

2024 REMAINS AN UNPREDICTABLE RACE: SIX PREDICTABLE THINGS THAT COULD STILL UPEND IT

Donald Trump announced he was running in the 2024 Presidential race over 21 months ago. Tomorrow marks four weeks since Joe Biden dropped out of the race. It marks two weeks since Vice President Harris became the presumptive Democratic nominee. Monday, the Democratic Convention starts.

Back before and when Joe Biden dropped, I was certain about two things: that Kamala Harris would bring a lot more stamina to the race and she would give much better voice to a pro-Choice position that could impact the outcome of the race. I was also pretty sure that because someone was out selling wildly successful policies, both Biden and Harris' approval ratings would improve (remember my screen caps are 5 hours ahead of ET; this tweet was three hours after Biden dropped and two after he endorsed Harris).



emptywheel (mouthy bitch)
@emptywheel



Two of the most important factors going forward.

- 1) Short of Big Gretch, Kamala has the best voice to talk about choice (and, bc Vance is Trump's Veep, birth control).
- 2) If she can break the Double Haters stalemate, this could snowball.

9:36 PM · Jul 21, 2024 · 39.1K Views

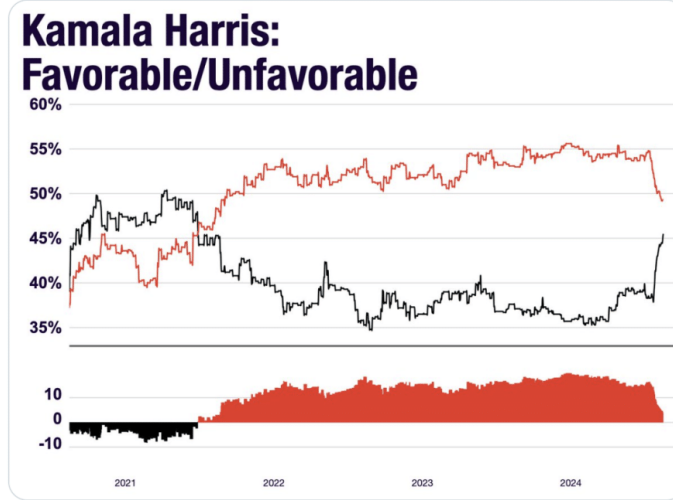
I hoped that Kamala would break the Double Hater logjam that has characterized the past two Presidential races (and this one, until that point).

Kamala's approval ratings have gone up (Biden's are less dramatic, but have ticked up maybe a point so far).

Derek Thompson @DKThomp

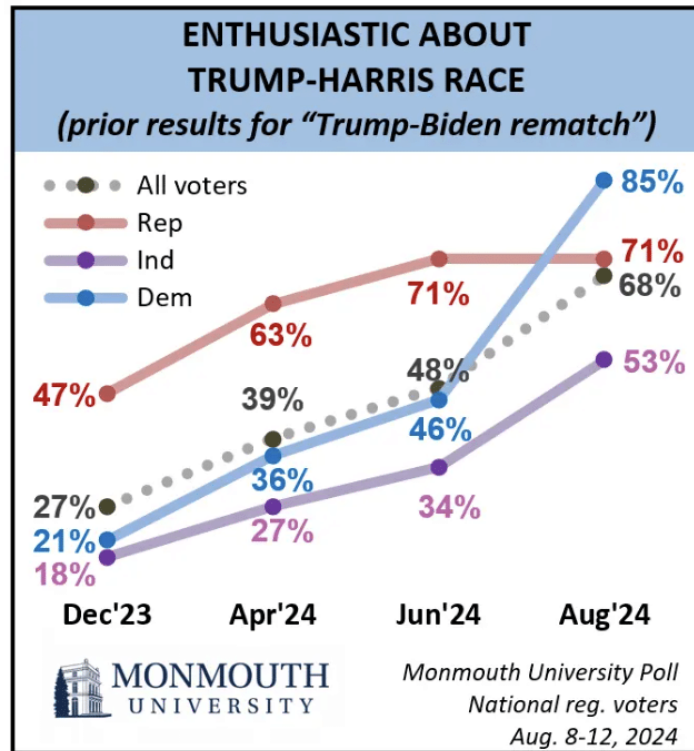
easy to lose sight of just how strange the last 3 weeks have been

if somebody asked you in June to sketch out Kamala Harris's approval rating following a Biden dropout, and you drew THIS ... experienced, wise, sober political analysts would have absolutely laughed at you



4:13 PM · Aug 16, 2024 · 141.5K Views

And newfound enthusiasm, especially among Independent voters, suggests the Vice President may, indeed, break that Double Hater logjam.



That said, I think far too many people are complacent in their belief that Harris will continue to slowly grow a lead that will be sustainable in the face of whatever rat-fuckery

Trump tries in November.

If we've learned one thing about the 2024 election, it's that normal predictions won't hold.

I still think a true Black Swan event is possible – something like a global war.

I also think the unpredicted and widespread notoriety of Project 2025 will upend any normal political outcomes. It's not just a post-Dobbs election (with abortion on the ballot in swing states like Arizona), but continued coverage of Project 2025 in both the political and the popular press has put democracy on the ballot in a surprising way.

But even the following six things are quite possible, which could significantly affect the race in a number of ways.

Big protests at DNC: Many of the people pressuring Biden to drop, including Nancy Pelosi, favored some kind of speed primary. Instead, Biden and Harris managed to make that impossible within 24 hours of his departure. So instead of a wildly divisive Convention, Harris can instead mostly look forward to a lovefest, where the biggest questions are whether Jimmy Carter can manage a video cameo and which surprise performers – potentially including Bruce Springsteen, Beyoncé, or even Taylor Swift will show up.

The very important caveat to that, though, is that around 30 Uncommitted delegates can will cause some dissension inside the Convention and tens of thousands of protestors will cause even more outside of it. It's the latter I'm most worried about. The protests themselves will restore attention to the ongoing catastrophe in Gaza. But they're also an easy target that provocateurs and right wing cops can exploit.

Meaningful ceasefire in Israel – or, further escalation: In the face of potential escalation, negotiators have redoubled efforts to forge some kind of ceasefire deal. But there's some reason

to believe that Trump and Bibi will thwart this at all costs.

The potential for Gaza to dampen Democratic enthusiasm (or to juice third party candidates) has long been a focus. But few have fully unpacked how it has been exploited by the right. So one way or another, this continues to be the most obvious pivot for more dissension among likely Democratic voters.

And all that's before Iran's very real efforts to target Donald Trump.

Superseding indictment and/or September

sentencing for Trump: As of right now, Trump is due to be sentenced in his New York document fraud case on September 18 and the parties in Trump's January 6 case should begin discussing what to do about SCOTUS' immunity indictment in early September.

Yesterday, Trump asked to delay the sentencing until after the election. Roger Parloff gave a nuanced assessment of the mostly but not entirely frivolous request. Even if he's sentenced, it's not at all clear that Juan Merchan would sentence Trump to prison time.

Meanwhile, I'm not the only one who thinks that Jack Smith asked for an extension until the last possible day to supersede Trump before the election because he may be contemplating such a course (since I wrote that post, DOJ has chose to recharge even more crime scene January 6ers charged with obstruction). A superseding indictment might add his co-conspirators (what others predict) or change the crimes charged against Trump (my own suspicion). One way or another, though, there will be legal proceedings on the January 6 case in September, proceedings that have the possibility to expose more details about how closely Trump's team worked with the Proud Boys or about how central a role Trump played in sending bodies to the Capitol.

The thing about both these eventualities is that it's not at all clear whether the rule to date – that Trump's legal troubles only make him more

popular with right wingers – will hold, not least because independent voters will finally be tuning in. And even if they do, they'll happen against a backdrop where Kamala is running as a prosecutor who has taken on thugs like Trump in the past.

Another tumultuous debate: Trump actually had a really poor debate in June, but a combination of asymmetric press coverage and normalization of Trump covered for that. If he has another such debate, it could serve as a real weight on his campaign.

But it's really not guaranteed that Kamala will ace a debate either. Trump's ability to reframe entire conversations is unmatched, and thus far no moderator has been able to rein that in. Plus, for at least half of Trump's presidential debate appearances, he has arranged some kind of gimmick for them (such as hosting Tony Bobulinski or making a framed false claim about Biden's role in the Mike Flynn investigation). Usually, they fizzle, but you can't guarantee they will.

Further decline in Trump's mental state:

Honestly, I think the degree to which Trump's rambling and grievance *are new* is wildly overblown. He has always been like this. But I think the way in which it has been perceived of late has changed. That's partly true because his schtick has gotten tired enough that even Trumpsters have begun to tune out (and occasionally, leave his events) in noticeable numbers. Because Trump has attempted to replace his big rallies in recent weeks, appearing at events with smaller or no crowds, he hasn't gotten the juice he normally gets from crowd adulation that he needs to pull off his performances.

That may change now that the Secret Service has developed a plexiglass booth to protect him outdoors.

Even still, Kamala Harris has found ways to trigger Trump's ugliest side, making it harder

for him to control his grievances.

As a result, the press and some Republicans have begun to comment on his mental performance in a way they've haven't done since 2016.

Far right political violence: As I laid out here, Trump's allies and Elon Musk have both been part of a transnational effort to stoke violence based on fearmongering about migrants. In the past, right wing efforts to sow fear based on fabricated claims about caravans and the like have failed. And there's always the likelihood that Trump's mob will rise up in response to one of the events above, such as a superseding indictment.

As noted at the start of this post, it is possible that Kamala Harris will continue to engage new voters, competing in states (started with North Carolina) that haven't been competitive in years.

But that's if trends continue. And this year, there's lots of reason to question whether they will.

Update: WaPo's latest (very positive for Kamala) poll shows that the number of people happy with their choices for POTUS have gone up 16 points, a measure of the decline in Double Haters.

In July, when the contest was still Biden vs. Trump, 28 percent of voters overall said they were satisfied with the choice. Today, 44 percent say they are satisfied with the choice of Harris or Trump.