



Trump Secures a Return to the White House

In the early hours of Wednesday morning, Former President Donald Trump was declared the winner of the 2024 U.S. presidential election, beating Vice President Kamala Harris in what turned out to be a resounding victory. Trump's triumph in the presidential election coincided with critical Senate, House, and gubernatorial races to determine the federal government's balance of power and future state-level policies. Besides the race for the White House, Republicans had major victories across the board, winning control of the U.S. Senate and a majority of the gubernatorial races in this election season. The overall balance of power in the U.S. House has not yet been determined, but if Republicans end up securing that as well, then they will have a government trifecta – which was last seen for the GOP during the first half of Trump's previous term between 2017 and 2019. The outcome of the 2024 elections will of course have significant implications for both U.S. domestic and foreign policy at a pivotal time for the nation and the world.

On Tuesday, Trump outperformed the polls while Harris faltered. Trump's victory was due to his ability to maintain and improve his standing among key demographics, including rural voters, suburban voters, Latinos, men, and younger voters. More crucially, Harris underperformed in Democratic strongholds and among demographics considered reliably blue-leaning. [CNN exit polls](#) show that Harris did win many of these groups overall, including young voters, women, urban voters, and voters with college degrees. However, she lost ground compared to Biden in 2020 and Clinton in 2016. When combined with Trump's gains, these losses explain Trump's triumphs in the swing states and why Harris's victories in blue states were by significantly closer margins compared to Biden back in 2020. While counting is still taking place, Trump looks set to finish with a similar vote count to his 2020 run, while Harris looks certain to finish around 10 million votes short of Biden's total in 2020. It is important to note that vote tabulation continues along the West Coast – including the longstanding blue state of California – but regardless, Trump is slated to win the popular vote by a considerable margin. Harris also appears to have lost support among women compared to Biden in 2020 and Clinton in 2016, while Trump increased his lead among men. Harris increased her support among Black women compared to Biden last time around, but remained lower than Clinton in 2016. At the same time, she lost some support among Black men, down to 56 points compared to Biden's 60 points. Among Latinos, Harris lost support among both men and women, with Latino men shifting particularly to Trump, who won with a +12 compared to Harris.

With regards to the Arab-American and Muslim-American vote, it is clear that Vice President Harris suffered due to her association with the Biden administration's mishandling of the Gaza War. The Council on American–Islamic Relations (CAIR) is releasing its [exit data](#) of Muslim voters this week. Robert McCaw, the Director of Government Affairs at CAIR, has stated that the Muslim vote – which has been previously reliably Democratic – was split this time around like nothing seen in the past two decades. One of their exit polls of 1,000 shows that less than half voted for Harris, with the rest splitting between voting Republican or for a third-party candidate. Trump also saw increased support in areas with large Arab-American populations, including in population centers in Michigan – securing Trump's flip of the state which Biden had carried back in 2020. Data in recent years has shown a rightward shift among some Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans over social issues, and now with anger towards the Biden administration for its approach to the Gaza War, this opened up an electoral opportunity for Trump to capitalize on.

During the course of this electoral cycle, experts had consistently pointed to the seven critical battleground states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin as those that would ultimately determine the outcome of the presidential race. Polling had suggested likely razor-thin margins between Trump and Harris in these states, and thus as a result of their status as pure toss-ups, most expected a split of them among the two candidates. However, Trump is poised to sweep all seven, having already been declared the winner in all except for Arizona and Nevada – the two remaining states that have yet to be called but ones where he holds a sizable 6% and 3% lead, respectively. This is a noteworthy shift from the 2020 presidential election which saw incumbent President Biden defeat Trump in six of these seven swing states, with North Carolina being the only one that Trump carried. In the run-up to this 2024 election, analysts had also expressed that projecting a winner in many of these states (and subsequently the presidential election as a whole) could take multiple days as it did back in 2020 due to the tight win totals that were predicted – something that ended up not being the case and exemplified the extent to which the vote margins were not as close as had been previously speculated.

The pre-election polls seem to have significantly understated a “red wave” of support for Trump across the board, as he outperformed the findings in all of the aforementioned key battleground states by several percentage points. Trump’s better than anticipated showing in these consequential states came in conjunction with a clear and even more pronounced underperformance from Harris as well, and the combination of these two factors together – which even alone could have each had enough of a determinant impact on any of the seven states – resulted in wider and more comfortable margins of victory for Trump than what polls seemed to be forecasting. Vice President Harris lagged behind President Biden’s 2020 vote tallies in counties throughout the major battleground states with an evident pattern of lower turnout, particularly in Democratic stronghold areas where large numbers were vital to the incumbent president’s triumph four years ago.

The Trump campaign seems to have successfully won the election by appealing to Americans’ concern regarding various economic and social grievances. Many political analysts attribute Trump’s success to American frustrations with inflation and slow job growth. To address these issues and offset his proposed tax cuts, Trump proposes a tariff on all imports of [10% to 20%](#) with partial high levels on Chinese imports. Various economists are worried about Trump’s new tariffs, fearing a rise in inflation and retaliation from trading partners. The European Union had already set up a task force to prepare the EU regardless of which candidate won. However, many world leaders, including those in Europe, were clearly far more worried about Trump's plan given that a Harris’ victory was perceived to be a continuation of Biden’s foreign policy. In the event of a trade war with Trump, one European diplomat said, [“We will hit back fast and we will hit back hard.”](#) Relations with China are expected to be heavily affected especially if he follows through with his proposal to implement a [60% tariff](#) on all Chinese goods. China has stated that it is seeking cooperation with Trump after his victory. However, it has not indicated its response in the event of Trump’s new tariffs.

Experts have speculated that the incoming Trump administration will likely seek to initiate protectionist policies. Since Trump’s previous term, there has been a resurgence of populist, national-conservative movements internationally in response to crises whose causes have been attributed to global interdependence. Trump’s foreign policy is expected to be dominated by a “peace through strength” approach, which suggests an increase in defense and security policy reforms. His policies are likely to favor import substitution policies, unilateralism, and a focus on combating domestic issues. Trump’s untraditional American diplomacy has characterized him as an unpredictable figure, who at times has made headway in certain areas – like achieving the United States’ first summit with North Korea in 2018 – while at other times being responsible for the deterioration of longstanding American commitments – such as when he suggested an American withdrawal from NATO that same year.

Trump’s reluctance for American involvement abroad and his tendencies for ad-hoc dealmaking are likely to greatly influence his response to Israel and Ukraine. It is expected that Trump’s victory will mean that Israel could be emboldened even further in the Middle East, as it anticipates high levels of American support under Trump, potentially even more than during his first term in office. Although Trump has been noted for his reluctance to invest American resources internationally, Israel has remained an exception. In his previous term, Trump recognized Israel’s claim to the Golan Heights, moved the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, and facilitated negotiations

that resulted in the often-criticized Abraham Accords – which failed to initiate any fair concessions to Palestinians in exchange for normalization between Israel and several Arab nations.

In regards to the wider Middle East region as a whole, Trump is expected to focus on countering Iran and its proxy groups. He may also try to continue to improve U.S.-Gulf relations as part of his economic policy. This comes as the Gulf has diversified its partnerships, leading them to develop closer ties with Russia and China. As the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) relations have evolved, Trump's hawkish policies towards Iran and China in his previous term no longer reflect their own, and may affect how these relationships play out in the future.

Trump is also likely to reignite the United States' trade contentions with China that took place under his administration in 2018. The actions began as an effort to get China to change its unfair trade practices and stop its theft of American intellectual property. Although these issues have been remarked upon by Americans on both sides of the aisle, the Trump administration's policies were met with concern due to the negative effect these had on both countries in his previous term, something that Chinese officials have not forgotten either. Many experts do note however that both countries have a reluctance to engage in any direct hostilities as a result of their deep interdependence based on large investments and trade, and there is a hope that this would continue to be the case moving forward.

There are some actions that the Chinese government has engaged in which have elicited concern though. China has increased its military presence, and has been known to conduct military drills and reconnaissance particularly close to its neighbors throughout the South China Sea and East China Sea. It has also continued to grow its military, particularly its Navy, which has suggested that it could be preparing for an offensive in Taiwan – something that has remained a pressing issue and is motivated by jingoist foreign policy on the behalf of some officials. It is uncertain how the Trump administration will respond to China's growing aggression in the region, and what will happen to the United States' longstanding commitments to countries like Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines.

All of this comes at a time in which America's adversaries in the region have become more active, increasing their support for Russia. Recently, North Korea sent thousands of troops to assist the Russian war effort in Ukraine, which has had experts wondering if Ukraine's allies may consider doing the same. Trump's response to Ukraine is expected to not include direct U.S. support, and potentially a reduction in aid to the country as a whole. Trump has stated that he will be able to end the war, and negotiate a deal with Putin, but critics remain skeptical. They believe that Trump will concede territory to Russia in exchange for peace, and that this deal will only bring peace in the short-term. This has remained a concern for the European community, who remember when Trump threatened to pull the United States out of NATO, and sought increased financial support from allies. At a point when fear of further Russian aggression remains high, members have been worried that Trump may threaten a U.S. withdrawal in order to coerce members into non-security related agreements, such as those relating to the economy.

In regards to Latin America, Trump's response to the migrant crisis, the war on drugs, and his plans for the economy will test relations with nearby countries, particularly Mexico. Trump seeks to crack down on migrants, initiate mass deportations, and impose potential tariffs on Mexico if the flow of fentanyl into the U.S. continues. Trump is also expected to address the Venezuelan crisis, though it is unsure whether or not he will cooperate with other countries in the region or if the U.S. will take action more independently. He is likely to focus on shifting many Latin American countries' primary trade from China to the U.S. and attempt to reduce inflation through low-cost manufacturing in order to strengthen the American economy.

On top of winning the presidency and paving the way for a new incoming Trump administration, Republicans were also able to retake control of the United States Senate in this election, after flipping seats in West Virginia, Ohio, and Montana. The results guarantee that the GOP will have at least 53 of the 100 seats in the new session of the upper chamber of Congress, as there are a few races that are still undecided. In West Virginia, the state's current Governor Jim Justice won the seat vacated by former Democrat Joe Manchin; while in Ohio, incumbent Democrat Sherrod Brown was unseated by Republican challenger Bernie Moreno, as was Democrat Jon Tester by Republican

Tim Sheehy in Montana. On top of flipping key seats, Republicans were able to hold on to others that were expected to be hotly contested as well. In Texas, Ted Cruz fended off Democrat Colin Allred, and in Nebraska, the GOP retained Deb Fischer's seat in the U.S. Senate following a valiant showing from independent Dan Osborn. All told, a total of 34 U.S. Senate seats were contested this past Tuesday.

While Trump has won the White House and Republicans are set to take control of the Senate, the balance of power in the House of Representatives is still yet to be determined. Previously, Republicans enjoyed a slim majority of 220 to 212 over Democrats, with 218 being what is needed for a majority in the lower chamber of Congress. As of earlier this morning, AP News has reported that Republicans currently sit at 211 seats while Democrats are at 199, leaving 25 seats left to be called. Republicans have picked up three seats previously held by Democrats, these being Michigan House District 7 and Pennsylvania House Districts 7 and 8. Given how close the results will be, counting will likely continue in the days ahead. If the Republicans can retain their majority, it would give them a government trifecta of the presidency, Senate, and House – and could thus allow Trump to pursue his agenda freely. In contrast, a Democratic House would give them a roadblock that could stall and prevent many of Trump's policy goals. House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries is calling for "every vote" to be counted since there are still possible paths for a Democratic House. Some of the remaining races to watch include tight ones in California, Oregon, Arizona, Maine, and Ohio.

This week saw 11 gubernatorial elections take place across the country as well, in Delaware, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia. Republicans won eight of these gubernatorial elections, with Democrats taking the remaining three. Some of the key issues in these races involved decisions at the state level, with one of the main ones this electoral cycle being access to abortion. Two of the notable gubernatorial races occurred in New Hampshire and North Carolina. In the former, Republican candidate Kelly Ayotte successfully beat Democratic candidate Joyce Craig, retaining the Republican seat. Meanwhile, in the latter, Democratic candidate Josh Stein successfully held on to the Democratic seat by beating Republican Mark Robinson. The GOP candidate was plagued with scandal during his campaign, in which comments of his resurfaced from a pornography website where he referred to himself as a 'black Nazi,' expressed support for bringing back slavery, and recounted sexually graphic stories from his past. In the end, no state flipped control over the governorship in this election.

Given the fallout of the 2020 presidential election, including Trump's widespread claims of voter fraud which were repeatedly disproved in court, many were worried about a repeat of disputes about the election's integrity. However, early on Wednesday morning, Trump was declared the rightful winner and later that same day, Harris conceded, called Trump, and later gave a speech – putting to rest any concern about contention over the results of the election. Harris also stressed that there would be a seamless transfer of power in just over two months' time, something that was reiterated by President Biden in his remarks to the nation on Thursday as well in which he underscored both the importance of respecting the will of the American people and the trustworthiness of the electoral process.

Ultimately, during this election, the overwhelming majority of Americans who voted decided to reject a possible Harris administration and instead give Trump a second term in the White House. With this, Trump has now officially become only the second American president to win another nonconsecutive term after Grover Cleveland, the 22nd and 24th president. Trump's main campaign message points of toughening immigration and tackling inflation seemed to have resonated with many Americans who feel the country needs a new direction. At the same time, Harris clearly failed to shake off being associated with the economic hardships, which many voters hold the Biden administration responsible for. Notably, the full scope of election outcomes is not yet known, as the fate of the U.S. House of Representatives remains in the balance – which will affect how easily Trump may or may not be able to initiate his agenda. What is clear is that Americans and world leaders are now preparing for what a second Trump term will bring, and on January 20th, many eyes will be fixated on Washington D.C. as this is ushered in.