

Is Trump a necessary evil?

By *Kim Sawyer*

16 January 2019



Trump shows us where democracy is failing, but more than that, Trump is showing all of us what we have become, writes [Dr Kim Sawyer](#).

In a sense, every U.S. President is necessary for the times they live and the times that follow.

Certainly, that was the case for [Lincoln](#). While his [Gettysburg Address](#) is most remembered, his [Cooper Union Speech](#) showed him to be necessary.

Lincoln concluded the *Cooper Union Speech* with [these words](#):

"Let us have faith that right makes might and, in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."

We might ask why this has been forgotten. Perhaps Donald Trump is necessary to

remind us.

Trump is necessary for three reasons:

- first, he is necessary because of what he represents to those who voted for him;
- secondly, he is necessary because of the test he has imposed on democracy; and
- thirdly, he is also necessary because he has shown us what we have become.

There is an unwritten law of politics, a variation of [Newton's Third Law](#) that every action has an opposite and often more than equal reaction. It is why first-term governments often fail and why the most popular [French president](#) in recent times is now the [least popular](#).

Macron's Approval Drops Behind France's Least Popular President Ever - What's up with that? The FRENCH economy roared past the UK, businesses doing well and FRANCE's much needed labor reforms will be an important step to modernizing a NAPOLEONIC system.
<https://t.co/E1trfHog3B>

— Pikke aka ARTIFICE (@atelierARTIFICE) [September 4, 2018](#)

For many, Trump was a reaction to too

much prescription of how to behave and how not to behave. His base voted for him because he was an "anti-politician". No politician has had a base like Trump, but his base will never support a pyramid. Trump's base already has a wall — it is a wall of indifference to those different from them, a wall that locks in the past and locks out the future. Trump is necessary because he has revealed why they are who they are.

Trump is also necessary to show us the weakness in democracy. Possibly more legislation will flow from Trump than any other president, but not in the way he intended. No future president will be able to be like Trump. Democracy cannot afford it.

Let's speculate about the presidency in 2040. It will be mandatory for all candidates to provide their full tax history. Executive power will be curtailed, perhaps there will even be limits on the ability to decide military incursions. The electoral system will be reformed so that the president must also win the popular vote. There may even be an independent electoral commission so congressional districts are not [gerrymandered](#). Almost certainly, a special prosecutor will be fully protected.

William Barr, nominated by President Donald Trump as attorney general, said Russia special counsel Robert Mueller's report should be made public and vowed to let the special prosecutor to complete his work.
<https://t.co/NBPYF1IL6A>

— USA TODAY
(@USATODAY) [January 14, 2019](#)

Trump is necessary to show us where democracy is failing.

However, Trump is more than that. Trump is showing all of us what we have become. When we look in the mirror we do not see him but we do see some of him. Trump represents something within all of us. [William Golding](#) alluded to it in [Lord of the Flies](#) and Trump is the realisation.

Like Trump, we are all self-interested. Generations of economists have taught the [maximisation of self-interest](#), but Trump is teaching us more. Trump is teaching how our obsession with ourselves is limiting who we can be.

Like Trump, we have never been more connected, but never more disconnected from the person sitting next to us on the train. A President home alone at Christmas tweeting from the White House is showing the level of our disconnection. We are addicted to brevity, where the text message has replaced the conversation. We are reading less of more. And through his tweets, Trump amplifies the problem.

Merry Christmas!

— Donald J. Trump
(@realDonaldTrump)
[December 25, 2018](#)

Like Trump, our lives are punctuated by too much uncertainty. Even at Christmas, the stock market is unforgiving. [General Kelly](#) and [General Mattis](#) hedged the risk, but now they too have gone. We are discovering that not every risk can be hedged.

Like Trump, we seem to accept everything has a price. Trump has lived a life of transactions where even morality has a price. He paid a price to become President. We are paying the price because he hid the transaction. We are learning the cost of the deal.

Like Trump, we have a selective memory. We are more confident than we should be and too proud to regret. Trump is more selective than most of us. Yet he reminds us of our own selectivity.

In his *Cooper Union Speech*, Lincoln dared us to do our duty. The Trump Presidency has dared us more than most. Duty is an ambiguous term. We must always ask, to what or to whom we have a duty. We all have a duty to family

and friends, but we also have a duty to random strangers, to other species, and to the planet. With more obligations, we trade off duties.

Read James Mattis' resignation letter to Trump: 'We must be resolute and unambiguous' toward Russia and China
<https://t.co/le2ckqBPd0>

— Smiley (@smileyt22)
[December 21, 2018](#)

Trump has lived a life of avoidance of duty — not just [avoidance of military service](#) and [avoidance of taxes](#), but also the avoidance of duty to others, whether on the other side of a transaction or the other side of the street. Many of those who have served in the Trump Administration have cited a

duty to country,
rather than a
duty to Trump.
They know him
too well.

But it is those
who have
avoided duty
that have
mattered most.
The
Republicans in
Congress are
Trump's
underwriters,
the co-
signatories of
the Trump
presidency.

They are
bystanders
underscoring
the maxim:

*'The only thing
necessary for
the triumph of
evil is for good
men to do
nothing.'*

They have
failed in their
duty.

The last word
should be left
to Lincoln. In [a
speech to the
Wisconsin
State
Agricultural
Society](#) in
1859, he
recounted the
story of the

Eastern
monarch who
charged his
wise men with
inventing a
sentence true
for all times.

That sentence
[was](#):

*"And this too
shall pass
away."*

And so it shall.

Want to
know
where
Trump
isn't
visiting
today
while
he's
here in
McAlle
n?

Ursula
Border
Patrol
Process
ing
Center,
where
most of
the
2,816
kids
taken
from
their
parents
were
kept in
cages.

Here's
what it
looks
like, as
I told
[@chrisl
hayes](#)
after I
toured.
[pic.twitt
er.com/
WOn1
Vmwo
R1](#)

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Jacob
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[Januar
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2019](#)

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