

Voters were lured by his promise to galvanise the economy. But business isn't booming – and that spells trouble for the President

# Both swept to victory as unfettered mavericks. But Trump may end up in the same trap as Boris



By **LORD ASHCROFT**

**L**AST year Donald Trump was swept to victory on a wave of dissatisfaction with the status quo. America cast its verdict on rising prices, uncontrolled immigration and a governing elite that seemed out of touch with their lives and hostile to their values.

On both sides of the Atlantic, polite opinion has it that Trump was elected by the mindless MAGA faithful, but this is a delusion. Yes, he has his true believers but not enough of them to carry him over the line.

Wearied of rising living costs, nearly every demographic group swung towards him. Many were simply sick of the system and others decided that even if he was a pretty unappealing character, he couldn't be any worse than the other lot.

My polling suggests these reluctant Trumpers make up about one in seven of his 2024 vote. Without them, we would all be getting used to President Harris.

What have they got to show for the deal they made with themselves and with him?

A helluva show, for one thing: a flurry of summits, showdowns,

*‘To some, the President has neglected the one job they hired him for’*

hirings, firings, executive orders and general pandemonium, designed to give the impression of action on all fronts.

And even the most sceptical Trump voters point to some wins. Toughening up border security, deporting more illegal migrants, banning men from women's sport, pushing for a negotiated end to the Ukraine war, and asking Europe to do more for its own defence – these all go down well in Trump world.

Despite this, nearly a fifth of last year's Trump voters say their country is heading in the wrong direction and that they dislike a lot of what he's doing as President.

This is partly down to his more outlandish actions – threatening to make Canada the 51st state, his apparently sincere wish to take control of Greenland, withdrawing from the Paris Agreement on climate change, or the swift and sweeping Elon Musk-inspired cuts in federal spending that some see as short-sighted and reckless.

But when it comes to the thing that drove many of them to Trump in the first place – the economy and the cost of living – little has changed and many are starting to lose patience.

Living standards show no sign of rising and business has hardly boomed since the 47th President took office. Some had unrealistic expectations of the miracle he

would unleash (not that he made any attempt to dampen them).

But others feel that in his blaze of activity he has neglected the one job they really hired him to do.

While his enthusiasts are enjoying the show, the sceptics think it's a distraction or even an impediment to getting the things they wanted when they held their noses and put him back in the White House.

This is especially true in the on-again, off-again tariff wars, which the faithful see as evidence

of Trump's negotiating genius but others regard as proof that he's making it up as he goes along.

They fear that any of the supposed benefits – bringing back jobs to America, making the country more self-sufficient, tackling the trade deficit or raising revenue to make room for tax cuts – won't materialise for years, if at all.

Higher prices and even shortages look like more immediate risks. Meanwhile, they find families reluctant to spend and busi-

nesses postponing investment or hiring until things settle down.

‘Things are down 30 per cent,’ a Las Vegas taxi driver told us. ‘A lot of international people aren't showing up. The Chinese aren't coming in as much. We're being boycotted by Canada. So we're praying everything changes here soon.’ How much does all this matter? Trump can't run for re-election himself (whatever his views to the contrary).

But as things stand, his Republican Party controls the Senate and

the House of Representatives. Elections for both are due in just 18 months.

A Democrat-controlled Congress could kibosh the presidency, allowing the opposition to block any legislation Trump proposes, derail any Supreme Court nominations he might need to make, or even begin yet another round of investigations and impeachments.

Making America great again would drop off the agenda as the country descended further into division and recrimination.

Republicans would fight over who was to blame for a presidency that had failed to deliver on its promise and a Left-wing opposition would be waiting in the wings for 2028.

This scenario will sound eerily familiar to anyone who can bring themselves to recall the tail-end of the last Tory government.

At the beginning of 2020, Boris Johnson had the world at his feet. He'd assembled the biggest and most diverse Conservative voting coalition in memory on the promise to end the deadlock and division over Brexit, level up the country and ‘unleash Britain's potential’.

Two years later he was fighting unsuccessfully to save his

*‘Boris had the world at his feet... then he was fighting to survive’*

premiership – the nation's potential still well and truly leashed – to the benefit of no one but Keir Starmer.

Around the world, many might welcome the prospect of an early end to the Trumpian supremacy.

As my polling found in Britain, France, Germany, Poland and Estonia, European voters are more likely to see the US as an economic competitor than a partner and increasingly doubt that America would intervene to protect a European country under threat. Majorities say the US is no longer the force for good it once was.

But they also believe that Trump doesn't really represent what most Americans think about defence and foreign affairs, and that the US approach will change once he leaves office.

Here they are mistaken. If there is one thing that unites Trump voters – not to mention a good number of Democrats – it is the idea that the US has borne too much of the international security burden for too long, that American resources are needed at home and that it's time for Europe to step up.

Whatever comes after Trump, that shows no sign of changing.

*‘While his enthusiasts enjoy the show, sceptics think it's a distraction, or even an impediment’*

● Lord Ashcroft is a businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. His research is at [LordAshcroftPolls.com](http://LordAshcroftPolls.com). X/Facebook @LordAshcroft