

Up or Down? Why I Will Vote for Trump

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By Bruce Gilley

On a steamy Florida day in September, I joined a throng of space enthusiasts at the Banana Creek viewing area of Cape Canaveral to count down the hours, then minutes, then seconds to a SpaceX blast-off. I shed a tear as the pulsing orange flame with the little white stick on top punched through layer upon layer of terrestrial restraint. I had never seen one live. The miraculous idea that humans aspire to go beyond earthly imperatives was a reminder of God, grace, and galaxies beyond. It was a day of Up, not a day of Down.

The man behind SpaceX, of course, is Elon Musk. “His rocket company is now the only reason we can send American astronauts into space,” former President Donald Trump noted as Musk bounded onto the stage in Butler, Pennsylvania three weeks later. Musk’s other company, X, is now the only reason that social media remains free from left-wing assaults in the name of “misinformation” and “hate speech.” His car company, Tesla, is now the only reason the American auto industry has something to show for the last half century. This guy is all Up.

And that, I have decided, is what we have to choose between in November: Up or Down?

Like other cautious conservatives, I have made wonkish arguments for Vice President Kamala Harris. Honestly, the two candidates seem a wash to me on substantive merits and demerits.

But one thing sets Trump apart at a more visceral level: his is a campaign of Up. He wants to make America’s role go up again in the world, as opposed to the managed decline of Harris. He wants to elevate the American story to its historical greatness again, as opposed to the grinding down of our past by Harris. He wants to free Americans to be themselves again, to raise them up in all their rough-hewn glory, while Harris offers only a great levelling down amidst an Olympic competition for oppression.

Trump also wants to open up the public square rather than shut it down. And yes, this will require Trump, who has tasked Musk with government streamlining, to blow up some things in order to keep the spreading bureaucracy and its trial lawyer friends down. On the vexed question of the challenged democracy that guides our republic, I cannot see how the Democratic Party’s flaws of lawfare against political opponents, attacks on the Supreme Court, mass illegal voter importation, blithe dismissal of voter integrity concerns, the Russia collusion hoax, the Ukraine impeachment sham, and two mass occupations of federal buildings during the Trump years to prevent the constitutional business of Congress can ever be redeemed because the same playbook will return if Trump wins in November. On the other hand, Trump’s awful fanning of the January 6 insurrection, and his inability to admit wrongdoing, has been widely reviled within his party. Things will be looking up for democracy under Trump in spite of him. They will be looking down under Harris because of her.

I work in a sector where things have gone down since the ironically named “Free Speech” movement at Berkeley of 1964-5. Higher education, like Hollywood, the media, sports, and publishing, has become one great big downer of oppression narratives and taboos. There are shoots trying to push up. But they will not survive without a national movement for Up.

Amidst all the uncertainties of this November, sitting on the aluminum bleachers at Banana Creek cheering the one American and one Russian astronaut as they fled our earthly tangles was a sudden moment of clarity for me. I am no longer undecided. I want Up.

About a minute after the launch, we watched the graceful descent of the booster rocket without parachute, which fired briefly before landing completely upright, a Bolshoi quality maneuver. “If that were government you wouldn’t see that for another 50 to 100 years,” Trump noted earlier this year in a Reaganesque refrain, recalling having watched the phenomenon on television. The booster will go up again, that’s the genius of it. America will too if Trump wins.

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