

THE (NOT SO) BLUE WALL: UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRATS' UNDERPERFORMANCE IN THE 2020 US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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Abstract

This study strives to understand the broader political phenomenon behind the Democratic Party's and Joe Biden's (as its nominee) underperformance in the 2020 U.S. presidential election. The election results showed that the Democrats barely recovered from their loss of Blue Wall states (Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania) four years earlier. The margins between Biden and incumbent President Trump in those states were close despite Trump's weakness in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the lens of Kathleen Bawn et. al.'s theory of political parties, the study found that a coalition-change played a big part in shifting those states nearer to the Republican column. The three states are home to a relatively high number of labor union members which used to be a reliable voter-base within the Democratic coalition. The changes of Democratic political platform, however, has been gradually disaffecting this particular constituent. This constituent regarded the Democrats' embrace of environmental and social liberal agenda as contradicting their economic and cultural interests. At the same time, the eroding union members' support of the Democratic Party is also incentivized by the presence of Trump who, despite being a Republican, shared some economic and cultural views with the union members.

Keywords: Blue Wall; labor unions; the Democratic Party; Joe Biden.

Abstrak

Skripsi ini bertujuan untuk memahami fenomena politik yang lebih luas dari performa mengecewakan Partai Demokrat dan Joe Biden di pemilihan presiden Amerika Serikat tahun 2020. Hasil pemilu menunjukkan bahwa Demokrat hampir gagal pulih dari kekalahan mereka di negara-negara bagian "Blue Wall" (Wisconsin, Michigan dan Pennsylvania) empat tahun sebelumnya. Perbedaan suara antara Biden dan sang inkumben Presiden Trump di wilayah tersebut sangat tipis di tengah lemahnya Trump menangani pandemi COVID-19. Melalui teori partai politik dari Kathleen Bawn dkk, skripsi ini mendapati bahwa perubahan koalisi berperan besar dalam mendorong negara-negara bagian tersebut mendekati Republikan. Ketiga negara bagian memiliki populasi serikat buruh cukup besar yang dahulu merupakan basis suara andalan dalam koalisi Partai Demokrat. Tetapi, perubahan platform politik Demokrat telah mengasingkan mereka. Konstituen ini melihat bahwa keputusan Demokrat untuk memajukan agenda lingkungan dan sosial liberal bertentangan dengan kepentingan ekonomi dan kultural mereka. Di saat yang bersamaan, erosi dukungan anggota serikat buruh terhadap Partai Demokrat juga didorong oleh keberadaan Trump yang, sekalipun Republikan, memiliki kesamaan pandangan ekonomi dan sosial dengan anggota serikat buruh.

Kata-kata kunci: "Blue Wall"; serikat buruh; Partai Demokrat; Joe Biden.