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USA presidential elections

Whoever Wins, This Election Is Not the End of Trumpism

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Joe Biden and the Democrats have steadfastly refused to articulate a compelling alternative political vision to Donald Trump's reactionary right-wing politics. Trump looks likely to have lost, but without creating an alternative to defeat it, Trumpism could return with a vengeance four years from now.

The results are still being tallied, but the electoral contest between Donald Trump and Joe Biden is far tighter than polls had predicted. An estimated 160 million votes were cast, making for a voter turnout of 67 percent—a level not seen since the election of 1900. [1]

At the moment, we're still waiting for final results from a number of key states. But regardless of the results, what we know for sure is that the 2020 election will not signal the end of Trumpism, even if, as appears increasingly likely, Trump himself ends up losing the election. [2] Despite his rank incompetence and callousness in the face of the pandemic and economic crisis, which eroded his support somewhat, Trump has retained the support of a significant minority of American voters.

Thanks to a wildly undemocratic electoral system, it's unlikely but still possible that this minority will allow him to stay in power (there is no scenario at this point in which Trump wins the national popular vote). [3] But even with a Biden win, Trump's base isn't going anywhere. In particular, we can expect some of Trump's far-right supporters, emboldened by his racist and xenophobic rhetoric, to ramp up their activity in the aftermath of the election. [4]

On top of that, with the Senate likely remaining under Republican control and a judiciary packed from top to bottom with Trump appointees (not just the Supreme Court), Trump's supporters will retain plenty of avenues for exerting power. [5] He steadfastly refused to advance any kind of comprehensive, progressive vision to respond to the burning issues of today, like climate change, the economic crisis, racial justice, health care, and more. Biden even bragged at several points about the fact that he beat the candidates like Bernie Sanders who were advancing that kind of vision precisely because he rejected that vision. [6]

But in rejecting a broader vision, and in doing little more than promising a return to "normal," a President Biden would risk returning to the very kind of politics that laid the groundwork for Trump. [7] The Trump phenomenon is the symptom of a profound crisis of political representation in the United States. Neither of the two major parties can address the concerns of the vast majority of Americans: economic security, health care, jobs. Trump may have failed miserably to deliver on each of these counts and never had any intention of delivering on them in the first place, but at least he talked about these issues in a way that resonated with a significant, desperate chunk of the population. [8]

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party, which is supposed to represent the interests of working- and middle-class voters, has, at least since the Bill Clinton era, promoted policies that have neglected their ostensible base in favor of cozying up to Wall Street. In 2016, the party paid the price for these policies, as some white working-class voters in the Midwest switched to Trump, while many disillusioned voters of color stayed home, clearing Trump's narrow path to victory. [9] Absent some compelling progressive political vision from Biden, it's likely that we will see the return of an amplified form of Trumpism four years from now.

Of course, no one should have any illusions that Biden or the Democratic Party is capable of advancing the kind of broad political vision we need right now. That will depend entirely on the kind of heat the Left can generate in the streets to force things like Medicare for All, a Green New Deal, defunding the police, and more onto the political agenda.

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Those on the Left who reluctantly supported Biden in 2020 argued that he would create a more favorable organizing terrain. [10] With Biden the likely victor, it's time to get to work shaping that new terrain.

5 November 2020

Source: [Jacobin](#).

PS:

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[1] This article was written on 5 November. AP 3 November. ["Presidency hinges on tight races in battleground states"](#).

[2] *New York Times* 5 November ["As Biden wins Michigan and Wisconsin, Trump's path to re-election narrows."](#)

[3] *Jacobin*, 13 October 2020 ["We Still Need to Abolish the Electoral College"](#).

[4] *Los Angeles Times* 30 September 2020 ["Q&A: What is President Trump's relationship with far-right and white supremacist groups?"](#).

[5] CNN Politics 4 November ["Republicans sharply narrow Democrats' path to Senate majority by keeping key GOP seats"](#).] As for Trump himself, we can't exclude the possibility that he will just keep campaigning so that he can run again in 2024. In any case, the Republican Party is likely to remain Trump's party for the foreseeable future.

As for the Democrats, they lack any kind of coherent political vision to counter Trumpism. Biden's principal — really, his only — message during the campaign was that he was not Trump. [\[The Hill, 15 September 2020 "Biden's 'not Trump' strategy playing out perfectly — partly thanks to Trump"](#).

[6] *Business Insider* 2 September 2020 ["I beat the socialist": Biden reminds voters 'worried about socialism' that he won the party nomination, not Bernie Sanders"](#).

[7] *The Guardian* 9 November 2016 ["It was the Democrats' embrace of neoliberalism that won it for Trump"](#).

[8] *Jacobin*, 22 November 2016 ["Listening to Trump"](#).

[9] *Catalyst* Spring 2012 ["The Great God Trump and the White Working Class"](#) and *The New York Times* 20 November 2016 ["Many in Milwaukee Neighborhood Didn't Vote — and Don't Regret It"](#).

[10] *The Call* 26 October 2020 ["This Time is Different: Socialists and the Lesser Evil"](#).