

The U.S. Presidential Election: A Referendum on Donald Trump's Character or a Campaign on Law-and-Order?

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"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." —Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th President of the United States, 1861-65.

"We must reject any thinking of our cities as a 'battlespace' that our uniformed military is called upon to 'dominate'. ...We must reject and hold accountable those in office who would make a mockery of our Constitution." —James Mattis (1950-), American Marine general and former U. S. Secretary of Defense (2017-2019), on June 3, 2020.

"I have an Article 2 [in the US Constitution] where I have the right to do whatever I want as president." —Donald Trump (1946-), statement made during a speech at Turning Point USA's Teen Action Summit, on July 23, 2019.

An autocratic system of coercion, in my opinion, soon degenerates. For force always attracts men of low morality, and I believe it to be an invariable rule that tyrants of genius are succeeded by scoundrels. For this reason I have always been passionately opposed to systems such as we see in Italy and Russia today. —Albert Einstein (1879-1955), German-born theoretical physicist, (in 'The World as I see it', London, U.K., 1935).

Traditionally, Labor Day marks the last stretch in the U.S. presidential campaign leading to the election this year to be held on November 3rd.



On the democratic side, the die is cast. [Vice President Joe Biden](#) (1942 -) will be the Democratic presidential candidate for the 2020 election. We know that Mr. Biden was the target of several intensive [lobby campaigns](#), after announcing that he would choose a woman as his running mate. He finally set his sights on the junior senator from California

[Kamala Harris](#) as his vice presidential candidate. This is an important strategic decision... for better or for worse. She will be the first black woman and the first Asian American on a major party's presidential ticket.

Mr. Biden has decided to please his base in choosing a running mate from California, a state already considered to be in the Democratic fold. In so doing, he has bypassed other candidates who had more administrative and government experience.

On the republican side, the incumbent, President Donald Trump, will attempt to stay in power. This will be a challenge considering his low position in the [polls](#).

In the United States, presidential elections are not primarily about winning the popular vote. They are about winning an absolute majority of the archaic [Electoral College](#). Otherwise, there would have been a president Al Gore and a president Hillary Clinton!

Vice President Biden has been involved in American politics for nearly fifty years. He is a pragmatic and cautious politician.

He has served as a U.S. Senator, reelected six times, and for eight years he was vice president of the United States in the Barack Obama administration (2009-2017). Nobody can say that Mr. Biden has no experience in government, or that he is an unknown quantity, for better or for worse.

All will not necessarily be rosy with a Biden administration

First, a Biden administration will be obliged to deal with the [massive public debt](#) left behind by the Trump administration. This could put a brake on new public expenses and lead to higher taxes.



Secondly, Mr. Biden has been subjected to a lot of pressure to adopt a left-of-center [political platform](#). This was done primarily to rally Senator Bernie Sanders' supporters. However, it could also be a point of friction with other groups of voters.

Personally, I see two policy areas that could undermine his popularity and his wish to unite the population.

Indeed, on foreign policy, a Biden presidency could suffer from Mr. Biden's unconditional [support](#), in the past, [for Israel's](#) government and its mistreatment of Palestinians. This could intensify U.S. involvement in [Middle East wars](#). It may be a sad fact, but both main political parties in the United States are [warmongering](#) parties when it comes to US foreign policy.

On the domestic front, Mr. Biden's ambivalent position on [illegal immigration](#) could also produce a backlash, especially among blue-collar workers in a period of slow economic growth.

There are other important issues in his program, which will be outlined in more detail in the coming weeks and which could also raise concern. Especially important for Democrats is the need not to ignore the interests of workers with less or little education.

So far, it is only when candidate Biden's policies will be fully explained and understood that we should see if they fly with the American electorate. —Mr. Biden's main advantage is that he is not Donald Trump, that he is a grown-up and that he doesn't tweet in the middle of the night to let the world know his feelings.

Challenges facing the next president

A president-elect must rely on both experience and character to address the serious economic and social crisis facing the country.

This was not the case, however, with candidate Donald Trump in 2016, even though he had previously been the host of a TV reality show, besides being a hotel and casino owner. Some people knew his name, but most had hardly any idea about his [autocratic](#) and [despotic](#) character and his [lack](#) of qualifications to serve in a public capacity. Now, after nearly four years since his election, most Americans have a general idea who he is and what character he has displayed.

It might be useful to review and summarize the main criticisms levied against the character and behavior of Mr. Trump, and to reflect on the type of president he has been.

Donald Trump has shown himself to be a provocateur and a man who is after power for power's sake

Ever since his election as U.S. president on Nov. 8, 2016, with fewer votes than his main opponent, Tycoon Donald Trump has shown himself to be a disruptive provocateur and a maker of chaos. He seems to have been on a dangerous '[power trip](#)', even though he was appallingly unprepared for the job of being president. He has been a most [reckless leader](#). Ever since his inauguration, Mr. Trump has run a show of successive [daily scandals](#), of blunders, controversies and of scandalous and irresponsible [threats](#).

His political strategy has been to rely on power politics, and to stir up polarization and [divisiveness](#), setting up one group against another, hoping to profit from the political and social chaos thus created. He has even sent federal agents, dressed in [army fatigues](#), to some American cities, over the objections of the mayors and governors.

The anti-science and anti-expertise president

It is undisputable that President Donald Trump has been the most openly anti-science and anti-expertise president ever. He has surrounded himself with the [least competent](#) people he could find, providing they were "loyal" to his person and ready to kiss his ring. [Competent officials](#) were quickly fired when not meeting his autocratic requirement. —A succession of failures has followed on almost every issue.

Trump's deadly failure of leadership during the coronavirus crisis

One example among many: As recently as last February 2020, the coronavirus was spreading [widely](#) in many countries. [Experts](#) were [warning](#) against a possible worldwide pandemic that had the potential to affect millions of people and could have severe economic consequences. It was then expected that millions of Americans could be infected and hundreds of thousands could die.

Nevertheless, Mr. Trump was in complete denial that a crisis was looming, and he dismissed the worries raised by experts. He was saying aloud that the coronavirus crisis was a [hoax](#) “*created by Democrats*”, (an insane attack reportedly made on the advice of his son-in-law [Jared Kushner](#)). Other initiatives made by Kushner also ended up in [failure](#).

Especially repugnant are Trump’s [pathetic attacks](#) against doctors fighting the pandemic, which has accelerated in the United States because of his incompetence and his deception.

One important flaw in Mr. Trump’s character is to shift blame

Donald Trump has often refused to take [responsibility](#) in the face of adversity, preferring to [shift blame](#) and find [scapegoats](#) for his failures and misgivings.

For instance, he was insensitive and undiplomatic enough to call the governor of the state of Washington, Jay Inslee, a “[snake](#)” for requesting more federal assistance to fight one of the worst pandemics that his state has ever faced.

Donald Trump’s general character: self-centered, boorish, dangerously delusionary and very un-presidential

Many qualified observers, some having worked closely with Mr. Trump, along with some writers and professionals, have evaluated his special character.

In books and in other [writings](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) again, they have used many words to qualify the Donald Trump phenomenon in U.S. politics, both as an individual and as a politician. Most of them are not very flattering and some are very scary.

Some writers who knew him well were [terrified](#) that such a person, known to constantly behave as a ruthless [self-promoter](#), could become president of the United States.

Indeed, they have documented his penchant for [shock and brawl](#), for improvising and for [smearing](#) anyone who criticizes him. They have documented case after case of his [insanity](#), his wickedness, his [delusion](#), his self-congratulation and [self-praise](#), his [self-centered](#) ambition for absolute power and the fact that his policy choices seem to be dictated mainly, if not entirely, by personal interests and [electoral considerations](#). He is known to have [used](#) the power of his office to punish political adversaries.

Donald Trump’s systematic lies and repetitive attacks against the medias

Mr. Trump’s use of [lies](#), [fabrications](#) and false claims is well documented and seems to be systematic. Indeed, he has proved again and again that he is a pathological [serial liar](#) who cannot help himself from [lying](#). He seems to have an enormous problem with the [truth](#), and he cannot take [criticism](#). That is the sign of an immature person.

His habit of [demeaning](#) female journalists in misogynistic rants is a very serious character trait. With such an exploitive character, it is no wonder that Mr. Trump has been accused, in

courts, of [rape](#). There have been numerous other [instances](#) of sexual aggression on his part. Repetitive attacks against journalists, male or female, also pose a serious threat to [press freedom](#) and to [free speech](#), in addition to showing a basic lack of good manners.

Mr. Trump has been a factor of chaos and instability

As a politician, Donald Trump contends that he does not have adversaries or opponents. He has, in his own paranoid way, '[enemies](#)'. In a democracy, calling political opponents 'enemies' is the language of dictators and totalitarians. This and his [obsession](#) with anything military should raise concerns.

He has shown himself to be [provocative](#), while displaying a [manipulative](#) personality. He has enjoyed destroying reputations to advance his personal interests. Some of Trump's critics have also said that he is [egoistical](#) and has a [narcissistic personality](#), and that he has no moral compass.

An excessively nationalist politician

On many occasions, Donald Trump has literally wrapped himself in the American [flag](#), as if it were his own personal property, and he has said that '[God is on our side](#)', a political slogan used in Nazi Germany during the 1930s, with the phrase, "*Gott mit uns*" (God is with us). As a display of deep hypocrisy on his part, the supposedly 'good Christian' Donald Trump, often seen carrying a Bible and pictured in a [Bible Photo Op](#), has constantly [mocked](#), slandered, insulted and [disparaged](#) his opponents.

In fact, the number of persons who have been the targets of profanities and [insults](#) by Donald Trump is countless.

As a politician, Donald Trump has been said to be [ultranationalist](#). He is also seen as being less than honest and [untrustworthy](#), besides being a [loose cannon](#) and acting in constant [conflicts of interest](#).

Trump has done everything to isolate the United States and insult allies

President Donald Trump has attempted to cut the United States off from the rest of the world by unilaterally breaking existing [treaties](#), and by provoking conflicts with other countries and international organizations.

For instance, on June 1, 2017, and without consulting anyone, Mr. Trump announced that the United States would unilaterally withdraw from the [Paris Agreement on climate change](#).

And, as recently as May 21, 2020, again without consulting with anybody, Donald Trump announced that the U.S. will be withdrawing from the 30-year old [Open Skies Arms Control Treaty](#), which allowed for mutual inspection flights between countries to insure against war preparations.

Donald Trump is also preparing to exit the one major arms treaty remaining with Russia: the [New START treaty](#) (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), signed on April 8, 2010, which limits the number of deployed nuclear missiles, thus raising even more the risk of a nuclear war in the coming years, a war that could destroy the world. Donald Trump is an arsonist, not a fireman or a peacemaker. ...And the list goes on and on.

Add to that the fact that the Trump administration is engaged in a program to deploy additional nuclear weapons, and the image comes out clearly of a Donald Trump who is an extremely dangerous head of state.

The economic and political tensions between the U.S. and China and against Iran or Venezuela are getting worse

There are increasing frictions between the U.S. and China. They could be the sparks of a [hegemonic conflict](#).

The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations should play a more active role in solving such conflicts. It must be noted, however, that Mr. Trump has ignored these two international institutions since his election, in order to pursue his ideology of conflict.

British historian Arnold Toynbee observed that the dynamics of international relations have led to disastrous [hegemonic wars](#) at the beginning of each of the last six centuries. The last major international war was World War I (1914-1918) at the beginning of the 20th Century, which in turn led to World War II (1939-1945). History could repeat itself, especially if and when unstable individuals, ignorant of history, are leading heavily armed countries.

An open conflict between the United States and [Iran](#) is also a possibility, because of an active campaign by the Israeli government in that direction. Such a war of aggression could destabilize the Middle East even more. And please, do not forget the Trump administration's meddling in [Venezuela's](#) domestic affairs. All this is not counting the inhuman and abhorrent sanctions against [Syria](#).

It's almost unanimous: In foreign policy, U.S. President Donald Trump has done a [lot of damage](#), and it will take many years for another administration to fix the mess.

Conclusions

Unless one is completely blinded by ideology or partisanship, it must be concluded that Donald Trump, with his erratic and deeply flawed character, poses a serious threat to American freedom and prosperity, and to world peace.

Having inherited money is no excuse to be vulgar, rude, vile, intolerant and lawless, or to be a malevolent bully. In ordinary times, such behavior should be denounced. —In time of crisis, such shortcomings can be a recipe for disaster.

In four years, Donald Trump has done more to destroy the image of the United States and its reputation around the world than a war would have done. —The country is more isolated internationally than it has been for a century.

In domestic affairs, the American [justice system](#) is in tatters. The "*rule of law*" has more or less been replaced by the arbitrary "*rule of the Donald*". —The law, that's him! In fact, the U.S. constitutional government has dangerously moved toward a *de facto* dictatorship. Donald Trump has been subverting the justice system like no president before him. This is clearly an abuse of power.

Especially troublesome also, he has fired [prosecutors](#) who were investigating people close to him, a clear conflict of interest and a violation of the principle of the division of powers.

The country is more divided than it has been in decades. Income and wealth disparities are more pronounced than they have been in a century. And the American health system is an unregulated industry that charges exorbitant prices, and which is failing large segments of the population.

And to top it all, there are black clouds over the economy. The latter remains dangerously based on a military-industrial complex that yearly siphons off trillions of dollars of tax money for its benefit. Moreover, much of the funds recently used to bailout the economy from the coronavirus crisis have come from newly printed money.

The latter has mostly benefited the very rich, who, in turn, have used it to boost stock prices and to push them up to their pre-crisis top. Down the road, this could translate into a crushing [inflation tax](#), which will badly hurt people such as savers and retirees on a fixed income. However, as this kind of [monetary exuberance](#), financed with the printing press, creates conditions conducive to a financial crash, everyone will ultimately lose out.

Basically, Donald Trump is not an administrator. He had no experience in government. His knowledge of economics is rudimentary. He seems completely ignorant about how the multilateral international trade system works. —Fundamentally, he is a showman who thinks about himself, and only himself. After four years of a freak show in the White House, it would seem that Americans should look for entertainment elsewhere than to their government officials.

Hopefully, [most](#) Americans seem to have had enough of his eccentricity and his incompetence. Not surprisingly, polls show that most Americans are anxious and [unhappy](#) these days. In fact, Pew Research reported, last June, that a [huge majority](#) (87%) of Americans said they were dissatisfied with the way things were going in their country.

One would think that a great country like the United States would deserve better. The United States is at an important political turning point. If Donald Trump is reelected next November, U.S. democratic institutions could be challenged as never before, because you can be sure that he will continue [playing politics](#) with the U.S. Constitution. His intentions have always been to “rule by decree”.

That is why this November’s election should logically be a [referendum](#) on candidate Donald Trump and his [vacuity](#). However, Mr. Trump would like nothing more than to wage a [law-and-order](#) political campaign, not one that would be centered on his persona and on his record.

Question: Will Democratic leaders play his game and side with mob rule? If the answer is yes, and especially if Mr. Biden does not denounce obvious cases of lawlessness, then I suspect that calls for law and order will get louder.

With such a scenario, the results of the November 3rd election could be closer than what polls indicate currently, although odds still favor the election of Joe Biden. —That is, if there is an election, because Mr. Trump would like nothing more than to discredit and [postpone](#) the election... *sine die*!

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