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Midterm mayhem

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President Donald Trump dances as he leaves the stage (Getty)

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The midterm elections in USA have delivered a shellacking to the Republicans and their policies.

This was not confined to those candidates who were closely associated with Donald Trump, but also carried over to Trump-lite incumbents like Texas governor Greg Abbott and Maine Senator Susan Collins. In Kansas, Adam Hamilton became the state's first Democrat Senator since 1932, and previously solid red Florida was very narrowly held by the Republicans.

In the Senate, the Republicans gained none of the Democrats' seats and lost 9, retaining only 13 of those they started with. The Senate is now likely to be 56:44 in favour of the Democrats, not enough to overturn Trump's policies but enough to force him into serious reconsiderations and bring paralysis as the Senate and the House of Representatives again pursue him, his family, and his appointees.

As in other countries, immigration was an issue in the US midterms. PJ Media ominously reported that a caravan of illegal aliens excited for a potential return of open-border policies has reportedly already started heading toward the United States. That said, opposition to the Mexican border wall and other calls for more open borders no longer divide the major parties. Several Democrats (Iowa's Josh Turek and James Talarico in Texas) softened their previous opposition to Trump's crackdown on illegal immigrants, while other winners like Adam Hamilton (Kansas) and Annie Andrews (South Carolina) had long been critical of the Biden Administration's immigration policies.

'It's the economy, stupid!' is the conventional rationale for US election outcomes, but though there was grumbling about the economy in general, US economic growth at 3.4 per cent in the latest quarter was much higher than the 1 per cent expected in Europe (or Australia's immigration-fuelled 2 per cent).

US voters' rejection of Trump's Republicans was most associated with price increases resulting from the war with Iran and the Democrats (though often previously seeking tariff protection) also campaigned heavily against Trump's chaotic trade policies. There was also some localised opposition to data centres boosting energy prices.

The traditional Democrat goals to replace cheap coal, gas, and oil with subsidies to wind, solar and exotics like hydrogen were largely replaced with 'climate hushing' but may be resurrected.

The Democrats successfully sold themselves as moderators of inflation. In buying this, people showed a voter irrationality evident in so many elections. For, although some price relief may follow from the Democrats forcing some moderation of Trump's tariff policy, other Democratic Party policies would increase prices.

Thus, their attack on fossil fuels, though now moderated, will clearly increase energy costs, just as Trump's repeal of renewable energy subsidies, and regulations in Biden's oxymoronically named *Inflation Reduction Act* has reduced them. Some other specific policies will also aggravate cost pressures. Among these is the demand for more corn and

soybean production to be diverted into biofuels. Similarly, the Democrats' call for increased minimum wages, while likely to raise some employees' remuneration, comes at a cost of higher prices for goods and services.

Democrats (supported by some Republicans) have also campaigned to force reductions in credit card fees, which would likely backfire on overall costs, and to raise health care subsidies, which would lower prices but require higher taxes.

The rejection of the Republicans in the midterms was far greater than expected, and all the more so since Trump was presiding over a generally buoyant economy. The war with Iran would have cost votes beyond those stemming from its outcome in higher prices. Those opposed to the war have not articulated a solution other than US ceasing to combat Iran and allow that nation to continue its march to a nuclear-weaponed future, radicalisation of Islamic states and control over the Persian Gulf.

The issue will be whether the November 2 Blue-nami will continue into the presidential election in 2028.

At present, the Democratic hopefuls are led by Californians Kamala Harris and Gavin Newsom, both of whom would adopt their party's by-now traditional policies of higher taxes and regulations of wages and energy, muted in the latter case by the realities of demonstrably high costs and poor reliability of renewables. But after his stunning win in Georgia, Jon Ossoff will likely figure alongside the prominent socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and possibly, after winning Michigan, Abdul El-Sayed.

J D Vance or his alternative, Marco Rubio, are now in a much weaker position as the heirs to President Trump, and as an outsider Vivek Ramaswamy, who was ousted as Ohio's Governor, is politically dead.

Those critical of Trump should be mindful of what they wish for. From today's perspective, post-2028, the US will resume the debilitating woke EU-like policies of the Biden era, with plenty of additional restraints on prosperity-inducing economic policies and a more accommodating approach to political actors who would threaten world peace.