



## Prominent conservative: Removing the ‘awful presence’ of Trump in 2020 would be great for conservatism

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Some of the Republicans who were outspoken critics of President Donald Trump before he received the GOP presidential nomination in 2016 have since become strident Trump sycophants, including Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and adviser Kellyanne “Alternative Facts” Conway. But veteran journalist George Will, now 78, is among the right-wing Trump critics who — like MSNBC’s Joe Scarborough and GOP strategists Rick Wilson and Ana Navarro — hasn’t budged an inch: Will is as adamantly anti-Trump now as he was three years ago. The conservative writer discussed his latest book, “The Conservative Sensibility,” in an [interview with the Daily Beast’s Scott Porch](#) and explained why he believes that a Trump loss in 2020 would be the best thing that could happen to the Republican Party.

Will discusses his ideas for a post-Trump conservatism in “The Conservative Sensibility.” And when the Beast asked him if conservatism in the U.S. would be “better served by Trump losing in 2020,” Will responded, “Yes, yes and yes. There’s no question about that.”

Will went on to stress that while he believes that Trump has been terrible for conservatism, a Democratic presidential victory in 2020 certainly wouldn’t be the end of the conservative movement — although conservatives would have to think long and hard about what they wanted post-Trump conservatism to be.

Will told the Beast, “Postwar conservatism was a bookish movement — Richard Weaver’s ‘Ideas Have Consequences’ and Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman — that evolved into a network of intellectual think tanks like American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation. I think we’ll have that again. There will be younger writers and younger politicians, and we’ll have a genuine fight to see what comes next.... But first, we have to clear the ground and remove this awful presence from our lives.”

That “awful presence” Will is referring to is, of course, Trump’s presidency. One of the many areas in which Will disagrees with Trump — as well as with many people on the left — is on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As Will sees it, NAFTA has reduced illegal immigration.

“I was on a radio show with a big Trump supporter who talked about how great it is what Trump is doing about immigration and complaining about NAFTA,” Will noted. “I responded that NAFTA has been so good for the Mexican economy that net migration to the United States has

been negative for seven years now. You'd think immigration hawks would have connected those dots by now."

During the Beast interview, Will expressed some admiration for someone who has been surging in the Democratic presidential primary: Sen. Elizabeth Warren — although not from a policy standpoint.

"What makes Elizabeth Warren interesting and admirable is not that she's right — I think she's wrong about almost everything — but that she brings gravity to politics," Will asserted. "I think it's still an open question of whether Republicans will bring ideas back to politics after we decide that we can't properly reduce political philosophy to 'Only I can fix it.'"

Back in the 1970s — long before the rise of right-wing media stars like Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity — Will and the late William F. Buckley reigned supreme as the most prominent conservative journalists in the United States. But as right-wing as Will is, he has acknowledged that some liberal and progressive policies have their place. Back in 1981 — the year in which Ronald Reagan was sworn in as president — Will wrote a column reflecting on how influential President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal had been even in parts of the GOP. And he stressed to the Beast that conservatives won't necessarily reject all liberal/progressive policies.

"My conservative sensibility is not opposed to ameliorative government," Will explained. "It is perfectly fine for the American people to decide collectively in 1935 that they want Social Security, or to decide collectively in 1965 that they want Medicare. In 2025, maybe that will be single-payer health care. Those are all within the broad parameters of reasonable democratic choice."