



## George Santos expelled from House in historic vote

The expulsion puts pressure on the Republican majority and its legislative priorities

By Zachary Li

On Friday, now-former Rep. George Santos was expelled from the House of Representatives by a bipartisan coalition of representatives, with 311 for and 114 against. The Republican, whose district included much of the North Shore of Long Island, was seen as a potential rising star within the party after his surprising victory in the D+2 district. Since then, however, his downfall has been just as abrupt; following his victory, media outlets have slowly uncovered a multitude of lies about his life story, and the Justice Department announced twenty-three federal charges against him in May, including wire fraud, money laundering, and falsifying records.

Santos had previously survived two attempts at expulsion, but neither could clear the two-thirds majority necessary to expel him. However, after the House Ethics Committee released a 56-page report that uncovered similar allegations to the indictment, 105 Republicans joined 206 Democrats in voting to expel Santos. The report detailed that the former congressman funneled campaign funds to cover personal expenses, including at luxury retailers, OnlyFans, and cosmetic procedures.



Santos defends himself on the House floor on Nov. 30. Source: ABC

Furthermore, his background as an MBA graduate of NYU Stern, grandson of Holocaust survivors, and former employee at Goldman Sachs have not been found to be true.

The expulsion set a modern precedent for the House. The other two modern expulsions - Michael Myers (1980) and James Traficant (2002) - were expelled after being convicted of federal crimes, namely taking bribes.

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While Santos finds himself the subject of a convincing federal indictment, he is far from being convicted. As a result, the expulsion of Santos might expand the limits of the procedure and lead to expulsions of controversial representatives in the future.

As the 2024 elections loom large, the debacle is sure to damage the Republican Party's reputation amongst voters, and the push to expel him from vulnerable New York Republicans shows that the Republican Party is worried about its position to take back the House. Perhaps more importantly, the expulsion deprives Speaker Mike Johnson's majority of a crucial vote and reduces the Republicans' four-seat advantage to just three. With the potential departures of Rep. Bill Johnson (R-Ohio) and Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-California) on the table, the Republican docket faces serious challenges.

Republicans have made the budget a priority this session, and the expulsion might force the Speaker to maintain the federal deficit with potential implications for inflation and the economy. Aid for Israel might also look less than Republicans might have hoped, and legislative victories on issues such as abortion and crime might find themselves in limbo. Overall, the work of the chamber, including potential investigations into the Biden family, will face even greater challenges over the next year and hamper Republican's abilities to deliver on their legislative promises.

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# Rishi Sunak Grapples with Immigration

Is Rishi Sunak capable of rescuing his controversial immigration strategy?

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By Sanvi Bathija

Rishi Sunak's central immigration plan has suffered a setback following the UK Supreme Court's rejection of the government's initiative to send asylum seekers to Rwanda.



Rishi Sunak's proposal to send refugees to Rwanda was shut down. Source: The Guardian

The court, composed of five judges, unanimously supported a previous decision by the appeal court. This decision identified a genuine risk of refugees facing incorrect assessments of their claims in Rwanda, or being sent back to their original countries where they could be persecuted.

This verdict challenges a significant promise made by the Prime Minister, which is to "stop the boats". The government had argued that the Rwanda plan, costing £140 million, would act as a major deterrent against the increasing number of asylum seekers entering the UK by small boats across the Channel.

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However, this claim has been contested by refugee charities.

Lord Reed, the president of the Supreme Court, reading the judgment, concurred with the court of appeal. He stated there was a definite risk of erroneous assessments of asylum claims in Rwanda, potentially leading to the incorrect return of asylum seekers to their countries of origin.

He cited key evidence from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), pointing out the failure of a similar deportation agreement between Israel and Rwanda.

Sunak's response involves introducing emergency legislation and potentially a new treaty with Rwanda to address the court's concerns. His plan is to reassure both Parliament and the judiciary that Rwanda is a safe destination for asylum seekers. However, this approach is met with skepticism from various quarters, including some Conservative MPs, who doubt the feasibility of the plan and anticipate further legal entanglements.

Critics of Sunak's plan, like Sir David Normington, question the government's capacity to unilaterally declare a country safe for asylum seekers, especially when it contradicts judicial findings. The Bar Council expresses concern over the implications of the government's proposed approach on the balance of power between the judiciary and the legislature. Furthermore, the Labour party has indicated their intention to abolish this policy if they come to power in the next year's election.

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## U.S. in India-Canada Tensions

Recent revelations of India's elaborate plan of killing American and Canadian nationals leave Biden in a political dilemma

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By Mira Dasgupta



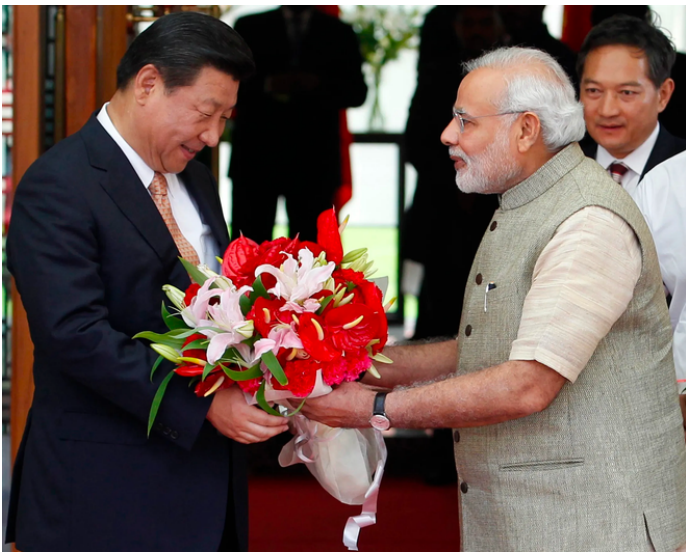
Federal indictment in New York reveals details about Sikh assassination in Canada  
Source: NDTV

Towards the end of September, Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claimed that the Indian government played a role in the killing of Sikh separatist leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in June. India vehemently denied these claims with Prime Minister Narendra Modi completely rejecting the allegations. While Canada perceived this alleged attack on a Canadian national on Canadian soil as a violation of their sovereignty, India, in turn, accused Canada of harboring extremists who threaten Indian sovereignty. These allegations have triggered a diplomatic rift between the two countries. Recent revelations from the U.S. federal indictment have brought to light the alleged elaborate Indian operative scheme to assassinate two U.S. citizens and four Canada citizens over the past year, bolstering Canada's claims' credibility.

When Canada initially made the allegations against India, U.S. and other allies, like Britain,

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remained quiet in fear of upsetting a large and growing economy and, notably, a counterweight to Russia and China: India. On November 30th, however, federal prosecutors disclosed the details of India's plot in the U.S.—where an Indian national, Nikhil Gupta, attempted to organize an unsuccessful assassination of a Sikh separatist under the Indian government's orders—revealing the links to the killings in Canada, therefore reaffirming Trudeau's allegations' legitimacy. In response to the revelations in New York, the Indian government promised the creation of a high-level investigative committee—a reaction starkly different from that to Canada's allegations.



India acts as a counterweight to Russia and China for the U.S.

Source: Brookings Institution

The difference in India's reactions to Canada's direct accusations and the revelations that came out of a federal indictment in the U.S. signal the change in the geopolitical paradigm where Canada no longer enjoys the same level of importance it did a decade ago. Instead of medium Western powers, muscular countries are garnering more soft power and significance.

Canada's mistake in not forging stronger ties with India, an emerging key ally of many countries, and instead only considering it as an economic partner has made it impossible to defuse the current crisis. Furthermore, we noted that the charges in New York fortified Trudeau's credibility and that in itself exposes the fragility of Canadian foreign policy and soft power.

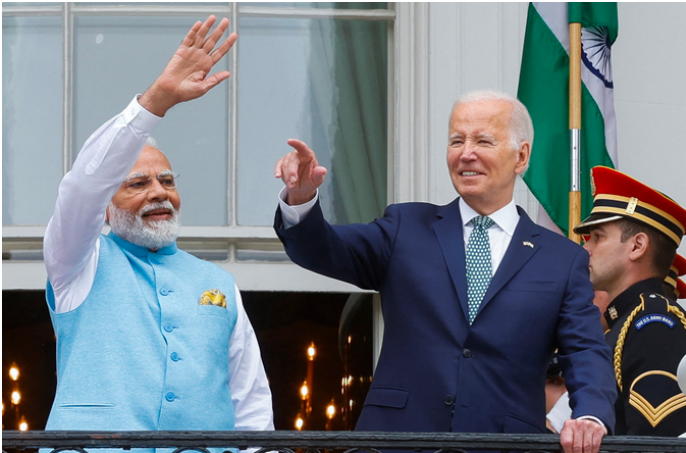
India maintains its status as an important ally to the U.S. Source: The New York Times

In the case of the United States, President Joe Biden is faced with a dilemma of having to balance relationships with imperfect allies, like India and Saudi Arabia, with his commitment to the ideals of human rights and democracy.

In the New York case, it is evident that the Indian government plotted to assassinate an American citizen on U.S. soil, typically viewed as a violation of sovereignty. However, the private approach that the U.S. has taken with India demonstrates how valuable India is to the U.S. in the present political paradigm and that the U.S. is keen on continuing to forge strong ties with India.

In the eyes of America, India serves as an opposing power to Russia and China, both economically and geographically, and India is desperate to be asserted as an economic superpower—these desires complement each other, making it easy for the two countries to be strong allies and compelling the U.S. to soft-pedal their differences once again.

This stance echoes Biden's relations with Saudi Arabia, a monarchy with no history of democracy, where it is in the USA's best interest to have strong relations with another powerful economy instead of allowing ideological differences to create rifts.



India maintains its status as an important ally to the U.S.

Source: The New York Times

Overall, the U.S.'s direct, yet purposefully muted involvement in the ongoing India-Canada rift further solidifies the sentiment that India's importance in the rapidly evolving geopolitical structure is burgeoning, which is offset by the decrease in significance attributed to Canada.

This is a trend that signals that, in the near future, as political crises like Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine and possibly China-Taiwan continue to occur, lesser importance will be given to ideological violations, such as human rights, and hard power, in the form of economic and military prowess, will take priority when forging alliances.

# Republicans Square Off

Four Republican candidates face off in the Fourth Republican primary debate Wednesday night

By Tim Panagoplos

On Wednesday, December 6, the fourth Republican primary debate will be held at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. It will be aired on NewsNation and moderated by NewsNation's Elizabeth Vargas, former Fox News and NBC host Megyn Kelly, and The Washington Free Beacon's Eliana Johnson.



Chris Christie, Nikki Haley, Ron DeSantis, and Vivek Ramaswamy attended the Republican primary debate. Source: NBC

This debate features the most exclusive set of competitors since the Republican National Committee tightened the requirements that must be met by candidates in order to participate. The requirements call for a candidate to poll at least 6% in two national polls, or at least 6% in one national poll and at least 6% in either Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, or South Carolina. In addition, each candidate must have 80,000 unique donors and at least 200 donors in 20 or more states.

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All candidates must also sign a pledge to support the eventual Republican nominee for President.

Ron DeSantis, Nikki Haley, Vivek Ramaswamy, and Chris Christie have met these requirements and will debate in Alabama on Wednesday night.

The requirements are up from a 4% polling threshold and 70,000 unique donors to qualify for participation in previous Republican debates. However, not all candidates support the strict qualifications. Doug Burgum, the current Governor of North Dakota, dropped out of the GOP race on Monday, December 4, when it became clear that he would not reach the threshold to participate in the debate on Wednesday.



Gov. Doug Burgum of North Dakota dropped out of the race for the Republican presidential nomination, deeming the debate threshold too exclusive.

Source: NBC

When asked his thoughts on the RNC's new debate threshold, Burgum expressed his discontent with it. He insisted that by making debates more exclusive and by shrinking the field of candidates, the RNC was taking away the "power of democracy" from voters in Iowa and New Hampshire.

Chris Christie, although he is qualified to debate, expressed his unhappiness with the RNC's debate qualifications. He believes that the 80,000 number for the minimum amount of donors is an arbitrary figure that holds no real meaning. Nevertheless, Christie agreed to abide by the RNC's rules, in a show of solidarity with his party.

The rest of the Republican field consists of Donald Trump and Asa Hutchinson. Trump is currently polling at 61.3% nationally among Republican primary voters. Instead of debate, he will be holding a fundraiser in Florida. In contrast, Asa Hutchinson has once again failed to qualify for the debate, but he remains in the contest.

With the Iowa caucuses a mere 6 weeks away, both Republicans and Democrats are deploying their large-scale ground operations. While the debate unfolds, Democrats will be holding a rival event in Tuscaloosa: a news conference about the effect of the "MAGA Republican" agenda in Alabama.

Although each week brings about new revelations in electoral politics, the current state of the Republican primary indicates that Donald Trump will be crowned as the official nominee over the summer.