**America prepares for Election 2024**

S Qaisar Shareef

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The next American presidential elections are more than 15 months away, but political activities are already picking up. President Biden has announced his candidacy for reelection. On the Republican Party side there are at least 14 candidates in the field. The front runner is again Donald Trump, based on opinion polling.

It is likely the presidential elections in 2024 will be a rerun of the 2020 contest. Most Americans are not too excited about this prospect. While Biden has done a remarkable job of delivering on his campaign promises even with a razor-thin majority in Congress, even many Democrats are not excited about this aging leader running again. He presents himself as agile and up to the task, but he appears frail and occasionally age-related missteps are showing up. Biden is 82 years old and if elected will be 86 when he concludes a second term.

Donald Trump on the other hand has continued to receive enthusiastic support among a majority of Republicans, the so-called Republican base. No matter how difficult his legal circumstances continue to become, his base is seemingly least concerned about the dozens of indictments he is under for crimes and misdemeanors of various levels of seriousness.

Trump may yet be charged with inciting violence on January 6, 2021, when he unleashed a mob of supporters on the US Capitol. The world watched the sad spectacle of Trump supporters trashing the halls of Congress, even leading to the deaths of several security personnel.

Trump is also under serious risk of being indicted for interference in the election count in the state of Georgia where he called the chief election officer and asked him ‘to find’ some 11,000 votes in his favour. The election officer astutely taped the entire phone conversation. Of course, none of this may matter to Trump’s base of supporters.

The crowded Republican field of candidates is trying to figure out how best to position themselves against front-runner Donald Trump. They are reluctant to openly criticize Trump for fear of losing the support of the Republican base. In effect, they are saying the former president “has done nothing wrong, but please vote for me instead.” Not exactly a convincing selling point.

Republicans also face the issue of how exactly to define their agenda beyond tax cuts for the wealthy. In 2016 Trump rode his strongly anti-immigration rhetoric all the way to the presidency.

Picking up on this successful slogan against immigrants, Republicans have now ratcheted up a number of other ‘culture war’ issues – among them, a push against teaching the sad history of race relations in America. Ron DeSantis, Republican presidential candidate and governor of Florida, has recently unveiled a revised history curriculum in his state where students are to be taught that former slaves also benefited from the work skills they acquired during slavery. In other words, in Florida slavery is going to be presented as a ‘skills training program.’

By actions like this, DeSantis is positioning himself further to the right of Donald Trump. It is hard to imagine there are any votes in that space that aren’t already committed to Trump.

There are also a few fringe Republican candidates, among them Chris Christie, former governor of New Jersey, who are willing to openly criticize Donald Trump for his actions during his presidency. What impact they may have remains to be seen.

On the Democratic side, many moderate supporters are increasingly uncomfortable with the push for mainstreaming of the LGBT community, particularly as it has started to affect school curricula. They blame Democrats for pushing this agenda on their children. This has also given another culture war opening to the Republicans who are doing everything to exploit the issue.

The American Muslim community is being particularly targeted by Republicans to pull them away from the Democrats. However, should Donald Trump become the Republican nominee, as is expected, many Muslims may remember the 2016 elections when Muslim-bashing was a core element of Trump’s campaign – the so-called ‘Muslim travel ban’ and talks of creating a ‘registry’ of all American Muslims.

Fifteen months is an eternity in American politics, but the outlines of the battles to be fought are starting to emerge. Sadly, during this long period, it will be very difficult to get much important work done for the country.

The writer is a freelance contributor based in Washington DC. Website: www.sqshareef.com/blogs