[**Why Trump lost**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1721214/why-trump-lost)

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TECHNICALLY speaking, Donald Trump was not on the ballot in the US midterm elections. These elections were not elections for the presidential post but for the two legislative houses, the House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

Despite this, however, many of the Republican nominees had to pass a Trump test to win the party primaries that precede the election. In most cases, Trump delivered an endorsement only to those Republican candidates who were willing to bow to his greatness and support his claim that the 2020 presidential election had been ‘stolen’ by Democrats cheating. Sadly for the future prospects of the Republican Party, most of these ‘Make America Great Again’ (MAGA) candidates would be punished for doing just that. As evening rolled in last week on Tuesday, and the first results began to pour in, so too began the slow realisation that the prematurely triumphant Republicans had been very wrong.

The forecasts that preceded the election had in fact been forecasting ‘a red wave’ in the US midterms. Some Republicans said this would mean certain control of Congress and almost certain control over the Senate. The projections for the House stood at 20 or 30 more than the 218 that was needed for the majority; in the 100-seat Senate, the margin was supposed to increase to 54-46 in favour of the Republicans.

Having lost the presidency, the House and Senate in the previous elections, the conservatives felt that they were ready to win, and to win big. Their forecasts relied on the polling done mostly by conservative outlets, all of which showed a huge margin for victory, with even reliably Democratic states like New York and Washington state being described as ‘competitive’ for the first time in several decades. The legacy of 2016, when hardly any poll had forecast a win for Donald Trump, justified the ‘correcting’ margins that were added to the Republican numbers in order to reflect those ‘invisible’ Trump voters who had shown up in 2016. These voters were the ones who would not confess to being Trump voters, but who would vote for the former president anyway.

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The hubris of all of these pre-election predictions is obvious now. Not only did the Democrats keep control of the Senate, they also managed to limit the Republican victory in the House of Representatives to a tiny margin. While Florida Governor Ron DeSantis enjoyed a huge double-digit point victory over his Democratic opponent, nearly everyone else fell short. Those who didn’t were the few long-time and pre-Trump-era Republicans who had managed to stay in the party even after the MAGA supporters made it almost impossible to do so.

In Georgia, which delivered the Senate to the Democrats in 2020, voters re-elected their governor, Brian Kemp. His victory is important because Kemp was the man who had stood up to Trump in 2020 when he tried to strong-arm him into disqualifying mail-in voting because it favoured the Democrats. So angry were the voters that they voted Kemp in as their governor even while favouring Democrats in other races. This sort of voting, called ‘split ticket-voting’, is relatively rare in elections in America because it requires voters to go line by line on their ballots voting Republican or Democratic instead of just filling out a circle for a party line Democratic or Republican vote.

By Saturday night, the CNN projected a victory for the Democrat Senatorial candidate Catherine Cortez Masto in the state of Nevada. With her victory, it was clear that Democrats would continue to lead in the Senate. This would mean that the Republicans would not control the legislative branch and therefore would fail to push a conservative agenda, which included measures such as a federal ban on abortion and a cessation of all aid to war-hit Ukraine. President Joe Biden, even with his low poll numbers, had done what has not happened in the United States for 40 years — he managed to allow his party to continue to control the Senate and kept the margin lower than ever in the House.

As this week began, both sides were acclimatising to the unexpected outcome of the election. President Biden, on his way to the G20 summit in Indonesia, felt he had been victorious and told reporters straight away that he was quite pleased with the results. It was evident that former president Donald Trump was fuming in private. One of his daughters got married this past Saturday. The statements released by Trump shrugged off the victory as not his fault. Beyond that, the former president (who still denies that he lost his presidential bid) made fun of the biggest Republican winner of this election — Florida’s Governor Ron DeSantis, who is likely to challenge Trump if he runs again.

The world stays tuned in to the US elections because they decide what the US posture in the world will be. If the MAGA Republicans had won, Europe, and Ukraine in particular, would have faced immediate and dire consequences. The isolationist stance championed by Trump and his ilk would once again draw down the US imprint on other world affairs, particularly the US leadership on climate change. The next two years will likely see a stalling pattern, with neither party having enough power to make big moves in foreign and domestic policy. For the longest time, it appeared that Trump and his appeal were indestructible. But now, the American voters have turned the other way. The frenzy in Washington’s conservative circles revolves around the same question: how to justify having sold out to Trump. Whatever the answer may be to this question, the voters in America have shown that the truth has begun to dawn on them.

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