Schrodinger's Election

By Glenn Harlan Reynolds

It's Schrodinger's election.

Some people are predicting a [Trump landslide,](#) based both on the various predictors and on the haplessness of Kamala's part-time campaign and fourth-rate running mate. It's plausible. The nation isn't in great shape, despite the finagling of interest rates and unemployment figures (expect a bigger-than-usual downward revision of the employment numbers for this month after the election), the Biden Administration, after running on a "return to normalcy" after the "chaos" of the Trump years, has delivered chaos in spades, and there's a pervasive sense, everywhere from NASA to FEMA to the U.S. Navy, that nothing, at least nothing related to the government, works anymore.

Trump, meanwhile, has come back from not one but two assassination attempts, named a first-rate, not fourth-rate, running mate, and is barnstorming the nation even as Kamala's appearances are so few and far between that Democrats are [worrying out loud](#) to *Politico.*

And in an epic show of immigrant assimilation, Elon Musk [appeared](#) alongside Donald Trump and J.D. Vance in a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania this weekend. (I love the Occupy Mars shirt.)

Trump is everywhere. Anxious Dems wonder why Harris isn't.

Democrats fear the vice president's risk-averse approach could hamper her campaign.

Vice President Kamala Harris speaks during an event at the Redford Township Fire Department North Station in Michigan on Friday. | Mark Schiefelbein/AP

So there's a plausible story in which the Democrats lose, and lose big.

But, you know, there's also a plausible story where they win. Politico, despite the worries above, is pretty much openly hoping that the devastation in western North Carolina and Trump-favoring parts of Georgia will suppress the Trump vote in the mostly-red counties affected (Asheville is very lefty, but the surrounding areas are not) and thus flip the states to the Democrats, deciding the election.

We're not hearing much about the urgency or sanctity of
voting, weirdly, with less than a month until the election.
If people aren't able to vote in large areas, will the North
Carolina legislature fail to certify its results? Might a
Republican House refuse to certify North Carolina results if
large areas of the state were disenfranchised? There's real
potential for drama there.

Or maybe voters elsewhere in North Carolina or Georgia, angry
that their state seems to have been shortchanged by federal
relief efforts, will vote for Trump as a response. It's even
possible that Virginia, a likely-Harris state that's adjacent
to North Carolina and has had some damage itself, will respond
unfavorably to the lousy treatment of their neighboring state.

On the other hand, there will be an uncertain, but possibly
large, amount of cheating, almost entirely in favor of Harris,
in a number of swing states. That could swing the balance
too.

It's possible to build up all sorts of entirely plausible

stories leading to a Trump or Harris victory. It's also impossible to tell which ones are right at this point. And with a month to go, who knows what will happen next in this crazy season that might tip the balance? Aliens?

Well, pundits and pollsters make their livings by predicting things — and pay little price for being wrong — which encourages them to make predictions, even wrong ones, to satisfy their audiences. But for the rest of us, none of the stories really matter.

If you're a Trump supporter and you expect Trump to win, that's no reason to slack off. If it's not close, they can't cheat, as Hugh Hewitt once said in a book by the same title. And the bigger the margin, the more Trump can do when in office. If you expect Trump to lose, though, that's still no reason to slack off. The closer the margin the better, even if he loses, and the more down-ticket candidates elected the better in terms of restraining whatever nightmarish policies the Harris administration produces. We'll know soon enough.

My gut, for what (very little) it's worth is that this election feels a lot more like 2016 than 2020. On election day that year, a lefty colleague asked me what I thought, and I said that if you went with the polls it would be a Clinton win, but that there was a pretty big "fuck you" factor out there that I didn't think the polls captured. (Interestingly, she agreed). Helen, meanwhile, was sure Trump would win.

This year I think the "fuck you" factor is much higher than 2016, and the polls less favorable to Harris than they were to Clinton. On the other hand Helen is pessimistic; she thinks it will be decided by cheating.

Either of us could be right. What do you think? And, more importantly, what are you doing about it between now and Election Day?

First published in [Glenn's Substack](#)