

FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

"One of life's most painful moments comes when we must admit that we didn't do our homework, that we are not prepared." ~ Merlin Olsen

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How Trump Lost the Midterms

Two years is a lifetime in politics. Just two years ago, Trump had made perhaps the greatest political comeback ever after being impeached (twice) and indicted on trumped up (pun) charges in an orchestrated campaign of prosecutorial malfeasance. His house was raided by the FBI and he survived two assassination attempts, one of which damn near killed him.

Yet against all odds, he won a second term by working harder than any other candidate and assembling the broadest, most diverse coalition since at least Ronald Reagan. He won the popular vote and all of the swing states, and his coattails helped Republicans win both houses of Congress.

By the end of the first year of his second term, it was obvious that his presidency would be transformational, as he had many unprecedented accomplishments. To his credit, he quickly stopped the flood of illegal aliens across the border and helped get crime under control. As he said at the time, America was the hottest country in the world. Trump was on a roll and Democrats were dejected, on the ropes and almost mute as they wandered in the political wilderness.

One of Trump's biggest mistakes was imposing large tariffs on many imported goods from

a number of major trading partners. Many Trump supporters gave him the benefit of the doubt on this, but a tariff is still a tax. It's the government interfering in a private transaction between two willing parties. They're willing because the trade would make both of them better off. But a tariff distorts that situation and leads to less trade and thus less wealth. Of course tariffs also make goods more expensive.

Trump also received a lot of bad PR as a result of trying to round up millions of immigrants who were in the U.S. illegally. It sounds like ICE generally tried to apprehend known criminals first, but I also heard about a bunch of day laborers getting picked up from Home Depot parking lots. Sure, they were here illegally, but they are some of the hardest-working people in the world, and they're not expensive or unionized. Like it or not, much of our economy runs on their labor.

But some of the worst optics for Trump came from Minneapolis, where a large group of well-organized Leftist activists went to great lengths (nearly all of which took place in frigid temperatures) to thwart ICE enforcement actions, including interfering with officers or vandalizing their vehicles. When a couple of the more reckless protesters ended up getting shot because they attacked armed law enforcement agents who were carrying out their lawful duties, I think that was the end of strong immigration enforcement in the U.S.

I'm sure that Trump's deep involvement with vanity construction projects such as the White House ballroom, the Triumphal Arch and the renovation of the Kennedy Center (which he added his name to) led many Americans to wonder if he cared more about himself than regular Americans who were having to deal with significantly higher prices for nearly everything.

Trump made much of his fortune by licensing his name to everything from buildings to bibles. After decades of doing that (and years of starring in a hit TV show), you probably start to think that your name is actually worth something because somehow you're a great person. But if most people learn about you from a media that is hostile to you, and you don't do some of the most important things that you promised voters you'd do (such as improve affordability and avoid never-ending wars), and you're also crass and unkind and react with comically hyperbolic statements, then your name isn't really worth much. His similar renaming of the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Ontario to “America” was ridiculous and will last less time than Biden's renaming of storied military bases.

Trump also removed Venezuela's unpopular communist ruler with little bloodshed using an extremely surgical military operation (though I don't think anything has really changed there as a result). He was on a roll, and Cuba was on the ropes and almost certainly was next.

Then Trump got a call from Bibi Netanyahu. Mossad had learned that Iran's entire political and military leadership was about to gather in one building for a meeting. Would the U.S. be willing to participate with Israel in a decapitation strike? Trump said yes, which turned out to be the biggest mistake of his life.

Although the strike killed almost everyone who was there, Trump probably didn't know

about Iran's Mosaic Doctrine, a well-thought out, long-term strategy that would allow it to survive an attack from Israel and/or the U.S. that included hardened positions (which Iran's rugged terrain made possible), redundancy, standing orders to keep fighting and a decentralized and autonomous military command.

At first the coalition of two was able to destroy virtually everything that wasn't in a hardened site underground, but that wasn't enough to topple the regime, which quickly murdered upwards of 30,000 people to prevent an insurrection by the majority of the population. Trump told them to hang on because help from the U.S. military was on the way, but by the time all of the military hardware and personnel were in the region, the regime had put down the burgeoning revolt.

At that point, the war became a waiting game. Iran had the advantage of geography (the ability to survive in military sites buried under mountains, and to control the flow of petroleum products [including fertilizer] through the Persian Gulf) and time (the U.S. could only threaten Iran for as long as Trump was in office *or* had political power [whichever was less]; also, it's much more difficult to sustain aircraft carriers and [unhardened] military bases in the region for months at a time than it is for the Iranians to just keep hunkering down inside of their hardened positions).

Another pivotal event occurred when Iran began to shoot down American military aircraft, apparently using advanced air defense weapons provided by China. After a near-disastrous rescue mission of a downed American pilot, it became apparent that the U.S. and Israel had lost air supremacy over Iran, which allowed the Iranians to emerge from their hardened sites and resume operations unhindered by attacks from most manned coalition aircraft.

After it became apparent that the U.S. wasn't willing to commit ground troops to Iran, the Iranians realized that they could probably outlast Trump, especially if they did things to hasten his political demise, such as making gas and most other goods and services significantly more expensive by shutting down the Persian Gulf. They did a masterful job of becoming a tar baby, a thorn in Trump's side, a festering wound that wouldn't heal, and a source of risk and uncertainty (especially for shipping companies).

The Iranians dragged out negotiations like a winning football team does when they have the ball and are running out the clock. Trump repeatedly claimed that the Iranians were "desperate" to do a deal to end the war, but I think he knew that with the midterm elections approaching, *he* was the one over a barrel. In this geopolitical chess game, Iran had Trump in check, and with the efforts of Democrats (including gerrymandering Congressional districts and novel methods of election fraud such as the "Decoy Dan" farce in the Alaska Senate race), it became checkmate.

As I write this, it appears that Democrats will end up with 56 Senate seats and at least 100 more House seats (!) than the GOP, not to mention 30 governorships, complete takeovers of statewide offices in Georgia and Texas, and new "trifectas" in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota and Nevada. This was the worst electoral disaster since Ronald Reagan won virtually every state in the 1984 presidential election (it's amazing how much

America has changed since then).

Allegedly, Trump's ancestral surname was Drumpf, and I just read that in 2016, comedian John Oliver urged viewers to adopt the slogan “Make Donald Drumpf Again.” Mission accomplished. Trump's Best Buy date has passed.

I don't know how or if opponents of the Left will ever be able to recover from this political fiasco, but I suggest that in the future, they focus less on personalities, egos, slogans, renaming things, etc. and more on *liberty*.

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