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Will Trump Triumph or Biden Beat Trump?

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BENJAMIN RUTLEDGE

WWW.POLITIKASPOLECNOST.CZ

OFFICE@POLITICSANDSOCIETY.CZ

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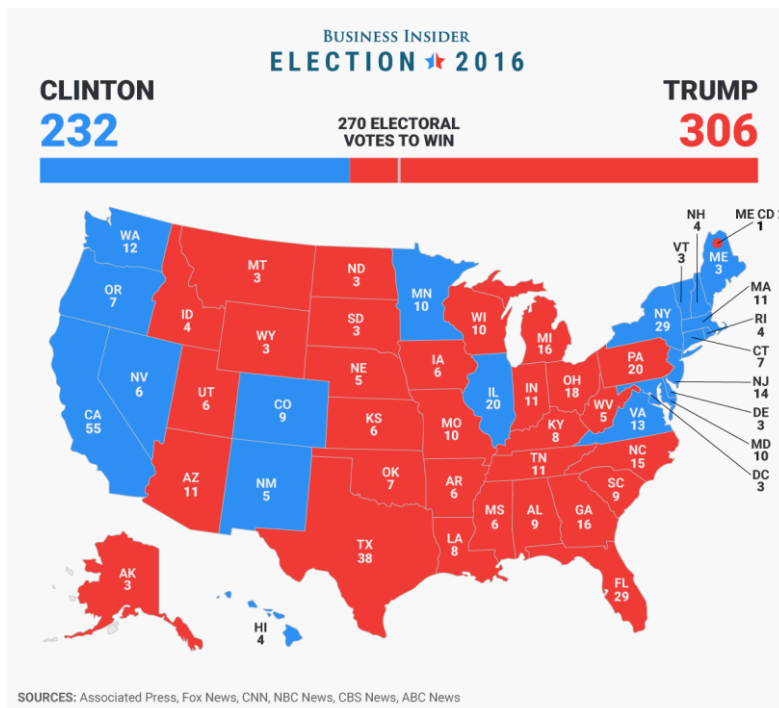
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What will happen to the *once* United States of America? The federation has drifted apart in bipolar political views that harm the cohesion of governance. It seems like Americans will no longer defend the right to free speech of others with opposing views. Political gatherings often coincide with counter marches and even violence. This year is going to again be monumental for the future of America and the world. Will Donald Trump remain president with his law and order and economy first agenda, or will Joe Biden win with an emphasis on controlling the coronavirus and racial reconciliation? This paper will begin looking at the political setting in comparison to 2016 and then outline the major policy differences on voter issues of Trump and Biden.

2020 Election Setting

To win re-election, President Trump needs to capitalize on America's election setting as he did in 2016. Nate Silver, founder and editor in chief of FiveThirtyEight, examined the 2016 election conditions that allowed Trump to beat Hillary Clinton. The three factors were: background conditions favored the Republicans, Trump focused on states with demographic advantage, and negative reports damaged Clinton's preference with undecided voters.¹ The political conditions have changed in the last four years, yet Trump has an advantage with the swing state demographics and corruption reports on Biden as voting day nears. If these conditions remain as November 4th nears, Biden will have a challenge in taking the Oval Office.

Picture 1: 2016 Election Map Results



Source: Business Insider²

¹ Nate Silver, "The Real Story Of 2016," FiveThirtyEight (FiveThirtyEight, January 19, 2017), <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-real-story-of-2016/>.

² Rebecca Harrington, "Millions Are Petitioning the Electoral College to Make Hillary Clinton President - Here's Why That Probably Won't Happen," Business Insider (Business Insider, December 19, 2016),

The political setting this year is currently a disadvantage to President Trump. In 2016, Trump had the benefit because he was running after 8 years of Democratic reign, a mediocre economy, and high partisanship. He was able to run as a successful, populist outsider that promised to rebuild the economy and place America first. Clinton was portrayed as a corrupt, lifelong politician with numerous failures. In contrast, today, the political setting has shifted to the Democratic left in the face of this year's events. America's economy could be sliding into an economic depression after record unemployment, closures, and international trade contraction due to COVID-19. Deaths from coronavirus and racial tensions have placed pressure and blame on Trump. An October 9th Pew poll shows that registered voters are more confident in Biden on bringing the country together (+20 percent points), on handling the coronavirus pandemic (+17), and on making good foreign policy decisions (+9).³ In addition to coronavirus blame, coverage from ABC, CBS, and NBC news cover President Trump in a negative way 92% of the time, as a thousand hour study from the Media Research Center concluded.⁴ Biden has the advantage in the current political atmosphere, and Trump has been on the defensive more this year.

Trump still has the advantage in swing state voter demographics. This allowed Trump to win in 2016 as his campaign concentrated on swing states' voting majority. The decisive vote for Trump came from white voters without college degrees.⁵ These votes were overrepresented in the crucial swing states and showed broader political developments. Trump drew votes in the Rust Belt states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin that are nicknamed for the declining steel, coal, and manufacturing production around the Great Lakes. Trump could appeal to their economic decline and highlight Biden's repeated intentions to eliminate gas and oil energy. On the contrary to Trump's voter focus, Biden (and former Clinton) focused on a coalition of minorities and upper-class whites. As of now, Biden leads these states with large polling margins. Trump must gain support in these traditionally left leaning states to win re-election.

In 2016, Trump and Clinton both had bombshell negative stories that came out in the campaign months. Trump had to face released footage of his derogatory language towards women, sexual assault claims, and Russian collusion. Similarly, leaked Democratic emails from Clinton and the Comey letter came out.⁶ Consequently, condemning news about Clinton came out weeks before the election, and she was soon seen as corrupt. This bad news in combination with email violations as Secretary of State was one deciding factor for undecided voters. There is now alleged email evidence from Hunter Biden's laptop proving Joe Biden met with a top executive at a Ukrainian energy company that asked Hunter for political favors in

<https://www.businessinsider.com/can-the-electoral-college-make-hillary-clinton-president-instead-trump-how-2016-11>.

³ "Biden Holds Wide Leads Over Trump on Coronavirus, Unifying the Country," Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy (Pew Research Center, October 11, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/10/09/amid-campaign-turmoil-biden-holds-wide-leads-on-coronavirus-unifying-the-country/>.

⁴ Rich Noyes, "Study: Economic Boom Largely Ignored as TV's Trump Coverage Hits 92% Negative," Newsbusters, October 9, 2018, <https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/rich-noyes/2018/10/09/study-economic-boom-largely-ignored-tvs-trump-coverage-hits-92>.

⁵ Silver, "The Real Story."

⁶ Silver, "The Real Story."

return for a high paying position.⁷ This could negatively affect Biden’s campaign with undecided voters as similar exposing events hurt Hillary’s campaign near the end.

Coronavirus

President Trump and former Vice President Biden have very different approaches on combating coronavirus that will be one of the most defining factors in this election. The Covid outbreak comes 4th in importance to voters, with 82% of Democrats and 39% of Republicans agreeing it is a “very important” issue.⁸ Trump points out how Biden called him xenophobic and racist for terminating travel to China and how Democratic states have the highest death rates. In the last debate, Trump said the country cannot remain locked down and pointed to the drastic rise in depression, suicide, household abuse, and unemployment.⁹ Furthermore, Trump declared, “the solution cannot be greater than the problem,” and the virus has a 99% survival rate for the majority of the population.¹⁰ Trump places the emphasis on individual choice and freedom.

Biden aims to take a more direct approach in eliminating the virus spread. Biden blames Trump for the 220,000+ coronavirus reported deaths in America and his lax approach to issuing nationwide lockdowns and masks. Biden is more faithful in his mask wearing and said he would shut down the country if the scientists recommend it.¹¹ Biden attacks Trump for not acting soon enough and countering the advice of high-level epidemiologists. Important to note, the average American voter believes there are 20 times more Covid cases in America than reality.¹² In July, Americans believed 9% of the population had died from corona—225 times more than actual reality—for a total of over 30 million deaths.¹³ With a widespread, overexaggerated perception of the virus, Biden has an advantage with American voters as fear is strong. Pivotal election questions will be: mask or no mask; lockdown or no lockdown?

Economy

The economy is the biggest concern to all Americans. The difference in the candidates’ approach to national recovery is in taxation and regulation. Trump says we are in a V-shaped recovery even though the economy is slowing down. Trump’s statement is questionable, but he does have accomplishing results for the American economy in the three years before the pandemic. His policies created 6.7 million jobs, increased average weekly wages of private sector workers by 2.5% after inflation, and lowered the number of food stamps recipients by

⁷ Emma-Jo Morris and Gabrielle Fonrouge, “Smoking-Gun Email Reveals How Hunter Biden Introduced Ukrainian Businessman to VP Dad,” New York Post (New York Post, October 14, 2020), <https://nypost.com/2020/10/14/email-reveals-how-hunter-biden-introduced-ukrainian-biz-man-to-dad/>.

⁸ “Important Issues in the 2020 Election,” Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy (Pew Research Center, October 8, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/important-issues-in-the-2020-election/>.

⁹ *Trump v Biden: The Final Debate*, YouTube (SkyNews, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGPfKkjDIIs>.

¹⁰ *Trump v Biden*, YouTube, Sky News.

¹¹ *Joe Biden, Kamila Harris talk COVID-19 and taxes with ABC’s David Muir/The Ticket - Part 1*, ABC News, YouTube, August 24, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHVMuRnaik>, (04:00).

¹² “COVID-19 Opinion Tracker - Edition 4,” Kekst CNC (Kekst CNC, July 27, 2020), 27, <https://www.kekstcnc.com/insights/covid-19-opinion-tracker-edition-4>.

¹³ *Ibid*, 27.

6.3 million or 14.8%.¹⁴ Trump also increased domestic oil production to record levels and cut over 700 regulations; in a larger picture, Trump reversed the regulation trend of the last two decades in which regulations were increased by 1.5% annually.¹⁵ In addition, Trump bragged about the lowest unemployment number in 50 years at 3.5% before the pandemic hit.¹⁶ Trump aims to “Make America Great Again, Again.”

The Democratic party itself has taken a more socialist approach to health care, taxation, and governance. Biden plans to reverse Trump’s tax legislation and increase tax on the top earners and corporations. Biden plans to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and make sure everyone has healthcare as a human right. Healthcare is a strong topic for the Democrat Party and the second most important issue to Americans (mostly Democrats).¹⁷ Furthermore, Biden and Harris are focused on economic sustainability and gradual elimination of fossil fuels and fracking. Biden has laid the “Build Back Better” plan to rebuild American manufacturing with tax investment and trade changes.¹⁸

Both candidates are equally stock market positive. A Biden win with a Democratic Senate is expected to boost the US stock market higher because the Democrats would have total control of the legislature to pass stimulus bills and increase deficit spending.¹⁹ Trump is stock market positive because of his tax cuts on corporations and regulation cutting. However, the stock market is not connected to the average worker and the overall economy.

Foreign Policy

President Trump has stirred up the global order through his unconventional foreign policy approach. From NATO, North Korea, and Israel, Trump has changed a lot in less than four years. In Europe, Trump shook up the EU by placing new tariffs, withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accords, and requiring NATO members to contribute more. Trump has been praised for meeting with North Korea’s Kim Jong-un after new sanctions were applied, signing the new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement on trade.²⁰ In the Middle East, ISIS territory has been conquered in Iraq and Syria, the US Embassy moved to Jerusalem, sanctions placed on

¹⁴ Brooks Jackson, “Trump’s Numbers January 2020 Update,” FactCheck.org (Annenberg Public Policy Center , January 20, 2020), <https://www.factcheck.org/2020/01/trumps-numbers-january-2020-update/>;

“AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS OF ALL EMPLOYEES, 1982-1984 DOLLARS,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2020), <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CES0500000012>.

¹⁵ Jackson, “Trump’s Numbers;”

“U.S. Field Production of Crude Oil,” US Energy Information Administration (US Department of Energy, September 30, 2020), <https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=pet&s=mcrfpus1&f=m>.

¹⁶ “Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey ,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, October 2020), <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000>.

¹⁷ “Important Issues,” Pew Research Center.

¹⁸ Shane Goldmacher and Jim Tankersley, “In ‘Buy American’ Speech, Biden Challenges Trump on the Economy,” The New York Times (The New York Times, July 9, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/09/us/politics/biden-buy-american.html>.

¹⁹ Mark Avallone, “Trump Versus Biden: Who Is Better For The U.S. Stock Market?,” Forbes (Forbes Magazine, September 29, 2020), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markavallone/2020/09/29/trump-versus-biden-who-is-better-for-the-us-stock-market/>.

²⁰ “Foreign Policy, President Donald J. Trump Achievements,” Promises Kept , 2020, <https://www.promiseskept.com/achievement/category/foreign-policy/>.

Iran (after withdrawing from Obama’s Iran Nuclear Deal), and recently signed the Abraham Peace Accords for peaceful recognition between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Sudan.²¹ A September Gallup poll reveals that Trump has a 46% approval to 53% disapproval rating in foreign affairs.²² Trump has achieved a lot of controversial changes in the international arena with his New York style business brashness.

Nonetheless, Biden will redo most of Trump’s international efforts. To begin, Biden plans to re-enter the Paris Climate Accords and lead the world in becoming carbon-neutral by 2050.²³ Biden will then renegotiate the Iran Nuclear Deal and pursue a new START treaty with Russia that limits nuclear weapons.²⁴ In contrast to Trump, Biden will undo the Mexico City Policy or “Global Gag Rule” that does not allow taxpayer funding to support international NGO’s in abortion services.²⁵ Furthermore, Biden plans to advocate for women’s equality and combat populism and nationalism. Biden will seek more cooperation and support within the EU and will reduce tariffs and focus on EU agriculture regulations.²⁶ Biden plans to focus foreign policy on climate change, human rights, immigration, and promoting American interests in a much milder manner.

China

Americans now see China as a threat more than ever before. According to opinion polls, 2/3 of Americans have an unfavorable view of China.²⁷ Negative views of China and President Xi have increased in both political parties since the start of this year. Nine out of ten Americans see China’s influence and power as a threat, and 83% believe the US is the world’s leading military power.²⁸ Which candidate is perceived better in standing up to China?

Trump’s term has been tough on China economically and strained US-China relations. Trump has criticized Chinese aggression in the South China Sea and continued US Navy activity in Southeast Asia. Trump has placed numerous tariffs on China that has sparked a trade war and a new Cold War. The trade war is hurting the American and Chinese economies and is one of Trump’s shortcomings, as he promised to re-negotiate a new trade deal but never got past phase one. Trump has also placed more tariffs in condemnation for the Chinese Communist Party’s actions against the autonomy of Hong Kong and Chinese intellectual property theft.²⁹

²¹ “Foreign Policy,” Promises Kept.

²² Megan Brennan, “At 46%, Trump’s Pre-Debate Job Approval Highest Since May,” Gallup.com (Gallup, October 21, 2020), <https://news.gallup.com/poll/321347/trump-pre-debate-job-approval-highest-may.aspx>.

²³ “THE POWER OF AMERICA’S EXAMPLE: THE BIDEN PLAN FOR LEADING THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY,” Joe Biden for President: Official Campaign Website (BidenHarris, July 29, 2020), <https://joebiden.com/AmericanLeadership/>.

²⁴ “POWER OF AMERICA’S EXAMPLE,” BidenHarris.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Andrea Shalal and David Lawder, “Biden Would End Trade War with EU, but Focus on Fixing Imbalance in Ag Trade: Adviser,” Reuters (Thomson Reuters, September 22, 2020), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-eu-biden-idUSKCN26D1UN>.

²⁷ Kat Devlin, Laura Silver, and Christine Huang, “Amid Coronavirus Outbreak, Americans’ Views of China Increasingly Negative,” July 31, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/04/21/u-s-views-of-china-increasingly-negative-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Kevin Breunginer and Amanda Macias, “China Vows Retaliation after Trump Slaps Sanctions on It for Interference in Hong Kong,” CNBC (CNBC, July 15, 2020),

More recently, Trump has led the charge in blaming China and the World Health Organization for spreading and not being transparent for the “China virus.”

On the other hand, Biden has criticized Trump’s actions and vowed to be much harder. Biden plans on hosting a global democracy summit to cooperate in maintaining liberalism and promoting it abroad. Biden has not clarified if he will terminate or reinstall new tariffs on China but has spoken out against China’s human rights violations and called President Xi a “thug”.³⁰ Biden is having a difficult time proving he will be harder on China as he said, “a rising China is a positive, positive development, not only for China but for America and the world writ large” in 2001, and his son’s dealings with Chinese state business cast corruption concerns.³¹ In the larger context, Biden will work with Congress and established US Foreign Policy strategies to combat Chinese aggression, yet Trump has been tougher with China.

Racial division

After the protests and riots following George Floyd’s death, the Democrats had the edge; the American public had to reflect on their internal injustices and discrimination. Biden had the momentum to attack Trump’s divisiveness and prejudices. However, with months of riots and calls for defunding the police, support for Black Lives Matter fell from 67% to 55% from June to September.³² Similarly, a Rasmussen Report survey found that 59% of likely voters believe there is a war on police and support a Blue Lives Matter law that would make attacking police a hate crime with harder penalties.³³ However, Biden is more focused on ending systematic racism and helping minorities with the “Biden Plan for Strengthening America’s Commitment to Justice”.³⁴ Biden has the advantage with younger voters and minorities with his attention to combating racial injustices.

After the first Trump-Biden debate, exit polls showed Trump’s support higher with blacks at 15 % and Hispanics at 36.5% (heavier support from Christian Hispanics or immigrants from socialist Hispanic states).³⁵ The fact that Trump has doubled black American support brings

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/14/trump-signed-law-slapping-sanctions-on-china-for-interference-in-hong-kong.html>.

³⁰ Jenny Leonard and Michelle Jamrisko, “Biden Set to Carve Own Brand of Tough-on-China Policy If Elected,” The Japan Times, September 29, 2020, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/09/29/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/joe-biden-china-policy-us/>.

³¹ Edward Wong, Michael Crowley, and Ana Swanson, “Joe Biden's China Journey,” The New York Times (The New York Times, September 6, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/06/us/politics/biden-china.html>;

Trump v Biden, YouTube, Sky News.

³² Deja Thomas and Juliana Menasce Horowitz, “Support for Black Lives Matter Has Decreased since June but Remains Strong among Black Americans,” Pew Research Center (Factank, October 22, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/16/support-for-black-lives-matter-has-decreased-since-june-but-remains-strong-among-black-americans/>.

³³ Rasmussen_Poll, “Most Want 'Blue Lives Matter' Laws to Protect Police, Fear for Public Safety,” Rasmussen Reports® (Pulse Opinion Research, LLC, September 17, 2020), https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/general_politics/september_2020/most_want_blue_lives_matter_laws_to_protect_police_fear_for_public_safety.

³⁴ “Joe Biden's Criminal Justice Policy: Joe Biden,” Joe Biden for President: Official Campaign Website (BidenHarris, October 2, 2020), <https://joebiden.com/justice/>.

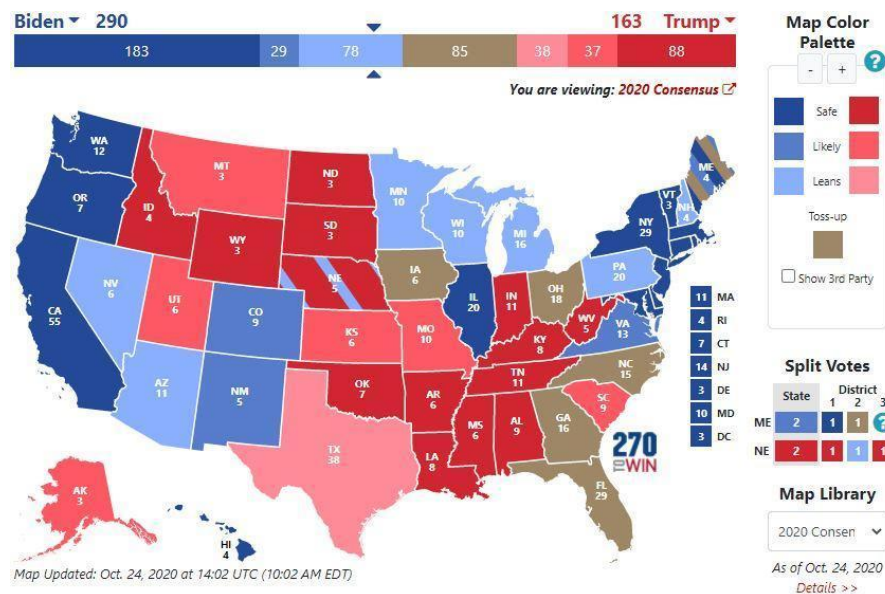
³⁵ Jed Graham, “Biden Lead Over Trump Cut To 3 Points After Presidential Debate: IBD/TIPP Poll,” Investor's Business Daily, October 2, 2020, <https://www.investors.com/news/joe-biden-lead-over-donald-trump-narrows-after-presidential-debate-ibd-tipp-poll/>.

into question the Democratic narrative that Trump is racist and disregards minorities. In the final debate, Trump pointed to his criminal reform bill that was passed, record low black and Hispanic unemployment, and funding to historic black colleges.³⁶ Trump has claimed that there is no systemic racism in America today.³⁷ After all the division and controversy, the larger majority of blacks and Hispanics support Biden, but the Trump administration has gained more support from minorities.

Conclusion

The election is going to be a close tossup. The polls show Biden in the lead and in favor of winning the electoral college. Picture 2 shows the electoral map prediction made by Nate Silver and the FiveThirtyEight team. It must be noted, on election night in 2016, Hillary Clinton set to win the election by 65-99% certainty.³⁸ FiveThirtyEight gave Trump a 13% chance of winning in 2016 and is giving Trump a 12% to win re-election this year.³⁹ At the same time, 56% of Americans believe Trump will win regardless of whom they personally support.⁴⁰ This election looks safe for Biden, but the polls could be deceiving again. Voter turnout could also be impacted by the mail-in-bailouts in comparison to the traditional in person voting rush.

Picture 2: The Presidential Election Poll Prediction



Source: 270toWin⁴¹

³⁶ *Trump v Biden*, YouTube.

³⁷ “President Donald Trump Denies Systemic Racism Exists in US: I Don't Believe That - CNN Video,” CNN (Cable News Network, September 1, 2020), <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2020/09/01/trump-systemic-racism-ebob-vpx.cnn>.

³⁸ Rachael Revesz, “The Man Who Predicted 49 out of 50 States in 2012 Has Said Who Will Win on Tuesday,” *The Independent* (Independent Digital News and Media, November 6, 2016), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/sam-wang-princeton-election-consortium-poll-hillary-clinton-donald-trump-victory-a7399671.html>.

³⁹ Max Zahn and Andy Serwer, “2020 Election Biden Landslide 'More Likely' than Trump Win: Nicholas Kristof,” *Yahoo! Finance* (Yahoo!, October 21, 2020), <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/2020-election-biden-landslide-more-likely-than-trump-win-nicholas-kristof-143412920.html?guccounter=1>.

⁴⁰ Brenan, “Trump's Pre-Debate Job.”

⁴¹ “Consensus Forecast Electoral Map,” 270toWin.com, October 2020, <https://www.270towin.com/maps/consensus-2020-electoral-map-forecast>.

Trump and Biden have general policy goals that seem similar. Both leaders want to help the American worker, advance American interests, stand up to China and Russia, and improve international partnerships. The two differ mostly on combating coronavirus, climate change, and immigration policy. Biden is a mainstream, experienced politician while Trump is an unpredictable, tough businessman. Ironically, even though the Republican Party is traditionally seen as politically conservative and the Democratic Party supported by the modern progressives, Trump is a more radical, changing force in contrast to Biden's stable, status quo character.



BENJAMIN RUTLEDGE

Intern

Benjamin Rutledge is a Czech-American from Mississippi, USA. Following high school graduation, he was appointed to three military service academies and chose the United States Naval Academy.

Later he moved to Prague to continue his bachelors in International Relations at Anglo American University, where he is on the Student Council. In his free time he enjoys soccer, languages, traveling, and investing.

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