

IRS JOURNAL



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Visiting the Republic of Türkiye
Ministry Foreign Affairs, Directorate
for EU Affairs.
Tuesday, 11.00

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Editor's Note

Dear readers,

As we have covered in the previous IRS Journal Issue, 2024 is the year of elections globally. A week ago, the American presidential elections took place. For months, the entire world kept up with every update in the American elections as it is inevitable that every election, every result and every update in the US would have an impact on the lives of individuals almost everywhere around the world. It is up to debate if the result was surprising or expected, however the elections are now concluded with Trump being reelected, and entering back to the White House.

IRS Journal, in this issue, will cover the voting behavior and domestic elements of the election, differences in Kamala Harris and Donald Trump's campaigns, especially in terms of human rights with a specific focus on immigrants and abortion. Moreover, Trump's stance on active conflicts such as Russia-Ukraine war, Genocide in Palestine and Sino-American competition will be examined. Lastly, Turkish foreign policy perspective and a general critique of the rise of the Far Right will be given.

Huge thanks to my fellow writers who spent their precious time on doing research and writing articles when it is the midterm season for us. Their hard work is evident in the great articles they write, each one showcasing their dedication. Last but not least, I would like to thank the board of IRS for supporting the IRS Journal. I wish everyone an easy and great midterm season, and I hope you enjoy reading the issue!

Aslısu Furtana

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Political Autopsy of Democrats' Electoral Collapse

Last Tuesday, 2024's most critical election took place in the United States. Contrary to expectations of a close race between former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump won decisively, securing comfortable leads in all seven swing states. He also won the national vote for the first time since 2004 for a Republican candidate, becoming the second president after Grover Cleveland to return to the White House after a re-election loss. In response to these results, Democratic strategists and independent analysts have launched a "political autopsy" to understand the party's disappointing electoral performance. This article explores key elements of Trump's victory, drawing from CNN exit poll and official election results.

1. Shifts in Coalitions:

One of the most notable trends in this election was the shift within coalitions. The Democrats' once-strong rainbow coalition significantly weakened, with the GOP making substantial inroads. Hispanic Americans, a key and rapidly growing voter group, displayed a noticeable shift compared to 2020. Biden won 65% of Hispanics in 2020 against Trump's 33%. However, this year, Harris secured only 52%, while Trump gained 46% of Hispanic support.

Economic issues, immigration, and identity politics largely drove this shift. Hispanic voters seemed less concerned with Trump's nativist and dark rhetoric on immigration and were alienated by what they saw as identity politics from the Democrats. This shift was especially evident in regions like New Jersey's Bergen County, Texas's Rio Grande Valley, Florida's Miami-Dade, Pennsylvania's Lehigh County, and New York City, where Trump gained skyrocketing support.

2. Catholic Voter Realignment:

Catholic voters also leaned more heavily toward Trump. In 2020, Biden, the nation's second Catholic president, won 52% of Catholics to Trump's 47%. In 2024, however, Trump achieved 58% among Catholic voters, with Harris receiving only 40%. The Catholic vote is not monolithic, with Hispanic and White Catholic voters distributed differently across regions. Trump's gains among Hispanic Catholics boosted his numbers, but White Catholic voters also shifted to him, especially in the Midwest.

For example, Trump became the first GOP candidate since 1988 to win Bucks County, Pennsylvania, with its significant Polish-American population, which helped him carry the county and ultimately the state. Economy and probably abortion issue were key for Trump's gain among this group.

3. The Youth Vote:

A third significant shift occurred among young voters, particularly young men. Trump's appearances on social media channels paid off, helping him raise his share among young male voters. Trump won this group with 49% to Harris's 47%, compared to his 42% to 51% loss in 2020.

Instant exit polls indicate serious warning signs for Democrats in maintaining their working-class, rainbow coalition. Unlike in his 2016 victory, Trump successfully diminished the Democratic coalition, drawing new support in reliably Democratic states like New York, New Jersey, and California. The results indicate a possible political realignment of the blue-collar working class toward the GOP. If the Democrats want victory, they have to adopt more left-wing populist policies similar to those enacted by popular Democratic governors in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The ongoing shifts in American politics seem poised to benefit the right-wing and Trump's redefined Republican Party.



“Land of Freedom”: Not So Much with Trump

The 2024 United States elections are complete. According to the results, Donald Trump won a second term as president. Although Kamala Harris and Donald Trump disagreed with each other on many issues during the election process, the most controversial issue was always abortion and the human rights arising from this issue.

Throughout the campaign, Kamala Harris ran a campaign that is pro-choice, and focused on the statement “Trust women.”, referring to Trump's negative and sexist statements about abortion rights. Kamala Harris has emerged as a politician advocating abortion rights and the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*. After overturning the *Wade* decision, she supported the effort to protect the right to abortion at the federal level. If Kamala Harris were elected as the 47th U.S. president, she would have prioritized efforts to protect abortion rights at the federal level and prevent states from passing laws that limit this right. It could also allocate a fund in this sense to protect women's rights and ensure the right to abortion



In addition, Harris, who introduced herself as a human rights defender, argued that the American Legal System should be reformed, especially regarding racism, sexism, and homophobia. Again, if Harris were the American president, she would've probably followed a more moderate policy on mass deportation and migration than Trump. Harris has often been a harsh critic of mass deportations.

On the other hand, Trump gained the support of American conservatives throughout the election process with his opposition to abortion. In his second term, he can be expected to support further restricting abortion rights at the state level and support politicians who promote anti-abortion laws. On refugee and mass deportation practices, Trump has taken a much harsher stance than Kamala Harris. Trump's support for ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) operations during his first term led to serious deportation proceedings, especially for undocumented immigrants. He is expected to adopt a similar stance in his second term; It could even introduce new regulations to speed up mass deportations. In addition, the construction of a wall on the Mexican border and the zero-tolerance policy he showed towards refugees from Muslim countries during his first term signal that he will introduce harsher practices in his new term.



Trump's Comeback and the Shadow of US-China Relations

In the 2024 US presidential election, Republican Party candidate Donald Trump was elected the 47th President of the United States, winning 270 delegates in the Electoral College, surpassing Democratic Party candidate Kamala Harris. Trump, notable for his sharp communication style in the international arena and relentless criticism of his opponents, has once again mobilized the Republican base. But beyond the heated domestic debates making headlines, there is another important factor shaping this election: US-China relations. Trump's return to the White House could have long-lasting consequences for world politics.

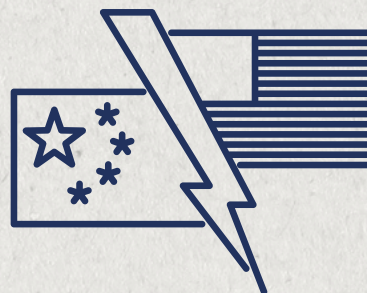
In recent years, relations between Washington and Beijing have undergone a dramatic change. What was once characterized as an era of economic dependence has now turned into a spiral of tension that many analysts have characterized as a “new Cold War”. The rivalry between the US and China has not been limited to trade and technology, with tensions ranging from Taiwan to the South China Sea. In his 2016 presidential victory, Trump's “America First” slogan launched a brutal trade war against China and wooed voters with promises to protect American manufacturing. These policies highlighted the weakness of American industry vis-à-vis China and opened the door to major changes on the international stage. Trump's stance on China is also an important part of his 2024 election campaign.

The Biden administration, on the other hand, has pursued a complex policy of both cooperation and competition with China. However, tensions in economic relations with Beijing continue to attract the attention of American voters. In particular, technology wars and military threats over Taiwan have caused America to reconsider its global leadership role. Trump has defended his administration's vision of “strong leadership”, arguing that Biden did not stand strong enough against China. Voters' concerns about national security and economic independence may be seen as giving Trump an advantage.

Particularly in economic terms, many American voters believe that China's rise is leading to job losses in the US. Trump is using these concerns to accuse the Biden administration of being “weak on China”.



In conclusion, the 2024 elections are not only a domestic policy shift, but also a turning point that will determine the US stance in the global arena. Trump's re-election with his clear stance against China, which we have seen in his previous policies, could further escalate tensions with China and have wide repercussions around the world. Considering this rivalry between the United States, which has dominated global politics for years, and rising power China, which has the potential to become a second Cold War, this election has the potential to reshape not only the future of American voters but also the world order.



What Does the Re-election of Trump Mean for Russia-Ukraine War?

Ukraine faces immense challenges as the war approaches its third year. With Donald Trump's reelection, Ukraine could soon lose the support of its most crucial ally, which has spent \$108 billion on military, humanitarian, and economic aid since Russia's invasion in February 2022. During his campaign, Trump cast doubts on continued U.S. commitment to Kyiv and suggested that the war might not have started if he had been president. He also hinted at the possibility of pressuring Ukraine into a truce with Russia, saying: "We have a very good relationship (with Zelenskyy), and I also have a very good relationship, as you know, with President Putin. And I think if we win, we're going to get it resolved very quickly... I think we can work out something that's good for both sides."

In contrast, former President Joe Biden visited Kyiv in February 2024, pledging \$500 million in military aid and assuring Ukrainians, "Americans stand with you, the world stands with you." From the outset, Trump criticized the level of U.S. aid to Ukraine, even blaming Ukrainian President Zelenskyy for starting the conflict. Trump also formerly attempted to influence the U.S. Congress during negotiations for a foreign aid package that allocated \$60 billion in military supplies for Ukraine, pushing for the assistance to be structured as a loan rather than a grant. Later, at a rally in June, Trump described Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as "maybe the greatest salesman of any politician that's ever lived. Every time he comes to our country, he walks away with \$60 billion," Trump remarked, referencing the aid package. "He gets home, and he announces that he needs another \$60 billion, and I say: it never ends. It never ends; I will have that settled before taking the White House as president-elect."



On Wednesday, despite everything, Zelenskyy congratulated Trump in a phone call. In his video address, Zelenskyy said: "People want certainty, they want freedom, a normal life. And for us, this is life without Russian aggression and with a strong America, with a strong Ukraine, with strong allies." Meanwhile, in the Kremlin, Putin did not immediately congratulate Trump, despite previously expressing hope for a Trump victory and a subsequent peace imposed on Ukraine.

If the U.S. decides to reduce its aid to Ukraine, the implications could extend far beyond the battlefield. Kyiv may have to rely more heavily on its European allies, placing a significant burden that could strain NATO's unity. Trump's 'peace through strength' rhetoric raises the question of whether his approach would lead to genuine peace or merely reinforce existing power dynamics, potentially emboldening Russia. Aware of these risks, President Biden is expected to take steps to "Trump-proof" some of the support for Ukraine before January, attempting to safeguard U.S. commitments amid the looming uncertainty.



Trump and the Israeli Genocide on Palestine

As Trump saw victory in the US Presidential elections on November 6th, an imminent question emerged on the consequence of the result on the ongoing genocide in Gaza. The 46th American President, Joe Biden, was increasingly involved in the armed facilitation of the IDF's attacks on Gaza and maintained friendly relations with Netanyahu and his government during his tenure. Is Trump expected to follow in his predecessor/successor's footsteps?

Trump may be understood to be the most pro-Israel President, but relations between him and Netanyahu were not always positive, particularly in his first term. Trump accused Netanyahu of betrayal in 2020 when the Prime Minister congratulated Biden for winning the elections. Similarly, he denounced Netanyahu and his intelligence services for being unprepared for the Hamas attack on October 7. However, despite that, Trump has maintained better relationships with the Israeli regime than Biden and has shown more preference for them than a Palestinian state.



In his first presidency: If we look back to Trump's first presidency, we will recall that Trump pulled the landmark move of recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, thereby negating the adopted abstention of previous Presidents in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This condemned move was followed by his establishment of the Israeli US embassy in Jerusalem. Furthermore, he signed an executive order which affirmed Israeli control over the occupied Golan Heights. Trump also put into implementation the US's formal departure from the United Nations Human Rights Council, declaring a surplus of negative bias held in the committee for Israel.

Alternately, Trump forced the closure of Washington's Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)'s office and cut about \$200m worth of American funding for the West Bank's governing body, the Palestinian Authority. He similarly made cuts to the American funding to UNRWA, which was the principle organization involved in facilitating Palestinian citizens, in 2018.

Now: Whilst not outrightly commenting on his intentions towards Israel's genocide on Gaza during his election campaign, Trump has had a defined problematic history in prioritizing Israeli actors over Palestinian lives, especially after October 7. He did poignantly comment that Israel needs to "get it over with fast" as they were "losing the PR war" in April 2024. In the presidential debate, Trump heavily criticized Harris's policies towards Israel and declared them to be weak and endangering Israel's existence. It is clear that Trump maintains his distaste for the Palestinian people and his policies during his presidency will exacerbate and facilitate Israeli violence against Gaza.

Turkish-American Relations in Trump “2.0”

For the past years, the relations between Washington and Ankara got strained for many reasons such as Türkiye forming stronger ties with China, domestic issues emerging in Türkiye and, very recently, Biden’s full support for Israel. Following the support of Biden for Israel committing genocide in Gaza, the relationship between the NATO allies weakened.

Türkiye officially did not endorse any candidate before the election, however President Erdoğan reportedly called Trump after the assassination attempt in July. For Turkish officials, a key matter for the betterment of relations was the stance the American president would have in terms of Gaza.



After Trump’s reelection, Erdoğan made a phone call with Trump, congratulated him and showed eagerness to strengthen relations. Erdoğan expressed hope for closer relationships between Türkiye and the US. While having an optimistic perspective, he also emphasized critical issues such as ongoing genocide in Gaza and Russia-Ukraine war.

During the congratulatory call, Trump was officially invited to Türkiye for a visit, and Erdoğan stated that Trump made positive remarks for the future of the relations. Erdoğan also urged Trump to stop Israel. However, it is still unclear what policy will Trump follow in Gaza.



Even though the general assumption is that relations between Washington and Ankara were mostly positive in Trump administration, this does not necessarily reflect the truth considering that during Trump’s presidency there were certain sanctions towards Türkiye and that the “phone diplomacy” of Erdoğan and Trump did not create concrete solutions or benefits.

All in all, since the future seems unclear, the broad predictions are most likely to not happen, and Türkiye’s immediate wishes from Trump’s second term are related to cutting the support to YPG in Syria, for a solution in Gaza, nevertheless whether Trump’s “America First!” mindset would meet these hopes or not is imponderable. Trump’s victory did not create an extremely optimistic expectations, however the question of “How would be the relations if Kamala Harris won?” is still up to debate, and once again shows that American-Turkish relations are in a fragile state.



Donald Trump Will Command Global Far-Right

In the last decade, the rise of the right-wing became notable worldwide. Especially following the 2015 refugee crisis, far-right parties in Europe gained popularity among voters. The underlying hostility towards cultural differences and unemployment problems created perfect conditions for far-right parties to profit from the rise in immigration rates. AfD in Germany, National Rally in France, Lega in Italy, Fidesz in Hungary, and Law and Justice Party in Poland are some examples. Trump's first victory in 2016 also had a big impact on world politics, far-right parties found a dismissal in his victory. Overall, political movements that champion nationalism, conservatism, anti-globalization, and populist rhetoric are gaining influence.

Aftermath of Globalization:

Globalization resulted in economic discontent which perpetuated the rise of right-wing movements. Global trade, technological innovation, and financial integration have brought prosperity and disruption. This disruption and displacement allowed the far-right in the US to exploit and offer solutions such as protectionist policies, strict immigration controls, and withdrawal from international trade agreements. Similar to the US many right-wing parties in Europe dwelled on these fears and offered more nationalist narratives that rejected the liberal international order.

Social Media's Influence

Social Media platforms allow far-right figures to bypass traditional media channels, appeal to bigger masses, and inflict their right-wing populist rhetoric through emotional content. This narrative is also referred to as "The Red Pill Content". The concept of "red pill" became a widely used political term in the US social media. "Taking the red pill" or being "red-pilled" means becoming aware of purported political biases inherent in society, including in the mainstream media, and supposedly thereby becoming an independent thinker. This narrative includes conspiracy theories, as well as racist, white supremacist, misogynistic and homophobic beliefs. "The Red Pill" narrative had a significant role in the rise of right-wing supporters in the US.

Culture and Identity:

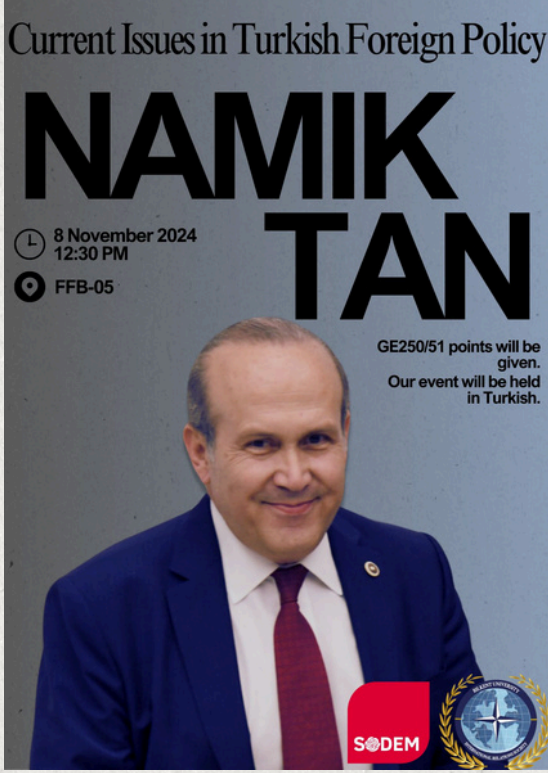
As the immigration rates have risen and many immigrants are from non-white Muslim countries, Western countries developed a fear of cultural dilution. These fears are often stoked by political elites, media outlets, and far-right movements, which portray immigration as a threat to national identity, social cohesion, and traditional values. One of the main narratives of Trump's campaign is also based on this portrayal. Trump's narrative focuses on WASP dominance and it identifies immigrants as outsiders or threats to the nation's traditional values.



With Trump's re-election to office, it seems like the rise of the right will continue and it will reinforce its place in world politics. As this racist narrative gets perpetuated, Trump's words "ending wars around the world" look extremely impossible.



“Current Issues in Turkish Foreign Policy” Event with Namık Tan



This week on International Relations Society, our host was Namık Tan to discuss the current issues in Turkish Diplomacy. Tan started his speech by addressing the importance of diplomats and how honorable it is to be the one to represent one's country.

Continuing on with the difference between past diplomacy and current diplomacy, Tan claimed that the quality of leaders throughout the world has decreased compared to the previous century. He addressed the elites, the unequal treatment, and the neglect that created reactions almost to the level of a “revolt,” making space for the rise of populism. Tan explained the massive impact of populism on the current world and how it causes uncertainty and a capacity problem in leaders on the international level, giving examples of Trump's lifestyle. Later on, Tan continued his speech by mentioning the similarities between Turkish politics and American politics. After the speech, the event concluded with a question-and-answer session. The questions included Tan's ideas on American elections and Türkiye's relation to it.

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