

Donald Trump is getting ready to throw Republicans under the bus

by Chris Cillizza

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(CNN) — In a [very wild interview with the Associated Press](#) earlier this week, President Donald Trump said something that should make every Republican in Congress a little skittish.

[Here's the exchange:](#)

AP: So my question is, if Republicans were to lose control of the House on November 6th — or a couple of days later depending on how long it takes to count the votes — do you believe you bear some responsibility for that?

Trump: No, I think I'm helping people. Look, I'm 48 and 1 in the primaries, and actually it's much higher than that because I endorsed a lot of people that were successful that people don't even talk about.

In case you missed it: The Republican President is asked whether he would take any blame if Republicans lose the House or Senate in 20 days' time. He says he will not. Which means -- stay with me now -- that Trump will blame Republicans if/when they lose the House or, much less likely, the Senate.

This is in keeping with two fundamental truths about Trump:

- 1) He never thinks anything is his fault
- 2) He doesn't associate with people he believes to be losers

In Trump's mind, he wins. He is a winner.

"My whole life is about winning," Trump told [The Washington Post in December 2015](#). "I always win. I win at golf. I'm a club champion many times at different clubs. I win at golf. I can sink the three-footer on the 18th hole when others can't. My whole life is about winning. I don't lose often. I almost never lose."

When his side loses, they aren't his side anymore.

Which brings me to what Trump might do if Republicans, as history, polling and most smart neutral observers expect, lose the House majority in 20 days.

He's already given us a VERY big clue -- [in an interview last week on "Fox & Friends"](#)-- when asked about how he would get along with a Democratic majority in the House. Said Trump:

"Now, can we get along? Maybe. And there's a possibility. They want infrastructure, I want infrastructure; there's something that can bring us together. We have a lot of things where there is commonality and it's possible that we'll even get along."

SIREN!

One thing I've learned in covering Trump is, listen when he tells you something. And, in the last 5 days, Trump has told us two things: 1) He's not going to take the blame for a Republican election loss and 2) He thinks he and Democrats could get along just fine on certain legislative proposals.

Add them together and it's very clear that Trump is already pondering the idea of triangulation -- using congressional Republicans as a foil to make some bipartisan deals with Democrats, and in the process, bolster his own standing among independent voters ahead of his 2020 reelection.

(Bill Clinton famously/infamously invented [triangulation in politics](#), with an assist from Dick Morris, after his party lost control of Congress in the 1994 midterms -- using his own party in Congress as a straw man to cut deals with Republicans and improve his chances of being reelected in 1996.)

Not only does triangulating against congressional Republicans -- who are not at all popular with the American public -- make sense from a political perspective for Trump but it's also totally in keeping with what we know about him as a person.

And -- and this is the truly scary piece of all of this for GOPers in the House and the Senate -- there's almost nothing they can do if Trump does go the triangulation route. Trump remains, by far, the most popular politician within the Republican base -- and it's hard to see that changing if he, say, cuts a deal here or there on something like infrastructure with a newly-minted Democratic House majority.

Distancing themselves from Trump a) won't work and b) would be a political death wish even if it did work. Congressional Republicans made a decision shortly after Trump won that they were going to be with him. It's been, generally speaking, a smooth ride: A tax cut, two conservative Supreme Court justices, deregulation etc. If Democrats win the House three weeks from now, Republicans may well look back at the past two years as the good old days. The ride could get a lot rockier for them from here on out.