

Surprise: Trump and Vance offer a high comfort level for Europeans

By Conrad Black

The average European reader is apt to be more mystified than usual by recent political developments in the United States. President Trump's popularity will undoubtedly have risen appreciably, as it deserves to do after his cool-headed response to mortal danger on Saturday in Pennsylvania and his and his wife's gracious comments afterwards.



Trump and Vance, what may be America's winning ticket (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

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itical credit customarily accorded leaders who survive assassination attempts, the astute response of Trump and the other Republicans in calling for unity in the country and a reduction in the temperature and tenor of political discourse to a more civilised level effectively deprives the Democrats of their one remaining campaign argument. Since the Democrats are judged by the country to have failed in matters of

inflation, immigration, taxes, excessively rigid and authoritarian imposition of green regulations, intolerable crime rates, and a number of egregious foreign-policy shortcomings starting with the debacle in Afghanistan, the Democrats' only recourse is been to claim that Trump is a threat to democracy.

Of course, this is a feeble argument, especially as Trump held the presidency for four years and did absolutely nothing to incite a justified suspicion of his commitment to democracy. In Democratic myth-making, slavishly propagated by the rabidly partisan national political media, making America great again is somehow a fascistic concept.

Trump has been more than holding his own reminding voters that the perversion of the intelligence agencies and the justice system to harass and persecute opposing candidates and an incumbent president when he was in office, constitutes a considerably more serious threat to democracy than anything he has said or done.

It was not Trump who used the FBI to coerce social media into improper partisan activities, and the only basis for this charge is the complete falsehood that Trump attempted to conduct an insurrection on January 6, 2021. No connection has been established between the hooligans who vandalized the Capitol and the Trump organisation, despite the application of all the dubious tactics of American prosecutors promising sweetheart deals and immunity from a charge of perjury to those improperly detained for years at Guantánamo and elsewhere.

President Biden has been boxed into the corner of claiming that he and his wife have been "praying" for Trump and his family, the same Trump who Biden recently compared to Hitler and who Mrs. Biden two nights before the assassination attempt described in a speech as "evil." The revised Biden line is that a cooling of rhetoric is definitely desirable, and

national unity must be sought, but that since Trump is in fact a threat to democracy that point can't be altogether overlooked.

Obviously, this kite won't fly. Events have been moving so quickly it is easy to lose sight of their political consequences. Despite running far behind Trump in every major policy area except abortion where they are almost even now, and Trump has intervened to revise the Republican Party platform to make it less vulnerable to the charges of the abortion enthusiasts, it was a reasonably close election though with Trump clearly leading for the last several months, prior to the shambles of the debate on June 27. This shook Biden down in the polls and incited a widespread revolt against his candidacy within his own party. Trump had a substantial lead in all polls and was well ahead on betting odds when he commenced speaking on Saturday evening to a crowd of 50,000 in Butler, Pennsylvania.

He now appears unstoppable, and while the events of the last few days have muffled the struggle to remove the Biden as Democratic candidate, that issue has not been decided. The feeble response of the Democrats to the obsolescence of their imputations of dictatorial ambitions to Trump is to claim that his own denunciations of the Democrats was chiefly responsible for the climate of violence which almost took his life. They might as well argue that Lincoln and Kennedy were responsible for their own deaths.

It is not immediately obvious what the Democrats could do to turn this back into a closely contested election. Throwing Biden out at this stage and bringing forward Kamala Harris whom no sane person could imagine to be qualified to be president would not be a solution. Throwing them both out would be difficult and convulsive and the Democrats would have to familiarize the country within two months with a new candidate and none of those now visible is very electrifying.

The nomination of Senator J. D. Vance as vice president was astute, as he is 39 years old, a significant intellectual, a strong vote-getter in the old Rust Belt of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, a Roman Catholic, a successful and rather intellectual author, combat Marine veteran and an uplifting meritocrat who has risen from a broken drug and drink-beleaguered family. He is a long-standing critic of reckless foreign policy interventions abroad.

On the specific subject of Ukraine, he will need a short lesson in geopolitics from his chief. I spoke with an eminent French journalist last week who is a long-time and perceptive commentator on American politics and had to assure her that Trump is not an isolationist. Europeans would set their own minds at ease if they could understand that for Americans to wish that NATO be an alliance where everybody pulls their weight is not synonymous with a return to the mindless isolationism of Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge.

Europeans may safely rely on the fact that the great majority of Americans understand that their national interest is served by following the Roosevelt principle of having a sufficient presence in Western Europe and the Far East to assist in assembling containment alliances when they become necessary to keep the dangers of anti-democratic forces as far away from the shores of America as possible. Europe should be preparing for a Trump administration, but with a much higher comfort level than the present widespread state of snobbish and disdainful nervousity implies.

First published in the [Brussels Signal](#)