

## Weekly Commentary 48

### *On US Elections*

On 5 Nov, next Tuesday, the people of America will vote for a new president. The problem for ordinary people is that it does not feel like it will be a “new” president. Kamala Harris is the current Vice President and has not represented herself as a change agent, so she is mired in Biden White House policies and there is nothing new expected from her. Since she became the candidate, she has not articulated anything at all, about new directions for her administration. And as Trump was already President before 2020, his policies are unlikely to change from the time he was in the White House and during the time when he was campaigning. He is the MAGA man. So most people are not expecting anything new from him either. It feels so ho-hum.

This does not mean there will be no excitement at all. Everyone is blown away over how the results will turn out. In fact, recent polls are no help just five days before the election and nobody is willing to make a prediction. Most pundits say that the margin is so tight that it is not possible to say who will win. And if you try to try to decipher it yourself, as I have done, there are just two camps - one for Harris with roughly 50% of the vote and the other half for Trump. There is no middle ground. It is so close that the excitement is not in the expectation of new direction in America but in the horse race itself. That is sad. It is down to a coin toss.

Clearly, I cannot cast new light on this debate. So why am I writing on this topic?

It is only because like everybody else, I am interested to see who wins and who loses. I have my preference of course, but that is not like I remember it in past elections when there were interesting issues that impact on the country and therefore the world, including where I live. I am only following it with the same interest as everybody else is - that there would be some kicks in getting it right. So here goes.

First, I have to state clearly that I don't like both candidates. Trump is a foul mouthed person whom most people find uncouth. But unlike how he is portrayed by the Democrats, he is not Hitler. On the other side, Harris is not even smart enough to be a candidate, much less a president. So whoever wins will disappoint.

Still, my view is that Trump has come a long way from end 2019 when I thought that he was callous about the way he managed the covid crisis, raging at the time of the last election. I thought at that time his attitude was unforgivable. But four years of Biden and we find that the Democrats have made a mess of the economy, especially on inflation and consequently on interest rates. So if I may say so, the cure was worse than the ailment, and in my opinion, Biden blew it. Add to that the fact that Biden is steeped in neocon habits and a warmonger. He started two wars and if there were not these two wars that preoccupy the US military, he would probably have started a third or even a fourth, one in Iran and another in the South China Sea. But before we get to

those substantial issues, let's check out if Trump or Harris has the edge, four days before the election begins.

This is what CNN, a pro-Democratic news organization, has to say :

## **Why nobody knows who will win the 2024 election**

Analysis by [Harry Enten](#), CNN

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**CNN —**

Almost two weeks to Election Day, I feel more uncertain about this year's result than any election I've covered professionally. Some of that is due to the polls – they're [really tight](#) – but it's also because for every good signal for [Donald Trump](#), there seems to be a good one for [Kamala Harris](#).

Many Americans believe this election has a lot on the line. And yet to me, it's still a race with [multiple potential outcomes](#) – from a clear Harris victory to a contest that can't be projected until late into election night (or week) to a decisive Trump win.

Let's start with a simple proposition: Harris' easiest path victory runs through winning the “[blue wall](#)” states of Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. If she loses in the Sun Belt battlegrounds (Arizona, Georgia, Nevada and North Carolina), carrying the three Great Lakes states, along with Nebraska's 2nd District and all the other states Joe Biden won in 2020, would get Harris to exactly 270 electoral votes.

Polling averages in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin show the margins between Harris and Trump at under a point right now. Were that to hold until Election Day, it would be the first time in at least 50 years that any of those three states had final average margins within a point.

*(Due to the electoral college system, where the winner of the popular vote in each state will take all the votes from that state, the 1% margin Harris over Trump almost assures that Trump will win the electoral college. The Democrat probably needs a 3-5% point lead to be able to just break even on the electoral college votes.)*

*More than that, the margins in those states have been consistently close since Harris got into the race in July. Neither Trump nor Harris has ever led in any of those states by 5 points or more, which mirrors the national polling. It's the first time in over 60 years that no candidate has led by 5 points or more nationally at any point in the race.*

Many Republicans are hoping that the close polling points to a blowout win for Trump next month. The former president outperformed the polls significantly in 2016 and 2020. If Trump did so again, he would likely coast to victory, getting over 300 electoral votes. (We are heading towards a Trump electoral college landslide.)

I would be cautious, however, about assuming that a polling miss would benefit Trump. Going back to 1972, we've never had three presidential cycles in a row in which the same party benefited from a state polling miss. In fact, surveys in the key battlegrounds in 2022 underestimated Democrats. If we had a polling miss like two years ago, Harris would probably win over 300 electoral votes.

Battleground state polling averages are far from perfect. The average miss is 3.4 points since 1972, and 5% of the time they miss by more than 9.4 points. Even an average miss in the key battlegrounds could turn the election into a blowout.

You might be tempted to guess the direction of a potential polling miss by the macro trends. Biden's approval rating is awful. No incumbent's party has ever won another term when the president's approval rating is this low. No incumbent's party has ever won another term when so few people think the country is heading in the right direction.

But Trump may be exactly the wrong candidate to take advantage of these structural advantages. If he wins, he'd be the second least-liked candidate to do so since pollsters started tracking candidate popularity in the mid- 20th century. The only presidential winner who was less popular was Trump himself, in 2016. Remember also that Republicans underperformed in the 2022 midterms, even while many of the macro indicators pointed in their direction.

Take party registration. The trends aren't as clear as they may appear at first glance. Republicans have been gaining on Democrats in all the key battleground states over the past four years. That, along with national party identification trends, would usually translate to Republicans cruising to victory this year.

But it's not clear how many registered Republicans will cast ballots for Trump. It's possible, as the most recent New York Times/Siena College poll of Pennsylvania shows, that Harris will win a higher share of Democrats than Trump will of Republicans. So with registered Democrats outnumbering registered Republicans in the Keystone State, such an outcome would mean that Harris very likely wins Pennsylvania.

What makes it all the more interesting is that we have a close race despite a lot of Americans changing their voting patterns from four years ago. Trump looks destined to put up one of the best performances for a Republican presidential nominee with Black voters in many years. This is especially true among young Black men.

Yet, Harris seems to be doing better among [White women](#) than any Democratic presidential nominee this century. While her gains are not as great as Trump's among Black voters, White women make up a much larger portion of the electorate. Therefore, these shifts may cancel each other out to a large degree.

This means the election is likely to come down to the few voters who [remain undecided](#).

More than two-thirds of likely voters believe that this is the [most important election](#) of their lifetime, including 72% of Trump supporters and 70% of Harris' backers. The 5% of voters who are currently undecided will determine which of them walks away from this election happy.

Ironically, only 24% of those undecided voters agree that this election is the most important of their lifetime.

How painful it must be for those who really care about the election that it will be decided by many who don't.

## **CNN Poll: Harris and Trump locked in exceedingly close presidential race**

By [Jennifer Agiesta](#), [Ariel Edwards-Levy](#) and [Edward Wu](#), CNN

This article was originally published on September 24, 2024.

The [race for president](#) between Vice President [Kamala Harris](#) and former [President Donald Trump](#) is exceedingly close, with Harris' support resting on stronger personal appeal, while Trump draws on a die-hard base and a wide advantage on handling the economy to run about even despite less positive views of him, his empathy and temperament.

Among likely voters nationwide, a [new CNN poll conducted by SSRS](#) finds 48% support Harris and 47% Trump, a margin that suggests no clear leader in the race. About 2% say they plan to vote for Libertarian [Chase Oliver](#) and 1% for Green Party nominee [Jill Stein](#). Both Harris and Trump hold positive support from the majority of their backers – 72% of Trump's supporters say their choice is more for him than against Harris, while 60% of Harris' supporters say their choice is more for her than against him.

That's a major shift in voters' attitudes toward the race compared with earlier this summer. In the [last national CNN poll in July](#), shortly after [President Joe Biden](#) ended his campaign for president and Harris threw her hat into the ring for the Democratic nomination, Harris' backers were evenly divided between affirmative support for her and those driven by anti-Trump sentiment. And Biden's supporters in earlier polls said they were largely expressing opposition to Trump with their choice.

The latest poll finds Harris and Trump roughly even with independent likely voters – Harris at 45% to Trump at 41% - with a gender gap that is centered among independents. Independent women break 51% Harris to 36% Trump while independent men split 47% for Trump to 40% for Harris, with very little difference between men and women in either party.

The gender divide in the poll is also more concentrated among White voters (White men break 58% Trump to 35% Harris, while White women split 50% Trump to 47% Harris), with very little gender divide among Black or Latino voters. Harris is well ahead among likely voters younger than 30 (55% support her to 38% who favor Trump), and among Black (79% Harris to 16% Trump) and Latino (59% Harris to 40% Trump) likely voters.

A scant 2% of likely voters say they haven't yet chosen a candidate to support, and another 12% have chosen one but say they could change their minds.

The poll suggests that overall, Harris has begun to build a more positive public image, outpacing Trump across several measures of how the public views her personally.

Since becoming the Democratic presidential nominee, Harris' favorability rating has climbed to its highest level in CNN polling since just before her and Biden's inauguration in January 2021 (currently 46% favorable to 48% unfavorable among likely voters), while Trump's has held steady (currently 42% favorable to 55% unfavorable among likely voters).

Although many voters are still forming opinions of the major candidates for vice president, Harris' choice for a running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, has a notably more positive favorability rating (36% favorable to 32% unfavorable) than Trump's running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance (30% favorable to 42% unfavorable).

A narrow majority or more of likely voters nationwide say Harris' temperament (58%), background and life experience (56%), ability to understand their problems (52%), skills as a leader (51%) and vision for the country (51%) align with what they want in a president. For Trump, by contrast, about half of likely voters or fewer say his vision for the country (49%), skills as a leader (49%), background (46%), ability to empathize with people like them (46%) or temperament (38%) align with their vision of a president.

But notably, in this divided race, 51% say each of them has policy positions on major issues that align with what they want in a president, with more saying Trump's are exactly what they want in a president (29% for Trump vs. 18% for Harris).

That's true even as Trump is more broadly seen as "too extreme" in his views and positions than Harris is (54% of likely voters say Trump is, 42% that Harris is). A

small group of those who see Trump as too extreme are voting for him anyway: He holds the support of 10% of likely voters who consider his views and policies to be too extreme, while Harris has the backing of just 4% of those likely voters who feel she is too extreme.

Trump also benefits from the 51% of likely voters who say that looking back on his time as president, it was more of a success than a failure. And Harris may be impeded by the widespread perception of Biden's time as president as a failure (61% see it that way, and only 19% in that group say they support Harris for president).

Likely voters overall say they trust Trump over Harris to handle the economy (50% Trump to 39% Harris), immigration (49% Trump to 35% Harris) and foreign policy (47% Trump to 40% Harris). Even among those who say Trump's views and policies are too extreme, 15% say they trust him over Harris to handle the economy and the same share say so on immigration.

Likely voters generally favor Harris' approach on abortion and reproductive rights (52% Harris to 31% Trump), uniting the country (43% Harris to 30% Trump), and protecting democracy (47% Harris to 40% Trump).

About 4 in 10 likely voters (41%) call the economy the most important issue for them as they choose a candidate for president, with protecting democracy second at 21%, immigration at 12% and abortion at 11%. Harris' voters are more likely to choose protecting democracy as most important (37%) over the economy (21%) or abortion (19%), while Trump's supporters are concentrated on the economy (61%) and immigration (21%).

**Voters who prioritize the economy, regardless of whom they support for president, are broadly focused on inflation.** A majority (55%) of them say in a follow-up question that inflation is the top economic issue on their minds as they consider the candidates, with only federal spending (12%) and taxes (11%) joining it in double-digits. Inflation is still a widespread consideration even among those for whom the economy is not the top issue: 32% in that group say inflation is the biggest economic issue they're considering, 16% jobs and wages, 15% federal spending, 13% the cost of housing and 12% taxes.

And there's a notable shift compared with 2016 among registered voters who say they would feel more positive emotions if Trump were to win: 41% of voters say they would be excited if Trump won, compared with just 27% who felt that way in June 2016, and 38% say they would be proud, up from 24% who said the same eight years ago. The share saying they'd feel embarrassed has dropped, from 56% then to 48% now.

Harris inspires more positive emotions than Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton did in the summer of 2016. Should Harris win, 41% of registered voters say they would

feel proud, and 40% excited, compared with a respective 35% and 29% who said the same about Clinton then. The share saying they'd feel embarrassed by a Harris win (41%) is about the same as it was for Clinton (39%).

*The CNN Poll was conducted by SSRS online and by telephone September 19-22, 2024, among 2,074 registered voters nationwide drawn from a probability-based panel. Likely voters include all registered voters in the poll weighted for their predicted likelihood of voting in this year's election. Results for the full sample of registered voters have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.0 percentage points. It is the same among likely voters and larger for subgroups.*

(There is yet another reason why this election is for Trump to win. This is due to fact that some of the battleground states are seeing more new Republican registrations than Democrats. There are four swing states that are seeing more registrations and if these turn out to vote for Trump, he will coast to an electoral college victory.)

There are the "issues" which are behind the recent surge in support for Trump. The mainstream media in the collective west are panicking over the possibility of a Trump win. They are all trying to write articles that propagandize the virtues of Kamala Harris. One prominent example are these editorials from the Economist.

### **How bad could a second Trump presidency get?**

The damage to America's economy, institutions and the world would be huge  
Oct 31st 2024|Washington, DC **The Economist**

On the stump, Donald Trump makes lots of eye-widening pledges. He will deport illegal immigrants by their millions; he will launch missiles at Mexico's drug cartels; he will use the army to crack down on the "far-left lunatics" who run the Democratic Party. Yet Mr Trump's tenure as president, whatever its merits or failings, was not the cataclysm that many Democrats had predicted. The economy hummed along, until the pandemic struck. There were no big foreign-policy crises. And although Mr Trump tried to steal the presidential election of 2020, he failed.

So what would a second Trump term be like? Many voters will dismiss Mr Trump's overheated rhetoric as just that. They may see the election as a finely balanced decision about which candidate would manage the economy better, or as a choice between divergent stances on such issues as abortion and immigration. But Mr Trump not only seems intent on following through on some of his wilder pronouncements if elected, but would also be in a better position to do so than last time. That suggests another way of looking at America's choice: how badly wrong could things go?

Kamala Harris, the sitting vice-president, is running as the candidate of the status quo. Her unofficial slogan is "We are not going back." Mr Trump, in contrast, implies



that radical change is needed, and that he will provide it. In all likelihood, if he returns to the White House, he will have trouble implementing many of his most extreme ideas, just as in his first term. He may be stymied by Congress, the courts and the bureaucracy or distracted by events or dissuaded by aides or foiled by his own incompetence. But there is a chance—and not a negligible one—that he might succeed in doing some of the things he talks about, with disastrous consequences for America’s economy, its institutions and the world. Fears that he may permanently damage American democracy and the rule of law are not far-fetched.

### Battle-hardened

After eight years of institutionalisation, Trumpism is much more organised than when it crashed into the Oval Office in 2017. Mr Trump’s agenda was slowed then by inexperienced acolytes who did not know enough about administrative law and the workings of the civil service to make things happen. What is more, Mr Trump, wanting to make his administration appear distinguished, appointed grantees to senior jobs even though they often disagreed with his ideas. The leaders of a second Trump administration, by contrast, would be loyal veterans. Many of them would arrive in office with plans already in mind. The architects of Project 2025—a 900-page policy agenda for the next Trump administration drawn up by the Heritage Foundation, a Trumpist think-tank—fell out with Mr Trump after Democrats began using it to attack him. But Mr Trump nonetheless embraces the underlying idea that he should return to office with pre-vetted personnel and detailed plans. The Supreme Court’s recent decision setting out extremely wide immunity for presidents also seems likely to embolden him.

Mr Trump’s economic plans are certainly bold—but not in a good way. The first iteration of Trumponomics was lucky enough to be implemented during a period of high growth and low inflation. Its next incarnation would not only be adopted in less benign circumstances, but would also itself be of a much more disruptive nature. His campaign is proposing a second, much bigger hike in tariffs, lavish tax cuts, a labour-supply shock in the form of mass deportations and attacks on the independence of the Federal Reserve.

These are all terrible ideas. “Normally, if you’re cutting off migrant labour, you try to get goods from outside. And if you’re cutting off goods from outside, you try to get migrant labour. If you cut off both, you almost certainly get inflation, if not stagflation,” says Adam Posen of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, a think-tank. JPMorgan Chase, a bank, has estimated that a tariff hike half the size of the one Mr Trump is advocating would knock a third to half a percentage point off GDP growth in its first year and increase inflation by 1.5-2 percentage points.

Whether Mr Trump would be able to put all his plans into practice is doubtful. The president has the authority to raise tariffs on national-security grounds or as retaliation for unfair trade practices. Mr Trump’s pledge of an across-the-board tariff of 20% on all imports, and 60% on imports from China, does not really seem to fit



under these headings. But while the courts debated this question, businesses would suffer ruinous disruption, presumably made worse by retaliatory tariffs imposed by other countries. Some advisers think Mr Trump would raise tariffs gradually, as a means to extract concessions from trading partners. That might only draw out the agony, however, and would not reduce the risks of a trade war.

The personal-tax cuts Mr Trump signed into law in 2017 are due to expire next year and he would have to negotiate with Congress to extend them. He wants to renew them all, as well as end taxation on tips, overtime and Social Security payments. If Mr Trump wins the presidency, our election model gives the Democrats a 34% chance of controlling the House of Representatives. They have different, less profligate plans. Moreover, were Mr Trump to steer America onto an even more irresponsible fiscal course than its current one, the bond markets might eventually rebel, prompting a reassessment.

Mass deportations of the magnitude that Mr Trump has proposed are also unlikely to happen. The federal government simply would not have the capacity to hunt down and deport millions of people unless Mr Trump were to enlist the armed forces or deputise state and local law enforcement. There would be public uproar, resistance from Democratic-led states and cities, and endless legal challenges. “I don’t think that there’s any world, even in Donald Trump’s fantasy, that you’re actually going to try to send...ICE agents door to door, to round up 12m residents of this country and deport them,” says Mike Johnston, the Democratic mayor of Denver. “There’s just no infrastructure capacity for that and Denver would never participate in it.” Shortages in industries that rely on immigrant labour such as agriculture, construction and slaughterhouses would also be inflationary.

#### Unreserved

If the Federal Reserve tightened monetary policy to counteract the inflationary pressures of higher tariffs, a shrinking workforce or lavish spending, Mr Trump would be minded to attack it. Already, some in his orbit are suggesting that a Trump administration undermine Jerome Powell, the chair of the Federal Reserve whose time in that job (but not as a member of its board) expires in 2026, by appointing a “shadow” chair to make less hawkish recommendations about interest rates. Yet an attack on the Fed would be almost certain to horrify the markets. “The stockmarket is a very effective and instantaneous feedback mechanism for economic policy which provides a constraint on crazy tariffs, a constraint on crazy Fed stuff, but probably not much constraint on unsustainable fiscal policy,” says Jason Furman, a former Democratic policymaker who is now a professor of economics at Harvard University.

Even assuming Mr Trump would eventually relent and water down or abandon some of these policies, he could still cause huge damage in the process. Many optimistic scenarios rely on markets tanking, inflation jumping or growth slumping to curb his enthusiasm. Moreover, there is no amount of deportations, tariff increases or Fed-bashing that is good for the economy; the only question is how much damage Mr

Trump would inflict. Were he really to stick to his guns, inflation, higher interest rates and recession beckon.

Foreign policy also presents alarming risks. Although Mr Trump's advisers may try to sketch out clear doctrines in rough alignment with America First rhetoric, their boss thinks that foreign policy succeeds or fails owing to force of personality, not policies. His stochastic style is inconsistent and unpredictable. "If former president Trump is re-elected, we are going to pay an enormous chaos premium" as allies scramble to work out what his policies will be, says Kori Schake of the American Enterprise Institute, another think-tank. Whereas, during his first term, the world was relatively calm, Mr Trump would return this time as America grappled with wars in the Middle East and in Ukraine.

Mr Trump says his commanding presence would be enough to settle the war in Ukraine within 24 hours of his election—before he was even inaugurated. What this means, if anything, is hard to gauge. The leading candidates for top national-security jobs in a second Trump administration have a wide range of views on Ukraine. Mike Pompeo, a former secretary of state and potential future defence secretary, argues for giving Ukraine a massive \$600bn in weaponry to force Russia to the negotiating table. J.D. Vance, who would be vice-president, seems to think any dollar spent on Ukraine is a dollar wasted. Who Mr Trump ultimately listens to is maddeningly unpredictable—often his view is decided by the last person to speak to him.

No matter who is elected president, it seems increasingly likely that Ukraine will have to abandon or at least shelve its ambition to reclaim much of the territory Russia has stolen. Given Republicans' hostility to the military aid for Ukraine proposed by Mr Biden's administration, it seems unlikely that a Republican-led House of Representatives would approve another big dollop—and it is hard to imagine Mr Trump protesting very stridently. But an abrupt and haphazard American abandonment of Ukraine would embolden Vladimir Putin, Russia's dictator, and increase the risk he poses to his neighbours.

There are many other nightmare scenarios. Might Mr Trump, in effect, void the collective-security guarantee at the heart of the NATO alliance by refusing to counter further Russian aggression? Would he decline to send American forces to help Taiwan in the event of a Chinese blockade or invasion? Would Israel be given a completely free hand to do as it wishes in the Middle East, including striking Iranian oil-production and nuclear-weapons facilities? All of these are possible. Mr Trump has a deep aversion to war, but also a strong urge to avoid looking weak.

Some vague but worrying trends can be guessed at. "You would assume that the US reaction function is more escalatory because their doctrine is peace through strength," says Jon Lieber of the Eurasia Group, a geopolitical consultancy. Both Mr Trump and his party are disinclined to sign up to any meaningful international initiatives on climate change. But most important are the possibilities that cannot be

ruled out: of a forced capitulation of Ukraine, of the collapse of NATO, of an expanding war in the Middle East and so on.

Perhaps most serious of all are the threats Mr Trump poses to American democracy and the rule of law. There is no doubt about his autocratic instincts. To stay in power after his election loss in 2020, Mr Trump tried to suborn electoral officials and fomented a mob, ultimately leading to the ransacking of the Capitol by his supporters on January 6th 2021. He has not recanted since. He still insists the election was stolen; he calls those convicted of crimes on January 6th “political prisoners” and has pledged to pardon them; he has mused about cancelling the licences of critical broadcasters; he calls his political opponents “the enemy within” that may need to be dealt with using military force. An astonishing number of those who work closely with Mr Trump come away appalled. John Kelly, a former chief of staff, became the latest in recent days to declare him a “fascist”.

The real question, instead, is whether America’s institutions would be able to constrain him. America’s courts and constitution would be the best check on Mr Trump’s autocratic whims. Mr Trump’s many lawsuits seeking to overturn the election result in 2020 got nowhere, after all. Mr Trump would not be able to get Congress to adopt constitutional changes, allowing him a third term, for instance. Nor would he have much sway over state governments led by Democrats. Although he has consolidated his control over the Republican Party, making it almost impossible that he would be impeached, there would still be some Republicans in Congress who would resist his worst instincts.

For these reasons, some political scientists think that American institutions will comfortably absorb the shock of a second Trump presidency. Of the 40 populist governments around the world between 1985 and 2020 identified by Kurt Weyland of the University of Texas, only seven devolved into authoritarianism. And those unfortunate countries had weak institutions and suffered precipitating crises. “I would not think that Trump would be able to do more damage in a second government than in the first,” says Mr Weyland. The Democrats may control the House of Representatives, ensuring divided government from the start. But even if Republicans began a second Trump term in control of both chambers of Congress, Democrats would be likely to do well in the midterm elections in 2026, constraining Mr Trump for the remainder of his presidency.

Even if the risk of a catastrophic breakdown in American democracy is low, a second Trump term would still corrode democratic institutions. Benjamin Wittes, the editor-in-chief of Lawfare, a national-security publication, warns that Mr Trump would be a worse danger to the rule of law for three reasons: first, “the grown-ups will not be in the room”, unlike in his first term; second, “he does at least rhetorically seem very fixated on revenge” after enduring four separate criminal proceedings; and third, he will be emboldened by his triumph “partly legally and partly electorally over the forces that tried to restrain him”.

Mr Trump is all but certain to dismiss the federal charges against himself. He is also likely to pardon the January 6th rioters. He has promised to end the independence of the Department of Justice, a norm since the Watergate scandal. That would allow him to initiate investigations of his political enemies, which seem likelier than not.

“There’s a whole set of second-order considerations that flow from this. Once you know those sorts of selective prosecutions are on the table, you will calibrate your behaviour very differently,” says Brendan Nyhan of Dartmouth College.

### Intimidating

The notion that Mr Trump might use the institutions of state to cow potential critics was raised this week when Jeff Bezos, the billionaire owner of the *Washington Post*, stopped it from publishing an endorsement of Ms Harris. Mr Bezos said he was trying to bolster the paper’s reputation for independence, not curry favour with Mr Trump, but roughly a tenth of the *Post*’s subscribers have reached the opposite conclusion and cancelled their subscriptions. There is also the risk that violent extremists, such as the Proud Boys militia, may feel emboldened to harry Mr Trump’s political opponents.

Mr Trump is also likely to try to put his stamp on the federal bureaucracy. He might invoke an authority known as Schedule F, which would allow him to dismiss many low-level civil servants. He has also talked about sacking America’s top generals, whom he considers too “woke”. There is a chance that he tries to hound Mr Powell into resigning or claims the (legally untested) authority to fire him. All this would politicise parts of the government that have been relatively free from such meddling until now.

These scenarios may sound mundane compared with a stolen election or the institution of a dictatorship, but they would have grave consequences. Selective, politically motivated law enforcement would not only be an injustice in itself, it would also be a threat to America’s economic might, frightening businesses and deterring investment. What is more, such abuses would be unlikely to stop when Mr Trump left office. Given the [political polarisation](#) of recent decades, once one of America’s parties has broken a norm, the other is likely to follow suit, if only to remain competitive. Confidence in the rule of law would be difficult to restore.

Many Americans find Democratic ranting about the risks of another Trump term hypocritical. They think that Democrats have weaponised the justice system against Mr Trump, not the other way round. They see Mr Biden’s tenure as a litany of foreign-policy failures far worse than anything that occurred on Mr Trump’s watch. The surge in inflation under Mr Biden is proof in their eyes that Mr Trump is a better economic manager. There is some merit to all these contentions—and a second Trump term might prove no more catastrophic than the first. But voting for Mr Trump on that assumption would be risky in the extreme to America and the world. ■

(We can all choose to disagree with the Economist article above. That diatribe basically argues that because Trump was not a great success in his first term, or that some of the ideas he is talking about now are preposterous, he would be a danger to the United States as a second term president. But that does not have to be. As noted in the article, he was an inexperienced president in 2017-2020. Now, his base is far more substantial and he will likely have good people serving in his administration. Also, if he doesn't try things like deporting illegals, what's the point of having a tight border policy. As far as the economy is concerned, the whole point of Trump being favoured by the electorate is simply that the Biden White House has screwed up big time. It is time for a change. Finally, on foreign policy, it's time America's war mongering ends; and if anyone can do it, it will be Trump. So why would a second Trump Administration be all that bad?

Efforts by the Trump campaign and GOP allies appear to be paying off: In all four swing states where voters register by party, Republicans have grown their share of voters since 2020. In Arizona, Republicans have extended their lead over Democrats, with nearly 260,000 more red than blue registered voters. And in North Carolina, Nevada and Pennsylvania, Republicans have cut significantly into the Democratic advantage.

### **'Shot in the arm' for Democrats**

Across the board, voter growth isn't limited to the battlegrounds.

Nationwide, the number of voters registering in late July following Harris' ascension were as much as triple that compared to the same time four years ago, said Tom Bonier, Democratic strategist and CEO of political data provider TargetSmart.

Many of the new registrants, he said, have been younger voters and more specifically, younger women and younger women of color.

His best comparison: The summer of 2022, when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the case that made abortion legal nationwide.

"At the time we saw that and thought, 'Wow, you'll never see anything like this again. We haven't seen anything like it before,'" Bonier said.

Bonier said numbers from this summer, though, exceeded what they witnessed then. The potential influx of new voters from these certain demographics could be a boon for Democrats, who tend to score well with voters under 35 and, prior to the Biden-Harris ticket shake-up, were being largely outpaced by Republicans in terms of registrations, McDonald said.

"Democrats have needed to get this shot in the arm," he said. "Harris' entry provided the opportunity for people to become enthused and start registering."

Owen Wallace, 18, is among more than 3.5 million voters registered in Wisconsin, which as of the start of this month is up by about 27,000 since 2020, according to the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

A freshman studying data science at the University of Utah, Wallace registered to vote for the first time in July. He said he was inspired by a high school government class, along with participation in the event, America in One Room: The Youth Vote, which gathered hundreds of first-time voters together in Washington, D.C., for a weekend this summer.

Wallace said he plans to vote absentee in his home state of Wisconsin and cast his ballot for Harris.

While the college freshman opted to register just ahead of Biden's surprise exit, Wallace said the decision reaffirmed his determination to vote this fall.

"It was sort of a reinvigoration of hope," he said.

### **Turnout remains a question and concern**

Still for many, registration does not automatically equal participation.

Out of the nearly 7 million Georgia residents registered to vote in 2022, around 4 million actually cast a ballot.

The numbers do improve in presidential years, though.

Of the more than 8 million Michiganders registered to vote in 2020, approximately 5.5 million turned out. In Pennsylvania that year, about 9 million people were registered and almost 7 million cast a vote.

"The election will be won by those who show up, and that's where the ground game comes in," Murtaugh, of the Trump campaign, told Fox News.

**Given the write-ups in the media sources cited above, I am of the view that 5<sup>th</sup> Nov will end up with a landslide for Trump in the electoral college race. It would be an amazing result for a man who was thought to have ended his political career after being made the victim of witchhunts, culminating in being impeached twice, made a felon by numerous lawfare suits and almost assassinated twice. The comeback reflects someone who displays presidential qualities of steadfast thinking and courage, accompanied by a cool sense of humour Trump has shown strength and heroism, including during the first assassination attempt, when he has the presence of mind to raise his fist to shout Fight! We will never**



**surrender. That's fantastic composure, enough to deserve another shot at the presidency. More recently, when his campaign invited a comic who called Puerto Rico garbage, Biden had responded that the MAGA base was garbage. In reaction, Trump dressed up as a garbage collector and drove around in a spotless garbage truck. That was good marketing. In contrast, what has his opponent done? Kamala Harris behaves like a nonentity. Trump deserves to win, and he will. I can be mistaken, but that's my take.**

While the horse race may be exciting for those of us who are news junkies, there is really not much at stake for those who are not American citizens or directly engaged in the wars the Americans are involved in. This would be a different story if you are Russian/Ukrainian which will see different responses from the two persons after one of them becomes the new president. The BBC has this to say:

### **US election weighs on Ukraine's frontline soldiers**

James Waterhouse

Ukraine Correspondent in the Zaporizhzhia region

As she sweeps up broken glass outside her shop, Inna knows her country's future is in the hands of Americans voting more than 5,000 miles away.

"We hope that the woman, Kamala Harris, will win and support us," she says.

A Russian bomb had shattered her shop windows - a common occurrence in the city of Zaporizhzhia. There's a 10-metre (32ft) wide crater in the middle of the road.

"Of course we are worried about the outcome [of the election]," she adds. "We want to defeat the enemy!"

For Ukraine to have a remote chance of doing that, it needs the help of the US.

It was here in 2023, on this south-eastern part of the front line, where Ukraine launched a counteroffensive it hoped would force out the Russian invaders.

Instead, after little to no progress, Ukraine's ambitions have switched to survival. Missiles and glide bombs slam into towns and cities daily, and its soldiers weather constant Russian attacks.

While Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris has suggested military aid would continue if she emerged the victor, her powers could be constrained by a Republican-run Congress. And the pipeline of military support, which so far totals more than \$50bn, is looking less likely to be sustained under a second term for Donald Trump.

Whoever becomes the next US president will have a profound impact on Ukraine's borders and everyone who lives within them.

Russian strikes like the one which shattered Inna's shop windows are a horrifying fact of life in Zaporizhzhia

If, for example, they forced Ukraine to give up land and freeze the front lines, then regions like Zaporizhzhia could become suddenly divided like North and South Korea after the ceasefire that halted fighting - but never officially ended the war there - in the 1950s.

Trump has said he would "work out something" to settle the war and suggested Ukraine may have to give up some land.

A second US option would be to pull its support completely, which would mean over time that Russian forces could eventually engulf the entire region and even more of Ukraine beyond it.

The third scenario of Ukraine completely liberating its occupied territories is looking less and less likely.

It's this lack of battlefield progress that has made the merits of supporting Ukrainian troops like Andriy increasingly up for debate across the Atlantic.

He's in charge of his unit's fleet of US-made armoured vehicles on the front lines. When they're not used for moving soldiers, they sit under camouflage netting along tree lines.

"If aid stops or slows, the burden will fall on the shoulders of the infantry," he explains. "We'll fight with what we have, but everyone knows Ukraine can't do it on its own."

Andriy and his fellow Ukrainians are nervously awaiting the US vote on 5 November. The uncertainty is stifling battlefield ambitions and frustrating political efforts to secure more help.

Western allies often look to America's example when deciding how or whether to support Kyiv's war effort.

"When we hear how one candidate, who is less willing to help us, is leading in the polls, it's upsetting and frustrating," says Andriy. "But we're not going anywhere."

Ukraine's soldiers know that the US election could drastically affect their fortunes on the battlefield

Amidst the autumnal farmland, the soldiers are keen to demonstrate the American kit they use - drones, grenade launchers and mounted machine guns.

All, they say, far superior to their Soviet-era alternatives.

Whether it's through Ukraine's natural resources or business ventures, President Zelensky is also trying to pitch his country as an investment opportunity to his allies. Drone pilot Serhiy explains how they can give direct feedback to Western manufacturers.

"We have an online chat with them, and we make suggestions," he says with a grin. "Improvements are already happening."

As demonstrated with drone manufacturing, the war in Ukraine is forcing innovations domestically. It's also allowing Western companies to test their products in an active warzone.

The outgoing Biden administration has recently pledged another \$800m in military aid to Ukraine, including weapons and vehicles

Billions of dollars of Western aid has also driven reforms in some areas of government. Kyiv wants to show it's a horse worth backing.

The question is whether these advances will be eclipsed by a conflict increasingly going Russia's way.

With an army typically only being as strong as its society, we head to meet someone who experienced Russian brutality first-hand.

Lyubov's daughter and grandchildren fled to the US at the start of the full-scale invasion.

We last met in her front-line village of Komyshuvakha two years ago, after the invading troops had destroyed her home.

Lyubov thinks Ukraine should not stop fighting Russia until it has freed all its territory

This time, she seemed happier, despite living close to the fighting for so long. In the warm confines of her new flat, I ask her whether Ukraine should negotiate to end the war.

“What about those who gave their lives?” she replies. “I see the end of the war only when we reach the 1991 borders of our country, when Crimea, Luhansk and Donetsk were ours.”

There is almost endless coverage of the US election on Ukrainian news programmes, with war projections based on the potential winner.

Kamala Harris is undoubtedly seen as Ukraine’s preferred candidate, and journalists are trying to combat Russian disinformation against her.

But across Ukraine’s south and east, we find a growing number of people who want the war to end immediately, and see a Donald Trump presidency as the best chance of bringing respite.

We spoke to many of these people around the embattled eastern town of Pokrovsk, where Russian forces are inching closer.

There’s a feeling here that Ukraine should have negotiated at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, to prevent the death and destruction they’ve seen since.

Both sides engaged in talks in those early months of 2022. But evidence of alleged Russian war crimes halted attempts at diplomacy, and strengthened Ukraine’s resolve to fight on.

“Death is not worth territory,” as one woman put it. “We have to stop this war, and Trump is the person who knows how to do that.”

For the politicians in Ukraine’s parliament, it is not an openly shared sentiment. While there is still cross-party support to keep fighting, President Zelensky’s “victory plan” has been criticised for not having a clearer timeline.

Halyna, who lived in a multi-storey building damaged by a Russian airstrike

As for Lyubov, she certainly wasn’t going to voice her preference on who should win the White House:

“I would like a true friend of Ukraine to win, who will continue to support us. But who it is going to be, I cannot tell you.” **(Honestly, a true friend of Ukraine would end the war immediately instead of letting the death and destruction continue another day.)**

As much as I admire Lyubov's inner steel, she reflects an increasingly popular and uncomfortable contradiction: a desire for Russia's defeat, while also wanting the bloodshed to end as soon as possible.

The pendulum between US interventionism and isolationism is closely watched and felt in Ukraine.

Ever since it voted overwhelmingly to be an independent country in 1991 during the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has had to fight for its sovereignty.

It's found itself on the edge of a geopolitical tectonic plate, trying to align itself with the West as Russia pulls it the other way.

Moscow's full-scale invasion means Ukraine needs the helping hand of America to stop it from being torn apart.

I am personally waiting for Trump in a few weeks from now to end the empty promises made to Ukraine by the Democrats that the Ukrainians will get to join Nato, and keep fighting Russia. That was a fxxking big lie, which was intended more to enlist Ukraine to fight for the American empire, through deception, to weaken Russia than to help Ukraine. All that Kyiv has for listening to the Americans is a broken country, a million destroyed lives and a third of the population wandering Europe as refugees.

In the country which the US regards as its greatest challenger, China, people are also watching the US elections keenly. But there is no war and unlikely to be one. The angst is over the commercial relationships that are being re-ordered, where Chinese export prowess of high tech products already worry both Trump and Harris since they both want the Americans to make a comeback in industrial supremacy. This is reflected in the battle of electric vehicles. The FT has this to say:

### **Has China already won the EV race?**

The expressway from Shenzhen to Dongguan and Guangzhou, through one of China's industrial heartlands, boasts almost every vehicle the global market has to offer. Toyota sedans weave aggressively between industrial tankers; sleek Maybachs and Mercedes ferry executives; Teslas silently demand attention; and global staples like the Volkswagen Golf chug along, minding their own business. But they are only half the fleet. Every second car seems to have an unfamiliar nameplate, funky headlights and a whining electric motor.

These are the new Chinese automobiles. They are taking over their domestic market. Soon they will take over the world. The rise of Chinese cars in China is already claiming victims abroad: Volkswagen plans to close factories in Germany for the first

time and lay off tens of thousands of workers as it loses share in the world's biggest auto market.

But this is just the beginning. Established carmakers are vowing to cut costs, begging for subsidies, demanding tariffs — which the EU has just enacted — and trying to cling to the internal combustion engine. If the intention is to preserve industrial employment then these efforts are doomed to fail. That is because the shock is not just China or just electric vehicles.

It is both at once. It is important to understand why the automotive powertrain has been the symbol of industrial might for a century. Each one is a marvel of engineering, with thousands of moving parts, machined to a high tolerance and assembled into a compact package, which must function safely for years, despite vibration, mishandling and changing weather. They are difficult to make. An electric vehicle, by contrast, is a battery on wheels — little more than a scaled-up version of a child's toy. Its supply chain is simpler.

Much of the value is in the battery, which is chemical and not mechanical. Even without China, EVs would transform the auto industry.

Manufacturing commodity chemical and electrical products, however, is something China does extremely well. They require massive scale, cheap capital, low operating margins and an ample supply of affordable technical labour. Foreign rivals are rightly upset at the subsidies Chinese carmakers receive, but they would be formidable competitors without them.

What, then, are established carmakers to do? There is a range of bad options to explore. One is tariffs. In addition to all the usual economic reasons to dislike tariffs, they can only protect a domestic market, which might help net importers such as the US and the UK, but is no use to countries such as Germany, Japan and South Korea, which rely on their lucrative export trade, including the real jewels: markets such as Australia and Saudi Arabia that have considerable purchasing power but no domestic car industry at all. Such countries have zero reason to impose tariffs on cars and even less reason to adopt a discriminatory tariff against China. The US has gone about it from the other direction, with subsidies for EVs and new battery plants.

It is one thing to get an industry off the ground, however, and quite another to sustain it if a rival has lower costs. Right now, as new factories come online across the US, Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act looks like a triumph of industrial policy. In five years, it may not look as clever.

The case of solar panels is instructive. Europe subsidised solar installations, and imposed tariffs on Chinese solar panels from 2013 to 2018: a period during which



most of its solar industry went bust. You must be somewhat competitive to stay in the game. Neither subsidies nor tariffs change industrial reality.

Another bad option is to try to force the market towards a different technology. Japan and Toyota have doggedly pursued hydrogen fuel cells, in part because greater manufacturing complexity means greater barriers to entry. From film cameras to Concorde, however, the market is a ruthless winnower of technologies. Similar logic applies to carrying on with internal combustion.

If you believe the transition must happen at some point, then delaying simply puts you further behind. There are some better options, even if they are still not good. If EVs wipe out the value added in the powertrain, the question is where value will then accrue.

It may make sense to import batteries from China, keep final assembly at home and concentrate on engineering for comfort, performance, experience and safety. An EV still needs sophisticated elements such as brakes, airbags and tyres. Japan no longer makes televisions and Sony is still in the TV business, although that is cold comfort to its former manufacturing workforce.

There is also the race to control what may be the greatest source of future value-added in the auto industry: the software for autonomous driving, ride hailing and in-car entertainment. The iPhone is manufactured in China but most of the value accrues to the semiconductor from Taiwan and the operating system from California. The physical car, in business terms, may become the least important part.

It is hard to back huge manufacturers such as Toyota and Volkswagen against software competitors in that contest. Even if they prevail, it would not necessarily help their factories. China will be a fierce competitor in software, too. There is going to be pain for Volkswagen and its peers. The worst thing would be to pretend it can be avoided.

It is not like this upcoming election is only about the war in Ukraine or the trade war against China. But these two examples encapsulate the geopolitical contests that are evident everywhere since Biden came to become president in 2020. The Ukrainian war, one of NATO against Russia was definitely created during the Biden Administration. So there is nowhere else to point fingers. The war has been lost. Trump is posturing to end it, while Harris does not want to go against her own Administration's pet project.

I am all for Trump pulling out of the futile struggle. The electorate is not keen on sinking deeper into the morass, so if Trump is the political animal that I think he is, he will end the military and financial support. Kyiv for having bought into proxy war

will end up paying a huge price for their stupidity. They have half a country left, and its army has been decimated.

On the simultaneously ongoing conflict in the Middle East, while Trump is not a dove, he is not all in behind Jerusalem. He supports Israel, which is against the opinion of most of the world outside of the collective west. It is a genocide being conducted, but Trump has already indicated to Netanyahu he would want the Israelis to stop it. So we may have an end to military confrontation in both Ukraine and in the Middle East.

As for the trade war between China, one has to see in Trump more of a negotiator than a hawk. At least during his first term, he tried to make peace with the “rocket man” Kim Jong Un of North Korea. Nobody else has done it before or since he attempted it. As such, I don’t think that he will start a war over Taiwan. It’s just not him. He is just a businessman who prefers to take on domestic foes such as the Democrats and it will keep him busy and away from foreign adventures. With that said, his MAGA policies will drive him to up tariffs and protectionism against China. But that would be no different from a Democratic administration. Biden wanted to be the president to reclaim the number one ranking of global economies from China in 2020, but he has failed to do so. He has imposed 100% tariffs on Chinese EVs as Trump promises to do with Mexican EVs to be manufactured by BYD and others. So there will not be a lot of difference between the Republicans and the Democrats in the trade disputes.

Overall, many Europeans think that Trump will end US commitment to NATO. The Europeans think that Russia will attack them. Really? Will the end of NATO lead to a safer world with fewer wars? I think the world will be a more secure place.

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