**Speaker Trump?**

[Harlan Ullman](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/harlan-ullman/)

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If Dickens’ first sentence in Tale of Two Cities was re-written for 2022, it might read, “It was the most dangerous of times, it was also the most bizarre.” Here is a small sampling of why. Vladimir Putin has threatened to use “all available means” to defend Russia against assaults by the West. A well-known Kremlin academic has gone much further; recommending attacking the United States directly with nuclear weapons to invoke “fear.” Wow!

NASA sent a satellite to collide with a small asteroid in space to determine if its orbit could be deflected.

The reason was part of experiments to prevent a huge meteor from striking the earth and, as happened aeons ago, causing a new ice age. And former president Donald Trump may well be indicted for breaking several laws, including the Presidential Records Act and unlawful possession and storage of some of the nation’s most highly classified and sensitive documents.

About Trump, for lighter relief, at the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas, Vice President Kamala Harris accomplished what he could not. She recognized America’s close friend and defence treaty partner, Little Rocket Man’s North Korea.

These are only a few examples of why Dickens might conclude dangerous and bizarre are fitting descriptors.

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Pursuing this bizarre side of American politics, consider a past idea that may attract future attention. The Constitution specifies qualifications for president (age, place of birth, residence in the US and winning the Electoral College) and members of Congress (age, residence). But the Constitution does not mention any qualifications for Speaker of the House, including being an elected member of Congress, just as an appointment to the Supreme Court does not require a law degree.

Suppose the Republicans win the House in November and the Senate remains deadlocked. Making Trump a speaker has certain political advantages. The Speaker is second in line for the presidency. It also provides an extraordinary bully pulpit.

While aspirants to that office would not be pleased, as a quid pro quo, the House Majority Leader could become the de facto Speaker with Trump as the figurehead. The irony would be delicious. When President Joe Biden delivers the State of the Union next January, who would be seated directly behind him on the House dais?

If the House followed through on impeaching Biden, who has had more direct experience in these procedures than Speaker Trump, having been twice impeached himself? Hearings on Hunter Biden would also give Trump a ringside seat as an interrogator. And, despite former speakers who ran afoul of the law, the speakership might offer Trump some protection if the Mar-a-Lago search leads to legal action.

Joe Biden will be 80. It is not inconceivable that during the next two years, the 25th Amendment could be invoked. Vice President Harris would become acting or, in the worst case, president. That would leave the vice presidency and, her second job, the Presidency of the Senate vacant. Trump would become next in line for the Oval Office. Without the tie-breaking vote, the Senate would be in gridlock, and neither house would confirm a replacement vice president as a majority is needed in both bodies.

The fitness of the vice president to hold office until 2024 would be severely challenged by Trump and the GOP. Harris could turn out to be a Harry Truman. Or she could become a Spiro Agnew.

The likelihood that any of these bizarre scenarios could unfold is remote. Yet, none is entirely inconceivable in today’s extraordinary environment. But would Trump accept the speakership if offered?

The arguments in favour were noted. Perhaps acceptance would virtually assure winning the 2024 nomination although rivals would counter that Trump is better suited to stay as Speaker. However, would Trump want a lesser job than the presidency? Of course, he could become a part-time Speaker that would not detract from his other interests or legal problems.

One may wonder how the Founding Fathers would react to Speaker Trump. I guess that many might have thought twice about what they wrought. Even though the American Revolution was perhaps the most dangerous period in our history when its outcome was in grave doubt until Yorktown, the state of US politics today will still be perplexing to the greatest of all great generations.

What is indeed chilling is that such prospects are no longer preposterous or the stuff of Hollywood and television super thrillers. Would Donald Trump find the option of the Speakership as the ultimate art of the deal? And more importantly, would he make it?

*The writer is a senior advisor at Washington, DC’s Atlantic Council and a published author.*