Deciphering the 2024 US Presidential Election

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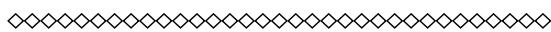
Abstract

The United States is the world's first federal democracy. The distinct structure of its democratic form of government has played a crucial role in America's rise as a global hegemon in the later part of the twentieth century. However, today, its global dominance has been challenged by the rise of several middle and regional powers, especially that of China. In this critical international scenario, compounded by domestic crises of multiple dimensions - economic, political, and socio-cultural, Donald Trump has re-entered the political scene with his slogan of "Make America Great Again (MAGA)". In the 2024 election, he defeated the Democratic candidate Kamala Harris by capturing all the seven swing states and the popular majority vote. The article analyses the issues and factors - failed administration of the current President Biden, extreme nationalism, controversies over abortion laws, wokeism, and changes in the voting patterns of various religious and ethnic communities that contributed to Trump's victory. It also briefly discusses what his victory could mean to the international order.

Introduction

Republican candidate Donald Trump has made a stunning political comeback in the US presidential election. He secured a landslide victory by winning 312 of the 538 electoral votes. All the major polling agencies predicted a tight race between Trump and the Democratic candidate Kamala Harris. The final results have awarded an overwhelming victory to Trump, winning majority in both the electoral college vote and majority vote. He was not able to secure the latter in 2016 when he defeated Hillary Clinton to get his first term at the White House. This underlines that his re-emergence is much stronger than his previous avatar. Trump's victory was determined by his ability to win all the seven swing states - Pennsylvania, Michigan, North Carolina, Nevada, Georgia,

Arizona, and Wisconsin, putting Harris well behind Trump in electoral college votes - 312 against 226 (Presidential Election Results: Trump Wins, 2024).

Trump has achieved many rare records after winning the 2024 election, including being America's oldest president, the candidate who won the election despite facing two impeachment proceedings, only the second to win non-consecutive president elections. Trump's entry into the White House in 2016 had made all the election predictions irrelevant then. Factors such as extreme nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment, racism, anti-Muslim sentiment, and the shortcomings of the Obama administration's economic policy etc. was instrumental in his 2016 victory (Smith,2016). Trump, who unexpectedly came to power, had created many controversies during his first term as president with his capricious moves. Political observers had judged that his huge defeat to Joe Biden in 2020 and his illegal attempt to remain in power by embarrassing American democracy had ended Trump's political career.

Table 1

Result Comparison of Swing States

Swing States	Presidential Election 2024	Presidential Election 2020	Presidential Election 2016
Pennsylvania	Trump	Biden	Trump
Michigan	Trump	Biden	Clinton
North Carolina	Trump	Trump	Trump
Nevada	Trump	Biden	Trump
Georgia	Trump	Biden	Trump
Arizona	Trump	Biden	Trump
Wisconsin	Trump	Biden	Trump

Source: The New York Times

However, Trump came back with an indomitable will, defeating Kamala Harris, the first female and the incumbent Vice President of the United States. Let us examine the important reasons that paved the way for the comeback of Donald Trump, who was once rejected by the American people.

Biden's failed administration

The American people looked up to Joe Biden, who defeated Trump, with great expectations. He was a complete failure as a leader. Biden was unable to create a revival in the economic scenario. The increase in inflation and unemployment disrupted the rhythm of his administration. In international relations, last four years have been a major setback for the policies of the United States, which had been the global hegemon for decades. The American administration was unable to effectively defend the Taliban's retake of Afghanistan, could not stop the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and struggles at the challenge of China in the South China Sea (Wilkie,2023). At the same time, its failure to effectively intervene in the Israeli-Palestinian war also gave the impression of weak leadership among its enemies and friends alike (Bazzi, 2024). This enabled its opponents to challenge American world dominance. In short, Biden's failure in the economic field and foreign policy made Trump's victory easy.

Regarding the economic policies of "Biedenomics", it is evident that the factors such as inflation, labour market and stock market performances has significantly impacted the voting decision. Under the administration of Biden, inflation has been far worse, up to 20.1% compared to the Trump's first term. The average annual inflation rate during the Bidens term was 5.4% and the same for Trump's first term was 1.9%. The performance of the stock market was much better under Trump, compared to Biden. Republican party has promised sweeping tax cuts and proposed abolition of tax on social security and corporation tax. He has proposed new tariff rate on most foreign goods of 10% to counter the trade imbalance and has proposed 60% duty on Chinese imported goods (Bessent, 2024). This move is an open challenge to the Chinese companies. This gave the image of a Trump who is taking back control of the economy in contrast to an ineffective Biden against economic challenges.

Ultra-nationalism

Donald Trump, the "saviour" who rose to power, placed ultra-nationalism above the democratic-liberal values traditionally held by the American people (Yazici & Oke, 2020). The label "fascist" given to him by the Democratic Party benefited him. The slogan "Make America Great Again" resonated with voters reeling from the economic crisis. The selection of J.D. Vance, who takes a hard-line stance on right-wing policies, as the vice-presidential candidate and Trump's anti-immigrant speeches made

nationalism favourable to the Republican Party. Trump has also promised an unprecedented mass deportation of undocumented immigrants as a key. he has emphasised that this will benefit the American workers, by raising more job opportunities. Addition to this, he has also promised the completion of US-Mexico border wall, which he started in his previous term to curb illegal immigrant into the US from the Latin American country.

Social Engineering

Trump's social engineering was able to significantly penetrate the votes of various religious and ethnic minorities who have been traditionally the supporters of the Democratic Party. He strengthened his influence among Afro-American and Hispanic male voters through various programs targeting workers. Trump received 12% of the black vote in 2020, but this time it has increased to 20%. Trump's progress in the state of Georgia is a result of this. In addition, despite his anti-immigration campaign, Trump's Hispanic vote increased from 45% to 54% in 2024. Trump, who was a controversial figure in the 2016 election due to his Islamophobic stances, won the Arab Muslim votes in swing states including Michigan this time. Trump benefited from the reluctance of Muslim voters to the policies of the Biden-Kamala Harris administration in the Gaza war. Moreover, Trump's social engineering was also able to win the votes of the elite class of Jews, Hindus, and young people in America (Shamim, 2024).

Table 2

Changes in the voting pattern among different age groups.

Voting pattern of according to different age groups.

Age wise voting pattern (%)								
Age bracket	2012		2016		2020		2024	
	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep
18-29	60	37	58	28	61	35	54	43
30-44	52	45	51	40	55	43	49	48
45-64	47	51	45	51	46	53	44	54
65+	44	56	44	53	48	52	49	49
Total	51	47	48	46	51	47	47	52

Source: Pew Research Centre

From the Table 2 it is evident that except the age group of 65+, the voting share of republicans has increased this time, notably among the young voters. In 2020, only 35% among 18-29 age group voted for the Republican party; this time it has risen to 43%. This resulted in a decline of vote share to democrats among the age group of 18-29. Among the 30-44 age group, there is a rise of 5% votes for the Republican party and loss of 6% for the democrats. Among the 45-64 age category voters, there is 1% rise on the vote share in favour of republicans, whereas the vote share of democrats has been fallen to 44% from 46%. In this age category, Trump has a massive lead of 10% over the democratic candidate. This seems to compensate for the minor lead Harris has in the other age categories.

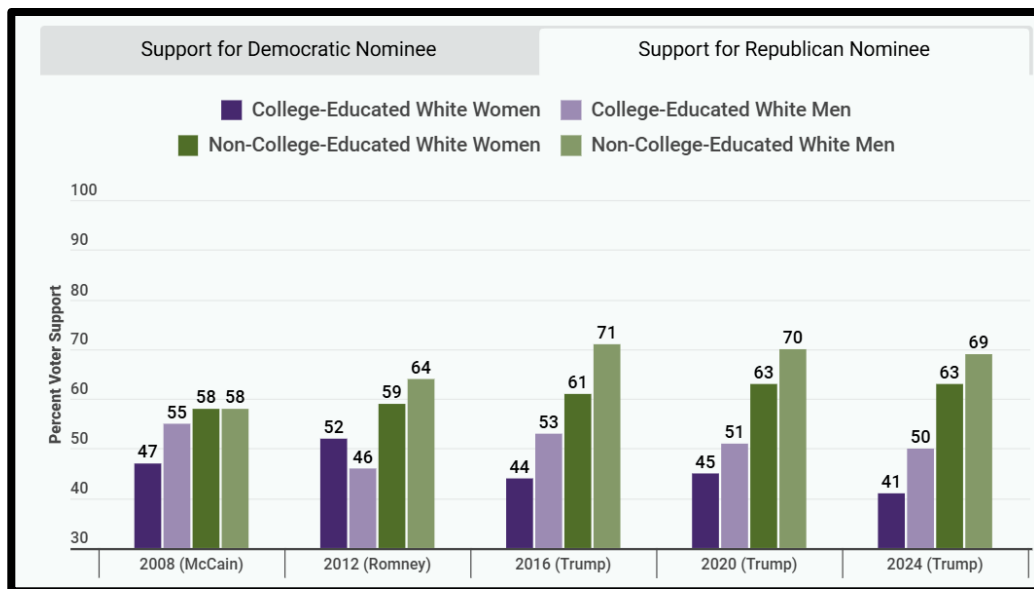**Gender Aspects among US voters on President election**

As per the study by the Centre for American Women and Politics (2024), in the 2024 election, support for Donald Trump was gauged at 55% among men and 45% among women, highlighting a 10-point gender gap. White women maintained majority support for Trump, like previous elections, while college-educated white women increasingly shifted towards Democratic support since 2016. Trump continued to have strong support from non-college-educated white women in 2024. White evangelical women were also very important for Trump's support, and their male counterparts backed the Trump/Vance ticket even more. On the other hand, most white men and women who have no religious affiliation, as well as those who identify as Jewish, supported the Harris/Walz ticket. In these groups, women were even more likely than men to vote for the Democrats.

From the Graph 2 and 3 it is evident that the non-college educated white women and non-college educated white men prefer Donald trump, whereas the college educated white women and men prefer the democratic candidate. The influence of woke and ultra-left liberal ideals has grown in the universities and educational institutions over the years. Trump and his camp attacked this tendency for its alleged promotion of anti-religious ideals, threaten to the conservative values and support for illegal immigration and radical Islamic sentiments. Americans who are being conservative and supporting national pride, took this election as an opportunity to curtail the rising woke culture promoted through universities and educational institutions. The disparity in the

preference on presidential choice among college educated voters and non-college educated votes is a reflection of the above mention ideological/ cultural conflict.
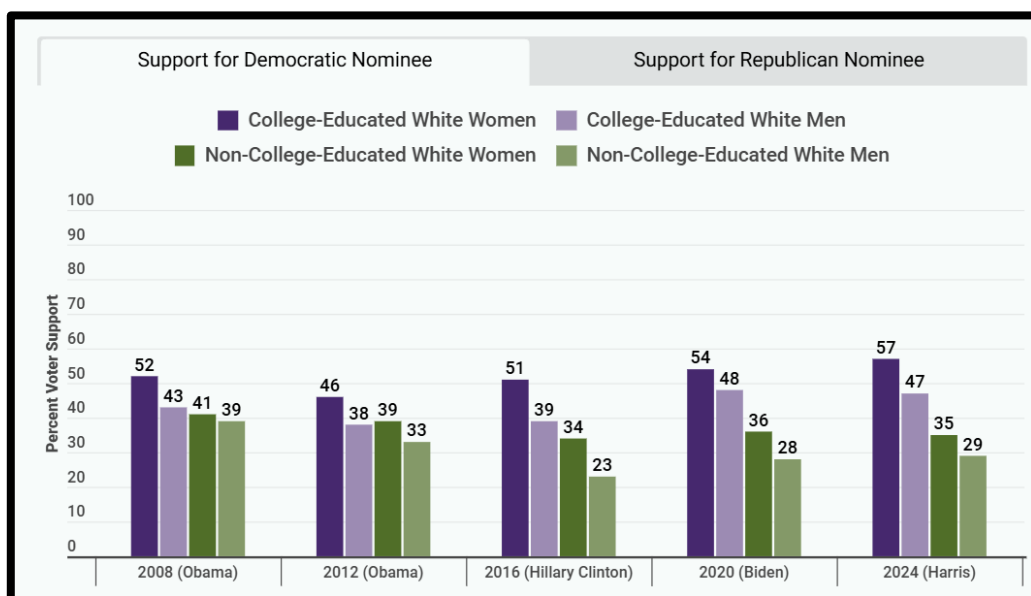
Graph 1

Gender Difference in US Presidential vote choice, white voters by Gender and Education -Support on Republicans

Source: Center for American Women and Politics

Graph 2

Gender Difference in US Presidential vote choice, white voters by Gender and Education -Support on Democrat

Source: Center for American Women and Politics

Abortion Law

Abortion is one of the most talked about issues in this year's American election. Kamala Harris's announcement was that she would take a stand to declare abortion a right for all women in the country. Trump, who follows a far-right stance, took a stand that each state should formulate its own abortion law according to their circumstances. He also announced that a law banning abortion at the national level would not be allowed. Even Pope Francis had expressed his opinion on the dispute between the two candidates regarding abortion. Kamala Harris's support for abortion, targeting women's votes, turned the support among conservative evangelical, Catholic, and Muslim voters in favour of Trump (Pinho,2024). The voting share of women's shows that it did not make much impact on Kamala Harris, even though she advocated women's issues centred on reproductive rights.

Trump as Superman

Trump's behavior in American politics for the past 8 years has been consistent with Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of Superman. Trump has dressed himself up as a Superman, a saviour who will find solutions to all the problems facing America. A community of people who view Trump with star power has emerged in the United States today. During the election campaign, Trump was given a heroic image by the

public when he called for "fight back" with a bleeding face immediately after surviving an assassination attempt in Pennsylvania (Bierman & Rainey, 2024).

Wokeism

Donald Trump has capitalised the emerging dissatisfaction on ultra-left oriented "woke" culture. Trump has given a clear indication to the American voters who are against the woke culture; that he will rewrite the education policies and will end appeasing of woke movement. Woke movements embodying extreme left liberal ideas such as sexual non-binarism and anti-religion has been an important election ideological issue . Kamala Harris has advocated the idea of "Woke" culture, which is supposedly the Christian conservative values of the United States. Woke culture is also challenging the nationalist viewpoints like "Restore America Greatness". Trump and his camp has been advocating American nationalism and pride, and has promised the people to throw out the ideas of woke from the social and cultural realm of United states (Goldman.2024). This has attracted some section of the US voters to republican party, who are thinking against woke culture and its adverse effects on their children's future, religious believes and the national pride.

Conclusion

The American people consider themselves to be a society with a broad liberal democratic consciousness. The United States intervenes in the internal affairs of many countries in the world under the pretext of intervening to protect democracy. However, with Trump's entry into politics, electoral politics in the United States has become increasingly chaotic. Trump has effectively used anti-immigration, extreme nationalism, and conservatism to win this time. He has also been able to use the racial consciousness of white people for his political gain. As a superpower, the United States has a great influence on determining the world order. Naturally, the coming to power of Trump, who is a critic of liberal democratic values, as the head of the United States will cause major changes in global politics. There is a possibility that changes from the traditional diplomatic methods of the United States will also occur under his leadership. However, Trump is the only American president in recent times who has not resorted to invasion. Moreover, he was able to hold peace talks with North Korea. Trump is expected to lead the way in ending the Ukraine-Russia and Israel-Palestine wars, which are threats to world peace. The second Trump administration is likely to strongly

confront the challenge posed by China. America's strong anti-China policy will benefit India. He gives priority to America's economic revival and may cut financial assistance to NATO, including to the alliance. This will cause significant changes in the world order. Trump will reject the Joe Biden administration's positions on climate policy and withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

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