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Focal Topic

2020 U. S. Elections and the New Trends of American Foreign Policy

2020 U. S. Elections and the Future Trends of American Politics

Diao Daming (10)

The 2020 U. S. elections are a “closed” competition with the incumbent President as the candidate under the special background of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic and its related economic situation have become key issues. Donald Trump’s failure to prevent and control the pandemic caused him to lose key support among voters in contested states, which directly led to his re-election loss. As a “mission-oriented candidate,” Joe Biden effectively catered to public dissatisfaction with the Trump administration, managed his shortcomings more successfully, and finally won the election. Even under the pandemic, Biden and Trump each received record votes, and Biden’s superiority exceeded expectations, highlighting the degree of polarization among American voters. After being elected, Biden will face pressures such as polarized and divided public opinion, opposition in the U. S. Senate and factional differences within his party. His campaign promises such as prevention and control of the pandemic, economic recovery and adjustment of foreign policy may be difficult to fulfill quickly. Due to factors such as the pandemic, the 2020 U. S. elections did not verify the political cycle started in 2016. After the elections, the two parties will continue to adjust their ideas and agendas, but the trend of identity politics and the “tribalization” of party struggles that emphasize the differences between whites and minorities has not been changed.

Back to the Future: The 2020 U. S. General Election and the Opportunity of China-U. S. Relations

Da Wei and Zhou Wuhua (32)

The ups and downs of China-U. S. relations in the past forty years took place against the backdrop of the rise and fall of neoliberalism in the

West. After the financial crisis in 2008, neoliberalism has encountered profound questioning and challenges. The administrations of Obama and Trump explored new frameworks of the China-U. S. relationship from different directions. As a member of the Democratic Party establishment, Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 U. S. presidential election provides a valuable opportunity for China-U. S. relations. This is not an opportunity of "back to the past". The Biden administration will not return to the old strategic framework of bilateral relations guided by neoliberalism. On the contrary, the potential opportunity that Biden's victory brings is "back to the future". If China and the U. S. can establish some effective mechanisms to avoid and manage the worst scenario in a very short window of opportunity in the next four years, a more stable future of China-U. S. relations is still possible and achievable.

Getting the West Back: How the Biden Administration Envisions Its Foreign Policy

Zhao Minghao (45)

The overarching goal of the Biden administration's foreign policy is to make America lead the world again. It seeks to restore America's international leadership and eliminate the negative impacts on U. S. foreign policy exerted by the Trump Doctrine. America under a Biden presidency would re-engage with the world, especially revitalize its ties with allies and partners. It would put the values of democracy at the core of U. S. foreign policy and rebuild the coalition of democracies, with an aim to get the West back as well as counterbalance Russia and China. The Biden administration emphasizes the importance of pursuing fair trade and protecting the American middle class with U. S. international economic policy, and it would correct the overdependence on the tariff war launched by the Trump administration. The Biden administration would advance international coordination by tackling global health security, climate change and other cross-border challenges. It would return to multilateralism selectively. It is a core task for the Biden administration's foreign policy to address the great power competition, and it would maintain American military spending, enhance deterrence against Russia and China by strengthening NATO and other relevant institutions, and advance America's competitiveness in the technological field. It is unlikely that the Biden administration would solve illiberal populism within American society, and Trumpism with Trump would have persistent influence on American foreign policy. For America, there is no road back to the grand strategy of liberal internationalism, and it would be extraordinarily difficult to get the West back.

American Diplomacy

The “Gray Zone” Conflication and the New Strategic Competition of the U. S. Towards China

Huang Zhong (65)

The importance of gray zone theory has been emphasized in recent years. The reason for the emphasis is that in the 21st century Western strategists led by the United States have serious anxiety over a series of strategic competitive failures and hegemonic declines, especially in East Asia, Europe and the Middle East. From the perspective of gray zone theory, the U. S. strategists hold the opinion that China has launched many gray zone offensives against the United States and has continuously challenged America’s leading position in the world successfully, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, the U. S. government, as a victim, sends a clear signal to China and adopts a series of countermeasures.

Major Power Competition and the Trump Administration’s Policy toward Southeast Asia

Yang Yue (89)

With the return of major power competition to the U. S. national security strategy, the Trump administration has significantly strengthened its strategic security game and digital geopolitical tactics as well as its battle of ideas over institutional and governance concepts with China in Southeast Asia. It has enhanced ties with Southeast Asian countries on fronts of security, economy and governance so as to resist China with both hard and soft power. Southeast Asia is unlikely to become a stalwart for the U. S. to contain China due to the continuing improvement of relations between China and ASEAN, the image and credit deficit of the Trump administration in Southeast Asia, the historical memory and realistic cognition of major-power competition in Southeast Asian countries, as well as the inherent contradictions between the U. S. Indo-Pacific strategy and the foreign strategic culture of ASEAN countries. However, the typical centrist mentality of ASEAN countries provides opportunities for the U. S. to get involved in regional affairs and makes them pick sides on some issues between the U. S. and China, which will in turn endanger regional security.

How Political Organizations Limit the Transformation of U. S. International Strategy: A U. S. National Security Council Perspective

Yang Nan (110)

The U. S. International Strategy of “Primacy,” which aims to main-

tain its liberal hegemony, was initially formed in the early days of the post-Cold War era. Why is this strategy still highly stable with the relative decline of the U. S. power in recent years? Existing literature mainly focuses on the internal, external, and social factors, and cannot account for this phenomenon. This article considers that some political organizations within the U. S. government possess a characteristic of “organizational inertia,” which makes them function within a given pattern and hard to change. With its influence, a trend of path dependence is reflected. As the core mechanism of U. S. strategic planning, the U. S. National Security Council is influenced by this inertia intensively, which contains four elements: “Standardized Operating Procedures,” “Dominant Organizational Culture,” “Operational Mind-set,” and “Evaluative Mind-loss.” Under this influence, the NSC focuses more on crisis management rather than strategic planning, and it finally leads to a dilemma in strategy transformation.

Field Study Research on the American Rust Belt

The Efforts and Dilemmas of Dayton’s Revival: A Case Study of the Transformation of an American Rust Belt City

Li Jiaju (131)

Due to the dual transformation of its industrial structure and urban form, Dayton, Ohio epitomizes the rise and fall of the American Rust Belt. It is not simply the result of economic activities but also the result of whether or not the regional economy and society can form a positive interaction and adapt to the changes of the macro environment. Therefore static elements, such as industrial structure, urban function, governance system, public service and infrastructure supply should be incorporated into a dynamic process analysis as a holistic social process. In the process of seeking revival, Dayton faces the historic and realistic dilemma of insufficient economic and social transformation momentum, and has successively adopted different strategies. In regard to its overall result, though Dayton has gradually come out from the bottom, it is far from achieving a full revival. Only by solving the core issues that constitute the overall dilemma, can Dayton truly achieve its urban revival.

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