
Trump, as Always, "Shifting Erratically"

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It was recently noted that one cannot trust Donald Trump—in what he says, promises, or does—because he suddenly shifts "*erratically*," earning the enmity of even those who were once faithful followers who believed in him.

The most notable reversal early in his second term was with prominent journalist Tucker Carlson, a fracture that exposes the internal contradictions within the MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement.

A Consequential Rupture

It began when Israel executed strikes on Iranian targets. Under normal circumstances, this would have generated automatic support from the American conservative wing. However, Tucker Carlson decided to break ranks spectacularly, warning that Trump would become an "*accomplice*" if he backed drastic actions against Iran, alerting that this would "*permanently damage his reputation*." The criticism went straight to the heart of Donald Trump's most important electoral promise: keeping the United States out of foreign conflicts.

Trump's response was not long in coming. He labeled his former ally "*kooky Carlson*" and categorically reaffirmed that "*Iran can never have nuclear weapons*." This verbal escalation marked the end of one of the most influential media-political alliances on the American right. Carlson was fired from Fox News, which recalled that Cuban presenter from Miami's La Poderosa station who was dismissed because she openly supported Russia's reasons for starting its special military operation in Ukraine. "*In this country, you cannot tell the truth*," she said, and later repeated.

A Broader Ideological Tension

What initially might seem like a dispute between egos reveals itself as something much more complex upon analyzing the voices that have joined the critical chorus. Prominent MAGA figures like Marjorie Taylor Greene and Charlie Kirk (later murdered) expressed similar reservations about Trump's stance on the Middle East conflict.

On the influential *War Room* podcast (by Steve Bannon), Carlson articulated his position with a phrase that summarizes the ideological tension: "*You're not going to convince me that the Iranian people are my enemy.*" This statement not only questions Trump's foreign policy but appeals directly to the voters who elected him precisely for his promise to prioritize domestic problems over foreign military adventures.

Carlson's criticism touches a sensitive nerve in the Trumpist electoral base: the perception that their leader is adopting stances indistinguishable from those of the traditional Republican establishment, the very one Trump promised to dismantle.

The Trump-Carlson rift transcends political spectacle to become a case study on the inherent tensions within populist movements. When campaign promises clash with the realities of power, when anti-establishment rhetoric must confront establishment pressures, contradictions become inevitable.

Not long after this situation, the rupture between Elon Musk and Trump followed, also due to unfulfilled promises, complicated by the near-billionaire's shift alongside the chameleonic and ambitious Trumpist chancellor, Marco Rubio. However, the president has not wanted to fully distance the Tesla entrepreneur, recalling that he was the largest contributor to his electoral campaign, with \$259 million, and that much more can still be extracted from him.

A System More Than Damaged

"*The system is rigged*" is one of the phrases that, according to Microsoft News, Donald Trump repeats most often since the meteoric rise of his political career began in 2016. Over the years, his denunciation has targeted specific actors: the deep state, liberal elites, judges, journalists, the "*radical left*"... He creates a narrative of persecution, according to which the United States must be saved from perdition and betrayal, and he and his movement are the only ones who can do it.

This communication strategy is fundamental for legitimizing his leadership. As sociologist Robert Tucker wrote in the seventies, the construction of "*situational charisma*" depends on the possibility of offering a means of salvation in a moment of deep misfortune. Therefore, the criticisms and accusations do not stop, even though a good part of the institutions are already under his control. Enemies and bad practices must continue to be identified because they confirm the necessity of his leadership.

The President and his Administration, mainly his Secretary of State, then dedicate themselves to sowing distrust. This also serves them to weaken and target political enemies who are inconvenient for their consolidation of power and to raise doubts about news and data that are not favorable to them. If all institutions and their leaders are questioned, if truth and facts do not exist, but only versions and opinions, then any accusation against them is weakened.

Mark Schiefelbein of The Associated Press is cited, noting that the decline of trust in institutions does not seem to be a problem for Trump, who rather fuels it. Although the credibility decline did not start with him, it has accelerated in recent years. According to a 2025 Gallup study, on average only 28% of citizens express confidence in nine key institutions ranging from the presidency to the Supreme Court and the media. In 2022, the percentage fell below 30% for the first time and has not recovered that level since.

Since returning to the White House, Trump has posted on his Instagram at least 15 videos or images made with artificial intelligence showing false versions of himself or other characters, including rivals in a negative manner. On Truth, he also continuously shares pieces sent to him by followers, like one in which he is seen piloting an F-16 and bombing protests with excrement under the October slogan "*No Kings*." It is not just a resource to capture attention on social networks; it is also a way of blurring the line between truth and falsehood. Almost no one believes the video showing Democratic leaders in the Senate and Congress with a mariachi hat while declaring that no one supports their party anymore, but the publication serves to feed and increase doubt about what is real and what is not.

Increasingly Worse

In September, the president caused astonishment in the scientific community when he warned that pregnant women should not take acetaminophen or paracetamol because it could cause autism in their babies. With social media content and conspiracy theories, they have strengthened the anti-vaccine sentiment, and in states like Florida, they have managed to eliminate the mandate to administer some injections. With an army of influencers

and on official accounts, they give advice as unscientific as avoiding taking medications or foods that are difficult to pronounce, feeding distrust in the healthcare system.

Thousands of independent officials who had been working for various federal institutions for years have been targeted by the president, who calls into question the work they do or the information they compile when he does not consider it entirely positive. Different areas have been in the eye of the hurricane, from the scientific and economic to the Intelligence services. The same pattern has tended to repeat: public criticisms to pressure resignations or decision changes, dismissals, or even threats using mortgage records to force exits. The objective is for the institutions to yield to him or, at least, for their credibility to be seriously compromised.

A few hours ago, the government shutdown ended, after the Trump movement managed to get five Democratic senators to back down on their demands. What is striking is that during its duration, the collection of highly important data was halted, such as the evolution of the labor market, flu or COVID-19 infections, import and export of agricultural products, and information essential for calculating the size of the economy and inflation. But beyond this specific situation, the Trump Administration has been taking measures for months that threaten the collection of official data. Let's see:

First, it stopped the publication of information on mental health programs and violence protection, as well as on the climate and environmental situation. In August, it went a step further by directly questioning the information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. After firing its head, in a statement to the media in the Oval Office, he showed several charts in XL format that supposedly proved that the figures were being underestimated to harm him while they had been inflated during the presidency of Joe Biden.

Lasting Consequences

In short, the consequences of Trump's discourse and actions are already visible in opinion studies. So far in his second Presidency, citizen valuation of independent institutions that were normally distant from political disputes has fallen significantly. Furthermore, partisan bias has deepened due to the colonization of some state instances for obtaining particular political ends or those with a high level of rejection, as is the case with security and defense bodies.

And this is only part of the problem that, I think, will worsen if he attempts to run for a new term, which is constitutionally prohibited. But with Trump, you never know. That is how he is, presenting himself as a peacemaker, with wars he says he solved, but not all was like that, while igniting the world with support for Israel's genocidal regime and threatening aggressions against smaller nations in Latin America and Nigeria, not to mention the role he maintains in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, totally hypocritical and not at all credible, while feeding the treasures of the war magnates.

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