**Let the legal process play out against former US president**

**New charges against Trump herald a battle for the future of America's political system.**

1. Few things are more perilous for democracy than an effort to obstruct the peaceful transfer of power after a legitimate election. This is what Donald Trump is now formally accused of. Bringing the previous, lesser, charges against him — of falsifying business records and mishandling classified documents — was right and necessary to show that even a former president is not above the law. But this week's indictment is by far the most grave, since it goes to the very heart of America's system of government. Bringing these charges entails huge risks. The risks of not doing so would have been greater.
2. The 45-page indictment alleges that Trump, with six unnamed co-conspirators, was involved in a scheme to make false claims that the 2020 election was rigged, then used those claims to attempt to overturn the outcome. A trio of conspiracies each targeted a "bedrock function" of the US government — the process of "collecting, counting and certifying the results" of the presidential election.
3. It does not accuse the ex-president of inciting the January 6 2021 assault on the Capitol by his supporters. But it says Trump's lies aimed to create an "intense national atmosphere of mistrust and anger" and erode faith in how the electoral process was run. These were the conditions in which such an attack could take place.
4. There are multiple hazards in mounting this case. The bar at trial is high. The indictment concedes Trump had a First Amendment right to criticise and voice falsehoods about the election. Prosecutors must prove he knew his statements were false, and used them as part of a criminal fraud.
5. The charges, moreover, may only boost Trump's support and fundraising capacity. They threaten to stoke the belief among his loyalist base that the ex-president is himself the victim of a plot to bar him from a political return. Since a sizeable minority is convinced by Trump's "Big Lie", the charges risk setting Americans against Americans.
6. Senior Republicans ought to think twice about further inflaming tensions by continuing to accuse Democrats and the White House of "weaponising" the justice system. Though Trump has not been found guilty by a court, they should realise that endorsing a man who is not only seen by many citizens as having attempted to subvert an election but is now charged with doing so could do long-term damage to their party brand. It is important, at the same time, that US legal authorities are seen to be entirely impartial in handling the process that is rightly under way against Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden, though on much lesser charges than those levelled at Trump — which Republicans have claimed is a cover-up.
7. Not to bring the latest charges against Trump for fear of the consequences would have set a precedent that presidents can get away with trying to undermine the electoral process. It would have suggested that the judiciary may not be able, or may simply choose not, to hold the executive arm to account. This would, in the end, have been worse for the US political system.
8. In an ideal world, this newest indictment would be prioritised, given its gravity, over the previous two — and would be guaranteed to come to trial before next year's election. In reality, Trump's team may succeed in delaying it beyond the poll, opening the possibility that, if he won, the returning president could appoint a more amenable attorney-general to bury the case — or even pardon himself.
9. What is clear is that the next year, even more than the 2020 election, will herald a battle for the future of US democracy — one in which not just the political system but the legal system will now be involved.

Financial Times, August 3, 2023

**Method: making an oral commentary on a text or recording.**

**Introduction (≈ 1-2 mins)**

**1. General introductory sentence = social / cultural / historical context / recent example**

Two and a half years after the Capitol attack of January 2021, Donald Trump is facing several serious indictments.

**2. Say what type of document it is (a news report, an opinion piece or an editorial), where it comes from, its date (or say if it is recent):**

This recent article from The Financial Times....

**3. Say what it deals with / the issue at stake:**

... deals with the importance of these indictments for American democracy and questions the role of the Republican Party.

**4. Transition:**

So what is at stake for American democracy and how should Republicans react?

**Summary (≈ 3-4 mins)**

**1. Written document : refer to the headlines, sub headings, illustrations (graph, cartoon, drawing etc) and captions:**

The headline mentions the legal fight ahead and announces that the Trump indictments are critical for the future of the American political system.

**2. Announce what the document deals with: (who/ what/ when / where):**

The document refers to a recent federal indictment against Trump, which accuses him of falsely claiming that the 2020 election was unfair and of conspiring to overturn its results.

**3. Structure your summary (context / issue; advantages/ disadvantages; problem/solution; past /present /future; opposition proposed by the text ; action / consequences etc):**

*Context* Indeed, the basis of any democracy is for the loser of an election to accept defeat. Not only did Trump refuse do so, but he also lied about having won the election. The journalist thinks it is important for the legal system to try to address this issue.

*Issue*  However, the journalist also recognises that the accusations will be difficult to prove and could provoke even more conflict within the American population. Many Republican supporters are convinced that Trump did win the election, for example. As a consequence, the journalist hopes Republican officials will support the legal process and not attempt to undermine it.

**Commentary (≈ 5-6 mins) = Start from the argument(s) the columnist/article makes:**

**What different point of view can you give (about one or several elements)? What different examples can you give?**

**Structure your commentary (advantages/ disadvantages; for / against; problem/solution; past /present /future; etc):**

**1. Transition:**

This article argues that challenging Trump's actions is key to the future of American democracy.

**2a. Position yourself:**

1) I'd like to agree with this analysis. If Trump is elected president in 2024, he could pardon himself and decide that he has won all future elections. In fact....

2) I disagree with this analysis. Most Republicans support Trump and can decide for themselves in 2024 if he is fit to be president. Indeed....

**2b. or give new context to the issue you are going to discuss / recent example:**

- I recently heard a report / read an article / saw a programme about other accusations against Trump / accusations against the Biden family.

- Why is the US so polarised?

**Conclusion (≈ 1 min):**

By way of a conclusion, we can say that... - In conclusion, it seems that ...

This brings us to another interesting question, that of ....