



*The Rise of*  
**DONALD  
TRUMP**



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The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States last November shocked the world. In the new political climate of nationalists against globalists, Trump harnessed the long-underappreciated power of the anti-globalists to propel himself to the White House. His promise to take back America appealed to those long frustrated by the consequences of globalisation. An isolationist America, however, will have ramifications not only through the US, but across the globe. “Americanism,” declared the new president, “not globalism, will be our credo.”

The appointment of an anti-free trade Republican to the White House epitomised the new political divide – no longer between left and right, but between “open” and “closed” (*The Economist*, 2016). Trump, with his calls for a 45 per cent tariff on Chinese imports (Campbell, 2016) and a wall on the US-Mexico border, champions the “closed” side of the debate. Here, the anti-globalists and nationalists perceive globalisation as a threat and find security in national strength and power. On the other side of the debate, the globalists believe the key to prosperity and freedom is in an interconnected world and multilateral collaboration. This new divide can be seen stretching across the world, from New Zealand’s new “closed” coalition of Labour, The Greens and far-right New Zealand First, to Brexit – at the time the anti-globalists’ greatest victory – which split traditional party lines down the middle.

Among the most significant consequences of Trump’s anti-globalist stance is the impact he will have on the power and effectiveness of global collaborations and institutions. As the second largest carbon emitter in the world (Hunt, 2017), Trump’s withdrawal of the US from the Paris climate accord was a huge setback to the world’s most ambitious carbon emissions mitigation agreement. Trump’s plan to cut funding to the UN will deal a similarly harsh blow. The 2018 budget, unveiled early this year, will cut \$10 billion – a 28 per cent reduction – from the State Department, America’s contributions channel to the UN (*The Economist*, 2017). This, according to a UN spokesperson, will make it “impossible” for the UN to continue all its essential work (Nichols, 2017), and, without the support of the US, the authority of the UN will falter. In both cases, Trump has described US contributions as “unfair” (Nichols, 2017), and his decision to withdraw, “a reassertion



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of America’s sovereignty” (Hunt, 2017). In withdrawing from the Paris climate accord and reducing UN contributions, Trump threatens the power and authority of such multilateral collaborations.

A second consequence of Trump’s withdrawal of the US from the world stage is the power vacuum he leaves behind. Since the end of the Second World War, America has used its status as a world power to promote democracy and liberal order across the world and defend human rights, acting, in the views of some, as a “beacon for the rest of mankind” (Kissinger, 1994). However, its new president scorns such a role, preferring instead the belief that strong nations should care solely for themselves (*The Economist*, 2017). As Trump’s America shrinks, he creates space for a new world power; China is ready. At the World Economic Forum in Davos earlier this year, China’s president Xi Jinping sounded remarkably progressive in his calls for international collaboration and free trade and promises to champion globalisation and the fight against climate change (Elliott, 2017). The surge of countries to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Perlez, 2015) demonstrates the potential many countries already see in China’s leadership. Trump’s protectionist policies offer China the perfect opportunity to become an influential leading power. However, China’s use of such power may not be as benevolent as America’s has been. Xi’s disturbing lack of commitment to human

rights may mean international commitment will also falter – perhaps already evident in the lack of an international response to the Rohingya massacre in Myanmar – and is far less likely to put the world before China as the US has historically.

A further ramification of Trump’s rise to power is the justification he gives to the anti-globalist and nationalist movement. No longer are the nationalists the “silent majority” – they now have a standard-bearer in one of the most powerful positions in the world. Trump’s election victory has proven to such groups that they are not alone; that their views are shared by millions across the globe. Most alarming are the self-proclaimed “white nationalists” who describe Trump’s election victory as “a validation for us” (Newton, 2016). The backlash against globalisation perpetuated by Trump’s rise to power could have many detrimental consequences.

As Trump’s rise to power justifies and encourages the nationalistic sentiment sweeping the globe, it is now more important than ever to remember the vast benefits of globalisation. Those who blame globalisation for their hardship overlook how much globalisation has given them. Since the end of the Second World War, world trade has exploded, with exports of goods rising from 8 per cent of world GDP to nearly 20 per cent between 1950 and the turn of the century, resulting in a huge improvement in global living standards

(*The Economist*, 2016). Multilateral collaboration, institutions and alliances aided in the rebuilding of post-war Europe and created the largest poverty reduction in history by connecting China to the global economy, and are just as important in the modern-day fight against terrorism and climate change. While globalisation and free trade undoubtedly creates losers, often in the lower class, the answer is not to create barriers and close borders. In fact, it is often the poorest who suffer the most from such policies. A study recently published in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* examined 40 countries and found that, should cross-border trade end, the bottom tenth of earners would lose 63 per cent of their purchasing power, compared to 28 per cent for the rich (Fajgelbaum, 2016). Instead, governments need to offer more support

and opportunities to those who lose their jobs due to open borders. During this period of global uncertainty, the benefits of globalisation must not be forgotten.

President Trump was elected on a promise to put "America first". In the 10 months since his election, he has done just that, sending global institutions tottering and making room for China to seize dangerous amounts of power. He has rallied nationalists across the world, strengthening the anti-globalist movement that threatens the economic strength and prosperity brought about by post-war globalisation. The long-term ramifications of such actions are yet to be seen, however what is certain is that the world cannot afford to lose America, once described by President Lincoln as its "last, best hope".

*Jessica Trevelyan*



**"I really enjoyed participating in the Global Scholar's Prize this year. I have always been interested in the forces shaping our world and modern society, and this essay has provided a fantastic opportunity for me to explore complex global issues, as well as improve my essay writing skills. Through researching and writing my essay this year, I have learnt a lot about global politics and deepened my**

**understanding of current political events. I am very grateful for this experience and would encourage all others interested in global events to participate in the prize.**

Jessica Trevelyan



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