

January 23, 2017 – TRUMP AND HIS SPEECH

Some of our regulars are enthusiastic about Trump. Others are not so sanguine. Among the enthusiasts was Jesse Jackson. Yes, you read that right. No, he's not one of the regulars, but if he keeps talking sense he will make the cut. A news story from [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) recounts an interview with Jackson. Under the rubric of "man bites dog" we'll make that the lede today.

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"What does a man with so much power do? Grace can expand your power. Arrogance can diminish it. I hope he'll have the grace and commitment to put all of us under one big tent."

In "Tale of Two Speeches," [Roger Kimball](#) writes on reactions to Trump's speech. Kimball's piece is long so we have abridged. Follow the link to read it all.

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To be fair, the legacy media in America hated Trump's speech, too, as did — and this is the more interesting thing — the anti-Trump Right. [The Chicago Tribune](#) described the speech as "raw, angry and aggrieved," "pugnacious in tone, pitch black in its color." OK, par for the course. But Andrew Ferguson, writing in [The Wall Street Journal](#), said that "the candidate who campaigned as a sociopath shows signs he may yet govern as one." ("Sociopath"? Caligula was a sociopath. Donald Trump?) Sure, [Chris "Old Reliable" Matthews](#), ready as ever with the Godwin Expedient, described the speech as "Hitlerian." But just about every mainstream outlet from [The Weekly Standard](#) on down referred to the speech as "dark." I was a bit taken aback to hear a politically mature friend describe the speech as "disgusting," "nasty," "borderline un-American" and then go on, listing Godwinwards, to invoke "beer halls" (you know what that means!) in connection with the speech.

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For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost.

Washington flourished — but the people did not share in its wealth.

Politicians prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed.

The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country.

Which of those statements do you find "Dark"? "Nasty"? "Aggrieved?" "Disgusting"? Or, more to the point, which do you find untrue? ...

... As he neared his conclusion, his tone became hortatory: "We stand at the birth of a new millennium, ready to unlock the mysteries of space, to free the Earth from the miseries of disease, and to harness the energies, industries and technologies of tomorrow." And then came this dollop of poetry:

It is time to remember that old wisdom our soldiers will never forget: that whether we are black or brown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots, we all enjoy the same glorious freedoms, and we all salute the same great American Flag.

And whether a child is born in the urban sprawl of Detroit or the windswept plains of Nebraska, they look up at the same night sky, they fill their heart with the same dreams, and they are infused with the breath of life by the same almighty Creator.

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Glenn Reynolds of Instapundit sees many things he likes. Among them;

... The appointments. The appointment of retired Marine general James Mattis as secretary of Defense all by itself represents a major step toward turning our military back into warriors, as opposed to the social justice warriors they were being turned into under the Obama administration. Mattis, of course, has gotten bipartisan support, but many other appointments also look good. I originally thought (and said) that Rex Tillerson was a bad pick for secretary of State, but hearing him talk since then I feel pretty good about it. Sessions wouldn't have been my first choice for attorney general (I don't like his record on the drug war or civil forfeiture), but otherwise he's a solid guy and even many of the Democrats attacking him now were happy to work with him over decades in the Senate. ...

David Goldman as **Spengler** has a look at Trump.

... Most of all Trump wants to protect Americans from globalization, and rightly so. At the peak of its technological dominance in the decade after the Cold War, when America fielded the technologies that made the modern economy, America opened its gates to China (allowing it into the World Trade Organization) and Mexico through the North American Free Trade Agreement. This occurred during the Clinton Administration at the peak of America's investment boom in technology. We invented semiconductors, lasers, optical networks, sensors, displays, virtually the whole of the modern economy.

But America was too complacent. Its share of global high technology exports (as defined by the World Bank) fell from 18% to 7% between 1999 and 2014, while China's share soared from 3% to 26%. (Europe remained steady at around 30%). China used every lever of industrial policy, including state subsidies, loans from state-owned entities, and so forth, to create employment in

tech industries. That is the Asian industrial model, and in many cases it works. It is hardly fair to expect America to play by free market rules while its competitors indulge in aggressive mercantilism. ...

... The problem is how to protect Americans. The global supply chain is so closely integrated that it is hard to discourage some imports without doing real damage to American industries. The border tax proposed by House Republicans would prevent corporations from deducting imported inputs as costs for tax purposes. For industries like oil refining, that would create enormous distortions, while providing windfalls elsewhere. My own preference would be to use selected tariffs for products that benefit from government subsidies overseas, which is entirely permissible under World Trade Organization rules.

Ultimately, no government can protect American workers unless productivity growth resumes. American productivity growth has fallen to zero for the first time since the stagflation of the 1970s. Without productivity growth, American living standards will fall, irrespective of whether the government pursues protection or free trade. I have argued elsewhere in this publication that reviving military and aerospace R&D is the key to productivity growth.

Donald Trump could be a character in a Frank Capra film or a Sinclair Lewis novel. He is our generation's incarnation of Bunyan's pilgrim. I do not mean that as praise (I never liked Bunyan, as it happens). That simply is the kind of people we Americans are, or rather the sort of people we have become at two and a half centuries' distance from our Revolution. We never have succeeded in training an elite. Whenever an American elite finds itself in power it chokes on its own arrogance. I cheered Mr. Trump to victory in the last election out of disgust for the do-gooders and world-fixers of both the Republican and Democratic mainstreams. Now I wish him good luck. He'll need all the luck he can get.

A [WSJ OpEd author](#) writes about coming out the second time.

Since Election Day, I've mentioned to friends my hope that America and its people are in better shape four years from now than they are today. Everyone I've shared this with has rebuked me and asked if I voted for Donald Trump. So far I've given evasive answers, saying something like I respect the election results and agree with President Obama that the "peaceful transfer of power" is a "hallmark of our democracy."

This makes me feel the same way I did for most of my life as I hid my sexual orientation. Born in the 1950s, I began having gay relationships at 25 but remained closeted. I hated lying to people, but in the 1980s and '90s I feared that coming out would estrange me from family and damage my career.

Similarly, I now find creative ways to avoid answering whether I voted for Donald Trump. ...

And [Andrew Ferguson](#), also in WSJ, shows less enthusiasm.

... Unfortunately, the candidate who campaigned as a sociopath shows signs he may yet govern as one. His refusal to submit to daily intelligence briefings on grounds that he's "a smart person" suggests the presidency will pump Mr. Trump's already world-class ego into something even

more obtrusive, more dangerous. His childish tweets continue unabated and, what's worse, no one close to him has the nerve to tell him to put a sock in it. His overpromising grows daily more extravagant ("health insurance for everybody . . . with lower numbers, much lower deductibles"), and in this he rivals President Obama, who once pledged to stop the rise of the oceans.

After the past 18 months, only an idiot would bet against Donald Trump. He has banged his way from one unlikely triumph to another. Now, with the stakes much higher, the conservatism of Trump's cabinet may save him. If, over the next few years, parents begin to feel they've regained control of their children's schools, if wages start to rise and business owners feel liberated from the dead hand of overregulation, if the military recovers its strength and self-confidence—then Mr. Trump's ignorance and vulgarity won't matter. He'll lay claim to the unlikeliest triumph of all: a successful presidency.

Yuval Levin writes on the inaugural speech.

Being a sucker for civic rituals, I've attended every presidential inauguration since Clinton's second in 1997. Regardless of my opinion of the person being inaugurated—when I have voted for him and when I have not—I've stood in the rain or the cold and relished the opportunity to observe the ceremony and hear what the new or returning chief executive has to say. ...

... Observing these ceremonies every four years is a reminder that the presidency is for the most part a pre-defined role in a larger political drama—a niche that can be occupied by different people with different goals and characters, and used by them to their different ends while largely keeping its shape. That shape has itself changed over time, of course, mostly expanding in our living memory. But the office has grown through use (and over-use) and every president has run to fill the role. The inaugural ceremony helps to highlight this: It is essentially the same every time, with a different glutton for punishment taking the same oath as all who came before, and setting out to occupy the same position in the same system.

But Trump's way of speaking about his vision and intentions suggests his case will be different. He did not really run to occupy the presidency as it exists, and does not seem to think of himself as stepping now into a role he is obliged to carry out. He ran to disrupt a broken system, and to be himself but with more power and authority. He is our president, but he has not taken on the job with any clear sense of the presidency as a distinct function and office which he should now stretch and bend to embody.

This has not been easy to accept, and so we have tended implicitly to wait for the moment when Trump would put aside his childish antics and step up into the role. Or else we have inclined to think about the prospects for Trump's presidency in terms of whether he would be too strong or too weak a president. But this is probably the wrong way to think about what Trump is doing. He is not filling the role in a certain way. He is playing a different role. He is being himself.

This suggests a different way to think about the challenges and opportunities the Trump presidency may pose. Trump seems inclined to leave largely unfilled the part traditionally played by the president in our system while playing another part formed around the peculiar contours of his bombastic, combative, and at times surely disordered personality. That means that Trump's team, the Congress, the courts, and the public will need to confront the implications of both the absence of a more traditional president and the presence of a different and unfamiliar kind of figure at the heart of the constitutional order. These are two distinct problems. ...

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Jackson: Trump's inauguration speech was 'full of hope and inclusion'

WASHINGTON - Not long after President Donald Trump was sworn in, we happened to run into the Rev. Jesse Jackson on the street. He gave a thumbs-up to Trump's inauguration speech but said the new commander in chief has much work to do in order to unify a nation riven by a divisive campaign.

"The speech was full of hope and inclusion and he reached out to cities in a way they've not been reached out to for a long time," he said. "But with that must come a target, a timetable and a budget."

Trump's speech hit many of the populist chords he refined on the campaign trail, portraying Washington as full of elite insiders indifferent to the common man.

"That all changes, starting right here, and right now, because this moment is your moment: it belongs to you," he said, before ticking off goals: "We will build new roads, and highways, and bridges, and airports, and tunnels, and railways all across our wonderful nation. We will get our people off of welfare and back to work, rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor. We will follow two simple rules: Buy American and hire American."

Trump capped his speech with his famous phrase: "Together, we will make America great again."

Jackson says Trump must back up his rhetoric with action.

"I'm hopeful. There's an awful lot of damage done that needs to be cleaned up," he said. "The campaign was very divisive and very painful... Referring to President Barack (Obama) as the founder of ISIS, Hillary (Clinton) as a nasty woman. He'll have to have to clean that stuff up and then put forth some concrete plans."

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Pajamas Media

A Tale of Two Speeches

by Roger Kimball

... Friday afternoon, I wrote a brief piece about the inauguration for the Financial Times (requires registration) in which I described Trump's address as "gracious but plain-speaking." My, how the readers of the FT disliked that!

To be fair, the legacy media in America hated Trump's speech, too, as did — and this is the more interesting thing — the anti-Trump Right. The Chicago Tribune described the speech as

"raw, angry and aggrieved," "pugnacious in tone, pitch black in its color." OK, par for the course. But Andrew Ferguson, writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, said that "the candidate who campaigned as a sociopath shows signs he may yet govern as one." ("Sociopath"? Caligula was a sociopath. Donald Trump?) Sure, Chris "Old Reliable" Matthews, ready as ever with the Godwin Expedient, described the speech as "Hiterlian." But just about every mainstream outlet from *The Weekly Standard* on down referred to the speech as "dark." I was a bit taken aback to hear a politically mature friend describe the speech as "disgusting," "nasty," "borderline un-American" and then go on, listing Godwinwards, to invoke "beer halls" (you know what that means!) in connection with the speech.

I said that Trump's speech was gracious. Here's how he began:

Every four years, we gather on these steps to carry out the orderly and peaceful transfer of power, and we are grateful to President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama for their gracious aid throughout this transition. They have been magnificent.

"Raw"? "Angry"? "Nasty"? "Disgusting"?

Granted, that was merely the prelude. The rest of the short speech (it was only about 1400 words) is what I called "plain-speaking." Trump negotiated the transition from gracious prelude to forthright substance with the word "however":

Today's ceremony, however, has very special meaning. Because today we are not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, or from one party to another – but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People.

During the primaries, my favored candidate was Ted Cruz, partly because I thought he was the most serious about bringing the bipartisan, leech-like Washington gravy train to an abrupt halt.

At first, I regarded Donald Trump as just another big-government operator who would not reform Washington so much as find ways to exploit it for his own benefit. So far, I have to say, I have been pleasantly surprised. Sure, it is early days. But he has spoken of making staff cuts of 20% and a budget cut of 10%. And, in what is the real kernel of his inauguration address, he gives the rationale: his administration will not just be Washington business as usual, in which new leeches come to town to replace the old leeches, but will actually endeavor to alter the basic, perverted metabolism that has taken root in Washington. The aim, he said, was not simply to transfer power from one party to another — chaps with different hats but the same grasping hands and insatiable appetite for your money — but to transfer it from Washington to where Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson and the rest thought it should be, to We the People.

Will Donald Trump be able to accomplish this? I do not know. But I applaud the ambition.

Trump began with a few general observations:

For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost.

Washington flourished – but the people did not share in its wealth.

Politicians prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed.

The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country.

Which of those statements do you find "Dark"? "Nasty"? "Aggrieved"? "Disgusting"? Or, more to the point, which do you find untrue?

Trump then came to the constructive part of his talk. First, a promise:

That all changes – starting right here, and right now, because this moment is your moment.

"What truly matters," he continued, "is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people." Is that "dark," or merely Madisonian?

"January 20th 2017," he said, "will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again."

Well, we'll see about that. But let's say it is. Would that be a bad, a "borderline un American" thing?

Again, Trump reminded his audience that "a nation exists to serve its citizens." At least, that's the idea. But something has gone wrong. I'd say that a combination of bureaucratic metastasis combined with cronyism has upset the system. Trump used different words, but his diagnosis comes to the same thing.

"Americans," he said, "want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families, and good jobs for themselves." Any objections so far? No? How about to this:

But for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential.

That's a dire diagnosis, maybe a "dark" diagnosis. But is it "disgusting," "borderline unAmerican," etc.? Again, is it, any of it, untrue?

Trump went on to say that "this American carnage stops right here and stops right now." Many commentators took issue with the word "carnage." But think about it. According to CNN, in 2016 Chicago saw 762 murders, 3,550 shooting incidents, 4,331 shooting victims.

How do you define "carnage"?

But now we come to the really contentious part of the address, the part where Trump declared that "from this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this moment on, it's going to be America First."

Imagine that! An American president that puts America first! Can you believe it?

Let's clear up one red herring immediately. Donald Trump's ambition to resuscitate American industry, benefit American workers, revitalize the American military has nothing but a verbal connection with the America First Committee, the non-interventionist group that militated against America's entry into World War II from September 1940 until the bombing of Pearl Harbor (it

was dissolved on December 10, 1941). Elaborate ghost stories have been spun around Trump's use of the phrase "America first." But as far as I can see, the dreadful tales are nothing more than desperate fantasies promulgated, repeated, and elaborated by people who have made a large psychic investment in regarding Trump as a monster.

"America First": what, specifically, does Trump mean by that?

Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families.

Is that a bad thing, "raw," "dark," "nasty," etc.?

Trump continues:

We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength.

"Protection" was another word that caused pain: Does Trump want to start a trade war? Impose tariffs? Return us to a protectionist isolationism?

Well, that is not how I read it. There is, first of all, a difference between "protection" and "protectionism." I'm not just playing with words. "Protectionism" is an ideology. The sort of "protection" Trump is talking about, as I understand it, is about self-defense.

But what about free trade, the free movement of capital, cheap labor, etc.? Again, I think those issues, though important, are largely a distraction in the context of Trump's ambitions. Trump is speaking as president of the United States and he is saying that his first obligation is to us, the citizens of the United States. I find that refreshing after eight years of a transnational progressive at the helm.

Trump's point is this: We may all be part of the family of man, but we can best serve our sisters and our cousins and our aunts (apologies to W.S. Gilbert) if we ourselves are strong. How can we accomplish that? Trump said that "we will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth." That's a start, surely. And then: "We will build new roads, and highways, and bridges, and airports, and tunnels, and railways all across our wonderful nation."

How are we going to pay for that, you might ask, and that's a good question. But, I would submit, in the context of an aspirational oration such as an inaugural address, that is a secondary consideration. The main thing is the ambition and the program, which, says Trump, can be distilled into "two simple rules: Buy American and Hire American."

A lot of people really hated that. They found it "raw," "dark," "nasty," etc. Do you?

Trump is not, he hastened to point out, seeking a splendid isolation.

We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world – but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first.

That sounds good to me. Do you find it "pugnacious in tone, pitch black in its color"? I don't. I find it merely healthy and realistic.

What was genuinely, I'd say gloriously "pugnacious," however, was Trump's attitude toward terrorism. The administration of Barack Obama studiously avoided even mentioning the word "Islamic" in a sentence that contained "terrorism."

Donald Trump, refreshingly to my mind, stated the obvious: "We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones," he said, "and unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth."

Now, Donald Trump may underestimate the difficulty of that task, but I for one applaud the ambition and prefer his attitude to the namby-pamby "it-has-nothing-to-do-with-Islam" ideology of the last eight years, actually, more than eight years.

James Fitzjames Stephen, the great critic of John Stuart Mill, saw deeply into the reality of Trump's "America First" exhortation in his book Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: "The man who works from himself outwards," Stephen observed,

... whose conduct is governed by ordinary motives, and who acts with a view to his own advantage and the advantage of those who are connected with himself in definite, assignable ways, produces in the ordinary course of things much more happiness to others . . . than a moral Don Quixote who is always liable to sacrifice himself and his neighbors. On the other hand, a man who has a disinterested love of the human race—that is to say, who has got a fixed idea about some way of providing for the management of the concerns of mankind—is an unaccountable person . . . who is capable of making his love for men in general the ground of all sorts of violence against men in particular.

I can imagine a story by Borges in which we learn of the influence of Donald Trump on Stephen.

Critics saw many malevolent things in Trump's speech. I discerned a generous spirit tempered by realism about the way the world works and a sound appreciation of human psychology. "At the bedrock of our politics will be a total allegiance to the United States of America," Trump wrote, "and through our loyalty to our country, we will rediscover our loyalty to each other."

One of the most poisonous features of contemporary social life has been the insinuation of political correctness into the academy and politics. It has stifled honesty and transformed principled disagreement into rancid heresy that must be stamped out, not argued with. Trump explicitly challenged that toxic development, insisting that "we must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity."

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"Raw"? "Dark?"

Donald Trump has set out to "make America great again." His real offense is to attempt to do so behind the backs of the vast network of established interests from both parties. I had my doubts that Trump would come to Washington and "drain the swamp." But on the evidence of his behavior as president-elect and his less than two days as President, I am convinced that he will make every effort to do just that. Look at the "top issues" that appeared on the White House website within minutes of his address:

- [America First Energy Plan](#)
- [America First Foreign Policy](#)
- [Bringing Back Jobs And Growth](#)
- [Making Our Military Strong Again](#)
- [Standing Up For Our Law Enforcement Community](#)
- [Trade Deals Working For All Americans](#)

Trump may fail, of course: no one should underestimate the strength of the opposition he will face. But I suspect he is part of a worldwide movement of revulsion against the sclerotic utopianism of political correctness. We are doubtless in for a wild ride. But I cannot think of a moment, at least not since 1980, when a current of burgeoning self-confidence was so powerfully asserting itself.

USA Today

[Trump has already delivered: Glenn Reynolds](#)

The almost president is exceeding my (modest) expectations.

by Glenn Harlan Reynolds

So the Trump presidency begins Friday at noon, and though plenty of people have been happy to offer predictions, nobody really knows how it will go. (If it's like pretty much every other presidency in my lifetime, the answer is "disappointingly.") But Trump's transition — his "pre-presidency" — is just about over now, so let's see how that's gone, and if that offers us any guidance on how things might go in the future.

And, actually, Trump has accomplished some stuff. So far, in his pre-presidency, Trump has:

- (1) Killed off dynastic politics, at least for now. If Hillary had won, 4 of the last 5 presidents would have come from two families. Before the election got underway, when everybody thought it would wind up as Clinton v. Bush, some of my friends from less developed countries were making fun of the United States trading the top slot between two connected families, as something less than an example of developed democracy. And they were right. That's not healthy.
- (2) Kept Hillary out of the White House. With the [Clinton Global Initiative](#) scam — shut down as soon as there was no influence left to peddle — she was amazingly crooked even by D.C. standards, and with her disastrous record in Libya and Syria, amazingly

inept even by D.C. standards as well. Countless future debacles have been prevented by keeping her out. Plus, a Clinton presidency would have allowed the completion of the Obama administration's weaponization of the federal government (as with the multiyear IRS scandal) and possibly ensured one-party rule for decades. And at the very least, it would have allowed the sorry gang that Obama and Clinton brought in (go read the Podesta emails!) to bore in for four to eight more years. A Hillary presidency would have been terrible for the country, and it has been averted. (Likewise — see above — a Jeb presidency, which would have been less crooked, but probably no less inept, to judge from Jeb's hapless campaign).

Frankly, those two things alone were perfectly decent reasons for backing Trump, and he's already delivered on them. But what else has he done, for good and ill?

- (3) Bringing jobs back. From the Carrier deal to the just announced decision by Wal-Mart to create 10,000 jobs in the United States, Trump has done what Obama said was impossible in terms of keeping jobs in the United States. Most of this, it's true, is symbolic. But as FDR knew, symbolism is important in maintaining morale during tough economic times. And Trump promises that he'll push changes that will encourage other companies to do the same for solid tax and investment reasons, not just because of presidential jawboning. These early examples make that more likely to happen.
- (4) The appointments. The appointment of retired Marine general James Mattis as secretary of Defense all by itself represents a major step toward turning our military back into warriors, as opposed to the social justice warriors they were being turned into under the Obama administration. Mattis, of course, has gotten bipartisan support, but many other appointments also look good. I originally thought (and said) that Rex Tillerson was a bad pick for secretary of State, but hearing him talk since then I feel pretty good about it. Sessions wouldn't have been my first choice for attorney general (I don't like his record on the drug war or civil forfeiture), but otherwise he's a solid guy and even many of the Democrats attacking him now were happy to work with him over decades in the Senate.
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- (5) The process. Right after the election, we heard that the Trump transition was chaotic, conflicted, a mess. Then the actual transition came and it was . . . pretty smooth. As Robert Charles wrote about the various cabinet nominees, "The nominees are not newbies. Nor are they misaligned with their assigned missions. They are seasoned professionals. And they are acting that way. They are proving candid and deep, sensible, at times even sage. They know the ropes, their fields, the challenges that lie ahead of them — and respect Congress. . . . Since the president-elect designated his future cabinet, nominees have conducted more than 300 meetings with Senators and staff, met with 87 of the 100 Senators, including 50 Republican Senators and 37 Democrats. "

The press likes to portray Trump as an impulsive goofball. But that's not what we're seeing here.

(6) The press. As *Politico's* Jack Shafer pretty much admits, the White House Press Corps has been asleep for eight years, serving more as lapdog than watchdog under Obama. Now, just as I predicted, they're starting to cover the presidency critically again. That didn't happen under Obama, and it probably wouldn't have happened under Hillary. But under Trump, the press will be making investigative journalism great again!

Whether Trump can match these accomplishments once he's actually in office, I don't know. It may be that he's peaked already. But he's already outperformed my (admittedly modest) expectations. I hope he'll keep doing that in the four (or eight) years to come.

Spengler

Donald Trump, American Hero

by David P. Goldman

The protagonists of American popular culture are outsiders with scant patience for authority. The Western heroes invented by Zane Grey and Louis L'Amour and portrayed by William S. Hart or John Wayne, and their urban cousins -- the private detectives of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler -- play loose with the law and play dirty with the opposition, but they have an inviolable inner code. They don't betray their friends and they don't exploit the weak. They don't aspire to entry into the elites, and they don't apologize for their vulgarity. They come in comic form, for example Huckleberry Finn, or nastily serious, like William Munny in Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, or a bit of both in Hammett's wise-cracking angel of vengeance, the Continental Op.

Religious or not, the entire *dramatis personae* of American fiction descends from the Christian in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the original of which every product of the American literary imagination is a reworking. Americans are pilgrims. We have no settled culture, no inheritance of customs handed down over generations, no ancient vineyards or ancient recipes, no monuments from the deep past and no long memory. We invented ourselves as a nation out of the Protestant imagination, and we must journey towards a goal that we never will reach. The goal -- salvation -- always awaits just beyond the horizon. Our fiction lacks endings. Our national novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ends perforce the way it began, with Huck running away from home: "But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before."

There is nothing un-Christian in the fact that American pilgrims are rogues -- rough men at best, killers and conmen at worst -- for the English Puritans who imagined the United States as a "Hebrew Republic" believed that humanity was hopelessly depraved, and that only an act of special grace from God could save them from damnation. Trump is a Christian, to be sure, of a characteristically American variety: as the political scientist Joshua Mitchell observed, he was for decades a follower of the Rev. Norman Vincent Peale, whose bestselling version of the prosperity gospel in *The Power of Positive Thinking* made him rich. Whether and in what way Trump is a Christian, though, is far less important than the fact that he is instantly recognizable as the protagonist in a Christian drama: the lone avenger who stands up to the depraved powers of the world and calls them out for combat.

Ted Cruz, an engaged and enthusiastic evangelical Christian, failed to understand the religious impulse of the American electorate. They did not want a politician-pastor to preach to them what they already knew. They wanted a hero, sinner though he be, to give battle to the forces of evil - - a Jephtha or a Saul. The election of Donald Trump represents a radical return to America's recondite nature. Some have compared his election to that of "populist" Andrew Jackson in 1828, which is wrong for many reasons: the comparison is the election of Lincoln in 1860.

That seems blasphemous, for Trump is no Lincoln; he is brittle where Lincoln was tolerant, resentful where Lincoln was self-deprecating, Philistine where Lincoln was intellectual, and often cruel where Lincoln was unfailingly kind. But the parallel remains. Not since 1860 have American voters rejected their elite and chosen a candidate without apparent qualifications. Ronald Reagan may have started as an actor, but he had served two terms as Governor of America's largest state before he ran for the presidency. Lincoln had served a single term in Congress a decade before the election.

Having thrown out the failed elite, Trump has the problem of governing with newcomers and outright amateurs. Trump's administration thus far is a bit of a mess, but critics should cut him a bit of slack. There is no foreign policy elite, and not much of a national security elite. Most of the grand names in the intelligence community bet on Trump's defeat -- which shows how deficient they are at intelligence. A good deal of mud has been thrown at his National Security Advisor, Gen. Michael Flynn, who ran a relatively minor part of the intelligence community, the Defense Intelligence Agency. But Gen. Flynn refused to suppress intelligence showing that ISIS was growing into a major threat years before the Obama administration admitted it, and got fired for sticking to his guns.

A three-star general who won't be bullied by his superiors into lying for political reasons is a moral and intellectual giant next to the mandarins of the Central Intelligence Agency, who got virtually everything wrong during the past twenty years. Give Gen. Flynn time to settle into his job. He has brought some very bright people into senior staff positions, and in my prediction will be far more effective than Condoleezza Rice during the Bush 43 administration -- not to mention the miserable Susan Rice, whose appointment as National Security Advisor was a bad joke.

Rex Tillerson got off to a bad start at his confirmation hearings (his mis-statement about denying China access to reefs in the South China Sea sounded like a war threat, when it was simply the result of deficient briefing). Why choose the CEO of Exxon as Secretary of State? Because Trump didn't have another candidate with the right kind of experience. He had plenty of candidates with the wrong kind of experience, to be sure, from Mitt Romney to John Bolton, but decided to choose an outsider with no ideological baggage.

Trump has been too quick to embrace individuals who he imagines to be populist comrades-in-arms, from the United Kingdom Independence Party's former leader Nigel Farage to France's National Front leader Marine Le Pen, while leveling harsh criticism against Europe's most powerful leader, German Chancellor Angela Merkel (which resulted in a jump in Mrs. Merkel's standing in the polls). Europe is not the United States: its social fabric is based on allegiance to elites and respect for authority, the opposite of Americans' antinomian impulse. Trump is a mainstream politician. In fact, he represents the true American mainstream, for the same reason that Clint Eastwood plays mainstream American characters. The European far right always has a nasty element, and in the case of Germany's "Alternative" party, more than a whiff of brimstone.

Most of all Trump wants to protect Americans from globalization, and rightly so. At the peak of its technological dominance in the decade after the Cold War, when America fielded the technologies that made the modern economy, America opened its gates to China (allowing it into the World Trade Organization) and Mexico through the North American Free Trade Agreement. This occurred during the Clinton Administration at the peak of America's investment boom in technology. We invented semiconductors, lasers, optical networks, sensors, displays, virtually the whole of the modern economy.

But America was too complacent. Its share of global high technology exports (as defined by the World Bank) fell from 18% to 7% between 1999 and 2014, while China's share soared from 3% to 26%. (Europe remained steady at around 30%). China used every lever of industrial policy, including state subsidies, loans from state-owned entities, and so forth, to create employment in tech industries. That is the Asian industrial model, and in many cases it works. It is hardly fair to expect America to play by free market rules while its competitors indulge in aggressive mercantilism.

Share of Global Technology Exports

| | China | Korea | Japan | United States | European Union |
|------|--------|-------|--------|---------------|----------------|
| 2000 | 3.60% | 4.70% | 11.10% | 17.10% | 33.90% |
| 2001 | 4.70% | 3.80% | 9.50% | 16.70% | 36.80% |
| 2002 | 6.50% | 4.40% | 9.00% | 15.20% | 36.20% |
| 2003 | 9.10% | 4.80% | 9.00% | 13.40% | 35.40% |
| 2004 | 11.40% | 5.30% | 8.80% | 12.30% | 35.00% |
| 2005 | 13.60% | 5.30% | 7.90% | 12.00% | 34.60% |
| 2006 | 14.90% | 5.10% | 7.10% | 12.00% | 34.30% |
| 2007 | 17.10% | 5.70% | 6.70% | 12.30% | 31.40% |
| 2008 | 18.50% | 5.50% | 6.50% | 12.00% | 31.70% |
| 2009 | 19.80% | 5.90% | 6.10% | 8.50% | 32.20% |
| 2010 | 22.80% | 6.80% | 6.90% | 8.20% | 32.30% |
| 2011 | 23.60% | 6.30% | 6.50% | 7.50% | 33.60% |
| 2012 | 25.30% | 6.10% | 6.20% | 7.40% | 32.00% |
| 2013 | 26.60% | 6.20% | 5.00% | 7.00% | 32.00% |
| 2014 | 26.00% | 6.20% | 4.70% | 7.40% | 32.00% |

The problem is how to protect Americans. The global supply chain is so closely integrated that it is hard to discourage some imports without doing real damage to American industries. The border tax proposed by House Republicans would prevent corporations from deducting imported inputs as costs for tax purposes. For industries like oil refining, that would create enormous distortions, while providing windfalls elsewhere. My own preference would be to use selected tariffs for products that benefit from government subsidies overseas, which is entirely permissible under World Trade Organization rules.

Ultimately, no government can protect American workers unless productivity growth resumes. American productivity growth has fallen to zero for the first time since the stagflation of the 1970s. Without productivity growth, American living standards will fall, irrespective of whether the government pursues protection or free trade. I have argued elsewhere in this publication that reviving military and aerospace R&D is the key to productivity growth.

Donald Trump could be a character in a Frank Capra film or a Sinclair Lewis novel. He is our generation's incarnation of Bunyan's pilgrim. I do not mean that as praise (I never liked Bunyan, as it happens). That simply is the kind of people we Americans are, or rather the sort of people we have become at two and a half centuries' distance from our Revolution. We never have succeeded in training an elite. Whenever an American elite finds itself in power it chokes on its own arrogance. I cheered Mr. Trump to victory in the last election out of disgust for the do-gooders and world-fixers of both the Republican and Democratic mainstreams. Now I wish him good luck. He'll need all the luck he can get.

WSJ

Coming Out—This Time for Trump

Hiding my support for him felt the same way as keeping my sexual orientation secret.

by Mitchell Lee Marks

Since Election Day, I've mentioned to friends my hope that America and its people are in better shape four years from now than they are today. Everyone I've shared this with has rebuked me and asked if I voted for Donald Trump. So far I've given evasive answers, saying something like I respect the election results and agree with President Obama that the "peaceful transfer of power" is a "hallmark of our democracy."

This makes me feel the same way I did for most of my life as I hid my sexual orientation. Born in the 1950s, I began having gay relationships at 25 but remained closeted. I hated lying to people, but in the 1980s and '90s I feared that coming out would estrange me from family and damage my career.

Similarly, I now find creative ways to avoid answering whether I voted for Donald Trump. This may be hard for some to believe, but watching protesters today call Trump supporters racists and bigots has been nearly as distressing as being told to "die in hell, faggot" 30 years ago.

I finally came out in 2005 at age 50. Starting a new job, I made the decision to be authentic at work. I brought my partner to a company party. It was a turning point in my life. I was comfortable, my colleagues were accepting, and I felt true to myself. With that in mind, I need to step out of the closet once again.

I voted for Donald J. Trump.

Until now, I have not shared this with anyone other than my partner. All I see around me is hate for the president-elect. My Facebook friends post links deriding him. The president of the university where I teach sent an agitated email putting down the election results and announcing a town-hall meeting for those who felt afraid of Mr. Trump.

This vote was not an easy choice. I supported Hillary Clinton in 2008 and would have liked to see her as the first female president. But eight years later I believed Mr. Trump was more likely to take bold action and upset the status quo in Washington, which is healthy for democracy. I also trusted him more to yield positive changes for all Americans—not only the politically connected.

I am aware of the man's shortcomings and inconsistencies. After his election, Mr. Trump said he was "fine" with same-sex marriage because "it was already settled." But he also declared his intent to appoint pro-life Supreme Court justices who might overturn *Roe v. Wade*, a stance I strongly disagree with.

Worse than Mr. Trump's inconsistencies, however, are those of his detractors. They cite his lack of inclusiveness yet discount that tens of millions of Americans voted for him, and he won 30 states. I am as afraid about acknowledging that I voted for Mr. Trump today as I was about being gay yesterday. There seems to be as little understanding of my political views as there was about my sexual orientation.

His detractors yell that he is not their president, but many did not even vote. They say he is all about divisiveness, but they can't acknowledge opposing points of view. I hope the opposition can grow to be accepting and join in wishing that great things happen over the next four years.

Mr. Marks is a professor of leadership at San Francisco State University's College of Business.

WSJ

[The Promise of President Trump](#)

'After the past 18 months, only an idiot would bet against Donald Trump.'

by Andrew Ferguson

Most Americans beyond our nation's capital may dislike him, but from here inside the swamp I can report that professional Republicans and movement Conservatives have decided our new president is aces. Mr. Trump's unthinking populism continues to worry a few Beltway types, but most Trump doubters on the right have been won over by his cabinet choices, which betray a sophistication about policy and personnel that few expected of him.

How bad can Mr. Trump be if he has hired Jim Mattis, Rex Tillerson, Andrew Puzder and Betsy DeVos to stand as buffers between the country and his changeable impulses? We are probably right to detect the sly hand of the vice president-elect. A government of such stalwart right-wingers would constitute an administration far more conservative than voters would have agreed to otherwise. Sometimes it helps when your leader doesn't believe in much of anything.

Unfortunately, the candidate who campaigned as a sociopath shows signs he may yet govern as one. His refusal to submit to daily intelligence briefings on grounds that he's "a smart person" suggests the presidency will pump Mr. Trump's already world-class ego into something even more obtrusive, more dangerous. His childish tweets continue unabated and, what's worse, no one close to him has the nerve to tell him to put a sock in it. His overpromising grows daily more extravagant ("health insurance for everybody . . . with lower numbers, much lower deductibles"), and in this he rivals President Obama, who once pledged to stop the rise of the oceans.

After the past 18 months, only an idiot would bet against Donald Trump. He has banged his way from one unlikely triumph to another. Now, with the stakes much higher, the conservatism of Trump's cabinet may save him. If, over the next few years, parents begin to feel they've regained control of their children's schools, if wages start to rise and business owners feel liberated from the dead hand of overregulation, if the military recovers its strength and self-confidence—then Mr. Trump's ignorance and vulgarity won't matter. He'll lay claim to the unlikeliest triumph of all: a successful presidency.

National Review

An Unprecedented President

by Yuval Levin

Being a sucker for civic rituals, I've attended every presidential inauguration since Clinton's second in 1997. Regardless of my opinion of the person being inaugurated—when I have voted for him and when I have not—I've stood in the rain or the cold and relished the opportunity to observe the ceremony and hear what the new or returning chief executive has to say.

So I was there today too. Both rain and cold were on offer, and the ceremonial aspects of the day were unchanged from the past five. Showing up for each inauguration is a good reminder that the president's time is limited. The same kind of crowd will be there for the same kind of ceremony four years from today, perhaps for the same president or perhaps for another. It will seem to have passed in a flash.

Trump's speech was what any observer of his campaign rhetoric might have expected, for good and bad. Rooted in the view that contemporary American life is a nightmarish scene of unrelenting carnage, despair, and desolation caused by the simple unwillingness of our leaders to act in America's interest, Trump's rhetoric manages to exaggerate our problems and yet also exaggerate how easy it would be to solve them. It lets him set a low bar for himself yet also causes him to make promises no one could keep.

But the speech was also rooted, as much of Trump's rhetoric has been, in a plainly genuine patriotism and in a healthy sense that leaders need to care for their country and not just for some theoretical ideal version of their country. Trump also did a better job than I've heard him do before of connecting his vision to the country's desire for unity. I think it has always been linked to it, offering a particular (if problematic) answer to the question of how to address our divisions. But he came closer here, even using the term solidarity, to suggesting that he believes that by building walls around our country we can break down the walls within our society. Although I think it grossly understates the challenges of unity in our vast and diverse country, this is one serious answer to the challenge of solidarity in 21st century America, and it is in many respects a more coherent and appealing answer than the one the Left tends to propose.

But to draw these themes out of Trump's remarks is not to say that he offered a traditional inaugural address geared to conveying his particular vision. The speech he delivered was normal for him, but not for presidential inaugural addresses. And in the broader context of the inaugural ceremony, it helped to bring into sharper relief for me the ways in which Trump is likely to be very unusual.

Observing these ceremonies every four years is a reminder that the presidency is for the most part a pre-defined role in a larger political drama—a niche that can be occupied by different people with different goals and characters, and used by them to their different ends while largely keeping its shape. That shape has itself changed over time, of course, mostly expanding in our living memory. But the office has grown through use (and over-use) and every president has run to fill the role. The inaugural ceremony helps to highlight this: It is essentially the same every time, with a different glutton for punishment taking the same oath as all who came before, and setting out to occupy the same position in the same system.

But Trump's way of speaking about his vision and intentions suggests his case will be different. He did not really run to occupy the presidency as it exists, and does not seem to think of himself as stepping now into a role he is obliged to carry out. He ran to disrupt a broken system, and to be himself but with more power and authority. He is our president, but he has not taken on the job with any clear sense of the presidency as a distinct function and office which he should now stretch and bend to embody.

This has not been easy to accept, and so we have tended implicitly to wait for the moment when Trump would put aside his childish antics and step up into the role. Or else we have inclined to think about the prospects for Trump's presidency in terms of whether he would be too strong or too weak a president. But this is probably the wrong way to think about what Trump is doing. He is not filling the role in a certain way. He is playing a different role. He is being himself.

This suggests a different way to think about the challenges and opportunities the Trump presidency may pose. Trump seems inclined to leave largely unfilled the part traditionally played by the president in our system while playing another part formed around the peculiar contours of his bombastic, combative, and at times surely disordered personality. That means that Trump's team, the Congress, the courts, and the public will need to confront the implications of both the absence of a more traditional president and the presence of a different and unfamiliar kind of figure at the heart of the constitutional order. These are two distinct problems.

There may well be some bright sides to both of these facets of our situation. The absence of a strong executive on the model that has taken form (and grown ever stronger) since at least the middle of the last century could become a spur to a reassertion of congressional authority in its proper realm, or in any case a shrinking of the president's role in the everyday work of governing. The presence of a bombastic populist in the White House could force some common sense on a political culture too dominated by abstract sloganeering. Trump is often irresponsible, but he has better political instincts than most of our politicians. Responding to the presence of this unusual figure at the heart of our politics with an effort to formulate responsible applications of his political instincts could redound to the good in some cases.

But there are obviously dark sides to both facets too. The absence of an executive eager to play his complex part could easily drive our constitutional system badly out of balance and leave it unfocused and hapless. And in foreign policy it looks likely to undermine the post-World War II system of liberal-democratic alliances in which the President of the United States has had a distinct role to play for seven decades, about which Trump appears to know or care very little. And the presence of an undisciplined, aggressive performance artist at the heart of our system of government, a figure whose excesses are not structurally counterbalanced by others in the system (in the way that the excesses of the traditional presidency are), could alter the public's expectations of government and politics in ways decidedly unhelpful to American constitutionalism.

This combination of potential good and harm poses a very complicated problem for Congress, for Trump's cabinet and staff, and for others in the constitutional system. The morning after the election, I suggested we might think of this as a standing crisis in the executive—and that these years would yield many important opportunities, but also grave risks. The transition period has left me with the same sense, eased a little by some of Trump's cabinet and other personnel choices but sharpened too by the sense that our new president enters office without a clear idea of the job.

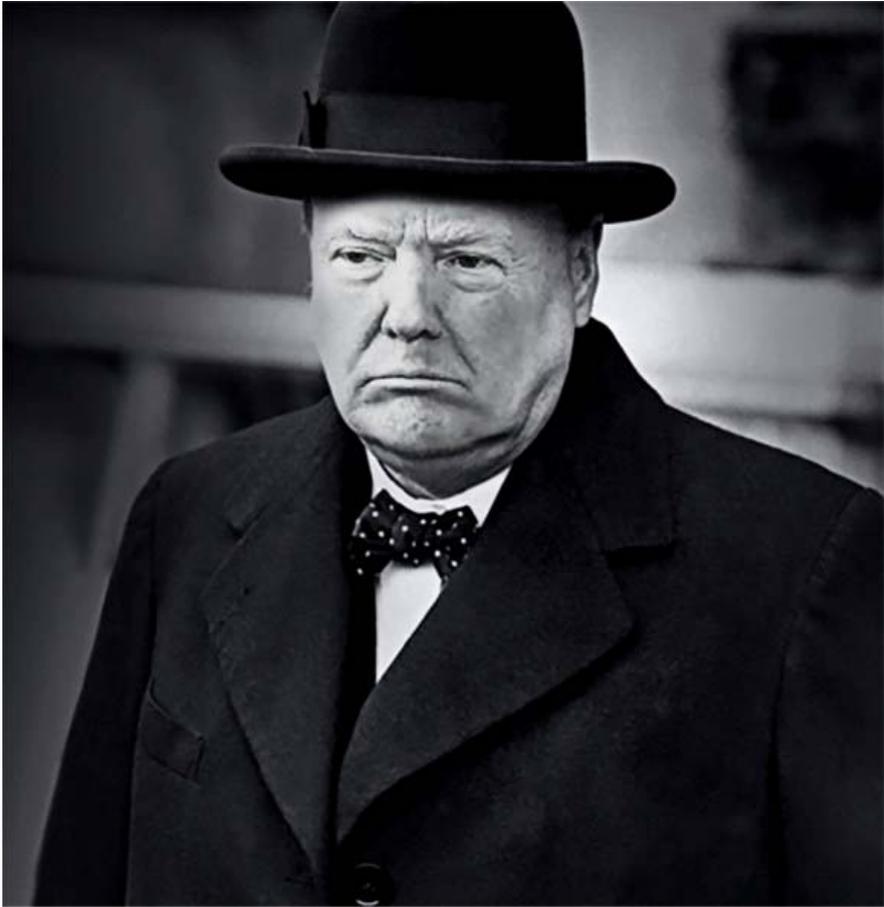
President Trump's term seems less likely than that of any modern president's to be defined by the role of the presidency in our system of government—not just by the limits of that role but even by its general form. Instead, to a greater degree than any modern president, his time in office seems likely to be shaped by his own character and personality. This is not good news.



Churchill's bust is back in the Oval Office



WSC where he belongs.



I DON'T ALWAYS WAKE UP WITH A
HUGE SMILE, BUT WHEN I DO...



IT'S THE MORNING BEFORE
NOBAMA DAY

STAY FREE MY FRIENDS

Photo: www.FDMATIC

