

► ‘Soccer field without referees’ shows low-quality democracy

Biden, Trump begin election campaigns with verbal attacks

By GT staff reporters

As the 2024 US presidential election draws closer, the two most prominent candidates – incumbent US President Joe Biden and former president Donald Trump – have begun their campaign rallies. However, to the disappointment of voters and the global public, both candidates launched fierce verbal attacks against each other in their first speeches of the new year, rather than discussing ways to address domestic issues.

The negative tone of the speeches by the two likely presidential nominees, marking the start of the election year, suggests that the trend of this US election feature even more extreme polarization, which experts described as “unprecedented in over a century.”

The election is likely to open up a scenario of low-quality democracy, analysts said.

During his speech on Friday in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, Biden accused Trump of instigating the Capitol riot in 2021 and plotting revenge. The attack went on in his first major campaign speech of the year, which had been scheduled on Saturday, the third anniversary of the riot, but which was rescheduled due to weather reasons. Biden said that Trump’s reelection bid is based on trying to seek “revenge and retribution” against his political enemies.

Only a few hours later, Trump fired back at Biden during his speech in Sioux Center, Iowa. Trump mocked the Democrat over his stutter, saying “he’s a threat to d-d-democracy.”

The trend of extreme polarization is further strengthened in the 2024 US election, as can be seen from the first campaign speeches by Biden and Trump, Lü Xiang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences,

told the Global Times on Sunday.

Both candidates, from the two parties, are adopting a “strongman strategy,” vigorously smearing each other and claiming that the other is a person who undermines the country and democracy, Lü said.

“The current US election situation is like a soccer field without referees, with both sides deploying red cards,” Lü said.

Diao Daming, an associate professor at the Renmin University of China in Beijing, pointed out that both sides are already adopting negative campaign strategies, which is usually done toward the end of the campaign in previous elections.

The two candidates focused their propaganda on attacking each other, indicating that neither side has confidence in solving domestic issues and can only claim that the other is worse, Diao said.

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Spillover of Gaza war raises concerns; US ‘hardly’ plays a role of peacemaker

By GT staff reporters

The aftermath of conflict in Gaza has seen its effects reverberate throughout the region as Hezbollah, the Lebanese military faction, launched 62 rockets at a significant Israeli military base on Saturday, which was described as a preliminary response to the assassination of the deputy chief of Hamas.

Some experts said on Sunday that this act heightened concerns about the intensifying discord between US-backed Israel and what the Western media terms as the Axis of Resistance, an “anti-Israel coalition” informally led by Iran.

In an effort to mitigate these rising tensions, high-ranking Western officials, including US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the EU’s senior diplomat Josep Borrell, embarked on separate missions in the region. Their goal is to avert further escalations.

However, some experts expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of these interventions as they argued that the inconsistent policies of the US undermine its ability to act as a peacemaker.

“The interests of the US and Israel in the Middle East have significantly diverged now,” Sun Degang, director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Fudan University, told the Global Times on Sunday.

Israel aims to capitalize on its recent victories to address security concerns in the north and potentially extend its military achievements. In this context, the visit of Blinken to the region is an attempt to calm the situation and stabilize the region, as the US does not hope to see an escalation of the conflict as it has to deal with the presidential election this year and does not want the Middle East to consume too much of its energy, Sun said.

“While the US displayed diplomatic efforts on one hand, it has been increasing military actions in Yemen, Iraq, and Syria on the other, highlighting its duplicitous nature. Despite multiple visits by Blinken, these actions have not effectively served as ‘firefighting’ measures,” said Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University.

► Anti-Blinken protest



Turkish people shout slogans during a small protest against US State Secretary Anthony Blinken’s visit to Turkey, at Besiktas Square in Istanbul, Turkey, on January 6, 2024. Blinken kicked off his latest urgent Middle East diplomatic mission in Turkey, as fears mount that Palestinian-Israeli conflict in Gaza may explode into a broader conflict.
Photo: VCG

US, Japan, S.Korea’s ‘Indo-Pacific Dialogue’ an attempt to counter China

By Zhang Yuying

After the US, Japan and South Korea reiterated the importance of peace across the Taiwan Straits during their first “Indo-Pacific Dialogue” on US local time Friday, Chinese experts pointed out Sunday that this indicates that Japan and South Korea have been wooed by the US to serve as pawns in its “Indo-Pacific Strategy” to view China as a common adversary and jointly contain China.

The three countries issued a joint statement on Saturday, stating their assessment of the geopolitical developments influencing the Indo-Pacific region, while emphasizing the necessity for increased collaboration among them, according to the US department of state website.

The three countries described China’s recent actions to protect its lawful maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea as “dangerous and

escalatory,” and reiterated the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits as “indispensable” to security and prosperity in the international community.

“The joint statement indicates that the political and military alliance among the US, Japan and South Korea will be further strengthened, which was manifested by their recognition of China as a ‘common adversary,’” Song Zhongping, a Chinese military expert and TV

commentator, told the Global Times on Sunday.

Song said that the real purpose of the statement is to contain China’s development and adopt joint measures centered on US’ so-called Indo-Pacific Strategy to strengthen control over China.

Song pointed out that the essence of such “Indo-Pacific Dialogue” is that the US has successfully wooed Japan and South Korea to make them important pawns in its “Indo-

Pacific Strategy,” to maintain the US’ own interests and hegemony in the region.

Song noted that the dialogue is inevitably posing more destabilizing factors in the region, while the purpose of institutionalizing the dialogue is to enable the three countries to establish joint measures against China in various fields.

