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President Trump is a monster waiting behind a locked door. What happens if America opens it?

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Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump addresses supporters at a campaign rally on August 1, 2016 in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania CREDIT: JOHN MOORE/2016 GETTY IMAGES

Donald Trump's campaign is falling apart. He's firing staff, prominent Republicans are coming out against him and senior supporters are on the brink of mutiny, according

to various reports in US media. This bunch of bitter, infighting incompetents led by a crazy, blond demagogue will implode long before November.

But wait a minute: haven't I heard that argument before somewhere? Isn't that exactly what every wise head was saying about Brexit a few months ago?

I have just returned from a week on the US east coast spent among friends, all of whom would probably be placed in the "liberal elite" voter category. Mr Trump was such a compelling topic that he had to be banned from the conversation at times to avoid souring the mood. When he is discussed, it's with incredulity and disbelief. "You know what the worst aspect of a Trump presidency would be?" said one friend. "Global warming."

I could only stare at them with wonder. I realise that Americans and Brits are now living in different worlds, and that we have been since June 23. But unlike Brexit, the election of Mr Trump could be a disaster on a scale we have not experienced in the West for a very long time. US power is the foundation of the western order, an order Mr Trump has shown no respect for and no intention of upholding.

Donald Trump jokes about throwing baby out of rally
00:46

As president, he would be handed an unparalleled set of powers to reshape the US and the world. Without any checks, he could veto laws, send troops or missiles into battle, appoint the cabinet and implement any policies that don't require new laws, issue pardons and, in some cases, issue executive orders on a range of matters that require no approval from Congress at all.

He could probably also pull out of treaties or at least make their operation impossible, upending the entire infrastructure of western relations, and would have a strong chance of getting damaging legislation like protectionist tariffs through Congress. In the delicate web of international peace, Mr Trump could wreak havoc.

He has voiced admiration for Vladimir Putin, for example, and claimed that Russia “is not going into Ukraine”, despite the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing war. He deploys belligerent rhetoric towards an increasingly aggressive China in the Pacific; and said that the US won’t necessarily honour the call of its Nato allies if they are attacked. Economic relations are similarly at risk.

He has threatened to pull out of Nafta, the US’s primary trading zone, to slash immigration and bring in a string of robust protectionist measures that could set off a trade war. He shows nothing but contempt for the network of flawed but important Bretton Woods institutions, like the World Trade Organisation and the IMF, which project western power and rules-based economic relations across the world.

Donald Trump hails Brexit result as he arrives in Scotland

01:33

And then there is the threat he poses to the ineffable but vital essence of western liberalism. His threat to ban Muslims; his provocative stirring of hatred against immigrants, whom he regularly associates with the violent crime plaguing the US; and his most recent tactic – suggesting that the election itself might be “rigged”, all show a complete lack of regard for democratic norms and values.

An ally of Mr Trump’s even went on the radio to promise a “bloodbath” if the vote is “stolen” from him. In response to this terrifying list of policies, Mr Trump’s opponents appear remarkably complacent. Perhaps that is because even Mr Trump talks about his campaign as if it’s a ratings game. During an interview with The Washington Post, he interrupted himself to point at the TV, which he had on in the background: “Look at this. It’s all Trump all day long. That’s why their ratings are through the roof.”

He lists his poll numbers like football scores. He beams superciliously at his fans like a Hollywood action man. “Yes,” his smile says. “Finally you see it too: what a brilliant guy I

really am.” It all seems more reality TV than reality. That must be why the American establishment still doesn’t really believe he could win and moderate or liberal voters are far from panicked.

They are underestimating the structural changes that have been taking place in a disillusioned electorate, which hasn’t seen its wages rise for years. Despite the existential threat posed by this reckless demagogue, supporters of Bernie Sanders are extraordinarily reluctant to swing behind Hillary Clinton.

This is because, unlike Britons after Brexit, Americans’ political understanding of their country stands firm. The US is ultimately moderate and reasonable, they believe. Americans want security and competent leaders with disciplined campaigns. And the exceptionally dangerous idea has developed that even if he does win, he can’t possibly be serious about anything he says.

“A Trump victory is still like a locked door with a monster behind it”

Juliet Samuel

In other words, a Trump victory is like a locked door with a monster behind it. It’s inconceivable that it will be opened so there’s no point planning for such an event, but even if someone is insane enough to open the door, the monster won’t really exist or won’t be allowed to run amok or won’t – can’t – be as mad and bad as everyone thinks. The perspective from Britain couldn’t be more different.

Whatever your view about the referendum, in Britain, we’ve woken up. We’ve realised it’s possible for all our received wisdoms to be wrong and for the inconceivable to happen. All of the old “common sense” rules – that British voters are cautious, that fear is more effective than hope, that we don’t want big, untested ideas but boring competence – have proven to be useless.

Remainers are still in a kind of post-traumatic shock, throwing up their hands at the world. For Leavers, many of whom thought their own political victory so impossible that they took their own pens to polling stations to ensure their votes weren’t erased, Brexit is a ray of light. It’s the shocking, wonderful proof, after years of being ignored, that the system might be theirs too.

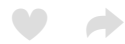
Going through this experience deeply affects a nation’s consciousness. Suddenly, anything is possible. A hailstorm in June? That fits. A coup in Turkey? Yep. A Trump presidency? Why, of course. And after that? Well, anything: US civil disorder, the internment of American Muslims, the erosion of US democracy, war with China, peace with Russia, the disintegration of the IMF and the EU and Nato.

After all, the western order can't last forever, can it? It's still unlikely the ultimate disaster scenario will unfold. But it feels to this post-Brexit Brit like we've turned a page in the world history textbook. In my version, the new chapter is probably called something like "Globalisation: the Western Backlash". In updated versions, maybe it will have a different name.

Whatever it's called, one of its themes is that traditional political techniques and wisdoms have lost their potency and that the elites of every country were too slow to realise. Keys are rattling in the locks of doors we thought had been sealed shut. Be in no doubt, the West's established democratic and economic systems are in the balance.



Telegraph



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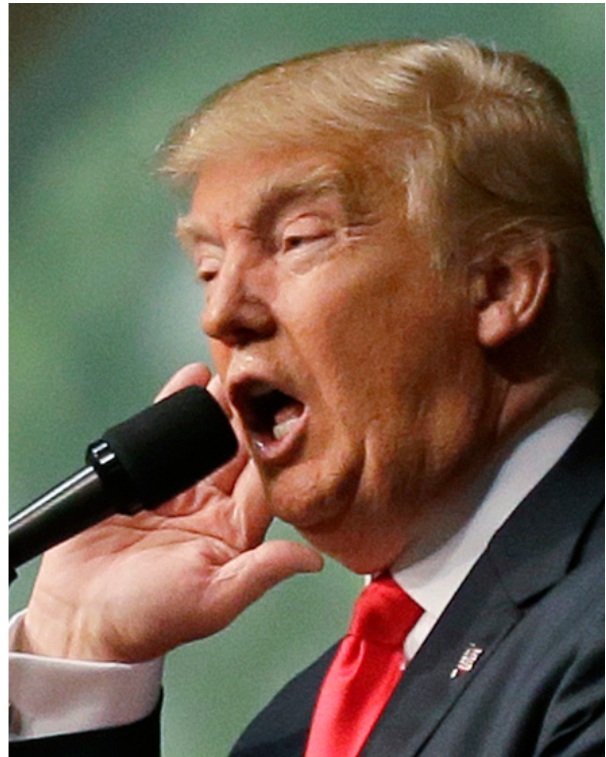
Hell no

Dear God, yes

11.4K voters

HPESTER

Head to head | Hillary Clinton vs Donald Trump



AP PHOTO/DAMIAN DOVARGANES/TED S. WARREN

Hillary Clinton **Secretary of State 2009–2013**

Senator for New York 2001–2009; First Lady 1993–2001

Age: 68

Party: Democratic

Education: Wellesley College
and then Yale Law School

Campaign slogan: It's Your
Time/ Hillary for America

Strengths: Huge amounts of
experience in government. Has
the chance to make history as
first US female president

Weaknesses: Seen by some as a
throwback to a previous

generation. Also faces
accusations she is
untrustworthy and out of touch

Secret service name:
“Evergreen”

Quote: “Americans have fought
their way back from tough
economic times, but the deck is
still stacked in favour of those at
the top”

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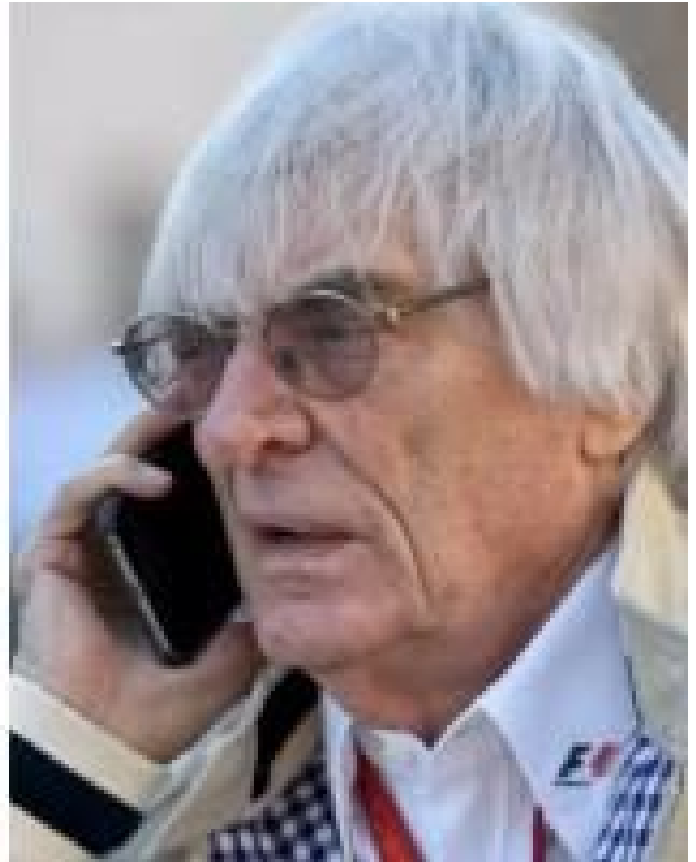
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