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## Trump, The Vital Diversion

By Matt A. Mayer

To understand President Donald Trump's appeal to many, look no further than J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy "The Lord of the Rings." As you may recall, critical to Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee getting the one ring into Mordor so they could throw it into the fires at Mount Doom was the diversion created by the rest of the Fellowship at the gates of Mordor. That diversion kept Sauron's eye atop his tower searching for the ring in the wrong place just long enough for Frodo and Sam to destroy it and, therefore, Sauron.

While I don't mean to imply that America's left or the mainstream media are evil like Sauron, I think the analogy is fitting when applied to Trump. I also don't mean to claim that this outcome was intended; rather, it is an unintended, but very beneficial, consequence of Trump's use of social media. Or it also could be the work of a strategic man who became president, not by accident, but by knowing how to use technology, bravado and arbitrage to win again and again.

To "get" Trump, you must look past the man who seems to never tire of media coverage no matter how negative it is. Specifically, Trump has constantly said and tweeted messages that have sent the left, the mainstream media, the Never Trumpers and foreigners into apoplectic reactions. From the day Trump announced his candidacy throughout the primary and general elections, his demise was predicted after each wild statement he made, including his fiery debate exchange with Megyn Kelly and the shocking audio from the "Access Hollywood" tape.

Before he was sworn in, a day didn't pass without some pundit claiming that Trump would be impeached within six months of the inauguration. When those predictions failed to materialize, the appointment of special counsel Robert Mueller added fuel to the fire and increased the belief among opponents that Trump's days were numbered. Opponents even cling to the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution with hopes that Trump would be deemed impaired and removed.

What opponents fail to understand is that, should Trump not serve out his entire term, long-time conservative Vice President Mike Pence would replace him and move ahead with the Trump agenda without the Trumpian drama. For the American right, we win no matter which man occupies the Oval Office.

Where Trump is vital in a way Pence is not, however, is in serving as a diversion which allows the rest of his team to secure enormous achievements. The fact remains that, in spite of Trump's controversial actions, his first year in office will go down as one of the strongest in modern history. Many on the

right firmly believe his policy successes were possible because his actions diverted most of the energy of his opponents from the work being done underneath him to him.

As Trump's opponents, like Sauron, aimed nearly all of their efforts at taking him down, the hundreds of Frodos and Sams in his administration went about their work reversing Obama administration policies and enacting conservative ideas largely unimpeded. Here's a brief summary of what been done in Trump's first year.

Most importantly, Trump replaced conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia with Appellate Judge Neil Gorsuch, who may turn out to be more conservative than Scalia. Given how little Congress gets done in this era of ever-shifting small majorities and the lack of permanency executive actions via the presidency have, controlling the Supreme Court increasingly determines America's laws for at least a generation or longer.

Don't be surprised if Justice Anthony Kennedy retires by mid-summer so that Trump can replace him with another conservative before control of the Senate is potentially lost in the November midterm election. Should the Democrats take control of the Senate, Trump may not get another Supreme Court nominee through in his first term.

Beyond Gorsuch, Trump set a record for the number of appellate court judges appointed in one year. This conservative reformation of the judiciary will far outlive his presidency.

Next, the Trump administration worked tirelessly to reverse the Obama administration's left-wing regulations, which set a record in its last year for the number of pages in the Federal Register (95,894). The Trump administration cut that figure to half as much through the first nine months of the year. As reported in the Wall Street Journal, more than 1,500 planned actions have been withdrawn or delayed. Congress pitched in by using the Congressional Review Act to kill 14 Obama administration rules [that would have cost](#) Americans \$3.7 billion, eliminating 4.2 million hours of paperwork.

Then, the tax reform package recently enacted will ripple through the economy over the coming months and years. Each day another company announces positive actions it will take because of the lower corporate tax rate. Just wait until Americans start filing their tax returns in the coming years when the vast majority will see that they get to keep more of their own money because of the tax cut, including the end of the Obamacare penalty that got eliminated with the

individual health care mandate.

Between the regulatory rollback, including the approval of key energy pipelines and withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement, and tax reform, the economy looks like it will surpass 3 percent GDP growth for last year. Many economists have raised expectations for the coming year above that mark.

Finally, on the international front, Trump's national security strategy is a bold vision rooted in realism and he sent the United Nations a clear message that America won't bear the burden of the U.N. without receiving clear benefits. In Asia, China is moving in the right direction to rein in North Korea and Pakistan is quickly learning we won't give it money without major actions to stop terrorist activities. In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is finally on the pathway to serious internal reforms, the Islamic State group was defeated in Iraq, and Iran is finding that Trump will stand with the Iranian people just as strongly as Ronald Reagan stood with the people trapped behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War.

Closer to home, NAFTA renegotiations are underway, with Canada and Mexico realizing that Trump really did mean what he said about the American worker coming first. Illegal border crossings reached an all-time low, as the Trump administration ramped up its interior enforcement efforts. And, Trump is moving ahead with building his big border wall.

Whether you like or hate him, it is hard to argue that Trump's first year wasn't a huge policy success for conservatives. Given my experience in Washington, these policy victories were possible because Trump diverted so much of his opponents' firepower to coming after him while those beneath him quietly did their work. As in "The Lord of the Rings," the longer Trump can keep their focus on him the better for those doing the real work of his presidency.

Just imagine what Trump and, more importantly, his team could get done in his first term if he remains the vital diversion and Republicans keep control of Congress. He could join Reagan as one of America's best presidents.

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