

## The Day After

# Turmoil to Erupt Regardless US Election Outcome

Whichever way US voters decide to go on election day, it's the day after that causes most concern. A win by Donald Trump is unlikely to be hotly contested by his opponents. Such a win merely ushers a man into the White House who has vowed to don the mantle of a dictator on his first day in office. Conversely, it is a foregone conclusion that Mr Trump will bitterly contest a loss.

In 2020, Mr Trump unleashed his lawyers to contest the election results in six states, filing more than sixty lawsuits - and losing them all. He also poured pressure on state governors, legislators, and electors to 'find' him votes. When that didn't work either, he mobilised his troops in a last-ditch attempt to prevent the certification of the election result during a joint session of Congress presided over by his vice-president Mike Pence.

This is when Trump's Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, Last Sons of Liberty, and other esoteric fringe groups ran amok on a nod from their chief. They stormed the Capitol, ransacked its offices, and tried to hunt down 'traitor' Pence who, for once in his political career, kept a straight back and refused to buckle under threat to his life. That day, January 6, 2021, Mr Pence upheld the constitution, prevented a coup, and earned his place in the history books as an American hero.

However, Donald Trump is a sore loser. He can't stand being bested by anyone and sees red whenever that happens. Given that the man is not particularly intelligent, smart, or successful after suffering six bankruptcies, washouts either in court or in business have been a recurring feature of his life.

### "I Didn't Do It!"

It is also never his fault and for every setback inflicted there are plenty of others to bear the blame. Another option is to simply deny that misfortune struck and proclaim victory regardless the reverse suffered. Mr Trump deploys both tactics to create a mirage of vigour and strength. His bravado is legendary and has gotten him all the way to the White House - an accomplishment of note.

If there's any quality to be attached to Mr Trump's character, it is the kind of perseverance famously set to music in Chumbawamba's 1997 smash hit Tubthumping: *I get knocked down, but I get up again. You're never gonna keep me down.*

As such, Mr Trump is the ultimate Energizer Bunny: he just keeps going tirelessly and will literally do or say anything to keep momentum.

As if to emphasise his approach, after Tuesday's debate Mr Trump made an unprecedented surprise visit to the 'spin room' where campaign staffers seek to impress the reporters covering the event. Here, he boasted about his 'masterful' performance in 'crushing' his 'clueless' opponent: "I think it was the best debate I've ever personally had."

However, most people watched another debate; one in which 67% of viewers thought he fared badly and proved no match for Kamala Harris. Again following his script to perfection, Mr Trump went on to blame ABC News - "the worst of all networks that should have its license revoked" - for allowing its moderators David Muir and Linsey Davis to factcheck several of his more outrageous statements. "It basically was a three-on-one," Mr Trump said, calling the moderators "very unfair" for daring to question him.

### Trump Lexicon

On Thursday evening, the Republican candidate declined Mrs Harris' invitation to a third debate. In an all-caps post on Truth Social, his own social media outlet, Mr Trump backed out of a final

confrontation with his electoral nemesis suggesting that only 'losers' demand a rematch. The move was, however, widely interpreted as proof that Mr Trump simply chickened out and dare not face an opponent who can give as good as she gets.

Though Mr Trump relishes heaping taunts and slur on others, he lacks the thick skin required to receive in kind. The candidate is infamous for the sexual innuendo he uses to demean women. About Kamala Harris and Hillary Clinton he remarked: "Funny how blowjobs impacted both their careers differently."

And is this coming from a man sentenced to pay upwards of \$83 million to New York writer E Jean Carroll for sexually accosting her in a dressing room and then defaming her in social media posts. Being the self-proclaimed personification of perfection, Mr Trump knows no embarrassment or, indeed, shame.

Mr Trump's reputation for crude and toxic remarks is now so formidable that people not defamed by him may feel snubbed. A sampling compiled by The New York Times offers insights into the Trump lexicon.

Former Republican congressman Justin Amash: "A total loser!" CNN presenter Anderson Cooper: "A waste!." Former White House aide Steve Bannon: "Dumped like a dog!" Fox New anchor Glenn Beck: "Mental basket case."

There's more: US president Joe Biden (his list is long): "Sloppy Joe, Sleepy Joe, Creepy Joe. Very low IQ, Very dumb." Former Trump national security advisor John Bolton: "So stupid!" Former president Bill Clinton: "Worst abuser of women ever!" Former first lady Hillary Clinton: "Crooked. Lock her up!" Former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen: "Liar & fraudster!" Actor Robert De Niro: "Low IQ individual." FBI agents: "Scum." 2024 presidential hopeful Kamala Harris: "Liberal whack job, Gaffe machine." Former president Barack Obama: "Worst president in history, Cheating Obama, Insane."

### **Yanking the Chain**

Perhaps Mr Trump could benefit from perusing one of the many dictionaries of insults available at bookstores or online. Yet, though he loves showering others with slurs, barbs, and slights; he cannot deal with, and gets visibly upset by, people who remain unfazed and dare push back as Kamala Harris did during the debate. More maddening still: she kept it civil, merely pointing out falsehoods and inconsistencies.

Mrs Harris and her campaign staffers seem to understand how to derail Mr Trump, expose his bravado, and portray him as a yellow-bellied schoolyard bully who runs at the first sign of opposition.

Whilst some may decry the absence of policy ideas, US political polarisation is now such that ideas and proposals no longer cross the congressional aisle and bipartisanship is dead - buried, one must add, by the Republican extremism. The GOP was pushed towards the outer margins of reason first by the 'birthers' of 2008 who loudly questioned Mr Obama's right to the presidency as a 'foreign-born person'.

The birthers soon morphed into ultra-conservative Tea Party movement of 2009 which brazenly likened the then-president to Adolf Hitler and Vladimir Putin. After the 'teabaggers' had exhausted their proverbial fifteen minutes of fame, the movement was replaced by the much more resilient Trumpism that is still with us today.

### **Personality Cult**

However, the issue with Trumpism is that, much like its leader, it cannot except defeat and 'plays' without rules. The constitution, whilst nominally celebrated and revered (particularly its cherished

Second Amendment which protects the individual right to possess firearms), is considered dispensable when its commands contradict the desired outcome. This is what makes The Day After so dangerous. Regardless the election result, Trumpism - in essence a personality cult not dissimilar to Maoism and Stalinism - is to exact its pound of flesh.

With the blessing of the US Supreme Court, a Trump win will see the incoming president stretching his executive powers to the limit, and quite possibly beyond. Mr Trump has not only promised to gear up with dictatorial powers, he also vows to take 'revenge' on his opponents by weaponising the Department of Justice and stuffing it, just like he did the Supreme Court, with acolytes.

Mr Trump also wants 'battle plans' drawn up for either the invasion of Mexico or the aerial bombing of the country to take out drug labs. Both undocumented immigrants and homeless people are to be rounded up with the former deported in record numbers and the latter corralled into 'tent cities', a euphemism for camps.

Other promises he made include expanding the death penalty and possibly introducing the guillotine to ensure swift execution; automatically taxing all imported goods; devaluing the dollar; reevaluate US support for NATO; dismantle climate legislation; relax gun control; censor independent media by revoking FCC licenses; enact federal law to end gender diversity; pardon the January 6 rioters; gut the federal government and its agencies and rid both of bureaucrats deemed left wing or atheist.

The Trump 2.0 revolution is determined to roll back hard-won civil liberties whilst trampling human rights and the constitution to reshape the country to his personal view of 'one nation under god'.

### **Last Minute Epiphany**

Many, if not most, Americans, even those in principle well disposed towards Mr Trump, may fail to recognise their republic's founding values in his discourse and award their vote, reluctantly or otherwise, to Mrs Harris as representing the lesser of two evils.

Make no mistake about it: though smart, tough, and quite possibly the saviour of American democracy, Mrs Harris remains a stand-in who was pushed onto the national stage at the very last minute to avoid a meltdown of the Democratic campaign. That need not be an impediment or diminish her standing, but merely serves as a reminder of her provenance and mission: to stop Trump, whatever it takes.

If and when US voters get struck by an eleventh hour epiphany and reject the man, the battle will be far from over. Already now, the Trump team is working out detailed strategies to challenge the election outcome from seeking legal recourse to rallying the troops for marches and demonstrations in Washington to chants of 'Stop the Steal'.

He won't go down without a fight, if only because he doesn't know how to.

Politics is a battle for hard raw power, more so in the US than, say, in Europe where a thin veneer of civility is usually preserved. The battle splits the United States into winners and losers: the former, including well-heeled donors, expecting the spoils, the latter the pain.

Whomever wins or loses on November 5, the presidential election is sure to produce spectacular fireworks that will delight some and terrify others. If this serves the best interest of the nation is another question altogether; one that seems rather irrelevant today given the stakes.