

In the first two weeks of his administration, President Trump issued a flood of executive orders. Many of those actions relate to energy and the environment, with the general intent of handicapping clean energy and promoting fossil fuels. Flooding the zone has undoubtedly helped him dominate the news and may have stunned opponents. But short-term success doesn't always translate into long-term gains.

The short-term benefits are very real. Trump's initial acts have helped solidify his image as a dynamic leader with a plan to demolish existing programs and structures. Image and theater matter a lot in politics, something that his predecessor seems to have completely forgotten. As a lame-duck president, Trump's clout is likely to decrease over time, and it's smart to move as quickly as possible in the beginning while his support is as strong as possible. And this cluster of first initiatives may have demoralized opponents and overwhelmed their capacity to respond to individual executive actions.

But there are real downsides as well that may only become apparent over time. There's a danger with stuffing so much drama into the first episode of the series. That's a tough act to follow. And the total amount of public attention for his actions may be less than it would have been if he had spaced them out. Thus, the short-term gain in theater may be offset by a longer-term reduction in political drama. But perhaps that won't be a problem - there are an almost unlimited number of small countries like Panama and Greenland that Trump can threaten to invade or otherwise sanction.

In addition, while the barrage of executive actions may have overwhelmed the opposition, it may also overwhelm the political appointees who are charged with carrying them out. Further down the chain of command, there may be too many measures for civil servants to implement, particularly since Trump is trying to get rid of as many as possible. Enacting or repealing a major regulation can require a huge amount of staff time. There are only so many of these efforts an agency can manage at a time.

Implementation may also be slowed because many of the executive orders seem to have been drafted hastily, leaving major questions for subordinates about how to implement them. The Office of Management and Budget will be responsible for issuing guidance and doing follow-up, but it has only 500 workers, many of whom are busy with budgetary matters and the more routine aspects of running the government.

Finally, the slew of early actions also risks early setbacks. For instance, most experts think that the effort to abolish birthright citizenship will lose in the courts. Such judicial losses will help raise the morale of opponents. After being sued, Trump has already had to back down on an order freezing all federal grants and loans, handing opponents a quick victory. Also, many of the individual initiatives such as banning birthright citizenship are unpopular and could help build opposition to Trump, as one early [poll](#) indicates. Anything that strengthens Democratic morale could be problematic since he needs their cooperation to prevent a government shutdown in March and raise the debt ceiling.

“Shock and awe” was a successful tactic in Iraq – for a while. We’ll have to see whether the political version of that approach works out for Trump over time. But there are reasons to doubt the likeliness of success.