

Donald J. Trump: consummate politician

by Phillip W. Weiss

If you are concerned over whether the Trump-Putin meeting weakens Mr. Trump politically, there is no need to worry. By now, Trump has shown that he can do or say practically anything he wants without sustaining political damage. Remember: Trump is the number one media star in the world today. The public expects him to do and say audacious things and he does not disappoint. His very unpredictability had become one of his trademarks. One moment a tough guy, next moment seemingly vacillating, one moment pouting, next moment all smiles, one moment critical, next moment praising. Adversaries are treated as friends and friends as adversaries.

Nobody knows what he is going to say or do next. He alienates many but by doing so keeps the spotlight on himself. That is because he is the star of the show; everybody else is the supporting cast. It is all about him, and the media, and especially the “Fake News” media, loves it.¹ No politician today works the media more skillfully than Trump. He is the master puppeteer. The whole world talks about him, thinks about him, obsesses about him. This practically guarantees that his name will go down in history, perhaps for posterity.

It is his massive name recognition and his reputation for the irreverent that wins Trump votes. He casts himself as the rebel, the maverick, the outsider, the anti-elitist (despite being born into wealth), and the guy who is rocking the system. He says what he wants, breaks all the rules, and does what he pleases – and makes headlines practically on a daily basis.

¹ Donald Trump routinely uses the expression “fake news” to attack and delegitimize the news media.

He also creates stars, especially in the news media. Scores of broadcast journalists and entire broadcast networks, most anti-Trump, owe their high ratings directly to Donald Trump. In return, the news media provides Trump with non-stop free advertising. All this makes Trump even more popular.

Anything Trump says or writes gets immediate coverage, not only in the U.S. but around the world. Not since Franklin D. Roosevelt has a U.S. president so dominated the media. Trump labels much of the media “Fake News,” and the media dutifully reports it as a story, thus lending credence to Trump’s admonitions and claims, and making the “Fake News” media an unwittingly complicit partner in Trump’s political success.

Before Trump, politicians did all that they could to avoid controversy. Trump changed all that. He thrives on controversy. In fact, he manufactures controversy. For Trump, controversy is the fuel that wins him voters. Controversy attracts and distracts the public. Attracts because it is exciting, distracts because it diverts attention from the more mundane concerns of life to him.

And if some people viciously scorn him and mock him to the point of outright condemnation, so what? All the better for Trump because paradoxically the more he is scorned, the more he is praised. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Trump proves that principle again and again. Attack him, even heap abuse on him, and his political stock goes up. Praise him and soon he creates new controversy. In this way his name continues to dominate the spotlight and center stage. He is the producer, director and star of the show all rolled up into one. He is the one and only Donald J. Trump.