

OPINIONWONDER LAND

# *Mar-a-Lago Search Shows the Swamp's Trump Obsession*

An FBI raid against a former president should never happen. End of discussion.

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Let us assume that for 99.99% of the U.S. population in early August 2022, the last thing on their mind was Mar-a-Lago. Instead, a short list of real things preoccupying Americans would include inflation, crime, battles in Congress over spending, Ukraine fighting World War III for us in Europe, and China conducting massive live-fire military exercises around Taiwan.

So it came as a surprise to discover Monday evening that the Justice Department and FBI decided the most important thing in the world just now was raiding former President Donald Trump's estate in Palm Beach, Fla. Among other thoughts, a three-letter acronym starting with W comes to mind.

Forgive me for not spending more than a moment on the legal niceties of this event—the applicability of the Presidential Records Act, that it had be about “something big” involving classified documents, or that no one, including a former president, is above the law. They are all beside the point.

You can hate Donald Trump until your eyes pop out, but let us be clear: He *was* elected the 45th president of the U.S. He served four years in office. No former president who was disliked by many—not Clinton, Reagan nor FDR—had his home invaded by a squad of FBI agents. This should never happen in the U.S. End of discussion.

But it did happen. The Trump raid is now a wall-to-wall political disaster for the United States, doing more damage, if that's possible, to the country's internal divisions and even creating external risks.

Consider the current spectacle the U.S. is presenting to foreign adversaries. Multiple members of the sitting president's own party in the past week—such as Joe Manchin and

Jerry Nadler—have openly abandoned Joe Biden for an election that is two years off. Days later, the previous president comes under explicit attack from the FBI.

Imagine what we would think of the stability of China or Russia if events like this were happening to Xi Jinping or Vladimir Putin. That is how they see us—destabilized and vulnerable. Our opponents are redoing their global risk-reward ratios.

Incredibly, we are doing this to ourselves. Correction: They are doing it to us. Who are “they”? They, as of Monday, are who much of the political right says they are—the Swamp, the Deep State, the Regime, the Establishment.

Normally in times of hypermarginalized political opinion, it is worth attempting to argue on behalf of a functioning government system. But past some point, that becomes nearly impossible.

With this raid on a former president’s residence, the Swamp pushed past that point. The rest of us are being carried along in their undertow of political debris.

Washington has become a very small town, inhabited by people inbred by profession, marriage, schools and cultural disposition. The imbalance between the capital and the nation has been a problem for a long time, but as we say, life goes on. Until Trump.

After Mr. Trump took office, the Washington establishment—the Comey-McCabe FBI, opposition Democrats, the press—asked the public to indulge the notion that the new U.S. president was a Russian pawn. No matter that the Steele dossier, the day it was published, struck many as Russian fabulism. The press published story after story based on anonymous sources that it might be real. It wasn’t.

Mr. Trump fired FBI Director James Comey, and the public next got the Justice Department investigation led by Robert Mueller, a figure from Beltway central casting, which led to the Mueller report, which amounted to almost nothing. Then Adam Schiff, the impeachments, etc., etc.

In the event, the Democrats won back the presidency in 2020 when the incumbent Mr. Trump failed to put away an opponent who campaigned mostly from inside his house in Delaware.

Trump takedown accomplished? Obviously not. For the Swamp, Donald Trump is Dracula, and they won’t rest until they’ve put a stake through his heart.

Which brings us to the hard part—Mr. Trump himself.

This incident may push the former president into the Republican nomination race, running—with evidence—against the Swamp’s institutional corruption. Within hours, Mr. Trump’s organization posted a 3½-minute campaign-style video about a “nation in decline.”

A second Trump term isn’t the last thing this country needs. But it’s about second to last. The raid on Mar-a-Lago proves that Trump Derangement Syndrome won’t go away until Mr. Trump is out of elective politics.

Trump II would not be a replay of Trump I, a more substantive, policy-driven presidency than his critics will admit. Trump II would be a four-year civil war. The Swamp wouldn’t drain. It would deepen. The rancor could drown us all.

American politics needs new, stable leadership. And Republicans need to find a way to talk about the Swamp’s threat.

It’s not a good day when Andrew Cuomo is speaking forcefully against the Mar-a-Lago raid on an elected president and Mitch McConnell is as silent as Attorney General Merrick Garland and FBI Director Christopher Wray. Invest in sump pumps.

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