

AMERICAN GENERAL ELECTION 2020: WHY TRUMP FAILED AND WHAT TO EXPECT FROM BIDEN?

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Abstract: The failure in the US election 2020 has ended the former US president Donald Jr. Trump's efforts in "making America great again". This article looks at the gains and losses to the USA during his heated time in the office, seeking for the reason for his failure in the general election and forecasting short-term visions of this powerful nation under the newly-elected Joe Biden's presidency. The results from this discussion paper has shown that the former US president Donald Jr. Trump set off his office term impressively but the final year stopped his progress and even erased most of his efforts with unexpected incidents. The candidate from the Democratic Party, Joe Biden was therefore supported greatly by both the people and the "right time" to get into the White House without much difficulty. However, in regard to the contemporary international and domestic situations, the USA under the newly-elected president Joe Biden's leadership is expected to confront a considerably hard time in the next four years. As a large-scale economy, the USA's influences and effects on other countries around the world deserve to be examined more carefully than ever.

Key words: Trump, presidency, US election, 2020, politics, Joe Biden

The appearance of Donald Jr. Trump was remarkably marked with his success in the American General Election 2016, when a businessman more than a politician confronted Hillary Clinton - the former First Lady with extraordinary self-built power, experience and external support - to be seated in the White House on the most influential seat. His office term had started impressively as he rapidly proved the world that he was serious in most of his declarations. Jobs had been created more than ever in the first two years of his term; the living standard of most Americans had been improved and the whole economy of the nation had been witnessing a great deal

of moving up. In 2018 Trump started his "trade war" against China – this has been also the first time the World has seen an America with clear, straightforward and consistent strategies towards this rising populated country. However, together with these aggressive steps against the growing up giant of the Chinese, Trump did lose some close friends in the political circle due to his inappropriate manners and tweets. But the losing was not really significant compared with his achievements until the end of 2018, as his biggest opponent – China – had to concede in most reactions towards the American. If the situation had continued in this way, the second term of his office as

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the US President would have been ensured. But then the covid-19 pandemic broke out at the end of the year 2019 and somehow only this plague was enough to stop him from almost any movement. The year 2020 can be considered as a year of significant impacts and memories to the world. Together with the wide-spreading of the pandemic Covid-19, the US national election 2020 has left permanent markings on that powerful country's history and influential effects on the world's politics. Contrary to a great number of scholars and politicians' expectations, the confrontation between the two most potential candidates, namely Donald Trump and Joe Biden, was not as fierce or durable as it was already forecast. The victory had come upon the Democratic candidate much sooner than expected. Joe's success somehow originated from Trump's weakening during the Covid-19 year and the democratic wise strategies to fight back the Republic. This result of the US election 2020 can also be traced back to the accomplishments and failures during Trump's first presidential office term. This article is aimed at outlining some of Trump's accomplishments and failures during his time in the White House and seeking for some plausible explanations for his "unexpected" failure in the General Election 2020 when his rival this time is a man being older in both age and experience too.

1. Accomplishments and Failures During Trump's Presidency of 2016-2020

Recently a number of scholars have been investigating the gains and losses to the Americans in Trump's time in office. The arguments vary from a small to a large extent with different perspectives and beholders' viewpoints. On the one hand, some authors like Michael Dimock and John Gramlich (2021) concentrate on spiritual or conceptual values of Trump's legacy such as (1) the

partisan and division among the Americans; (2) the distrust in media and the wide spreading of fake news; (3) concerns over American democracy; (4) the returns of racial conflicts and inequality; (5) a redefinition of public health and economic crisis. On the other hand, others just outline and summarize the facts on Trump's legacy with definite data and give the audience the freedom to make any inference themselves about the former US president's abilities. After a great deal of consideration, the authors of this article agree that John Haltiwanger's summary of the former US president's accomplishments and failures (2021) may be one of the best ones.

According to Haltiwanger (2021), Trump's biggest accomplishments include: (1) reshaping the federal judiciary: 3/9 Supreme Court justices were appointed during Trump's office time and 226 judges to the federal bench, exerting an influence on the direction of the US many years later; (2) strengthening the American army with a newly-built Space Force: with \$738 billion defense spending, Trump had established the sixth branch of the national Armed Forces; (3) tax reform: The corporate tax rate has been decreased to 21% from 35%; (4) First Step Act: Trump put First Step Act into effect in December 2018. It can be considered the first legislative victory after many years advocating to reform the criminal justice system; (5) initial defeating IS caliphate: After a five-year effort led by the US, IS caliphate was initially on the way of being defeated in March 2019; (6) Trump somehow had raised the dominant stand slightly higher on the world's politics through the US-China trade war. This is the first time in the 21st century has this nation proved its influence so strongly and also the first time it has clarified its strategy towards

the rising of China. The world has witnessed “an American great again” at least under the light of this trade war.

Still according to Haltiwanger (2021), the list of most obvious failures by Trump include: (1) poor dealing with the case of George Floyd; (2) America's global image is in shambles (when he decided to withdraw the USA from the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership – CPTPP, the climate change program of the Paris Agreement, the WTO, and his reactions to Corona pandemic, his “unsuitable” manners when meeting the UK’s Queen, etc.); (3) family separations and the deaths of migrant children: Trump's "zero tolerance" policy on illegal border crossings was claimed to cause the separations of at least 5,500 families and children’s being placed in cages in 2018; (4) causing the chaotic situations in Iran (with the decision of withdrawing the American from the 2015 nuclear deal), Syria (withdrawing his troops out of this country in the late 2019), and Afghanistan (with his intention to withdraw the American troops from this country); (5) replacing the Affordable Care Act (or the Obama Care); (6) impeachment: Trump has been the only president in US history to be impeached twice; (7) COVID-19 pandemic: He lost a great deal of confidence among the Americans due to his poor reactions and careless speeches towards the most widely spread pandemic of the two first decades of the 21st century; (8) the US economy: Coronavirus lockdowns in early 2020 led to a high rate of unemployment (7.9% during February to April), a large reduction in the consumer spending and the highest national debt since the World War II. And the US economic growth was -3.5% in 2020; (9) damaging democracy.

Of the two above lists, it is easily noticeable that the losses or failures have outnumbered the gains by Trump’s

administration. It is also a common conclusion by most prestigious political journalists, scholars and writers worldwide. The figure named “Trump’s numbers” below can be considered another summary of Trump’s legacy with numbers and figures.

Figure 1

Noticeable Figures Reflecting Trump’s Achievements and Failures During His First US Presidential Term (Jackson, 2020)



2. Analysis of Trump's Policies That Leads to His Failure in 2020 General Election

From the above figure of "Trump's numbers", some of the most noticeable facts about Trump's policies during his office terms are as follows:

- Increase security for the people with the murder rate, US-Mexico border apprehensions and gun production all decreased (-5.7%, -12.9%, and -35.2% respectively). But the incidents of Charlottesville and George Floyd being shot by the police has destroyed nearly all his efforts.
- Eradicating poverty and the number of people receiving food stamps witnessed progress (-1.6 point and -12.6%) but the number without medical health care insurance decreased (7.1 million).
- US reaction to the worldwide corona pandemic has been criticised as slow and ineffective. The noticeable aspect here is also the fact that this pandemic just broke and spread out quickly in the final year of Trump's office term.
- Despite the fact that real weekly earnings and median household income increased (7.1% and 6.2%), the unemployment rate rose, too (7.9%), which is said to be so due to the collapse of the economy during the break-out of the covid 19. Meanwhile Americans lost 3.9 million jobs and the consumer price index went up to 6.8%. In the end of his time, the federal debt held by the public increased to 46%.

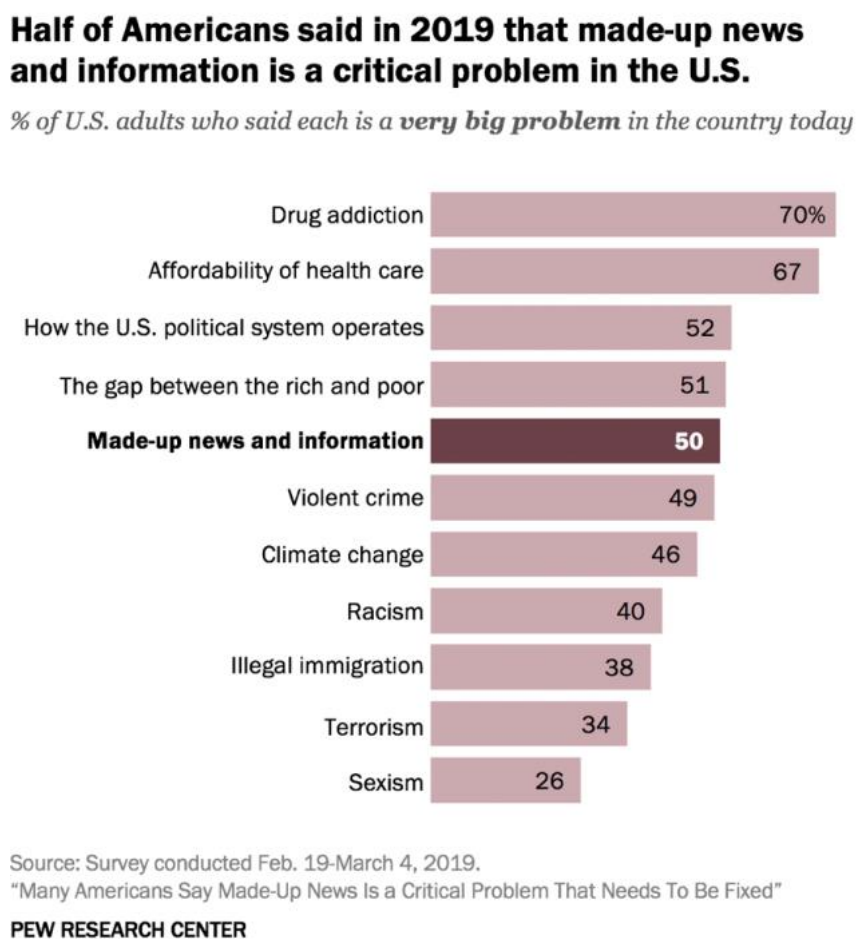
Similarly, his most noticeable foreign relation policies include: His failure in the negotiations with both Iran and North Korea heated the conflicts and suspicions of those countries. His lack of skilful and elegant manners at the international conferences and meetings made his allies unhappy and even embarrassed. His stubbornness and separating attitudes from international organizations and agreements such as the WTO, the United Nations and the Kyoto Protocol further isolated himself and the whole USA from the outside world. Especially, the trade war between the USA and China started by Trump in 2018 has not gained any victory yet to the US as expected. At the end of 2020, while China still maintained a positive growth rate (3.2%), the USA has been recorded as having one of the slowest economic progress times in its history (-3.5%).

Examining Trump's effects of domestic policies, we have to admit that the first three years of his regime had sailed through impressively, given the fact that the President did not have any official training or professional experience previously related to state management or political jobs. But he had managed bunches of tasks with admirable durability and courage. But the year 2020 had stopped his running up for the second term of the US presidency when the corona pandemic broke out and destroyed the world as well as the US economy.

Moreover, if we look at the worries and concerns among US citizens during his time as illustrated in the graph below, we can see that they are now worrying about the political system's operations more than other dangers of illegal immigration or terrorism.

Figure 2

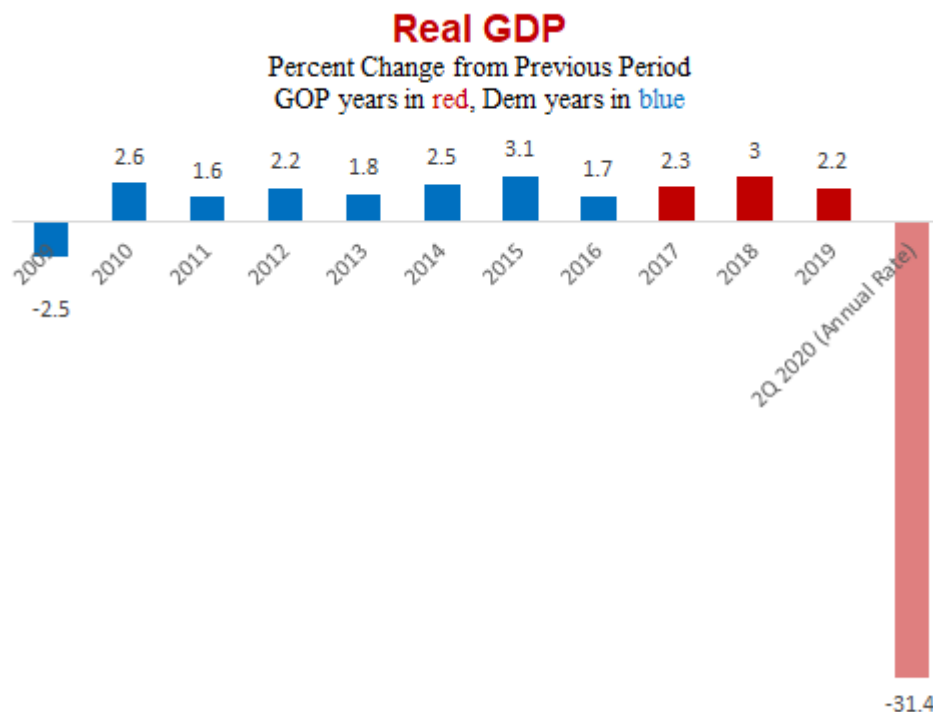
Problematic Issues as Viewed by the Americans in 2019 Under Trump’s Ruling Government
(Dimock & Gramlich, 2020)



Contrary to what the public and politicians often think of Trump as a talent in economic management jobs, the USA during his term did not witness any triumphant records of growth in this aspect. The first three years’ economic growth of 2017-2019 fluctuated from 2.2%-3.0%, not better than the peak of 3.1% in 2015 under the former president Barack Obama (see the diagram on Real GDP 2009-June/2020 below). The first two quarters of 2020 in Trump’s time witnessed the growth plunge

to the irrational low of -31.4%.

According to Mandelbaum (2014), financial strengths contain in themselves typical political capacities: conspiring or planning must derive first from the roots of economy; but whether the plan thrives or not all depends on political strategies. Looking at Trump’s situation just before the election 2020, it is obvious that he did not have enough supportive economic strength needed to win.

Figure 3*Real GDP of the USA – Percent Change From 2009 to 2019 (Jackson, 2020)*

Growth under Trump has fallen far below the 4% to 6% per year that he had promised repeatedly, both when he was a candidate and also as president. The disillusionment he caused among the Americans in this aspect alone has been enough to push him far away from the second presidency of this nation.

3. The Victory in the 2020 General Election by Joe Biden and the Prospects of the USA in His First Presidential Term

The Straits Times (2020) listed five reasons why Joe Biden, at the age of 78, had defeated Donald Trump Jr. to become the US 46th president. They include: (1) Covid-19, which is considered to appear and make it the “right time” to dump nearly all of Trump’s previous efforts and accomplishments; (2) less-is-more campaigning, when Joe concentrated on a more leisure schedule of visiting important states and giving speeches than Trump – who liked to show off himself

as an inexhaustible man with frenzy working timetables; (3) anyone but Trump, which turns the election into a referendum towards the question of Trump’s role and position as the leader of such a powerful and prestigious nation; but at the same time this strategy aimed at portraying Trump as a man making large holes and gaps among the American; 4) stay in the center, when he appeared as a “healer”, not “destroyer” as Trump. Also, he attracts the audience and media towards himself and his family as an average American worker with a stable family, not his coming government or his Democratic Party; 5) more money, fewer problems, when he promised to spend more money on the general public, not just one or two tasks or missions as Trump, who had spent too much money on the Armed Forces. Also, his fund raising campaign had earned US\$180.7 million in total in August 2020, compared with just US\$121.1 million collected by Trump’s in September.

It is noticeable that the experienced man Biden of 47 years working in the US political arena has exploited all of the opponent's weaknesses to fight back. The strategies here seem simple but effective: first, exploiting the weakness of the opponent; second, raise him up to meet the expectations of the US men. Of the five main strategies mentioned above, there is only one aiming directly towards Trump (Strategy Number 3) and one polishing Joe Biden himself at the central position (Strategy Number 4) but all the three left more or less portraying Joe and his main opponent in the somehow contrasting standings. When the American have been tired and bored with Trump's boiling tempers and careless tweets, Joe Biden has taken the advantage to become a more desirable image in his voters.

Last but not least, the outbreak of the corona pandemic in late 2019 had a tremendous impact on Trump's administration capacity during the last important final year of his term. It destroyed nearly all his earning points before the election, from the aspects of jobs created, employment rate to the growth of the economy in general. Without the pandemic, it had not been so easy for Joe to overcome him and his staff. Once again, it is necessary to emphasize that Biden has been given a golden time to defeat such an adamant man of Donald Trump.

4. The Forecast of America Under Joe Biden's Administration

The USA and the world have suffered from a hard time, a period of "sickness". And as the image of the healer that Joe Biden had always tried to portray during the election 2020, he is stepping into the office of the 46th US president with a number of healing jobs, both domestically and overseas.

Towards the domestic problems, Biden is aiming at narrowing the gaps

between political parties and races or religious groups of the country. He is once again in a good position to do so when his Democratic Party has gained control over both the Senate and the Congress in late 2020; and his vice president is an intelligent black woman – an unprecedented phenomenon. Another of his priorities will be the eradication of the covid-19 pandemic; therefore he may reset the US relationship with the WTO and other health care systems to fight back this plague. In the long run, public health care will still be his first and foremost priority. In order to push up the economic growth, a package of economic relief valued at 2,000 billion US dollars has been considered and disbursed generally with the recovery of different branches in the nation's economy.

For overseas and international matters, Joe Biden may not be too hurried to take full care of them as his country's domestic situations have not been stabilized yet. But his cabinet will take one eye on the most urgent jobs such as re-connecting with the alliances to fight back the covid-19 pandemic worldwide. He has promised to reconsider joining into the CPTPP agreement and also the Paris Agreement. His reactions towards the trade war started by the former US president in 2018 have been forecast as no less heated or deterrent than his predecessor; however Joe may adopt a softer voice and more skillful diplomatic manners towards the related tasks.

In short, Biden and his government will try to solve domestic problems before reaching their arms overseas. In regard to the comparative weakening of the US recently, his first presidential term may be a struggling time with home land matters. Therefore, on the international arena, the US position is going to suffer from slightly lowering than before. But with such an experienced and calm man, the Americans may get stronger little by little to maintain their dominance until the half end of his term.

As a large scale economy with tremendous influences on the world's markets, Vietnam may find its chance to widen their participation into the USA in Biden's time. A friend in need is a friend indeed – as the saying goes – Vietnam should prove to be a reliable partner to the US as in the short run, this powerful country is still exerting strong impacts on nearly all aspects of the international relationships. With the support and cooperation from Americans, the progress of Vietnam is expected to be smoother.

In conclusion, Trump's failure in the US general election 2020 can be largely due to his too challenging style of state management and the "golden time" of Covid-19. Joe Biden's victory in the election mainly comes from the democrats' skillful strategies to a weakening opponent. However, the coming years seem embedded with a great number of difficulties and hardship to the newly-elected US president as well as his cabinet. Vietnam should take a chance to prove its friendliness to that influential nation with the aims of better living for both citizens of the two countries and mutual cooperation towards the world's peace and development.

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BẦU CỬ TỔNG THỐNG MỸ 2020: VÌ SAO TRUMP THẤT BẠI VÀ CHÚNG TA CÓ THỂ MONG CHỜ ĐIỀU GÌ TỪ BIDEN?

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Tóm tắt: Thất bại trong cuộc bầu cử tổng thống Mỹ năm 2020 đã đánh dấu sự chấm dứt các nỗ lực của Cựu tổng thống Mỹ - ông Donald Jr. Trump trong việc 'làm cho nước Mỹ vĩ đại trở lại'. Bài nghiên cứu này muốn tìm hiểu về các thành tựu cũng như tồn thất của nước Mỹ trong suốt nhiệm kỳ đầy sóng gió của ông, tìm hiểu về lý do cho thất bại của ông trong cuộc bầu cử và dự đoán về tương lai của quốc gia hùng mạnh này dưới nhiệm kỳ của tổng thống mới được bầu chọn - ông Joe Biden. Kết quả của báo cáo thảo luận này cho thấy cựu tổng thống Mỹ - ông Donald Jr. Trump đã bắt đầu nhiệm kỳ của mình một cách đầy ấn tượng, tuy nhiên những thành tựu, nỗ lực ban đầu này đã không được duy trì trong năm cuối, thậm chí còn gần như bị xóa bỏ sau một loạt các sự kiện bất ngờ. Ứng cử viên của đảng Dân chủ, ông Joe Biden, do đó đã được sự ủng hộ lớn mạnh của người dân cũng như tận dụng được 'thời điểm phù hợp' và đã giành chiếc vé vào Nhà Trắng một cách dễ dàng. Tuy nhiên, trong bối cảnh quốc tế và quốc gia hiện nay, nước Mỹ dưới sự lãnh đạo của tổng thống Joe Biden sẽ phải đối mặt với một khoảng thời gian khó khăn trong bốn năm tới. Là một nền kinh tế lớn, các ảnh hưởng và tác động của nước Mỹ tới các nước khác trên thế giới cần được nghiên cứu, đánh giá kỹ hơn bao giờ hết.

Từ khóa: Trump, nhiệm kỳ tổng thống, bầu cử Mỹ, 2020, chính trị, Joe Biden