

Global Perspectives

Biden and the World: Global Perspectives on the U.S. Presidential Election

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Global Memos are briefs by the Council of Councils that gather opinions from global experts on major international developments.

In this Council of Councils global perspectives roundup, members of seventeen leading global think tanks reflect on the impact of the election outcome and the most important steps that the winner of the U.S. presidential election can take to advance global cooperation from their country or regional perspective.

Joe Biden's election victory could present a moment of opportunity on a range of issues including trade reform and climate change collaboration, according to many of the submissions. However, many warn that both U.S. and global institutions will be put to the test in the years ahead, in part due to domestic forces.

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Expect a Rebalanced U.S. Middle East Policy

In the wake of the recent U.S. election, it is worth considering what steps President-elect Joe Biden might take to advance international cooperation in the Middle East. Three major elements of his expected Middle East policy are actually subject to bipartisan agreement in a deeply divided Washington. First is the desire to reduce the U.S. military footprint in the region by ending the so-called endless wars and avoiding new conflicts. Second is the conviction that the dangerous regime in Iran must not be allowed to obtain nuclear weapons. Third is the belief

that ensuring the flow of energy from the Gulf is no longer a vital U.S. interest. The by-product of these principles is the conclusion that U.S. policy in the region should be reworked to include more diplomacy and greater burden-sharing.

The United States need not remain indefinitely bogged down in costly conflicts, however. At the same time, it should avoid hastily abandoning the region altogether and leaving a power vacuum behind it.

A middle ground is possible in which Washington doubles down on efforts to reinforce pro-American regional security architecture by seeking to build new relationships with its partners, such as expanding the 2020 Abraham Accords to include states such as Saudi Arabia; mediate ongoing rows between allies, particularly the rift between Qatar and the Arab Quartet (Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates); and limit the damage from ongoing conflicts involving allies when immediate and comprehensive resolutions are not forthcoming, including but not limited to that between Israel and the Palestinians. In some instances, Washington may find that efforts to achieve these goals are mutually reinforcing, such as continuing to promote normalization between Israel and Arab states in exchange for Israeli steps that preserve the two-state solution for the future and prevent the slide into an even more hazardous one-state reality.

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