

WHAT WORLD AFTER THE US ELECTIONS?

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Gilles Paris, Xavier Chemisseur, Isabelle Lebon and Martin Quencez

In 2024, no less than a quarter of humanity would go to the polls, enough to shake up the world order, for better or for worse. At the forefront was the American election on 5th November to elect the person who would sit in the White House for four years, and also to elect the members of the House of Representatives, which was to be entirely renewed, a third of the Senate and a certain number of governors. These are decisive elections, which will define the political line of the world's leading power on major conflicts such as the war in Ukraine or Gaza, or on issues with repercussions across the entire globe, such as digital technology and trade.

The Normandy Index, which measures the level of threat to peace, security and democracy in the world, ranks the United States 5.52 among the countries most at risk of conflict. 'A fairly high figure' as Gilles Paris pointed out. There are two explanations for this: first, the involvement of the United States in many regions of the world, the deep division in the country between the Republican camp led by a comeback, Donald Trump and the Democratic camp behind last-minute candidate, Kama-

la Harris. Faced with this level of threat, was the latter following in the footsteps of her predecessor, Joe Biden, or was she breaking away? 'Embracing continuity,' replies Xavier Chemisseur, editor-in-chief of France 24, even while he noted that 'the idea of the two-state solution in Israel can be considered a real change, because until now American diplomacy refused to mention it. According to him, Kamala Harris was now expressing ideas that were shared by the Democratic camp but which were not put in the spotlight until now.'

Martin Quencez, director of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, agreed. However, the status quo policy of the United States, led by Joe Biden, has its limits. According to him, it will now be necessary to shake things up further. 'The Democrats have no vision for a victory in Ukraine or for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,' he explained, while the Republican camp, on the issue of trade with China, is more assertive: 'We see a Republican position that says «we are in competition with China, we are going to win», and the Democrats say «we are going to manage it». To defeat or to contain would

thus be, according to him, the two major thrusts that pit Democrats and Republicans against each other. But beyond the announcements, how does Donald Trump want to weaken Chinese exports, knowing that the United States has a deficit of 400 billion dollars with China? 'It's colos-

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sal', added Isabelle Lebon, academic and economist. 'He wants to impose massive tariffs, including on his allies.' According to her, Donald Trump could, for example, decide to tax products imported from allied countries at a rate of 10% of their value, compared to 60% for products from China, hoping to thus subdue it economically. 'For him, if it's profitable to have a more conflictual situation with this country, he will have it.'

Isabelle Lebon also believes that the United States is the only country, along with China, that can afford to impose customs duties everywhere, paid by American con-



Isabelle Lebon

MODERATION

Gilles Paris, Journalist at Le Monde, writer

SPEAKERS

Xavier Chemisseur, Editor-in-Chief, France 24

Isabelle Lebon, Professor of Economic Sciences at the University of Caen

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sumers. Elsewhere, 'it can't work. If France imposed customs duties on a foreign product, it would not change world market prices. It takes a country the size of the United States for this to create price distortion. As for China, which will have massive stocks to sell off, it will be forced to turn to other markets, including Europe, which will also end up protecting itself against the influx of surplus goods. And then we will be forced to call into question thirty years of rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).'

Regarding these geopolitical issues with China, Europe was already in disagreement with Joe Biden who, moreover, 'sent Europeans signals that they wanted to hear, particularly on the security provided by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), to the point of putting them to sleep and annoying them.' But Europe is far from rejoicing at the possible election of Trump, who, on this point, did not hesitate to call into question the existence of NATO during his first term, with the collateral effect of resurrecting the idea of a European defence.

Xavier Chemisseur explained that there is an 'invisible strategy of arms sales by the Americans, who sell tanks and weapons to European countries when the latter send theirs to Ukraine. Diplomats, particularly in France, viewed this with a very negative eye as a competitor to a European army and armament.' The only government very favourable to Donald Trump in Europe would be that of Viktor Orbán in Hungary, who is very aligned with Trump. Would Europe be prepared to react firmly to this,

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as it did by voting overwhelmingly for the arming of Ukraine despite the opposition of Viktor Orbán? 'There is hope that Donald Trump's fear will unite Europe, but he will tend to prefer unilateral «deals» with each country individually rather than with Europe. Divide and conquer. He gets a lot more like that. It will be very difficult for us to reach an agreement among ourselves,' explains Martin Quincez, who imagines a probable scenario where Donald Trump, once in the White House, would make an agreement with Russia and recognise the country's sovereignty over the conquered territories in Ukraine. This is an agreement that would be unacceptable for Ukraine and all Europeans opposed to this annexation. 'If Donald Trump then threatens them that if they don't sign, he won't attend the next NATO summit and makes a statement saying that American soldiers don't have to die to save Sweden or Denmark, Europeans will quickly understand that they will have to choose between the guarantees of American security and the sovereignty of Ukraine.'

Whereas, on the one hand, the Democratic camp has displayed its weaknesses in the status quo regard-



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ing the management of current conflicts, on the other hand, the Republican camp, swamped by the unpredictability of Donald Trump, should act according to the priorities and instinct of its candidate. So what might emerge from all this, if one side wins or the other? For Martin Quincez, disorder always precedes new order. 'There is an era coming to an end, the one in which the United States could force players to act according to global interests against their will.'



This fragile transition period will take many years,' he concluded, and stated that it would be to the detriment of Europeans. Two possible options: the first, that of a new axis opposing the United States and China, with allies gravitating in each camp. Or else, no power hub will emerge, 'with many countries playing their parts and having become powerful, like India, Brazil or Indonesia, and being able to act as they wish.' Finally, what if these new state powers were the big winners of this transition?