

**US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2020.
PRINCIPLES, SPECIFICITY, INFLUENCE
ON FOREIGN POLICY.**

**WI WARSAW
INSTITUTE**

— SPECIAL REPORT —

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2020/10/28



SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

- On November 3, 2020, the 2020 United States presidential election will be held. The main rivals are the current President Donald Trump, representing the Republican Party, and Joe Biden, a Democrat known primarily for his role as the Vice President under Barack Obama. This report is an attempt to analyze both candidacies and their potential impact on the international policy of the United States.
- The mood in the United States has been particularly tense over the past year, due to the economic and health crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, social unrest over the death of George Floyd and the attempted impeachment of Donald Trump.
- The US presidential election and the US Congress elections are held under these circumstances. The citizens will vote on the future of the state's domestic and foreign policy, but currently the national issues are the most important ones for the society.
- The result of the presidential election will be determined by the so-called swing states, i.e. states where there is little difference in the support of the candidates, and which have a large number of representatives in the Electoral College.
- Depending on the winner, US foreign policy may be continued, including further limitation of the role of international organizations, or be a return to the times of Barack Obama, i.e. the promotion of democracy and the fight for human rights. Only the question of China remains unaffected in the proposals of both candidates, suggesting a further escalation of tensions between the US and China.
- If Donald Trump is reelected, his policy will be continued in the spirit of America First, and Joe Biden's victory may lead to a redefinition of American Leadership on the geopolitical scene.

The Mood and Situation in the USA

The year 2020 is a turbulent one for the United States. It began with the American attack on Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), followed by an escalation of tension in the Middle East. Shortly afterwards, President Donald Trump was in danger due to the impeachment i.e. a process when a government official is indicted and held accountable, possibly even being removed from the office. This was related to the charges against Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden, both of whom were alleged to have been involved in corrupt activities related to the Ukrainian gas company during Barack Obama's presidency. The United States under Trump's presidency was alleged to suspend government assistance to Ukraine and to invite its president to the White House in order to put pressure on the local judicial authorities to investigate the Democratic candidate's son. Because of these actions, the US House of Representatives voted on the impeachment, which ultimately did not happen. In addition, the American public believes in Russian interferences in the previous presidential election and the internal affairs of the country as well as the Kremlin's alleged influence on the current administration. This has been a subject of heated public debate, investigations, media campaigns and mutual accusations of the parties of the dispute over the past four years. Moreover, during Donald Trump's presidency, the number one topic in foreign affairs was relations with China, which was used not only to conduct international politics, but also the domestic one.

In the meantime, the first COVID-19 cases emerged, which soon led to the rapid development of a pandemic worldwide on an unprecedented scale. As of October 26, 2020, there were 8.96 million cases and 231,000 deaths reported

since the beginning of the pandemic. Consequently, a dispute emerged and concerned the reform of the health system, initiated by Barack Obama under the term ACA (Affordable Care Act), also known as Obamacare. Its aim was to increase the number of people with health insurance and at the same time reduce the cost of care, but this involved higher government spending. The introduction of the Affordable Care Act caused a disagreement between the Democrats who supported it and the Republicans who opposed it. This is primarily due to ideological differences between the parties: the former are in favor of the welfare state model as well as desire to ensure equal opportunities and medical care for all, while the latter prefer the least possible state interference in the privacy of citizens. This dispute has escalated along with huge government spending and a massively growing number of patients in the country.

The development of the virus, as in other countries, caused the economic downturn and a huge spike in unemployment. The following months also saw the death of Georg Floyd in Minneapolis, for which local police officers were blamed.¹ As a result, numerous protests condemning the law enforcement as well as the brutality and racism among the officers broke out in the country. Tensions began to build up in society and peaceful demonstrations often turned into acts of vandalism or even riots, mass looting and street shooting. Moreover, these events were associated with widespread disinformation – the media often provided information only from one point of view. The news was sometimes presented misleadingly in order to blame the “other side” for the bad state of affairs. Such measures intensified social unrest. For instance, events in Kenosha, WI, where 17-year-

1. J. Johnson, 'A Disgusting Display': Police Fire Rubber Bullets, Stun Grenades, and Tear Gas at Demonstrators Protesting Killing of George Floyd, www.commondreams.org/news/2020/05/27/disgusting-display-police-fire-rubber-bullets-stun-grenades-and-tear-gas?fbclid=IwAR2MRQli7ZlKM747SoHlv4ESOFJVBZlnTMvFUU6nGO2haMCBjRUySYFejow, (Retrieved: October 9, 2020)



NEW OVERNIGHT

FIERY BUT MOSTLY PEACEFUL PROTESTS AFTER POLICE SHOOTING



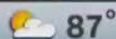
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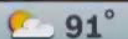
BOSTON



NEW YORK



PHILADELPHIA



OR WHEREVER YOU GET YOUR FAVORITE PODCASTS

PROTESTS

EARLY START

SOURCE: CNN.COM (FAIR USE)

old Kyle Rittenhouse killed two participants of the protests and wounded another with the use of firearms. Left-wing American media fueled the conflict by slandering the teenager and presenting him as a murderer and a so-called white supremacist, while the video recordings showed that he was only defending himself against the protesters who attacked him. These discrepancies could be summarized by illustrating the “fiery but mostly peaceful protests after the shooting,” as the CNN called the riots in Kenosha. Additionally, in recent months, the West Coast has seen been severely affected by wildfires, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to evacuate as well as causing the death of 86 individuals and massive destruction.

On top of everything else, there has recently been the matter of filling a seat in the Supreme Court after the death of Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg in mid-September. Amy Coney Barrett, judge of the US Court of Appeals, was chosen by the incumbent president to fill the vacated seat. This will be another republican nominee, which will give the conservative judges an overwhelming

majority in the Supreme Court (6:3). This is significant because each justice has lifetime tenure. This choice therefore guarantees a conservative spirit of judgment for many years. Additionally, the current state of affairs may help Donald Trump win reelection, as he, like the majority of the Republicans, is against postal voting. This is due to the fact that there have been cases of fraud in the past, including October 2020, when almost 50,000 voters received incorrect ballots. On the one hand, the White House presents documents on its website that over a thousand cases of electoral fraud have been proven. On the other hand, FBI director Christopher Wray, appointed by Trump, testified under oath that the FBI has “not seen, historically, any kind of coordinated national voter fraud effort in a major election, whether it’s by mail or otherwise.”² According to the incumbent president, this form of voting can lead to numerous abuses and manipulations of election results. In June 2020, Louis DeJoy, who publicly supports Donald Trump, took over as the Postmaster General of US Postal Service. He then introduced a number of changes that sig-

2. Ch. Cillizza, The FBI director just totally shut down Donald Trump’s vote-fraud conspiracy, CNN. (Retrieved: October 11, 2020)

nificantly affected the operations of the Postal Service. There were numerous public objections that the changes were meant to slow down the operation of the Postal Service and prevent a large number of citizens to vote this way. Under pressure from the public, DeJoy suspended the modifications at the end of August until the general election is over. Donald Trump, however, warned that in case of many doubts, it is possible that his staff will challenge the vote count. In such a case, the complaint will be dealt with by the Supreme Court of the United States, where after the swearing-in of a new member, the Republicans have the aforementioned significant majority.

In mid-October, Hunter Biden's case has been brought up after the New York Post published an article containing emails that allegedly cast a new shadow over Biden's relationship with the Ukrainian gas company. Although the newspaper presented photos and copies of the emails, their authenticity has not been confirmed. A few days later, tweets and posts under the article began to be blocked by Facebook and Twitter. This was the first time that social networking services dared to censor such a well-known newspaper. Additionally, the personal account of the White House Press Secretary was locked. Commentators from various political circles criticized these actions whilst the whole situation intensified the already tense campaign even further.

The above aspects make the 2020 US presidential election exceptional. They will take place in difficult circumstances, among social, economic, political, health and climate problems. Due to the significant domestic issues, the voters expect the next US President to primarily focus on matters, such as overcoming the pandemic, getting the country out of economic troubles or defusing racial tensions. Polls show that domestic issues are much more important than foreign policy for most voters.³ In this respect, America's significant involvement in international affairs seems unlikely, because the public's priorities lie elsewhere.⁴

3. Pew Research Center, Election 2020: Voters Are Highly Engaged, but Nearly Half Expect To Have Difficulties Voting, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/important-issues-in-the-2020-election/>, (Retrieved: October 11, 2020)

4. B. Strokes, US Electorate Shows Distrust of the Realities of Foreign Policy, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/09/us-electorate-shows-distrust-realities-foreign-policy> (Retrieved: October 11, 2020)

Before the Election

What is the US election like and what do candidates have to do to serve as the President of the United States? First of all, only a natural born citizen of the United States, who has been living in the United States for at least 14 years, can run for this office. Those who meet these criteria and wish to do so must first compete in primaries and caucuses within their respective political parties. These take place between January and June of the election year. They ultimately select one candidate who receives an official nomination at the party's national convention and is allowed to represent it in the election. During this period, lasting from July to early September, the nominee chooses a running mate. If a candidate wins the election, he or she will be appointed the Vice President by the person designated at the convention. Although there are several political parties in the United States, for years the American politics has been dominated by two major parties – the Republicans and the Democrats. Therefore, the president always comes from one of them. The Republicans are a conservative political party and their candidate in this year's election is the incumbent President Donald Trump, who is seeking reelection. The Democrats, in turn, are a liberal political party whose candidate is Joe Biden, an experienced politician, best known for his eight years as the Vice President under Barack Obama. Both candidates are in their seventies – Trump would be 74 at the beginning of his second term, while Biden, at 78, would be the oldest president during the first term in US history.

Following the national conventions, the candidates organize campaigns. Interestingly enough, they can be financed from public funds (with statutory limitations) or privately, which is a much more common practice. In this way, voters can actively support their candidate.⁵ However, this brings considerable risks, such as large corporations paying for the campaign and later expecting from the future president some privileges or legislative changes to their advantage. In this context, Trump seems to be a better candidate as he is one of the richest American politicians in history. In 2020, Forbes estimated his net worth at 2.1 billion dollars, bringing him to 1001st in the world and 275th in the US.

As someone who does not suffer from a lack of money, Trump appears to be a president who is independent of the sponsors. This cannot be said of Joe Biden, who has essentially been a politician by profession for many years and needs additional resources for campaign and staff.

In September and October presidential debates are organized. During them the views of the candidates are confronted. Only the representatives of the two largest parties or their candidates for the office of vice president are invited.⁶ Recently, three presidential debates were held – on September 29 in Cleveland, OH, on October 7 in Salt Lake City, UT and on October 22 in Nashville, TN. Although the first two of them were not completely satisfactory, the last debate is said to have been much better and more substantive than the previous ones.⁷

5. B. Mucha, Mechanizm finansowania prezydenckich kampanii wyborczych w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki, *Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe* V: 2008, nr 3, KSM-200.indb

6. Presidential Election Process, <https://www.usa.gov/election> (Retrieved: October 12, 2020)

7. Full Analysis and Highlights of the Trump vs. Biden Debate, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/10/22/us/politics/debate-live-stream.html> (Retrieved: October 15, 2020)

The Electoral System

The system for electing the President of the United States is based on the use of the so-called Electoral College. In the early days of America, the founding fathers could not agree on how the president should be elected. The two main ideas were to elect the President by the Congress or by a direct vote of citizens. The Electoral College was therefore established as a result of a compromise. This system is based on the fact that each state (and the District of Columbia) receives a certain number of electors, which depends on the number of members of the Congress (House and Senate) in that state. The total number of electors is 538. Then, on Tuesday after the first Monday of November, citizens vote for electors by universal suffrage within their state. This year it will take place on November 3. However, citizens can vote early by mail. As of October 26, 2020, nearly 60 million Americans had already marked X next to their candidate's name.⁸

Importantly, the “winner-takes-all” principle applies in almost all states. This means that a candidate who has the majority of the votes in a given state, receives all electoral votes of that state. The second on the podium does not receive any electoral votes. The exceptions are Maine and Nebraska, which, using the Congressional District Method, allocate two electoral votes to the state popular vote winner, and then one electoral vote to the popular vote winner in each Congressional district (two in Maine, three in Nebraska). This provides an opportunity to distribute the votes of the electorate among candidates within a state.

To win the election, the candidate must receive the majority of electoral votes – at least 270. If

this majority is not obtained, i.e. in the case of 50/50 split of the votes (269 for each candidate), the House of Representatives shall elect the President from the top three candidates and the Senate shall elect the Vice President. This has only happened once in 1824.

It is worth noting at this point that the sum of votes obtained by the candidate in a popular vote, does not imply a victory. It results from the above-mentioned “winner-take-all” rule, which causes that all votes cast in a given state for a candidate other than the winner are forfeited. As a result, a situation in which a person running for the office of president achieves a better result than the opponent and at the same time loses the election may occur. This has happened five times so far, including in the previous election in 2016, when the Democratic Party nominee Hillary Clinton was defeated by Republican nominee Donald Trump despite winning the popular vote – she received 2.8 million votes more than the winner of the Electoral College, which is the biggest difference in the history of the US presidential election.

Although the actual vote of the Electoral College takes place in every state around mid-December, this year on December 14, the winner can usually be announced on the night of the November election. This is because faithless electors⁹, i.e. members of the Electoral College who do not vote for the candidate for president or vice president they have pledged to vote for, occur very rarely. The electors are usually chosen and nominated by the political party or are associated with the presidential candidate. They frequently have a good reputation for being loyal,

8. R. Luscombe, Nearly 60 million Americans cast early vote as record-shattering turnout expected, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/oct/25/nearly-60-million-americans-cast-early-vote-trump-biden> (Retrieved: October 12, 2020)

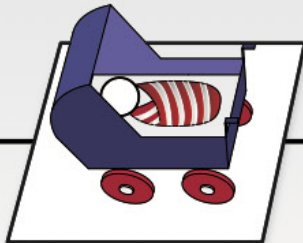
9. The Electoral College, National Conference of state slates, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/the-electoral-college.aspx#faithless>, (Retrieved: October 12, 2020)

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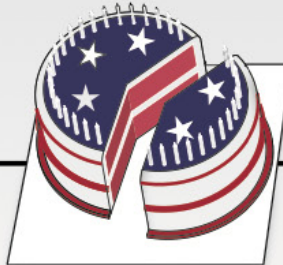
U.S. CONSTITUTION'S REQUIREMENTS FOR A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE



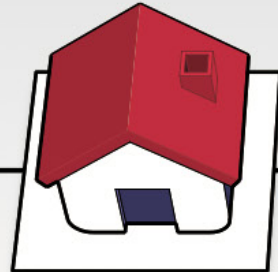
✓ NATURAL BORN CITIZEN



✓ MINIMUM AGE 35 YEARS



✓ U.S. RESIDENT 14 YEARS



STEP 1 P

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STEP 2 NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

The presidential candidates campaign throughout the country to win the support of the general population.



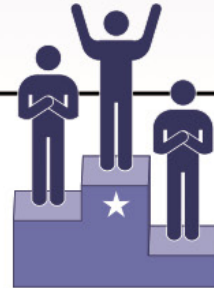
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At each convention, the presidential candidate chooses a running mate (Vice Presidential candidate).



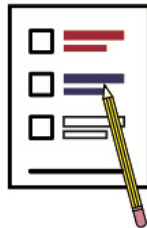
Each party holds a national convention to select a final presidential nominee.



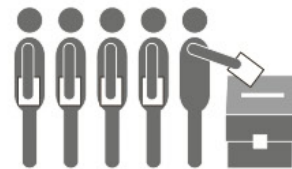
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STEP 3 GENERAL ELECTION

People in every state across the country vote for one President and Vice President.



When people cast their vote, they are actually voting for a group of people called **electors**.



STEP 4 E



DEFINITIONS

Caucus: A meeting of the local members of a political party to select delegates to the national

Delegate: A person authorized to represent others as an elected representative to a political party

Electors: A member of the electoral college.

Electoral College: The voters of each state, and the District of Columbia, vote for electors to elect the President and Vice President.

Natural Born Citizen: Someone born with U.S. citizenship includes any child born "in" the United States.

Primary: An election where voters select candidates for an upcoming general election. Winning candidates advance to the general election.

DESIGNED BY:
Ifrah Syed

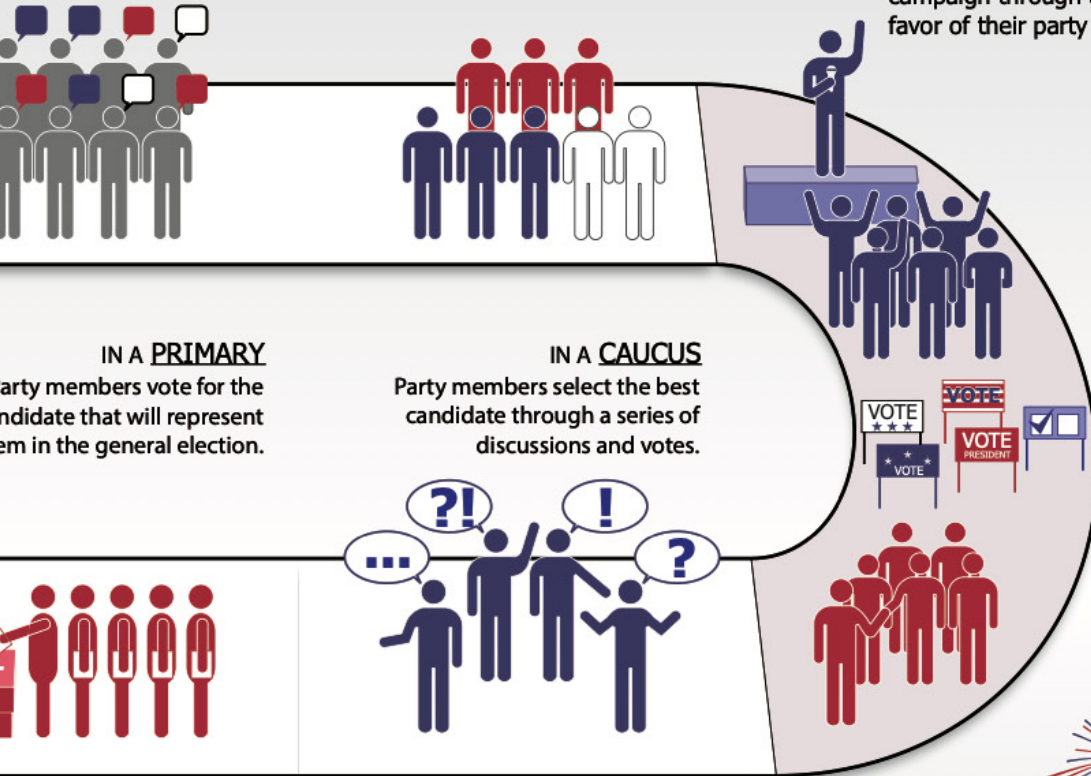
BECOME THE UNITED STATES

PRIMARIES AND CAUCUSES

Many people who want to be involved with their own ideas about how government should work.

People with similar ideas belong to the same political party. This is where primaries and caucuses come in.

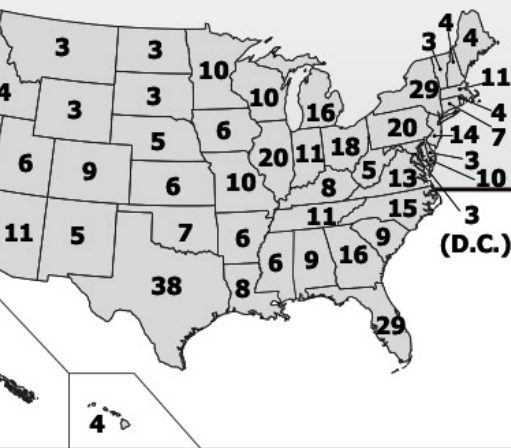
Candidates from each political party campaign through the country to win the favor of their party members.



IN A PRIMARY
Party members vote for the candidate that will represent them in the general election.

IN A CAUCUS
Party members select the best candidate through a series of discussions and votes.

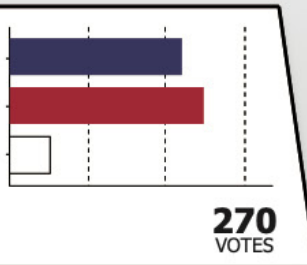
ELECTORAL COLLEGE



In the electoral college system, each state gets a certain number of electors based on its representation in Congress.

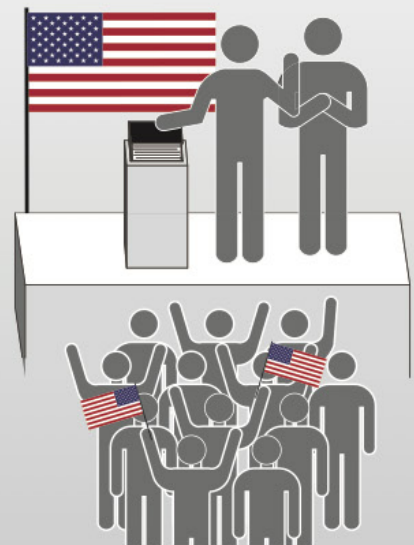
Each elector casts one vote following the general election, and the candidate who gets more than half (270) wins.

538
ELECTORAL VOTES



Based on 2010 Census

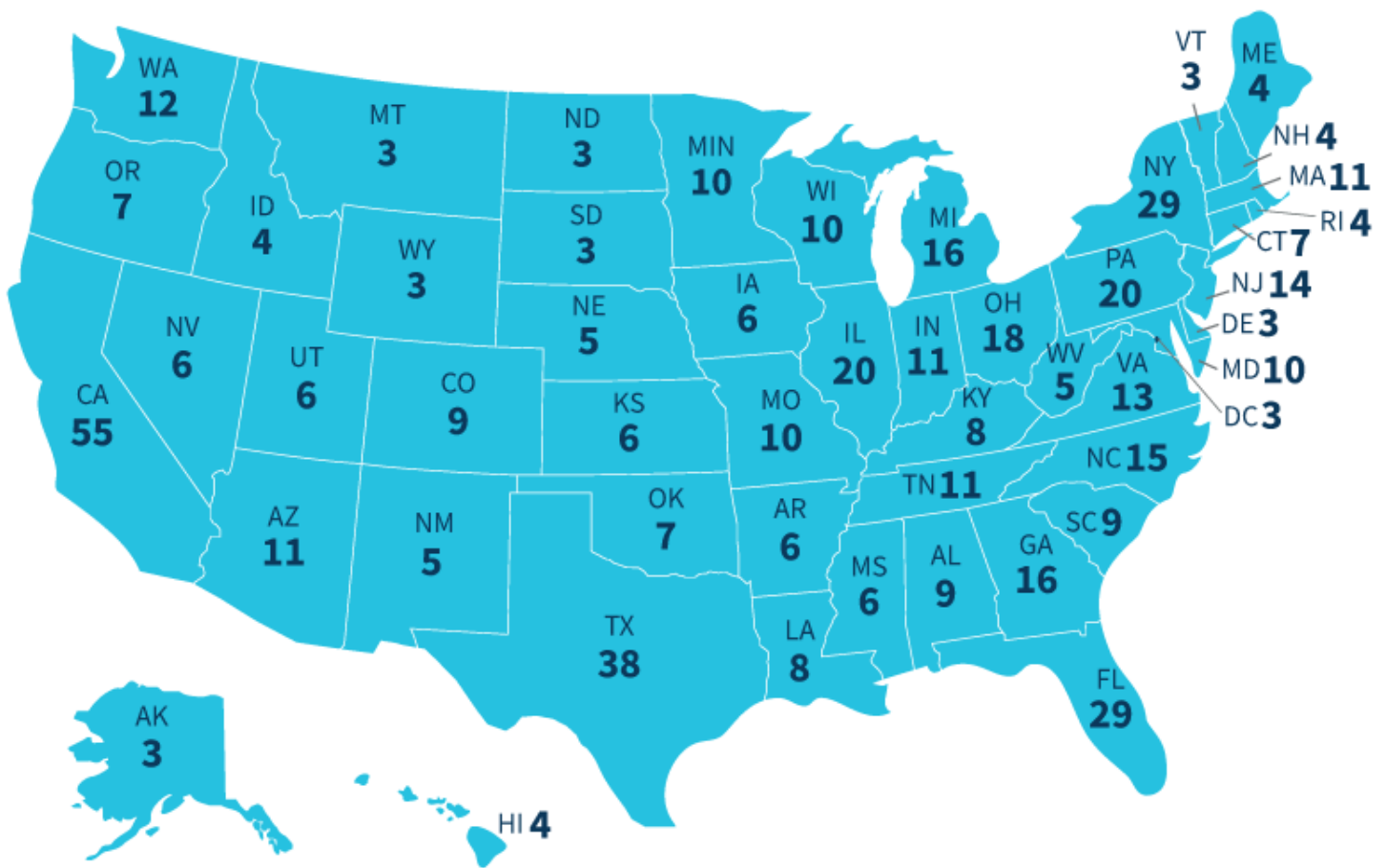
The newly elected President and Vice President are inaugurated in January.



Party convention. A caucus is a substitute for a primary election. Party conference.

Be the authorized constitutional members in a presidential election. United States, the children of United States citizens born abroad, and those born abroad of one citizen parent. Candidates will have delegates sent to the national party convention as their party's U.S. presidential nominee.

Revised: April 2016



SOURCE: USA.GOV/ELECTION

both to the party and to its candidate. Additionally, a faithless elector is exposed to criticism and political retaliation from his party as well as potential legal sanctions in some states. Like most voting systems, the Electoral College has many advantages and disadvantages, but it is widely respected for its historical roots dating back to the establishment of the United States.

The new president is officially sworn in on January 20 during a ceremony called the inauguration, which takes place on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, DC. After the ceremony, the new president travels to the White House to begin a four-year term.

Little attention is devoted to another significant event that is overshadowed by the presidential election. At the same time, citizens elect new members of the Congress, the highest legislature of the USA. It consists of two chambers – the House of Representatives and the Senate. Members of the House hold two-year terms while senators six-year terms, and are divided

into three groups. This means that one third of them are elected every two years. Part of the Congress is therefore elected at the same time as the President. Due to the strong position of the president and his cabinet in the political system of the United States, the elections to the Congress are not so popular in the media. However, they are not insignificant, even for the elected president, because, thanks to the Republican majority in the Senate, Trump had a guaranteed support for his actions and did not have to fear the impeachment, which was attempted at the beginning of this year. Democrats already control the House, so they will try to maintain it while attempting to seize the Senate. With a majority in both chambers, they would be able to block or delay President Trump’s plans if he is reelected.

The Swing States

In general, individual states tend to be in favor of or against a given party, which is due to the prevalence of citizens with certain views and attitudes towards a given candidate. Between 2000 and 2016, 38 states voted repeatedly for the same political party. Some states, however, could be “undecided,” having small differences in the pre-election polling, voting inconsistently and changing sides over the years. These states are called the swing states, and the struggle between the candidates is mostly about them. This, however, usually applies to states with a large number of electoral votes. In 2020 there eight states which are said to be key in the fight for the Oval Office: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. They account for 127 electoral votes.¹⁰

Victory in the swing states is so important that candidates spend most of their campaign budget on marketing there, often completely overlooking other states. Four years ago, Donald Trump won the Electoral College, winning six of the ten most competitive swing states.

With that in mind, the expression “every vote counts” is more than adequate, as the difference in votes is extremely small and the number of undecided people is considerable. In the history of the United States, there have already been presidential election victories where the difference in the votes secured by each of the candidates was really small. Among others, Harry Truman defeated Thomas Dewey in 1948 by winning less than a percent of the votes in the swing states of that time: Ohio, California, Indiana, Illinois and New York. The difference was so small that at first the headlines mistakenly declared Dewey the winner.

10. S. Hecht, D. Schultz, *Presidential Swing States: Why Only Ten Matter*, Lexington Books. ISBN 9780739195246.

Impact of the Election on International Relations

If Donald Trump is reelected, it could be expected that he would continue his foreign policy. There will also be little public pressure on an active, collaborative US foreign policy. However, the incumbent president will surely be praised for holding a firm line against China. Biden's victory, on the other hand, may result in various international initiatives and, as the candidate of the Democrats said himself, "restore the United States to a leadership role on the world stage that strengthens ties with allies and stands up to adversaries." This would be a reversal of Trump's America First doctrine, according to which the country is withdrawing from many of its global spheres of influence.

Biden's foreign policy could probably look completely different from Trump's strategy. The former vice president often talks about rebuilding alliances, promoting human rights and opposing dictators. These issues are rarely mentioned by the current president. In his speech at the Democratic National Convention, Biden promised to "work in common purpose for a more secure, peaceful, and prosperous world."^{11 12}

China

In his first term, President Trump was consistent in his trade policy with China, trying to counteract the negative effects of capital and labor flight from the country. Since assuming office, he has taken a number of measures in this matter, thus damaging bilateral relations. This was accompanied by accusations against China of causing

multiple problems to the US, including the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³ Importantly, this anti-Chinese rhetoric has gained support among American society, including the Democrats. During the primaries, their candidates did not challenge the position of the president, but only his strategy.

Consequently, intensified pressure on China could be expected after the election, although the manner and motivation of these actions will certainly differ. The current president is likely to continue the trade war, while the Biden's path will include cooperation with Europe on both trade and human rights issues. This is due to the fact that, in general, the Republicans are more critical of Beijing due to the development of the Chinese economy and the loss of the current position of the USA. The Democrats, on the other hand, are stricter about the disrespect for human rights by the Asian superpower. Furthermore, Biden will most probably focus on putting pressure on China, the world's largest CO2 emitter, to stop supporting coal exports and thus outsourcing pollution to other countries in addition to granting billions of dollars to fossil fuel-based energy projects.

The Democratic candidate is unlikely to use Donald Trump's nomenclature, such as "Chinese virus," which damages the relations between these countries. Instead, he no longer seems to believe that increased global involvement will push China towards democracy. Biden once said that "a rising China is a positive, positive development, not only for China but for America

11. L. Ruikang, Election 2020: The foreign policy wedge between Trump and Biden, www.news.cgtn.com/news/2020-10-11/Election-2020-The-foreign-policy-wedge-between-Trump-and-Biden-UtS6izqYLe/index.html, (Retrieved: October 13, 2020)

12. N. Toosi, The Trump foreign policies Biden might keep, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/21/trump-biden-foreign-policy-419130> (Retrieved: October 13, 2020)

13. M. Giorgione, Trump vs. China: Facing America's Greatest Threat, ISBN-13: 9781546085096



SOURCE: YOUTUBE/THE TELEGRAPH

and the world writ large.”¹⁴ In turn, he recently called the Chinese President Xi Jinping “a guy who is a thug.”¹⁵ He accused Chinese leaders of genocide against Uighur Muslims and promised to mobilize countries to hold China accountable for its economic “frauds.” It seems that his staff understood the public mood and expectations of such rhetoric from the future president.

According to Biden, in order to win the future rivalry with China, the United States must unify the economic power of democracy around the world in order to counteract economic abuse as well as strive to reduce emissions in global maritime transport, aviation and the energy sector. In his opinion, aggressive trade enforcement action is needed against China or any other country seeking to curb US production through unfair practices, including currency manipulation, dumping, abuse of state-owned enterprises or unfair subsidies.¹⁶

It seems, however, that both candidates should think carefully about the action plan. The result of Trump’s efforts to decouple the US and Chinese economies is driving China towards self-sufficiency. China’s trade surplus with the US has increased by almost 25% since the beginning of Trump’s presidency, exceeding 300 billion dollars annually. In the second quarter, China’s gross domestic product, despite the pandemic, was higher than at the end of 2019, which is one of the few such cases in the world, especially among the developed economies. In the United States, where the number of COVID-19 cases was the largest in the world, the economy contracted by 9.5% in the second quarter, which is the biggest decline in the last 80 years.

For this reason, President Trump leads a fight for the return of manufacturing facilities that have fled the country to China, and thus announces, above all, tax breaks for companies that decide to

14. Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to the Opening Session of the U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue, The White House, Office of the Vice President, 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/09/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-opening-session-us-china-strategic-econ> (Retrieved: October 13, 2020)

15. D. Sevastopulo, “This is a guy who is a thug’: how US elite became hawks on Xi’s China, <https://www.ft.com/content/75ce186e-41f7-4a9c-bff9-0f502c81e456> (Accessed: October 13, 2020)

16. The power of America’s example: the Biden plan for leading the democratic world to meet the challenges of the 21st century, Joe Biden’s campaign website, <https://joebiden.com/americanleadership/>, (Retrieved: October 13, 2020)

return back or no federal contracts for companies that outsource their business activities to the PRC. At the same time, it intends to hold China fully accountable for the spread of the pandemic around the world. The question is whether these actions can have a satisfactory effect, given that industrial trends are in favor of China, which in the wake of the worldwide lockdown is continuously increasing its share of the global market, delivering machinery even in sectors previously dominated by, for instance, German companies.

The Middle East

In terms of the Middle East, Trump's actions have so far evoked mixed reactions. On the one hand, he did not condemn nor hold accountable Saudi prince Mohammed bin Salman, responsible for the death of a journalist Jamal Khashoggi or the loss of civilians during the civil war in Yemen. This behavior of the president was met with great dissatisfaction in the Congress, including the Republicans.

On the other hand, Trump sought to facilitate peace treaties between Israel and Arab countries as well as helped Israel secure the normalization agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which is a significant diplomatic achievement. At the same time, he wasted decade-long international policies and traditions by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to the Holy City which Palestinians also claim as theirs.

During Trump's term, the number of American troops in Iraq, Syria and other countries was reduced. Moreover, the Afghan government began talks with the Taliban thanks to an already signed agreement on restoring peace in Afghanistan after 18 years of conflict. This event gave hope for the end of a long-lasting war.

However, the incumbent president terminated the US participation in the nuclear agreement with Iran, concluded in 2015 by the previous American administration, known as the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). The plan aimed at controlling Iran's nuclear program in exchange for lifting sanctions imposed by the UN, the US and the European Union. After the US withdrew from the agreement, Trump re-imposed sanctions on Iran to force it to change its policy, concerning the support for militant groups fighting in the region. Tensions between the countries led to the already mentioned events in the beginning of 2020.

Biden has already announced that he will not change Trump's decision to move the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and recognize the city as the capital of this country. He stated that the relocation of the embassy will not help the process of achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians. However, he committed himself to reopening the US consulate dealing with Palestinian affairs, which was closed by Trump.

The Vice President under Obama wants to bring the majority of American troops home from Afghanistan. Furthermore, he promises to cut off aid to Saudi Arabia in its war in Yemen. He is also in favor of rejoining the nuclear agreement with Iran, depending on the cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

If the Democratic candidate assumes the office of the president, there will be no radical changes in the Middle East, at least in terms of Israel. However, his actions may ease the tense relations with Iran and put pressure on Saudi Arabia to respect human rights.

Europe

During the pivot to Asia, announced under Barack Obama and intensified under Donald Trump's presidency, America reoriented its engagement towards China. This does not mean, however, that the US interest in Europe has been marginalized. Both candidates and their advisors are aware that without cooperation with Europe and its support for American actions, Washington will not be able to effectively conduct a dispute with Beijing (e.g. issues of trade agreements, cooperation in 5G technology, respecting human rights). However, Joe Biden is committed to rebuilding alliances and strengthening NATO as a guardian of democracy, whilst Trump, a businessman, has a more transactional approach.

Both candidates agree on the development of cooperation in energy sector between America and Europe. The priority in this area is to block activities that threaten energy security, such as the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, or the development of US exports of raw materials and energy technologies (e.g. LNG, nuclear energy). It is also worth noting that in addition to the actions taken by the Congress to halt this Russian-German project, it was Donald Trump who, by announcing the sanctions, effectively stopped the construction of Nord Stream 2 and questioned the validity of the project. Such mechanisms were not implemented under Vice President Joe Biden.

An important aspect in relations with Europe was also the withdrawal of Donald Trump's administration from the INF Treaty. This was due to Russia's persistent violation of its provisions as well as a change in the balance of power in Asia and the Pacific. China was not a party to the treaty, which enabled it to develop its arsenal. Joe

Biden, in turn, declared that he would seek to extend the New START Treaty as an anchor of strategic stability between the United States and Russia as well as use it as a basis for new arms control arrangements.

Another very important area of transatlantic cooperation is the American military presence in Europe. Regardless of who resides in the White House, the United States is gradually reducing its contingent on the Old Continent. From the standpoint of European security, which should be treated as a vital interest of the USA, this is clearly a negative phenomenon. The dispute between some of the NATO members is fueled by the attitude of Donald Trump, who directly criticizes (somewhat rightly) mainly Western European countries for failing to meet the goal of spending 2% of their GDP on defense. However, in a way, he is rewarding the countries that meet this goal, especially the countries of the NATO's eastern flank. They are the ones that are in favor of increasing the American presence in Central and Eastern Europe. This trend is supported, for instance, by the possible relocation of American soldiers from Germany to Poland, among others.

It is also worth noting that Donald Trump's administration directly supported the development of the Three Seas Initiative as a mechanism facilitating cooperation of Central and Eastern Europe with the USA and declares support for investments in this region. From the positions expressed by Joe Biden's advisors one can conclude that if he is elected president, he would probably maintain American involvement in this project. As his advisor Michael Carpenter said, the Three Seas Initiative can be "a transparent and private sector-led alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative."

South America and Immigration

Among American society, the immigration policy of the country is quite important. Donald Trump announced further steps to reduce immigration in case of winning the election, due to the fact that such actions are expected by the republican voters. In case of reelection, more arrests of illegal immigrants, completing US-Mexico border wall and further restrictions on legal immigration can be expected.

Joe Biden takes the opposite view on this issue, proposing to ease immigration restrictions. This is because he believes that immigration is good for the economy. In addition, this is due to the Democrats' increasing dependence on Hispanic and Asian voters, two of the fastest growing groups of the American population.

As far as the crisis in Venezuela is concerned, the USA does not officially recognize Maduro since January 2019. Instead, Trump identifies opposition leader Juan Guaidó as the interim president of Venezuela and imposed sanctions on the regime in Caracas. Maduro, who led to the country's economic collapse, is considered a dictator and is widely condemned by Washington and its allies in Latin America. Joe Biden supported Trump's sanctions in this regard and also proposed to grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Venezuelans.

International Forums

During the presidency of Donald Trump, the importance of international organizations was attempted to be diminished by a number of activities. In the last four years, Trump's administration announced, among others, withdra-

wal from the Paris Agreement, UNESCO and committed itself to leave the World Health Organization. Such actions resulted from its America First policy, which focused on restoring jobs in the US, cutting spending on other countries and international organizations as well as increasing the military spending, domestic security and the pursuit of a balanced budget. In this way, a policy that is believed to lead to the alienation of the country from its valuable allies has been consolidated. According to Biden, the United States is more isolated from the world than ever before.

Joe Biden wishes to increase the importance of NATO. This will most probably include putting pressure on allies, including Germany, although perhaps not as effectively as Trump, to increase defense spending. Biden pledges to resume full US participation in other multilateral organizations as well, and promises to restore human rights importance in foreign policy. As he said, to "rebuild a demoralized State Department," which he believes has been greatly sidelined during Trump's time.¹⁷

Furthermore, Biden wants to organize a global Summit for Democracy. Such proposals are made to distance him from Donald Trump, who has often praised dictators and focused on doing "purely business" with them. It seems, however, that recently the former Vice President went too far in his statements when he compared the problems of Belarus and the developments of totalitarian regimes around the world with democratic Poland and Hungary. Although in the US such a statement may pass unnoticed, electing Biden may affect relations between the USA and these countries. What is more, Americans of Polish and Hungarian ancestry jointly make up about 3.8% of the US community and almost 10% of the voters, as estimated in 2012. It seems that such statements may discourage some of them from voting for Joe Biden.¹⁸

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SOURCE: THE WHITE HOUSE

Summary

The upcoming election is certainly extraordinary due to the circumstances in which it takes place and given the recent events. Both candidates have a chance to win and it seems that the election outcome would not be determined until the last vote is casted. Depending on which candidate wins, the United States may be heading in fundamentally different directions. Trump's reelection is a vote for America First and a policy that focuses on ordering domestic affairs as well as treating relations with other countries bilaterally, limiting the possibilities and potential of international organizations as well as agreements. In turn, Biden's victory will bring the dissemination of slogans and democratic values around the world, the increase of the role of international organizations, the fight for human rights and joint responsibility for the environment. As this is an

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election for the president of one of the world's superpowers, the fate of international politics in the coming years will depend on the decisions of American citizens made by postal voting and election held on November 3, 2020.

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