

The Washington Times

If Trump's 'egregious,' what was Barack Obama?

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February 15, 2019

So President Donald Trump announced he was poised to declare a national emergency at the border, setting leftist tongues a-waggin' about the "egregious" lines of power he was crossing, and "egregious" bypass of Congress he was committing, and "egregious" political precedents he was setting.

Yeah, well about all that — let's take a bit of a breather, shall we? Trump is hardly the only president to use unilateral action for political ends. And he definitely doesn't inflict the greatest constitutional offense.

Declaring a national emergency at the border based on factual realities of an ongoing and emerging national emergency is hardly the same sort of "egregious" bypass of Congress so loved and so frequently used by the former administration, by Barack Obama.

"Five times that President Obama went around Congress," the Washington Examiner wrote in June 2014 headline, and then listed them: Obama used an executive order to prevent federal contractors from hiring and firing based on sexual orientation. Obama used an executive order to meddle with the contracted pay-back schedules of students and parents with their school loan originators. Obama used an executive order to force federal contractors to report salary data, sorted by sex and race, to the Labor Department. Obama used an executive order to raise the minimum wage for federal contract employees. And finally, the executive order of all executive orders — Obama signed a measure unsupported by Congress that granted amnesty to hundreds of thousands of illegals brought to America before the age of 16.

That last came as even Obama, just a few years earlier, during a Q&A on immigration reform in 2011, acknowledged the unconstitutionality of bypassing Congress on border control.

"We live in a democracy," he said then, Politico reported. "This notion that somehow I can just change the laws unilaterally is not true. The fact of the matter is there are laws on the books I have to enforce. And there is a great disservice done to the cause of getting the Dream Act passed and comprehensive immigration reform passed by perpetuating the notion that somehow, by myself, I can just go and do these things."

Yet he did. And the left cheered.

The left, for Obama, cared little for headlines like this, from the Cato Institute: "Top 10 Ways Obama Violated the Constitution during His Presidency," or for accusatory drubbings like this, from the same Cato piece: "The Obama administration has been the most lawless in U.S. history. ... [M]y accusation rests on the 44th president's seeing himself as professionally above the law, ignoring the executive branch's legal limits and disrespecting constitutional bounds like federalism and the separation of powers."

No, the left largely saw Obama as their road to progressive power, the bold-faced and arrogant solution to that pesky limited government document called the Constitution. Whatever reservations any in the Democratic Party held against an Obama administration's roughshod run over rule and good order promptly vanished in the whiff of government power that was to come. The moderate voices went silent, cowed by a "for the greater good" argument. The radical elements rose to the top, buoyed by a once-in-a-lifetime White House leader who obviously, blatantly cared nothing for law. Or truth.

And now these same lawless types want to cry foul over Trump's declaration of national emergency and tapping of federal funds to build a wall, absent congressional permission?

"The president's unlawful declaration over a crisis that does not exist does great violence to our Constitution and makes America less safe, stealing from urgently needed defense funds for the security of our military and our nation. This is plainly a power grab by a disappointed president who has gone outside the bounds of the law to try to get what he failed to achieve in the constitutional legislative process," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer in a joint statement, The Hill reported.

You mean like Obama?

"Trump will be crossing an egregious line of presidential overreach unprecedented in history that could have dire repercussions for years to come," wrote one opinion contributor at The Hill.

No. The precedent for presidential unilateral action has been set in stone for some years — decades, really. Plenty of presidents have used executive orders to ramrod through their congressionally unpalatable policies. Obama, most recently — and really, most "egregiously." More "egregiously" than Trump, for sure.

At least Trump, unlike Obama and his unilateral amnesty orders, is using his executive power to keep out the elements that would harm American citizens. Nothing egregious about that at all.