

A Relook at Trump's and Biden's Accomplishments

by
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We've just had another election season including the election for president of the United States. When this paper was being contemplated in April 2024, it looked like U.S. voters would have the same two presidential candidates – President Joseph Biden and former President Donald Trump--as in 2020 to consider. This has only happened once before for John Adams against Thomas Jefferson in 1796. In June 2024 when President Biden made the decision not to run again, it seemed to make sense to continue with this comparison to remember exactly what Trump accomplished in his first term as president and to understand what accomplishments Biden achieved during his presidential term in office.

President-elect Trump was inaugurated on the 20 January 2025 for his second four-year presidential term. This results in President Joseph Biden becoming the 'former President' but here he will be referred to as "President Biden" while Donald Trump will be referred to as "President Trump".

As a quick aside, Under Amendment 22 of the U.S. Constitution, one can hold office of the presidency for two terms. These terms don't need to be consecutive but they can't be indefinite terms. President Glover Cleveland had two terms as president which were not consecutive.

In this paper, we'll compare the campaign promises each of these candidates wanted to achieve during their term of office and what they actually achieved. We will look at: the US economy during each president's term of office; some of the new laws and/or regulations passed by Executive Order or by Congress; and the number of Cabinet members who stayed the course with each president. Last, we'll see how scholars have ranked Donald Trump and then Joseph Biden with all previous presidents on their overall performance in office. Every effort is made that this information is factual and can be obtained from those recognized as experts or knowledgeable in their field.

Comparing Presidential Terms:

- Donald Trump - 20 January 2017 to 20 January 2021
(Note: Trump's expected 2nd term of office: 20 January 2025 to
20 January 2029 is generally NOT covered here.)
- Joseph Biden - 20 January 2021 to 20 January 2025

Although Donald Trump ran for a consecutive second term, Joseph Biden won the US national election held in November 2020; the first time in 30 years that a sitting president was defeated for a second term.

1. Campaign Promises Made – Were They Fulfilled? What were some of the campaign promises each candidate made prior to taking office and which ones were actually achieved (for better or for worse)?

Donald Trump's Campaign Promises made in 2016:

a) Tax Cuts: President Trump promised to lower the corporate tax rate (the tax paid by companies to the US Federal Government) of 35% down to 15% and bring in huge tax cuts for working Americans.

--Somewhat achieved. Under the "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017" (the "Tax Cuts Act") signed into law in December 2017 by Trump, Congress agreed to lower the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%. While this is more in-line with the average corporate tax of 22.5% charged in 188 other countries, it is much lower if compared by Gross Domestic Product ("GDP"). In that case the corporate tax for the U.S. should be 29.5%. The Tax Cuts Act cut estate taxes for the very wealthy and eliminated some deductions for homeowners especially in high tax, democratic states. All this resulted in a 1.5 Trillion tax cut to the coffers of the U.S. government (See, Trump 1.m) below).

--Achieved huge tax cuts for the 1% most wealthy Americans. Samatha Jacoby (Senior Tax Legal Analyst, Center on Budget & Policy Priorities) testified before the Senate Committee on the Budget on 17 May 2023. She stated that the huge Trump tax cuts to the most wealthy benefited those more than twice as much as those in the lower 60% of the population.* She stated that there was little evidence these tax cuts promoted growth. Instead, they contributed to a rise in income inequality and ballooned deficits and debts (Noted also in Trump 1.m) below). (See, "After Decades of Costly, Regressive & Ineffective Tax Cuts, a New Course is Needed", The Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, 17 May 2023.) (See, 3. Tax Cuts below.)

*Trump also raised the inheritance tax baseline from \$5 million to \$11 million per person (i.e., the threshold before any tax must be paid to the federal government on assets held at the time of death). In 2024, the inheritance tax baseline went up to \$13.61 million per person. Note, in the US there are two taxes: a federal estate tax and an inheritance tax affecting property.

All these tax cuts under the Tax Cuts Act are temporary measures until the end of 2025. If Congress does not agree to make these different cuts permanent by the end of 2025, certain ones will revert to their previous levels. For example, the current inheritance tax cutoff at \$13.61 million would revert to its prior level of \$5 million if it is not made permanent law in 2025.

b) "The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change" i.e., the Paris Agreement: Trump promised to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

--Achieved. To this day, Trump has never admitted that climate change is occurring on Earth. Instead, he calls it a "hoax". The Paris Agreement ("PA") was adopted by 196 countries (including the U.S.) in Paris on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016. In order to withdraw from the PA, the terms of the PA required that the US to wait until three years after the treaty's effective date (i.e., 2019). Following the three years, the US then had to wait one more year before withdrawing. Thus, the US withdrawal from the PA took place on 4 November 2020, one day before Donald Trump lost his bid for a second presidential term. (See, Biden rejoining, Biden 1.d) below). With Trump's intention being to withdraw from the PA when he became president, he also rescinded or weakened two domestic policies initiated by President Obama to help the U.S. meet its climate goals under the PA. Trump also altered the National Environmental Policy Act governing the environmental review of big infrastructure projects.

c) Repeal and Replace the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act" ("Obamacare") Insurance:

-- Not achieved although Trump managed to dismantle parts of the law such as shortening the enrollment period. Signed into law in 2010, Obamacare's popularity has grown over the last years. During Trump's administration, those without health insurance grew by 3 million. At the beginning of 2021, 12 million Americans had Obamacare. As of 17 January 2025, Forbes reported that 24.2 million Americans were enrolled in Obamacare.

d) Building a Wall Along the US and Mexican Border and have Mexico Pay for It.

The 2016 Republican Platform stated: "The Border Wall must cover the entirety of the southern border and must be sufficient to stop both vehicular & pedestrian traffic."

--Not achieved as expected. Differing reports on the work state that some 49 miles/no, 62/no, 69 miles etc. of new wall was built by May 2020 under President Trump. Turning instead to FactCheck.org, this site reported that the "wall" was actually a resulting patchwork of fencing and that most of the wall construction was actually replacement for existing, including inadequate, fencing despite plans to build new barriers where none had existed before. Before the Trump work began, there was some 654 miles of barrier with 354 miles built to stop people and 300 miles that was anti-vehicular. In a report on the "Borderwall Status" dated 18 December 2020, the US Customs & Border Protection stated the following had been completed: "365 miles of new primary and secondary borderwall to replace dilapidated and outdated designs." Besides this replacement fencing, there was also "40 miles of new primary wall & 33 miles of secondary wall that was built where there had been no wall before." While the repair of the already-built barrier is something that is routinely done, this would mean that there was only some 73 miles of new wall built during Trump's presidency. Despite Trump's threats that Mexico must pay for the wall, Mexico never agreed to pay for the wall nor did it pay anything towards the wall.

Congress actually refused to pay for the wall, too, when it denied Trump's request for \$5 billion to build the wall. Not to be deterred, President Trump then redirected defense spending and other funds to pay for building the wall. This decision faced several legal challenges: the US District Court ruled in 2019 that this transfer of funds was unauthorized, followed by the US Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit upholding this decision. On 31 July 2020 the US Supreme Court ruled 4-5 that Trump could use these diverted funds thus defying Congress.

On his second campaign trail in 2024, Donald Trump falsely claimed, "We created the most secure border in US history, building nearly 500 miles of border wall" (29 July 2023). Further, Joseph Biden never said he had plans to "take down the wall" as Donald Trump falsely accused him.

e) Withdraw From the Iran Nuclear Agreement, technically known as "The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (JCPOA). This agreement came into effect on 16 January 2016 between Iran and a group of world powers including all permanent members of the UN Security Council.

--Achieved. This agreement was put into place to stop or, at the least, slow down Iran's development and attainment of nuclear abilities (i.e., nuclear weapons) by putting new, more strict sanctions in place on Iran. It was effective in doing this until Trump withdrew the US from the JCPOA in 2018 saying it was "the worst deal in history" and reinstated all previous sanctions against Iran which had been lifted when Iran signed the JCPOA.** It should be pointed out that Iran was keeping to the conditions of the JCPOA at this time but about a year after the US leaving the agreement, Iran began ignoring limitations on its nuclear program. (See, "What is the Iran Nuclear Deal?" by Kate Robinson, updated 27 October 2023). (See, Biden 1.f) below.)

** "This (exiting from the JCPOA) has been an increasingly costly blunder" for the US and the world. (See, "Trump Promised a Better Deal", Responsible Statecraft, 7 May 2024.

As a timely aside, on 7 March 2025, President Trump announced he had written Iran on 5 March 2025 because “Iran’s nuclear capacities are reaching a critical point”. The New York Times reported on 8 March 2025 that Trump said, “We can’t let them have a nuclear weapon”. Iran’s Ayatollah Khamenei strongly rebuffed Trump’s message to Iran, stating that Trump demanded Iran should negotiate with the US or face potential military action. Khamenei said, “The US’s offer to negotiate is not to solve issues but to put new demands on Iran.” Trump’s new instigation has now led to discussions between the US and Iran beginning with weekend talks on 12 April (in Oman) and 19 April (in Rome) 2025. But, to what end? On 19 April 2025, CNN reported that Iran in recent weeks had been vocal about “its concerns about striking a nuclear deal with Trump.” The Islamic Republic “has voiced objections to any deal that fully dismantles its nuclear program as opposed to only limiting its uranium enrichment to civilian-only use as stipulated by the JCPOA.” CNN noted that various US officials have made conflicting remarks, resulting in muddying the US’s true objectives in restarting these talks.

f) Rebuilding the U.S. Military So Strong That “Nobody will Mess with Us”.

-- Achieved (but see j) below) by reversing the defense cuts implemented by President Obama in 2013 for the Department of Defense (DoD). Defense spending increased from \$656 billion in 2017 to \$774 billion dollars in 2020. During Biden’s four years, the DoD’s Budget started at \$759 billion (2021) and grew to \$910 billion dollars for 2024. The Biden defense increase was mostly due to the U.S.’s large military support of Ukraine after it was attacked by Russia in February 2022 and supporting Israel’s retaliation against non-state terrorist organizations in the Middle East.

g) Bombing ISIS into Oblivion:

--Achieved only a small success by dropping one large, non-nuclear bomb on ISIS’s (Islamic State of Iraq & Syria) stronghold in Afghanistan. At which time President Trump announced that ISIS was largely defeated. ISIS remains a terrorist threat today.

h) Moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

--Achieved. With Jerusalem being a divided city claimed by both Israelis and Palestinians, moving the US embassy (in Israel) to Jerusalem appeared to signal that the US supported Israelis over the Palestinians – an appearance the US government has always stayed far away from for political reasons.

i) Cutting Up to 70% U.S. Federal Regulations to help business grow.

--Achieved. Trump slashed through regulations on everything from labor through the environment. Several days after taking office, he mandated that any federal department proposing a new regulation had to drop two already-existing regulations (a 2 for 1 proposition). This mandate was without regard to what the regulations actually said. Some regulations that were slashed were ones protecting wetlands and streams while others made changes to the National Environmental Protection Act.

j) Since 2013, Trump Has Said That No U.S. Troops Should Be Overseas.

-- Achieved mostly although as president, Trump sent an additional 3,000 troops to Afghanistan in September 2017. In December 2018, he withdrew about 2,000 troops from Syria. President Trump initiated a peace agreement with the Taliban (viewed as a terrorist organization) on 29 February 2020. The Afghan government was not included in any of these talks as demanded by the Taliban. Under this agreement, Trump agreed that the US would withdraw from Afghanistan by decreasing its troops from 13,000 to 8,600 in a few months following the signing of the agreement. The rest of the US troops would be withdrawn within 15 months but only if the Taliban fulfilled its agreed conditions. These conditions included cutting ties with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Trump’s own officials criticized the removal of overseas troops including his Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, who then resigned. Trump set the date of 1 May 2021 for the withdrawal of all remaining US troops with the idea that once he announced his ‘success’ in Afghanistan he would be able to regain the presidency in November 2020. The Taliban did not follow through and, among its breaches, welcomed al-Qaeda terrorists into the Taliban leadership. This did not deter Trump from continuing to state his success. (See, Biden 1.g) for more details of leaving Afghanistan.)

k) Complete Ban on Muslims Entering the US

-- Achieved somewhat by country but not by religion as Trump wanted. On the Trump’s Administration’s third try, it managed to ban citizens of four countries: North Korea, Iran, Libya and Venezuela.

l) Reversing the Obama Administration’s Move to Thaw Relations with Cuba.

-- Achieved mostly by re-imposing some trade and travel restrictions on Cuba and limiting the ability of organized tours and cruises to stop in Cuba. The poor relationship between the US and Cuba has existed since 1962 with the Cuban Missile Crisis (between the US, the Soviet Union and Cuba) until the Obama presidency.

m) Clearing the National Debt of Some 19 Trillion Dollars Within 8 years (i.e., 2 terms of office)

--Definitely Not Achieved: Instead, the Trump administration greatly added to the US National Debt by its tax cuts. Trump increased the National Debt Ceiling in 2017 (this does nothing to the debt except

excuse a larger debt); by October 2020 the U.S. National Debt had ballooned from \$19,000 Trillion to \$27,000 Trillion. (See, 3. below: "US Taxes & the National Debt")

Positive or Negative Results? On what, advisedly, can be called the 'positive' side, President Donald Trump managed to fulfill many of the campaign promises he made. This probably demonstrates that when he speaks of what he wants to achieve as president, he should be believed. On the very negative side, the majority of Trump's fulfilled promises did not help him to effectively run the U.S. government nor help the majority of U.S. citizens - especially those in the lower 60% economic levels of living. Trump's presidency most helped the 1% most wealthy taxpayers, certain US companies and himself. By making these tax cuts, Trump greatly added to the U.S. National Debt. As important, Trump's term of presidency noticeably lowered the esteem held by other countries for the United States. He left a void in the leadership of the world and was generally welcomed only by dictators such as President Putin of Russia and Kim Jong Un of North Korea. Trump questioned the need of the NATO Alliance, alienating European allies. In the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, he withdrew the US from the World Health Organization where the US had played a leading role. This move and Trump's own lack of concern for the common person raised the health threat for all Americans. His own recovery from Covid was due to US medical research and the use of experimental drugs.

Following his first term of office, President Donald Trump was ranked the worst president the United States has ever had. That is, out of 45 presidents he came in at number 45. (See, Biden 1. and 8. below.)

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Joseph Biden's Campaign Promises made in 2020: (See, Kevin Liptak, CNN 28 April 2023)

a) Biden Promised to Create Millions of Jobs in Manufacturing, Care-giving and Other Industries.

--Achieved. During Biden's presidential term (3.5 years/up to July 2024), employment grew by 13.4 million new jobs. This is almost double to the Trump presidency where employment grew by only 6.5 million new jobs. (See, "Employment Grew More Under Biden & Immigrants Did Not Get Most Jobs" by Stuart Anderson, Forbes 21 July 2024).

In historical terms, the U.S. unemployment during Biden's presidency reached its lowest level in 50 years. On 5 October 2024, the New York Times reported that the U.S. labor market "remains impressively strong" with a gain of more than 4.1 million jobs in the past year. The report stated it expected unemployment to continue to drop to 4.1% by the end of 2024. Lucia Mutikani, Reuters, 10 January 2025, reported that by June 2024 there were more than 8 million job openings but only 6.5 million unemployed individuals. The strong labor market was balanced with falling inflation. Spending on new factories almost tripled over Biden's first 3 years. With the Chips and Science Act of 2022 (the "Chips"), the Biden administration made the much needed investment in critical US technologies in order to reduce dependence on foreign manufacturing of critical semi-conductor chips. Construction employment hit an all time high of 8.2 million workers.

b) Repealing Trump Tax Cuts Given to the Very Wealthy

--Not Achieved. Also, although Biden stated he wanted to raise the corporate tax rate to 29%, he did not achieve this. (See, 3. below.)

c) Beating Covid-19 – His promise was: "To return to the sense of normality including reopening schools safely after the extended closures of the pandemic." The Covid-19 pandemic reached Western countries at the beginning of 2020, during Trump's presidency.***

--Achieved. Like the rest of the world, the U.S. mostly returned to normal after 2020 even with new variant waves in 2021 and 2022 prolonging the process. During Biden's initial year in office, there was a sharp decline in Covid-19 deaths from the earlier high number. President Biden said the federal government would provide 100 million Covid shots in his first 100 days in office. The US saw a low uptake on boosters. Under Biden, the US formally announced it was rejoining the World Health Organization ("WHO"). The US also joined COVAX (a partnership between WHO and two international groups) aimed at worldwide equitable access to vaccine with the US committed to give over 1 billion doses of Pfizer vaccine to poorer nations. Biden's \$1.9 Trillion American Rescue Plan of 2021, signed into law in March 2021, provided Covid relief to the nation with its stimulus checks, school funding and money for vaccines and testing,

*** In the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic in July 2020, President Trump said he was withdrawing the US from the World Health Organization (WHO). The US has been the largest contributor to WHO, contributing 12-15% of its total budget. Ironically, with the WHO requiring a one-year notice to withdraw from it, this occurred when Joseph Biden became president (see above). During Covid, Trump and his associates very publicly complained about and seriously undermined the positive reputation of the U.S. Centre for Disease Control & Prevention.

d) Climate Change: Biden promised to pull back a permit for the Keystone XL pipeline and to rejoin the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. (See, Trump 1.b above.)

--Achieved. On his first day in office (20 January 2021), Biden cancelled the Keystone XL pipeline and also signed an Executive Order to start the process to rejoin the Paris Agreement. The US officially rejoined the PA on 19 February 2021.

Biden also promised to ban new oil and gas permits on public land and water.

-- Achieved mostly. Biden protected millions of acres from drilling but also approved the Willow Project one of largest oil projects on public land. He tried to include major investments in clean energy but drew major blowback for his decisions on oil and gas drilling which wasn't the result he wanted.

e) Repair the US's Reputation Abroad and Repair Broken Alliances - "America is Back"

--Achieved, strongly. President Biden was instrumental in galvanizing both NATO and G7 in supporting Ukraine's defensive war against Russia. Ironically, although there have always been complaints and negative comments about US leadership in the world, when it was no longer there during Donald Trump's first presidency, it was missed. While it is obvious that the US can make and has made some poor decisions, historically it has tried to support other cultures and countries since the Second World War. Isolationism is no longer an option for the United States. Through a set of diverse programs the US reaches out to both allies and to countries that are in opposition to it. The US has been instrumental in setting up and supporting organizations such as the United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the World Health Organization, and USAid while helping with natural disasters around the world.

f) Return to the Iran Nuclear Agreement -- Technically known as "The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)".

-- Not Achieved due to the elapse of time. As seen above (Trump 1.e)), the JCPOA was agreed to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon but President Trump's withdrawal of the US from the agreement changed things. Biden's government 'rejoined' the JCPOA with months of negotiation between the US, Europeans and Iran. These talks went back and forth and then stalled to such an extent that the U.S. government said returning to the JCPOA was no longer a priority. UN inspectors reported in early 2023 that Iran had enriched trace amounts of uranium to nearly weapons-grade levels. By late 2023, certain provisions in the JCPOA started to expire. (See, "What is the Iran Nuclear Deal?" by Kali Robinson for the Council on Foreign Relations, updated 27 October 2023.) By 2023, it was then too late to agree anything with Iran.

g) End "Forever War" in Afghanistan & Remove All US Troops

--Yes to removing all US troops but No, because it was a mess on almost all fronts.

Although President Biden long held the view that the United States should pull its troops out of Afghanistan, the actual agreement to withdraw US troops was put forward and agreed to by President Trump. The agreement between Donald Trump and the Taliban, a non-state armed group, was signed on 29 February 2020 (the "Doha Agreement"). Under this agreement, President Trump agreed that if the Taliban fulfilled certain requirements, the U.S. would withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. As important, the Trump Administration agreed that US troops would not attack the Taliban from the date the agreement was signed through to the withdrawal of all US troops. The Taliban agreed to these conditions: to stop terrorist groups including al-Qaeda from operating in Afghanistan; to engage in negotiations with the Afghan government (not included in any of these meetings due to the Taliban demands); and to cease attacks on the US and coalition forces. At the time of signing, President Trump said, "If bad things happen, we'll go back." Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated, "The agreement will mean nothing—and today's good feelings will not last – if we don't take concrete action on commitments stated and promises made." The Secretary of Defense, Mark T. Esper stated that if the Taliban violated its pledges, "the United States would not hesitate to nullify the agreement." (See, Trump 1.j) above.)

Within several months of signing this agreement with the Taliban, the US had reduced troop numbers in Afghanistan from 13,000 to 8,600 with NATO withdrawing 4,000 of its 16,000 troops. The Doha Agreement stated that the Taliban would release 1,000 of its prisoners and the US/Afghan government would release 5,000 Taliban prisoners. Lengthy negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban resulted in the release of 5,100 prisoners by the Afghan government and the release of some 1,000 prisoners by the Taliban by August 2020. President Trump then asked the Afghan government to release a further 5,000 prisoners which it did. By this time, over 10,000 Taliban fighters had been released. Despite the Taliban not fulfilling most of its commitments, Trump still agreed to remove all US troops by 1 May 2021. On 15 January 2021, days before Joseph Biden became president, Trump withdrew more US troops, leaving only 2,500 US troops (from 13,000, 10 months earlier) in Afghanistan.

Despite the violations by the Taliban of the agreement, Biden continued with Trump's plan to pull all US troops out of Afghanistan, changing only the date from 1 May 2021 to 31 August 2021. Due to many Taliban victories across Afghanistan in 2021, President Biden sent additional US troops in August 2021— totaling some 7,000 troops—in anticipation of the US withdrawal. The United States' allies including Britain did not agree to nor were consulted about the timing of the US troop withdrawals.

From all appearances, the Trump administration should not have entered into an agreement with a non-state terrorist group which had very questionable legal standing to even enter into an agreement. There were no adequate US enforcement measures stated nor agreed to in case of non-compliance by the Taliban. Importantly, the US/Trump should have demanded that the Afghan government be involved in the talks from the beginning. The Afghan government could see (as could the Taliban) that an end date existed when all US support would end. Trump was anxious to conclude 'a deal' in time for the November 2020 elections. The US/Biden's failures included the US not having a strong evacuation plan for leaving Afghanistan; Biden did not share the US withdrawal timeline with his allies and he greatly underestimated the speed at which the Taliban would 'retake' the country. Some things beyond the US's control were the Afghan government immediately collapsing; the quick collapse of the trained Afghan military; and the regional tribal leaders giving their allegiance to the Taliban rather than fighting (MN Schmitt). Biden later, somewhat, apologized to the US's allies for the tragic withdrawal.

h) Cancel Federal Student Loans: Cancelling at least \$10,000 in federal student loans per borrower.
 --Achieved somewhat. According to Newsweek (13 January 2025), President Biden's administration cancelled/forgave a total of some \$183.6 billion in school loans held by more than 5 million borrowers. The federal courts put a stop to any further loan forgiveness, saying that the Biden Administration lacked the authority to forgive these student loans since he did it by Executive Order rather than through Congress, the appropriate law-making body.

i) Provide Universal Pre-kindergarten and Free Community College
 --Not Achieved. These provisions were part of the initial "Build Back Better" ("BBB") bill which did not pass Congress. Once these educational provisions were removed, the resulting bill, i.e., the "Inflation Reduction Act", was passed by Congress.

j) Appoint a Woman to the US Supreme Court
 --Achieved. After Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer resigned, Biden nominated Ketanji Brown Jackson who was confirmed in April 2022. She is the first woman of color on the Court. The Senate Judiciary Committee also appointed some 213 federal judges during Biden's term as president.

Positive or Negative Results?

Generally, all of the legislation passed by Congress or by Executive Order during Biden's presidency was directly for the benefit of the country, the local communities the environment, and the health of the US population. Contrary to President Trump, President Biden understood the need for conservation and the dangers imposed on the environment by climate change. Even in the area of loan forgiveness where he didn't have the authority to forgive federal school loans, he said he worried that those graduating from higher education were being overloaded by school debt. Generally, the first three years of the Biden presidency were successful in achieving his goals. While still very successful compared to any of the Trump years, Biden's last year became mired down with the on-going wars of Russia against the Ukraine and Israel against other non-state terrorists as well as Iran. His age seemed to catch-up with him as he tried to manage these wars, his numerous presidential duties and running for a second presidential term. For whatever reason, while Biden gave Americans much stability and economic growth during his administration, this was not reflected by his low approval numbers. Abroad, President Biden was much appreciated by the US's allies as someone experienced and knowledgeable in governance, diplomacy and fairness in contrast to his predecessor.

Following his first term of office, President Joseph Biden was ranked 13th of the total of 46 US presidents. Abraham Lincoln was ranked the best (1st) president the United States ever had. (See, Trump 1. above and 8. below.)

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Other Areas Under Each of D. Trump's and J. Biden's First Terms

--Please note that information given above may be repeated in these lower sections--

2. The Economy and the Markets:

Donald Trump came into office on 21 January 2017 on the crest of a strong economy which began during President Obama's first presidential term in 2009. A strong US economy continued until the first quarter of 2020 when the effects of a worldwide Covid-19 pandemic took hold. Ironically, Trump's campaign slogan in 2016 (and, 2024) was "Make America Great" but it already was that when he became president. Instead of doing great things, Trump did everything to run the country down both here and abroad. He dismantled or disrupted multilateral treaties, overhauled the tax system and immigration systems and with the help of the Senate's Republicans, changed the judiciary. Unfortunately, in building an administration, Trump valued loyalty over qualifications. With many top positions requiring experience along with specific skills and knowledge, this meant many areas of the US government were poorly and inadequately run.

Both Trump and Biden were presidents during the difficult Covid-19 pandemic. Trump was president for some 11 months at the beginning of Covid while Biden's presidency included some 17 months at the end of the worse part of the pandemic. In addition to the terrible toll of Covid worldwide, Biden also had to deal with the seriously hampered US economy left from the Trump presidency. Trump had decimated many of the federal governmental departments before his term of office ended in a time of uncertainty. The Covid pandemic produced worldwide unemployment, growing inflation for individuals and businesses, and an uncertainty of the future.

a) Employment: (See, Biden 1.a) above for more details)

--Under President Trump (2017-2021), employment grew by a total of 6.5 million jobs although some 2.1 million jobs were lost during the Covid pandemic. Unemployment rose 1.6% to a 6.3% total unemployment while number of those individuals being in employment fell to its lowest level in 50 years.
--Under President Biden (2021-20 July 2024*), employment grew by 13.4 million jobs; more than double the employment figures from President Trump's term of office.

b) Price of Goods & Services:

The actual price of goods and services was lower under Joseph Biden than it was under Donald Trump due to US wages increasing faster than the actual prices. This was a rare exception to many of the other top economies.

c) Repairing the US Infrastructure including but not limited to the roads, bridges, waterways under federal control.

Donald Trump spoke on this subject during his term as president but never did anything about the urgent need for the federal government to invest in the US infrastructure. In 2021, Joseph Biden signed into law the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act ("IIJA") for repairing dilapidated roads and bridges while allowing for massive investment in rural broadband. This legislation was the biggest investment in infrastructure repair in 60 years. By 2023, there was already a very substantial distribution of funds with the State Highway Funds receiving \$128 million for projects including nearly 3,000 bridge repair or replacement projects funded and \$9.9 billion committed to States for 10,000 new highway and bridge projects. (See, Joshua Sadlock, "Two Years Later, What has the IIJA Done?", 10 October 2023.) Sadlock also observed that President Biden was delivering on his stated agenda and needed to continue promoting the initial success stories.

d) Spending on New Factories: President Biden created a large number of manufacturing jobs and built new plants in areas suffering job loss and decline. Government investment for new factories almost tripled over the first three years of Biden's administration.

e) Inflation: Inflation is the measure of how much prices are increasing. Bringing inflation down doesn't mean reverting to earlier prices (as one would wish) but means that the increase in prices is slower. Following the Covid lockdowns, the US was not alone in having prices increase (i.e., inflation) as a reported 179 countries (of 194) saw higher inflation. Due to Covid, there were serious and long-term disruptions to the global economy with supply-chains severely affected. Certain goods were not in demand while others seemed too much in demand such as face masks and hand sanitizer.

f) Stock Markets:

Trump came in on a strong economy but overall, Wall Street did not like Trump due to his unpredictability. Following Biden's election win against Trump in November 2020, the Dow Jones stock market index passed 30,000 points, each point equating to one dollar of trade. On 17 May 2024, the Dow index passed 40,000 points for the first time ever. This was a significant marker indicating inflation was easing and that Biden's policies were working.

3. US Taxes and the National Debt

Taxes and Tax Cuts:

During President Trump's presidency, windfall tax cuts were given to the most wealthy individuals in the top 1% of the population and to big corporations. There were also certain tax changes under the "Tax Cuts & Jobs Acts of 2017" which did benefit all taxpayers but on a much smaller scale. These standard tax changes included a doubling of the standard deduction rate (resulting in fewer taxpayers itemizing their expenses); the elimination of personal deductions; a doubling of the annual Child Tax Credit as well as allowing more high-income parents to claim this credit; and a reduction of the number of taxpayers being subjected to the Alternative Minimum Tax. These changes reduced the tax for most

*The US labor market continued to remain impressively strong by adding 254,000 new jobs in September 2024, the largest gain since March. (See, "US Hiring Surges, Surpassing Expectations" by Talmon Joseph Smith, 4 Oct 2024, NYTimes.)

people but it was the wealthy individuals who benefitted far more than others. Of all the tax benefits, 60% of these tax benefits applied to individuals in the top 20% of income. Samatha Jacoby stated that the tax cuts for top 1% of the most wealthy meant they benefited from tax cuts of \$41,000. The bottom 60% of taxpayers benefited from \$500 tax cuts. (See, Trump 1.a) above.)

A review of US tax cuts in the past 25 years shows that the tax cuts benefiting solely the most wealthy have been made by the two Republican presidents, George W. Bush and Donald Trump. In his article of 27 March 2023, "Tax Cuts are Primarily Responsible for the Increasing Debt Ratio" **, Bobby Kogan wrote, "House Republicans are calling for spending cuts but this does not address the true cause of US debt." He went on to say that in the last 25 years the tax cuts enacted by both George W. Bush and Donald Trump slashed taxes disproportionately for the wealthy and for the profitable corporations, severely reducing federal revenues. Further, while "spending is down, so are revenues – significantly more. Without these tax cuts and extensions, US revenues would be on track to keep pace with spending indefinitely."

To understand how much revenue loss he is referring to, Kogan notes that "[t]hese tax cuts have added \$10 Trillion to the US debt since their enactment and are responsible for 57% of the increase in the debt ratio since 2001." He also adds, "[I]f the one-time costs of Covid and the Great Recession (2007-2009) are excluded, these tax cuts are responsible for more than 90% increase of the US debt ratio." This tax money from wealthy individuals and companies is no longer going into the coffers of the US Treasury. Finally, it is good to recall that all the tax cuts made by Donald Trump in his first term were 'temporary' and are set to expire in 2025. Several months now into Trump's second presidential term, it seems more likely that either Congress or President Trump will make these wealthy tax cuts permanent. (See, Trump 1.a) above, especially Samatha Jacoby's comments.)

National Debt:

In January 2017 when Donald Trump began his presidential term, the National Debt of the United States government was some \$19.9 Trillion dollars (capitalised here to show the extreme debt the U.S. has). By the end of Trump's administration in January 2021, the National Debt had jumped from \$19.9 Trillion to \$27.8 Trillion dollars – an increase of about 9 Trillion dollars (one Trillion is 1,000 times one billion dollars, i.e., \$1,000,000,000,000). This jump in the National Debt was due almost wholly to the Republican tax cuts to the wealthy (see above). The National Debt during Biden's administration (for comparison) started at around \$27.8 Trillion dollars (2021) but by the end of Biden's term of office had jumped to \$36.2 Trillion dollars (2025). While certain costs may have been predictable, other events such as war are unpredictable but generally necessary to support. The US under Biden supported Ukraine in its fight against the aggression of Russia for some 3 years while also supporting Israel in its defence against none-state terrorist groups for over some 1.3 years. There was Biden's cancellation of school loans which amounted to a forgiving of some \$183.6 billion debt. In the last year of the Biden administration, there were rising interest rates and rising costs of Medicaid. At the same time, none of these costs were due to giving large tax breaks to the most wealthy. The US Congressional Budget Office estimates that by 2034, the US Debt will rise to more than 56 Trillion dollars.

4. Gun Safety:

Despite the very strong efforts of most recent presidents (i.e., Democrat not Republican), this has not been achieved due to a very strong gun lobby. The Violence Project uses the following definition of a "mass shooting": "where four or more people are shot and/or killed at a single event in a public place." The number of mass shootings during Donald Trump's presidency (only the first) are shocking. Gun Violence Archive.org gave these numbers for each of Trump's presidential years: 2017 – 348 people shot and/or killed; 2018 – 336; 2019 – 417; and 2020 – 615. While Trump worked at placating the gun lobby, he made the US so much less safe. Trump's mantra was "It's not the gun that kills people, it's people who kill people."

In contrast to this, President Biden signed into law two of the most sweeping gun safety bills in nearly three decades. On becoming president in January 2021, Biden signed Executive Orders expanding background checks and also requiring tougher checks on younger buyers although too many gaps still remain.

Note: President Trump on 25 April 2025 has rejected all calls for new gun-control legislation. He also announced plans to dismantle President Biden's gun legislation.

5. Comparison of Staff Turnover during President Trump's four-year term and for the first three years of President Biden's presidency.

On 20 January 2024, Kathryn Dunn Tenpas, writing for the Brookings Institute, published her study of the staff turnover of the current president, Joseph Biden, and the prior six presidents going back to Ronald Reagan's two terms of office.

**Center for American Progress report.

Dunn Tenpas explained that turnover of staff informs one of several possibilities lurking in the president's leadership. It generally gives an indication of a president's ability to instill loyalty among his/her top advisors; in the first year, someone leaving may indicate a difficult fit with the new president; it may indicate a lack of knowledge of the person appointed to a position; and/or it can reflect dissension with the president or leader.

In her study, Dunn Tenpas defines "Turnover" as a vacancy created through resignation or firing or through promotion. Each event creates a disruption in either learning the job or the continuity of the job. As she explains, even a senior member leaving may cause junior staff departures due to following the senior staff to a new post or because the new senior person may prefer a new staff of people they know or want.

One area Dunn Tenpas's study examined was the Turnover for the Fifteen Cabinet Secretaries*** for both Trump and Biden during their term in office.

This is her chart regarding Turnover of these Cabinet positions:

	<u>1st Year</u>	<u>2nd Year</u>	<u>3rd Year</u>	<u>4th Year</u>	<u>Total</u>
Donald Trump	2	5	3	4	14
Joseph Biden	0	0	1	(0)	1

During President Trump's four-years in office, only 5 of the 15 Cabinet Secretaries served all four years. Dunn Tenpas noted that to find the same low turnover of Cabinet Secretaries as reflected by President Biden's loss of 1, one would have to go back some 171 years to find such a stable cabinet. Biden's Cabinet Secretaries worked as a team with the president, demonstrating a strong loyalty to him throughout his administration. While it was not stated in this study but was stated in 2. above, Donald Trump valued loyalty over qualifications. As is universally recognized, Donald Trump possessed no government or military experience as he started his first term of office.

In a separate study****, Dunn Tenpas looked at the stability of the National Security Council (NSC) during different presidential terms. The NSC is of utmost importance to the president and to the nation because it provides the president with advice on national security and foreign policy issues and also coordinates these policies with other key departments and agencies including the State, Defense, Homeland Security and the CIA.

Dunn Tenpas notes that "recordbreaking turnover at the most senior level of the White House staff and Cabinet" occurred during the Trump's first three years as president with "the frequent departures of senior staff being one of the most noteworthy features of this administration." According to Dunn Tenpas, the instability in the NSC began the first month of the Trump administration with the departure of three high-level officers. By August 2017, more departures marked a total of 5 NSC staff changes within 7 months. High-level departures continued through 2018 and 2019. By the fall of 2019, 7 of 8 senior NSC positions had turned over at least once. She noted, "This turnover rate is simply off the charts – no prior president comes close to this level of instability."

In stark contrast to President Trump, President Biden had one NSC advisor, Jake Sullivan, during his four years as president. Presidents (GW) Bush and Clinton also had only one NSC advisor throughout their first terms while President Obama had two advisors. Dunn Tenpas noted that a departure of a single NSC advisor results in additional departures adding to the disarray, raising anxiety levels and decreasing the level of expertise. In addition to the high turnover at NSC, President Trump instructed his (4th) NSC advisor to cut about 13% of the staff without any apparent strategy (an apparently common drawback with Trump). The instability and large cuts could "well undermine further the President's ability to conduct the business of national security."

As a final note, Simon Kuper, columnist for the Financial Times, wrote "Two Trumps. Which One is the Real One?" in which he examined the amount of support from Trump's first Cabinet for his second presidential campaign.(5*) Support of Trump's second presidential campaign only came from four of the dozens of Trump's former cabinet members. The quotes from a majority of the other Cabinet members included these: "Trump is a threat to democracy."; "He's unfit to be president."; Trump admires "autocrats and murderous dictators."; and, Trump's re-election "could mean the end of American democracy as we know it." Kuper pointed out that it was hard to find any democrat who worked for Biden saying he was unfit to be president.

***Cabinet Secretaries: State, Treasury, Defense, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health & Human Services, Housing & Urban Development, Transport, Energy, Education, Veteran's Affairs, Homeland Security, and the Attorney General.

**** "Crippling the Capacity of the National Security Council" a study by Kathryn Dunn Tenpas published by the Brookings Institute 21 January 2020.

5* Financial Times Magazine 4/5 May 2024.

6. Migrants

This has been a difficult area for both presidents and for all Western countries. In Europe during the decade ending 2023, some 29 million migrants arrived from outside Europe. In 2023, some 4.5 million migrants entered Europe with 3.5 million entering under legal means while another 1 million entered illegally (See, "Migration is Remaking Europe" by Andrew A. Michta, The Hoover Institute. 17 September 2024).

An overhaul of US immigration was a central plank of Donald Trump's first campaign. Trump's government had zero-tolerance towards migrants, using tough diplomacy to pressure Mexico and Central American to stop immigrants from travelling to the US border. In January 2019, Trump passed the Migrant Protection Protocols ("MPP") which forced asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for US immigration hearings. Some 70,000 US arrivals were sent back to Mexico. In March 2020, President Trump invoked "Title 42" by Executive Order which was a controversial law allowing the US to expel migrants - including those seeking asylum - at its border due to a 'concern of Covid-19'. Some 400,000 migrants were detained and expelled up to January 2021. (See, Trump 1.d) above.)

Trump's policies allowed US border authorities to deport adults crossing the US border illegally. In some cases, only the adults were sent back while any children accompanying them remained in the US, in US government custody. According to Bernd Debusmann Jr., at least 3,900 children of all ages were separated from their parents between 2017 and 20 January 2021.(6*) Debusmann pointed out that President Biden put an end to the "moral and ethical" shame of President Trump's controversial migration policies. While Biden reversed Trump's practice of separating families, his administration had much difficulty reuniting these families due to the many questions to be answered. Where were the adults sent? Had they moved on? What records were available outside the US?

As of April 2024, 1,400 children were still waiting to be reunited with their families—with 300 of these in the process of being reunified. (7*)

Following Trump's first term, many Democrats embraced the idea of a more open border. While running for president, Biden said that he would welcome many more migrants. As president, he loosened the standards for asylum. Due also to political and economic turmoil in Venezuela and other Latin American countries; a strong US economy and also a post-Covid surge of numbers, the US migration numbers massively increased after 2022. In her examination of the migrants reaching the US, Lucy Gilder (8*) noted that there were record numbers of migrants arriving at the southern border when Biden was president but that in the months before September 2024, these numbers dropped significantly. She stated that the migrant numbers were never at the high levels mentioned by Donald Trump. Gilder also discussed what an "Encounter" meant as used by the US Border Officers. During Biden's term of office, there had been more than 10 million 'Encounters' recorded. During Trump's term, 2.4 million Encounters were noted. "Encounter" refers to the following entries into the US: individuals entering and staying in the US; individuals entering into the US but later leaving; and, with multiple entries by the same person, each are noted as separate Encounters.

Biden extended Trump's Title 42 until 11 May 2023 claiming Covid as a justification. But on the day Biden became president, he suspended Trump's MPP policy by Executive Order. In May 2024, Biden attempted to pass a cross-party bill to limit the number of migrants into the US but this bill was voted down by the Republicans in Congress. The motivation for Republicans voting against the type of migrant bill they actually wanted seems mainly to put Biden and the Democratic party in a bad light for the forthcoming November 2024 election. Following the failure of his cross-party bill, Biden then signed an Executive Order in June 2024 that allowed the quick deportation of migrants at the US border without having their asylum claims processed if the average number of weekly 'Encounters' exceeded a certain threshold. A month later, the number of Encounters fell by one-fifth. It was also through Mexican efforts that the migrant numbers were brought down. The Mexican president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador stated that migrant numbers at the US southern border were halved from 12,000 per day to 6,000 per day.

As a final comment, although Trump has repeatedly linked border crossings with fueling violent crime in the US, the Department of Justice figures show a long-term decline in violent crimes with the 2023 numbers similar to those in 2018.

Note: While there have been much lower numbers of migrants arriving at the US's southern border in 2025, President Trump has sent some 3,600 US military troops in late January 2025 'to secure the southern border with Mexico' against migrants.

6* BBC News Verify – "How Biden's and Trump's Border Policies Differ" by Bernd Debusmann Jr. (4 June 2024)

7* IBID.

8* BBC News Verify – "How Many Migrants have Crossed the US Border Illegally?" by Lucy Gilder, 27 September 2024.

7. Joseph Biden's Win in the November 2020 Election over Donald Trump

Following Donald Trump's first term as president, he lost the 2020 election to Joseph Biden. It had been some thirty years since a sitting president had been defeated for a second term.

For the first time in modern history, a defeated presidential candidate refused to accept the election results or, at least, publically accept these results. Donald Trump's presidency stands out for many reasons and this is just one more. Privately, those around Donald Trump at the time have stated he did understand that he had lost the election. Despite some 62 court cases filed by Trump and others after the election, contesting inter alia, the election processes, vote counting and vote certification processes, nearly all cases were dismissed for lack of evidence or standing. Rep. Liz Cheney stated on 23 February 2021, "There were over 60 court cases where judges, including ones appointed by Trump and other Republican presidents, looked at evidence in many cases and there was no widespread fraud." The US voting system, including postal votes proved to be robust and fair. In January 2021, Donald Trump went even a step farther to legitimize his false claim of winning the election when he asked his vice president, Mike Pence, to refuse to accept the electoral results on 6 January 2021. Vice President Pence refused Trump; preferring to follow the law. Looking at Trump's words and actions in the days before and on 6 January 2021, President Trump intended to instigate, if not an insurgency, then an armed protest against those in the US Capitol. His strong words to certain people and groups, including that he would meet them at the Capitol, demonstrated two things: his true intentions and also his own cowardice as he never showed up at the Capitol. Instead, he continued to inflame the situation with his strong words and innuendoes. Following the 6 January 2021 attack on the US Capitol and the people who worked there, impeachment proceedings were brought by the House of Representatives against Donald Trump. The Senate Hearing ended in acquittal despite 7 Republican Senators voting with Democratic Senators. President Trump had two different impeachment proceedings brought against him – setting a new record. The first impeachment involved events happening in Ukraine.

As a note, Some hours after swearing to uphold the US constitution on 20 January 2025, President Trump proceeded to sign an Executive Order pardoning some 1,600 people who had been convicted of offenses related to the US Capitol attack.

On 25 March 2025 President Trump signed an Executive Order directing several federal agencies to change the rules for federal elections relating to postal voting. The Executive Branch, i.e., the president has no legal right making law about elections. Voting practices are decided by each state. By this Executive Order, Trump is attempting to override laws in 17 states. The Campaign Legal Center (CLC) in Washington, D.C. has announced that it along with several other election organizations have now sued to block the "Trump Administration's Illegal Election Overreach". (See, CLC 31 March 2025.)

8. Ranking of Each President Following the First Term of Office

Each president is ranked following their term of office looking at areas such as crisis leadership; economic management; public persuasion; international relations; administration skills; relations with Congress; performance with vision and whether they pursued equal justice for all. In the ranking by "2024 Presidential Greatness Project Expert Survey" (by 525 historians & political science scholars) published in February 2024 was:

- a) Donald Trump was ranked as the worst president of all US presidents – Position 45 of 45 presidents.
- b) Joseph Biden was ranked 14th of 46 presidents.

Under the Norwest Progressive Institution's Presidents' ranking, published 17 February 2025:

- a) Donald Trump was again ranked as the worst president of all US presidents: 46 of 46 presidents (this included Biden who was the 46th US president).
- b) Joseph Biden was ranked 13th of 46 presidents in greatness with the author stating Biden would have been ranked as one of the US's greatest presidents except for his last year in office. The author stated in 2024, "If Biden can prevent Trump's return and continue to strengthen the country, he would be ranked as one of the greatest presidents". But Biden did not act 'as a bridge' to the next president and instead negatively impacted on a successful presidential candidate due to his resistance to stepping aside for someone else to run.

The End