

## Opinion

### President Donald Trump will roll on

#### Regardless of election results

Matt A. Mayer

**What is to be expected of the midterm elections? This article offers an American conservative's view on the matter.**

In the five weeks before this column was due (10/1/18), the following events occurred: President Donald Trump announced a new trade deal with Mexico and Canada; signed a new trade deal with South Korea; another jobs report came out showing continued strong job growth and record low unemployment for African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Americans without a college degree; the New York Times published an anonymous "resistance" op-ed from within the Trump Administration; Bob Woodward's critical book on President Trump came out; former Trump campaign official Paul Manafort reached a plea deal with Special Counsel Robert Mueller on charges pre-dating his affiliation with President Trump; the American Left released four last-minute allegations of sexual assault against U.S. Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh; a must-watch hearing occurred with Judge Kavanaugh and his accuser followed by a committee vote and another Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigation; new evidence of bias and impropriety by the U.S. Department of Justice and FBI under President Barack Obama came out regarding President Trump; the second quarter figure for America's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was revised up to 4.2%; and positive news came out of North Korea on inspections and an end to the Korean War.

With certainty, over the five weeks between when this column was due and the mid-term U.S. elections, a vote will be had confirming or rejecting Judge Kavanaugh; President Trump may get the Nobel Peace Prize; two additional jobs reports will come out; the third quarter GDP advance estimate will get released; classified documents related to the Russia collusion probe ordered to be declassified and released by President Trump may have gotten published; and Americans will be bombarded by election ads on tv/radio, by mail, and by in person door knockers. Additionally, we can be certain other big events will occur in the days leading to the November election. These events could include: a bombshell or whimper from the Mueller investigation; the announcement of trade deals with Japan, Europe, or China; more positive news out of North Korea; and the always expected "October Surprise" by one side or the other.

I highlight these events to make the point that there are so many unknown variables bouncing around the American electorate that figuring out how each U.S. House and U.S. Senate race will go is far more art than science. That said, the current polls indicate a good year for Democrats in terms of U.S. House races and a likely stalemate in U.S. Senate races. Historically speaking, the party in power's first-term election losses in the U.S. House average thirty-two seats. Currently, Republicans control the U.S. House by twenty-four seats, with twenty-three seats in districts won by Hillary Clinton in 2016. The tide of history is against Republicans maintaining control of the U.S. House. In contrast, the Democrats are

having to defend far more U.S. Senate seats in states won by President Trump in 2016 than seats Republicans have to defend in Clinton states.

If I were a betting man, I'd wager that the Democrats take back the U.S House by a 5-8 seat margin, but the Republicans hold the U.S. Senate expanding their margin slightly by a seat or two. The latest polling supports these bets, but, as noted above, so much could happen in the coming weeks to shift each race.

How will these election results impact America and, for you, America's foreign policy?

### **Gridlock is good**

First, if the Democrats take back the U.S. House, President Trump and his Administration will be under near constant attack by congressional investigators. Though still unlikely, a Democrat-controlled U.S. House could begin impeachment proceedings against President Trump. Whether the Democrats have the votes to pass articles of impeachment *for his acts as president* remains to be seen. That action, however, may not accomplish what the Democrats think it may accomplish. After all, the Republican impeachment actions against President Bill Clinton ultimately failed to obtain a conviction and made him *more* popular with the people. Such action by the Democrats going into the 2020 election could secure President Trump's reelection.

Next, a Democrat-controlled U.S. House would ensure gridlock in Washington, D.C. That may not be a bad thing for the U.S. economy, as it prevents either party from enacting laws that could disrupt the current strong economy. Remember, the booming '90's happened after Republicans took the U.S. House in 1994, thereby ending any liberal-progressive policies, including HillaryCare, from getting advanced by President Clinton that could have undermined the economy. A divided Washington tends to be good for taxpayers.

Finally, the more vital election is for control of the U.S. Senate due to the nomination of U.S. Supreme Court and lower court seats. If Republicans maintain control, President Trump can continue to nominate conservatives to reshape the courts for at least a generation. Given how Democrats have depended almost entirely on the U.S. Supreme Court for victories over the last fifty years, shifting the court from a 5-4 liberal majority to a 5-4 or 6-3 conservative majority would be enormous. If Democrats take back the U.S. Senate, they can sit on all vacancies until at least the 2020 election to stop President Trump from filling spots with conservatives.

### **Foreign policy**

In terms of foreign policy, the impact of the mid-term elections will be minimal. Why? Because under the U.S. Constitution, the President has near total control of U.S. government actions outside of our borders. Other than authorizing funding for departments and programs, including defense budgets (Article I, sections 7 & 8), and declaring war (Article I, section 8), the U.S. Congress's only real meaningful foreign policy role is in approving or rejecting treaties (Article II, section 2) and trade deals (Article I, section 8) negotiated by the Executive Branch. That role is why President Obama didn't submit either the Paris Agreement or the Iran Nuclear Deal Framework to Congress because he knew he didn't have the votes to ratify either as a treaty.

As President Trump has demonstrated in the last twenty-one months, there is much he can do without congressional approval. In that span, he has pushed NATO members to meet their funding obligations, pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement, revoked the Iran Nuclear Deal Framework, renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada, moved the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, engaged extensively with North Korea, started fair trade wars with Europe and Asia, committed defense assets to defeat ISIS and stabilize Syria, revised U.S. policy on refugees and asylum, and withdrew funding from Pakistan and the United Nations. There is no basis to believe the next twenty-seven months won't contain additional foreign policy actions given his very strong team of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, and Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis.

On top of his foreign policy successes, President Trump has passed historic tax reform; drastically scaled back regulations and mandates; put two conservatives on the U.S. Supreme Court; begun expanding the wall on the southern border; spurred job creation and economic growth the U.S. hasn't seen in years, including the rebirth of manufacturing in key Midwest battleground states; and, not to be discounted, fought the Left and Mainstream Media with the same vigor as they used in attacking Republicans for years, which Republican voters absolutely love about him — he fights back aggressively.

### **Trump 2020: the risk of 'wait him out'**

Beyond the midterm elections, what happens in 2020 is of far more consequence for America and the world. It is clear based on my time among Europeans that a significant chunk thought President Trump would be impeached, resign, or removed from office within six months of his inauguration. When that did not happen, those Europeans, fed their news by the New York Times and CNN, clung to the notion that the Mueller investigation would show collusion with Russia and force President Trump to leave. It is possible that will happen, but, given the lack of any evidence of collusion or leaks thereof from the sieve that is Washington, D.C., it is growing less likely that Mueller will "get" President Trump. Instead of evicting President Trump, all signs indicate he will run for reelection in 2020.

Despite the non-stop assaults on him and his administration by the Left and the media (90% of all stories on President Trump are negative), at 87% approval according to Gallup, Republican voters remain strongly behind President Trump because of the accomplishments listed above. Most analysts put President Trump's core support at roughly 40% of all voters. No matter how many real or fake news stories about him, his base remains steadfast behind him. That unwavering support makes it virtually impossible for a fellow Republican to successfully primary President Trump. Keep in mind, he vanquished sixteen other very strong Republicans in the 2016 Republican Primary. Who has the gravitas, power, and funding to do what those sixteen men and women failed to do?

Beyond Republican base voters, President Trump is making inroads among African-American and Hispanic-American voters. Why? Because their respective unemployment rates have reached record lows and their wages are going up under his tenure. Americans may be tribal in their social lives, but they also vote with their pocketbooks. CNN, which is President Trump's main target of fake news, reported in August that he has doubled his support among African-Americans and a June survey showed his support from Hispanic-Americans is

up 10% since his election. Those figures matter a great deal because if President Trump can secure a small, but meaningful increase in African-American and Hispanic-American voters in 2020, it will make it very hard for the Democrat candidate to win any of the battleground states President Trump won in 2016.

Many foreign leaders, including those in China, Iran, and several European countries, have adopted the John Kerry “wait him out” approach when it comes to President Trump, with the hope he goes away in 2021. These leaders desperately want to get back to the new world order they love so much, but that President Trump and his supporters believe devastated the American worker. If President Trump is able to win reelection, then those leaders will have to change course. In fact, if by the Summer of 2020 it looks like President Trump will win reelection, then those leaders likely would act before the election versus face a strengthened President Trump looking to settle the score with those who scorned him.

### **Transatlantic populism**

With the populist movement that began in the Netherlands with the rise of Geert Wilders, that spurred the passage of Brexit, and that reached U.S. shores when President Trump rode its wave to office, some of the top European leaders face their own domestic election challenges. Sweden just ditched its Prime Minister after populists gained greater control in recent elections. Italy put populists in charge six months ago. Austria also is now led by a populist. Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel grows weaker each month, as Germans grow weary of her very long tenure, especially after the migration crisis she caused across the continent. The massive uncertainty in our elections is mirrored across Europe with people on both continents not knowing how this populist upheaval will end. Come 2021, we could have a world led by a reinvigorated President Trump with Chancellor Merkel in forced retirement.

Don’t get me wrong, Democrats winning back the U.S. House will be a big deal, but the bigger deal will be who controls the U.S. Senate, as future U.S. Supreme Court and lower court nominations are in play and, as the Kavanaugh confirmation process showed, the stakes are monumentally high. Regardless, President Trump will continue to do much of what he wants on foreign policy matters. Hopefully, we can iron out the trade issues that separate us so America and Europe can join together to end China’s manipulation of international trade.

Though you may not like me saying it, if European leaders join President Trump’s efforts to make trade fairer and increase global security, we indeed can make the world great again!

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Would you like to react?

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