



10 ways Trump is controlling us all

by *Tim Shipman*



Donald Trump is very likely the most consequential US President for the world and for British politics since Ronald Reagan, and arguably since Harry Truman. Everything he does is so, as the man would say himself, 'yuge', that it's easy to overlook that he's also the President whose actions have the most unintended consequences.

Like the fluttering of the hummingbird's wings that causes a hurricane halfway across the globe, Trump's careening around the world stage is largely responsible for much of what is going on in British politics right now.

This week is a case in point. Here are 10 ways in which we are all in thrall to Trump, whether we like it or not:

1) The price of fuel is up

Petrol hit £1.50 a litre for the first time in nearly two years. Nick Butler, a former vice-president of BP, claimed that Britain could be hit by oil and gas shortages within three weeks. He told Times Radio: 'There is a crisis coming. I think within the next two to three weeks you will see physical shortages.'

2) Panic is up

Keir Starmer and his senior ministers met the governor of the Bank of England at a Cobra meeting on Monday, to discuss how to cope with a crisis that might cause the price of oil to hit \$150 to \$200 a barrel. They're dusting off no-deal Brexit plans and wondering about fuel rationing. A cabinet minister says: 'We're in 1973 territory.' Gulp.

3) Inflation is up and growth is down

The OECD says the hit from the Middle East fuel crisis will impact Britain more than any other G20 nation. It has lowered its UK growth forecast for 2026 to 0.7 per cent,

from 1.2 per cent in December. UK inflation is now forecast to hit 4 per cent this year, up from the previous estimate of 2.5 per cent.

4) Starmer's biggest domestic problem is indirectly Trump's responsibility

Westminster has been consumed all week by the saga of Morgan McSweeney's stolen phone. The former chief of staff reported the theft of his phone to the Metropolitan police on October 20, three weeks after Peter Mandelson was forced out as ambassador to the US. Apparently that means some messages between McSweeney and Mandelson may be lost for ever.

This came after people in No. 10 had begun war-gaming the risks of the Tories using the 'humble address' mechanism (which had been used by Starmer in opposition to force the publication of Tory messages) to force McSweeney to disclose his messages. A piece I [wrote](#) on Starmer last month has become the focus of frenzied speculation, since it included the quote from an impeccable source that if the Tories came for McSweeney's messages 'Morgan is fucked'.

Let us not forget, Mandelson was only appointed to start with because Starmer and his team thought a fellow Epstein chum with political smarts was a good man to deal with Trump. That judgment might yet be the end of the PM.

5) Starmer is either ignorant or misleading

The PM sought to claim this week that 'the idea that somehow everybody could have seen that sometime in the future there would be a request for [McSweeney's] phone is, to my mind, a little bit far-fetched'. Given the levels of detachment the Prime Minister evinces on a weekly basis, it is possible he did not imagine such a scenario. But someone who had himself used the humble address device to force disclosures (and who, as a leading lawyer, would have watched countless public inquiries unfold), should have realised the phone might be of interest.

6) War is just politics by other means and vice versa

Trump is an accidental devotee of Carl von Clausewitz. He offered Iran a deal with 15 demands in the hope of pursuing peace, including a total end to Iran's uranium enrichment programme, and the closure of the three main sites associated with it, at Natanz, Fordow and Isfahan. Trump also demanded that the Straits of Hormuz be kept open and that Iran end its support for proxies like Hezbollah and its missile programme. In return, Iran would receive sanctions relief, and the US would help the country to build a civilian nuclear energy programme. But when Iran's leaders rejected the plan, he threatened to 'unleash hell' against them. Trump likes deals, and if he can't get one he just throws his toys. In this case the toys are precision-guided munitions.

7) War and politics are all business

In the Cabinet Office there is a genuine belief that the President announced the possibility of a peace deal to drive down oil prices and drive up the stock market to feather his own investments. A senior civil servant says: 'It's mad how Donald Trump is saying stuff to tweak the oil price.'

8) Trump always chickens out

The TACO theory raised its head again this week, with the vain attempt at peace. There is a lot of evidence that people in his inner team, from JD Vance down, are concerned about the unpopularity of the war.

9) The UK has no idea what Trump will do next

Relations between the White House and No. 10 are at an all-time low as Starmer boasts he has made the right call by staying out of Trump's war. One senior figure confides: 'We wake up every morning not having a clue what he will have said or done next.'

10) Starmer is right about one thing

The PM told Beth Rigby on the *Electoral Dysfunction* podcast that this is a 'once in a generation moment' which is going to shape the next decades of our lives. From a once in a century President.

Have a good weekend. Maybe turn off the news...