

Tuning into the narratives in the American election

In this year of successive world-wide elections, the issues in the United States presidential election, to be held in November, have not yet aroused considerable scrutiny. Yet, 1892 was the last time an immediately former President was contesting with his successor incumbent. The election's main issues will cover immigration, democracy, foreign policy, abortion and Donald Trump's indictments. In the current deeply polarised setting, opinion polls show that supporters of the former Republican President, Donald Trump, will do so again; and the same applies to the current Democrat President, Joe Biden's followers.

The economy, the perception

The economy has become an important issue in the November presidential elections; normally, the economy should be decisive since history shows that a sitting President with a strong economy gets re-elected. But different economic indicators are travelling in different directions; some are positive, with low unemployment and a rising stock market, but negatives also appear in the high interest rate which affects everyone using credit. The rate of inflation has not come down, nor have prices even after the COVID-19 pandemic, though incomes have gone up.

The good aspects of the economy take time to impact the public, unlike the negatives. Mr. Biden is considered a better economic manager than Mr. Trump, and 65% of the electorate appears to think that the economy is in good or very good shape. But whether this will be a steady trend or only a momentary reaction cannot be anticipated, remembering that Mr. Trump's pre-pandemic economy was quite strong. Most voters are not focusing on the economy – at least for now.

Polarisation in American society covers social issues as well as the urban versus rural/semi-urban divide. The latter since the 1990s are Republican, the former Democrat and



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In the Biden versus Trump face-off, the core issues to shape the November election exist but have still to stir up scrutiny

the two are sharply divided. De-industrialisation, deregulation since the 1990s, job losses, and agribusiness suffering have affected the rural areas deeply and magnified these differences. President Biden has tried to rectify this but has not received any credit for his initiatives because the rural and semi-urban areas remain feeling discriminated against. Mr. Biden knows very well that the rural vote needs more attention, but it will take decades for such a divide to be properly rectified.

In industry, employment levels are good but inequality is still grave. A great deal of current investment goes into hi-tech, high-skilled, high-salaried jobs, but many of these projects are long term in gestation. Republicans tend to avoid involvement in the economy, but, here too, Republican opinion seems to be changing. Mr. Trump has been talking of a 10% across-the-board tariff but this will add to inflation and increase each family's expenditure by \$1,500-\$2,500 every year.

The approaches to trade

In trade policy, there are clear differences between the Biden and Trump approaches. Mr. Trump is no believer in multilateralism, and during his tenure used tariffs to leverage better bilateral trade deals. Mr. Biden retained some of these tariffs but lowered others for Europeans, for example, to block Chinese steel and aluminium in order to limit the high carbon used to make these in China. The age of neo-liberal fundamentalist Democratic policies seems to be over, while on the Republican side, the debate continues; the libertarians are very powerful but there are nascent signs of rebellion against them.

Regarding the unions, in some regions blue-collar workers have become newly unionised at a time when the recent trend has seen the union movement decreasing. Unions have been helpful socially and assisted the Democrats, but with de-industrialisation, their

place in society has been taken over by evangelical movements and gun lobbies, which attract strong support among rural communities. Support for unions appears still high among the American public, and Mr. Biden was the first U.S. President ever to join a picket line, but this factor is not likely to help his campaign for a second term.

Factors now present

Four danger signals seem key to the future of American democracy: extreme partisan polarisation; social questions of 'belonging', such as anti-immigration and racism; high economic inequality and executive aggrandisement, namely, when a leader expands his/her power beyond the customary checks and balances. Some experts feel that all four factors are now present in the United States.

Mr. Trump was unwelcoming to immigrants, and by the end of his term, public support for immigration had risen. Mr. Trump's policies on immigration will prove inflationary since he wishes to deport thousands of low-wage earners. Mr. Biden is more welcoming, but perhaps more so than the American public at large wanted, and he mismanaged border issues.

This is now a contentious issue even among Democrats and will be another factor going into the elections. Mr. Biden tried to outflank the Republicans with a bipartisan bill that the Democrats would not normally have agreed to, but Mr. Trump gave Mr. Biden a lifeline by opposing it; Mr. Biden will now lose fewer votes as a result.

Opinion polls suggest that Democrat support among minorities such as African-Americans, Latinos and Asian-Americans is slipping. But all these polls have a small sample size and the shifts could be small, and more marked among men than women. Nevertheless, they give cause for the Democratic candidate in a few key States to be worried.

Question -1)

Statement: The passage suggests that economic performance is a crucial factor in the upcoming U.S. presidential election.

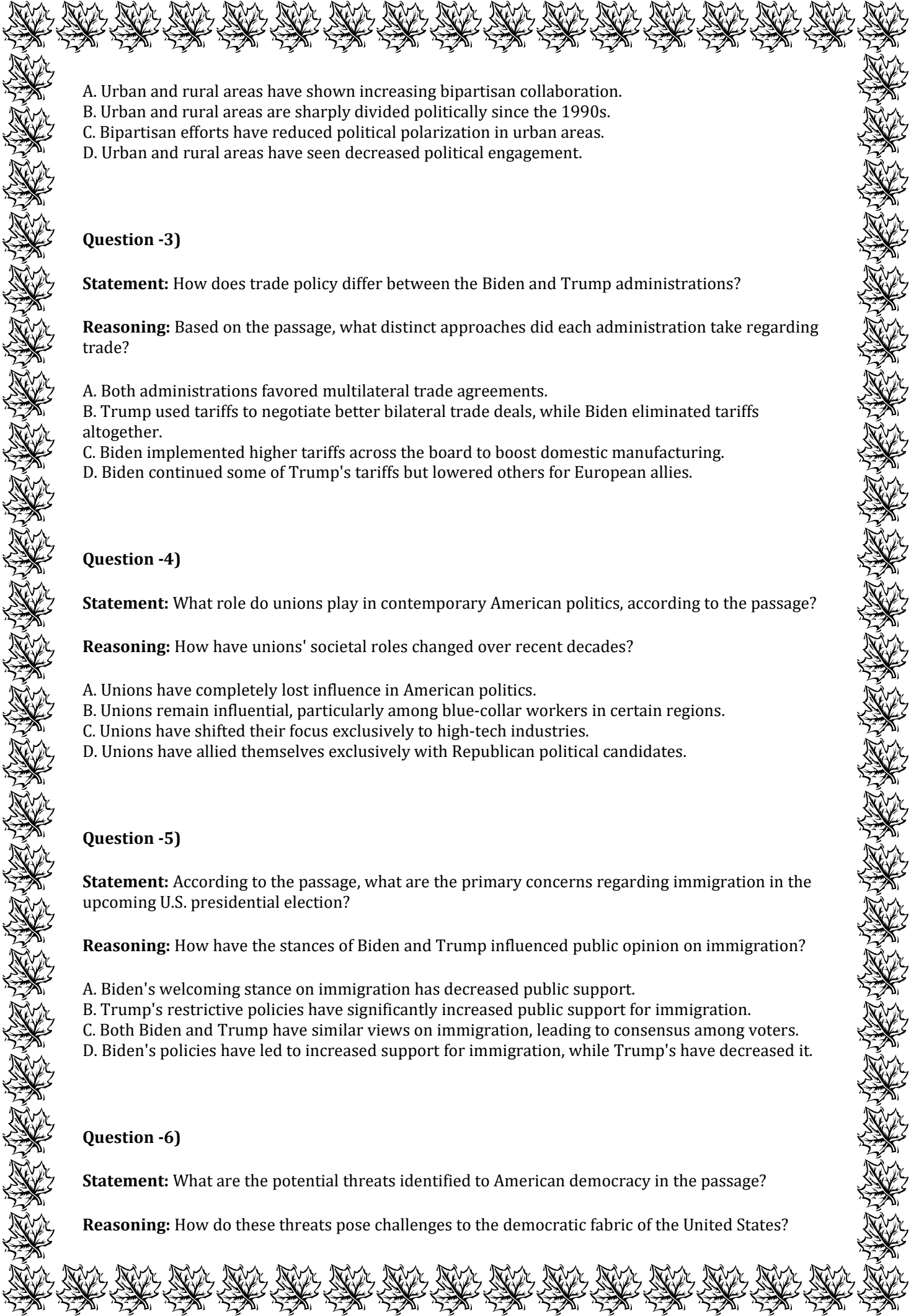
Reasoning: Why might economic factors influence voter decisions according to the passage?

- A. Voters are influenced by both positive and negative economic indicators.
- B. Voters do not consider economic factors important in their decision-making.
- C. Economic indicators have historically had no impact on U.S. presidential elections.
- D. The passage does not mention economic factors as relevant in U.S. presidential elections.

Question -2)

Statement: What role does polarization play in the American political landscape, according to the passage?

Reasoning: How does polarization manifest in social and geographical terms in the U.S.?

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- A. Urban and rural areas have shown increasing bipartisan collaboration.
 - B. Urban and rural areas are sharply divided politically since the 1990s.
 - C. Bipartisan efforts have reduced political polarization in urban areas.
 - D. Urban and rural areas have seen decreased political engagement.

Question -3)

Statement: How does trade policy differ between the Biden and Trump administrations?

Reasoning: Based on the passage, what distinct approaches did each administration take regarding trade?

- A. Both administrations favored multilateral trade agreements.
- B. Trump used tariffs to negotiate better bilateral trade deals, while Biden eliminated tariffs altogether.
- C. Biden implemented higher tariffs across the board to boost domestic manufacturing.
- D. Biden continued some of Trump's tariffs but lowered others for European allies.

Question -4)

Statement: What role do unions play in contemporary American politics, according to the passage?

Reasoning: How have unions' societal roles changed over recent decades?

- A. Unions have completely lost influence in American politics.
- B. Unions remain influential, particularly among blue-collar workers in certain regions.
- C. Unions have shifted their focus exclusively to high-tech industries.
- D. Unions have allied themselves exclusively with Republican political candidates.

Question -5)

Statement: According to the passage, what are the primary concerns regarding immigration in the upcoming U.S. presidential election?

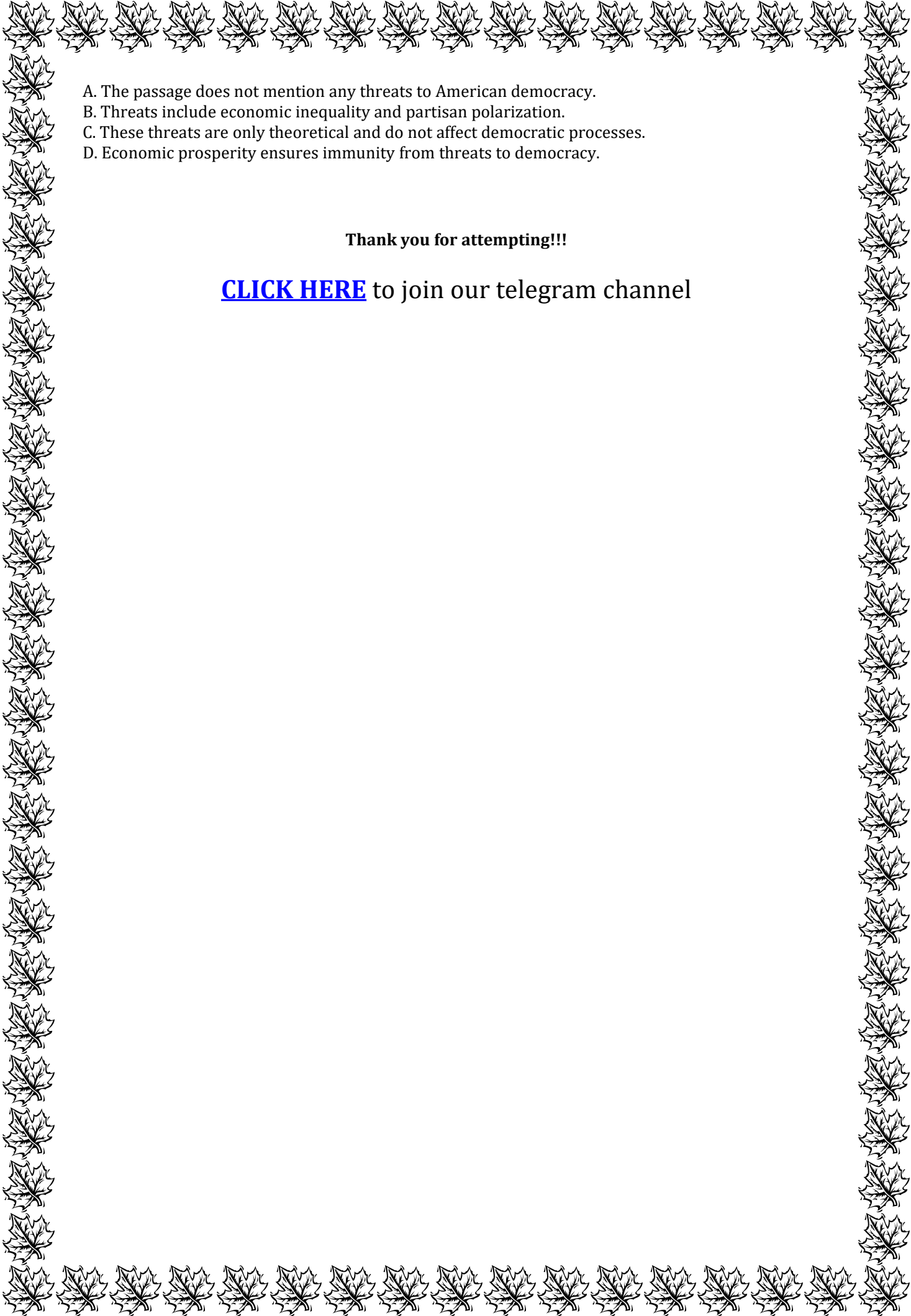
Reasoning: How have the stances of Biden and Trump influenced public opinion on immigration?

- A. Biden's welcoming stance on immigration has decreased public support.
- B. Trump's restrictive policies have significantly increased public support for immigration.
- C. Both Biden and Trump have similar views on immigration, leading to consensus among voters.
- D. Biden's policies have led to increased support for immigration, while Trump's have decreased it.

Question -6)

Statement: What are the potential threats identified to American democracy in the passage?

Reasoning: How do these threats pose challenges to the democratic fabric of the United States?

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- A. The passage does not mention any threats to American democracy.
B. Threats include economic inequality and partisan polarization.
C. These threats are only theoretical and do not affect democratic processes.
D. Economic prosperity ensures immunity from threats to democracy.

Thank you for attempting!!!

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