trump, it will have been drilled into both parties' heads just how badly things have gone wrong in our country by the lights of millions of our fellow-citizens.



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He was appointed a [Knight-Wallace Fellowship](#) at the University of Michigan in 1991-1992.^[2] In 1997 he was awarded the [Gerald Loeb Award](#) for distinguished business and financial coverage^[1] and in 2013 he became the inaugural winner of the Calvin Coolidge Prize for Journalism.