



“Trumpism”, the Long-Term Future of the Republican Party?

Mateusz Piotrowski

A lost presidency, the loss of the Senate majority, Trump’s attempts to challenge the election results, and his role in the Capitol riots on 6 January seem not to have dimmed the cooperation between the Republican Party and the former president. As a party, Republicans mostly rely on Trump and the pillars of his policy—“Trumpism”. Trump will strive to cement his position as the obvious candidate in the 2024 primaries, which may make Trumpism not a temporary phenomenon but one with a long-lasting impact on the Republican agenda, including in U.S. foreign and security policy.

Trumpism and the Republican Party. Two months have passed since the end of Donald Trump’s time in office, and despite the election defeat, Republican Party (GOP) leaders still want to continue their cooperation with the former president. In January, Trump met with the Republican leader in the House of Representatives, Kevin McCarthy. They confirmed their willingness to work together to help the GOP win back a majority in both chambers of Congress in the midterm elections in November 2022, which would require winning at least 218 seats in the House (the party holds 211 now) and 51 in the Senate (50). To achieve this, the GOP leadership will continue to base its political programme on Trumpism.

In a 28 February speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), the former president argued that his views, that is, Trumpism, form a policy focused on the economy, protecting borders and limiting migration, strengthening police and the armed forces, protecting gun rights, and fighting an ideological war against the Democrats. In many respects, that does not differ from the usual Republican agenda, but given Trump’s presidency and style of his politics, it is likely that the GOP platform will be characterised by Trumpism’s populism, exploiting social fears and fuelling confrontation in society. In this respect, Trumpism is an extension of the Tea Party movement that emerged among conservatives in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but took prominence in the party amid the 2009 financial crisis in response to a perceived lack of strong leadership in the GOP.

Consequences of the Trump Impeachment Trial. On 13 February, the Senate formally acquitted Trump, ending his second impeachment, this time in connection to [the Capitol riots](#), and the procedure that could have removed him from office were he still there. Although 57 senators voted to convict, at least 67 votes are required for conviction. In total, seven Republicans joined the Democrats. Following the vote, some state GOP structures chose to condemn those Republican senators and 10 representatives who had voted to [impeach Trump](#). Personally and within the party, the trial did not have negative consequences for the former president. However, prosecutors in Georgia and New York are investigating, respectively, attempts to reverse the election results and potential tax fraud, which after conviction would prevent Trump from running for office again. In that case, without the former president actively seeking office, Trumpism would likely wane.

The GOP’s Internal Situation. After the 2020 elections, the GOP lost control not only over the executive but also the Senate. This was a result of the Democratic Party regaining states that customarily vote Democratic but which were won by Trump in 2016—Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin—as well as victories in the usual Republican states of Arizona and Georgia. These results were clear warning signs of the erosion of the GOP position in southern states, further confirmed by the fact that Democratic Party candidates are gaining popularity in other Republican states, such as North Carolina and Texas. This trend, however, is mainly in the presidential and Senate

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elections. In House elections, which are more local, as well as in elections to state offices, GOP candidates achieved generally better results. Republicans won a total of 213 seats in [the House, gaining back some Democrat seats lost in the 2018 midterm elections](#) (16 more than in the previous term but five fewer than the 218 required for a majority). At the state level, the GOP controls 61 out of 99 legislative chambers in the 50 states, exercising full power in 23 states (both the executive and legislative chamber/s).

Already Looking to the Primaries. In his speech at CPAC, Trump signalled his willingness to run in the 2024 presidential election and denied rumours that he was forming a new party, stating that he would run for the GOP nomination. To maintain his position as an unelected leader and strengthen support for his own candidacy ahead of the primaries, Trump will strive to eliminate politicians from contention who go against him in the 2022 elections to Congress. He has already criticised the 17 in Congress who voted against him in the impeachment process, including Rep. Liz Cheney (R-Wyoming), chair of the House Republican Conference. Trump urged people to vote for “strong, tough and smart Republican leaders” in the elections rather than “RINO’s” (Republicans In Name Only), which in practice are those who oppose him and his policies.

After the Senate trial was over, Trump’s position strengthened again among Republican voters. In a survey from February, 54% of respondents declaring themselves as GOP voters indicated Trump as the preferred candidate in the primaries. Among the remaining candidates, voters indicated former Vice President Mike Pence (12%), former Ambassador to the United Nations and former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley (6%), Donald Trump Jr. (6%), and Senators Mitt Romney (4%) and Ted Cruz (3%). Pence and Haley do not oppose Trumpism, but lately they have not been seen as unconditional Trump supporters and allies. Romney, who has consistently opposed Trump since before he was elected, said the former president would surely get the party’s nomination in 2024 if he ran for it. In turn, Sen. Mitch McConnell, who publicly blamed Trump for the attack on the Capitol after the Senate trial, announced that if Trump would be the party’s nominee, he would receive the full support from the GOP.

Conclusions. Politicians opposed to Trump are a minority in the party, and if in the next three years he manages to maintain GOP voters’ interest in him and the movement he built around the slogans “America First” and “Make

America Great Again”, he will not meet with opposition in the party that would threaten his candidacy. To further build his prominence, he will seek to influence the GOP’s plans to reflect his proposals and constitute an extension of his own election promises. Republicans opposing cooperation with the former president may face internal party consequences in the form of being “primaried”—facing a Trumpist rival in the party contests, such as the former president’s support of Katie Arrington in the race against Republican Congressman Mark Sanford—or a lack of support resulting in them ending their political careers early, as was the case with former Sen. Jeff Flake and former House Speaker Paul Ryan.

This course of action would cement the remaining Republicans around Trumpism, reducing the chances of an alternative conservative political concept. Trumpism may therefore remain a strong factor influencing the political agenda of the GOP for years to come, perhaps decades. While the adoption of Trump’s views at the state level and in congressional elections may prove to be an effective solution for the GOP, in the next presidential election, Trump may already be too controversial for independent voters and some registered Republicans.

If the Republicans regain power, Trumpism will again have a secondary effect (as under Trump’s presidency) on foreign and security policy. A return to a weakening of multilateral cooperation by the U.S., pursuit of trade policy based on tariffs, transactional approaches to allies, and being primarily guided by economic interest in trade relations. The survival of Trumpism and its possible strengthening in the coming years should be a signal to U.S. allies of deeper ideological changes in the GOP. The traditional Republican commitment to global security issues and almost unconditional support for alliances could be replaced by a stronger transactional approach and a departure from multilateral diplomacy, familiar from Trump’s tenure. The decisions of future Republican administrations in foreign policy could be determined to a greater extent by economic self-interest and motivated by the internal state or perceived state of the country. Decisions could also be taken unilaterally, without consultations with allies, such as [the announced relocation of troops from Germany](#) or [the introduction of tariffs on steel and aluminium](#), which affected, among others, EU firms. The firm rooting of Trumpism in the GOP may in future indirectly affect NATO, U.S. allies in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, as well as U.S.-Russia and U.S.-China relations.