

MY RESPONSE TO A READER OF MY FACEBOOK CONCERNING WHAT PRESIDENT TRUMP DID TO UNITE THE NATION

Ben:

Thank you for your comments/question on my Facebook page: “ *I think one issue that both sides would agree on is that after the election, the U.S. is very divided. My question is what did Donald do in this past year to unite the U.S. back together?*” Because your comments raised some interesting yet important issues, I want to respond below in detail.

First, allow me to interpret what you implied in your comments:

1. The U.S. was divided after the election, so before the election the U.S. was not divided, or at least not as divided. The implication here is that something happened after the election that caused the U.S. to be divided, or more divided, than before.
2. Donald Trump, as the President, has a duty to unite the U.S. And although you did not state it as such, your question appears to imply that he had not done (or at least has not done enough) to unite the U.S.

I know people cannot read others’ minds so it is always a bit risky to interpret what others’ mean. But allow me the latitude to make the above interpretation for the sake of commenting on the issue of division, and Trump’s role in it.

My first question is: **has the U.S. ever not been divided as a country?** A look at the country’s history would clearly tell us that the U.S. has **ALWAYS** been a divided nation. To wit:

- At America’s founding, there were bitter divisions at the 1787 Constitutional Convention. There were the Federalists who wanted to strengthen the power of the central government, and the Anti-Federalists (led by Patrick Henry, etc.) who wanted the 13 States to have more rights and influence. They

argued bitterly over whether the Constitution gave the central government too much power over the individual states. The division was so severe that a delegate named Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts wrote: "I am exceedingly distressed at the proceedings of the Convention, being apprehensive and almost sure they will — if not altered materially — lay the foundation of a civil War." As you can see, even at the beginning the division was so bad that at least one delegate had mentioned civil war.

- Then the U.S. entered into what is called an "Antebellum Period" which was after the adoption of the Constitution in 1789 but before the Civil War. We all know the issue that bitterly divided the country at the time: abolition of slavery. Finally in 1861 the country entered a full-scale civil war in which more than 600,000 Americans died fight each other. You cannot tell me there is ever a division that is more bitter and bloody.
- The Reconstruction Period after the Civil War did not lead to unity and peace as there was still no racial equality. Finally It led to the civil rights movement in the 1960's when the Vietnam War protests also reached its height at the same time. We saw exploding social protests among blacks, women activists and young people who passionately opposed American involvement in the Vietnam War. Again the nation was torn socially, culturally and politically. The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy nearly put the country on the verge of another civil war!

So America has always been a divided nation, and at times much more violently and bitterly than we are today. Was America united under the previous Presidents, like Bush or Obama? Absolutely not. There was a brief period of unity after 911, but that was short-lived. Even during the Obama years the nation was bitterly divided -- while Obama campaigned to "move beyond the divisive politics of Washington and bring Democrats, independents and Republicans together to get things done," he kicked off his administration with a strict party line vote on Obamacare which most Americans did not want. A Rasmussen poll taken early this year found that 60 percent of Americans felt "race relations have gotten worse

since Obama's election". And President Obama constantly engaged in more unilateral policy-making through executive orders than almost any previous president—bending, changing, rewriting, and ignoring the law (including immigration laws) at will. Many of these executive orders have now been undone by Trump. No matter how we look at it, the Obama years did not bring unity to the nation. So it is not fair to say that the country was united before Trump took office. It is equally unfair to say that Trump divided the nation -- the nation was already very divided even before he took office.

My second question is: **has Trump done anything to escalate the division since his election?** First, let me point out his election agenda brought together 62,984,825 voters, and I am one of them. Sure in terms of sheer vote counts Hillary Clinton had 2,868,691 more votes, but California alone gave Mrs. Clinton 4,269,978 more votes. And New York State gave Mrs. Clinton 1,736,590 more votes. Apart from these two States, it is easy to see how dominant Trump was in winning the election by rallying the entire Middle America around him. Middle America is united in getting rid of political corruption and status quo. In fact Trump won 2623 out of 3112 counties. He won in more counties than any previous Republican candidates including Ronald Reagan. He was uniting the silent majority.

Then what about his behavior after he took office -- did his demeanor unify the nation or divide the nation? He certainly is a lot more vocal, combative, and direct than previous Republican presidents like Bush. Trump fights back when he is attacked, and there is no shortage of people attacking him even before he was inaugurated: the media, Democrats, Republicans, the "Deep State" including the government bureaucracy, etc. In fact I cannot recall a President, including Richard Nixon, who was more relentlessly attacked day and night like Trump has been. As a New York businessman he fights back harder when he is attacked. Sometimes it seems to be 不按章法的亂拳. But watching Trump almost every day since his election I would caution anyone who underestimates his smartness and overall strategic coherence. Even his seemingly incoherent tweets are aimed at uniting supporters by letting people hear what is on his mind and heart.

Should we want a passive and submissive President who kowtows to everyone and every group in order to please everyone in the name of bringing unity to the nation? Absolutely not. I think most people who voted for him want him to DRAIN THE SWARM, which we all know is bringing down the nation. We want a President who stands up to tell the truth, and fights for the good of the nation. We want a President who stands firm when attacked either by evil forces within or without. We want a President who advances the welfare of all ethnic groups and all strata of society, including blacks in inner cities (by the way, Black unemployment rate is now at an all time low).

I think Trump is unifying the country simply by bringing back economic growth and prosperity to the nation. The left-leaning Tax Policy Center has acknowledged that under the Tax Reform 90% of the middle class will get an average tax cut of \$1,600 in 2018. We cannot, and should not, expect Trump to unite America in terms of ideology and political beliefs -- after all democracy does allow (or even encourages) people the freedom to hold different beliefs. But we want him to unite the country in terms of economic opportunities, freedom of religion and freedom of expression, national security, and international prestige. These transcend political leaning and ideology. When groups are trying to tear the nation apart, such as the football players who disrespect the American flag and national anthem, it is right for Trump to oppose them on behalf of the many Americans (left or right leaning) who are patriotic. When the mainstream media is spreading lies day after day which tear the nation apart, it is right for him to call them out as fake news on behalf of the majority of Americans who want truth and fairness.

Sorry for giving you a long response, but this only shows how much I respect your comments and questions. It also gives me a platform to express my views and beliefs.

Sau-Wing Lam

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