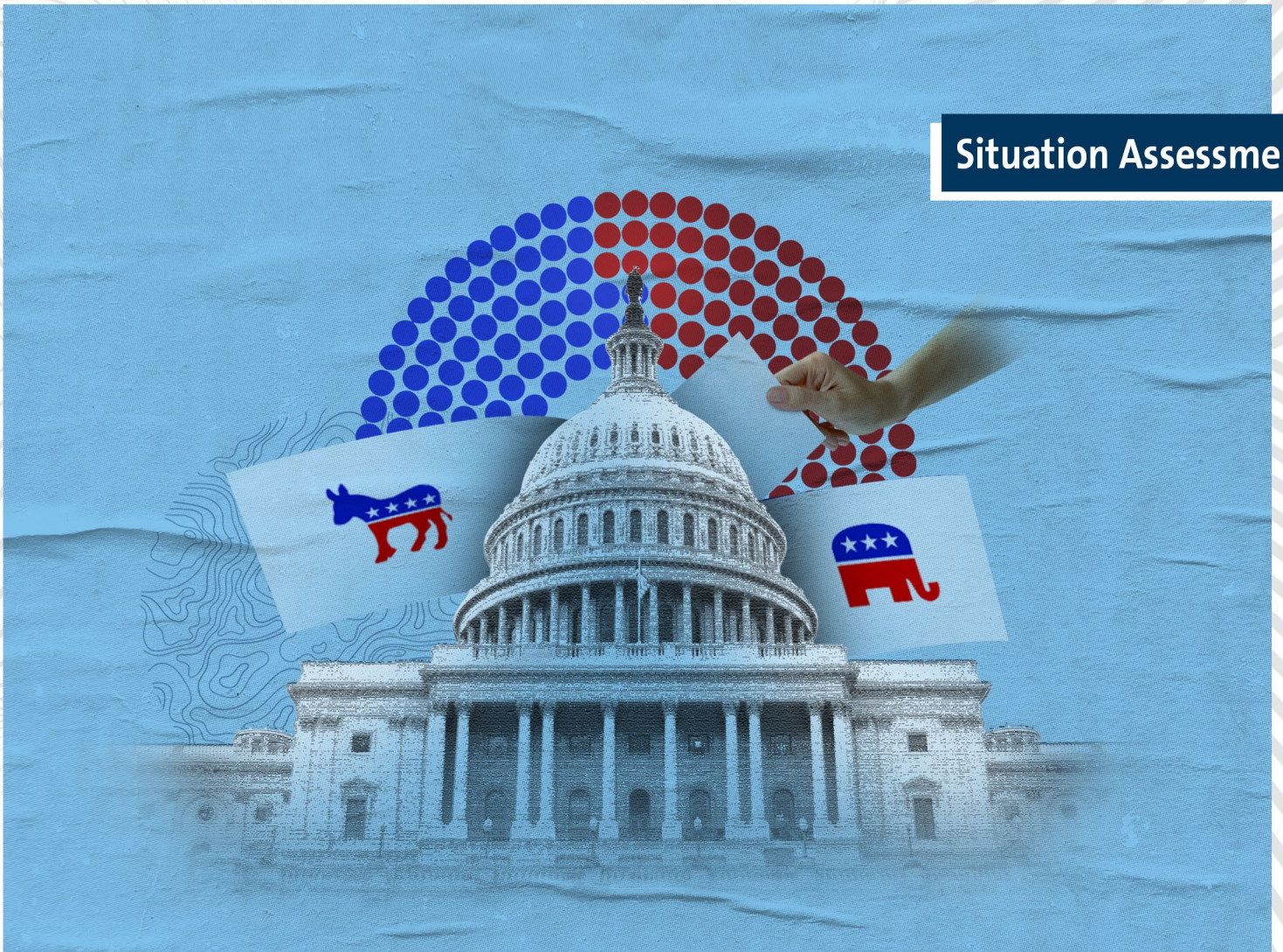




**Dimensions**  
for Strategic Studies

**Situation Assessment**



# Midterm Elections in the United States

A new phase of bipartisan balance

Prepared by:  
**Marah Al-Buqa'i**

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## PREAMBLE

The US presidential election is of great importance and follow-up around the world, and it is held every four years to elect a new president. However, what happens in midterm elections or half-term elections- which are called as such, because they take place almost two years after the start of the President's term- can have a significant impact on the direction in which the country is heading.

Most of the attention for the midterm elections is focused on Congress in its two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives. For the House of Representatives, its members are elected for a term of two years, and therefore, during the mid-term elections, the occupants of all 435 seats are determined. Senators are elected for a term of six years. In any mid-term election, one-third of the one-hundred Senate seats shall be available for electoral competition.

Ultimately, whoever controls the House of Representatives or the Senate has control over the political program, which is supported by the winning majority party, and achieves its agenda, both at the level of domestic politics, and in relation to foreign policies and the relationship of the United States with the countries of the world.

The majority party also determines who heads the specialized committees in Congress. Of course, the US president's ability to accomplish his program has a strong relationship with whether his party controls both houses of Congress, and thus the committees' decision.



## THE RED WAVE

With most of the ballot boxes in most US states closed in the November 8, 2022, Democrats realized that they would lose control of the next House of Representatives, but they might retain a very small majority in the Senate.

However, the small difference in the number of seats held by both parties contradicts the promises of the Republicans, who motivated their supporters ahead of the elections, stressing at the time that a "red wave" will overrun the ballot boxes, and that the Republican Party will obtain a comfortable majority in the two chambers, so that it can impose its political vision in the United States legislative wing on the executive wing of the White House, where President Joe Biden and his Democratic Party.

This did not happen, however, and the Republicans could hardly confirm their majority in the House by a narrow margin with their democratic rivals, while President Biden's party is expected to retain a majority in the Senate (which, like the majority of Republicans in the House, is also a tiny majority).

From this point of view, Republican Representative Kevin McCarthy, who is likely to be the new Speaker of the House of Representatives, a successor to democracy Nancy Pelosi, warned that given the outcome of the elections, which went against all polls and party expectations, Republicans will have to try to work in partnership with their democratic counterparts, because they do not have the necessary pressure votes to impose - absolutely and unhindered - their programs and control over the rudder of the decision.

However, the Republicans from the hard-right wing, most of whom are supporters of former President Donald Trump, do not agree with McCarthy and other moderate Republicans. They want to continue to push their ideas



and programs, despite the conclusive evidence that undermined their ambition after the elections, which is that the emergence of Trump in the electoral scene was a negative factor that led to successive losses for most of the candidates who were linked during their campaign with direct support from him, and for all those who invited him to their electoral platforms to deliver his rhetoric, which is still popular among the hard-right ranks.

The opposite was true, for example, Sarah Hawkabe, a spokesperson for the Trump White House, who was one of the strongest supporters and closest associates of his reign, succeeded in obtaining the position of governor of Arkansas, a position that had never been reached by a woman before. As for the strategy followed by Hawkabe, it was to refrain completely from calling Trump to the platform of her election campaign, but rather to disengage her from his ideas and political orientations completely, which helped her win the votes of a large segment of young voters, especially women in the state.

Another example came from Florida, where Republican Governor Dan Desantis easily won again the state governor's seat. Desantis is known for his strong criticism of Trump, and their relations are almost severed. Following Desantis' victory, who is expected to be a Republican presidential candidate for the 2024 presidential election, Trump's advisers quickly advised him not to announce his current candidacy for the presidential elections. Trump was determined to formally announce his candidacy once the midterm ballot was over.

Proceeding from the above, several questions arise: What are the main reasons for the Republicans' failure to achieve their ambition to get an overwhelming majority in the polls? Was the Democrats' performance a decisive factor in the elections? Was it internal affairs and social matters, that are traditionally of concern to Democrats, foremost among which are the rights of women in particular and human rights in general, what tilted the balance; especially in such issues as the right to abortion, homosexual rights, health insurance and other priorities in American daily life?

What about inflation, high prices, and bumps in the economy from which American citizens suffer during the reign of Democrats?

Aren't Republicans supposed to be more likely to get more vote, being more sophisticated and able to adjust the economy when it slows down, by securing jobs, and lowering prices and taxes together, which are important and vital goals for the American citizen?



Was Trump really behind the loss of the Republican nominees he backed, which made the entire party frustrated by the results? So, will the party be indulgent with Trump's desire to rerun for president in 2024?

In a Reuters poll published by Edison Research, 60% of Republicans believed that Trump should run again in 2024, while 36% said he shouldn't.

Has Trump become a burden on the Republican Party, as he spends most of his time defending himself against the charge that has been chasing him, even from those closest to him, such as his deputy during the presidency, Mike Pence, who stated that the former president had an unfavourable influence on his party, and that he should not run for president again?

Or is the scene of the attack on the Capitol building (the headquarters of Congress) on January 6, 2021, following Trump's loss of the election to Biden, still in control of the mindset and decision of the American voter; as this event was a major, blatant, and direct threat to the democratic traditions and antiquity represented by the Capitol, which was attacked by right-wing extremists on that day? Trump has been accused of encouraging this dangerous and unprecedented attack in American history on a monument that represents the voice of the people held by the House of Representatives.



## OBAMA'S STRONG PRESENCE.

A former president was strongly present in the midterm election scene as well, but on the side of Democrats. It is President Barack Obama, who has a long relationship with President Biden in party and governmental work, as the latter was his deputy for eight years in the White House (2008-2016) before Trump occupied the White house until 2020.

Obama resorted to social media extensively to support his Democratic party's candidates. He also showed up successively in the campaigns of Democratic candidates. His wife, Michelle, joined him in supporting the candidates, noting that the couple enjoy great popularity among most university students and educated and coloured elites who gave their votes to prevent the rival Republican party from winning.

Obama drew up a roadmap for his party members, stating that they should focus on issues, rather than on persons; and that they should devise social, economic, and health plans, rather than criticize the behaviour rival competing candidates, nor should they focus on Trump and his supporters.

In one of his podcasts, Obama warned of a strategic mistake that members of his Democratic party candidates might make in the midterm, saying that "We are wasting enormous time, energy, and resources to point out what Donald Trump is saying, or how rudely he behaved, or even to monitor the statements of some Republican candidates." He added: "This is not what preoccupies most voters' minds, because it is beyond their basic interests and does not focus on them properly. Rather, it does not answer their pressing questions: "Am I going to be able to pay the rent at the end of the month? What is the price of gas for my car today? "How do I deal with the conditions of care for my children?"



Obama, who can still rally vigorously due to his great popularity that still prevails in the American street, advised that Democrats must rally around the idea of the success of the Biden agenda during his two years of presidency, as he said in this regard: "The Biden administration has accomplished a lot. We have great infrastructure projects that will help rebuild America and create jobs all over the country. We have an anti-inflation law that reduces the price of medication and makes health care affordable.

Indeed, that roadmap, which Obama drew for his party's candidates, contributed to shifting their rhetoric from personal to public, and from blaming Trump and his supporters to focusing on the achievements of Biden, his party, and the two houses, while promoting the rights of the American citizen and his living needs, which usually determine the compass of the voter and where his vote will go.





## BALANCE IN DECISION-MAKING SALONS

With the beginning of the clarity of the picture in Washington, where there is a democratic president in the White House, and a House of Representatives with a Republican majority, while the Senate remains under the democrats leadership (until the date of writing these lines), it can be said that the largest winner in the extraordinary elections within the conditions of extreme polarization between the two parties and their supporters, is the American political tradition, which is based on the principle of Checks & Balances, a longstanding political tradition that achieves a balance between the legislative and executive powers whenever flaws arise.

The balance goes back to the halls of decision-making in Washington, at both the domestic and foreign policy levels.

In the foreign policy sphere, committees in congress will be under the influence of the Republican majority, which will be reflected in the voting on resolutions and budget allocations.

The obvious bipartisan disagreement, for some time, over the pressing strategic issue of Ukraine's support, in defending its sovereignty against Russia's unwarranted aggression, is that the Republicans do not want the extent of armed and logistical support to the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelinski's to be unlimited. Most Republicans don't approve of President Biden continuing to issue a "blank check" to Kiev. Although Ukraine's empowerment and self-defence support is a bipartisan issue, the level, size, and limits of support will be decided by the Republicans.

A trend was observed in the statements of the Biden administration during the latter's attendance at the G-20 summit on the Indonesian island of Bali. US national security adviser Jacques Sullivan stated on the sidelines that Kiev should find the appropriate means to enter negotiations with Moscow and end the war.



This statement appears to be a proactive step to catch up with the new House of Representatives under its new leadership, which is likely to go to McCarthy.

It is also worth mentioning that the Democrats are not only euphoric, as a result of these elections, which they expected to be much worse for them, but are today even more relaxed regarding how the presidential elections of 2024 might go. They believe, therefore that the political indicators emerging from the midterm elections reflect a great possibility for them to remain in the White House for four new years. These indicators also constitute a motivating factor for President Biden to run again in 2024, despite the obstacle of his age. This is because he will rely on the fact that these elections came as a referendum in his favour and that of his party's, and a popular sign of the American voter's desire to see President Biden again in the White House after the end of his first term.

However, American elections are always pregnant with all possibilities. As it came against all opinion polls expectations, that said the Republican red tide would sweep the political scene, they can be dramatically transformed in 2024, which will witness fierce competition for the Oval Office, especially if Trump wins his party's candidacy to compete with the potential democratic presidential candidate, in which case Biden will be an undisputed winner.



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[info@dimensionscenter.net](mailto:info@dimensionscenter.net)