

Chaos in presidential election shows how 'ill' US is

By Yuan Peng

As the US Election Day draws near, it is almost certain that no matter who wins the election, the history will always deem this election as the most "dark, chaotic and bad" one in over two centuries, instead of a victory of democracy.

It is a "dark" presidential campaign. On the one hand, the two candidates, in their open speeches, smeared each other in the most despicable and uncivilized way, making most US citizens apathetic; on the other hand, the campaign unveiled the "dark side" of the so-called US democracy.

The Democratic Party kicked Bernie Sanders out of game with the aim make sure Hillary Clinton wins the candidacy. What's more, in order to squeeze Donald Trump's campaign, Republican heavyweights even urged voting for Clinton, the candidate of the Democratic Party.

As a result, almost all mainstream media chose to stand with Clinton, prompting Trump supporters to conclude that the "US democracy is dead."

It's been a "chaotic" election throughout the whole process. During the primary election of the Democratic Party, Sanders almost won against the assured Clinton. On the other side, the script for the Republican Party campaign turned the House of Cards into reality. Promising political stars -- Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz -- all collapsed on the battlefield one after another, but Trump, who was deemed as an "unlikely" candidate, went all the way to the final round.

When Clinton and Trump were the only ones left in the pit fight, they threw at each other scandals of "private email server", "poor health" and "sexual harassment", turning the campaign into a total mess.

This is a "bad" election because it is tasteless. More importantly, the whole process was dominated by emotionally extreme comments and personal attacks without respect for a bottom line. The candidates could no longer focus on a systematic explanation of their political measures and policy views. Eventually, the whole campaign lost its meaning and was reduced to a farce.

The chaos and disorder of the US presidential campaign signaled to the world that the US is now "sick" economically, socially and politically.

First of all, its economy is no longer in a good shape. Though the US economy is recovering, the public did not benefit from the momentum as the economic growth was mainly driven by quantitative easing and other monetary policies, and structural flaws were left untouched. What's worse, the wealth gap is widening, the middle class is diminishing and the young generation are lost. All of these elements generated the "Sanders phenomenon" in this year's campaign.

In addition, social problems remain unsolved. Over the past eight years since Barack Obama took

office, racial conflicts have not eased, but escalated. Conflicts of race, inter-generation, gender, region and class stoked anger, anxiety, depression and incited isolationism, protectionism and populism. In this way, Trump, who reversed people's expectations, was able to last this long.

Besides, the current political system is riddled with troubles. The superpower used to treat its "US-style democracy" represented by separation of powers as a pride, but the checks and balances failed to stop the confrontation between the two major parties.

"Extremity and separation" prevails in today's US political circle. Partisan standoff and interdepartmental confrontations take place here and there, dividing the US on so many levels, dragging down political efficiency and disappointing the public. Many US political scholars are quite concerned about the future of "US-style democracy."

The etiology of the "illness" lies in its postponement of the systematic reform the country should launch after the Cold War, which turned the structural conflicts accumulated day by day into a "chronic disease."

When President Bill Clinton was in power, the US was so obsessed with its victory in the Cold War and the prosperity brought by the "new economy" that the motivation for reform was quite lacking. After George W. Bush took office, emergencies like "the September 11 attacks" put the country's strategic focus on counter-terrorism and Iraq War, leaving no time for reform in the system.

When Obama was inaugurated, the US noticed the urgency of the impending reform and was determined to transform itself, but he had missed the best chance and also did not get enough political support. "Obama's New Deal" fell on deaf ears and failed to change the country in the end.

Obama's hands are tied now as the two major parties couldn't reach a consensus on immigration, gun control, taxation, education and some other big agendas that impede US social and economical development.

As a result, during his eight-year-term, though Obama revitalized the US economy, the biggest beneficiaries are Wall Street, Washington bigwigs while the public's livelihood and income are not recovered to the level before the economic crisis.

Because of political conflicts, the man in office couldn't do much about tough challenges such as gun control and illegal immigration, only making things worse. The weirdness and chaos of the 2016 presidential election is actually a way for the public to vent their anger with the current situation.

Under such circumstances, whoever wins this election would face the political conundrum about how to efficiently run the government. The world is more concerned about whether the US will adopt a more cautious diplomatic policy or decide to make a more aggressive move. After all, the

discretionary power that the president possesses over diplomacy is much larger than that over internal affairs. Which way would US go? We will wait and see.

(The author is the Vice President of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations.)

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