

Biden Versus Trump: a Libertarian-Right Perspective

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Abstract

This essay was created for the purpose of examining the presidency of Donald Trump and the presidency of Joe Biden. This essay will draw comparisons between the two in order to determine whether the state of the country would have improved if the 2020 election results were different. Rather than viewing both presidencies through the lens of party affiliation, this essay aims to carefully scrutinize and analyze aspects of both presidencies through the lens of libertarian-right values such as personal freedom, free markets and limited government. This paper will include reports, statistics, and data in order to thoroughly investigate various areas in which both Donald Trump and Joe Biden may have succeeded or failed. More specifically, this paper will cover the topics of the Covid19 pandemic, the economy, and the war in Ukraine. The basis for the success or failure of both administrations is whether either president successfully promoted individual freedom and prevented government overreach.

Biden Versus Trump: A Libertarian-Right Perspective

In their book, *The Great Reset: Joe Biden and the Rise of Twenty-First-Century Fascism*, Beck and Haskins (2022) explain how powerful and highly influential leaders are close to finishing the vast infrastructure that would change our communities forever in the first chapter. These changes, which range from being enormous to barely noticeable, are part of a proposition to transform the global economy, a plan that has been referred to as The Great Reset. The final result of this plan would result in societies with less personal freedom, more cronyism, and political and economic centralization. When trying to analyze who is behind this plan, Beck and Haskins explain how the World Economic Forum hosted a virtual meeting for some of the most powerful people in the world in 2020. The reason behind the meeting was to launch a new campaign for a Great Reset of the global economy by using the pandemic and climate change as an argument for the reforms they proposed to society. When considering the draconian covid policies like the lockdowns and vaccine mandates, bank bailouts, inflation, and ridiculous amount of funding we have sent to Ukraine, it seems that our society is moving closer to resembling the one that Beck and Haskins believe the ruling class is trying to achieve. As they point out in chapter two of their book, many American citizens feel that there has been a gradual shift toward light authoritarianism in both major U.S. political parties over the past couple of decades, and the problem seems to have escalated. When asking the question as to whether the status quo would have changed if Trump or Biden would have won, we should keep the following question in mind: who is more likely to put a stop to the economic and social collapse that our country is starting to fall into?

Trump and Biden's Response to Covid

During the beginning of the pandemic, the original plan was for the government to push social distancing for a maximum of fifteen days. Trump had also initially shown that he wanted a laxer social distancing policy when it came to parts of the country that were not as affected by the spread of Covid. Instead of taking this more relaxed approach, Donald Trump extended the national social distancing guidelines to last until April 30th. This led to many local governments having more restrictive policies on mobility and social gatherings. On the federal level, guidelines discouraged social gatherings as well as going out to restaurants, bars, stores and the workplace (Associated Press, 2020). As Covid began to spread, Donald Trump released the following statement: "NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 201 and 301 of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*) and consistent with section 1135 of the Social Security Act (SSA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 1320b-5), do hereby find and proclaim that the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States constitutes a national emergency, beginning March 1, 2020." He then directed that throughout the duration of the public emergency, the Secretary of HHS be given authority to modify requirements for health insurance programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and State Children's Health Insurance programs, as well as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Privacy Rule (Trump White House, 2020).

Donald Trump declared a state of emergency under the Stafford act, as well as the more expansive National Emergencies Act. The Stafford Act is a law that allows the president to grant power to FEMA so that they will assist states and municipalities during a crisis. In regards to the Stafford Act, Trump stated that "We have very strong emergency powers under the Stafford

Act." The National Emergencies Act is one that allows the president to declare a national state of emergency at any given time. This law does not have any guidelines for determining a state of emergency, therefore it is up to the president to make the decision. Upon declaring a national emergency, the president may renew emergency powers and redeclare a national emergency an unlimited number of times. The indefinite renewal of a national emergency is a practice that has been done before (Cathey, 2020).

Although some may claim that Donald Trump did not have a hand in shutting anything down, we can recall when Brian Kemp, the Governor of Georgia, opened up his state in April of 2020 (BlazeTV, 2023). In regard to his view on Kemp's wish to reopen, Donald Trump stated that "Spas, beauty salons, tattoo parlors, & barber shops should take a little slower path, but I told the Governor to do what is right for the great people of Georgia (& USA)!" When Kemp revealed his plan of action for reopening the state of Georgia, Donald Trump responded by saying that he completely disagreed with Kemp's decision and claimed that it violated federal reopening guidelines. According to reports from the AP, Trump's stance on Kemp reopening was the result of White House advisors having persuaded him that Kemp was reopening the state too soon (Breuninger, 2020).

In a White House briefing in August of 2020, Donald Trump stated his belief that Americans must recognize that a permanent lockdown is not a viable path, and that it would cause harm rather than prevent it. He also claimed that the United States originally shut down in order to prevent hospitals from overflowing, and to allow scientists and health officials to study the virus so that they can develop treatments. President Trump claimed that the United States was doing well in developing vaccines and treatments. Trump also stated that "Lockdowns do not prevent infection in the future. They just don't. It comes back many times, it comes back."

Over the course of the Covid19 outbreak, state lawmakers have been responsible for enforcing draconian restrictions on citizens and businesses. These restrictions and social distancing rules have led to the decline in the United States economy, which led Donald Trump to begin pushing for the country to reopen (Lovelace Jr, Higgins-Dunn, 2020). Not only did the lockdowns affect the economy, but they also had a significant impact on mental health. According to Shweta Singh et al., (2020), the lockdowns brought a sense of fear and uncertainty across the world and has led to both short term and long term psychological and psychosocial implications for children and adolescents in particular. The isolation and social distancing strategies, as well as the closure of schools and activity areas, were unprecedented circumstances, and caused a feeling of stress and helplessness across the globe. Stress has been proven to have negative effects on a child even before birth, and the lockdowns have had a far more negative effect on development in young children and adolescents in comparison to adults. Questionnaires completed by parents have revealed that the state of the world during the lockdowns left young children feeling isolated, scared, and uncertain. Parents have also reported that children had experienced nightmares, insomnia, lack of appetite, irritation, and separation anxiety. For children attending school and college, the lack of a structured school setting had resulted in disruption in routine, boredom, and apathy towards new innovations for engaging in academic and extracurricular activities. Some children had shown a lower effect for not being able to go outside, being unable to spend time with friends, and being prevented from attending in person school functions. The constraint of movement caused by the lockdowns will also possibly have long term effects on psychological well-being. For the children who were separated from parents, isolation may cause them to be at risk of developing mental health problems due to this separation. Isolation from parents can have long term psychological effects on a child, and can

make the child more vulnerable and can have a negative effect on mental health. This separation can cause symptoms such as feelings of sadness, stress, fear of death, fear of the death of one's parents, and fear of being isolated in a medical facility. All of these components can have a severe effect on a child's psychological development (Singh et al., 2020).

On twitter on March 27, 2023, Representative Thomas Massie shared a video that exposed Trump's early praise of Fauci. The caption for the video read "Fauci was a disaster for America. No creature of the swamp should ever be trusted with this much power." What Thomas Massie did was essentially post a two-minute-long compilation video that includes each of the times Donald Trump had praised Anthony Fauci. In the video, Fauci makes the statement "I didn't close down anything," but he was nonetheless given the power to shut down the country, and the video posted by Thomas Massie sheds light on who exactly gave Fauci that power. In the video, Donald Trump makes remarks on Fauci by stating that "He's a good man, I like Dr. Fauci a lot." When speaking about President Trump, Fauci claims that "the President has listened to what I have said and what other people on the task force have said." The video also includes footage of Trump stating that "We have, whether it's Dr. Fauci, we have the best people on Earth." Fauci claims in the video compilation that when Trump "suggests why don't we do this, and I say that's really not a good idea from a scientific standpoint." The fault that Donald Trump seems to have is that he does not have the ability to admit when he has been deceived. When Donald Trump made the decision to shut down based on bad information, he did not admit that he made that decision based on bad information, nor did he apologize. Because of this, the final year of his presidential term was taken over, which led to his support not being as strong as it could have and ultimately enabled more opportunities for election fraud (BlazeTV, 2023).

In 2021, Joe Biden made the attempt to force companies with over 100 employees to comply with vaccine mandates or test employees weekly. The mandate would have affected up to 100 million Americans in different fields, including the healthcare industry, and would directly impact the private sector. In response to this, Representative Neal Dunn stated that “Getting the vaccine should be up to you and your doctor - not the federal government.” Representative Robert Aderholt also made his stance on the mandate known when he stated that "The U.S. Constitution does not give the President this type of authority. No where in Article 2 of the Constitution will you find anything that even remotely gives the President this kind of power" (Morris, 2021). Under the Biden administration, HHS also extended the Covid19 state of emergency and released a declaration that said "As a result of the continued consequences of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, on this date and after consultation with public health officials as necessary, I, Xavier Becerra, Secretary of Health and Human Services, pursuant to the authority vested in me under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, do hereby renew, effective January 11, 2023, the January 31, 2020, determination by former Secretary Alex M. Azar II, that he previously renewed on April 21, 2020, July 23, 2020, October 2, 2020, and January 7, 2021, and that I renewed on April 15, 2021, July 19, 2021, October 15, 2021, January 14, 2022, April 12, 2022, July 15, 2022, and October 13, 2022, that a public health emergency exists and has existed since January 27, 2020, nationwide" (Nerozzi, 2023). After HHS had extended it for the 12th time, house Republicans called for Secretary Xavier Becerra to end the Covid19 public health emergency. The house Republicans sent a letter to Becerra in which they demanded that the declaration be withdrawn and explained that the continuous extensions of the public health emergency calls into question the expansion of power within the executive branch and its abuse of statutory authority (Chasmar, 2023).

In chapter two of their book Beck and Haskins (2022) analyze the following quote by Rahm Emanuel: “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste.” This was a statement that Rahm Emanuel had made in 2008 at a conference hosted by the Wall Street Journal. Beck and Haskins explain how Emanuel made this statement during what was one of the most significant economic crashes in United States history. The authors note that the quote is often used by Republicans to demonstrate how establishment politicians like Emanuel, who was the former chief of staff for Barack Obama, try to use disasters as opportunities to fulfill their liberal, progressive, or socialist goals. Emanuel does not explicitly say that the 2008 economic crisis provided democrats an opportunity to further their reforms, instead he was stating that the crisis provided an opportunity for both parties to provide a solution. Although that might be seen as pandering, the covid pandemic has taught us that many Republicans want to find ways to expand the power of the government and corporations just as much as Democrats do. The difference between the two no longer seems to be the question as to whether the government should be involved in economic and societal decisions, and instead has shifted to the question as to what extent the government should be involved with these issues. The people who believe in free markets and individual liberty have few champions in government, and the problem appears to be getting worse. Having an understanding of how policymakers have reacted to the outbreak of COVID-19 and turned it into an opportunity for accelerating reform provides a vital road map we must understand if we are going to fight back against attempts to centralize power in the hands of the ruling classes (Beck & Haskins, 2022).

Trump Versus Biden: Economic Policy

The stock market may have grown by 31 percent during the 807 days leading up to Trump’s election, but by the 807 days after his election, manufacturing grew by 51 percent.

Manufacturing has also had a significant rise as a result of the Trump administration and rose by 3.6 percent during Trump's first three years in office in comparison to the 1.7 rise during Obama's first three years. 487,000 manufacturing jobs were created under the Trump administration, and unemployment has also fallen under Trump. Although unemployment was already declining before Trump's election, economists believe that the continued trend is especially impressive considering the rate has reached the lowest it has been in 50 years. Although some criticize the Trump administration for wages due to wage increases slowing down, it is worth noting that wages are at their highest point in history (Lott, 2020). According to the U.S. Commerce Department, the United States economy grew at the fastest pace ever documented by the time of the third quarter under the Trump administration. The state of the economy under the Trump administration was even higher than economists estimated, setting a positive trend.

Based on this, we can attest that Donald Trump is skilled when it comes to providing work for U.S. citizens. As a result of President Trump's policies, household median income reached the highest level in history at \$65,000, and real disposable income was increased by almost \$6000 per household. The Trump administration was also responsible for removing expensive and unnecessary regulations on small businesses and employers. Prior to the outbreak of Covid19, around half a million jobs were created during Donald Trump's presidency, and wages for blue collar employees were increasing faster than they were for white collar employees. Donald Trump himself signed one of the biggest tax cuts in the history of the United States, and the majority of workers have benefited from these tax cuts. Decreasing marginal tax rates, doubling the standard deduction, and doubling the size of child tax credit is highly beneficial for U.S. citizens. Because of these tax cuts, employees have been able to receive pay

raises, bonuses, or additional retirement contributions (Walker, 2020). Under the Trump administration, employment for even the most vulnerable income groups, including minorities, had the highest increases we had seen in decades. African American unemployment reached an all-time low, and Hispanic unemployment went from 5.5 percent to 3.9 percent (Trump, 2020).

In its re-estimate of President Joe Biden's FY23 budget, the Congressional Budget Office verified that the Biden administration's proposed levels of debt, spending, and taxes in President Biden's budget submission would be at the highest levels we have ever seen in the history of the United States, with spending increasing by 62 percent and taxes increasing by 80 percent, which will ultimately create a crisis that stems from the Biden administration. Energy prices have reached a record high as well with Biden's cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline, as well as his \$45 billion tax increase on domestic energy producers. Whether it's the border, the gas station, or the store, it is evident that Biden's Democratic policies have chipped away at personal and financial freedoms and harmed the economy of our country. Some other predictions for the economy made by the Congressional Budget Office for 2023 include \$13 trillion dollars in new public debt, debt as a percentage of GDP rising by 103 percent (the highest in 76 years), and 1.6 trillion dollars more on discretionary spending (Budget House Republicans, 2022). Due to Joe Biden's radical policies, the state of the economy is on the brink of a recession (McIntosh, n.d.).

While giving a speech in New York, Joe Biden claimed that the most common gas price was \$5 when he took office. This statement was far from true, as the average price for gas on the day he was inaugurated was \$2.39, which is much lower than the price of gas under the Biden administration. Biden's statement made it appear as though gas prices have decreased significantly during his presidency when in fact they have increased significantly. According to AAA, gas prices rose to \$5.02 per gallon in June partly due to the Russians invading Ukraine. In

September of 2022 Biden also claimed that in 41 states as well as in the District of Columbia that the average price of gas was \$2.99. This statement also proved to be false, as there was not one state that had an average lower than \$2.99 at the time (Dale, 2022).

Another example of a false claim made by the Biden administration is when the administration asserted that the actions that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation took in order to bailout Silicon Valley Bank would not cost taxpayers any money. According to EJ Antoni, a research fellow in regional economics for The Heritage Foundation, the government is spending tax dollars, and therefore is also spending taxpayers' money. After the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, which is the second largest in United States history, the Treasury, Federal Reserve, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation released a joint statement claiming that the losses of Silicon Valley Bank would not be borne by the taxpayer. Biden himself also claimed that the actions taken to protect Silicon Valley and Signature Banks would come at no cost to the taxpayer, and that Americans can trust that the system is safe. Antoni explains that the idea that taxpayers will not be affected by the mitigation effort, which President Biden had suggested was not a bailout, is completely false when examining the mechanics of the bailout operation. After the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, federal regulators decided to backstop \$175 billion in deposits. Federal officials have also waived the FDIC threshold of \$250,000 and intend on releasing cash from the insurance funds paid into banks. The FDIC also intends on auctioning around \$200 billion of Silicon Valley Bank assets, and deposits that do not come from the auction or insurance fund will be supported by special assessments, which is a tax on larger banks. Antoni explains that the FDIC will recoup its losses by raising the prices of fees it charges other banks, which leaves taxpayers having to cover the insurance and bank fees (Miller, 2023).

On the Subject of Ukraine

During his February trip to Ukraine, Joe Biden announced that the United States would be providing \$500 million in security and assistance to aid Ukrainians during their war with Russia. This aid package includes rocket system ammunition, mortar and artillery rounds, anti-armor weapons, radar equipment, two tactical vehicles for equipment recovery, Claymore anti-personnel mines, demolition munitions, four Bradley Fighting Vehicles, night-vision equipment, communications equipment, medical supplies, spare parts and other field equipment. According to the Department of Defense, this aid package is worth \$460 million and will be Joe Biden's 32nd drawdown of supplies and equipment from Department of Defense inventories for Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian government, the United States has donated more than any other country with \$196 billion in military, financial, and humanitarian aid between the dates of January 24, 2022, and November 20, 2022. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has stated his opposition to Biden's Ukraine policies, as they seem to lack a clear strategic objective (Gillespie, 2023).

Former senior advisor Jared Kushner claims Russia would never have invaded Ukraine had Donald Trump still been in office. In an interview with Hugh Hewitt, Kushner stated his belief that the conflict between Ukraine and Russia could have been completely avoided. Kushner also stated that Donald Trump had no issues with Russia during his time in office. In an interview with Newsmax, Kushner emphasized this belief by stating that there's a zero percent likelihood that there would be a war in Ukraine had Trump still been in office. It would appear that the majority of American citizens would agree with Kushner; in a poll conducted by Harvard's Center for American Political Studies and Harris Insight and Analytics, 62 percent of

Americans said that Russian President Vladimir Putin would not have invaded Ukraine if Donald Trump were still president (Saul, 2022).

It is worth noting that the 2022 invasion of Ukraine is not the first. In 2014, armed conflict began in Eastern Ukraine when Russia annexed Crimea (Center for Preventative Action, 2023). There are some commentators and politicians on the right who believe that the answer as to why Putin didn't invade Russia during the Trump administration has to do with the strength of Donald Trump, though associate professor of politics Jennifer Pisano disagrees. Pisano (2022) believes that the explanation for Putin not invading Ukraine during Trump's presidency has to do with the policy alignments of Russia and America at the time, and claims that when Trump was in office, Putin was already getting what he wanted. This theory has been disproven by Manafort in the book *Political Prisoner: Persecuted, Prosecuted, but Not Silenced* (Manafort, 2022). In the book, Manafort recalls how in January of 2017, though he was no longer involved with Donald Trump's campaign, leaks about Manafort being the link to Russia began to spread throughout the news. One day after the Steele dossier became public, Ken Vogel of Politico wrote an article that tracked the beginning stages of the investigation on Manafort. The article laid out the case of how DNC staffer Alexandria Chalupa who was working with the Clinton campaign, the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington, and a network of Ukrainian sources started to promote storylines of Manafort being connected to Moscow. Chalupa had reportedly told embassy staff that "if we can get enough information on Manafort or Trump involvement in Russia, she could get a hearing in congress in September" meaning before the election. The story also highlighted the release in Ukraine of a ledger which alleged to list a total of \$12.7 million in cash payments to Manafort. Opposing party politician Serhiy Leshchenko stated at a press conference that the payments listed by the ledger were completely against the law. The basis of

these accusations was never mentioned, and the authenticity of the ledger was questionable at best. A story released by the *Times* claims that there was a meeting between President Yanukovich and Putin in which Yanukovich told Putin that the payments were authorized. Manafort affirmed that there was no trail to worry about as these stories were completely fabricated, and there was no basis for the allegations; it was an attempt to boost a false narrative. In the political and media spheres, the reaction exploded on a global scale. Amongst the hysteria, no one was paying attention to the fact that there was no evidence to support these accusations. The National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, which is an investigative body designed by the US Embassy in Ukraine and the Government of Ukraine to investigate corruption, dismissed these allegations as false. The ledger was discredited along with the possibility that Putin and Yanukovich had met up to discuss it. Manafort explains that he was a victim of the conspiracy to undermine Donald Trump's campaign (Manafort, 2022).

Conclusion

Upon examining the topics of the war in Ukraine, economic policy, and the Covid19 pandemic, we can infer that Joe Biden's policies have been particularly devastating to the country. As we have learned from the data collected in this paper, the Biden administration has been responsible for skyrocketing gas and energy prices, crony capitalist bank bailouts, and authoritarian mandates. All of this suggests that the Biden administration has not put the interests of the American people first - an alarming thought when considering the fact that those in power are paid to represent us. When comparing Biden's presidency with that of Donald Trump's time in office, we can see that our country has seen some positive change under the Trump administration. It is evident that conflict in Ukraine has happened during both the administration that came right before Trump's time in office, and during the administration that came

immediately after. When looking at the statistics, it is hard to deny that Donald Trump successfully created millions of jobs for American citizens. Under the Trump administration, we saw significant economic growth and unemployment reached record low levels. Despite all this, his presidency was not perfect. His response to the outbreak of Covid19 was one that enabled authoritarian state officials to impose rules and regulations that resembled something of a dystopian novel. His choice to declare a state of emergency allowed Joe Biden to continue the dystopian state we had endured for so long, and kickstarted a series of attacks on our civil liberties. Although it is easy to see that Donald Trump made a big mistake, Joe Biden's entire presidency feels like a big mistake. Considering this as well as the fact that Donald Trump oversaw a great period of economic growth during his presidency and avoided conflict in Ukraine, it would seem that if Donald Trump had won the election in 2020, our society would not have moved towards economic failures and social collapse that we have experienced in recent years.

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