

What Trump's success would have meant for the developing world and Africa – a rejoinder

My fellow columnist on this platform [argued that Trump's re-election was good for Africa](#). I disagree. If Donald Trump had succeeded in overturning the 2020 Presidential Election and extending his stay in power, he would have emboldened, even further, the contempt that despots elsewhere in the world have for elections whose results do not accord with their atavistic pursuit of personal power. After four years of his maverick presidency, Trump was defeated by his Democrat opponent, Joe Biden. In the run-up to the 2016 election, it became clear that Trump was a presidential hopeful like no other. His experience in politics was non-existent, a fact those inured to the cutthroat business of Washington, DC considered a blemish on his aspirations., However, to the many Americans who felt estranged by the “Establishment”, with its habitual strangulating political correctness, an outsider like Trump was an irresistible breath of fresh air.

Indeed, Trump's allure to his supporters was so profound that it beclouded their sense of moral considerations. Trump's political base excused his blatant chauvinism, racism and mendacity and the sheer chicanery he used to convince poor Americans that their travails were not their doing but caused by the ineptitude of “Establishment” politicians such as Hillary Clinton, and the influx of undesirable immigrants. Surprisingly, there are untold numbers of women and immigrants who supported Trump in disregard of his sub-human debased utterances against immigrants and women; such as that women would let you do whatever you want to them if you were famous. Ultimately, Trump won the 2016 election, a stunning result

that would probably not be paralleled in America in the near future.

Trump's ego and his instinct to embellish his image have been on full display to the world. He likes to portray himself as the best at everything he does, irrespective of the glaring facts that challenge his fantasies. In [*Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man*](#), Trump's own niece, Mary Trump, recounts how winning was the ultimate goal, at any cost, in the Trump family. Her claims are validated by the fact that Trump has often discounted his critics, and even war victims, as [losers](#). For this reason, it was not surprising that Michael Cohen, Trump's erstwhile lawyer and fixer, warned the Congress in 2019 that Trump would refuse to commit to the customary [peaceful transfer of power](#) in the event of losing his re-election bid.. Cohen's presentiment of an unpeaceful transition came to pass when Trump refused to concede defeat even when it had become clear that he lost the 2020 election to Biden. Trump and his increasingly unhinged lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, filed and lost dozens of lawsuits to overturn Biden's victory. Things came to a head on 6 January when the Congress met for the hitherto proforma sitting at which the Vice President, as President of the Senate, was to confirm the electoral college results. Mike Pence, Trump's Vice President, was understandably in the uncomfortable position of ratifying his and Trump's defeat, an unenviable task that befell Richard Nixon in 1961 and Al Gore in 2001.

Sadly, to use Franklin Delano Roosevelt's word, 6 January 2021 will live in infamy as the day when an incumbent American president fired up his followers, effectively urging them to attack the United States Congress, the very fortress of American democracy. The unprecedented attack, which has been called by a raft of names, ranging from coup, insurrection to sedition, claimed about five lives and overshadowed the [historic victories](#) of Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, two

democrats who defeated the incumbent Republican senators, David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, respectively. Warnock is the first African American to represent Georgia in the Senate and Ossoff, a 33-year old Jew, will be the youngest member of the Senate. By any measure, the victory of these candidates was a considerable shift in the historically conservative Georgia.

The violence on the Congress exposed just how Trump managed to deepen America's savage divisions. However, what happened on that day is of global importance considering America's standing in the world. No doubt, Trump managed to tarnish America's repute in the world, but the country could still claim some moral certitude and appeal when pitted against more objectionable powers the world over, and even within the United Nations Security Council. However, Trump's ultimate sin, culminating in the assault on the Congress, was his refusal to respect democratic processes that were at variance with his desires. For his self-serving behaviour, Trump [was impeached](#) on 13 January, becoming the first president in the history of the United States to be impeached twice. This is probably a befitting epitaph to a disastrous presidency. But what does his refusal to respect democratic elections mean to countries in the rest of the world that are either only beginning to entrench democracy or those still struggling to maintain it?

Samuel Huntington wrote about the [third wave of democracy](#), a period from 1974 to 1990 when "at least 30 countries made transitions to democracy, just about doubling the number of democratic governments in the world." Africa's democratic transition has largely been fitful and dismal. The continent is littered with third-rate despots who refuse to give up power, by either changing constitutions in order to extend their tenancy at the summit or undermining the electoral process. In happier political times, American presidents were confident in inveighing against flawed elections in Africa that only served to keep incumbents in power. The decency of

America's domestic elections justified such pontifications. Trump's behaviour has put all that in jeopardy, at a time when some African countries are preparing for what could be [crucial elections](#). Close to mind are Benin, Chad, Uganda and Zambia. Uganda has been under Yoweri Museveni for almost 35 years. Up to 2017, Uganda had the age limit of 75 years for the office of the president. Perhaps not surprisingly, Museveni had that bill excised, effectively paving the way for him to contest the January 2021 elections, at the age of 76.

Museveni's main opponent, Robert Kyagulanyi, a renowned musician popularly known as Bobi Wine, has struck fear in the veteran leader who has employed [violent tactics](#), including murder and [shutting down the internet](#), to protect his hold on power. In the unlikely event that Bobi Wine wins the election, Museveni will likely act in the manner that Trump did. It is almost inconceivable, of course, that the Ugandan government could even countenance the publication of elections results not in favour of Museveni. This notwithstanding, Trump's refusal to accept the results of an unfavourable election presents a bad example to authoritarian incumbents such as Museveni and Zambia's Edgar Lungu who, in a level playing field, cannot take elections as a foregone conclusion in their favour.

Joe Biden's administration should thus be more than a change of style; it should also be a change of substance, aimed at repairing America's damaged standing in world affairs. Despite its flaws, America's strength is that it is a system that is capable of change; the disappointment that America was during Trump's term was a consequence of the great deal of expectation heaped on that country. It is thus expected that in the next four years America will stick to its arduous journey of political and moral recovery, thereby removing the cover for despots in the developing world who might accuse America of hypocrisy should it criticise unconstitutional means of gaining and retaining power. Another four years of

Trump would have been a disaster for the developing world, even for those making admirable strides in their quest to achieve full democracy. Biden should demonstrate why he merits the optimism of such countries.

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