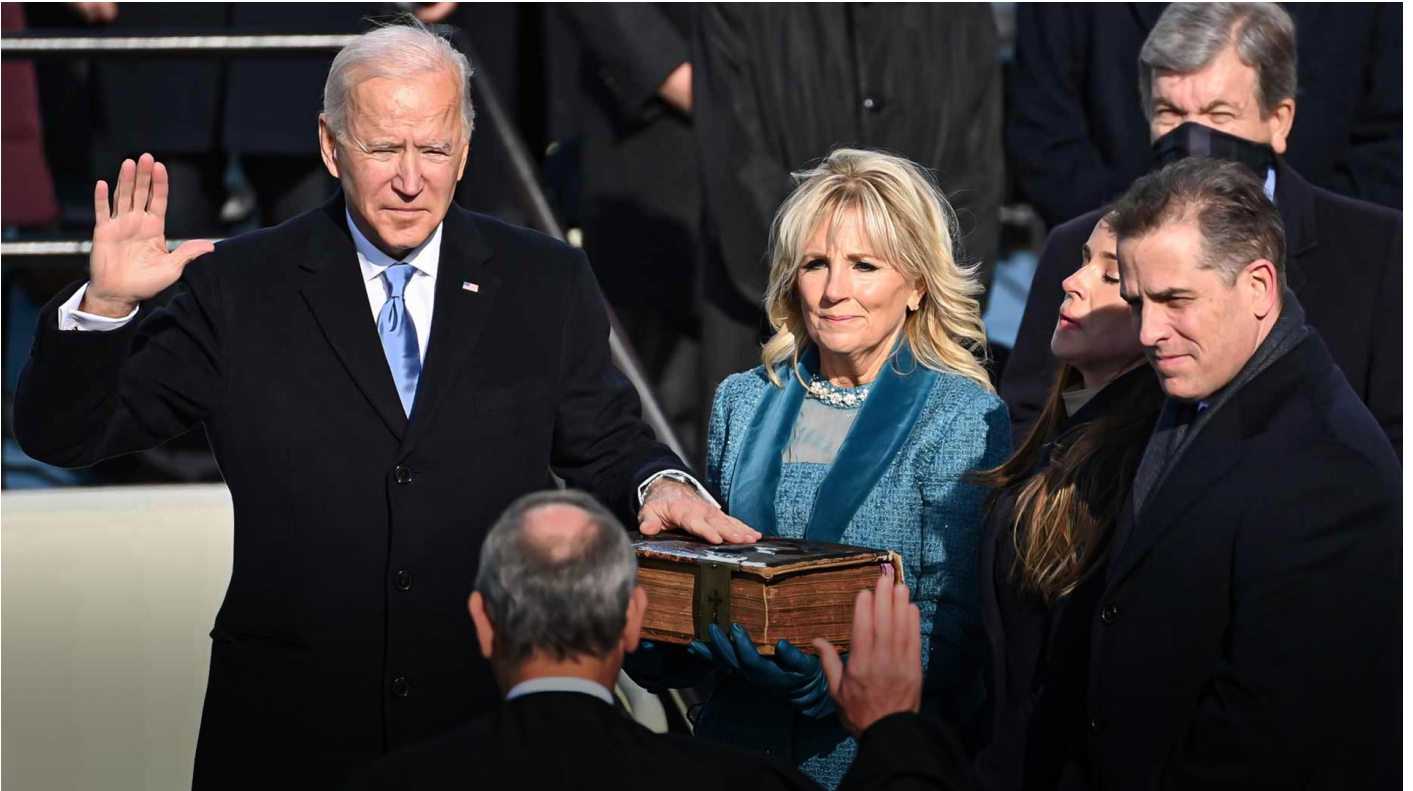


Challenges for the US in Post-Trump Era



Cover photo: *AFP*

Now that **Joe Biden** has been sworn in as president, international politics experts from [Tec de Monterrey](#) believe the United States will face **challenges** to its political and **social life**, with **internal polarization** being one of the greatest.

On January 20, there was an unusual transfer of power in Washington D.C. when **Biden** and **Kamala Harris** were sworn in as president and vice president; former president **Donald Trump** did not attend the ceremony.

“We will press forward with speed and urgency, for we have (...) much to repair. Much to restore. Much to heal. Much to build. And much to gain,” Biden said in his address to special guests, such as former Presidents **Barack Obama**, **George W. Bush**, and **Bill Clinton**.

Tec experts share the most important issues the United States will face under its new president with **CONNECTA**.



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Joe Biden giving his inaugural address as President of the United States. Photo: AFP.

What will happen after the succession in the United States? - Calming social polarization

Dr. **Ángel Lopez-Montiel**, a professor at the Tec's **School of Government**, said that one of the challenges the incoming government will face is reshaping the political identities that have emerged in recent years, and which have polarized American society.

"The most important social division in the United States is racism, but Trump encouraged others such as sexism, the idea of rich vs poor, and others that weren't visible, even though they were there. People stormed the Capitol because of these issues.

"Biden will have to find a way to deactivate these attitudes through government programs," the professor explained.

- Regaining voter trust

One of the biggest impacts on American democracy was **losing the trust** of a whole sector of society, said **Miguel Ruiz**, director of the Tec's Sustainable Development Goals Initiative.

*"The damage has been huge because the electoral system in a democracy is always based on **voter trust**. According to the polls, it's a significant percentage: 4 out of 5 Republican voters think there was some type of fraud," Ruiz said.*

Ruiz, who is also a **Mexican Foreign Service ambassador**, believes that one of the big challenges for the Biden government will be to recover that loss of trust in the democratic system of the United States.

- Overcoming the pandemic and starting economic recovery

Ambassador Ruiz pointed out that the most immediate thing Biden must deal with is combating the COVID-19 pandemic in his country, so that economic recovery can begin.

“If Biden can overcome the pandemic through vaccination as soon as possible, he will be able to resume international leadership. If economic recovery is sufficient to reach the majority of the electorate, I believe that the authoritarian populism spearheaded by Trump could be deflated,” he said.



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- The senate will decide whether or not to prosecute Trump

For López-Montiel, Trump's attempts to try to prolong his stay in power **damaged the image of American democracy** that the Democrats will seek to heal by making an example of Trump with a second *impeachment* for inciting the [storming of the Capitol on January 6th](#).

“The obligation of the Democrats is to create conditions that reverse this negative image of democracy. They have to show that anyone, at any level, who attempts to crush democracy will be

punished, from the people who stormed the Capitol to the president himself,” said López-Montiel.

Ambassador Ruiz believes that the majority of Republicans would not want Trump to be prosecuted in his second impeachment and would want to negotiate with Biden.

“Trump could escape impeachment. It depends on how the negotiations between the two parties go. Republican congressmen may say, ‘You want a stable government, Biden? Forget about impeaching Trump.’

“I think it may be too high a price that Biden should refuse to pay, but with a new government, he’s probably tempted to go down that route. That’s already in Congress’ hands,” Ruiz said.

“Republican congressmen may say, ‘You want a stable government, Biden? Forget about impeaching Trump.’”

- The Biden administration will reverse Trump’s decisions

The new US president announced that he will reverse some measures imposed by Trump during his administration.

One of the first decisions taken by **Biden** in the **Oval Office** was to sign the return to the [Paris Agreement](#) that seeks to reverse climate change, which was applauded by environmentalists such as former Vice President Al Gore.

<https://twitter.com/algore/status/1352023094861426688>

Other decisions taken on his first day were to **stop** the construction of the US-Mexico **border wall** and **strengthen** the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (**DACA**) program, which protects the 700,000 young migrants known as **dreamers** from deportation.

Other measures are expected to include making the **use of face masks** mandatory to combat the **COVID-19** pandemic; reuniting undocumented families; and removing the travel ban on citizens of majority Muslim countries.

*“The nuclear pact with Iran, the return to the **World Health Organization**, and NATO contributions are several issues that Joe Biden will have to work hard on with the political capital he has and the cabinet that will have to be approved in the next few days,” said Dr. Rodríguez.*



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What were the bases of “Trumpism”?

The experts gave various **reasons** why the **Trump**-led movement came to power.

- A charismatic leader

Dr. Iliana Rodríguez, a research professor in the Department of Law at the Tec’s Mexico City Campus, believes that Trump was an **interesting personality when in power**.

*“He was a very interesting leader, because while it is true that he represents ‘**Trumpism**’, a right-wing populism (...) he created a **new type of government** and a **philosophy** much of American society identified with,”* Rodríguez said.

- Capitalizing on discontent

American society has **historically been split** among different groups: there is still a mentality of **segregation**, especially in **rural areas**, and even in some urban areas, which Trump knew how to take advantage of to come to power, said Dr. Lozano.

In addition to this, he took advantage of the **discontent** caused by the **financial crisis** that began in 2008, and that continued during **Barack Obama’s** Democrat administration, in which there were **job losses** caused by businesses moving to other countries, such as **Mexico**.

“(Trump) created a new type of government and a philosophy which much of American society identified with.”



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- Support from conservative groups

Trump also took advantage of support from **conservative groups** to promote an agenda revolving around issues such as nationalism, the right to life, and attitudes towards the LGBT community.

“(Trump) dedicated himself to feeding a political discourse to conservative groups in rural areas that said: ‘There is a good America and a bad America,’ which was connected to global society,” said **Dr. Lucrecia Lozano**, emeritus professor at the Tec.

In terms of international politics, he broke with what had been achieved by previous administrations. For example, in 2018 he withdrew from the **Iran** nuclear agreement, achieved by Obama, and even caused confrontations with the country such as the killing of General **Qassem Soleimani** in a Baghdad drone attack.

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- Boosting the US economy

Through decisions such as the removal of regulations and the renegotiation of the [North American Free Trade Agreement](#), Trump **aided US economic recovery by creating jobs**, but the **COVID-19** pandemic halted this trend in 2020.

*“We also have to see what **positive things** he achieved before the pandemic hit the world, in areas such as **employment and tax**,”* said Dr. Rodríguez.

For example, the unemployment rate fell to 3.5% during Trump’s tenure, a record low in the last 50 years.

<https://twitter.com/POTUS/status/1351960433905700864>

What other scenarios can we expect? - Anti-Trump groups will get stronger

López-Montiel said that some groups will get stronger with Donald Trump out of the White House.

*“In the medium term, it is possible that anti-Trump **pro-immigration** groups and **feminist groups** will gain strength, not as support for Biden but rather for a change in federal policy,”* said the specialist.

- Democrats will take advantage of what Trump dared to do

López-Montiel said that the Democrats will take advantage of certain actions carried out by Trump which they would not have dared to do, such as moving the **United States Embassy** in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem despite international condemnation.

*“It was very **disruptive to international politics**. He sought rapprochement with some Middle Eastern countries to ease tensions, an important decision, but it came at the expense of the Palestinians,”* said Dr. Lozano.

He also managed to normalize **Israel’s** relations with countries like the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco.

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- Republicans will seek a return to power

Dr. Rodríguez believes that the next two years will be of vital importance for the **Republicans** in trying to **regain seats in the Senate and House of Representatives**.

“They haven’t got a majority in the House of Representatives or in the Senate. We’re going to see the Republicans being very active so that they regain enough seats in the midterms to be able to discuss or negotiate Biden’s proposals,” said Rodríguez.

- Pro-Trump demonstrations will continue

Rodríguez Santibañez said there is a high probability that Pro-Trump demonstrations will continue, so the government must be open to answering their needs.

“That’s Joe Biden’s challenge: not to silence them, but rather to meet their demands in terms of social rights in order to prevent further violent demonstrations from being planned or happening,” said Rodríguez.

Dr. Lozano said that the pro-Trump groups are very diverse, ranging from Republican voters who want to negotiate to **right and far-right groups**.

- Debate about the role of social media and the media

For Dr. Lozano, an important issue will be the discussion on **whether to regulate the use of social media** following the permanent suspension of Donald Trump’s accounts as a result of inciting his followers to storm the Capitol.

*“(Trump’s) social media accounts were blocked. **The question is: ‘Is it okay to restrict freedom of expression?’”***

She pointed out that, as part of the polarization promoted by Trump, some **US media** outlets adopted a marked stance against him.

“There was a very marked trend in the media, it was very idealized. There’s a lot of work to do”.

*“(Trump’s) social network accounts were blocked. **The question is: ‘Is it okay to restrict freedom of expression?’”***



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What is Trump's political future?

Trump is facing a historic second impeachment trial, after a second article of *impeachment* was passed by the House of Representatives.

So, there are two **scenarios** to consider while waiting for the **Senate** to approve a conviction against Trump or not:

- If it is approved

"In that case, he would be banned from holding any public office in the future. Given that, what we will observe is Trump actively supporting his fan bases, and directing campaigns to strengthen any Republican candidacy," said Rodríguez.

- If it isn't approved

"I see a Donald Trump who could run for reelection. He has significant political capital, so unless he constantly feeds his fan base, the 'Trumpian' movement might lose steam and could fade closer to 2024," added Rodríguez.



width="900" loading="lazy">? - **Further legal battles**

In addition to the second impeachment that Trump will face, Ruiz says he could also face other legal battles.

"I believe that the U.S. courts could try him for different things that he might have done during these four years, and for those that he did before.

*"We have to remember that Trump never made his **tax returns** public which, until today, is unusual for a president or any high-level public official in any country. It's obligatory for him to explain where his income comes from,"* said the ambassador.

Among some of the pending lawsuits that Trump could face are those related to investigations into **real estate and banking fraud, defamation, and sexual assault.**

"Trumpism" survives and could return, but why?

Will the ideological belief known as "Trumpism" end upon Donald Trump's departure from the **White House**? Dr. Rodríguez doesn't think that will be the case.

"It's important for each and every one of his followers who believe in the philosophy and ideology.

*"It's not only the pragmatism typical of the US in terms of policy but it also raises the voice of the **white working class** that wants to recover the **American dream**,"* said the specialist.

What's more, Professor Lozano says that 'Trumpism' is more than just an ideology. Its foundations are built on the **figure of the former president** and, without him, it will be difficult for like-minded

groups -such as those on the right and the far right- to prosper.

“It’s an important political moment, but also one of great division; what pro-Trump groups do not have is an ideology because they are solely Trump-focused.

*“The challenge for Biden and for the Republicans, is how to move the **racist far-right groups** aside and build consensus through different policies such as education, to facilitate a more moderate vision of the national project,”* said the professor.

The specialists also agreed that Trump has an **important fan base**, and that this could weaken depending on the balance achieved by the Biden government in the first few years.

*“Today Trump is going strong; he has a 34% approval rating, which is very low for a US president, but of that 34%, 20 to 25% are fans. That means it is not just any support: **they’re people who are convinced that the Trump agenda must continue,**”* said Ambassador Ruiz.



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25,000 members of the National Guard joined thousands of police officers at the US capital to guard the inauguration ceremony. Photo: AFP

A transition of power that will go down in history

Dr. Rodríguez described the inauguration of the new US government as historic due to the pandemic and the security in place to prevent any violence.

“We have never seen Washington D.C. only granting passes to certain guests for the inauguration and a Capitol surrounded by the National Guard, guarded as if it were a target for domestic terrorism, as a result of the atmosphere that has developed in the last few days,” she shared.

On January 20, Biden swore on a Bible on the steps of the Capitol to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution,” in a ceremony led by Justice John G. Roberts Jr., Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court.

The National Mall was filled with thousands of American flags to represent those killed by the pandemic.

Singers such as **Lady Gaga**, who sang the US national anthem, and **Jennifer Lopez**, who sang “America the Beautiful” and “This Land Is Your Land”, participated in the ceremony.

Jennifer Lopez said, “One nation under God, indivisible, with freedom and justice for all,” in Spanish.

Country star **Garth Brooks** sang “Amazing Grace” a cappella.

<https://twitter.com/UniNoticias/status/1351935383546822656>

The 10 features of Trump’s years as president 2017

- Donald Trump took office on **January 20, 2017** as the 45th US President, after defeating his Democrat rival **Hillary Clinton** in the election on November 8, 2016.
- He began the project to build a **border wall** between the United States and Mexico.
- He ordered the United States to withdraw from the **Paris climate agreement**.

2018

- He **imposed tariffs on products from China**, starting a trade war.

2019

- He was the first US president to visit **North Korea**.
- A report on **Russian interference** favoring him to win the presidency did not find him guilty of any collusion, but neither did it exonerate him from some illegal acts.

2019- 2020

- He was **impeached (for the first time)** for trying to get the Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden in connection with the business of his son, Hunter Biden. He was acquitted by the Senate, which had a Republican majority.

2020

- In 2020 he faced one of the largest **anti-racist protest** movements in United States history as a result of the murder of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American citizen, by Minneapolis police.

- After the Electoral College confirmed Joe Biden's victory over him, he made accusations of **electoral fraud** (without providing evidence).

2021

- In an unprecedented act, the House of Representatives decided to put him **on trial for the second time** in January, after he incited his supporters to storm the Capitol on January 6.

With information from José Longino Torres Garza

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