

**Are Biden and Trump Really as Different as Most Think?**

Josephine Yu

Department of Political Science, Diablo Valley College

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Adjunct Professor: John Kropf

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### **Abstract**

The status quo of the United States, politically and economically, has not changed very much in the past few years. Although many Americans view the Democratic and Republican parties as the complete opposite of one another, there are actually few differences that set them apart. Whether it was under Trump, or currently under Biden, the status of the US has been relatively stable. Both the politics and economy of the US are complex and are made up of many parts. Some examples of the many topics that go under the status quo are large corporations and international relations. Politically and economically, large corporations have started to dominate US industries causing relationships between government officials and businesses to form. Foreign affairs are also a big part of the political status quo today. It includes war, trade, and alliances, all things that make up both Biden and Trump's foreign policies. Due to the many similarities both the Democratic and Republican parties have and the unsatisfactory results of both leading the country, a large group of Americans have even started to desire a new third party.

### **Are Biden and Trump Really as Different as Most Think?**

The term “Status Quo” comes from Latin, meaning the existing state of affairs (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It can be used to describe issues in politics, religion, science, society, economics, and the military of a country. Specifically for the United States, the political and economic status quo has not changed very much from several years ago. The politics of the United States is very complex and is made up of multiple parts, including large corporations, elections, and international affairs. Large corporations seem to have too much power over the government, instead of the other way around. The government’s priority is not to listen and implement ideas from the people that can benefit society, but to make decisions that benefit corporations. The government no longer serves the people, as it was intended to do by the Constitution, which has created lots of dissatisfaction among the American people. Elections are also an important part of the politics and economy of the United States but have lost some value as most Americans associate spending and funding with victory, therefore, if their favorite candidate has less funding than others, they do not see a point in participating as it is assumed that he will have a smaller chance of winning. International affairs also affect a large portion of the political status quo. Although it may seem as if Biden and Trump have completely different foreign policies, they are not as different as most would think.

The politics of the United States has always been somewhat messy, with problems that have been going on for decades, and even as new leadership came and went, no changes have occurred. The United States is also quite complex economically. According to the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis, this year’s third quarter GDP has grown by 4.9 percent annually, which shows there was an increase in customer spending and inventory investment (U.S. economy at a glance, n.d.). The United States is also seen as a global leader in trade as well as

having one of the world's largest economies (Economy & Trade, n.d.). However, there are also issues such as corporations, military spending, unemployment rates, and inflation. Corporations are able to heavily influence government official decisions because of their contribution to the economy. United States military spending has always been one of the highest in the world and is one of the priorities of the government. Similarly to the political status quo, the economic status quo has also caused a large number of Americans to negatively view the US government and political parties. Considering how similar the political and economic status quo has been for the past few years, it does not matter whether Biden or Trump wins, the political and economic status quo will be relatively similar, and nothing will fundamentally change how the society, the economy, and the politics of the US are run today.

For change to occur in our society, there has to be a difference in the beliefs and values of those elected to represent our country. If the beliefs of the two are similar, actions and decisions made by them will be similar as well. This makes it almost impossible for any change to occur, meaning the status quo will remain relatively the same. There are many examples of recent events that show that despite the change in leadership every few years, nothing in society has changed. Before explaining these examples, it is important to first understand the ideologies of the top candidates for the upcoming election next year, Biden and Trump. Biden, a Democrat, and Trump, a Republican, are usually portrayed as opposites with different goals and priorities. However, they are not as different from each other as many may think. According to the political compass, a test that shows where one lies on the political scale, both Biden and Trump fall into the Authoritarian Right category, which means they both believe in a centralized power of government, are more conservative, and like to maintain the status quo (The Political Compass, 2001). Not only do they fall into the same category, but they are positioned very close to one

another, indicating that they share very similar beliefs and would most likely make the same decisions in politics and economics, despite being from different political parties.

Although the goals of Biden and Trump are similarly aligned, both Democrats and Republicans still view them as completely different. The liberals believe their society under Trump had worsened significantly while Biden helped with issues that affected the public. According to Gurtov, a professor of political science at Portland State University, America's politics has been on the decline since Trump became president. Gurtov agrees with a New York Times columnist, Peter Baker, that, "There was a time, not that long ago, when the United States presumed to teach the world how it was done. When it held itself up as a model of a stable, predictable democracy. When it sent idealistic young avatars to distant parts of the globe to impart the American way. These days, to many watching home and abroad, the American way no longer seems to offer a case study of effective representative democracy. Instead, it has become an example of disarray and discord, one that rewards extremism, challenges norms, and threatens to divide a polarized country even further." He argues that the United States can no longer be called a democracy, with political decline at both the national level and the lower levels of government. At the national level, the Republican party has become a "Trump cult", the House of Representatives has become weakened and damaged, and the following of the Constitution has not been emphasized (Gurtov, 2023).

At the lower levels, there have been movements against almost everything, from book bans and violence against election workers to every action or decision made by the federal government. Not only has Trump politically destroyed the US, but some of his actions can classify him as a criminal. He has been impeached twice and indicted many more times, is a fraud, and does not even conceal his admiration for Vladimir Putin, but is still allowed to run for

president. Gurtov claims that Biden has been far more helpful in issues that the public supports, has a good moral compass, is intelligent, has better poll numbers than other current democratic leaders, and is logically most likely to win the election next year since he will be weighed against the Republicans, who are no longer capable of leading and representing a country (Gurtov, 2023).

However, as much as liberals like to believe Trump was completely useless in office and that he should not be allowed to lead the United States, his opponent, Biden, has flaws that Trump does not that conservatives believe can affect how effectively Biden will serve, thus leading to the belief that Biden should not be re-elected as president. Data collected from a survey of 1,088 general election voters asking whether or not they believe Biden is too old to serve a second term shows that the majority, 63.5 percent, think he is, with 92.3 percent of Republicans, 64 percent of independent voters, and 29.3 percent of Democrats agreeing with it (Knudsen, 2023). Rush Limbaugh, a conservative radio host, also believes Biden will do a poor job in uniting the country. He points out that in his inauguration speech, Biden insulted around 75 million people who did not vote for him by saying, ““They are white supremacists. They’re domestic terrorist, political extremists, and we’re gonna defeat ‘em!”” Republicans also back up and support Trump by justifying his actions that led to his impeachment. Trump was impeached due to the incitement of rioters in the Capitol, however, Trump supporters believe that he should not have been blamed for the incident. According to Limbaugh, there was never any evidence showing Trump purposefully provoked unlawful behavior and that he even told protestors to do so peacefully. He also mentioned how the timeline did not make sense as Trump’s speech, which was blamed for causing the rioting, happened after the storming of the capitol, so it is not possible for Trump to have been the cause (Soellner, 2021). Since this caused most Republicans

to see Trump as the victim, about half of Americans still believe Trump should be able to run despite his actions, and 80 percent of Republican voters believe that even if convicted, Trump should still be able to run (Buren, 2023).

Although both political parties are correct in some of their claims, they focus too much on differences that are mainly in their personality and leadership styles, not so much on their beliefs and goals. Most of Biden and Trump's differences will not deeply affect the political and economic status quo. According to Fayazmanesh, a professor of economics at California State University, Fresno, Biden and Trump have some similarities, but for the most part, represent the same thing. Biden is seen as a "normal" president, who knows how the system works and how to respect other country leaders, however, he is also a supporter of war and the invasion of Iraq, old, a liar, and possibly involved in sexual assault. Trump, on the other hand, is seen as not "normal" and to many as a "sociopath," "narcissist," "liar," white supremacist, sex offender, and more, who has also destroyed relations with many countries. However, even though the two presidents have these differences, the author points out that both their foreign policies and domestic policies are similar and that they both make decisions based on money and what benefits themselves instead of, "what is right or wrong, what is moral or immoral," and, "what is ethical or unethical." Ultimately, regardless of who wins the next election, the existing social order will be maintained, "butchers around the world that are friends of the US," will continue to be supported, and any governments not ready to obey the US will still be overthrown by the US government (Fayazmanesh, 2020).

One of the biggest commonalities between most Presidents from either party is their tendency to put the needs of large corporations before those of their people. Large corporations are a big part of the US economy and help generate a lot of the GDP. According to the Patriot

Ledger, large corporations are dominating the industries of the United States, which caused a huge gap between the income of the elites and the common people, with the top one percent earning 23.8 percent of the national income and 38.6 percent of national wealth. Although the US has tried to regulate large businesses in the past, such as creating anti-trust policies, it has never been truly successful. Now, many want the government to revisit antitrust laws over the past 40 years that have not been heavily enforced in hopes of lowering the power large corporations have and giving smaller businesses a fairer chance of succeeding. However, other factors, such as lobbying, lower the chances of any major changes happening. Corporations spend millions of dollars in lobbying every year, which can heavily influence government officials and their decisions. In 2018, Facebook spent \$12,120,000 and Amazon spent \$14,400,000 on lobbying (Giglio, 2020).

Not only are large corporations part of the economic status quo that the government wants to maintain, but they are part of the political one as well. The Supreme Court can give large businesses more power, such as in the *Citizens United v. FEC* case where businesses were given the power to spend as much as they wanted on candidates during political campaigns and elections, which affects both the economic and political status quo (Kennedy, 2017).

Economically, the large amount of spending during election season helps increase GDP, which generally shows that the economy is doing well. Politically, the relationship between politicians and corporations continues to grow, as both rely on each other and usually, the more a candidate spends on his campaign, the more likely he is to win. The difference in political parties will not change the fact that large corporations can be very beneficial to a politician or any government official, meaning whether Biden or Trump wins next year, the chances of continuing to form

relationships with large corporations and choosing them over smaller businesses and the common people is quite large.

Government officials also have more incentive to please corporations than the general public. An author explains how and why corporations have the upper hand in getting the policies they want approved by the government. Large corporations play a big role in the country's economy, but since the president is ultimately in charge of running the country, if there is any economic deterioration, the people will blame the president and not the corporations. This gives businesses an advantage over government officials. In order for these officials to stay in their positions, they will tend to create policies and make decisions that will benefit corporations so that they will not experience business confidence and economic decline, which can lead to a decrease in popularity and power. This greatly affects the laws and policies that are passed and the attempts to improve or change institutions and society (Genovese, 2002). For example, there have been lots of calls for reform nowadays, but only reforms that can benefit government officials, the elites or the rich, and large corporations, are passed by the government (The politics of the status quo, n.d.). Since corporations are necessary to boost the economy and failure to please them can result in the loss of power for government officials, the likelihood of any changes to this relationship, and ultimately to society, is small, regardless of which political party serves the next term.

As mentioned before, spending and elections go hand in hand. During election season, it is almost assumed by the public that candidates will spend lots of money and that those who spend the most will win. Even if the two are not directly related, it is still perceived as so. An author, though agreeing that the majority of the time, if a candidate spends more money, they usually win, points out that there may be other factors that contribute to the spending equals

victory relationship. It may even be possible that the possibility of victory causes donors to spend on specific campaigns, instead of candidates spending money in order to win. Smith also points out that victory is based on ballots and not dollars, so even if millions of dollars are spent on a campaign, if it cannot change the minds of the people voting, the candidate will not win (Smith, 2006). However, it does not matter why or how money ends up being spent or funded, if it can benefit the economy in one way or another, it will continue to be part of the political and economic status quo for a very long time.

A country's unemployment rate can also directly affect the economic status quo. Unemployment has always been a big issue that the government tried to combat. For example, in the New Deal, Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Public Works Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps, both of which dealt with the unemployment problem by providing more jobs to those who needed them. This indirectly increases the US economy by helping the circular flow of economics. When more people have jobs and a paycheck, more people will spend, meaning businesses will be able to produce more goods and hire more people, leading to more people having money and more consumer spending and the circle keeps going. However, unemployment has started to become less of an issue these last few years. Under Trump's administration, the unemployment rate reached the lowest it has ever been, at 3.5 percent, with 160 million Americans being employed and a 16 percent pay increase for low-income and blue-collar workers (Economy and Jobs, n.d.). Although the number did rise to 6.3 percent later in Trump's term, under Biden, 3.2 million jobs were added, and the unemployment rate dropped back to 3.5 percent (Kiely, 2023). Taking into account both Trump and Biden's achievements in this field, it is safe to assume the unemployment rate will continue to be relatively low, unless affected by unforeseen events, regardless of who wins the election next year.

Inflation has also become a very big part of the economic status quo. Inflation is when the price of goods and services rises, making a single unit of currency, such as one dollar, worth less than it used to (Floyd, n.d.). During Trump's presidency, inflation was only at 1.4 percent, while for Biden, it was at 5.0 percent after his first two years (Yahoo!, n.d.). Although the inflation rate during Biden's term was higher than the few presidents before him, it can be explained by the events that happened starting in early 2020. Before 2020, inflation was quite low, but after the coronavirus disease started affecting the United States, the price of goods and services started to rise. In 2021 and 2022, the ratio between job vacancies and unemployment increased, making the price of goods and services increase as well. Since more employees were asking for higher wages, businesses responded to this by increasing the price of their products (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). However, since mid-2022 to the present day, inflation has started decreasing, from the highest at 9.1 percent in July 2022 to 3.7 percent in November 2023 (United States inflation rate, n.d.). This shows that inflation under Biden's presidency may have been due to events out of his control and that if given the time, can slowly move back to a lower percentage. It is possible that the inflation rates will continue to be maintained at a low percent through the rest of Biden's term and continue to do so during his or Trump's second one.

Another big part of the economic status quo is national defense spending. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the US ranked first in military spending, at around \$877 in 2022. This is almost three times more than the second-place country, China, at \$292 (Trends in world military expenditure, n.d.). This shows just how much the US spends on its military and this has been going on for years. Since 1948, maybe even earlier, the government has already been putting billions of dollars towards the defense budget. When Obama, a Democrat, was in office, he spent \$3.3 trillion in defense budgets for his first term and \$2.7

trillion during his second term, while Trump claims to have spent \$2.5 trillion (Robertson, 2023). During Biden's term, he requested a defense budget of \$886 billion to help with the war in Ukraine (Stone, 2023). Most of the money from the defense budget gets spent on the military while the rest is put towards other defense-related activities, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Budget basics: National defense, 2023). National defense spending is considered to be one of the most important priorities of the government and considering how much money was put into the defense budgets in the last few decades, the spending will most likely remain in the millions, if not trillions, in the next few years, regardless of which political party wins the election.

International relations are also a big part of today's current political situation. The US has always had pro-war presidents and currently, the US is involved in a few international affairs. One of the biggest foreign policy events to happen recently, in 2022, is the war in Ukraine. Although the war started in 2014, the US did not get involved until Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. The US has always been more hesitant to join foreign policies, especially those that do not directly affect them. An example of this is during the Second World War. The US stayed relatively uninvolved in the war until two years in when they were attacked causing them to be directly affected. During the next few decades, the American public started favoring isolationism more and more, with 33 percent of Democrat voters and 45 percent of Republican voters favoring it, and only 20 percent of Democrat voters and 15 percent of Republican voters hoping for engagement (Muchnick et al., 2023). Both parties had a majority who supported staying out of foreign policies not associated with them.

However, for the war in Ukraine, the US did end up getting involved during Biden's term. Throughout this past year up until now, the government has continued to provide Ukraine

with financial support, with a total of \$12.1 billion so far in 2023, and military gear and weapons, with 12,000 anti-armor systems, 1,550 anti-air missiles, radars, guns, ammunition, and more (U.S. Department of State, 2023). Although Trump claimed to be in favor of isolationism, he still kept the US somewhat involved in worldly affairs. Many perceived Trump as being “anti-war,” as he claimed to be so and promised to end the “endless wars”, but in reality, he was pro-war, just like many of the presidents before him. Although he never started a new war, he still increased troop levels, increased aerial warfare, dropped more bombs, and overall, caused the wars to worsen and more civilians to be killed (Galant, 2021).

When Biden became president, he promised to repair the damage done by Trump and to make the United States a global leader once again. However, his foreign policy, “has been described as a dressed-up version of Trump’s emphasis on putting U.S. interests above its global commitments (Editors, 2023).” One of the similarities is the foreign policy in the Middle East. When Trump was in office, one of his biggest foreign policy achievements was the Abraham Accords between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, which Biden approved of and it was even something he wanted to expand on. Another similarity is their relationship with China. Trump had already started putting trade restrictions on China before Biden, but Biden increased them, showing that he believes “trade wars are good and easy to win”, something that Trump believed in as well, which can make it easier for more restrictions to take place if Trump ends up winning the election next year. However, they are not just affecting China economically, but militarily. One of Biden’s biggest achievements is the trilateral agreement between Japan, South Korea, and the United States, which was not only a strategy to increase and strengthen defense collaboration against China, but to make it easier for the cooperation to be maintained if Trump becomes president again. Biden’s foreign policy also includes the containment of Russia. Although Trump

seems to have a decent relationship with Vladimir Putin, unlike Biden, and even threatened to pull out of NATO, he claimed to be disapproving of Putin's actions against Ukraine and later agreed that NATO was important and necessary. According to the World Politics Review, even if Trump's administration disapproves of Biden's foreign policy, they will have a hard time moving away from it if Trump returns to office, as they already have many similarities between their foreign policies (Poast, 2023).

Throughout American history, third parties have always existed, and many times tried to overtake the two main political parties in order to bring a new system of government to the United States. Although third parties do not usually get as much support from the public, it has started to become more popular as Democratic and Republican presidents continue to make little progress in addressing issues the public supports. According to the Pew Research Center, six percent of the public was dissatisfied with both the Democratic and Republican parties in 1994, however, that number grew to 27 percent in 2022. This shows that a large number of Americans have negative views of both parties. Not only are there many who are dissatisfied with the current party system, but many younger voters who are not yet affiliated with one specific party desire more political parties to choose from, instead of just the normal two, with 39 percent of the public agreeing with this statement (Pew Research Center, 2022). Another survey, by Gallup, also shows the American people's desire to have a third party, with 62 percent of adults agreeing that the current "parties do such a poor job representing the American people that a third party is needed." Ever since around 2006, the number of people who think a third party is needed is higher than the number of people who think the parties are doing an adequate job. In recent years, that number has increased a lot more. In 2013, 60 percent agreed, 60 percent in 2015, 61 percent in 2017, and 62 percent in 2021 (Jones, 2023). This can be a sign that both current

political parties are not addressing current issues very well, especially those that concern the common people, leading to a desire for more parties as many people believe no change will occur if the country continues to be under the leadership of either party.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, after comparing the presidencies of both Biden and Trump, it is clear that there will be very few changes to the current political and economic status of the United States if Trump takes office next year. Even though both have differences, as they are two separate people, their differences are not enough to fundamentally change anything. They still have the same goals and priorities. They will continue to please large corporations to maintain their power and popularity and to ensure economic success for the country, support the spending of large amounts of money on campaigns, expand on each other's foreign policies, spend millions of dollars on national security, and stabilize unemployment and inflation rates. Biden and Trump are both authoritarian right. Just because they come from different parties does not mean they will have different goals. In fact, Biden's actions have been quite similar to Trump's when he was in office, so even if Biden has only one term and is removed after Trump becomes president once again, the likelihood of creating any changes to the political and economic status quo is low.

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