

Is Donald Trump the Second Coming of Andrew Jackson?

It doesn't seem entirely inappropriate for the 47th President to have the seventh President's portrait on the wall.

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The portrait of Andrew Jackson has returned to the Oval Office wall, put up in time to greet President Donald Trump as he entered for the first time as the 47th president.

It's a choice Democrats are poorly positioned to criticize, even though the seventh president owned slaves and ordered the Southeastern Indians west on the Trail of Tears. Inconveniently, Jackson was long a Democratic icon, nominated for his second term in 1832 by the first Democratic National Convention, and there is something to be said for the man who founded what is now the world's oldest political party.

There are certain resemblances. Jackson's demeanor, like Trump's, appalled his predecessors. He was from the Tennessee frontier, killed a man in a duel, and abandoned Congress to become an elected general in the state militia. Angling for a national command, he became a celebrity for slaughtering the British at New Orleans in 1815.

Thomas Jefferson, who, as vice president, had presided as the 30-year-old Rep. Jackson exploded in fury, called him "*a dangerous man*" and told visitors to Monticello years later that he was, in his biographer Dumas Malone's words, "*a man of violent passions who had shown little regard for laws and institutions.*"

As president, Jackson took things personally, ousting all Cabinet members because their wives refused to socialize with his secretary of war's young second wife, who was accused, as Jackson's late wife had been, of loose morals. After the Senate in one Congress voted to censure him, he got the next Senate to vote to rescind the rebuke and draw lines across the earlier censure in the Senate journal.

For all that, Jackson was a serious policymaker. He paid off the national debt. In vetoing the re-charter of the national bank, he established the precedent, though he said he wasn't doing so, that bills could be vetoed for policy and not just constitutional reasons. When South Carolina "*nullified*" a federal tariff, he sent troops to the border until it backed down.

Jackson's first election was opposed by his four living predecessors, as Trump's was by his five. However, Jackson was the first and so far only president who determined his party's presidential nominees for the rest of his life. After the ructions of his first term, Trump has at least momentarily established similar dominance over the party he adopted and proceeded to make his own.

When House Republicans' ebullient fractiousness threatened to delay the seating of Congress and tally of the electoral vote, he made sure that only one Republican member, a chronic dissenter whose wife recently died, was allowed to dissent. Former attorney general nominee Matt Gaetz, obviously unconfirmable, was allowed to withdraw, unmourned.

Fox News host and defense secretary nominee Pete Hegseth got unanimous Republican support in committee, and no Republican opposition has appeared in the 53-47 Republican Senate to controversial nominees Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Tulsi Gabbard.

Similarly, little Republican criticism has appeared of the pro-abortion rights Kennedy or the foreign policy maverick Gabbard, nor of Trump following former President Joe Biden's precedent of granting a 75-day reprieve to TikTok.

Few Republicans have criticized Trump for pardoning, contrary to his own words, violent Jan. 6 rioters, which has removed some of the sting for Biden's pardons of his family members and violent murderers.

Trump's declaration that, contrary to court decisions, the 14th Amendment does not grant birthright citizenship tends to undercut the entirely justified criticism of Biden's declaration, contrary to statutory and constitutional provisions, recognizing ratification of a 28th amendment.

In Jackson's relatively brief second inaugural address, he avoided criticism of his predecessors. In Trump's second inaugural address, he didn't, denouncing the *"vicious, violent and unfair weaponization of the Justice Department"* and *"the radical and corrupt establishment."*

But on balance, he presented a more positive vision. *"The golden age of America begins right now,"* he boasted. *"Sunlight is pouring over the entire world."* He mentioned in 23 words his own *"historic political comeback"* but prefaced and followed that with 334 words of praise for Americans' achievements from colonial days to the 20th century, a handsome addition to previous presidents' telling of the nation's story.

"The entire nation is rapidly unifying behind our agenda," he proclaimed. An overstatement, obviously. However, the executive orders he described do, in fact, accord more closely with public opinion than the policies of his predecessors that they repudiate.

Repealing the “*diversity, equity, and inclusion*” bureaucratic apparatus aligns with most people’s (even, as registered in referenda, most Californians’) support of equal treatment and opposition to racial quotas and preferences.

Effective border enforcement and the deportation of criminal illegal immigrants enjoy supermajority support, as shown by the 264 House and 64 Senate votes for the Laken Riley Act. Ending electric vehicle mandates and barriers to energy production is in line with the public’s desire for consumer choice.

The dozens of executive orders Trump has signed since taking the oath of office have shown a similar level of preparation and seriousness, as evident in his dozens of appointments to second- and third-line positions in executive agencies—a vivid contrast to his chaotic transition eight years ago.

It took Jackson until his second term to control his administration and his party in Congress, and historians have overstated his political ascendancy in labeling his times “*the Jacksonian era.*” Trump’s second term, like Jackson’s, will indeed have its setbacks, and it has already been spotted by departures from the principal. But it doesn’t seem entirely inappropriate for the 47th president to have the seventh president’s portrait on the wall.