



Touchbutton

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It's a mad mad world

We are not even into the dog days of August and the British newspapers are consumed with a mix of the Harry & Meghan, Heard & Depp domestic sagas. Between them, they have pushed the pandemic into the middle pages of the tabloids, whilst the other big couple power play barely merits more than a mention.

They are of course, Donald Trump and Joe Biden. As we limber up towards the US election in November, what happens over the next few months will assume even greater importance. Presently, all the polls suggest that, despite considerable age, Joe Biden will be the next occupant of the White House and the 46th President of the United States of America.

However, there are three things that could upset this.

First, the economy and the stockmarket. Opinion polls specifically targeting these still deliver a general consensus of approval for how Trump handles the economy.

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This is despite huge unemployment numbers, which do not seem to be regarded by voters as his doing but entirely due to the pandemic, which is true. In a similar vein, the stockmarket remains very buoyant – this will also be key to his re-election. A significant fall in markets would upset his chances.

Second, Trump's handling of the pandemic. This is widely seen as being shambolic, but it should be remembered that the early forecasts of premature fatalities in the USA were estimated at about two million. A number that looks likely to be considerably lower, but still dreadful nonetheless, will be hailed by Trump as a "huge success, huge." This may be unpalatable to many, but is entirely consistent with his behaviour and language.

Finally, a much more complex and genuinely unprecedented issue: in the event of losing the popular vote, he could simply refuse to leave.

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Trump has already signalled that postal votes are rigged and open to fraud. He could determine this to be all engineered perhaps by the Chinese and an issue of national security that must be investigated by the Department of Justice.

The deadline for the appointment of Electoral College electors is 14 December; but if an investigation has not been completed by then (which would be likely, as these things take time), then any state where fraud is suspected must be excluded. If this were to happen, the election passes to the House of Representatives, where 26 states still have a majority Republican delegation. This almost certainly secures Donald Trump in the White House for a second term.

This may all seem ridiculously far-fetched, but we live in a world where far-fetched and highly implausible events seem, for now at least, to be all part of the new normal.

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