

Leading Australian academics respond to Donald Trump's victory, and look ahead to what kind of president he might be.

Much unknown about Trump's foreign policy, but expect instability

Gorana Grgic, lecturer in US politics and foreign policy, University of Sydney

This result confirms that 2016 is a year of tectonic shifts in politics of the Western democracies. The surge of populism, Brexit and Trump's victory are all testament that it is no longer "business as usual". This is perhaps the most critical departure from the way US politics has been operating in the post-Cold War era. It has shown that the population rejects some of the main tenets of globalisation, such as free trade and open borders, and sees little value in internationalist foreign policy.

In terms of how the world sees the result, I think there's going to be a lot of trepidation over the "unknowns" of Trump's foreign policy. His foreign security policy sees little place for values and international norms, emphasising interest instead. This will undoubtedly have major repercussions for US standing in the world, particularly if we take into account the global public opinion polls have been assessing Trump.

Finally, in denouncing major alliances and partnerships, Australia has been conspicuously missing from Trump's campaigns. There are reasons to believe that not much will change in terms of the commitment to ANZUS treaty. However, given Trump's disinclination to maintain some of the key alliances in East Asia, it is possible that the Asia-Pacific region will grow unstable.

Moreover, trade protectionism, especially in terms of China, could contribute trade disruptions and market instabilities that could well impact Australia.

A Trump victory may not spell doom and gloom

President Trump will change the United States and the world, but just how remains to be seen

Written by Mark Chou, Associate Professor of Politics, Australian Catholic University

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So [Allan Lichtman](#), the American professor who's correctly predicted every presidential election since 1984, just got another election right. Donald Trump will be the next American president.

This result, which [proved most polls wrong](#), will no doubt shock many. But with the election done, it's important to take stock and ask the question: what now?

In his victory speech, Trump presented an uncharacteristically measured and gracious front, calling for national unity. It's "time for us to come together as one united people," Trump said, adding, "I will be president for all Americans." But if a recent [Pew Research Center](#) study is to be believed, close to 60% of voters think that America is set to become even more divided under Trump's watch.

There may be no more prominent a battlefield for these divisions than in Congress. Yes, the GOP now controls both the House and Senate, and there's good reason to expect that even Republicans who openly opposed Trump during the campaign will now want to build ties with the incoming president. But political candidates, once elected to office, have a tendency to want to keep the public on side so that they might win re-election. Trump's victory was no landslide, and Republicans on the Hill with 2018 and 2020 in mind have plenty of incentive to do all they can to ["keep Trump's worst tendencies in check";](#)

For now, it's too early to know for sure what President Trump's first 100 days in office will hold. But for those looking for a silver lining to this nightmare, there may be some solace in the words of Alexis de Tocqueville. He once wrote that the "frenzied state" whipped up by elections, when "intrigue becomes more active, agitation more lively and more widespread," never remains for long. In fact, the divisions and passions which "one moment overflowed" during the election proper always evaporates and everything "returns peacefully to its bed".

Let's hope he's right.

International climate ambition at stake

Peter Christoff, Associate Professor, School of Geography, University of Melbourne

In his [first major speech on energy policy](#), in May this year, Donald Trump said he will “cancel the Paris climate Agreement”

As President, he can end the United States’ ratification by rescinding the executive order used by President Obama to bypass an oppositional Republican US Senate.

The [Agreement came into force](#) last week, 30 days after its ratification threshold was met. This threshold required the support of 55 parties responsible for at least 55% of global greenhouse emissions.

At the time of writing, 103 countries have ratified the agreement, which now covers some 70% of global emissions. The United States - the world’s second largest emitter and responsible for somewhere between 14.5-15% of global emissions – is a major contributor to this coverage.

If the US were to decide to withdraw from the agreement, this would occur one year after notification of withdrawal was made to the United Nations. Coverage would fall close to the agreement’s emissions threshold if no other parties joined in the meantime.

However, numerous additional states – the United Kingdom (1.5%), Australia (1.3%) and Italy (1.2%), Turkey and Thailand (1% each) - are expected to ratify shortly, which would be enough to ensure the agreement’s survival.

This means that Trump won’t be unable to cancel the agreement.

But a US withdrawal may have a chilling effect on the agreement’s implementation, and could encourage defections by other parties with major fossil fuel interests, such as Saudi Arabia. Moreover, withdrawal would likely see the US also renege on its internationally promised emission targets.

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Trump's agenda for an "[America First Energy Plan](#)" emphasises "American energy dominance [as] a strategic economic and foreign policy goal", by promoting the production of untapped shale oil, gas and "clean coal".

This plan peripherally mentions the benefits of gas and "other American energy resources" in reducing emissions.

What a Trump presidency will mean for America's national mitigation performance is now of critical international interest as well as planetary importance.

Lasting economic change

Rodney Maddock, Interim Director of the Australian Centre for Financial Studies at Monash University

Donald Trump is not as odd to Americans as he is to Australians. Remember that Republicans will retain control of the Senate, the House and many State governments. Mainstream Republicans voted for him in droves.

The financial markets reacted quickly and badly to Trump's likely election. That will almost certainly turn out to be an over-reaction. Economies change gradually, and governments have less power to move them than most people think. The underlying trend in the US economy has been one of sustained if slow strengthening. This will almost certainly continue.

For Australia too the economy appears to be strengthening. Commodity prices seem likely to be stronger, government revenues stronger, and unemployment seems likely to fall. My guess is that a President Trump will make less difference than most of us assume.

I see two main areas of lasting change.

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President Trump will get to make a number of appointments to the US Supreme Court. This will change the majority in the Court towards a much more conservative line on social issues. The various “rights” movements will be slowed as a result. And because justices stay on the Court for decades, the impact will be long-lasting and US cultural tensions will intensify.

The second major area is America’s positioning in the world. The long period where America’s position on issues was predictable, where America supported freer trade and helped move the world towards more open engagement, is likely to change. We won’t know how far Clinton might have reversed traditional policies on trade, but she was clearly in internationalist, Trump is not. I think Trump’s moves will not be helpful but I also remember opposing Ronald Reagan’s “star wars” defence strategy. It seems certain the world will be less predictable but we won’t know for a long time how that plays out.

The Australian press is likely to go into meltdown about the outcome. Trump challenges their ideas of civilised discourse and many of their values. The correct approach is to separate the issues. As democrats we should bemoan the way people have engaged in slanging matches rather than constructive debates. As democrats though we should also accept that differences in values need to be expressed through the political system and not disparaged. We need to engage with alternative views, not censor them or rubbish them.

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