TOP NEWS

Key changes in US foreign policy 'unlikely'

Expert: President's veto power could limit congressional ability to enact legislation

By **YIFAN XU** in Washington
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As a decisive blue wave sweeps the United States in the midterm elections, with the Democrats winning clear majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, analysts expect stronger scrutiny of the administration led by US President Donald Trump, but noted that the shift in congressional power may not necessarily effect major changes in the US' foreign policy.

As of Wednesday, Democrats and independents who caucus with them had secured at least 54 seats in the 100-member Senate, including traditionally Republican strongholds such as Texas, South Carolina and Kansas, while counting continued in some states.

Inside
Comment, **page 9**

In the 435-member House, Democrats had already won 240 seats to cross the majority threshold, even though some races had not yet been called.

The newly elected Congress will be sworn in on Jan 3.

In a discussion hosted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs on Wednesday, Daniel Drezner, a professor at Tufts University in Massachusetts, linked the US' foreign policy and the economic concerns of voters.

"Americans fundamentally do not care about foreign policy, unless it affects their bottom line," Drezner said, as the discussion repeatedly veered between the impact of the Iran war and the increasing cost of living.

Justin Logan, director of defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute in Washington, DC, wrote on the institute's website on Wednesday that the Iran war played an unusually important electoral role because voters had to bear the brunt of high energy prices.

In his first comments on Wednesday after Democrats pulled off a striking election performance, Trump largely agreed with Vice-President JD Vance, who publicly ruminated on the Iran war being a catastrophe for Republicans.

"It's largely true because it drove gasoline up a little bit," Trump said, while Vance said in a post on social media that the "real reason we lost is obvious to almost everyone".

While the newly elected Congress is likely to prepare a vast oversight agenda to rein in the Trump administration, Jack Midgley, an adjunct associate professor at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, told China Daily that the US president's veto power and broad executive authority would limit the Democrats' ability to enact major legislation. Congressional investigations could take precedence over lawmaking, he said.

Experts from the Council on Foreign Relations in New York noted that Democrats would chair committees, exercise leverage over federal spending and, through the Senate, decide whether to confirm senior administration nominees.

Pierre Yared, a senior fellow at the CFR, said that Democratic control of Congress is unlikely to unilaterally change Trump's tariff policy, because the president is exercising congressionally delegated authority.

Drezner, however, indicated the possibility of a bipartisan action, because some Republicans also oppose Trump's tariffs.

Meanwhile, fiscal disputes could prove consequential beyond Washington. Josh Lipsky and Bart Piasecki of the Atlantic Council warned in an article published on Wednesday that negotiations on federal spending and the debt ceiling in 2027 could create uncertainty for US financial markets and the global economy.

Christopher Preble, a senior fellow and director at the Stimson Center in Washington, called on lawmakers to use oversight and funding powers to press for an end to the Iran war.

Jan Yumul in Hong Kong and Cui Haipei in Dubai, UAE, contributed to this story.

Courageous stunt



Canadian contestant Elowan Rousse demonstrates his flip-over move in the men's freestyle final of a parkour competition held on Thursday at the Tianmen Mountain Scenic Area in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province. The two-day event, which started on Wednesday, attracted more than 60 athletes from 18 countries and regions. ZHOU GUOQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

New start at school



Primary school students enjoy a light moment after having lunch at a middle school in Nagchu city, Xizang autonomous region, on Wednesday. The students were relocated to the school after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck the city's Drachen county on Oct 22, affecting two local primary schools. The students resumed classes on Wednesday, minimizing the disruption to teaching activities due to the quake. JIGME DORJE / XINHUA

Justice: Fair ruling based on NSL

From page 1

"The punishment must fit the gravity of the crime committed. It is also necessary for the court to express the community's abhorrence of the defendant's scheme and acts together with others to collude with foreign forces or external elements to endanger national security, and to serve the imperative of deterrence," Tam said while handing down the sentence.

Tam said that Wong and Law were the two "ringleaders or masterminds" of the conspiracy with others to endanger national security, who persisted with their scheme to collude with foreign governments and external elements to endanger national security, despite the promulgation of the security law.

At a daily news briefing in Beijing on Thursday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said that the HKSAR is a society governed by the rule of law, where the fundamental principles are that laws must be obeyed and violations must be prosecuted, and the central government supports the Hong Kong SAR in upholding national security in accordance with the law and combating acts endangering national security.

John Lee Ka-chiu, chief executive of the Hong Kong SAR, said in a statement that Wong, Law and their accomplices are among the primary culprits responsible for undermining Hong Kong's prosperity and stability, whose acts "not only severely undermined national sovereignty, security and development interests, but also directly prejudiced the well-being of the public and the stability of society".

A spokesman for the SAR government said the heavy sentence "shattered the illusion of individuals endangering national security that they could escape liability under the guise of a so-called 'international battlefront' or 'international advocacy'," and demonstrated the SAR's firm determination to safeguard national security to the global community.

A spokesperson for the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR also expressed firm support for the sentence, stating that the ruling powerfully upholds the dignity and effectiveness of the security law.

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Stronger marine cooperation stressed

By **LI MENGHAN, ZHANG YI** and **HU MEIDONG** in Xiamen, Fujian

Global ocean experts called on Thursday for stronger international cooperation to translate agreements into tangible results, acknowledging China's experience in marine restoration and governance as a valuable contribution to this shared effort.

"The ocean faces pressures that are increasingly interacting with each other: climate change, unsustainable fishing, pollution, habitat degradation, invasive species and other pressures," said Grethel Aguilar, director-general of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Aguilar made the remarks at the opening ceremony of the 21st World Ocean Week in Xiamen, Fujian province. The event is themed "Safeguard the Deep Blue Together, Foster Human-Ocean Harmony".

Aguilar noted that while the numbers of coral reefs, sharks and rays are shrinking, mangroves have shifted from net loss to net gain, indicating that the problem is "not whether recovery is possible", but whether it can be achieved at the speed and scale required, and with the scientific rigor needed.

"Xiamen and Fujian have a long record of working with the sea rather than against it, from coastal wetland and mangrove restoration to the marine science now advancing at the Fujian Ocean Innovation Center. This is the kind of practical, science-based approach that the ocean needs," she said.

Aguilar emphasized the significance of implementing the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, or the BBNJ Agreement, which took effect this January. This marks the first time that the international community has established a comprehensive and legally binding framework specifically aimed at conserving and sustainably utilizing biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

"A treaty does not protect the ocean simply because it entered into force. Its provisions must become effective institutions, decisions and actions," she said, stressing accessible financing and capacity building, particularly for developing countries.

Jose Maria Figueres, former president of Costa Rica, echoed Aguilar's views, emphasizing that the success of agreements should be measured by the results achieved.

"With its scientific capabilities, technological innovation and international influence, China can help shape a new era of ocean governance, where science guides decisions and cooperation bridges geopolitical differences," he added.

Figueres expressed strong support for Xiamen's candidacy to host the BBNJ Secretariat, suggesting that along with becoming the headquarters of an international institution, the city would also become a global center for ocean science, diplomacy and practical conservation solutions.

Sun Shuxian, vice-minister of natural resources, expressed China's willingness to share its progress with developing countries. This includes organizing joint international deep-sea expeditions, providing professional training on the international law of the sea, and helping developing countries enhance their environmental monitoring and implementation capacity.

"We should firmly support multilateralism, uphold the international system centered on the United Nations, and jointly foster a fairer and more equitable global order for deep-sea governance," he said.

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Robots: Evolving gadgets fuel export growth

From page 1

Chinese window-cleaning robots are drawing attention abroad as well.

On Amazon.com, a Canadian consumer commented that "I don't take pleasure in cleaning, so I really like this robot as it reduces the amount of effort for me. ... Just plop it on a window as you take care of other cleaning tasks".

At the recent 140th China Import and Export Fair, or Canton Fair, in Guangzhou, window-cleaning robots made by Chinese companies drew crowds of potential overseas buyers.

One such manufacturer is Shanxi Jiashida Robot Technology. Established in 2012, the company exports its products to 56 countries and regions, including the United States, Germany and Japan, with Europe being its main market.

Feng Fenfen, head of the company's foreign trade department, said that customers at home and abroad want effective cleaning at a good price, while overseas buyers place more emphasis on safety and environmental protection.

Service info

Chinese window-cleaning robots are usually priced between 600 yuan ($90) and 3,000 yuan.
The devices are sold on domestic e-commerce and cross-border platforms such as Amazon, allowing shoppers to choose according to varying needs and budgets.

The company's product has a dual-disc design, with each disc acting as a suction cup while fitted with a cleaning pad. The discs work alternately, with one holding against the glass while the other moves. Autonomous path-planning technology helps the robot identify edges and adjust its cleaning operation.

Feng said the company has adapted its products for different markets. The suction system is adjusted to deal with extreme cold climates, while in areas prone to sand and grit, a dedicated model is designed to remove these particles prior to washing.

Niu Liqun, chairman of the company, said the company will keep using real scenarios to drive its technology development.

The industry is also moving toward consistent performance benchmarks, with China's first household window-cleaning robots standard set to take effect on Dec 1. It sets unified threshold requirements and criteria.

Chinese manufacturers such as Ecovacs and Dreame Technology are also integrating algorithms into their window-cleaning robots.

Wei Wei, deputy dean of the School of Computer and Information Technology at Shanxi University, said: "With breakthroughs in multimodal perception, intelligent decision-making and large model technologies, window-cleaning robots are evolving from automated devices into intelligent autonomous machines."

For robot users, a chore that once required effort, expense and planning now begins with a button.

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Elections: Deputies serve as bridge between State organs, public

From page 1

Wang Liguo, a resident of Fuzhoucheng town in Wafangdian, Liaoning province, cast his vote for township deputies on Oct 20.

"This is my right as a voter, and it's our way, as citizens, to take part in governing the country," said Wang, one of over 700,000 voters in Wafangdian who went to polling stations across the city that day. "I approach voting seriously so that we can elect deputies to the people's congresses who truly represent the people."

Jiao Hongchang, a law professor at China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing, said the election of county- and township-level lawmakers is the most direct expression of whole-process people's democracy, serving as the primary means by which the Constitution's electoral rights are realized.

Under the Constitution, all citizens age 18 or older have the right to vote and run for election, regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, occupation, family background, religious beliefs, education level, property status or length of residence, except those legally deprived of political rights.

According to China's electoral law, deputies to people's congresses at county and township levels are directly elected by voters, while deputies to people's congresses above the county level are elected by deputies from the next-lower level.

Jiao said direct elections are the "starting point" of whole-process people's democracy.

"They form the foundation for democratic elections, consultation, decision-making, management and oversight, vividly showcasing the authenticity, breadth and vitality of China's democracy," he said.

Jiao added that the elected deputies serve as a bridge between State organs and the public. "The quality of deputy election affects governance ability and determines whether the power serves the people and reflects public opinion," he said. "The election of deputies to people's congresses is conducive to strengthening grassroots State power and modernizing local governance."

In September, Song Rui, deputy secretary-general of the NPC Standing Committee, told a news conference that more than 1 billion voters nationwide will directly elect more than 2.6 million deputies to county and township people's congresses this year. He urged enhanced support for deputies in fulfilling their duties, maintaining close contact with the public, conveying their views and concerns, and helping to resolve practical issues.

Li Ying, a resident of the Changsheng community in Gangdian subdistrict of Wafangdian, said that voting is a crucial part of political life. "Deputies represent us and express our concerns, so it's important for me to vote thoughtfully," she said after voting on Oct 20. "I hope the newly elected deputies will pay attention to our difficulties and genuinely help resolve our challenges."

Mao Yuchong, a student at College of Science and Technology of China Three Gorges University in Yichang, Hubei province, recently cast his vote for the first time for deputies to the local people's congress. "I got up at 8 am to get ready," he said. "I'd only ever read about these elections in textbooks or seen them in films. Now I've experienced it myself. This is what democracy looks like."

County and township authorities have implemented measures to make voter registration more inclusive and improve the voting process. In Liangxi district of Wuxi, Jiangsu province, an online platform was launched on WeChat to assist young residents and those living away from home in registering and discussing election-related matters.

In remote mountain areas such as the towns of Wangyou and Xiantang in Guizhou province, staff members visited the homes of elderly voters and those with limited mobility to ensure they could exercise their right to vote.

These efforts aim to enforce the Constitution and the electoral law, and uphold the people's role as the country's masters.

Jiao, the professor, said that advancing the modernization of grassroots governance involves completing the new round of lawmaker elections at county and township levels, scientifically drawing constituency boundaries, protecting the voting rights of migrant populations, and rigorously reviewing deputy qualifications. "These are not only major political events, but also the shared expectations of the people," he said.