

AS KAMALA HARRIS PASSES THE TWO- THIRDS MARK, TRUMP ADOPTS APOCALYPTIC LANGUAGE

I continue to track the asymmetric pace of the campaigns of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. Today is another milestone for the Vice President.

As of today, Donald Trump has <5% of his campaign left (36 days of 721).

As of today, Kamala Harris has a third of her campaign left (36 days of 107).

Back on August 17, I laid out six things that could destabilize the race. We've gotten versions of four of those, though without yet serious impact on the race.



- There were no mass protests at the DNC. Neither, however, was there someone

speaking for Palestinian people from the Convention podium.

- With the assassination last week of Hassan Nasrallah and Israel's expanding operations against Iranian proxies in Lebanon and Yemen, we have seen unforeseen escalation in the Middle East. Joe Biden seems incapable of understanding that Bibi Netanyahu was never a good faith negotiator. On top of the instability this will bring (and the ongoing threat of Iranian violence targeted at Trump), I worry that Harris' choice to prioritize Republican endorsements over Palestinian speakers could harm her in Michigan (as Elissa Slotkin issues warnings about Michigan).
- We did get a superseding indictment in Trump's January 6 case (though without any new charges), but Trump succeeded in delaying sentencing in his NY case. We may find out this week whether we're going to get to see a redacted version of Jack Smith's argument that Trump is not immune; indeed, given

how Judge Tanya Chutkan issued a deadline for noon tomorrow, we may even see the argument itself this week. If we do, Trump's attacks on Mike Pence will be at the center of the argument. Remember: Trump's increasing fascistic language over the weekend has come *after he* got a first look at Smith's argument, and his lawyers seem terrified of some of the claims made by witnesses that could get unsealed.

- Kamala Harris did have a historically successful debate, but it has done little more than bump polling, slightly. That said, her campaign continues to goad Trump to make him look weak, most recently in a national ad and plane advertisement at the Alabama-Georgia game yesterday. Whether or not Harris pushes him to accept a second debate, the continued goading seems to keep him unbalanced. In recent campaign appearances, Trump has denied he fell into her trap at the debate, directly addressed rally-goers who were leaving

(denying they *were* leaving),
and freaked out about a fly.

- Whatever the cause, Trump is increasingly unhinged in public appearances, though much of the press continues to sanewash his coverage. More and more, his rants adopt fascist language, such as yesterday when he either endorsed *The Purge* or *Kristallnacht*. Donald Trump looks weak and Donald Trump looks violent, but that is not yet a persistent news coverage theme (indeed, in his polling update, Nate Silver claims there's nothing "like Joe Biden's deteriorating public performances" that might be affecting the race in ways polling is not accounting for). If the press does begin to capture Trump's weakness and violence, it may impact the race – but I'm not holding my breath.
- Trump's right wing running mate has drummed up terrorist threats against his own constituents in Springfield, OH, and more recently drummed up threats against a beloved Pittsburgh restaurant (while trying to tamp them down). We have not

yet gotten right wing violence, neither localized nor mass. But understand that the far right Christian nationalists that Trump has been cultivating, most notably with JD Vance's appearance with Lance Wallnau, have been an absolutely central factor in past political violence, including January 6. When Donald Trump mobilizes Christian imagery, he does so not because he believes in any of it, but because he believes in power, and he knows he can get people who mistake him for the Messiah to go to war for him. (An Evangelicals for Harris group just rolled out an ad interspersing Billy Graham warnings of the anti-Christ with clips of Trump.) We have not yet seen political violence against marginalized groups, but Trump is doing everything that has fostered it in the past. Nevertheless, most horserace journalists are ignoring that, just like they and their colleagues dismissed the risk of political violence in advance of January 6.

In my earlier post, I said we should be unsurprised by a Black Swan event (I suggested all-out war was one possibility, and given the escalation in the Middle East, it remains one).

The floods caused by Helene could be another. Right wingers are already trying to ensure this works like Katrina did for George W Bush. And whatever else, the flooding disproportionately affected the rural areas that Trump needs to win North Carolina (though North Carolina voters can forego voter ID requirements under an emergency exception). That said, the Helene response may also highlight two things – FEMA and NOAA – that Project 2025 aims to defund. Tennessee Governor Bill Lee’s attempt to forgo federal help may provide a contrast that shows how Federal help can make a difference in a catastrophe. And a whole bunch of conservative people just got bowled over by the impact of climate change, hundreds of miles from the nearest coast. If the Feds can respond to the damage on I-40 like they did to the I-95 or the Francis Scott Key Bridge disaster, it may convince people in North Carolina that the government can too do something good.

Against that background, small shifts continue that could have significant payback in days ahead. As noted, Kamala has significantly cut Trump’s lead in perception of who will best manage the economy, and that happens as more good economic news rolls in. That’s where the horserace journalists are looking instead of Trump’s apocalyptic rhetoric. That measure, at least, is moving in a positive direction.

Tomorrow marks two key events: a Vice Presidential debate that may prove more momentous than prior debates (and JD is much more resilient to goading than his boss is), and Jimmy Carter’s 100th birthday, one day closer to the day he can vote for Kamala Harris.

May Jimmy Carter live to see the first woman elected President.