



Presidential Debate Reaction: Glenn Reacts to ABC News Debate Between Kamala and Trump

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Glenn Greenwald: Good evening, everybody. It's Glenn Greenwald. I am here to react to, to analyze, to speak about the first and probably the last presidential debate between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump that concluded just a few moments ago. It took place in Philadelphia, it started at 9 p.m. Eastern. It concluded at 10:30 p.m. Eastern. We are doing this stream exclusively for our Locals community, I can also see the chat and see people's comments, which I'll try to do my best to keep track of and respond to when I can. So, I don't really like to say who I think won or lost the debate because I'm not the target person for this kind of a show. They're obviously speaking to people who aren't already decided or don't have a very strong conviction one way or the other, they're people who don't pay a lot of attention to politics. Those are the people who generally tune in to these sorts of things. And it's often their only opportunity to speak to those kinds of people. And they're trying to speak to a certain kind of people who have a level of knowledge and interest in politics that's probably on the average ordinary. And therefore it's not someone like me who is the target. And therefore it's very difficult for me to assess. And so I just have to say, I think both of them did a decent, competent job. I think Kamala Harris did probably a better job, I guess, than I expected her to do. I thought the format suited her very well. She was nervous at first, but kind of gaining confidence. I thought Trump was fine. I don't know. Dispositionally, she was a little bit happier. He was a little bit more serious and a little darker. How that is perceived or whatever, I'm going to leave that to whoever. What I do want to start with, though, is the way in which this debate was structured and moderated, because honestly, it kind of shocked me. And the only reason it shocked me was because my understanding of the structure was that it was going to be identical to the first CNN debate. The first CNN debate was conducted – and I said so at the time, I was surprised at how fair that structure was. The moderators asked questions. They kept track of the time. They made sure that each candidate had equal speaking time, Biden and Trump. They did not try to fact check in real time, which I think was a crucial decision because the problem with trying to fact check in real time is that it is impossible to do a comprehensive job in doing that. Both candidates are constantly

getting things wrong. They're speaking erroneously, they're exaggerating, they're minimizing things. They're inventing things. They're lying. That's what politicians do. And so you either have to decide you're not going to fact check at all or you're going to fact check every single inaccurate and false claim that came from the mouths of both candidates, which is basically impossible to do. And so if you do this thing that the moderators did, David Muir and I don't know the other ABC hosts name, what you end up doing is what happens, which is you get driven by your own biases, your own preconceptions of issues and candidates. And so every single fact check, formal fact check and informal fact check involved primarily David Muir, the ABC correspondent and host and moderator to the debate, arguing directly with Donald Trump, constantly saying when Donald Trump was finished speaking, that is not true, what you said is inaccurate, what you said is false. Donald Trump would then respond. They would get into an argument. And never once, not a single time did the moderators ever tell Kamala Harris that anything she said was out of context, was misleading, was deceitful, was exaggerated, or was false. And it's not because Kamala Harris spoke for 90 minutes without uttering false statements. She had an endless number of false statements that she uttered that could easily and should easily have been subject to fact checking. She lied about Trump's position on IVF. She lied about his comments when he said there are good people on both sides. She said that he was praising the Nazis and the antisemites when he made it very clear that those were the people he was condemning and vehemently condemning. There are so many – she said that the Trump administration left the Biden administration the highest level of unemployment since the Great Depression, when it was absolutely false to say that. There was a higher level of unemployment after the so-called Great Recession of 2009 – none of these things were fact checked, they were going on and on. So it was so clearly intended to use the authority of the moderator, whatever the authority that still retains in people's eyes to press their thumb on the scale of Kamala Harris, because obviously, if the only thing you're ever saying when fact checking and claiming that a false statement was made and doing that to one candidate and not the other, you're obviously trying to create the impression that one of the candidates, Kamala Harris, was constantly telling the truth and the other, Donald Trump, was constantly lying.

So it was remarkable to me just how blatant they were about it. Like, if you're going to do that, at least just give a token fact check to Kamala Harris over something. They didn't even bother pretending. And it wasn't just the official fact checks. It was also just this constant bickering almost on the part of the moderators whenever Trump would say anything, they would just kind of make asides about how he didn't answer the question or how something that he said was out of context. And they never, ever once did that with Kamala Harris, despite the fact that for the vast majority of the occasions when she was asked a direct question, she refused to answer. There's this one example that sticks in my mind so vividly, because it was so obvious, was when they asked her: when you left Afghanistan, the withdrawal caused the death of soldiers, do you take any responsibility for that at all? Any accountability whatsoever? And she just ignored the question, just completely put it off and she began talking about what Trump did wrong with Afghanistan. So if they were treating the candidates equally, they would have said: I know, but I asked you a very direct question, do you think that you have any responsibility for the loss of lives of those 13 soldiers in the way

the withdrawal was carried out or the leaving behind of American soldiers? They never once did that. It was such flagrant bias, even though the rules were intended to preclude that bias as much as possible. I don't know what the rule on fact checking was. I assumed it was the same as the CNN debate. But again, either you have to not fact check and leave that to journalists to do afterwards or you have to fact check each candidate equally. And the fact that they fact checked only Trump repeatedly and explicitly was remarkable. Now, obviously, that's what they should do if Kamala Harris said nothing inaccurate. But as I just demonstrated and there's so many examples, that wasn't the case. So that's the first thing.

The second thing was, how are you – it's not just which you usually decide to talk about, but also how you decide to talk about them and when you decide to talk about them that can absolutely shape and interfere in the debate more than almost anything else you can do. So when you ask, for example, you have the female moderator who didn't speak much, but she took the abortion question and it was framed to Trump, not to Kamala Harris, when asking her: should there be any limits on abortion? In what month should there be a limit on abortion? Is it at six months, seven months, eight months – what is your view on that? The question that was framed to Donald Trump was: well, you've repeatedly said conflicting things on abortion, you are proud of the fact that you overturned Roe vs. Wade, you said you are the most pro-life president, but on the other hand, you're now saying that you don't want a national abortion ban or that there are restrictions that are much less and lower than the ones previously people assume you have. Kamala Harris says women can't trust you when it comes to abortion in given how often you've contradicted yourself and changed your answers, why should women trust you? That was from the female journalist speaking on behalf of women saying "why should we trust you?" That is not a question. That's an argument. It's an argument. If there were similar arguments in framing made for Kamala Harris, such as: in 2019, you advocated these positions. Four years later, you have said that you don't believe in any of them anymore. All of this at the same time that you've refused to sit down for interviews or to speak in an unscripted way. Like, why should people trust you given how often – if there were a similar question like that, then at least there would be equal treatment. But it wasn't just that they brought up abortion, which is obviously a very positive issue for Kamala Harris, they then brought up January 6th. And the way they framed that was also extremely argumentative. You know, essentially: you caused a riot, you caused an insurrection, you told those people to go down, you said you would march with them, left out the fact that he told them to peacefully march and basically said: do you have any remorse? So every question was basically framed from a liberal perspective, which makes sense because the people who work in these corporate outlets are oriented primarily by antipathy towards Donald Trump. That is the reality of the media. It's not that they hate conservatives. They don't hate the Republican Party. They hate Donald Trump and his version of conservatism, his anti-establishment populism is what they feel threatened by. It's just so obvious that the media has always been against Trump, continues to be against Trump and the first CNN debate, the rules that CNN adopted, particularly no fact checking, no grandstanding as a journalist, made it so that it was a reasonably balanced debate. It was reasonably fair. I would, I guess, in an ideal world, prefer that journalists fact check every single inaccurate thing that any candidate said. The problem is that no journalist can be that

comprehensive, that efficient, that objective, which is why you don't have the moderator assume that role because of the weight that the moderator is supposed to have. They're sort of like, here are two different politicians running against each other but the moderator is the one in the middle, the authoritative voice. So if you start having the moderator act as a fact checker in a very partial and biased way, the whole debate is going to be shaped by that. And it wasn't for me, the one sided fact checking and it was the way the questions were framed, the way in which David Muir in particular would argue with Trump constantly. He argued with Trump and attacked Trump and criticized Trump almost as much as Kamala did. He was a participant in the debate. Always on the side of Kamala, always on the side of attacking Trump.

Now, in some sense, you could say, look, people who whine about the behavior of the moderators, that's usually a sign that they think the person on whose behalf they're complaining lost the debate. And biased media is something that you ought to expect. And I do think one should question the Trump campaign's decision to have this debate with ABC News given the prior antagonisms between Trump and ABC, the fact that ABC's figurehead is George Stephanopoulos, who has been a lifelong Democratic Party operative. It was very predictable what was going to happen, but the Trump campaign showed up and agreed to do it. And I think they got what they probably should have expected. Although, like I said, even given my very low opinion of media's ability or willingness to be objective, the way in which those moderators, especially David Muir, played such an active anti-Trump role – he really was a participant more than a moderator. Now, how the viewing audience perceives that we all know that the media is despised. People think the media deliberately lies to advance a partisan agenda. The perception generally is that the media is liberal. Whether that might have backfired on the moderators in the sense of making it seem like Trump was again, being treated unfairly by the media or whether, you know, an ABC News anchor has a sufficient sort of gravitas in the eyes of certain people to believe the things he's saying then I don't know the answer to that. That's the sort of thing I don't think I can assess. There were some indicators during the debate, I think, like the primary betting pool or the bet on the probabilities of which candidate is going to win – I don't want to say significant, but also a non-trivial drop in Donald Trump's chances to win the election. I believe it was 52/48 prior to the debate. Trump dropped two points, maybe a few more, Kamala increased a few more. I think the general consensus, even among a lot of Republicans, was that Kamala mostly avoided the sort of really bad and weak parts of her personality. One of the things Trump does so poorly is even when he has a good point, he just doesn't fully articulate the thought because he's always around people who understand and are familiar with the controversies. Like, he referred to Aurora, Colorado, four times and what he's referring to there is a pretty dubious claim based on some snippets of a video that kept appearing on Fox News of like Venezuelan immigrants allegedly entering the building with arms and taking over the building and threatening the residents and telling them they better leave or they're going to get killed. But Trump never explained that. He just kept referring to Aurora, Colorado as though everybody is familiar with this right-wing narrative that may or may not even be true. You can't really tell what's going on from the video. It does look like people of Latino heritage are carrying guns and trying to break a lock, but there's no context for it. There's no

reporting from it. Same thing with the stuff about Haitians eating dogs and cats. You can do that if you're capable of explaining it, but Trump uses this shorthand that doesn't articulate a full thought that makes it difficult for people in the audience who don't follow every news cycle and every controversy and every scandal to even know what it is that he's referring to oftentimes. I just don't think he fully articulates his thoughts. And Kamala was much better in terms of communicating and articulating her thoughts. But again, I have no idea if that matters at all. She was extremely evasive. I felt she was extremely evasive and blatantly so. Starting from the very first answer, the question was: have people been better off over the last three years economically under your administration, or are they better off under Trump's administration? Instead of just answering the question – it's a very direct question, it's a yes or no question, it's a binary answer – she starts by saying: I grew up with a middle class mother and I love the middle class. And I mean, again, it's hard for me to tell. To me, that seems like she's fortifying the perception of her that she's nothing, she doesn't believe in anything, she can't answer direct questions. I have no idea how her more smiling disposition will be perceived in contrast to Trump's sort of gloomy, darker, angrier position. Maybe people want that kind of focussed anger in a president, maybe they don't want that energy. I have no idea. But I definitely don't think you can argue that this was some sort of disastrous night for Kamala Harris. In large part because the debate structure was so blatantly designed to favor her. How the questions were posed, the framing of every question. It was as if they knew what Trump was going to say, even on things like immigration, inflation and every question was designed to pre-empt his response to sort of negate it. And then asked, you know, it was often like, why should women trust you, President Trump? And then they would turn to Kamala Harris and they would say: do you have anything to say on that?

Same thing with this issue about race. They didn't ask like, hey, why do you think it is that according to polls, more and more non-white voters are turning to the Republican Party under your leadership than ever before. Instead, it was: you said in a recent event that you don't even know that Kamala Harris is black. You didn't think she was black and then she suddenly turned black. Do you think it's appropriate to talk about someone's racial identity and to question it? These are not questions, these arguments posing as questions. And then when Trump said, I don't really care what she is, I was asked about it, I really didn't know she was black, I didn't think she identified as black, whatever. Then they turned to Kamala Harris and were like, what do you think, what do you have to say about this incident? And so it's a little bit subtle, although it wasn't very subtle. I think that was, for me, the biggest impression that I had of the debate was just how blatant ABC structured the debate, structured the questions, framed the questions, and intervened constantly in order to undermine Trump and promote Kamala Harris. And it was hard to evaluate things outside of that context because that really is the only sort of blatant characteristic of this debate.

I'm just looking through some of these comments. There are a lot of them about the moderators. Yeah, it was Trump versus three of them. That definitely seems to be a consensus. There's a question from Jim: "So if I want to watch locals on Roku instead of the app on my phone, do I have to pay another \$50 a year? What a rip off. I'm glad Rumble doesn't do that." I don't think once you subscribe to Locals, you have all the access to all the

content. „It is true that Kamala constantly lied, and I'm not going to say she lied more than Trump or less than Trump. But of course, Kamala's a politician, there were all sorts of false things she mischaracterized. Trump's views, constantly”. Oh, Gerry says: “What lies and inaccuracies do you think Kamala got away with?” We went over some of those at the beginning. She lied and said that Trump has been against IVF and fertilization when in fact he's always been in favor of it. She lied when she said that Trump had praised the antisemites and neo-Nazis in Charlottesville by saying that there are good people on both sides, because if you look at the context of these comments, which have been fact checked many, many times and debunked many, many times, including by PolitiFact and Snopes, these kind of like neutral pro-Democrat sites, you look at the context of his comments and he will say, Yeah, there were bad elements on both sides, and the bad elements primarily were the Nazis and the antisemites and the overt racists. Those people have to be repudiated and condemned. There's nothing good about them. But there were people who were protesting against things like tearing down statues of Robert D. Lee and other things who were not neo-Nazis and antisemites, and that he was saying there were good people on that side and good people on the other side and there were bad elements too. The idea that he was saying, oh yeah, the Nazis and the antisemites were also good people has been debunked a million times. It's nothing like what he said. She claimed that the unemployment rate that they inherited under Trump was the highest since the Great Depression, when in fact it was higher or significantly higher during the Great Recession of 2009. I also think the whole attempt to depict Trump as having presided over this great loss of jobs without mentioning the reason it happened, which is the Covid pandemic that caused the shutdown of everything. And to compare the unemployment rate in the last year of Trump's presidency under Covid compared to the bounce back in recovery jobs that the Biden administration got is so deceitful and misleading. Of course, it's the kind of thing that, if you were fact checking, you would say is something that ought to be fact checked. There were so many different lies and inaccuracies and exaggerations that, again, if you were fact checking everything, you would have fact checked. And yet there was never any single fact check by her at the same time. Yeah, you know, there were questions she refused to answer too, like I said, you know, they were asking her very direct questions. Do you think Americans are better off under your economy than they were under Trump? That's something that they should insist on her answering. They asked her if she deserves any blame or responsibility for the deaths of American soldiers and how the withdrawal was done. She refused to answer that. They asked her specifically and explicitly, and Trump asked her too: okay, you're pro-choice, you believe in the freedom of a woman's right to choose to have an abortion, are there any limits on that? Is it the fifth month? Do you believe it's the sixth month? Is it fetal viability? Does it go up to the seventh month? The eighth month? She just refused to answer that and was not pointing that out by the moderators like they did oftentimes with Trump. Or they would say, Sir, we asked you a very specific question, we asked you a very direct question, and I don't think you answered it. They never once did that with Kamala, even though she was incredibly evasive on so many of the questions. Yeah, I think it's important.

Oh, by the way, someone mentioned the gun thing, too. She absolutely advocated a confiscation or a buyback of guns when she was running in 2019 for the Democratic primary.

She denied she ever believed it, that she ever advocated that. Same thing with the fracking ban. She absolutely ran on a fracking ban in 2019. You can go and look at it. And it was only during the campaign that she repudiated that position. And then she lied and she said I was never for a fracking ban, I was never for gun buybacks, denying all the positions that she absolutely ran on in 2019. And there was, again, no fact checking of her at all. There was obviously a part of the debate where they each argued over who loves Israel more. And that was just to be expected. Trump said Kamala hates Israel. She said, no, I actually don't hate Israel. In any event, I will see how people respond. My expectation of how people respond is they'll say that Kamala won the debate. I think, just dispositionally, she seemed to be calmer, more focused, her sentences were more coherent. I think there were lower expectations of her, too. But whether it's going to in any way affect the state of the election I kind of doubt. And I can't see that happening because it didn't really change what you would think about either person. Maybe some people would have come away thinking Kamala is more moderate than they thought or more moderate in the way that they want her to be. I don't know. I didn't think she conveyed much substance. But again, I really am hesitant to answer those kinds of questions since I'm absolutely not the targeted person there. But if you ask me, if you sort of insisted that I say who I thought won the debate in the sense of how polls of people who they survey or going to ask who won the debate, my guess is Kamala Harris will wind up winning the debate. But again, you know, I think that there's these intangibles that are very hard to judge. You know, I think Trump, by being kind of aggressive, by being angry was fortifying his primary foreign policy argument, which is, look, under my presidency, Hamas didn't attack Israel, Russia didn't invade Ukraine, we now have all these wars breaking out – of course, NATO hates me because I demanded that NATO pay their fair price, whereas they get taken advantage of by NATO. So it's possible that this narrative that you need a strong president to avoid wars, to project strength in the world is something that Americans have been inculcated with for a long time about what a president looks like, what to expect from someone. Maybe Trump's angrier and heavier disposition was effective in that way. I have no idea.

The other thing I will say is obviously one of Kamala Harris' strategies was to bring up all the things that derail Trump from his message. She very purposely raised the question of crowd size, that people were leaving his rallies in the middle because they were bored. Something that, you know Trump has no discipline to avoid addressing, even though no one cares about any of that. She obviously brought up his court cases, the fact that he lost the election. A bunch of things that she knew that on issues where she didn't want to talk about, she could bait him into reacting kind of emotionally or getting him sidetracked. Probably his advisors told him not to talk about those things. And she, I think, successfully baited him into talking about them. That's just understanding how Trump works. Yeah, it is true that they weren't really – the idea was that they were going to mute both of their microphones. And yet every time Kamala wanted to talk while Trump was speaking, it seemed like she was able to speak. Trump came with that plan, when Kamala interrupted him to say "I'm talking" to kind of preempt her from having her big moment and pointedly said "does that sound familiar to you?" I thought that was a very smart, strategic move. I think it's hilarious when Trump says go to Washington tomorrow and wake up the person who was supposed to be the president at

four in the afternoon once he's ready to be a little bit engaged. I think that kind of thing is funny. I don't know how Americans perceive that. I don't know if they think that's too personal or too low, especially since Biden isn't even there. That's why it's very hard to predict these things. I see here from 538: "Harris 47.1%. Trump 44.4%". I don't know if that's a debate poll or not. Like I said, if you forced me to, I would say that Kamala will be declared the winner of the debate, certainly by the media. I have heard four minutes of ABC's coverage or maybe it was NBC. I was listening to their live feed. I think it was Kirsten Walker and people like that, Savannah Guthrie. And they were all giddy about, you know, Kamala baiting Trump. The New York Times headline is: *Kamala Puts Trump on the Defensive*. No question that the media is going to declare Kamala the winner, even if she is the winner by polling. I don't know how much that affects the outcome at all. Sometimes these debates do. Sometimes these debates don't. But for me, the real takeaway, the thing I care about most, the thing that I think is most important to highlight was just how blatantly and flagrantly one sided, not just the moderators were in terms of only fact checking Trump and never Kamala, getting into all kinds of arguments with Trump and never arguing with Kamala, but the framing of the questions. And it was hard when I was keeping track of people commenting on Twitter, commenting all of the moderators fact checking one sidedness, but it's a little bit more subtle to complain about that or to talk about that. You have to kind of wait till the debate was over and think about it. The way these questions were framed so often, they didn't just bring up an insert at the top of the show or the top of the debate issues that they thought Trump was vulnerable on. They did it in a way that framed it as an argument against Trump and not really as a question. So, you know, I wish I could talk more about the substantive debate. I said that last time, too, when Biden and Trump debated. The only thing there was to say was, it's shocking how nakedly obvious Biden's mental incapacity was. There was nothing else much to say. I think the same here is true with this debate. And again, I think Kamala performed competently. Maybe she performed well. I don't know, for some people. But I think Trump was fine for the most part, except when he got derailed. But he always gets derailed. I've never not seen him get derailed. To me, the main issue was just the media's behavior. And I don't know if it was blatant enough to cause that to backfire given that people already so distrust the media and believe that this is exactly what they are.

All right. So, it's very late here. I actually did, I'm not exaggerating, four podcasts today back to back. It was my fault. I was being dumb, I scheduled four podcasts back to back with no time in between. One was an hour long, one was 90 minutes, the other two were 20 minutes at the end of the show. We're an hour later here, so I think it's 11:30 or something. So I think that's enough to talk about for the debate tonight. That's my summary view of it. We're going to put this up on Locals. We're going to keep it exclusively there for a day or so. And we will obviously cover the reaction and other things tomorrow on our live show. So thank you guys very much for staying up and for watching the reaction. Thanks as well for just being members of our Locals community. It really is absolutely vital to everything we do. Without you, we would not be able to do the show or anything else. We're super appreciative that we were able to give you this content. You should look as well for interviews that Michael Tracy and Morgan O'Rourke, who are there on behalf of our show, are going to be able to do in the

quote unquote spin-room with various conservatives – with surrogates, rather. We're going to put that up on the Locals platform as well. That'll be here in a little bit or maybe sometime in the early morning. And we hope to see you back on the main Rumble show tomorrow night at 7 p.m. Eastern. Have a great evening, everybody, and I appreciate your taking the time to watch.

The clip you just watched is from the live aftershow we do on Locals exclusively for our Local subscribers. The live aftershow airs every Tuesday and Thursday nights immediately following our live System Update show on Rumble, which is freely available to everyone to join our Locals community simply click the Join button under each video on our Rumble page or the link below. That not only entitles you to exclusive access to our aftershow where we take your questions, respond to your critiques and feedback, and hear suggestions for issues we should cover and people we should interview, but also to the transcripts for each show that we produce, as well as the exclusive written content we publish there. Enjoy.

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