

Federation, in response to its illegal invasion and occupation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Since then, the Government of the Russian Federation continues to illegally occupy Crimea and has utterly failed to fulfill its obligations under the Minsk Agreements to end its violent aggression in eastern Ukraine. Russia has failed to respect a full ceasefire; it has failed to pull back its heavy weaponry; it has failed to permit the monitoring and verification of a ceasefire regime; and it has failed to ensure access for humanitarian aid to conflict-affected individuals.

The story does not stop with Ukraine. Since 2014, the Government of the Russian Federation has greatly expanded its aggression around the world, including against the United States with the attack on our 2016 election. The Kremlin continues to interfere in elections, wage cyber attacks, engage in corruption and political meddling, and spread lies and disinformation—all with the goal to divide societies, undermine the rules-based international order, and break up longstanding transatlantic alliances. Our intelligence community has repeatedly asserted that the Kremlin will likely target our elections again this fall. The very ideal of democracy as a system of government is under constant assault from a Kremlin bent on destroying the international rules-based order.

Upon considering these facts, no observer could seriously think Russia deserves to be welcomed back into the G-7 club. Any such suggestion is ludicrous and must be dismissed out of hand.

The United States is a country long governed by the rule of law, where breaking the rules has consequences. More broadly, the United States has helped to create the rules-based order in the international community that has undoubtedly served the interests of the American people and benefited the world since the end of WWII by fostering peace and prosperity. The United States is bound with other G-7 nations not just because of the size of our economies, but because of our shared values and common cause to foster societies in which our citizens can live freely, peacefully, and prosperously. Inviting the current Government of the Russian Federation to rejoin the circle of G-7 world leaders when President Vladimir Putin's regime poses an ongoing threat to our freedom, peace, and prosperity serves his interests, not ours.

President Trump's suggestion to readmit Russia to the G-7 and his subsequent disavowal of the joint communique which the United States and other G-7 nations successfully negotiated in Charlevoix defy logic. More outrageously, they reflect his propensity to praise autocrats while attacking our allies and the democratic values and rules-based system they defend. Does it put America first to side with autocrats? This President seems to think so.

I have submitted an amendment to the defense authorization bill calling on President Trump to retract his comments on readmitting Russia to the G-7. Absent any change in the Kremlin's efforts to undermine the rules-based international order or its illegal occupation of Crimea, the G-7 should not even consider welcoming the Russian Federation back into its fold, let alone with open arms. This amendment sends a necessary and strong message that the United States stands by our friends and the international rules-based order that benefits American workers and American national security. I am committed to working with my Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle to shore up our closest alliances and to hold the Russian government accountable for its aggression in Ukraine, the United States, and beyond. I urge adoption of this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as long as I may require.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONGRATULATING MITCH MCCONNELL AS THE LONGEST SERVING SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, the Senate majority leader, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL of Kentucky, will become the longest serving Senate Republican leader in history, surpassing former Senator Bob Dole of Kansas. This is according to the Senate historical office. Today is Senator MCCONNELL's 4,179th day as Senate Republican leader—a position he assumed on January 3, 2007, after Republicans lost control of both Chambers of Congress.

I would like to take a few minutes to put Senator MCCONNELL's leadership in perspective. That perspective begins in the year 1969. I was 29 years old and working in the Nixon White House. Senator Howard Baker, Jr., of Tennessee, said to me: "You might want to get to know that smart, young legislative assistant for Marlow Cook." Marlow Cook was Kentucky's newly elected Republican Senator. That smart, young legislative assistant was 27-year-old MITCH MCCONNELL.

If one has known him for a long time, the evolution of MITCH MCCONNELL's Senate leadership isn't hard to trace. To begin with, when he was 2 years old, the doctor said: "Mitch has polio." It is hard to imagine today how terrifying those words were for parents then. McConnell remembers:

It was 1944. There was a serious epidemic that year all over the country. And the disease was very unpredictable. First, you'd think you had the flu, and a couple of weeks later, some people would be completely normal and some of them would be in an iron lung or dead.

He continued:

In my case, it affected my left quadriceps, the muscle between the knee and your thigh. And in one of the great good fortunes of my life, my mother was living with her sister in this little crossroads of Five Points, Alabama, where there was not even a stoplight—while my dad was overseas fighting the Germans—and it happened to be 60 miles from Warm Springs, where President Roosevelt had gone [to treat his own polio]. My mother took me to Warm Springs. They taught her a physical therapy regimen, and said to do it four times a day and to keep me off my feet. She watched me every minute and prevented me from really walking.

My first memory in life is when they told my mother I was going to be okay, that I'd be able to walk without a limp, and we stopped at a shoe store in LaGrange, Georgia, on the way back to Alabama to get a pair of low top shoes, which were a kind of symbol I was going to have a normal childhood.

If one knows about the determination of MITCH MCCONNELL's mother, it is not hard to imagine how her son determined as a college student to be a U.S. Senator, and did; determined to be his party's Senate leader, and did; and then determined to hold that leadership position longer than anyone in U.S. history, and has. This was an arduous, two-decade leadership journey: chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, counselor to Majority Leader Trent Lott, majority whip, minority leader, and finally, majority leader.

As for his mother's example, this is what MITCH MCCONNELL said: "It sure had to have an effect on me, which was that if you stick to something, you keep working at it and giving it your best, the chances are you may actually overcome whatever problem you're currently confronting."

A second leadership quality that MITCH MCCONNELL learned early—in a fistfight—was to not be pushed around. According to MCCONNELL, "I was about 7. We lived in Athens, Alabama, and I had a friend across the street named Dicky McGrew who was a year older than I was and considerably bigger. He was also a bully and he kept kind of pushing me around. And my dad called me over and said, 'Son, I've been watching the way he's been pushing you around and I want you to go over there and I want you beat him up.'"

So, MCCONNELL says, "I went across the street and started swinging and I beat him up and bent his glasses, and it was an incredible lesson in standing up to bullies and I've thought about that throughout my life at critical moments when people are trying to push you around."

As a junior Senator on the Foreign Relations Committee, MITCH MCCONNELL surprised colleagues when he sponsored sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa, and then

in 1986, he voted to override President Reagan's veto of those sanctions, but these colleagues would not have been surprised had they known MCCONNELL 25 years earlier when he was a student at the University of Louisville.

He remembers:

The civil rights movement was the defining issue of our generation. Working as an intern in Congress during the summer of 1963, I got to see [Martin Luther King, Jr.'s] "I Have a Dream" speech. Then, in 1964, I was an intern in [Kentucky Senator] John Sherman Cooper's office. Two important things happened in 1964. Cooper was in the middle of breaking the southern Senators' filibuster on civil rights and we nominated Barry Goldwater, one of the few people who voted against the Civil Rights bill. Honestly, I was mad as hell about it. And I was so irritated about Goldwater voting against the Civil Rights bill and defining the Republican Party in a way that I thought would be unfortunate that I voted for Lyndon Johnson, which in retrospect was a huge mistake. But it was a protest vote.

That willingness as a college student to buck his own political party resurfaced 40 years later in his leadership on First Amendment free speech issues. In 2006, he cast the deciding vote against the adoption of a constitutional amendment to prohibit flag burning when most of his Republican colleagues and almost all of his constituents had a different point of view. He argued that the First Amendment protects even personally offensive messages, and MCCONNELL became the Senate's leading voice against restrictions on political speech under the guise of "campaign reform." Again, some in his own party disagreed, including President George W. Bush and Senator JOHN MCCAIN, but he persisted and on multiple occasions, the Supreme Court has agreed with MCCONNELL's view of protecting political speech under the First Amendment.

Two of the three U.S. Senate office buildings in Washington, DC, are named for Philip A. Hart of Michigan and Richard B. Russell, Jr., of Georgia, two Senators who were never elected to formal leadership positions by their colleagues. In this book, Senator MCCONNELL discusses "leaders without portfolio" in some of his writings, describing occasions when a Senator assumes a major policy role outside of the confines of formal party or committee leadership. His favorite was Senator Cooper, whom MITCH has described as "my role model as a young man, a man of great conviction, very smart." In his autobiography "The Long Game," Senator MCCONNELL tells of when Cooper took him to the signing of the Civil Rights Act and, later on, of watching Cooper's principled questioning of the Vietnam war.

Senator Cooper's example must have influenced his young intern's one-man crusade 20 years later against a repressive junta in faraway Burma. According to the New York Times, on September 15, 2016, Senator MCCONNELL "has been a lead sponsor of every major sanctions measure against the Burmese government over the last 20

years and has worked quietly and tirelessly with several administrations to try to bring democracy to the country."

"Unlike South African apartheid, it was a totally unknown cause," his foreign policy adviser, Robin Cleveland, told the Times. He championed the cause of Burma's pro-democracy leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who for years was under house arrest. In 2012, when San Suu Kyi came to Washington, DC, as the new head of government, she traveled to Kentucky "to thank [MCCONNELL] for everything he did for us over, well, two decades. That's a long time," she said.

Of course, in order to be the Senate leader, one first has to be elected to the Senate. In MITCH MCCONNELL's early career, one can find multiple clues that point to his fascination with political campaigns and the pugnacious style with which he wins them. Of course, an early signal was the fistfight with Dicky McGrew. Another: "I was the only 14-year-old in America watching political conventions from gavel to gavel [and] I began to practice the craft and see if I could get good at it." When he was elected president of his high school student body, he remembers, "I was hooked." At the University of Louisville, he campaigned for president of student council both in college and in law school, participated in civil rights marches on the State capitol, and as president of the College Republicans, persuaded Barry Goldwater to come to campus to speak.

He did learn the craft of the politics, and he did get good at it. He is undefeated in his own political campaigns, winning six Senate races in Kentucky, more than any other Commonwealth Senator. He has been elected Republican leader more than any other U.S. Senator, each time unanimously, and he has been proficient in not just his own races.

In 2010 and 2012, the Senate Conservative Fund helped nominate Republican candidates in five States who lost the general election when more mainstream conservative nominees might have won. So, in 2014 and 2016, MCCONNELL organized an effort to defend incumbent Republican Senators who were challenged in primaries. He was successful in every case, including his own primary. This is what he said:

We were not going to allow [what happened in 2010 and 2012] to happen anymore. And so we got the most electable people nominated who basically took them on, because if you're dealing with a group of people who think compromise is a dirty word and who always want to make a point but never want to make a difference, the only thing to do if you want to win the election is to beat them.

Mostly, MITCH MCCONNELL's political skills were born of necessity. In July 1984, he was 34 points behind in his challenge to incumbent Democrat Senator Dee Huddleston. MCCONNELL discovered that his opponent had been making speeches for money—now, that was legal then—but Dee Huddleston had been missing Senate votes to make

those speeches. So MCCONNELL ran an ad featuring a Kentucky hunter with bloodhounds looking for Senator Huddleston to get him back to work. In another ad, the dog treed the Senator right at the end of what became known as "the bloodhound campaign." MCCONNELL defeated Huddleston by four-tenths of 1 percent of the vote.

I have searched in vain for early clues to one more aspect of MITCH MCCONNELL's leadership style: his parsimonious use of words. Sometimes he reverts to absolute silence. In his autobiography, he admits he only speaks to the press when it is to his advantage. He also tells of when Microsoft founder Bill Gates visited him and the two of them just sat there waiting for one to speak, making others in the room uncomfortable. At another time, someone once told President George W. Bush that MITCH MCCONNELL was excited over a certain vote, and President Bush replied: "Really, how can you tell?"

Why so few words? McConnell's answer is, "I learn a lot more by listening. And so frequently I start out by listening and think about what I want to say before I say it. You don't get in trouble for what you don't say. There's nothing wrong with being cautious about your comments. I certainly don't mind talking but I usually like to know what I'm talking about before I venture down that path."

He is not the first Senate leader to be frugal with words. According to columnist Bob Novak, former majority leader Mike Mansfield was the most difficult interview on "Meet the Press" because "I would ask Mansfield a question and he says 'Yep,' and then I would ask him another one and he'd say, 'Nope' and I'd run out of questions." Former Vice President Dick Cheney, in his constitutional capacity as President of the Senate, would attend weekly luncheons of Republican Senators, rarely saying a word. This made certain that, when Cheney did rise to speak, Senators listened. And silence, after all, was one of Benjamin Franklin's 13 virtues and a tactic Franklin often employed in his leadership style.

In July 2014, when he was minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL spoke on the Senate floor about what kind of majority leader he would be if Republicans won the majority in the November elections. His model, he said, would be Mike Mansfield, the Democrat who was majority leader 45 years earlier when MCCONNELL and I were Senate aides. "What I meant by that," he said, "was . . . first of all, you have to open the Senate up. The last year of the previous [Democrat] majority (2014) there were only 15 roll call votes on amendments the entire year. In the first year of our majority, in 2015, we had over 200. Open the Senate up, let people vote. Number two, we needed regular order, which means the bill is actually worked on together in committee, comes out to the floor, with bipartisan support, and has a better chance of success. The best example I can think of

was the bill to rewrite ‘No Child Left Behind.’ The law had proved to be unworkable and unpopular. And by the time it came out of committee, you had the Democrats and the Republicans lined up, it went to the floor, it was relatively open for amendments, not that absolutely everybody got everything they wanted, and in the end, it passed with a very large majority. President Obama called it a ‘Christmas Miracle’ and the Wall Street Journal said it was ‘the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter-century.’”

MCCONNELL is quick to list a series of bipartisan accomplishments during his time as majority leader which he regards as “concrete legislative results for the American people.” In addition to the first significant education reform since 2002, these accomplishments include the first significant reforms to Social Security since 1983, the first trade promotion authority bill since 2002, the first long-term highway bill since 2005, and the first major legislation to confront the Nation’s opioid crisis. And don’t forget, he says, measures to protect victims of human trafficking, to address Puerto Rico’s fiscal crisis, to sanction North Korea, to strengthen the Nation’s cybersecurity defenses, to reform Medicaid and to provide permanent tax relief for families and small businesses. These are serious accomplishments for a legislative body many had written off as irredeemably broken.

“Now, what do all these things that we have done time after time under our majority have in common?” he asks. “In a time of divided government, we’re focusing on the things that we can agree on, and do those. Because when people elect divided government, I think what they’re saying is, I know you have big differences, but why don’t you look for the things you agree on and do those. And that’s how this majority is totally different from the previous one.”

To gather other clues for what kind of majority leader MCCONNELL would be, one only had to look to previous Congresses when he was minority leader and was at the center of four major, bipartisan legislative efforts that helped to keep the American economy from being seriously damaged. At the end of 2010, the country was facing a tax “cliff.” Republicans controlled neither the White House nor Congress. With an economy still reeling from the Great Recession, the expiration of tax relief threatened to further imperil the economy; yet Senator MCCONNELL led a bipartisan effort to ensure that taxes were not raised on any Americans.

The next year, the United States was on the verge of defaulting on its debt payments for the first time in history. With the clock ticking on the full faith and credit of the United States and calamitous economic consequences staring policymakers in the face, Senator MCCONNELL negotiated an eleventh hour deal with Vice President Joe

Biden. This measure avoided the devastating economic consequences of default and resulted in the most significant spending reductions in recent memory.

In late 2012, the United States risked prolonging the Great Recession and increasing unemployment due to a series of expiring tax policies and indiscriminate spending cuts scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2013. Once again, Senator MCCONNELL crafted a bipartisan compromise with Vice President Biden to avert this fiscal crisis by preventing a tax increase on a majority of Americans and making the spending cuts in a more prudent manner.

Finally, in 2013, a standoff involving Federal spending and the debt limit led to the second longest Federal shutdown since 1980, threatening thousands of public and private sector jobs, and putting the economic health of the country in jeopardy. Despite these challenges, Senator MCCONNELL orchestrated an agreement with then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid that reopened the government and raised the debt ceiling, allowing the United States to continue making payments on its debt.

The humorist Roy Blount, Jr., who grew up in Georgia has written, “You start getting in trouble when you stop sounding like where you grew up.” The political corollary is you start getting in trouble when you stop coming home. This is advice MCCONNELL has not forgotten. He and his wife, Elaine, go home to Kentucky almost every weekend. He has kept his eye on Kentucky matters, both large and small, including disposal of chemical weapons that have long been stored in the middle of Kentucky, enacting a tobacco buyout to help local farmers, support for the State’s public universities, and his advocacy for workers at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant. Kentucky anglers and tourists appreciate his helping to enact a law to require the Army Corps of Engineers to allow fishing below the dams on the Cumberland River. Twenty years ago, he created the McConnell Center at the University of Louisville, attracting a bipartisan parade of national leaders to visit with 10 scholars chosen each year from each undergraduate class.

Each year, MITCH MCCONNELL buys 12 season tickets to the University of Louisville football games. He said:

I have some regulars. We go to every home game and occasionally an away game. We make a day of it. We go out early. One of my friends has an RV in the parking lot and we will talk about what will happen in the game and then go to the game and then we talk about what did happen after the game and it’s a complete, lengthy exercise. And one of the great joys of life.

MITCH MCCONNELL’s University of Louisville honors thesis on Henry Clay tempted him to pursue a Ph.D. in American history and a career as a professor, but those of us who know him doubt that he would have been satisfied interpreting the action rather than being in the middle of the action, but

his devotion to American history and his understanding of the importance of the U.S. Senate as a unique institution in American life have contributed a valuable extra dimension to his Senate leadership.

In a 2016 C-SPAN interview, he was asked: “What would you like for high school American history teachers to tell their students about the United States Senate?”

He replied:

That the Senate has been the indispensable legislative body. Because that’s the place where things are sorted out, the place where only rarely does the majority get things exactly their own way, the place where stability can occur.

And at a time when many Americans are not optimistic about our country’s future, he was asked: “What would you want those teachers to tell students about their future in this country?”

MITCH MCCONNELL replied:

Because of our woeful ignorance of American history we always think the current period we’re in is tougher than others. We’ve had nothing like the Civil War period. We haven’t had a single incident where a Congressman from South Carolina came over and almost beat to death a Senator from Massachusetts. America’s had plenty of tough challenges. World Wars. Depressions. This is a great country. We’re going to deal with whatever our current problems are, and move on to another level. And I’m just as optimistic as I ever was that this generation is going to leave behind a better America than our parents left behind for us.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019—Continued

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 5515.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the Toomey amendment No. 2700.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Senate amendment No. 2700 to amendment No. 2282, as modified, to H.R. 5515, an act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2019 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pat Toomey, Ted Cruz, Cindy Hyde-Smith, James Lankford, John Cornyn, Roy Blunt, Thom Tillis, Marco Rubio, Mitch McConnell, Ben Sasse, James M. Inhofe, James E. Risch, John Barrasso, Cory Gardner, John Thune, Steve Daines, Ron Johnson.