

**May 3, 2024**

## **Metaphors**

### **A Bit of a Mess**

My apologies, but my web editor, Wix, burped and created some background in the lower part of this post that I have not been able to get rid of. You can still read the post, but it is messy. I hope to have it cleared up by next week.

### **Markets**

#### [Updated Charts](#)

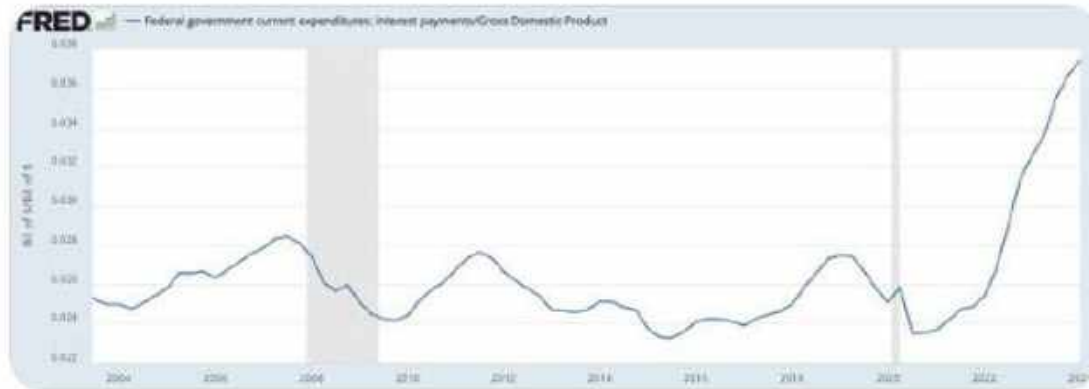
- > No change in market outlook
- > Better late than never, or too late? US TREASURY SECRETARY YELLEN: I AM CONCERNED ABOUT WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH THE US DEFICIT.
- > Must listen - Lyn Alden on [Thoughtful Money podcast discussing fiscal dominance.](#)



Richard A. Stern  @RichAStern · 22h



Tell me you're in a debt spiral without telling me you're in a debt spiral 🤔🤔



> If I were to point to only one indicator of how strange and perverse our times are, it would be that the stock market roared up when it was announced today that unemployment went up. This is not about earnings or valuations, our financial system is now mostly about interest rates. Until it isn't.

## > Metaphors

When I was a senior in high school, I rejected the idea that a stormy day in Shakespeare meant anything other than a stormy day.

Two years of brain development later and a wonderful English teacher in college and all of a sudden, there were symbolism and metaphors everywhere.

(Warning, I am not going to worry about the line between metaphor and analogy in this piece.)

*Alice in Wonderland* -is my go-to metaphor for our times, but Joe Biden and Donald Trump are walking metaphors for the state of our culture.

In a democracy, you get the government you deserve.

Let's start with Trump.

Ironically, while wokeness is, as part of its essence, the triumph of feelings over facts, Trump is the embodiment of the raw emotional id of our nation. We Jungian-ly project our anger, frustration and despair onto this deeply flawed human, hoping to rescue ourselves and our country from our slides into oblivion.

I grew up in the 50s. Hopalong Cassidy, the Lone Ranger, Roy Rogers, the original Superman - heroes of sterling character who would save the day. Truth! Justice! The American Way!

Our hero is now Donald Trump, a man of poor character and no philosophy. A coarse philanderer. (I remember, decades ago, when *Spy* magazine, which I miss intensely, referred to Trump as a "short-fingered vulgarian.") This is what we have become. This is a metaphor for our times.

Biden was never anything above ordinary - he graduated 76th out of 85 in his law school - but now he is by default the adult in the room - and his mind and body appear to be deteriorating rapidly.

To focus on his ordinariness, Barak Obama once said of Biden, "Don't underestimate Joe's ability to fuck things up."

He is a classic old-school pol, who basically played the classic political game. Yes, he lies a lot. Yes, he has changed what have now become awkward positions regarding, say, integration.

But those are not the points I want to make.

The metaphor is old and deteriorating and quite ordinary.

We are actively promoting an at-best ordinary and deteriorating man for president.

And Obama, who understands this better than almost anyone, is leading the way. We are all actively avoiding reality together in a lemming race over the cliff.

We are both morally and financially bankrupt - decay creeps into every cranny of a culture over time.

Reagan's metaphor was "a shining city on a hill." JFK saw a greatness in America.

Today's metaphors are a deteriorating ordinariness and a naked id.

Beth often discusses the lack of great art today. The *Wall Street Journal* recently ran a Peggy Noonan article, "The Uglification of Everything."

Times have changed.

We are reflecting ourselves and our culture in many ways, including in our choices of presidential candidates.

The way to bet is either revolution or collapse.

However, there have been several spiritual awakenings over the history of our country within which people wanted to return to many classic values and choose a white knight instead of a dark one. Maybe history will rhyme, yet again.

Milei was, after all, elected in Argentina, even though, while so-far-so-good, the jury is still out on that one. Giuliani did pull New York out of its death spiral. There is hope. It can happen.

Both fingers crossed and not holding my breath.

"All the leaves are brown, and the sky is grey" (not Shakespeare).

## Short Takes

> There is a profound change coming, which I have discussed over the years, and that will be the time when whites actually become an identity group beyond some far-right Proud Boys. Completely overstating, whites have approached the issues of

immigration and diversity and white supremacy with a combination of enlightened self-satisfaction and bemusement. We are now at an inflection point in the United States where whites are being actively discriminated against and sanctioned segregation is increasing. Incompatible cultures, primary Islam, will begin to compete for control of society at the legal and cultural levels, beginning with local communities.

Whites are probably destined to become minorities most places. As that time comes and as whites are actively marginalized and discriminated against, they will begin to cohere into identity groups.

Racial and cultural issues will become increasingly dangerous.

It will be ironic that immigration and diversity have unintended consequences.

This process is much more advanced in some parts of Europe, which will provide us with both cautionary tales and roadmaps.

The process has begun, but it will likely take years. Only enlightened minorities can change the outcome, and that is not the way to bet.

"History repeats itself, first as tragedy; second as farce" - Marx

Pro-Israel protesters have begun adopting a banana as a symbol of counter-protest after organizers of the Gaza extremist encampment banned bananas (they claim one of their comrades is allergic).

Vivek - "When we face our founding fathers in the afterlife and they ask us what sacrifice did you make for your country we better have a damn good answer for them." Vivek is a Hindu. No afterlife for him. He goes through life after life until he becomes nothing - or everything.

> Pippa Malmgren makes a point you have seen me make several times - they are doing to us what we did to the USSR (I have actually referred only to Russia, but by supporting Russia and messing around in the South China Sea, China is getting into the game).

China and Russia know they cannot defeat the US using traditional military means. Their strategy is simple. Force the US to deploy military assets, which will bleed America dry of cash at a time when the US budget deficit is already overwhelmingly too large and perhaps unfixable. Create inflation by any means because the US is very politically sensitive to inflation, especially in the run-up to an important election. Open multiple geopolitical fronts because the US can't handle a multi-front conflict very well.

> Pippa continues (behind a paywall, so I am trying to tread carefully here) - endorse strongly -

Why do we care? We care because this 4th Estate brouhaha reveals that there is a serious gap between what is happening in reality and what is being discussed in the media. That gap exists in almost every important issue I see in the world economy. The problem here is that the media has squirreled itself into a cozy burrow of like-minded thinkers. That means the public does not have any idea of what is really going on in the world, especially in the realm of geopolitics. This is a serious problem given the perilous state of geopolitics and the various elections being held this year. The issue is the absence of diversity of thinking, a subject I've written two books about. These days, people think diversity means ticking boxes: gender, color, capacities, sexual orientation, etc. But, you can have a room full of very diverse people who all think the same thing, like "Donald Trump will never win" or "We can beat China/Russia hands down." Then you have no diversity of thinking. Berliner referred to it as an "absence of viewpoint diversity."

> In first change to the guidance in 25 years, federal agency says repeatedly misgendering employees or denying them access to a bathroom consistent with their gender identity amounts to workplace harassment.

> From *National Review*

After five days of anti-Israel demonstrators occupying Deering Meadow on Northwestern University's campus, Northwestern president Michael Schill and the rest of the university's leadership decided to accede to several of the protesters' demands.

While not committing to divesting its endowment from companies that do business in Israel and ending partnerships with Israeli institutions, the university released a list of concessions in a celebratory statement Monday afternoon in exchange for the removal of the encampment on the lawn.

Most notable among those concessions is a promise to offer full-ride scholarships to Palestinian students and guaranteed faculty jobs for Palestinian academics.

"The University will support visiting Palestinian faculty and students at risk (funding two faculty per year for two years; and providing full cost of attendance for five Palestinian undergraduates to attend Northwestern for the duration of their undergraduate careers)," the document reads. "The University commits to fundraise to sustain this program beyond this current commitment." As *National Review* reported in March, over 70 percent of Palestinians support Hamas's October 7 attack against Israel and 75 percent support Hamas as the governing body of the Gaza Strip.

Northwestern will also provide a “house for MENA/Muslim students” and will “advise employers not to rescind job offers for students engaging in speech protected by the First Amendment.”

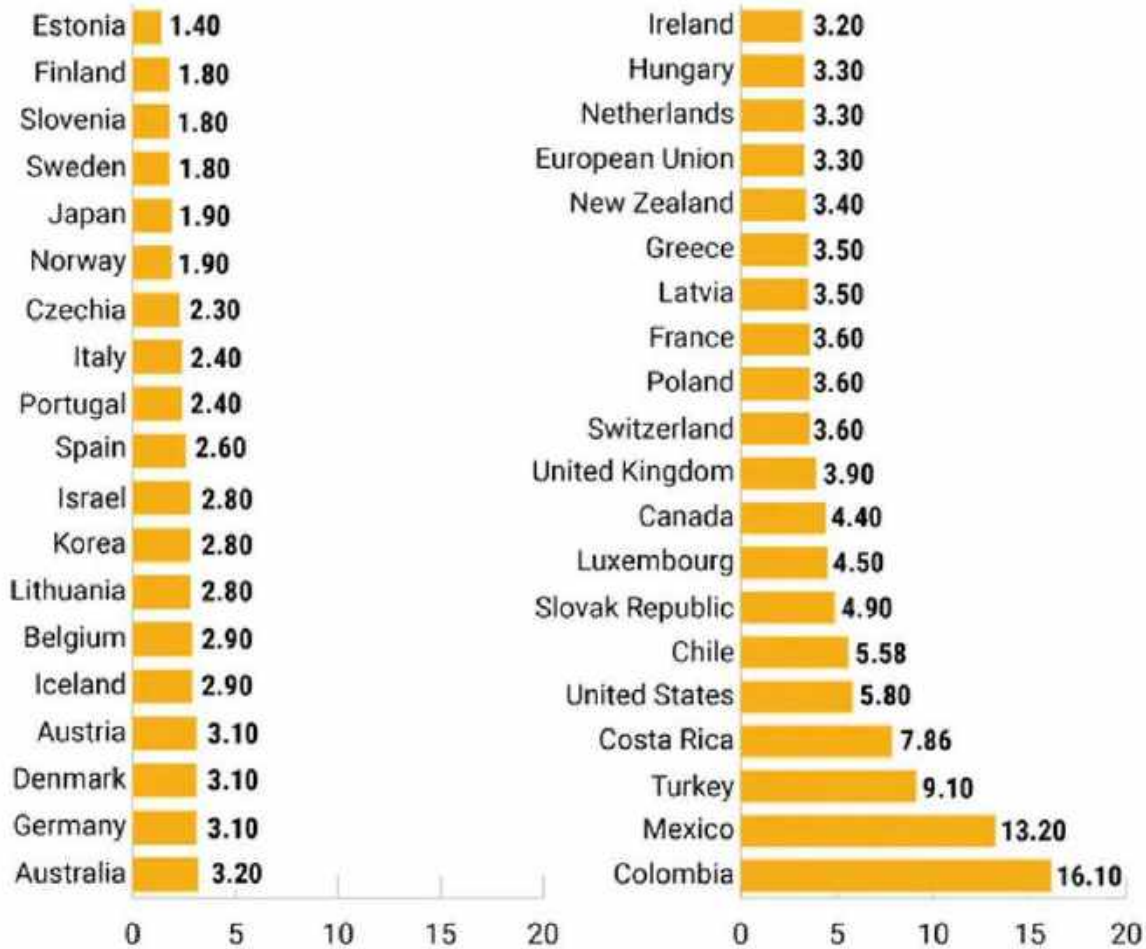
Other concessions in the deal Schill and the rest of Northwestern’s leadership struck with the encampment occupants — one of whom assaulted a student journalist attempting to take a video — include student oversight of the university’s partnerships with suppliers and the investment of its endowment. “The University will include students in a process dedicated to implementing broad input on University dining services, including residential and retail vendors on campus,” Northwestern’s leadership wrote, as well as forming a committee on “investment responsibility” with “representation from students, faculty, and staff.”

## SHIRAZ UNIVERSITY IN IRAN IS OFFERING SCHOLARSHIPS TO AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WHO'VE BEEN EXPELLED FOR THEIR FREE SPEECH

> From *The Morning Dispatch*

“Donald Trump thinks he’s identified a crucial mistake of his first term: He was too nice,” Time Magazine’s Eric Cortellessa wrote of his recent interview with the former president, in which Trump reveals what he wants a second term to look like. “Trump has sought to recast an insurrectionist riot as an act of patriotism,” Cortellessa wrote. “‘I call them the J-6 patriots,’ he says. When I ask whether he would consider pardoning every one of them, he says, ‘Yes, absolutely.’ Trump has also vowed to appoint a ‘real special prosecutor’ to go after Biden. ‘I wouldn’t want to hurt Biden,’ he tells me. ‘I have too much respect for the office.’ Seconds later, though, he suggests Biden’s fate may be tied to an upcoming Supreme Court ruling on whether Presidents can face criminal prosecution for acts committed in office. ‘If they said that a President doesn’t get immunity,’ says Trump, ‘then Biden, I am sure, will be prosecuted for all of his crimes.’” Perhaps most concerningly, Cortellessa writes: “Trump does not dismiss the possibility of political violence around the election. ‘If we don’t win, you know, it depends,’ he tells TIME.”

Number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births.



From *The Telegraph*

Sex is a biological fact, according to Britain’s National Health Service, which is reversing guidance from 2021 that allowed trans patients to be placed in single-sex wards according to their gender. It’s only the latest sign that peak trans has passed—at least in Britain.

One of the “community guidelines” at George Washington University’s encampment is “no sexual relationships.”

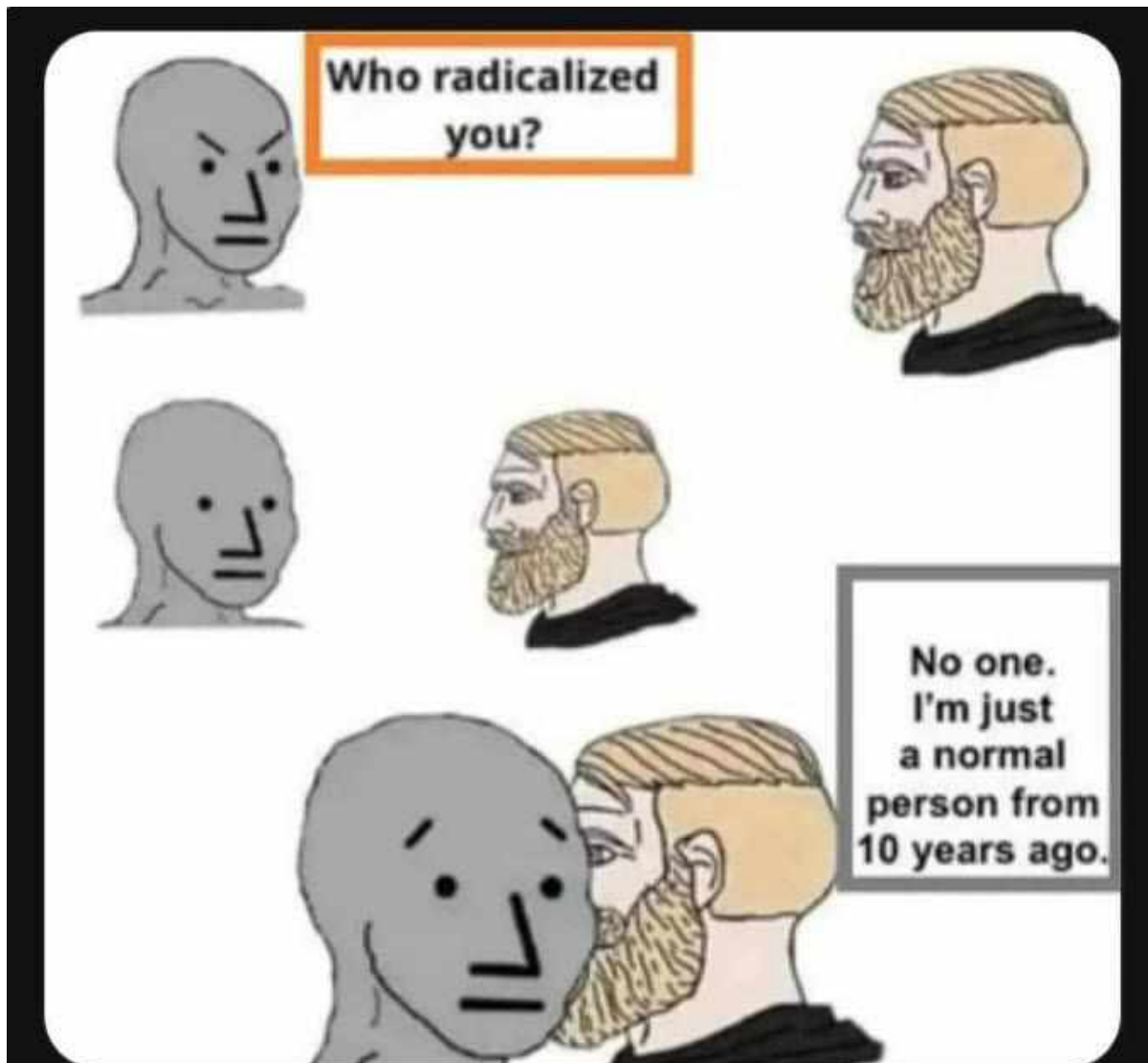
> *The Free Press* on Biden's student debt forgiveness

That’s why a new study by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, which added up the total cost to taxpayers of these write-offs, is so useful. They estimate the total cost will be somewhere between \$870 billion and \$1.4 trillion, which is “more than all federal spending on higher education over the nation’s entire history.” (Our emphasis.) As CRFB notes, it’s also more than all

educational appropriations for the next decade (\$935 billion), more than the cost of providing universal pre-K and universal affordable childcare (\$750 billion), and more than the cost of tripling the Pell Grant program (\$675 billion). The cherry on top is how [poorly targeted](#) this scheme is—with the benefits mostly going to the richer half of the country. Another recent [analysis](#) found that at least 750,000 of the households having their student debt cleared by the rest of us are “making over \$312,000 in average household income.”

> The movement to forgive trade school debt is impressive (sarcasm)

> A new Pew survey shows 42% of Americans consider China an “enemy,” up from 25% two years ago. The mounting mistrust is largely driven by Republicans, among whom 59% describe China as an enemy, compared to only 28% of Democrats.



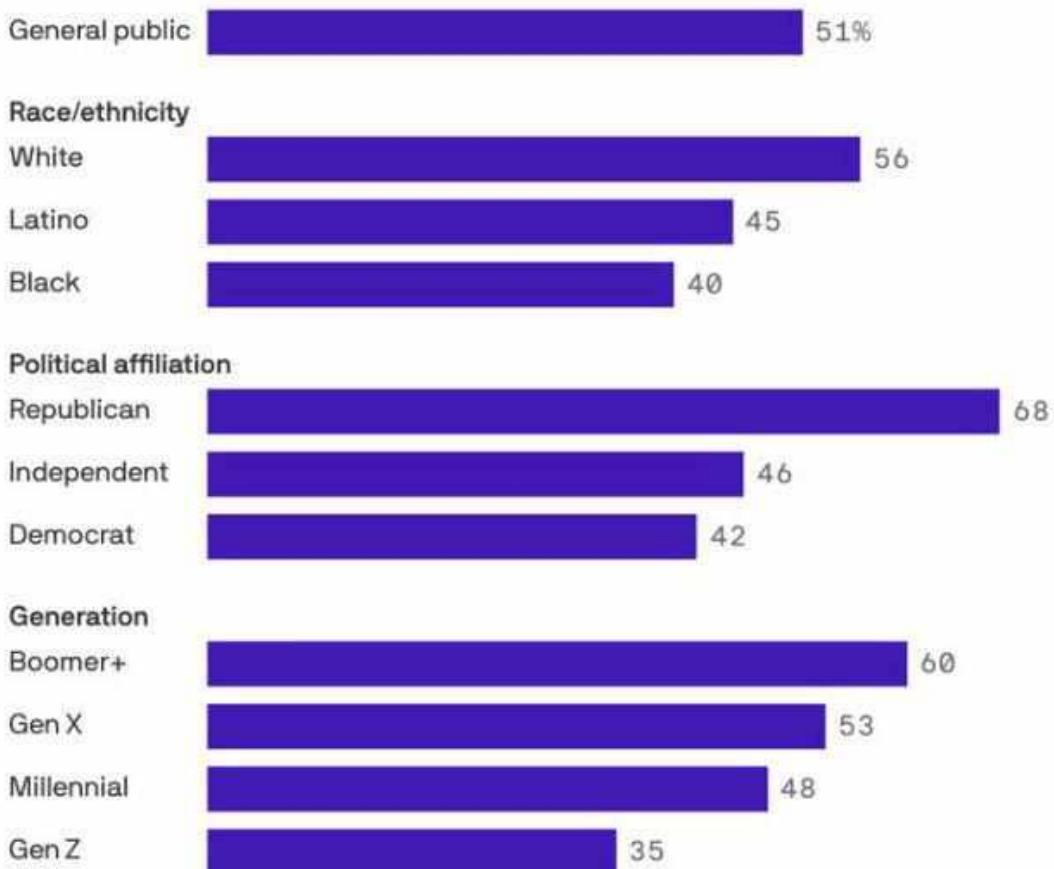


> Arnold Kling, an economist, published a book a decade ago that offered a way to think about the core difference between progressives and conservatives. Progressives, Kling wrote, see the world as a struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed, and they try to help the oppressed. Conservatives see the world as a struggle between civilization and barbarism — between order and chaos — and they try to protect civilization.

> Not on my Bingo card - 42% of Democrats?

## Share of Americans who say they support mass deportations of undocumented immigrants

Survey of 6,251 adults taken March through April 2024



## It Ain't Easy Being Green

> From the Wall Street Journal

HUD last Thursday announced that it will require new homes financed or insured by its subsidy programs to follow the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code standard. The nonprofit International Code Council sets what are supposed to be model energy building standards every few years, which states and municipalities can adopt.

Many governments have declined to adopt the 2021 standards because of their higher costs. The National Association of Home Builders says the energy rules can add as much as \$31,000 to the price of a new home. It can take up to 90 years for a buyer to realize a payback on the higher up-front costs through lower energy bills.

Not to worry, HUD says taxpayers will help cover the cost. It “is anticipated that many builders will take advantage” of numerous tax incentives in the Inflation Reduction Act “as well as rebates that will become available in 2025 or earlier for electric heat pumps and other building electrification measures,” the rule says.

These incentives include a \$5,000 per unit tax credit for “zero energy” multifamily construction that meets prevailing-wage requirements that also raise building costs. HUD adds that builders may also “take advantage of certain EPA Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund programs, especially the Solar for All initiative” and an investment tax credit that can offset 50% of a solar project’s cost.

Notwithstanding these taxpayer handouts, HUD estimates that the new standards will raise the cost of a single-family home by \$7,229 and the average annual mortgage payment by \$439, assuming a 5.3% mortgage interest rate

> The G7 group of wealthy democracies has given itself 11 years to all but stop using coal in their energy systems. A carveout will still exist where emissions are captured. The G7 — which includes Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the US — accounts for about a fifth of global emissions, but it does not include China and India, the world’s top two coal polluters.

>From *The Guardian*

New climate rules imposed by Joe Biden’s administration requiring huge cuts in carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants will accelerate the decline of an industry that until recently provided most of America’s power, experts say, potentially even dealing a death blow to coal in the US.

Coal, once the backbone of the US economy and feted by Donald Trump as he rose to the presidency, is being driven out of the power sector by cheaper renewables and gas and now faces an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulation, finalized last week, that demands all coal plants not retiring by 2039 to slash their carbon emissions 90% within the coming decade.

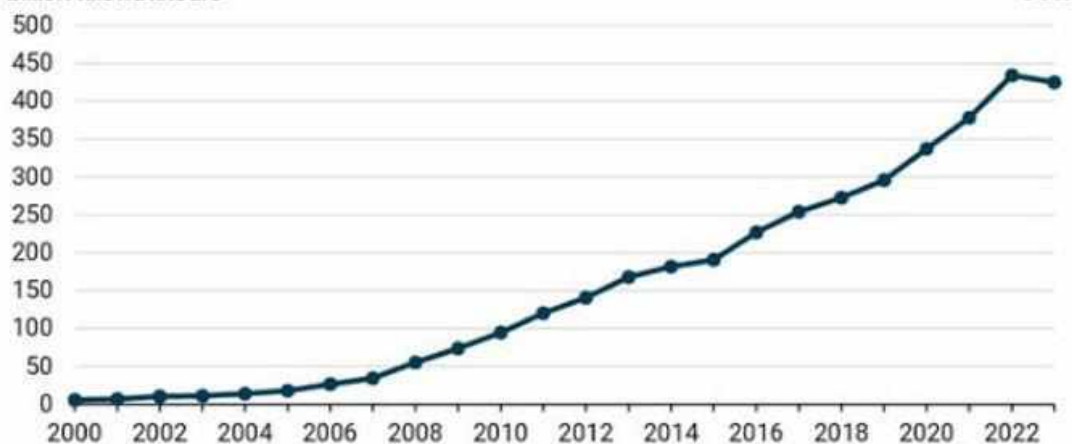
The situation is now “probably terminal” for most of the several hundred US coal plants not already earmarked for closure, according to Seth Feaster, a coal industry analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics & Financial Analysis, who said “just a handful of plants” will likely survive beyond the end of the 2030s.

> More capacity; less wind

APRIL 30, 2024

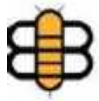
## Wind generation declined in 2023 for the first time since the 1990s

Annual U.S. wind generation, 2000–2023  
billion kilowatthours



Data source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Electric Power Monthly*

## Miscellany



**The Babylon Bee** 🐝 @TheBabylonBee · 5h

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Columbia University Students Reject A Two-Campus Solution [buff.ly/3WaWAOB](https://buff.ly/3WaWAOB)



Eh - maybe a gentlemen's C

