JEFF MCMULLEN: The Correction

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The stunning repudiation of Donald Trump and Trumpism in the U.S. midterm elections is an extraordinary historic 'correction' Jeff McMullen writes after a two-month visit to an ailing superpower.

This is the correction we had to have. Americans have achieved it but the rest of the world has desperately needed this result too.

I don't mean the stock market correction that Wall Street is fretting about as some tech stocks dive and brokers fret about the risk of a burst in that bubble.

We are witnessing a correction towards functioning democracy. Action that illustrates how people can vote to alter the course of authoritarian leadership.

You won't hear cries of 'the King is dead!' That would be as misguided as much earlier claims about 'the end of history'.

But it was clear over my two months of travel in the United States that the 'No Kings' marches and other forms of persistent and often creative protest against Donald Trump had kept hopes flickering for a Democrat revival.

Despite months of attempts by a desperate President to invoke a 'Red scare' and his stoking of fears of election interference, a majority of well-chosen Democrat candidates have swept Trump's handpicked pawns right off the gerrymandered chessboard.

With a greater degree of strategic planning (and generally speaking some unity of purpose) the Democrats got out their vote and delivered an historic rebuke of the worst U.S. leadership in memory.

The young, blue-collar workers, educated women and men, Hispanic and African American independent voters and many others who previously had fallen for Trump's hollow promises, arrived at a sense of reality. This man was not fit to govern.

Voters castigated the leader by driving out cowardly members of the Republican controlled Congress, those who had refused to check his most irresponsible actions, especially those decisions aggravating the higher cost of living, including petrol prices. Much of this pain was a consequence of Trump's 'own goal' in waging a war of choice against Iran.

American voters have exposed Trump's dramatic miscalculation about his infallibility and the strength of his MAGA base. He was not on the ballot but he asked voters to choose sides as if he were still there to save the Republicans.

As the electoral map turned from red to blue in places Trump had triumphed in his 2024 comeback to the White House, his rage initially was directed at the Fox Network's polls that blamed Trump's policies for the Republican rout.

Winning control of the Senate with splendid victories in Texas, Kansas, Ohio and South Carolina was more than most Democrats dreamed of.

The winning margins far exceeded most of the opinion polls. Prediction markets also overestimated Trump's lingering appeal.

Abject failure by this leader, his pathetic performances on election eve and the morning after the vote, mumbling about building ballrooms with chandeliers, his 'grand arc', the new helicopter pad or the park to come with statues of his heroes and, yes, golf everyone…let them have golf!

It is a very strange movie we are watching.

But now Trump's audience is walking out. The aimless weaving and waffling nonsense cannot hold the world's attention any longer.

There were other important factors at play in this election, particularly the unmistakeable stench of crony capitalism.

Trump, his family and some of the richest and most powerful men in the world have been dealt a reality check.

Despite Elon Musk alone spending at least U.S. $440 million in trying to rescue Republicans, a new generation of younger Democrats have successfully campaigned against the astonishing wealth driving the surge in new data centres.

In Texas where Musk has headquarters for his SpaceX enterprise and Tesla manufacturing, many of his planned data centres are to be built there.

The newly elected first Hispanic Governor of Texas, Gina Hinojosa, and victorious Democrat in the Senate race, James Talarico, both took aim at the contempt shown by the mega-rich towards locals who don't want their land and water consumed by data centres.

Likewise, Adam Hamilton who won a Senate seat in Kansas, has insisted that data centres must pay for their own energy.

These ‘new Dems’ want the tech bros to pay for more of the true costs of the technological revolution.

James Talarico’s victory in Texas has shattered the mystique surrounding Musk and perhaps the global misconception that AI and its magnificent profiteers are beyond regulation for the common good. Talarico declared on election night,

‘*The biggest divide in this country is not left versus right. It’s top versus bottom.*’

In Trump’s morning after state of bewilderment, shocked and humbled by the scale of this astonishing loss, he had to admit that his Vice President, J.D. Vance was probably right on why the Republicans had lost.

> *The reason we lost is the war. The president himself said so last night.*
> *If you'd like to argue it was worth it, that losing the Senate for the next 6 years was worth it, then do so. Argue it was a worthwhile cost to pay.*
> *Agree or disagree, that's at least honest.*
>
> *Vice President J.D. Vance on X*

Vance’s unbridled ambition and his inescapable rivalry with Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, to succeed Trump in the White House, ensure that the President’s men will be making their most urgent challenge finding some way to end the war with Iran.

While sounding congratulatory towards the winning Democrats, Trump will hate to see the front page of France’s leading centre-left newspaper, *Liberation,* emblazoned with a single word. LOSER.

His two terms in power demonstrate that he cannot bear to admit any loss.

He may have to cut a deal with Iran after so many failed promises.

Or, having replenished ammunition, defensive missiles and moved into the war arena thousands of additional American troops and a third carrier force, an angry President may order escalation or at least new devastating strikes.

If that is the case, why signal that the U.S. will slash military aid to Israel when it is the vital ally in the conflict?

The Iranian leadership clearly is enjoying Trump’s season of political defeat at home and claim that there is a stalemate in the warzone. But beware the humiliated and somewhat cornered superpower.

A much younger Trump once expressed admiration for a boxer who absorbs all blows and then surprises his opponent with a sudden devastating knockout.

After such a grievous dismissal of U.S. military strategists who long warned against starting a war that would close the Strait of Hormuz, it is time for Congress to move ahead with impeachment of his self-described Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth, who still seeks outright military victory.

This is an additional necessary 'correction'. Maybe Hegseth's resignation and possible instalment into the soon to be vacated Governorship in Tennessee, might allow Trump a way to shift blame for the war.

He has reportedly been warned that unless he acts decisively the Iran War might drag on for the rest of his term. He has had additional advice that the Ukraine conflict with Russia is not going to end abruptly because of his deals with Putin.

The incoming House Majority leader, Hakeem Jeffries, first African American to hold such power, must use the Democrat's overwhelming numerical strength to attempt to restrain this Commander in Chief's belligerence and abandonment of effective diplomacy. Any threat to reduce military spending in the midst of this war is going to pose terrible risk. Jeffries also must simultaneously address an array of other extremely complex and urgent tasks.

The Democrats can choose to negotiate with Trump or defy the lame duck President's threats to veto anything he doesn't like. They may boldly legislate to show that they can reduce inflationary spending, lower the cost of living, restore medical coverage stripped from Obamacare while at the same time acknowledging the $US 40 trillion debt and $US2 trillion deficit last year. What a mess and it will be there for a very long time! Maybe a generation or more.

If Trump insists on having his own way, we may see two more years of American chaos. Then the 2028 Presidential contest with more than a dozen highly ranked Democrat contenders might have the last word on the Trump Presidency.

Not quite!

If the Democrats successfully instigate even some of the numerous investigations against Trump and his cronies that are now possible, he might again have to rely on Presidential immunity and a plethora of presidential pardons for the many who have served him or allegedly benefited unlawfully from his time in leadership.

The Democrat expected to chair the House Oversight Committee from next January, Representative Robert Garcia, issued his threat to Trump's White House team late on election night: 'Lawyer up.'

Choosing deliberate menace Garcia's statement declared,

'the Trump crime family is at the top of our priorities.'

Trump has said that 'nobody cares' about his family members or anyone else making extraordinary amounts of money while he is President.

That was certainly the case while Republicans controlled the Congress.

Now the Democrats have a very long list of investigation targets that would have strong support from most Americans. They include:

The killing of American citizens by federal immigration agents.

Cruelty against those interned by ICE agents

Donald Trump's property deals in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Crypto business deals that netted Trump some $US1.4 billion last year.

Donald Trump Junior's business investments.

A Russian with Kremlin connections paying for the younger Donald's wedding party last year. Don Jr. repaid the bill when it was exposed in the media.

Alleged conflicts of interest having Trump's son in law, Jared Kushner, conduct negotiations on the wars in Ukraine and Iran while his private equity firm accepts investments from nations with interest in those conflicts. Kushner denies any ethical conflict of interest.

Stock market trades linked to Trump policy announcements.

Corporations that allegedly have secured government contracts by leveraging donations to Trump's projects.

Yes, this President has denied all these allegations and some more. Will we ever hear the end of what is in the Epstein files?

Clearly, after failure of previous attempts to subpoena, impeach and ultimately convict Donald Trump the Democrats have a challenging mission to hold anyone to account.

I left the United States feeling certain that this man would rather fight all the way than admit this is the beginning of the end.