

Liz Cheney’s primary defeat shows that predictions of Trump’s demise are exaggerated



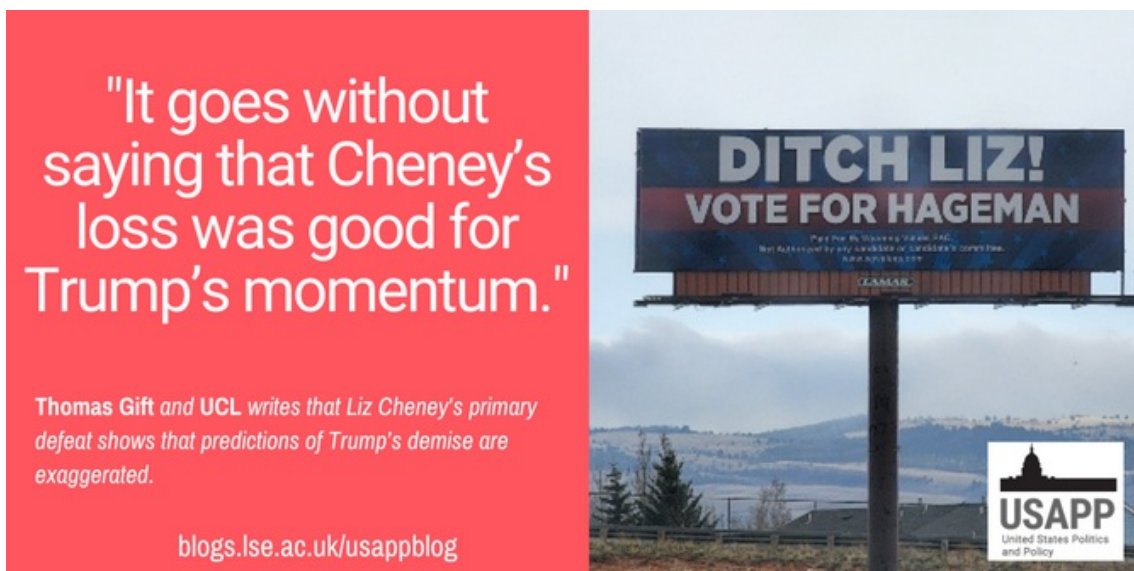
In Tuesday night’s Wyoming primary, outspoken Trump critic and January 6th Committee member Liz Cheney was defeated soundly by Trump-endorsed challenger Harriet Hageman for the Republican Congressional nomination. In this Q&A, [Thomas Gift](#) discusses the significance of Cheney’s defeat, her political future, and what the loss could portend for the 2022 midterms and the chances of Donald Trump running for president again in 2024.

What did you make of Liz Cheney’s defeat last night?

It was a lopsided loss for Liz Cheney, the representative for Wyoming’s at-large US House seat, who [gained](#) only 29 percent of the primary vote against her challenger’s 66. But you could ask: was she really running to win, or just to make a point? To my mind, Cheney had been using her campaign in recent weeks less to retain her congressional seat and more to push a symbolic agenda. Yesterday was a referendum on Trumpism – at least in Wyoming – but I think some Republican voters also viewed Cheney as [more preoccupied with sparring with the former president than representing the interests of her home state](#). Cheney knew that rebuking Trump would likely cost her politically—and in the end, she was right. History may prove a kinder judge to Cheney. But the full-scale repudiation of her just confirms that in much of the country it’s almost impossible now to win as a Republican unless you embrace Trump.

What do you think Cheney will do next? Is a 2024 run in the cards?

Cheney won’t fade into the backdrop, but I don’t see a clear future for her in the Republican Party, and certainly not as a presidential contender. Cheney likes to [fuel speculation about a 2024 run](#) because it keeps the media talking about her. But the GOP is just so completely Trumpified that moderates like Cheney no longer have a natural constituency. It’s possible that Cheney could stage a [third-party challenge](#). However, America’s electoral system is so institutionally biased toward the two major parties that I just don’t see that as viable. Cheney will probably get involved in grassroots organizing or become active in a Super PAC devoted to electing “never-Trump” candidates. Yet even here, it’s not clear which Republican politicians would want her help. This is someone who just got beat handily in her own primary, so she doesn’t possess much clout right now.



“Ditch Liz Cheney – Vote for Hageman Bill” (CC BY 2.0) by [Tony Webster](#)

What does this say about Trump’s grip on the GOP?

It goes without saying that Cheney’s loss was good for Trump’s momentum. He’s really been reenergized in the last couple of weeks by a number of events. First, the Mar-a-Lago raid distracted from the January 6th committee and [galvanized Republicans around Trump](#). And now, [with a number of primary victories for candidates he’s endorsed](#), Trump continues to prove that he has considerable sway over the party. All of this boosts the chances that Trump will run in 2024. That was likely anyway, but the odds must be rising as Trump sees candidate after candidate echo his election lies and get rewarded with victories. Certainly, there are some within the GOP who’d like to turn the page on Trump and nominate someone like Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who doesn’t come with all the baggage. But I think any predictions of Trump’s looming demise are exaggerated.

Can we glean any predictions for the 2022 midterms?

For Democrats, a string of primary wins by Trump-backed candidates poses both an opportunity and a threat. The opportunity is that “ultra-MAGA” politicians may have less appeal for swing voters in a general election. The consensus is that Republicans are going to take the House this November, and the race for control of the Senate will be close. If Republicans put forward candidates perceived as outside the mainstream, Democrats could have a better chance of picking up crucial seats. The threat, however, is that it’s certainly not impossible in today’s hyper-partisan climate that some of these fringe, Trumpist candidates will pull upsets. We’ve seen some [liberal groups propping up ultra-MAGA politicians](#), expecting they’ll be easier to beat in a general election. But that’s not inevitable. After all, Trump was supposed to lose in 2016, and we all know how that film ended.

- *These remarks are based in part on an interview by Thomas Gift for BBC World News on Aug. 17, 2022.*

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