**Boris and Donald: Are There Second Acts in Life?**

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London, England: To paraphrase Winston Churchill, “Never in the course of human events have a British Prime Minister and an American President concurrently faced charges of committing high crimes and misdemeanours.”

In Britain, former PM Boris Johnson, fined for violating a Covid law prohibiting large public gatherings and holding a drinks party, resigned his seat in the House of Commons to avoid a further Parliamentary investigation. But Johnson seems determined to remain engaged in British politics already attacking Premier Rishi Sunak for malfeasance.

Is Johnson preparing for a second act in politics as Sir Winston did in his return from “the wilderness” of political exile becoming prime minister in May 1940? If so, Johnson must reverse the mood of most of his fellow citizens who want him gone for good. That is indeed a steep mountain to overcome.

The case of Donald Trump is far more serious. What Johnson has done was buffoonish and trivial by comparison in terms of law-breaking. That does not mean his future personal conduct towards his political rivals will not be destructive. It most likely will.

Reading the thirty-seven indictments against Trump, who is the only president to have been twice impeached and acquitted, is breathtaking. Trump ignored, disregarded or violated the most basic security laws and rules for safeguarding classified material that, if disclosed, could do exceptionally grave damage” to the nation. Punishment for the charges runs from five to a maximum of twenty years of confinement and a $250,000 fine for each.

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The number of top secrets and “code word” documents noted in the indictment is chilling. While the specific countries are not mentioned, it does not take a spymaster to guess that Iran, Syria, North Korea, China and Russia are among them. Other documents were labelled NOFORN meaning no distribution to foreign states inferring that disclosure of the material would be detrimental to some and FIVEY meaning limited to “Five Eyes” of the US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. And a few more atomic energy labels.

While Trump had falsely asserted he could declassify documents, nonsensically by thinking about it, nuclear energy secrets cannot be downgraded in classification even by presidents. And the cavalier manner in which documents were moved around and stored, if that word is sufficiently vague enough to describe their handling, was stunning if not incredulous. That Trump’s attorneys will cite wrongful possession of classified material by President Joe Biden and former Vice President Mike Pence, will make no difference.

Neither the president nor the former vice president, once informed of wrongful possession, did not lie or fail to return the material as required. According to the indictment, Trump lied, withheld and obstructed returning all the classified material insisting that, despite the ironclad law declaring all official documents belonged to the nation, they were his. How anyone can accept this explanation, and his supporters do, suggest the land mines that lie ahead in this prosecution?

A week before, an Air Force lieutenant colonel had been sentenced to three years of confinement for improper possession and storage of highly classified material. But that officer was not a former president, as some will argue who assert the charges against Trump are politically driven. Yet, the law is the law.

Worsening the case against Donald are his comments on tape and television readily admitting possession of highly classified material and in the former case, bragging about it. It is difficult to see how, in any trial that is conducted without “fear or favour” and under the law, Trump cannot be convicted.

The judge, Aileen Cannon, was a Trump appointee. Her prior ruling over the documents was unanimously overturned by an appeals court consisting of all Republican appointees. No doubt questions will be raised over a possible conflict between her oath of office and loyalty to Trump regardless of how she conducts the trial.

As a result, has President Joe Biden been slipped the political equivalent of a nuclear hand grenade with its pin already pulled waiting to explode? No matter how this case, as well as one existing and possibly other indictments, unfold, the old legal aphorism will apply. Tough cases make for bad law.

Biden has no choice except to let justice run its course. He will be attacked nonetheless. But unlike Gerald Ford who pardoned Richard Nixon and lost the presidency as a consequence, Biden has a better option. He can commute the sentence in exchange for Trump’s commitment to retire permanently from politics. Or the grenade can explode.

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