

Trump Is Failing to Protect America's Heritage

The last few weeks have seen a nonstop explosion of disorder, violence, and hostility to America and its history. The message is plain: the old America was bad to its core, worthy of no respect, and therefore its heroes, history, and heritage must be paved over to make way for a new order.

President Trump [predicted something like this](#) in the wake of the Charlottesville protests over the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee when he suggested George Washington and Thomas Jefferson would be next. He was right.

In recent weeks, while expressing humane thoughts of sympathy for the family of George Floyd, Trump has been highly critical of the riots and their attack on statues. When unrest began, he [tweeted](#), "I can't stand back & watch this happen to a great American City, Minneapolis. A total lack of leadership. Either the very weak Radical Left Mayor, Jacob Frey, get his act together and bring the City under control, or I will send in the National Guard."

Help came too late. The looting and rioting rendered Minneapolis a war zone. Since that time, violent protests have happened around the county. National Guard troops have been mostly absent or, when they did appear, they were unarmed.

Trump's campaign has suggested that [riots and more disorder will happen](#) if Biden is elected. The problem with this argument is that *disorder is already happening now* under President Trump.

Admittedly, Trump has had a difficult fight from the beginning. He has been hamstrung by investigations, a hostile [deep state resistance](#) from career civil servants, and a nakedly partisan propaganda campaign by the media.

Nevertheless, he has a job to do. He's not merely citizen Trump. He's not just an observer. It's his FBI. It's his government to run. It's his military to command. If he can't run it, he needs to fire people until he can get the right people where they belong.

Government's First Duty

It's not entirely clear whether Trump's reluctance to use force is a cynical calculation that this chaos works to his advantage, or a vague instinct that anything he does will boomerang. It does not matter; there is a job to do regardless of electoral consequences.

Americans deserve to have Mt. Rushmore and the Lincoln Memorial and their war memorials protected. They deserve to be able to walk on their own streets. The government's first duty is order.

Sometimes doing the right thing means going down with flags waving in the face of certain defeat. Such gestures can be a rallying cry for some future generation. We don't think much today about the reelection of Calvin Coolidge. But we do remember the Alamo.

As it stands, the country and the president are diminished in the face of extended disorder. A strong and swift response, while controversial, would restore the sense that the nation is not up for grabs. It would also do much to restore Trump's prestige. Impotent tweeting and inaction encourages more assaults, demands, and brinksmanship.

Trump, for all his business and political success, chiefly has a talent for marketing. He's able to gin up enthusiasm and excitement to change the conversation. He did this regularly in New York City going back to the 1980s. He transitioned to television and continued to promote his brand. He surprised everyone in 2016 by winning the presidency, after championing

the interests of a middle class wary of globalism, open borders, and forever wars overseas. Political marketing – the so-called “bully pulpit” – is an important part of the modern presidency.

Trump's Unforced Errors

But it's not the only part. Management is an equally big part of the job. Making the right decisions, hiring the right people, setting the right priorities, and getting things done. In this regard, Trump has done rather poorly.

Some of this, again, is due to the obstruction he has faced from within the government, including from his own party.

This is not the only problem. He has hired the wrong people, sometimes obviously so. No one in the deep state made him hire John Bolton or keep his politically incompetent son-in-law, Jared Kushner, around. No one forced him to flirt with [immigration amnesty](#) or to pursue [soft-on-crime sentencing reform](#). Trump has empowered and listened to people who fail to understand the unique mandate of his election.

Trump also appears uninterested in following through. He has many times thrown red meat to his base in the form of tough rhetoric, only to walk it back later in administrative rulemaking. The most glaring example of this is the border wall.

Consequently, his current campaign and much of his presidency has been weak and short on results. He is losing his core supporters – middle-class [white voters](#) – in a quixotic and, so far, ineffective attempt to make peace with the swamp.

The Middling Way Won't Work

This is the worst of all worlds. These gestures do not get the establishment to relent, and they alienate and demoralize his

supporters. They do not even translate into additional votes among those he's courting, nor among the fickle suburban voters. Even if this all had a certain plausible logic as a theoretically successful way to proceed, abysmal poll numbers strongly suggest that he needs to change course and return to the message and policies that got him elected the first time. A good place to start would be to suppress these riots and the destruction of public art using the military and every other tool available to him.

There is no doubt some cohort of middling voters who think that all of the friction and strife of the last four years – lately expressed as a violent cultural revolution – may end if the establishment is returned to order. In other words, law and order voters may prefer some order, any order, over the current chaos.

Unfortunately for them, that middling way is not likely to work. Trump needs to find a way to make this clear. Violent street protests began during the Obama years in Ferguson and Baltimore. Trump is just the latest pretext for what has already been organized and happening in America. We have a revolutionary ruling class that is running roughshod over America's heritage. The protesters act as the vanguard and streetfighters to those in power. Their function is to do the dirty work and convince the country to make concessions.

Voters need to understand that ejecting Trump will not lead to a restoration of order. But Trump needs to understand that inaction will not bring it about, either.

Restoring order would involve violence and controversy, but it would restore order nonetheless. It would also demonstrate resolve and grit, qualities that always attract support and, at the very least, command respect among one's opponents.

A nation is more than the people living in it during a snapshot in time. In the words of Edmund Burke, it is “a

partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.”

The nation and its patrimony are bigger than Trump and more important than his reelection. Trump owes it to all Americans, past and present, to preserve their heritage and restore order.

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