

Yes, Trump is dominating the primaries. That doesn't mean he'll beat Biden

Robert Reich



The mainstream media is flabbergasted at Trump's success in sweeping the Iowa caucuses, dominating the polls and destroying all his rivals but Nikki Haley before Tuesday's New Hampshire primary.

- CNN is awestruck, calling Trump's "landslide victory in Iowa" a "stunning show of strength".
- The New York Times is dumbfounded, talking of an "expected Trump coronation" and also the "power of his political machine".
- Time magazine marvels at his "commanding position" to secure the Republican nomination, and that "nothing has slowed him down".

• The Washington Post's Dan Balz writes that *"the end of any real competition could come very soon"*. Headline after headline offers the same breathless, spellbound story: **"Trump is dominating."** **"Disciplined"**. **"Ruthless"**. **"Hugely effective"**. **"Remarkable"**.

Earth to the mainstream media: **this is dangerous nonsense**. Why should Trump's dominance be surprising? He's dominated the Republican party since 2016. He dominates by ridiculing opponents, blasting anyone who stands in his way, bullying, browbeating and bellowing. The media eats it up. He's outrageous and entertaining. Trump's success in last week's Iowa caucuses **wasn't a "stunning show of strength"**. It was a display of remarkable weakness. He got just 56,260 votes. There are 2,083,979 registered voters in Iowa. Fewer than 3% of Iowans voted for him.

According to an entrance poll, only 46% of the Republican caucus-goers considered themselves part of the **Maga** movement. Nearly 50% said they were not. **Three-quarters of these non-Maga Republican voters opposed Trump. Over 30% said they would not consider Trump fit to be president if he were convicted of a crime.**

His performance in New Hampshire will probably reveal similar weaknesses. What seems to be lost on the media is that Trump was president for four years. In effect, he's the incumbent Republican president. That's not because he says he won the 2020 election. It's because he *was* in fact president. Former presidents have a huge advantage in their party's primaries because they control their party apparatus. **Presidents who have served just one term and seek the nomination for another are always re-nominated by their party**, as was Trump in 2020 – and presumably will be again in 2024.

Of *course* Trump will be the Republican nominee. Trump was the party's presumptive nominee before he even announced he was running again. What's remarkable is that he nonetheless attracted so many competitors for the nomination, who raised a lot of money for their primary runs. Tim Scott, Niki Haley, and Ron DeSantis finished September with a total of \$26.7m available for use in the primary. That's no small change.

It's also easy to forget that Trump began his third bid for the White House just days after Republicans took a beating in the midterms. That was the third straight national election in which Trump was a drag on his party. Across the country, his hand-picked candidates, who embraced his big lie that the 2020 election was stolen, lost critical races.

The danger in the mainstream media's awestruck coverage of Trump right now – making a big deal out of his winning the Iowa caucuses, dominating the polls, pushing out all rivals except Haley, and almost surely winning today's New Hampshire primary – is **that it creates a false impression that Trump is unstoppable**, all the way through the general election. But no one should confuse Trump's performance in the Republican primaries for success in the presidential election. **When Americans actually focus on the presidential**

election and the stark reality of choosing between Biden and Trump, I expect they will once again choose Biden.

Even if Trump is not yet criminally convicted, I doubt that a majority of Americans will want for their president a man who has 91 criminal charges against him, who has been impeached twice, who has orchestrated an attempted coup, who has profited financially while president, who has stolen top-secret documents and who has been judged to be a rapist.