

Give Trump a chance

Oliver Hartwich | The New Zealand Initiative | 11 November 2016

According to most commentators, the election of Donald J. Trump signifies the end of the West, the end of the international post-War framework – or, at least, the end of the United States.

I beg to differ. With apologies to a truly great American, Mark Twain, reports of the death of America, the West and the World are greatly exaggerated.

You do not have to be a Trump fan (I certainly am not) to come to a more balanced view and forecast, and there is no better starting point than Trump's acceptance speech.

Even people who were deeply opposed to Trump applauded the tone of his first remarks after the election. He was gracious to his defeated opponent Hillary Clinton. He promised to be a President for all Americans. He thanked his family and supporters. And he did not say anything outrageous.

It is true that any other successful presidential candidate would have said the same. But that is precisely the point. Trump said what any other President-elect would have – and that alone was enough to surprise us on the upside.

The expectations the world has of Donald Trump are so low that he will continue to positively surprise us by doing the things any politician would do.

It is a safe bet that Trump will thank Barack Obama in his inaugural speech. He will not insult foreign leaders when he finally meets them. When Trump visited Mexico during the campaign, he showed that he can behave himself on the international stage.

President Trump will also surround himself with people who understand the business of government better than he does. His politically experienced running mate Mike Pence was a good choice in that respect. Trump will also feel the natural constraints of office and learn the art of the diplomatic deal.

Again, there is nothing unusual about that. Most heads of government start off relatively inexperienced in international affairs and only develop a deeper interest and skills in this field over time.

Of course, most of Trump's ideas in the campaign have been flawed, loony or just plain stupid (especially on trade). But that does not mean that he will implement them as President. He is a politician after all, albeit one with money.

So let's follow Hillary Clinton's advice and give President Trump a chance. He might well turn out to be a bad or even a mediocre – but at least not a disastrous – President. And that would already be better than what most people expect.



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