

How Trump’s assassination attempt affects the US election



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Throughout history any attempted assassination has been memorialised, canonised and imprinted onto the public psyche. In many cases the act of assassination has been a turning point—from Benazir Bhutto, to Indira Gandhi to John F Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln, all these world leaders have had an abrupt end to their flaring political careers, but are remembered more for their good than bad, regardless of which side of the political line the public of the day inclines. While many have come up with conspiracy theories after the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump in a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday, Trump has received words of assurance, condolence and kindness across the board. The imagery of blood trickling down his face and fist up in the air is quite iconic and heroic—supporters who loved him love him more, and the ones who did not look at him are looking at him now.

This unprecedented event has not only pivoted attention away from major world issues, at least in the US, but it could also be a major turning point for the outcome of the current election. It has already charged the Republican Party, and it will continue to shape their strategy as they move forward with packaging their rhetoric. However, despite the fact that the attack could have been avoided with some form of gun control, the party’s position on gun control and the Second Amendment will remain intact. Two of the most talked about US presidents in history, who were party favourites—Theodore Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan were also

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survivors of assassination attempts and Trump has now joined that list. Though his felony cases did not really play a pivotal role in the public’s decision to support or not support him, this incident takes away any clout from the hush money, falsification of business records, corrupt dealings and hearings might have had. Following the attack, a Florida judge dismissed the federal classified documents



Former President Donald Trump pumps his fist as he is rushed offstage following his assassination attempt at a rally on July 13, 2024 in Butler, Pennsylvania.

PHOTO: AFP

case against Donald Trump on the grounds that the Department of Justice unlawfully appointed special counsel Jack Smith.

Since the last week of June, Trump has held a lead in the national polls according to FiveThirtyEight; after the assassination, it has gone up by two percent over Biden, while Biden’s national disapproval rating is on the rise. The political ground has been made fertile for Project 2025—a \$22 million project led by the right-wing think tank, Heritage Foundation, with an autocratic bend that aims to realise staunch Christian nationalist principles, undermine separation of power, eliminate the department of education, curb climate change and civil liberties related regulations, push for significant cut to social security provisions and establish partisan leadership in major agencies. It is a presidential transition operation specifically

undecided voters are still undecided and will likely remain undecided and the ones who have decided not to pick the lesser of the two evils won’t hit the polls. The Republican National Convention proved to show a Republican Party recharged with Trump’s words minutes after surviving the attempt: “Fight, fight, fight.” Security was ramped up for the convention so that the security failures were not repeated, although questions still remain both for the security apparatus and the public on how the shooter got so close and why there was a failure. The Justice Department under Attorney General Merrick Garland can be trusted to carry out a full-fledged impartial investigation, but the question persists if the same can be expected from the Justice Department under another Trump presidency. It is vital to save

What we are witnessing is a monumental loss of institutionalisation for the Republican Party, as its politics revolve around amplifying Trump, a move from defending conservative ideals which are fundamentally against debasing the branches of the government. The creation of the new party platform for the Republicans is a closed process, which is unlike other election cycles. As Biden attempts to try his chances by declaring he knows how to say the truth, in many ways, so does his opponent Trump is clearly adept at speaking his version of the truth.

While many of Biden’s liberal and progressive voter bases are lacklustre—with much of the lethargy stemming from the US’ role in the ongoing genocide in Gaza—Trump activists are on the move, and this shooting event has only added more fuel

to the movement. Trump has established, although mostly rhetorically, that he is the commander-in-chief who gets things done and he is the one who is taken seriously by the world leaders. The assassination attempt could legitimise Trump’s rhetoric for swing voters. Regardless of the sound bites we must not forget what was actually accomplished during Trump’s last term and the risks associated with the promises of Project 2025. From the cusp of misinformation, we slid into the labyrinth of fake news, alternate and multiple realities, loss of objectivity, immense push backs against reproductive rights, scandalous turnovers in the government.

The extent to which the public has been exposed to chaos has truly made them immune to the likes of such ruptures in US institutions which were meant to be trusted. The ultimate and the biggest numerical outcome of the Trump presidency was the number of Covid deaths and insensitivity at a time when the world needed to come together. Sure, there was some progress in foreign policy, but the magnitude of loss is much greater. And an important question needs to be considered: would the genocide of Palestinians by Israel stop if Trump takes office? That is a complicated question given that Trump courts evangelical Zionists who are quite influential in the broader national political landscape. He also called Biden a “bad Palestinian” denigrating an entire people and glossing over the constant trauma and brutality against humanity.

Technocracy of the Democratic Party may have made it a party of the elites, but the Republican Party is not quite the people’s party and it hasn’t been in a long time. People may rather prefer doctors to run a hospital versus a family who would run the healthcare establishment like a business. Trump is known to appoint his family members and loyalists in influential government posts, which reeks of corrupt “third world” family-run governments with compromised institutions. But whether American citizens will see that truth, and the problem with that, seems further away today than it was before the assassination attempt.

Joe Biden—whose candidacy was in doubt, with talks of his replacement dominating the headlines before Trump’s assassination attempt—is now in a more precarious position. Biden is a leader who has delivered before, both on the goods and bads, but he has reached a ceiling with his support for the genocide—another political move to keep Israel sympathisers in the Democratic party’s pocket. Pollsters can make sound predictions about the general election, but the future of both parties, particularly the Republican Party, looks bleak as its institutional rigour erodes and the party turns into a movement around one man and his family cantered top-down leadership. The optics of the shooting event will only expedite that erosion. In this market place of democracy, we have only a few bad choices.

The most incredible election in French history



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By calling a snap parliamentary election in the wake of his party’s defeat in the June European Parliament election, French President Emmanuel Macron hoped to “clarify” the political situation for his own benefit. Clearly, he failed. The election produced no parliamentary majority, only a great deal more confusion. With many losers and very few winners, it is the most astonishing election in the country’s modern history.

Among the many losers is National Rally (RN), the far-right party that clinched a decisive and shocking victory in the European elections just weeks earlier. Though RN has increased its seat count and emerged as the largest party in the National Assembly, it fell far short of expectations. The second round featured a powerful anti-RN mobilisation, as voters shifted tactically from the centre to the left, and from the right to the centre. Many French apparently concluded during the campaign that RN’s candidates were ill prepared to hold power.

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The second loser is Macron, whose party lost around 100 seats. Before the election, his Ensemble grouping could anchor a relative majority. Now, it is dwarfed by the left-wing New Popular Front (NFP), which won the most seats overall.

But while Macron probably will be forced to appoint a new prime minister from the left, the NFP remains around 100 seats short of



Supporters of French far-left opposition party gather to celebrate the results of the early French parliamentary elections in Paris, France, on July 7, 2024.

PHOTO: REUTERS

an absolute majority. Moreover, it is a loose coalition whose members disagree on much and whose leader, Jean-Luc Melenchon of France Unbowed, has only one objective: to radicalise public debate and create the conditions for a face-off between him and RN’s Marine Le Pen in the 2027 presidential

the European Commission, which recently launched an “excessive deficit procedure” against France.

Still, the NFP is not likely to break up anytime soon. While the Socialists and Greens drew much criticism for allying with Melenchon despite their fundamental

is that a moderate minority government will be formed to serve as a caretaker for the next year (the president cannot dissolve the National Assembly again until June 2025). But with Macron on the defensive and lacking a parliamentary majority, France will be in uncharted waters. Specific political

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personalities will play a much larger role than labels like “left,” “right,” or “centre.” As in every political system, some French politicians want to pursue stability and compromise, while others are bent on crushing perceived enemies.

Thus, the coming year will be marked by deep political uncertainty, which will not help France’s economic outlook. No matter what, though, the next government must agree on the 2025 budget within the next few months.

Perhaps the new National Assembly will find some common ground on electoral reform. The current two-round procedure is suited for a bipolar political system, but this election provided further confirmation that French politics is now tripartite. Given the emergence of distinct left-wing, right-wing, and centrist blocs, the only solution is to introduce proportional representation, with each party establishing its level of support and then pursuing voluntary coalitions after the votes are counted. Within the left, for example, the Socialists would not have to tie themselves to France Unbowed to get elected, and they could form alliances with others—such as Macron’s party—once in parliament.

France’s fragmented politics are not so different from those of other European countries. But its political culture and institutions are unique in the degree to which they favour confrontation over coalition-building.

Will this election outcome spur French politicians to see things differently, or will everyone just keep behaving as they always have? In the latter scenario, RN need only bide its time, capitalise on the government’s ineffectiveness, and sooner or later win everything.