



[Analysis into Key United States Senate Races to Watch as We Approach U.S. Midterm Elections Next Tuesday and Their Potential Foreign Policy-Related Implications](#)

Next week, voters in U.S. midterm elections will put an end to months of anticipation about the fate of the Senate, which Democrats currently control only because of U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris's position as the de facto tiebreaker. A net gain of one seat for Republicans will grant them control of the chamber, but the path to victory is difficult, as they already own 21 of the 35 seats up for grabs. Adding to their problems is the fact that every seat currently held by a Democrat on the ballot is in a state won by Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election. On the other hand, the Wisconsin election features incumbent Republican Ron Johnson against challenger Mandela Barnes in a state that Biden also won, which has made for a toss-up in the Midwestern state, according to recent Politico analysis. The same report indicates that there are four other toss-up races, and that whichever party wins three of the five will control the Senate, barring an upset. One such race is taking place in Georgia and consists of incumbent Democrat Raphael Warnock against former NFL star and University of Georgia alumni Herschel Walker. Of late, this race has been clouded by scandal, with evidence suggesting that Walker paid a former girlfriend to get an abortion in 2009, in contrast to his staunchly pro-life rhetoric. Despite controversy, the race is incredibly close. A poll published on Monday by the New York Times and Siena College found that Warnock leads Walker 49-46, while an Atlanta Journal-Constitution/UGA poll published the same day found that the two were tied at 45-45. In Nevada, where Republican Adam Laxalt is taking on incumbent Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto, NYT/Siena polling found that race to be tied as well, at 47-47. However, a poll released on Tuesday by The Hill and others found that Laxalt leads by five points, 50-45. The other races to watch are Arizona and Pennsylvania, where Democrat John Fetterman has been struggling to cognitively recover from a stroke. The NYT/Siena poll gives Fetterman a five-point lead on Republican opponent and former TV personality Mehmet Oz, whereas a Muhlenberg College-Morning Call survey declared the race deadlocked on Wednesday.

Whether control of the U.S. Senate goes to the GOP or to Democrats following the upcoming election will most immediately have an impact on domestic issues. Inflation, crime, abortion, and immigration are dominating every candidate's platform. Foreign policy is unlikely to be changed while President Biden is in office. However, a Republican-controlled Senate may look to set the table for a Republican president in 2024. Notably, foreign policy is a particularly interesting topic in relation to the Senate because its members hold certain constitutional duties that House members do not, such as approving treaties and presidential appointments. Although treaties are almost always circumvented by executive orders in the present day, there is evidence in recent years amidst rising partisanship that senators are beginning to use the power to reject presidential appointments more often. The Senate refused to approve three appointees of both President Trump and President Obama. Previously, three or more withdrawals or rejections of appointees had only taken place during the Clinton and early 1840s Tyler administrations. Some appointees, like Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense, play crucial foreign policy roles. Rejection or withdrawal is unlikely, but of course, possible. In any case, presidents must consider the possibility of rejection when they make their selections. In addition to confirming appointments, the Senate is also home of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which has a large say in U.S. foreign policy. It is customary that whichever party holds the Senate as a whole also places a majority of its members on each committee and names its most senior member on each as its chair.

On a more general level, Senate legislation going forward will vary greatly depending on who is in control. A Democratic president in 2024 backed by a Democratic Senate would hope to pass legislation aimed at collaborating with other countries militarily, economically, and diplomatically via climate change resolutions,



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financial aid, more open borders, and a nuclear deal with Iran. Of course, a likely Republican House would complicate these moves. On the contrary, a Republican Senate and House aligned with a Republican president would be able to make large-scale changes of the opposite nature. They would likely want to place emphasis on domestic issues and remove the U.S. from many international agreements and initiatives. Regarding current foreign policy, the United States' role in the war in Ukraine and our handling of China still have substantial bipartisan support, although Republican support for Ukraine may be waning in the face of economic recession. Even so, amending support for Ukraine would likely take months.