

1-25-2025

WSJ Print Edition

Trump returns to office with a burst of energy and a flurry of actions, some sensible, some dangerous.



President Trump signs executive orders in the Oval Office Jan. 20. CARLOS BARRIA/ REUTERS



DECLARATIONS

The White House 'Wonder Horse'

What is the honorable way to oppose while hoping for the best, to oppose while being as quick to recognize progress, as to see failure, to oppose while appreciating any outcomes that are healthy for and helpful to the United States of America? And without forgetting why you oppose? We'll find out. This is our goal. History is long and our moment within it short. Play it straight and say what you see.

As for the past week, where to start?

It was another Trumpian tri-

--umph. Talk about energy in the executive. President Trump is flooding all zones, throwing whole pots of spaghetti against the wall. The spirit is Teddy Roosevelt, high dynamism and canny show business, though the new president has taken to referring to TR's more orderly predecessor, William McKinley.

Mr. Trump successfully turned the page. He established this feeling: The past is sodden, the future electric. *

As he sat at the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office Monday night, holding an impromptu news conference—this was after he gave an inaugural address, a long, ad libbed postinaugural speech to the overflow crowd, a Capitol One Arena speech accompanied by the public signing of executive orders, and before the sword dancing at the first of three inaugural balls—as he sat at the Resolute desk simultaneously taking questions and signing more executive orders—this one makes clear the United States owns Saturn—I realized three things: I once wrote of him as Chief Crazy Horse but as he signed, I thought of . . . an old nickname for Tom Brokaw. Years ago his producers marveled at his stamina—he could sit in that anchor chair and go live all day and all night, he was indefatigable, never lost focus, he didn't even have to use the bathroom. They called him "Duncan the Wonder Horse." That was Mr. Trump this week.

He is going to utterly dominate our brainspace. He is a neurological imperialist, he storms in and stays. In his public self, Joe Biden asked nothing and gave nothing. Mr. Trump demands and dominates: Attention must be paid. It was said

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years ago that Fox News viewers were so loyal that they never changed the channel and the Fox logo burned itself into the screens. Donald Trump won't be happy until he's burned himself into the nation's corneas.

He is at the top of his powers, top of his game. He used to be testy and aggrieved with reporters because he yearned for their admiration. Now he treats them with patience and calm because he doesn't care about them. He's got his own thing going. If they don't like him it's their problem, with their puny little numbers and shrinking networks.

Finally, my optimistic thought. I found myself wondering if the first Trump administration was Mr. Trump's public nervous breakdown and his second administration will be his recovery. Is that possible? His first was chaos and fury, ending in 1/6. What we're seeing now is a person who presents as even, collected and commanding, who isn't wholly uninformed and has a plan. We all tell ourselves stories, and that, this week, is mine. His inaugural address was exactly like a speech by Donald Trump. He fleetingly asserted a golden future and quickly reverted to insulting the presidents who'd shown up to maintain form, most pointedly his immediate predecessor, who listened impassively. A friend said of Mr. Biden, sweetly, "At least he won't remember." I include the insult because it is deserved after he pardoned his family for any crimes they might have committed. This was a scandalous act that embarrasses America in the eyes of the world—*you with your moral pretensions and your skeevy elites on the take.* It was the act of someone who doesn't care anymore.

His friends were encouraged by the celebrations of Jimmy Carter when he died—"In time, history will be kind to Joe." It will not. He took a torch to that possibility in his last official act.

Of Mr. Trump's executive orders, some were sound, such as the crackdown on illegal immigration. But let me tell you what happens when you pardon virtually everyone who did Jan. 6: You get more Jan. 6ths. When people who commit crimes see that their punishment will be minimal they are encour--aged. It was a wicked act. Conservatives are tough on crime because of the pain and disorder it causes. In that case it pained an entire nation. Jan. 6 too shamed us in the eyes of the world. This pardon was not a patriotic act.

What the president's appointees have to balance in their minds is two opposing thoughts. One: They just won an overwhelming victory—the presidency, Congress, the popular vote—with almost all the institutions of the country arrayed against them. The other: Mr. Trump won 77 million votes and Ms. Harris 75 million. The margin of victory was 49.7% to 48.2%. We are a split country. The victors had a stunning victory but half the country opposed them. The point isn't to advise gradualism or moderation, which in Mr. Trump's case is absurd and already overtaken by events. It is to say: Know your position. For all the triumphalism of the moment Trump staffers shouldn't feel impervious or unhurt. Their position can change overnight.

An example: the tech billionaires in the front rows at the inauguration. It was a Trumpian power-flex: *Look who's on my side.* But they aren't kissing the ring, they're tough and willful men who do what they must to get what they want. What they won was a live White House event in which the president excitedly prompted them, like a yokel, on how artificial intelligence will cure cancer. That's not all it can do, read a little Geoffrey Hinton. AI doesn't need a cheerleader; it needs caution and gravity. But it seems to have just won the formal imprimatur of the new administration. To be taken in like this by subtle highclass hustlers wasn't promising and fresh but embarrassing.

Democrats so far are nonexistent as the opposition. In the long term their passivity is a strategy: Let Mr. Trump control immigration and kill woke; that will remove the issues people most hate about the Democratic Party. Once he solves them, the issues are gone. In the short term this isn't a strategy but another indication of lostness: They don't know what they believe in and have no leader. The idea that Barack Obama will swoop in to save them is ridiculous. That selfish man isn't interested in a fight that would expose him to fire.

It will be interesting to see how the world arranges itself. Eight years ago when Mr. Trump rose, Europe thought it was witnessing an aberrational freak show, something visited on them like a spaceship. It would disappear in four years. The only ones who saw the implications of his rise were themselves slightly nutty, like Nigel Farage. Now they're watching the Republicans in Washington and seeing: In four years Mr. Trump will be gone but Trumpism will stay, it is entrenched. Even rising Democrats will take cues from it. This is a new dispensation. It will be interesting to see how they adjust.

For four years it's going to be non-stop, 24/ 7 rock-'em-sock-'em. God bless our beloved country. History ahead,
everybody hold on tight.

By Peggy Noonan

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Saturday, 01/25/2025 Page .A013

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