PRESIDENTIAL PRIMER

A capsule history of the presidency, 1961-2024

Introduction

WE AMERICANS HAVE the memory capacity of a goldfish.

At least, that's how it seems when election time rolls around. Though candidates ostensibly run for office "on their record," campaigns often exploit our collective amnesia—*"pay no attention to my record, dear voter, hear this shiny commercial designed to scare you instead."* And it works. People forget or minimize what they know from the past and overwrite it with new input.

Of course, that assumes people were paying attention in the first place; a large portion of the US citizenry just isn't interested in government and politics. Our society considers anything over 60% to be a high number when it comes to voter turnout. That's sad. Sadder still, many Americans who do vote do so without understanding who they're voting for.

Here in 2024 we're approaching another election and the stakes are higher than ever. Polling has been rather janky in recent cycles, but one thing it does reveal is that we're still not paying attention—according to the **Pew Research Center**, a majority of the American public believes what they're told by campaigns more than they do objective reality. The broadcast and cable news media deserves most of the blame for that, but we do seem to live in an age when "low-information voter" is synonymous with "average voter."

Relatedly, a near-majority of Americans believe there is either no real difference or only a "fair" difference between the Republican and Democratic parties, and a quarter of Americans—a third of Americans under age 50—feel that neither party represents their interests.

More than a third of that group thinks voting is pointless. These are the types that spout cynical tropes like "**It doesn't matter who wins**." "**The parties are basically the same**." "It's always just **the lesser of two evils**." We heard a lot of that back in 2000, during the campaign between George W. Bush and Al Gore, but even that election didn't disabuse people of the idea. Bush won—by a mere handful of votes in Florida, with the help of the Supreme Court—and we got two decades of war, economic collapse, and we all now take off our shoes at the airport in a bizarre form of mandated performance art.

Since John Kennedy assumed office, there have been six presidents from each party, with Democrats and Republicans each governing for 32 years. A completely even split, offering a fair comparison of equal time.

Tell me again how it doesn't matter who wins.

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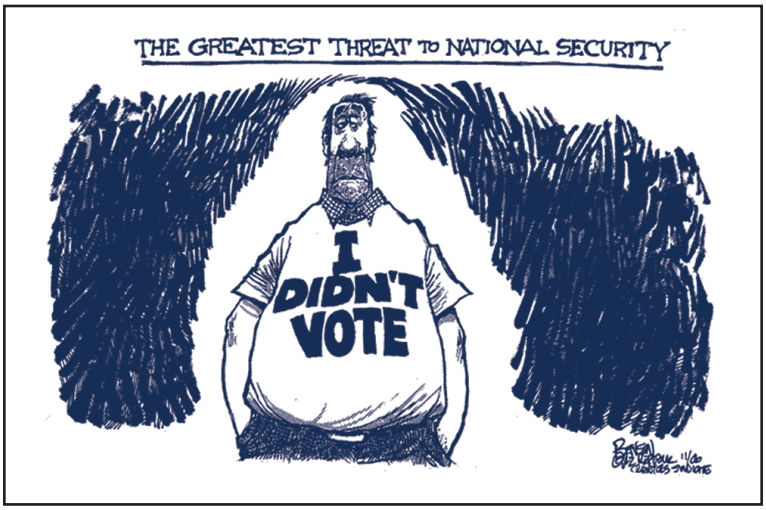
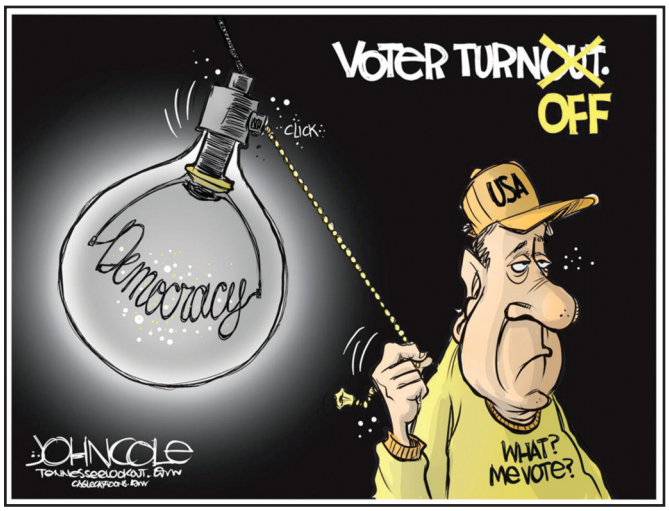
Conventional wisdom holds that Republicans are fiscally responsible champions of law and order, Democrats are free spenders soft on crime; Republicans are for individual freedom, Democrats prefer a "nanny state" run by elites. History tells us that ***the opposite is true***. Republicans rack up huge deficits, amass debt, and create recessions; Democrats reduce deficits and use debt only when the economy's in trouble. Republicans favor curtailing rights and promoting a class hierarchy, with the rich and powerful ▶



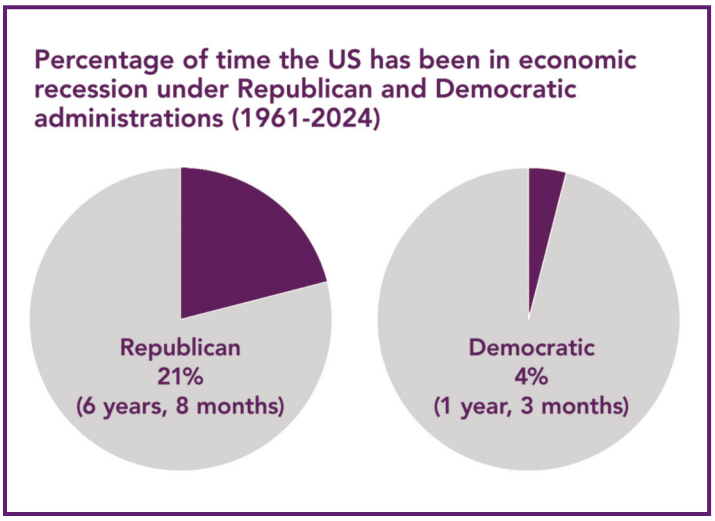


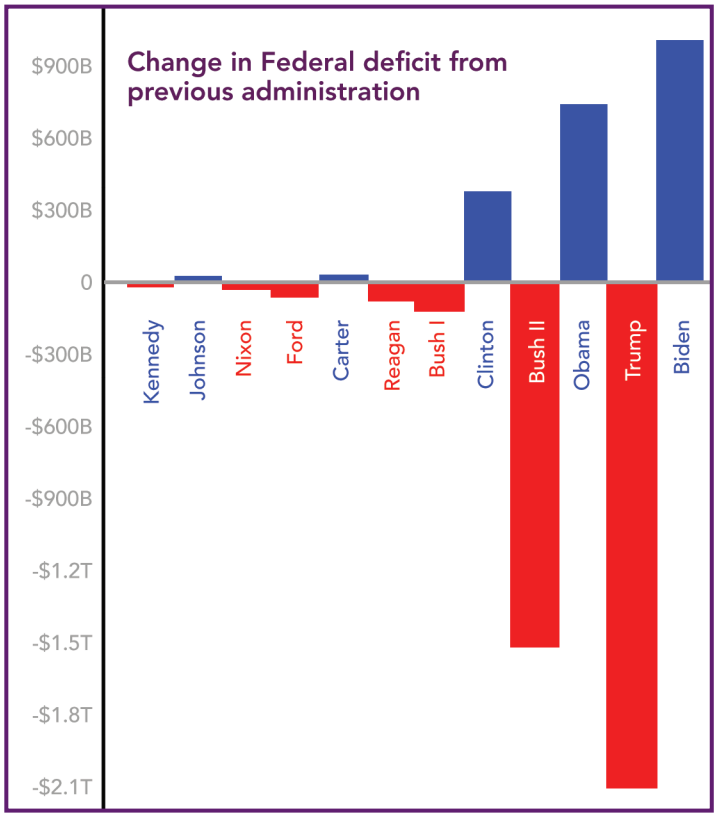
Throughout the document, purple text is hotlinked to websites with further/explanatory information. URLs listed in the back for those reading this offline.

exempt from rules and laws; Democrats support egalitarian civil liberties and hold that the law is the law for all. It's all there in the record, yet the conventional wisdom persists.

So I had a thought: What if I could produce something to help pierce our collective amnesia and pop that bubble of convention? A sort of snapshot of Presidential history, easily digestible and brief, kind of like the statistics on the back of a baseball card?

I pondered that for a while but decided one cannot really convey the pros and cons of a Presidential administration in lists of statistics and military engagements. Economic fortunes change due to global events and external forces as much as to an administration's policies; the president's job encompasses far more than tax plans and regulations, it turns on world affairs and both external and internal crises. Many times these things all interrelate and are affected by those the president turns to for advice and staffing—these people are often critical to how an administration operates.





Then I heard Buzz Burbank on **The Bob Cesca Show** joke about how we need a "pamphlet drop" to remind us all about everything that happened from 2016-2021, and I started expanding the idea from a set of baseball cards to, well, a pamphlet drop.

This booklet is the result. I had intended a fully neutral comparison of administrations, but in the end there was no way to remove my own biases from the presentation and still give what I considered to be a proper context of performance. It'll be obvious that I prefer one party over the other, but everything here is based on documented, factual information. Nevertheless, **further research is strongly encouraged**, and many elements herein are hotlinked to additional reporting. Think of this as a sort of "quickstart guide" for the previously disengaged voter.

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Since John Kennedy assumed office, there have been six presidents from each party, with Democrats and Republicans each governing for 32 years. A completely even split, offering a fair comparison of equal time. What follows are one-page synopses of each President in that span—his notable policies, how the economy performed in his term(s), what major crises he had to contend with, scandals he was mired in, who he picked for the Supreme Court, who he relied on to advise him and staff his administration, and finally a few paragraphs of context on his term of office. It's important to know who did what.

Because the tropes are wrong. It *does* matter who wins. The parties are *not* the same. And if there's ever a race truly between the lesser of two evils, *one of them is more evil*.

Like it or not, Presidential elections in the United States are a binary choice once the primaries are over. Third-party candidates do not have a practical chance to win, they can only make someone else lose. We choose one of the two major options every fourth November even if we opt for a third party "protest vote" or not to vote at all—as the band Rush once sang, "if you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice."

We need to choose wisely. Now more than ever.

—Tim Harrison,
Seattle, WA, April 2024

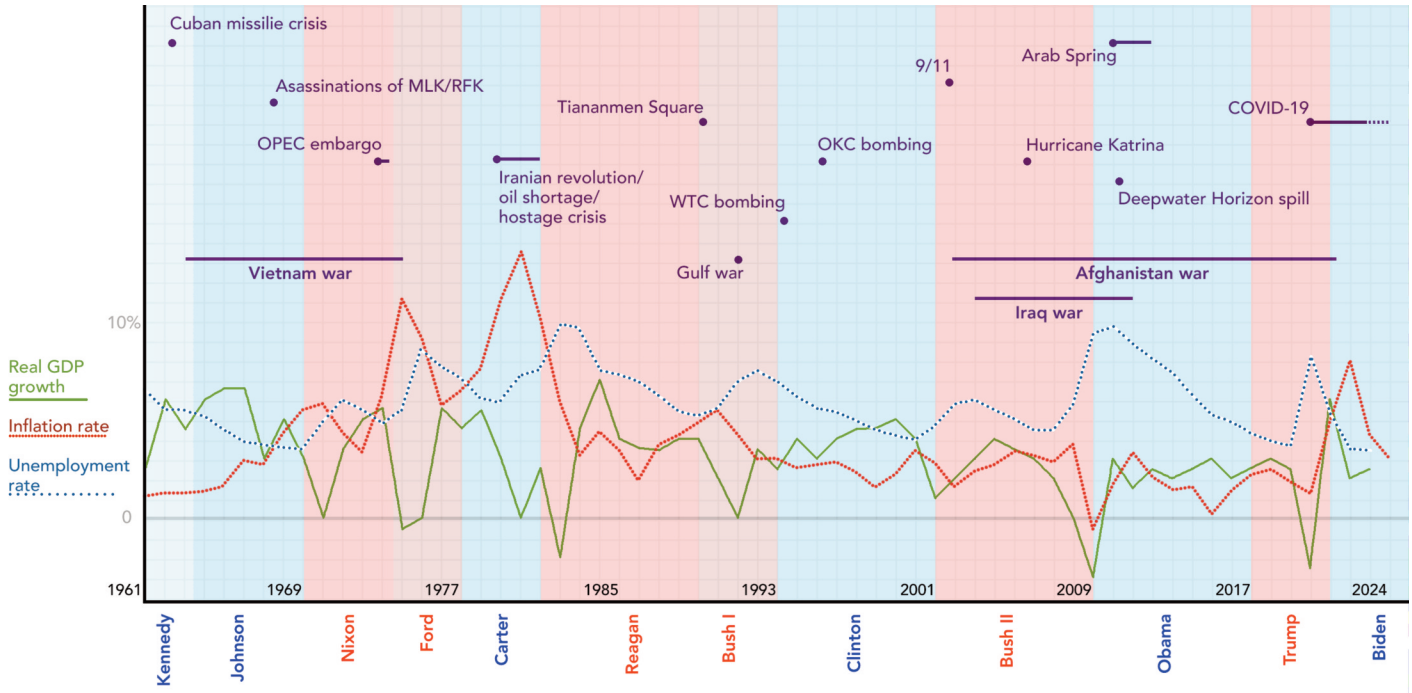
Do you remember / Your President Nixon?
Do you remember / The bills you have to pay
Or even yesterday?

—David Bowie,
"Young Americans"

Key Supreme Court rulings (Justices appointed since 1961)

- **New York Times v. United States**
  (publication of the Pentagon Papers is permissible)
  w/Majority: White, Marshall
  Dissenting: Burger, Blackmun
- **Roe v. Wade**
  (anti-abortion laws are unconstitutional)
  w/Majority: Blackmun, Burger, Marshall, Powell
  Dissenting: White, Rehnquist
- **United States v. Nixon**
  (The president cannot withhold evidence via executive privilege)
  w/Majority: Burger, White, Marshall, Blackmun, Powell
  Recused: Rehnquist
- **Romer v. Evans**
  (state laws discriminating against LGBT people unconstitutional)
  w/Majority: Kennedy, Stevens, O'Connor, Souter, Ginsburg, Breyer
  Dissenting: Scalia, Thomas
- **Bush v. Gore**
  (2000 Florida recount must halt due to differing methods between counties; uniform method recount disallowed)
  w/Majority: Rehnquist, O'Connor, Scalia, Kennedy, Thomas
  Dissenting: Stevens, Ginsburg, Souter, Breyer
- **Lawrence v. Texas**
  (anti-homosexual laws are unconstitutional)
  w/Majority: Kennedy, Stevens, Souter, Ginsburg, Breyer, O'Connor
  Dissenting: Scalia, Rehnquist, Thomas
- **Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission**
  (corporations may spend unlimited funds to influence elections)
  w/Majority: Kennedy, Roberts, Scalia, Thomas, Alito
  Dissenting: Ginsburg, Stevens, Sotomayor, Breyer
- **Obergfell v. Hodges**
  (same-sex marriage laws legal nationwide)
  w/Majority: Kennedy, Ginsburg, Breyer, Sotomayor, Kagan
  Dissenting: Roberts, Thomas, Alito, Scalia
- **New York Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen**
  (state concealed-carry handgun law unconstitutional)
  w/Majority: Roberts, Thomas, Alito, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, Barrett
  Dissenting: Breyer, Sotomayor, Kagan
- **Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health**
  (overturns Roe v. Wade, allows anti-abortion laws)
  w/Majority: Roberts, Thomas, Alito, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, Barrett
  Dissenting: Breyer, Sotomayor, Kagan

Timeline



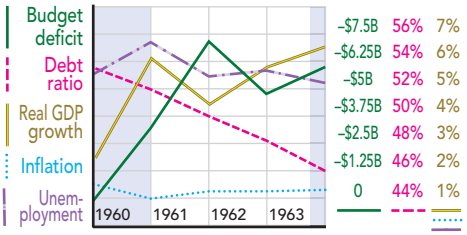
#35: KENNEDY, John Fitzgerald ("Jack"), 1961-1963

Election (1960):

	EV	PV
Kennedy/Johnson (D):	308	49.72%
Nixon/Lodge (R):	219	49.55%
Byrd/Thurmond (I):	15	0.42%

Voter turnout: 62.8%

Economy:



Job gains: 2.66M
Recession: None
Poverty rate change: –2%
Top marginal tax rate: 91%

Military conflicts:

Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba
Advisory/small-scale involvement in Vietnam

Crises:

Cuban Missile Crisis
Berlin Wall

Scandal:

None, though in modern times health issues and extramarital affairs may have caused scandal

Notable achievements:

Established **Peace Corps**
Nuclear test ban treaty
Spearheaded **Apollo program**
1961 Housing Act
Championed passage of the **24th Amendment**
Trade Expansion Act

SCOTUS nominations:

Byron White (1962-1993)
Arthur Goldberg (1962-1965)

Influential staff:

Robert F. Kennedy
Robert McNamara
Sargent Shriver
J. Edgar Hoover
Clark Clifford

"Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

A hugely inspirational figure, Kennedy was revered for calling citizens to serve in his Peace Corps initiative, for aiming high with the Apollo program, and championing a domestic agenda he called the "New Frontier." Though reluctant to alienate southern Democrats, he furthered the cause of civil rights for African-Americans with equal employment policies and intervention in the infamous **George Wallace obstruction** of school integration.

Foreign affairs were heavily colored by the Cold War; JFK oversaw a huge buildup in the country's nuclear arsenal as tensions between the US and USSR increased. He also inherited minor US involvement in the proxy conflict in Vietnam from the prior administration; Kennedy added to the US presence there while stopping short of committing American soldiers to the war.

The Kennedy legacy is tied largely to Cuba and the successful resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Of course, the crisis was presaged in part by Kennedy's catastrophic attempt to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961 to inspire domestic revolt against Cuban dictator Fidel Castro (these things rarely happen in a vacuum). "We got a big kick in the leg and we deserved it," Kennedy said of the Bay of Pigs fiasco. "But maybe we'll learn something from it."

Further US-Soviet tensions focused on the divided German city of Berlin, which had been partitioned after World War II. With many Germans fleeing East Berlin for the Western-controlled part of the city, Soviets controlling East Berlin constructed the Berlin Wall to block further defections. A standoff between US and Soviet tanks at the wall's crossing point was resolved via covert administration contacts with a USSR spy.

Kennedy also established the military alliance between the US and Israel and may or may not have been **involved in a coup** overthrowing the Prime Minister of Iraq in 1963 before arming the new Iraqi government.

Cold War politics also influenced the space program, as Kennedy shifted from being opposed to manned spaceflight to its most prominent booster after the USSR sent **the first person into space** in a 108-minute orbital flight on the Vostok 1 spacecraft. "No nation which expects to be the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in this race for space," Kennedy said in declaring the goal of landing an American on the moon.

The Kennedy administration was instrumental in securing the 24th amendment to the US Constitution. The amendment abolished poll taxes, a **Jim Crow** practice in southern states to suppress the African-American vote.

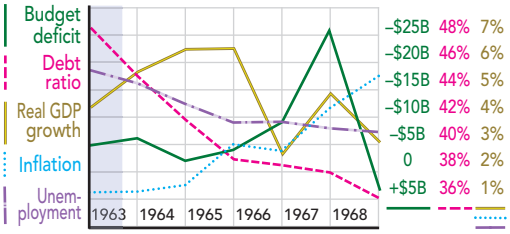
Had Kennedy not been assassinated in 1963, it's likely he would have cruised to reelection in '64. How things would have differed after that is fascinating to speculate on—would he have withdrawn from Vietnam, as his Secretary of State said he was planning to do? Would he have been as aggressive with civil rights as Johnson would be? Barring a trip into the multiverse, we'll never know.

#36: JOHNSON, Lyndon Baines, 1963-1969

Election (1964):	EV	PV
Johnson/Humphrey (D):	486	61.1%
Goldwater/Miller (R):	52	38.5%

Voter turnout: 61.4%

Economy:



Job gains: 13.75M
Recession: None
Poverty rate change: –7%
Top marginal tax rate: 75%

Military conflicts:

Greatly expanded role in Vietnam
Support role in Dominican civil war
Minor Korean DMZ skirmishes

Scandal:

None, unless Vietnam counts

Crises:

Urban riots
Assassinations of **Malcolm X**, **MLK**, and **RFK**

Notable achievements:

Civil Rights Act
Voting Rights Act
"War on Poverty"
Medicare
Medicaid
Immigration reform
Elementary and Secondary Education Act
Gun Control Act of 1968
Consumer protection laws
Established Nat'l Endowments for Humanities and Arts

SCOTUS nominations:

Abe Fortas (1965-1969)
Thurgood Marshall (1967-1991)
Homer Thornberry (withdrawn)

Influential staff:

Robert McNamara
Dean Rusk
Walter Jenkins
Bill Moyers
Clark Clifford

"Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose."

Perhaps the most consequential president since Franklin Roosevelt, LBJ's "**Great Society**" legislative achievements passed despite sometimes vehement opposition from conservatives in Congress. Today, these programs are foundational.

Preferring to focus on domestic matters like poverty and civil rights, Johnson nevertheless got bogged down in escalations in Vietnam. The demands of the Cold War boxed LBJ into choosing from a menu of bad options and pretty much nothing went well; still, he felt obligated. "Let no one think for a moment," Johnson said, "that retreat from Vietnam would bring an end to conflict. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another."

The unpopular war ran concurrently with unrest at home over civil rights, generating a seemingly endless sequence of protests and violence in the streets about one or the other or both. Some form of civil-rights rioting may have been inevitable after decades living with the failures of **post-Civil War reconstruction** on one side and bitter racist backlash against progress toward equality—which Johnson accelerated—on the other. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were the first real attempt by the Federal government to combat the **Jim Crow laws** of the former Confederate states and proved hugely impactful.

LBJ opted not to run for reelection in '68, as his party had fractured into Great Society, anti-war, and anti-civil rights factions (the latter group ultimately defecting to the Republicans). Vietnam is thought to have been the largest factor in his decision; LBJ hated being a wartime president. "I knew from the start," he said of Vietnam, "that I was bound to be crucified either way I moved. If I left the woman I really loved—the Great Society—in order to get involved in that bitch of a war on the other side of the world, then I would lose everything at home. All my programs. But if I left that war and let the Communists take over South Vietnam, then I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser and we would both find it impossible to accomplish anything for anybody anywhere."

Because Johnson became president due to JFK's death, he had no vice-president until inauguration day 1965. And when Johnson underwent planned surgery in '65, there was no mechanism for him to temporarily transfer power to Vice President Humphrey. Both circumstances contributed to the remarkably fast adoption of the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, which allows a vice-presidential vacancy to be filled (via Presidential appointment and confirmation by the House of Representatives) as well as mechanisms for the temporary or permanent transfer of power from the president to the next official in the line of succession should the president become incapacitated or be deemed unable to perform his duties. The Amendment was ratified in 1967 and would come into play in just a few years, when the VP position again became vacant in 1973.

#37 NIXON, Richard Milhous, 1969-1974

Elections (1968):

	EV	PV
Nixon/Agnew (R):	301	43.4%
Humphrey/Muskie (D):	191	42.7%
Wallace/LeMay (I):	46	13.5%

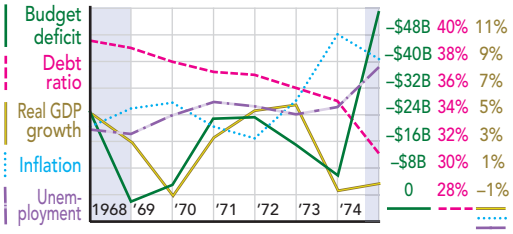
Voter turnout: 60.7%

(1972):

	EV	PV
Nixon/Agnew (R):	520	60.7%
McGovern/Shriver (D):	17	37.5%

Voter turnout: 55.1%

Economy:



Job gains: 7.88M
Recession: 1969-70 (11 months), 1974-75 (16 months, including 8 months following resignation)
Poverty rate change: –1%
Top marginal tax rate: 70%

Military conflicts:

Continued Vietnam war
Invasion of Cambodia

Scandal:

Corrupt Vice President resigned
Watergate break-in and coverup

Crises:

Kent State massacre
Stock market crash
OPEC oil embargo

Notable achievements:

Established Environmental Protection Agency
Normalized relations with China
Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I)
Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
Established Occupational Safety and Health Administration
De-funded NASA, killed Apollo program as well as plans for a lunar base and mission to Mars

SCOTUS nominations:

Clement Haynsworth (rejected)
G. Harrold Carswell (rejected)
Warren Burger (1969-1986)
Harry Blackmun (1970-1994)
Lewis Powell (1972-1987)
William Rehnquist (1972-2005)

Influential staff:

Henry Kissinger
George Shultz
Caspar Weinberger
Donald Rumsfeld

"The press is the enemy."

Nixon will forever be known as the president who resigned his office rather than be impeached and removed by Congress over crimes committed during the 1972 election campaign and their subsequent coverup. The **Watergate scandal** would force him out just ten months after Vice President Spiro Agnew also resigned as part of a plea bargain over corruption charges. But it wasn't just felonies that marked Nixon's less-than-stellar tenure.

Nixon expanded the Vietnam war into Cambodia and Laos, including secret bombings that **constituted war crimes**. "[Nixon] wants a massive bombing campaign in Cambodia," Henry Kissinger told his deputy National Security Advisor. "It's an order, it's to be done. Anything that flies, on anything that moves."

Destabilizing southeast Asia wasn't enough; the Nixon administration also orchestrated a coup in Chile, ousting democratically elected President Salvador Allende in favor of brutal tyrant **Augusto Pinochet**. It also supported similar South American coups in Bolivia and Uruguay under the thin guise of Cold War anti-communist policy, though none of the nations were truly communist.

In more domestic matters, Nixon wanted to eliminate several of LBJ's Great Society programs including Medicaid, which he'd have replaced with state-run programs that shifted costs to the consumer; and Medicare, which would've been replaced with a scaled-back version that imposed coverage limits. He also tried to weaken the Voting Rights Act. All of these attempts were thwarted by Congress, with Medicaid and Medicare remaining intact and Nixon instead signing an *expanded* Voting Rights Act in 1970.

Nixon attempted to stave off inflation by decoupling the US dollar from the gold standard, and in the process destabilized currencies all over the world. He also instituted wage and price freezes and devalued the dollar. Though inflation was temporarily mitigated somewhat, negligence in foreign affairs directly led to an embargo from Arab members of OPEC and oil price gouging from Iran. By 1974 inflation had topped 11%, mostly due to oil and gasoline prices. The concurrent high unemployment and high inflation became known as "**stagflation**."

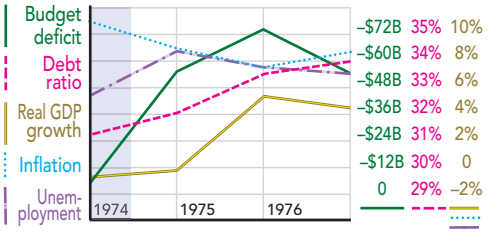
The OPEC embargo was touched off by a US aid package of weapons to Israel, then at war with Syria and Egypt, that was far in excess of what Israel had requested. Distracted by Watergate, Nixon let Kissinger handle mideast policy despite his not knowing a lot about it at the time; of the arms package, Kissinger later admitted, "It was not the best-considered decision we made."

#38: FORD, Gerald Rudolph Jr., 1974-1977

Election:

None; appointed to vice-presidency after Spiro Agnew's resignation, ascended to presidency upon Richard Nixon's resignation

Economy:



Job gains: 4.2M
Recession: 1974-75 (8 months, continued from Nixon's term)
Poverty rate change: +1%
Top marginal tax rate: 70%

Military conflicts:

"**Mayaguez Incident**"; thought of as the final US combat in Veitnam war

Crises:

NATO cohesion
Israel-Arab nation wars
Swine flu outbreak

Scandal:

Pardoned Richard Nixon for crimes committed in Watergate scandal

Notable achievements:

Partial clemency for Vietnam draft evaders
Rockefeller investigation into CIA abuses

SCOTUS nominations:

John Paul Stevens (1975-2010)

Influential staff:

Henry Kissinger, **Dick Cheney**, **Donald Rumsfeld**, Robert Hartmann, Brent Scowcroft, James Schlesinger, George H.W. Bush

"Let us put an end to self-inflicted wounds."

On the one hand, Ford was an adequate president who did his best to provide a sense of normalcy after Nixon and **Watergate**. On the other, he let Nixon skate and face no accountability other than leaving the Presidency, all while touting the US as "a government of laws, not of men." Public sentiment was largely against Ford on the Nixon pardon—his approval rating dropped more than 20% immediately after it was issued—and the *New York Times* called the pardon "profoundly unwise, divisive, and unjust" and said it revealed a troubling lack of credibility in the new president. Though accusations were made about a "corrupt bargain" between Nixon and Ford being struck before Nixon resigned, Ford insisted he'd never made any deal with Nixon regarding a pardon. It's likely Ford was sincere in thinking that letting Nixon off the hook was the best way to put the whole ugly affair in the country's rear-view mirror, but we see today how that had a large downside—had Nixon faced charges and trial, things in this century might look much different.

In other matters, Ford's administration was largely inoffensive despite economic floundering. He addressed inflation by asking citizens to simply save their money as part of a public relations campaign he called "Whip Inflation Now"; then, with the country in recession, he signed a tax reduction package rather than buck his party in favor of his own desire to raise taxes on corporations. Inflation continued to be high and unemployment reached a peak of nearly 9%, a post-World War II record that wouldn't be topped until the 1980s, when it hit 11% during the Reagan administration.

Sharply opposed to much of the Democratic-led Congress, Ford vetoed 66 bills in his brief tenure, including legislation for research & development of electric vehicles, expansion of the Freedom of Information Act, and added veterans benefits (15 of his vetoes were overridden). His chief bone of contention was appropriations—Ford opposed any spending he deemed "excessive," while Democrats favored stimulus spending to help the economy and assist the growing population of unemployed Americans.

One area of success was Middle East policy, as Ford stood up to pressure from Israel and pro-Israel Senators to further fund the Israeli war effort, instead ordering a "reassessment of US policy in the region" after becoming frustrated (or in Ford's words, "mad as hell") with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. What followed was a "test of wills" between Ford and Rabin that eventually led to a temporary agreement between Israel and Egypt over disputed territory and the resumption of US aid to Israel.

Ford's staff included many holdovers from the problematic Nixon administration as well as up-and-coming GOP figures that would become infamous in their own right during future Republican administrations. In phasing out some of the Nixon crew, Ford promoted such figures as Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, who had instigated a staff shakeup after they and other officials repeatedly clashed with Vice President Nelson Rockefeller and Chief of Staff Robert Hartmann.

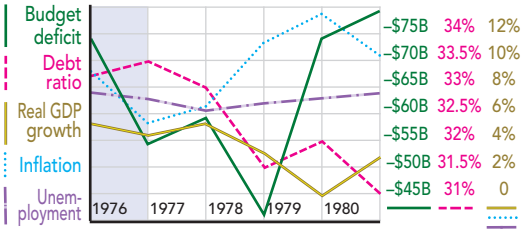
#39: CARTER, James Earl Jr. ("Jimmy"), 1977-1981

Election (1976):

	EV	PV
Carter/Mondale (D):	297	50.1%
Ford/Dole (R):	240	48.0%

Voter turnout: 53.6%

Economy:



Job gains: 8.7M
Recession: 1980 (6 months)
Poverty rate change: +1%
Top marginal tax rate: 70%

Military conflicts:

None

Scandal:

Antics of brother Billy Carter

Crises:

Iranian hostage crisis
Oil shortage/energy crisis
Three-Mile Island nuclear plant meltdown

Notable achievements:

Facilitated peace treaty between Egypt and Israel
Panama Canal Treaty
Established Cabinet departments of Energy and Education
Full amnesty for Vietnam War-era draft evaders
SALT II treaty
Superfund environmental cleanup law
Airline Deregulation Act
Alaska Lands Conservation Act

SCOTUS nominations:

None

Influential staff:

Zbigniew Brzezinski
Cyrus Vance
James Schlesinger
Hamilton Jordan
Walter Mondale

"We are a nation of differences. Those differences don't make us weak. They're the source of our strength."

Carter provided the country what it needed in the wake of Nixon and **Watergate** by restoring real integrity to the White House. On the other hand, his brutal honesty with the public and frustration with Congress' failures to acknowledge what he saw as obvious truths made for a less successful administration than he'd envisioned. An ambitious domestic policy agenda was centered on **energy, environmentalism**, and a more responsible tax system, but many of Carter's initiatives were perhaps ahead of their time—few met with enough Congressional or public approval to become law.

In the wake of the **oil embargo** and "stagflation" of the Nixon/Ford years, Carter created the US Department of Energy and sought to move the country away from oil dependence to cleaner and renewable energy sources. He proposed a more progressive tax code, modest national health insurance, a negative income tax bracket, and even floated the idea of decriminalizing cannabis. He championed the Equal Rights Amendment and was the first president to address the issue of gay rights. Most of these efforts failed to pass (or even get to) Congress or gain much public support.

Carter was more successful in foreign affairs. He negotiated the Camp David Accords establishing peace between Israel and Egypt, and the Panama Canal Treaty despite strong Republican opposition. US policy toward regimes around the world was upended to favor human rights over Cold War politics.

His biggest crises centered on the 1978 Iranian revolution that deposed the Shah of Iran in favor of the theocratic regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Among other things, the revolution created another oil shortage, as Iran curtailed its production and global oil prices skyrocketed. Thus, gasoline became the primary cause of another large spike in inflation in 1979 and '80 that topped out at 13.5%, making the opposition to Carter's push to move away from oil-based energy all the more frustrating. An address to the nation on the subject included what was interpreted by some as a scolding of the American public. "The energy crisis is real!" Carter said. "It's worldwide. These are facts and we must face them."

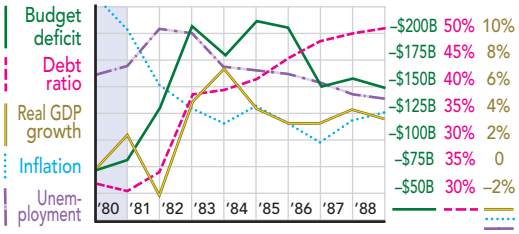
At the urging of former officials including **Henry Kissinger**, Carter reluctantly allowed the exiled Shah of Iran into the US for purportedly critical medical treatment (Kissinger's group **was lying**—the Shah was getting equally good treatments in Mexico but Kissinger and company wanted their friend allowed in and knew they could manipulate Carter on humanitarian grounds). This angered Khomeini so much that a group of Khomeini-backed militants retaliated in November 1979 by storming the US embassy in Tehran and holding its occupants hostage. After a failed rescue attempt by the US military, Khomeini resolved to use the hostages as a tool to defeat Carter in his reelection bid. Nevertheless, Carter worked through all of 1980 to arrange the hostages' release, making headway that was oddly halted at almost every turn. It was later **credibly alleged** that Khomeini and the Ronald Reagan campaign had secretly made a deal for the hostages to remain in captivity until Reagan won the 1980 election and came to power.

#40 REAGAN, Ronald Wilson, 1981-1989

Elections (1980):	EV	PV
Reagan/Bush (R):	489	50.8%
Carter/Mondale (D):	49	41.0%
Voter turnout: 54.2%		

(1984):	EV	PV
Reagan/Bush (R):	525	58.8%
Mondale/Ferraro (D):	13	40.6%
Voter turnout: 55.2%		

Economy:



Job gains: 16.1M
Recession: 1981-82 (16 months)
Poverty rate change: 0%
Top marginal tax rate: 28%

Military conflicts:

Lebanon, Invasion of Grenada, Libya bombing, Iranian navy, Iranian airliner fiasco

Crises:

AIDS epidemic
Savings & Loan failures

Scandal:

Iran-Contra illegal arms sales
HUD corruption
Lobbyist corruption
EPA/Superfund corruption
Defense Department corruption

Notable achievements:

Huge tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations
Union-busted air-traffic controllers
Eliminated **Fairness Doctrine** in broadcasting
Large-scale deregulation of industries
"**War on Drugs**," mandatory minimum sentencing
Expanded surveillance powers of government agencies within US
Greatly escalated arms race
Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty

SCOTUS nominations:

Sandra Day O'Connor (1981-2006)
Antonin Scalia (1986-2016)
Robert Bork (rejected)
Douglas Ginsburg (withdrew)
Anthony Kennedy (1988-2018)

Influential staff:

Alexander Haig, James Baker, **Caspar Weinberger**, Ed Meese, **James Watt**, George Shultz

"Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem."

After four years of Jimmy Carter's brutally honest pragmatism, voters decided they'd rather be BS-ed, so long as it was BS with charm. Dubbed "The Great Communicator," Reagan's strength was making people feel good with his folksy demeanor no matter how damaging his policies may have been.

Devoted to **"trickle-down" economics**, Reagan's administration enacted tax cuts primarily benefiting the rich and corporations while spending on social programs was slashed as far as Congress would allow. Disdainful of LBJ's **Great Society,** one of Reagan's favorite lines was, "The most terrifying words in the English language are 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'" Some economists credit Reaganomics for a period of growth in GDP; others note the damage it did to the middle and lower classes and how it unleashed the stark widening of the wealth gap between the super-rich and everyone else.

Reagan attempted to cut, eliminate, or privatize nearly every government program outside the military. Congress proved too big an obstacle for much of that, and Reagan was likewise unsuccessful in passing an abortion ban, ending desegregation busing for public schools, and vetoing civil rights protections. Nevertheless, his regressive domestic agenda was furthered by inaction: the AIDS epidemic **was largely ignored**, the Clean Air Act was allowed to lapse, and the Justice Department simply didn't prosecute very many employment abuse, discrimination, or civil rights cases.

Sweeping deregulation allowed excessive corporate pollution and corruption and contributed to the Savings and Loan crisis: hundreds of S&L businesses failed, many having engaged in previously illegal investment schemes, and several CEOs embezzled millions. Taxpayers had to cover billions of dollars in restitution to S&L customers.

Reagan took a national debt that had been shrinking as a percentage of GDP—Jimmy Carter left him a debt ratio that was a post-World War II low—and added nearly $4 trillion to it. He spent those trillions on a military buildup that dangerously escalated the arms race with the Soviet Union. Some analysts have credited this to bringing about the downfall of the USSR; others note Soviet expenditures remained flat throughout the '80s and believe the collapse was unrelated.

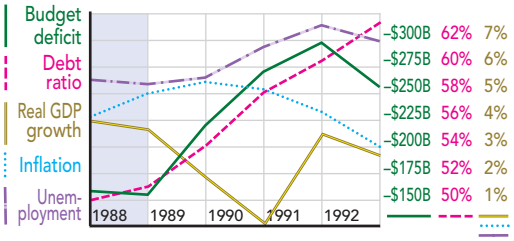
Staunch anti-Communist foreign policy brought back Nixon-style support for brutal regimes across the world in the name of Cold War geopolitics. Such actions begat one of the biggest presidential scandals in history: the Iran-Contra affair. The administration secretly sold more than 2,000 missiles to Iran and gave the proceeds to right-wing rebel guerrillas in Nicaragua (the Contras) who were trying to overthrow their government. Every part of this scheme was illegal, and though indictments came for several officials, Congress opted not to impeach Reagan as the public was unconvinced that he was personally responsible.

#41: BUSH, George Herbert Walker, 1989-1993

Election (1988):	EV	PV
Bush/Quayle (R):	426	53.4%
Dukakis/Bentsen (D):	111	45.7%

Voter turnout: 52.8%

Economy:



Job gains: 2.9M
Recession: 1990-91 (8 months)
Poverty rate change: +3%
Top marginal tax rate: 31%

Military conflicts:

Invasion of Panama
Persian Gulf War
Somalia
Former Yugoslavia

Crises:

Tiananmen Square massacre
Exxon Valdez oil spill
Not a crisis, but collapse of the USSR was a major event

Scandal:

Pardoned key Reagan Administration officials for crimes committed in the Iran-Contra scandal, effectively ending investigations into the affair

Notable achievements:

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)
Americans with Disabilities Act

SCOTUS nominations:

David Souter (1990-2009)
Clarence Thomas (1991-)

Influential staff:

James Baker, **William Barr**, **Dick Cheney**, John Sununu, Brent Scowcroft, Colin Powell

"I will never apologize for the United States — I don't care what the facts are."

Bush the elder was focused on foreign affairs in his only term, and there was a lot going on there. **The USSR was in mid-collapse**, Germany reunited, and the Cold War effectively came to an end. The Chinese mowed down thousands of their own citizens who were protesting for democracy, Panama had an election crisis, and Iraq invaded Kuwait. Bush was content to call the Chinese massacre "an internal affair," but despite his campaign theme of "a kinder, gentler nation," he deployed the US military to force the issue on Panama and Iraq.

Use of such force was not universally favored, but to Bush's credit, he stuck to immediate goals with his warmaking and didn't let larger quagmires develop. The US invaded Panama to oust dictator Manuel Noriega, who had been supported by the Reagan administration as a Cold War proxy until he was indicted as a drug-trafficking kingpin. Noriega had lost an election and in response annulled the results. Bush's "Operation Just Cause" lasted two weeks and Noriega was deposed. Later, Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait to conquer it and seize its oil fields; Bush assembled a coalition of nations to support a US-led war against Iraq (which had been supported by the Reagan administration in its invasion of Iran). The war lasted about two months and was successful in its aims: driving Iraq out of Kuwait and ensuring Kuwait's continued sovereignity. Some wanted Bush to continue the war and overthrow Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, but the president did not think that was justifiable.

Domestically, Bush was seen as detached. He continued many of Reagan's economic policies even as their flaws became more apparent. The 1990-91 recession—partly due to continued fallout from the **S&L crisis**—hurt his standing with the public and a government shutdown forced Bush to accept a tax hike on most Americans, a betrayal of his campaign promise not to raise taxes that spawned a schism within the Republican party that would continue to grow for years to come.

Instead of directly addressing domestic issues of unemployment, homelessness, and the increasing wealth divide, Bush called on citizens to volunteer and support charities. "We can find meaning and reward by serving some higher purpose than ourselves," he said, notably not serving such purpose with his own considerable powers. He referred to this as his "points of light" initiative and established a foundation by that name. The foundation subsequently received millions in federal funds, but according to the *Los Angeles Times*, by 1995 "only 11% of the foundation's budget had been spent to provide grants to volunteer efforts" and it had "fallen well short of private fund-raising goals and attracted scant scrutiny from Congress." Songwriter Neil Young used his song "Rockin' in the Free World" to critique Bush with the line, "*We got 1,000 points of light for the homeless man… We got a kinder, gentler machine gun hand.*"

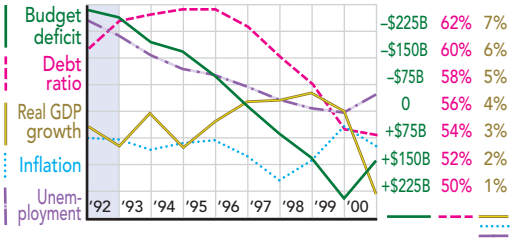
In his final weeks in office, Bush pardoned several officials indicted in the **Iran-Contra scandal** whom he called "true patriots," including Reagan defense secretary Caspar Weinberger, who was days away from standing trial. This put an end to the special counsel investigation into Iran-Contra that had yet to run its course.

#42: CLINTON, William Jefferson ("Bill"), 1993-2001

Elections (1992):	EV	PV
Clinton/Gore (D):	370	43.0%
Bush/Quayle (R):	168	37.5%
Perot/Stockdale (I):	0	18.9%
Voter turnout: 58.2%		

(1996):	EV	PV
Clinton/Gore (D):	379	49.2%
Dole/Kemp (R):	159	40.7%
Perot/Choate (I):	0	8.4%
Voter turnout: 51.7%		

Economy:



Job gains: 21.1M
Recession: None
Poverty rate change: –4%
Top marginal tax rate: 39.6%

Military conflicts:

Croatia/Serbia/Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti, Kosovo

Scandal:

"**Travelgate**"
M. Lewinsky extramarital affair

Crises:

Al-Qaeda terrorism
Nuclear proliferation (North Korea)
Waco raid
Oklahoma City bombing

Notable achievements:

Federal budget surpluses
Handgun Violence Prevention Act
Assault weapons ban
AmeriCorps community service program
"Motor Voter" law
Kyoto Protocol on carbon emissions
Ratification of NAFTA
Normalized relations with Vietnam
Good Friday Agreement (Ireland)
Expansion of NATO
Welfare reform
"**Don't ask, don't tell**" armed forces policy

SCOTUS nominations:

Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1993-2020)
Stephen Breyer (1994-2022)

Influential staff:

Al Gore, Madeleine Albright, Mack McLarty, **Bruce Babbitt**, William Cohen, Janet Reno, Sandy Berger, Robert Reich, Leon Panetta, John Podesta, George Stephanopoulos, Tom Freedman

"There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America."

A so-called "New Democrat," Clinton endeavored to marry the small-government ethos of Reaganites with the liberal social policies of Johnson's **Great Society**. It was a tall order, but he was largely successful—under his watch, the country experienced the longest continual period of economic expansion on record. Tax policy was made more progressive; budget deficits were reduced, eliminated, and finally made surpluses (Clinton had the US on pace to entirely eliminate the public portion of its national debt by 2009); and a record for new jobs was set while unemployment sank to its lowest level since 1973.

Still, he had a hostile Congress that killed his comprehensive **health care reform proposal** and forced unpalatable compromises on other issues, including the "don't ask, don't tell" policy for gays serving in the military and a mixed bag of a **crime bill** (which instituted mandatory sentencing, expanded the Federal death penalty, and overturned law providing for education for inmates, but also banned assault weapons and introduced the Safe Homes for Women Act).

Clinton also championed welfare reform that was unpopular with Democrats and generous to Republican concepts like work requirements and aid limits. And he signed a number of deregulation bills that would have been at home in the Reagan administration, **some of which** contributed to future crises.

In foreign affairs, Clinton worked to expand NATO in the wake of the Soviet collapse, attempted to replicate President Carter's **Camp David** achievement by mediating between Israeli and Palestinian officials (without success), and dealt with a recalcitrant North Korea's efforts to build nuclear weapons. But it was non-state terrorism that became the biggest foreign issue with the emergence of al-Qaeda, an Afghan terror group led by Osama bin Laden. Al-Qaeda bombed several overseas US installations and the World Trade Center in New York, prompting Clinton to authorize CIA operations to capture or kill bin Laden. One such opportunity arose: "I could have killed him," Clinton said, "but I would have had to destroy a little town called Kandahar and kill 300 innocent women and children, and then I would have been no better than him."

Republicans, under House Speaker **Newt Gingrich**, so **loathed Clinton** that they investigated a failed investment he'd made years prior, searching for anything they could use against him politically. The investigation dug up nothing useful concerning the investment, but did discover that Clinton had had a brief sexual liaison with a White House intern. Thus began the Monica Lewinsky scandal, which Gingrich and company ultimately impeached Clinton over. The Senate acquitted Clinton, but the incident damaged him greatly.

#43: BUSH, George Walker, 2001-2009

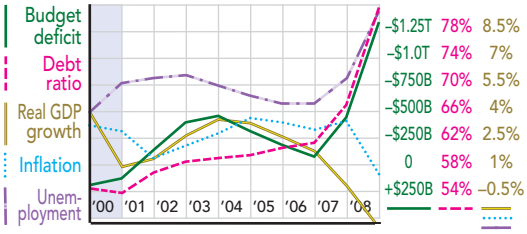
Elections (2000):	EV	PV
Bush/Cheney (R):	271	47.9%
Gore/Lieberman (D):	267	48.4%

Voter turnout: 54.3%

(2004):	EV	PV
Bush/Cheney (R):	286	50.7%
Kerry/Edwards (D):	252	48.3%

Voter turnout: 60.1%

Economy:



Job gains: 12.3M
Recession: 2001 (8 months), 2007-09 (18 months)
Poverty rate change: +2%
Top marginal tax rate: 35%

Military conflicts:

Iraq war, Afghanistan war, "Global war on terror"

Crises:

9/11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina

Scandal:

Failure to heed warnings of what became the 9/11 attacks
CIA leak/outing of agents
Mass firing of US attorneys
Torture policy
Guantanamo Bay prison

Notable achievements:

Huge tax cuts, primarily for wealthy and corporations
Massive reaction to 9/11 resulting in
- Creation of **Department of Homeland Security**
- **USA PATRIOT Act**
- Warrantless wiretaps
- Decades-long military operations

Withdrew from **Kyoto Protocol**
Withdrew from Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty

SCOTUS nominations:

John Roberts (2005-)
Harriet Miers (withdrawn)
Samuel Alito (2006-)

Influential staff:

Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, John Ashcroft, Karl Rove, Condoleezza Rice, Tom Ridge, John Bolton, Alberto Gonzalez, Michael Chertoff, Paul Wolfowitz

"Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."

An utter disaster for the country, Bush the younger's administration launched brutal wars on flimsy justifications, did untold damage to America's reputation abroad, posted budget deficits that would shame Reagan, and oversaw the largest economic collapse since the **Great Depression**.

The prior administration had given Bush intelligence briefings about Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terror network, but they were **largely ignored**; new warnings of an imminent al-Qaeda attack within the US were given in May, June, July, and August, 2001, the latter brief infamously titled "**bin Laden determined to strike in US**." Those, too, were largely ignored, and when that attack occurred on September 11th, Bush wrongly assumed it was the work of Iraq's Saddam Hussein.

Riding a wave of support from a traumatized populace, Bush responded in a sweeping manner that proved mostly counterproductive. After first declaring a "war on terror" that would defy conventional boundaries, Bush launched the Afghanistan war, which would continue for 20 years and **ultimately fail** to eliminate either the Taliban government or bin Laden. Though he'd been shown that al-Qaeda, not Iraq, had been responsible for 9/11, Bush was determined to wage war there as well. The administration convinced the United Nations to support them by **falsely claiming** that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction with intent to use them. Whether Bush officials believed their WMD story or knew it was a fabrication, the truth was evident after Iraq had been toppled: there were no WMDs.

In prosecuting its war on terror, the administration used what it called "enhanced interrogation" on alleged combatants captured in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. **Most people called it torture**. Evidence indicates the US engaged in international war crimes and violated several of its own laws.

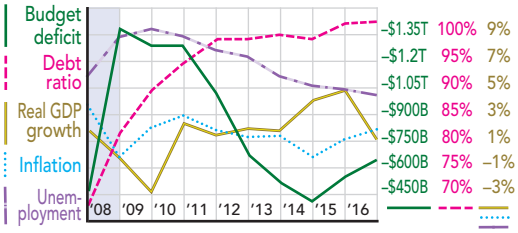
At home, Bush created a new cabinet agency, the Department of Homeland Security—an enormous bureaucracy incorporating 22 sub-agencies including new ones **Immigration & Customs Enforcement**, oft accused of abuses of power; and the **Transportation Safety Administration**, the world's most expensive theater production. DHS has been the site of billions in waste and fraud and **calls for its abolition** have been made since 2011. The USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 authorized vast new powers of surveillance and law-enforcement in direct opposition to civil rights and privacy statutes and was considered by many to be unconstitutional. The administration claimed that the new DHS and PATRIOT Act allowed them to thwart several terrorist plots, but the veracity of those claims **is dubious**.

Bush enacted another series of tax cuts primarily benefiting the wealthy and continued deregulation of businesses in general and financial institutions in particular, contributing to risky practices that led to a number of prominent bank failures and near-failures. The resulting Great Recession would see soaring unemployment, market crashes, and a steep rise in consumer debt; virtually no Americans were untouched in some way by the economic crisis.

#44: OBAMA, Barack Hussein (2009-2017)

Elections (2008):	EV	PV	(2012):	EV	PV
Obama/Biden (D):	365	52.9%	Obama/Biden (D):	332	51.1%
McCain/Palin (R):	173	45.7%	Romney/Ryan (R):	206	47.2%
Voter turnout: 62.5%			*Voter turnout: 58.0%*		

Economy:



Job gains: 13M
Recession: 2009 (8 months transition/ recovery from Great Recession)
Poverty rate change: –0.5%
Top marginal tax rate: 39.6%

Military conflicts:

Continuation of Afghanistan war
Continuation/withdrawal from Iraq war
Drone attacks in "war on terror"
"War on terror" vs. ISIS events
SEAL mission to get Osama bin Laden
Somali pirates
Part of NATO forces in Libya

Scandal:

Once wore a tan suit

Crises:

Inherited **Great Recession**
Inherited GWB wars and detentions
Deepwater Horizon oil spill
Arab Spring & aftermath

Notable achievements:

American Recovery & Reinvestment Act
Affordable Care Act
Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act
Wall Street Reform & Consumer Protection Act
Established **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau**
Paris Climate Agreement
Repealed "Don't ask, don't tell" policy
Education reform
DREAM Act
Drug policy reform
Clean Power Plan
Iran nuclear agreement
New START treaty
Normalized relations with Cuba

SCOTUS nominations:

Sonia Sotomayor (2009-)
Elena Kagan (2010-)
Merrick Garland (blocked)

Influential staff:

Joe Biden, Rahm Emmanuel, John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, John Podesta, Valerie Jarrett, Leon Panetta, David Axelrod, Eric Holder, Janet Nopalitano, Susan Rice, Austan Goolsbee

"When all Americans are treated as equal, we are all more free."

Cleaning up George W. Bush's mess was a daunting task. On the Great Recession and the economy, Obama succeeded in seeing the country into a recovery with tax reform, industry loans, and stimulus spending. Overseas, his success was more of a mixed bag: Combat troops were withdrawn from Iraq—with some redeployed later as advisers—but fighting escalated in Afghanistan before a partial troop withdrawal; by the end of his term, troop levels in that war were reduced from a peak of 100,000 to 8,500 with combat still happening. Obama also continued Bush's "war on terror" with drone strikes in several countries and special forces missions, including one that surgically **took out Osama bin Laden** with no collateral damage.

The administration's signature legislative achievement was the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which expanded the availability of health insurance, while other significant measures included Wall Street reform, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and the repeal of "**don't ask, don't tell**."

For much of his tenure he had a hostile Congress, with the Republican party getting more extreme in reaction to the election of the first African-American president. The so-called "**Tea Party caucus**" was particularly vocal and served as a precursor to today's "MAGA" Republican party. Congressional opposition prevented Obama from closing the prison at **Guantanamo Bay**, stymied a new Clean Energy Act, blocked reinstatement of the assault weapons ban, forced compromises on tax policy, and shut down the government for two weeks in an attempt to rescind the ACA.

Obama's admistration was completely scandal-free, much to the frustration of Republicans, who contrived to create scandal over anything they could think of, including the president's preference for **brown mustard**. The racist "birther movement" spearheaded by Donald Trump postulated that Obama was ineligible to be president, claiming he was not born in the US even though he was, in fact, born in the state of Hawaii. The excessive partisan divide that began with Republicans of the 1990s was now a chasm of petulance, if not outright hatred.

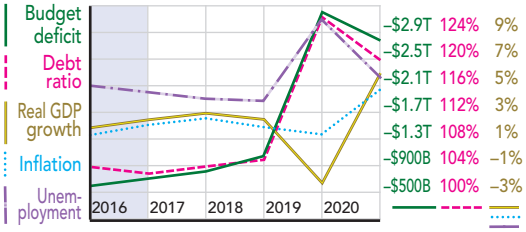
Perhaps the most consequential congressional obstruction came in 2016, when Senate leader **Mitch McConnell refused** to hold a confirmation hearing on Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland. The Court would remain short one member for the remainder of Obama's term, the vacancy ultimately filled by Trump.

#45: TRUMP, Donald John, 2017-2021

Election (2016):	EV	PV
Trump/Pence (R):	304	46.1%
H. Clinton/Kaine (D):	227	48.2%

Voter turnout: 61.4%

Economy:



Job gains: –2.9M
Recession: 2020 (3 months)
Poverty rate change: –1.3%
Top marginal tax rate: 37%

Military conflicts:

Continued Afghanistan war
Several "war on terror" incidents

Scandal:

Russian help in getting elected
Emoluments violations
Selling pardons
Family separation policy
Election interference
Incited insurrection after losing election
So, so many **abuses of power**
So, so much **corruption**

Crises:

COVID-19 pandemic
Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, **Maria**, **Dorian**
Wildfires
Police killings & subsequent protests

Notable "achievements":

Massive tax cuts for the wealthy
Huge increase in Federal deficit
More Federal executions than under any president in over 120 years
Import tariffs/trade war
Withdrew from **Iran nuclear agreement**
Withdrew from **Paris climate agreement**
Withdrew from World Health Org.
Suspended or revoked nearly 100 environmental, industry, & safety regs.
Instituted gag rules and bans on research for reproductive issues
Travel bans based on religion
Reduced or rescinded LGBT protections
Deployed Federal forces to US cities against local officials' wishes
Pardoned war criminals
Impeached twice

SCOTUS nominations:

Neil Gorsuch (2017-)
Brett Kavanaugh (2018-)
Amy Coney Barrett (2020-)

Influential staff:

Jared Kushner
Stephen Miller
Steve Bannon
Reince Priebus
Steve Mnuchin
Mick Mulvaney
Mike Pompeo
Mark Meadows
Michael Flynn

"I don't take responsibility at all."

Never before had this country had a chief executive so blatantly corrupt or **staggeringly dishonest**. From defiance of the emoluments clause of the Constitution to overcharging the secret service to stay at his own properties to selling pardons, there seemed no limit to what Trump would do to grift the nation.

Utterly transactional, Trump withdrew from a number of international agreements and **threatened to leave NATO** as he didn't see any benefit from the alliance and was inclined to aid **his Russian benefactor**, Vladimir Putin. Unabashedly cruel, Trump sought to use the military to shoot migrants at the border and instituted a policy of "family separation," essentially kidnapping migrant children from their parents when they crossed the border as a deterrent to asylum seekers.

An admirer of despotic regimes, Trump made no secret of wishing similar power for himself. Repeatedly praising the likes of **Putin**, **Viktor Orban**, **Xi Jinping**, and **Kim Jong Un**, Trump believed that the complete obedience those men receive from subordinates was also his due as President of the US. "I need loyalty," he said, "I expect loyalty."

Trump also disdained science; insisting climate change was somehow both "a hoax" and "created by the Chinese," he negated all progress from the prior administration in combating the climate crisis. The anti-science view was most prominent when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Having **previously eliminated** the government's Global Health Security unit, Trump had no plan for dealing with a health crisis and tried to simply ignore it. "**It will go away**," he said. When it spread to the point of nationwide lockdown, Trump blamed health officials and rejected efforts to fight the virus. The incompetent response abetted the deaths of half a million Americans, 40% of whom, **it is estimated**, would have survived if not for Trump's "leadership."

After he lost his bid for reelection, Trump incited his cult-like supporters to attack the Capitol on January 6, 2021, in an attempt to stop the certification of his defeat so he could remain in power in defiance of law, democracy, and the Constitution. Legal cases surrounding those efforts remain ongoing.

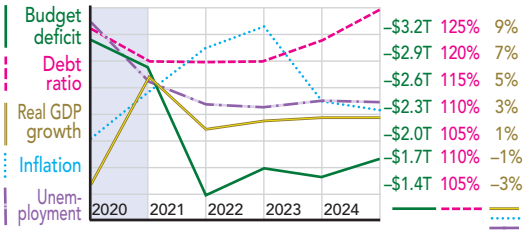
If Trump had been at all aware of how government worked, his term of non-stop chaos and graft could have been very much worse. As it was, there were **people in various positions** that checked some of his worst impulses; by the end of his four years, those people had all been removed and replaced by more compliant sycophants.

#46: BIDEN, Joseph Robinette Jr., 2021-

Election (2020):	EV	PV
Biden/Harris (D):	306	51.3%
Trump/Pence (R):	232	46.8%

Voter turnout: 66.9%

Economy:



Job gains: 9.77M
Recession: None
Poverty rate change: 0%
Top marginal tax rate: 37%

Military conflicts:

Withdrew from war in Afghanistan
Ended remaining operations in Iraq
Part of multinational Red Sea naval force

Crises:

Russian invasion of Ukraine, **Israel-Hamas war**, **MAGA cult**

Scandal:

None, though Republicans have been trying to manufacture one since the 2020 campaign

Notable achievements:

American Rescue Plan
Inflation Reduction Act
Effective COVID-19 management
Rescinded anti-union policies
CHIPS and Science Act
Rejoined **Paris climate agreement**
Rescinded Trump ban on transgender persons in the military
Enacted **Juneteenth holiday**
Repealed **Defense of Marriage Act**
Facilitated int'l support for Ukraine
Facilitated NATO expansion
Student debt relief
Funding and support for NASA, including **Artemis moon mission**

SCOTUS nominations:

Ketanji Brown Jackson (2022-)

Influential staff:

Kamala Harris
Ron Klain
Antony Blinken
Merrick Garland
Jennifer Granholm
Jake Sullivan
Alejandro Mayorkas

"Democracy doesn't happen by accident. We have to defend it, strengthen it, renew it."

The campaign theme for Joe Biden's election was "a battle for the soul of the nation." He took office mere weeks after a mob of his predecessor's supporters **stormed the Capitol** to overthrow his election amid a raging pandemic that had already killed hundreds of thousands of Americans. The catastrophes of the prior administration threatened to destroy the US's standing as a leader of democratic nations; as a nation steeped in the rule of law; and where the government is of, by, and for the people. Biden's first priority was to reestablish the US as all of those things.

He's been able to do that to a large extent, but still faces intransigent opposition from a bloc of Republicans, both in and out of Congress, who are so extreme as to **favor Russia over NATO**, the **subjugation of women**, and policies that would regress the social structure of the nation by a century.

Under Biden, the COVID-19 pandemic has been largely controlled through vaccinations and safety measures. Science once again became a basis for decision-making as the US rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization. Support for organized labor and the middle class once more was a priority, long-overdue infrastructure repair projects were funded, and the climate crisis finally got serious and overdue attention.

Biden's successes in foreign affairs include facilitating important international support for Ukraine, which had been invaded by neighboring Russia. He's also worked to repair relations with European nations strained by the former administration and reverse several troubling US policies concerning Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, Biden threads the tiniest of needles regarding Israel, which has been excoriated for its indiscriminate response to a savage attack by Hamas terrorists. Biden has been taken to task for apparent support of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but behind the scenes more critical diplomatic measures appear to be in play. How this issue gets resolved is yet to be determined.

Before the 2022 midterm elections gave control of the House of Representatives to Republicans, Biden was able to achieve a great deal through legislation (though the slim Democratic majorities were insufficient to overcome Republican opposition to several bills). The American Rescue Plan was critical in reviving the economy in the wake of the pandemic and in making COVID vaccinations available to the public. The Inflation Reduction Act was largely about things other than inflation—which had been quite high thanks to the pandemic—but also aided in bringing inflation down to normal levels. The bill also included the most legislative action on the climate crisis to date and consumer-friendly reforms to Medicare and the IRS, now tasked with reclaiming funds from tax cheats and large corporations.

VOTE!

You can ensure the United States remains a government of the people, by the people, and for the people

Many resources can be found online to assist you in registering to vote, checking your existing registration, getting an absentee ballot, and any other need you may have. Here are some to get you started:

www.vote.org
www.vote411.org
United States Election Assistance Commission
Federal Voting Assistance Program (for US citizens abroad)
U.S. Vote Foundation
Vote Save America
ACLU: Know Your Voting Rights

ELECTIONS MATTER.
YOUR VOTE COUNTS.
WE CAN DO FAR BETTER THAN 60%.
KEEP THE UNITED STATES A DEMOCRACY.

2024: THIS ONE'S FOR ALL THE MARBLES.

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