

The Atlantic — DAILY

By Tom Nichols, Staff Writer

9 September 2024 (@ 1828 Hrs)

Over The Weekend, **Donald Trump** Fired Off A Threat To Arrest His Political Opponents If He Wins This Election. This Should Be The First — And Maybe The Only — Thing He's Asked About Tomorrow Night.

A Basic Paradox

I Find It Exhausting To Have To Point Out That **Donald Trump** Has Yet Again — Threatened To Engage In Violent And Dictatorial Behavior, And That — Yet Again — The Collective Reaction By Some In America Seems To Be A Numb Acceptance That This Is Just Who **Trump** Is.

But As I Wrote This Past Spring, **Trump's** Goal Is To Exhaust People Who Care About Democracy: That's Why He Regularly Inundates The Nation With His Rancid Word Salads. His Screeds Are Aimed At Making Us All So Tired That When He Actually Attempts To Carry Out These Schemes, We'll Hardly Have The Energy To Notice. *Oh, He's Ordering Homeland Security To Arrest People In Unconstitutional Dragnets? Yeah, I've Been Hearing Stuff About That For A Long Time*

Here Is Part Of What He Posted Early Saturday Evening Over At His Personal Rantatorium, Truth Social:

CEASE & DESIST: I, Together With Many Attorneys And Legal Scholars, Am Watching The Sanctity Of The 2024 Presidential Election Very Closely Because I Know, Better Than Most, The Rampant Cheating And Skulduggery That Has Taken Place By The Democrats In The 2020 Presidential Election. It Was A Disgrace To Our Nation! Therefore, The 2024 Election, Where Votes Have Just Started Being Cast, Will Be Under The Closest Professional Scrutiny And, WHEN I WIN, Those People That CHEATED Will Be Prosecuted To The Fullest Extent Of The Law, Which Will Include LONG TERM PRISON SENTENCES So That This Depravity Of Justice Does Not Happen Again.

This Post Is The 45th President Of The United States Putting *In Writing* That He *Must* Win, And That After He Wins, He Will Mobilize The Machinery Of Government Against His Opponents Because There Was Clearly Fraud *Anyway*.

(I Will Just Note That I Refuse To Believe That **Trump** Really Coughed Up A Word Like *Skulduggery* On His Own. Spelling It Incorrectly Does Point To Him, But The Likelihood That Someone Else Is Writing These Posts Is A Reminder That **Trump** Is Surrounded By People Who Have No Objections To His Plans And Will Willingly Carry Them Out.

Some Of This Was Drowned Out By **Trump's** Other Deranged Statements Last Week. Just Before He Issued His Stalinist Threats, He Dropped A Piece Of Pure Weapons-Grade Nuttery About Kids Getting Gender-Changing Surgery *During A Normal School Day In America*. “Can You Imagine You’re A Parent,” He Said At A Rally In Wisconsin On Saturday, “And Your Son Leaves The House And You Say, ‘Jimmy, I Love You So Much. Go Have A Good Day In School’ And *Your Son Comes Back With A Brutal Operation*. Can You Even Imagine This? What The Hell Is Wrong With Our Country?

You Cannot Imagine It Because It’s Never Happened. Any Parent Knows That Most Schools Completely Plotz If They Even Have To Give A Kid Some Ibuprofen, But On Planet **Trump**, *School Nurses Can Apparently Do Surgery In The Office*. At The Same Rally, **Trump** Threatened To Round Up Undocumented Immigrants En Masse And Admitted It Would Be A “Bloody Story.

To Recap: In One Day, **Trump** Threatened The Use Of Mass Government Violence Inside The United States, Asserted That Kids Are Getting Secret Medical Procedures At Schools, And Promised To Lock Up His Political Opponents. One Might Reasonably Assume That When **Trump** Takes The Stage With Vice President Harris Tomorrow Night, The First Thing The Moderators Will Ask Is: *Are You Out Of Your Mind?*

Well, Maybe Not In Those Words, Exactly. But The Very First Question At The Debate Should Reflect A Basic Paradox In This Election: How Can Any Meeting Between **Trump** And Harris Be A “Debate” If **Trump** Has Already Made Clear That He Rejects The Foundations Of The American System Of Government?

Debates Are Based On Good Faith And Shared Assumptions About Democracy. **Trump** Bellows At Us, Over And Over, That He Couldn’t Give A Damn About Any Of That. He’s Running Because He Wants To Stay Out Of Prison, Get Revenge On His Enemies, And Gain Access To Even More Money. Are We Really Expecting A Give-And-Take About, Say, Child Care (A Subject On Which **Trump** Was Spectacularly Incoherent A Few Days Ago) Between A Candidate Who Will Govern As A Traditional President And A Would-Be Junta Leader Who Intends To Jail His Opponents — Including, Possibly, The Woman Standing Next To Him And The Reporters Grilling Him?

I Can’t Give You A Lot Of Headlines About All Of These Mad Comments Because, For The Most Part, They Don’t Exist. (Reuters Summed Up The Raving On Saturday As “**Trump** Revs Up Small-Town Base In Wisconsin,” Which Is True, In The Way That A 1967

Headline Saying *Mao Encourages Chinese Intellectuals To Aid With Agricultural Efforts Would Be True But Perhaps Incomplete.*) *The New York Times* Had Nothing About **Trump's** Weekend Comments On Its Front Page Today. This Morning's *Washington Post* Homepage Simply Said: "Harris Hunkers Down For 'Debate Camp,' **Trump** Opts For 'Policy Sessions' As Showdown Looms." This Headline Is No Doubt An Accurate Account Of What's Happening In The Campaigns, But "**Trump** Says He Will Inevitably Win And Prosecute His Opponents For Fraud Anyway" Is Probably More Important Than Whether He Is Being Briefed Yet Again On Policies He Doesn't Care About Or Understand.

Politico, Meanwhile, Boldly Suggested Yesterday That The "Shadow Of Tulsi Gabbard" Now "Looms" Over Harris. Yes, If There's One Thing We're All Wondering, It's How The Shadow Of ...

Wait, What? *Tulsi Gabbard*?

For Those Of You Not Steeped In The Current Weirdness Of American Politics, Gabbard Is The Former Representative From Hawaii Who Was Masquerading For A Few Years As A Standard Democrat Before Quitting Her Job In Congress And Coming Out As A Fringy Attention Seeker. In A 2019 Democratic Primary Debate, She Managed To Rough Up Harris On A Question About Crime.

When Harris Is About To Step Onstage With **Trump** — A Convicted Felon, The Instigator Of A Violent Insurrection, And An Avowed Threat To Democracy — Does Anyone At *Politico* Believe That Millions Of Americans Are Tuning In And Thinking *Gosh, I Remember That Big Tulsi Gabbard Moment; I Wonder If That Shadow Is*

Looming Here?

Several Writers At *The Atlantic*, Including Our Own Editor In Chief, Jeffrey Goldberg, Have Raised The Issue Of The “Bias Toward Coherence” That Prevents Many Journalists — And Millions Of Americans — From Saying Out Load That The Republican Nominee For The Presidency Of The United States Is *Emotionally Unstable And A Menace To The Constitution*. This Is Not Going To Change In The Next Two Months. But If **Trump’s** Comments This Weekend Are Not The First Questions At The Debate — If His Threat To Democracy Is Not The *Only* Question — Then There Is No Points In Debates At All.

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