

Too Awful to Imagine?

A decade of unprecedented fury at Trump saw his opponents undermine civil liberties, weaponize institutions, and set precedents that risk eroding the republic.

By [Victor Davis Hanson](#)

Over the decade of Donald Trump's political career, the left—as exemplified by Democratic politicians, the media, academics, the Washington military hierarchy, and the permeant bureaucratic state—illustrated a level of furor, venom, and near madness unprecedented in modern American history.

Yet stranger still about such visceral, indeed lunatic hatred, despite Trump's eccentricities and lack of a traditional political resume, his administration between 2017-21 was successful by traditional economic, military, security, and diplomatic standards. It was certainly not characterized by weaponizing the DOJ, Pentagon, CIA, or FBI, get-even vendettas, the use of lawfare, corruption, optional wars, open borders, hyperinflation, or a war on the environment—as predicted and alleged. Nevertheless, the idea of Trump as president justified to the left the greatest assault on our civil liberties, justice system, and free expression in modern history.

Indeed, at times the frenzy has ranged the gamut of an unprecedented two impeachments, a first Senate impeachment trial of a private citizen ex-president, and a coordinated effort to deplatform the major Republican presidential candidate from state ballots.

But at other times, the efforts were more sinister—and conspiratorial—to the point that the attempt to destroy the purported threat of candidate, president, and two-time candidate Trump apparently justified any means necessary.

In retrospect, what is the legacy of these unmatched efforts? They have established precedents, if ever again followed, will destroy the republic as we have known it.

1. “Russian collusion.” There was never any evidence that a 2016 Trump candidacy sought to “steal” the election through the intervention of the Putin Russian government. But a paranoid Clinton campaign, through the deliberate paywalls and agency of the DNC, Perkins Coie law firm, and Fusion GPS consulting firm, hired a retread ex-British spy, Christopher Steele—who was also FBI Director James Comey's paid informant—to fabricate a “dossier” of invented scandals and salacious sex detail to smear Trump and ensure his defeat.

That effort required sowing the dossier throughout the government, partnering with traditional and social media, warping the FISA courts, forging an FBI-submitted document, and ambushing and destroying the National Security Advisor designate Gen. Michael Flynn.

Two years later, the self-congratulatory Robert Mueller's “dream team” and “all-stars” of liberal beltway lawyers evaporated after finding no such Trump-Russian collusion—after a wasted nearly two years and \$40 million. Meanwhile, revelations emerged of all sorts of covert FBI skullduggery—from erasing incriminating cell phone records, the revelations of the Strzok-Page text exchanges indicating an apparent FBI “insurance policy” effort to preclude a winning Trump candidacy, to the meltdown of

Director Comey himself, who lied to the president that he was not a target of an investigation and then leaked confidential records of a private one-on-one presidential conversation to the media.

2. Indeed, during the Trump administration, we witnessed once more undreamed-of efforts to sabotage a presidency:

a) A former Pentagon lawyer publishing a call for either immediate Trump impeachment, 25th Amendment removal, or a military coup.

b) A planning session of the Deputy Attorney General and Interim FBI Director to discuss stealthily recording the President of the United States in hopes of finding enough off-the-record embarrassing conversations to justify a 25th Amendment removal.

c) A later 2020 campaign effort jumpstarted by the current Biden Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the former interim CIA Director Mike Morrell, with help from former CIA Directors John Brennan and Leon Panetta, along with former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, to round up 51 “former” (but actually many enjoying then-current CIA contractor status) “intelligence authorities” to publicly mislead the public by signing a letter that the incriminating Hunter Biden laptop (then in the hands of and authenticated as genuine by the FBI) was once again a Russian effort to throw the election to Trump. It was an obvious scripted lie, but timely scheduled before the last debate to arm Biden with plausible denials and thus to help swing the election to him. And it likely did.

d) There was, in addition, an effort by the heads of the NIH, Francis Collins, and NIAID, Anthony Fauci, deliberately to obfuscate, and allegedly in the case of Fauci, to lie under oath, about the efforts of American health authorities 1) to evade U.S. prohibitions on gain-in-function viral research, by funding the third-party EcoHealth Alliance to facilitate the transference of American money, instrumentation, and consulting to partner with the Chinese communist Wuhan virology lab; 2) to obfuscate the truth that the lab had somehow leaked the lethal, manmade virus—birthed with the help of U.S. expertise—that was killing millions worldwide; 3) to promulgate a false scenario of a bat/pangolin origin; 4) to deny under oath the American government’s role in the birth of the virus; 5) to suppress dissident scientific voices; and 6) to advise radical quarantine policies that would virtually destroy the U.S. economy along with the Trump 2020 reelection effort, and then shift blame from their own culpability to a false narrative that Trump was the chief driver of a disastrous national shutdown that had ruined the economy and yet was supposedly nearly criminally lax in controlling the outbreak.

e) The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mark Milley, took it upon himself to 1) violate his own legal prerogatives as an advisory military official by unlawfully interrupting the chain of command when ordering theater commanders to report directly to him rather than as legally required to the Secretary of Defense in times of national crises, and 2) without presidential or Pentagon written authority, contacted his Chinese communist counterpart, Gen. Li Zuocheng of the People’s Liberation Army. His stated aim apparently was to reassure the Chinese military that in Milley’s own view, if he should diagnose Trump, his own commander-in-chief, as unbalanced and intending to escalate tensions to the threshold of a possible nuclear war, Milley again would first contact General Zuocheng to reassure him that an erratic Trump would then be not in full command of American strategic forces. Then he, Milley, with others, would seek to de-escalate tensions and preclude a conflict.

Milley denied any impropriety. But he could not negate that he had no such authority to act on the part of the executive branch and was doing so in direct opposition to the President of the United States. Milley was also de facto creating a dangerous precedent for any future ambitious, freelancing chairmen of the Joint Chiefs, both to interrupt the chain of command and to self-diagnose their commander-in-chief to justify excluding him from exercising his responsibilities entailed in his oath of office.

f) In the 2020 election cycle, left-wing-funded legal teams systematically and under the guise of the COVID lockdown sued in favorable courts to overturn or modify state balloting laws to ensure the most radical and abrupt changes in U.S. voting procedures in history.

The net result was that in many key states, traditional Election Day balloting that had accounted for 60-80 percent of the cast votes was made a mere construct. Instead, some 60-70 percent of voters in many key states cast early- or mail-in ballots, even as the traditional rejection rate of such ballots drastically fell—again, as the numbers to be counted soared.

g) During this same 2020 election, according to liberal journalist Molly Ball, writing triumphantly post facto in *Time* magazine, a named “cabal” and “conspiracy” of billionaire leftist grandees, Silicon Valley monopolists, Chamber of Commerce, corporate entities, labor, and street activists sought to change balloting laws, street modulate demonstrations, enlist social media to censor and shape the news, partner with the FBI, and provide hundreds of millions of dollars to absorb the work of state registrars by supplying their own adjutant employees and voting materials. This was a holistic effort, Ball proudly wrote, that helped guarantee a Biden victory.

h) During 2021-2024, there were 91 local, state, and federal felony indictments launched against the ex-president and then-current front-running Republican candidate and opponent of the sitting president Biden. The charges were so blatantly political, and the principals in direct or indirect contact with either the White House counsel, the Department of Justice, or each other, that the multifaceted effort could be rightly termed a conspiracy to warp the legal system by destroying a political opponent. The charges would never have been brought against any other political candidate or against Trump himself—had he not publicly announced his intention to run a third time for president.

3. Never in recent election history had a presidential candidate in the midst of the final stretch of the campaign been the target of two assassination attempts—in part enabled by a climate of widespread and acceptable vituperation that equated Trump with a vile Hitler, fascist, Nazi, and dictaToo Awful to Imagine?

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The first would-be assassin was an amateur shooter, who easily evaded Secret Service scrutiny to post himself in sight of bystanders, as he enjoyed a direct line of fire at Trump. Meanwhile, local law enforcement was desperately trying, in vain, to warn the lax Secret Service of the immediate danger to the president. The second wannabe assassin approached with impunity the most recognizably vulnerable spot on a local golf course, staked out a shooting position, and would have, if not spotted, been within minutes of having an uninterrupted shot at the president.

4. Finally, not since the Woodrow Wilson scandal of 1919-1920, have the media and the Democratic left conspired to hide the morbidities of a president that left him unfit mentally and physically to carry out the duties of the office.

That current and still ongoing covert effort put the nation at great risk, as evidenced by the catastrophic humiliation in Kabul, the successful Russian gamble that the U.S. would not or could not deter Putin from invading Ukraine, the unsteady and anemic reaction to the theater-wide wars in the Middle East, the hyperinflation of 2021-2, the erasure of the southern border, the deliberate greenlighting of some 12 million illegal aliens into the United States, and the weaponization of the FBI, CIA, and DOJ.

The final irony?

Those who were perpetrators of these illicit, unethical, and unprecedented efforts were themselves the first and most prominent to project Trump as the promulgator of conspiracies to debilitate the very institutions that they had already undermined and disgraced and thus encouraged unhinged would-be killers to delude themselves into believing they would forever be enshrined as heroes. And never would social media influencers, columnists, and celebrities voice near approval of such attempts on the leading presidential candidate's life.

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