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The Fall of Trump



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

In classical dramas, tragic figures are driven to their doom by some inexorable flaw in their character.

For Donald Trump, that tragic flaw has been unbounded narcissism.

For four years as president, Trump could focus on only one thing: himself. He preferred to be in front of cheering crowds than behind the desk in the Oval Office actually doing work. He cared only about his appearance, his reputation, his legacy. Trump pursued various foreign policy initiatives – such as meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un or pushing for a peace deal in the Middle East – only to get a Nobel Prize not because he genuinely cared about the lives of the people in other countries.

If Trump had shown even minimal compassion for all the Americans whose lives were disrupted by COVID-19, he might have won re-election in November. If he had campaigned for the two Republican senators in the Georgia run-off election in January – instead of

focusing on his own conspiracy theories about his “stolen victory” – the Republicans might not have lost control of the Senate.

And if he hadn’t given into the temptation of urging his followers to march on the U.S. Capitol and demand a reversal of the presidential election results, Trump wouldn’t have been impeached for a second time and also face near-certain economic ruin when he leaves office.

It’s often been said that Donald Trump, as a businessman, is interested in the bottom line. He worked hard over the years to become a billionaire. He took pride in his global brand. As president, he was expected to burnish that brand so that he would come out the other end even wealthier and more powerful.

But in the end, Donald Trump cared more about himself than about his business. The following incident serves as an illustration of that point.

One of Trump’s old friends Tom Barrack called the president after the November election.

Stop talking about election fraud and just smooth the transition for the incoming Biden administration, Barrack recommended.

Trump was unpersuaded.

Do it for the sake of your business, Barrack urged.

Trump ignored him.

In his efforts to hang onto power, Trump ran up enormous legal fees and suffered one embarrassing loss in court after another. In desperation, the president likely committed election fraud when he called Georgia state officials to pressure them into changing the results of the November election.

Finally, on January 6, Trump engaged in anti-constitutional actions by inciting a mob to insurrection.

This last act has inspired even close Republican allies to break with the president. “If inciting to insurrection isn’t” an impeachable offense, former New Jersey governor and Trump ally Chris Christie said, “then I don’t really know what is.”

Trump has been impeached for a second time but he might be able to run out the clock to avoid a trial in the Senate. Or the vote to convict might not garner sufficient support, since passage requires a supermajority of two-thirds of senators present.

But he will still exit the White Office on January 20 with a diminished base. According to a poll after January, more than 40% of Trump voters believe he has “betrayed the values and interests of the Republican Party.”

He also faces the potential loss of his economic empire. Even before January 6, the Trump Organization faced significant problems, because of the president’s debts and the impact of COVID-19 on his hotel and hospitality businesses. As soon as he leaves office, creditors will begin calling in their loans, which amount to more than a billion dollars.

After January 6, Trump faces even more serious problems. Banks have cancelled his accounts and declared that they won’t do business with him. Corporate clients like the PGA of

America have pulled out of using Trump golf courses. Shopify stopped hosting TrumpStore.com.

More concerning to Trump perhaps has been his rapid deplatforming. Twitter and Facebook suspended his accounts. YouTube blocked him. Trump officials who tried to give their accounts to the president were suspended as well. Nor has Trump set up accounts on alternative platforms, like right-wing favorites Parler and Gab, reportedly on the advice of son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Without a public voice, Trump will be a much-diminished personality. Without a thriving business, he won't be able to buy media attention.

Until January 6, Trump was a credible threat to run again for the presidency in 2024. He did, after all, get the second largest number of votes in a presidential election in U.S. history. Those 74 million American could be counted on to sustain Trump's political ambitions.

Now, even if a Senate conviction doesn't bar him permanently from public office, Trump will have a hard time staying in the public eye much less run for office. And figures like Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Josh Hawley (R-MO), who went to bat for Trump in the Senate to challenge the results of the Electoral College on January 6, face a donation boycott from major businesses that will compromise their own presidential ambitions.

Thanks to his monstrous ego, Trump has suffered the fate of a tragic figure. Trumpism, however, will live on. Those 74 million Americans are going to be looking around for a Trump substitute, someone like Tom Cotton (R-AR), who broke with Trump to certify the Electoral College results. Cotton can be counted on to offer Trumpism without Trump in 2024.

As for Trump himself, he will continue to nurse his grievances about a "stolen election" until the end of his days. Too many Americans will encourage his narcissism by believing in his nonsense. But as of this week, Trump's ego will no longer warp U.S. foreign and domestic policy.

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John Feffer is the director of [Foreign Policy In Focus](#), where this article originally appeared.