

# 2024 US presidential election is latest chapter in deeply rooted conflicts in American society

November 3, 2024 | 08:00 pm GMT+7



**David Pickus**

Professor

The upcoming U.S. presidential election on Nov. 5 will undoubtedly be a moment of significant impact on history. One thing we can say for sure: this election will leave lasting effects.

However, exactly how it will shape history remains uncertain. At this moment, our best approach is to carefully observe and interpret the election results. While the winner might be declared promptly, the full implications could take time to unfold. What is undeniable is that the 2024 election will have far-reaching global consequences. This is a moment to watch closely.

This article aims to explain the key issues at play and provide context so you can form your own perspectives on what happens on election day, and what the outcomes might mean not just for the United States but for the world at large. I won't be sharing my own opinions or trying to influence your support for any candidate. Instead, the focus is on understanding what's at stake as Americans make their decision. Toward the end, I will offer a single prediction—not to push any agenda, but to illustrate that this election is about more than just who will become the next U.S. president; it is also about how America is evolving.

## Understanding the key issues



From afar, it may seem like the central question is whether Americans prefer Trump or Harris. But this election goes beyond a contest between two personalities. It's the latest chapter in ongoing, deeply rooted conflicts between well-established factions in American society. To grasp these complexities, understanding some background about U.S. history and political culture is essential.



Photo montage of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at a North Carolina campaign event on Sept. 25 (L) and Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris at an event in Atlanta on Oct. 19, 2024. Photos by AP

## **Historical context and political divisions**

U.S. presidential elections often highlight significant divisions in American society. Even when there's a clear winner, the victory margins are usually tight. Take 2008, for example, when Barack Obama convincingly defeated John McCain. Despite Obama's decisive win, nearly 60 million Americans still voted for McCain compared to about 70 million who supported Obama. Subsequent elections have been even closer and more contentious. The reality is that no matter who is elected, a large number of people on the opposing side remain dissatisfied and unlikely to support the winner.

## **Why elections are intense and expensive**



Many people notice how emotionally charged and costly U.S. presidential elections are. Why is so much money spent on campaigning, especially when so many voters have already made up their minds? The answer lies partly in keeping voters engaged and ensuring they don't lose focus. But another reason is that there remains a small segment of the electorate that can be swayed by persuasive, attention-grabbing campaigns. Both the Democratic and Republican parties invest heavily in media saturation to reach these undecided voters. This dynamic not only makes elections expensive but also keeps the atmosphere heated and emotional.

### **Social divisions and campaign strategies**

Beyond the close nature of national polls, it's important to understand the regional divides. While the overall popular vote may be neck-and-neck, there will likely be areas where Trump secures overwhelming support, with as much as 70-80% of votes, and others where Harris will dominate. These stark regional differences reflect deep societal divides, which could even deepen as the election unfolds.

### **Personal perspective and broader implications**

I'd like to share a brief personal observation to highlight the growing divides within American society. After living abroad, including time in Vietnam, I recently returned to the U.S. for a short visit. Standing in a suburb on the West Coast, I noticed rows of modest but charming houses. When I asked about the prices, I was told they cost over a million dollars—prices affordable only to a small portion of Americans. This division in wealth and lifestyle reflects a broader societal separation that influences how people vote and how political campaigns are conducted. It often leads presidential candidates to focus heavily on some regions while neglecting others.

### **What to watch for on Election Day**

So, what can we expect this coming Tuesday? Here are a few insights. First, many experts agree that Kamala Harris's success will largely depend on her performance in key "swing states" like Georgia and Pennsylvania, which narrowly went to Biden in 2020. If Harris can hold onto these states, she has a strong chance. If Trump wins them, he could be



victorious. Young voters, aged 35 and below, will likely play a decisive role. Even a small shift among these voters could determine the outcome.

Second, while we often focus on the candidates, no president can win without building a strong coalition. Trump's coalition consists mainly of rural and small-town voters, along with urban supporters who hold traditional Republican views. Harris's coalition is more diverse, including minority groups, lower to middle-income earners, and highly educated urban professionals. Both candidates will need to energize their base, even if that means further alienating their opponents.

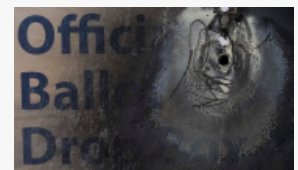
Finally, it's crucial to remember that this election isn't just about the presidency. Many other races, including for seats in the U.S. Congress, are on the ballot. Congress has seen declining public confidence, and the coming years may be critical in determining whether it regains authority or continues to lose influence. These shifts will likely make American politics more volatile and unpredictable.

Two major takeaways emerge, regardless of who wins. First, future presidents will likely need to focus more on domestic issues, as U.S. politics become increasingly unpredictable. Second, this election highlights severe divisions within American society, problems that will not be easily resolved. The impact on U.S. foreign policy is inevitable, though how it will unfold is hard to predict. I encourage Vietnamese readers to draw their own conclusions, and I hope this article has provided a clearer understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

*\*Professor David Pickus has a PhD in History at the University of Chicago. He currently teaches at a university in Da Nang.*

### **About 475 damaged ballots retrieved from burned drop box in Washington state, auditor says**

About 475 damaged ballots were retrieved from a ballot box that was burned early Monday in southwest Washington, a county official said Tuesday.



### **Donald Trump returns to world's 500 richest list**



Former U.S. President Donald Trump has returned to a list of 500 richest people in the world as his company shares surge two weeks ahead of the next U.S. presidential election.



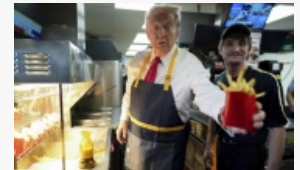
## Elon Musk's election promise of \$1M daily giveaway sparks call for probe

Pennsylvania's Democratic governor, Josh Shapiro, on Sunday called on law enforcement to investigate billionaire Elon Musk for his promise at a weekend pro-Trump rally to give away \$1 million each day until Election Day.



## Trump hands out french fries, Harris visits Georgia churches

With the U.S. presidential election just over two weeks away, Democrat Kamala Harris visited two churches on Sunday while her Republican rival, Donald Trump, visited another kind of American temple: a McDonald's, where he again accused Harris of lying about having previously worked at the fast-food chain.



## TikTok, Facebook approve ads with US election disinformation, study says

TikTok and Facebook approved advertisements containing blatant US election falsehoods just weeks ahead of the vote, a watchdog investigation revealed Thursday, calling into question the tech platforms' policies to detect harmful disinformation.



## Harris mocks Trump after rally turns into bizarre dance-a-thon

Kamala Harris went after her US presidential election rival Donald Trump's mental state and fitness for office Tuesday after the 78-year-old Republican's televised town hall veered into a surreal, impromptu music session.



The opinions expressed here are personal and do not necessarily match VnExpress's viewpoints. Send your opinions [here](#).

### Tags:

[2024 U.S. presidential election](#)[Kamala Harris](#)[Donald Trump](#)[swing states](#)[U.S. political divisions](#)[election day insights](#)[voter demographics](#)[campaign strategies](#)[U.S. Congress races](#)[American politics](#)

**Comments** (1)

Latest first | Highest rated



Well written article but I think it is remiss in addressing the two main issues of concern which is the economy and immigration.

I certainly hope you write a follow up to this opinion because the two candidates stand on opposite sides of the spectrum. You have one candidate with a proven track record and another candidate that really nobody knows anything about.

T TM - 23:10 3/11

[Reply](#) | [Like](#)  · 2 | [Share](#) 

Your comment

Send

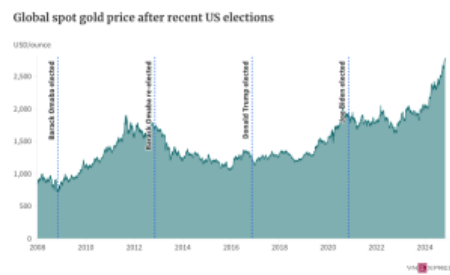
## US presidential election 2024



Trump or Harris: Which candidate do the top 5 US billionaires endorse?



Harris or Trump: America decides in knife-edge election



How will gold, stock markets perform after US elections?

[See more](#) 

Subsidiary of VnExpress  
License number: 71/GP-CBC, Ministry of Information and Communications, September 22, 2021

Editor-in-Chief: Pham Van Hieu  
Email: [evne@vnexpress.net](mailto:evne@vnexpress.net) | Tel: 028 7300 9999 - Ext 8556  
FPT Tower, 10 Pham Van Bach Street, Dich Vong Ward, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, Vietnam

