

THE TRIALS OF T

The election of Republican Donald Trump as America's next president has caused the world considerable upset. Most hoped that America would elect Democrat Hillary Clinton as a safer pair of hands, but ultimately his brand of nationalism had greater appeal. Perhaps understandably parallels have been drawn between Trump's victory and the UK seeking to reassert its sovereignty from the EU with Brexit.

Outgoing Democrat US President Barack Obama warned: "We are going to have to guard against a rise in a crude sort of nationalism or ethnic identity or tribalism that is built around an us and them". However, some would argue that Obama's two terms in office have contributed to this situation, leading to US voters voicing their dissatisfaction with his meagre achievements.

Trump's most immediate security challenges revolve around immigration, particularly the future of America's sizeable illegal immigrant population, America's mutual defence alliances, its relations with China and Russia and energy security. Regarding immigration, it remains to be seen whether the US Department of Homeland Security and US Customs and Border Protection can allay his fears.

Ultimately Trump is foremost a businessman and his worldview is shaped by the bottom line – namely the dollar. His primary focus will be, is it good for the American economy and does it represent good value for money? To date this has clearly shaped his opinions on US foreign and security policies. This was particularly noticeable in his pronouncements regarding Mexico and Nato. The former in terms of immigration he sees as a threat to the US economy and security; the later he is of the view that the member states are not paying their way nor fully committed.

Since being declared President-elect on 8 November 2016 Trump has shown little sign of shying away from controversy. This has particularly been the case when it came to picking his cabinet. His appointees are not known for their tact and diplomacy.

The appointment of retired military general Mike Flynn, who also has an intelligence background, as National Security Adviser caused raised eyebrows. Flynn is a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan reaching the rank of Lieutenant General by 2011. President Obama appointed him Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency the following year, but he only remained in post for just two years before reportedly leaving under a cloud. He was allegedly sacked because of his management style.

Flynn has made controversial comments about Islam, calling it "a cancer" and worryingly he shares Trump's scepticism over the role of Nato. Trump has also sought the advice of retired four-star general Jack Keane who was one of the architects of the Iraq conflict troop surge that helped overcome al Qaeda in Iraq.

Congressman for Kansas, Mike Pompeo, is similarly considered a controversial choice for the key role of Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He is an advocate of the National Security Agency's highly intrusive surveillance programme and has been critical of whistle-blower Edward Snowden. Further, to the distaste of civil libertarians, Pompeo has stated that in his view enhanced interrogation techniques are legal. He also alienated Muslims when he said if they did not condemn terrorism then they were "potentially complicit".

Trump's choice for US Attorney General has also led to claims that he has approved an ill-considered candidate. Jeff Sessions, a Republican Senator from Alabama, found that his past has now come back to haunt him. He became only the second nominee in 50 years to be turned down as a federal judge in 1986 due to allegations of racism. In keeping with Trump, he takes a very hard line on immigration.

Trump's largely conciliatory tone towards Russia and Vladimir Putin has ruffled feathers among US hawks. This has led some to fear that the Trump administration will be seen as a continuation of Obama's weak approach to Moscow. Some commentators have argued that Putin has taken advantage of US interests in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East because Obama was not a bullish US President when it came to foreign policy. Ironically interventionists argue that the bully needs to be bullied and he will back off.

While Russia has been stepping up its support for Syrian President Assad, some commentators felt that it was no coincidence that within 12 hours of Trump and Putin talking, Russia relaunched its air campaign in Syria. However, key Trump ally, Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York, has said America must be prepared to threaten Russia with military force.

Closer to home, Trump faces a staggering problem over immigration. Up to 11 million people are assessed to be dwelling in the US illegally. Some of these live as regular tax-paying citizens, others function on the 'Black economy' operating outside society as much as possible. There is no quick fix for this issue. Trump sees this population as a haven for criminals and terrorists.

In the past there have been discussions about issuing an amnesty for undocumented people who have resided in the US for a certain length of time and if they are the children of illegal immigrants. This has always been thwarted by the fear that a reconciliatory approach will encourage yet more illegal immigration. Trump ally Senator Jeff Sessions since being elected has opposed every immigration bill, most notably citizenship for illegal immigrants and has opposed legal immigration.

Trump's solution to this seemingly insolvable problem has been to threaten to deport millions



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TRUMP



of undocumented immigrants and fence off the US-Mexican border. Ironically, while Trump has pointed the finger at Mexico as the source of America's illegal immigrants many of them are not Mexicans. Mexico simply acts as a transit country for impoverished migrants coming from Central America. Many of the illegal immigrants are from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Those US cities with illegal immigrant populations, known as 'sanctuary cities' run by Democrat administrations have said they will not cooperate with Trump's mass deportation policy. These include Chicago, Los Angeles and New York.

In reality the practicalities, legalities and indeed the cost of deporting millions of illegal immigrants seems almost insurmountable. The US Secretary of State would have to consider whether people would be deported back to their point of entry or their country of

origin. Either way, it could have a massively detrimental economic impact on Mexico and its Central American neighbours. Likewise, Trump has said that if Mexico cannot get its house in order then he would expect the Mexicans to foot the bill for the border fence.

Understandably Mexico has flatly refused to bear the cost and has set up a helpline for its alarmed citizens living legally and illegally in the US. Nevertheless, the President-elect's immigration team have been drafting executive orders to authorise the speedy construction of a wall along the Mexican border.

Equally worryingly for Mexico, Trump has threatened to jettison the trade agreement that underpins economic relations in North America. It is feared that if Trump slapped heavy tariffs on cheap Mexican imports and or scrapped the North American Free Trade Agreement this would be economically damaging,

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triggering yet more economic migrants heading north.

Trump has made it no secret that he views America's Muslim population as the enemy within. He sees it as a fertile recruiting ground for homegrown jihadists prepared to support the ideals of Daesh or Islamic State. Trump caused a furore when he announced during his election campaign that he would outright ban Muslims entering the US. This stance was swiftly moderated to imposing extreme vetting on those coming from countries where extremist groups are known to be active.

There are concerns that he may also push through the registration of immigrants from Muslim majority countries without seeking congressional approval. There have been suggestions that the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System brought in after 9/11 might be re-instigated. This was abandoned in 2011 and has largely been made redundant by the US Department of Homeland Security's Biometric Entry/Exit Plan presented to congress last year (see *Blade Runner Biometrics intersec*, October 2016).

Nato allies were alarmed by Trump's pronouncements on weakening their mutual defence provisions. This in part was driven by his view that America continues to shoulder the major burden for European defence and that Nato's European members should step up. Pledges to meet increased defence spending in Europe have simply not been met. Nato at least has the good grace to recognise this. Trump also feels that Nato and the EU should have done more to stand up to Moscow's actions in Crimea, Ukraine and Syria.

Outgoing President Obama has sought to reassure Europe that Washington will maintain its

commitments. He said: "Across Democratic and Republican administrations there is recognition that the Nato alliance is absolutely vital". After Trump spoke with Jens Stoltenberg, Nato's secretary General, the latter agreed that more needed to be done with regard to fairer burden sharing.

While Nato frets over Trump's faith in the utility of the alliance, Japan harbours similar concerns. The first world leader to meet the President-elect was Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. He sought reassurances that there would be no weakening of Washington's commitment to defend Japan from North Korean posturing and the burgeoning military power of China. Besides security, trade also looms large in the Pacific. Trump has signalled that he wants to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership. This trade deal was supposed to lower trade barriers with the 12 Pacific Rim nations, but like Nafta exposes America to cheap competition that undercuts US manufacturers.

Of all the trials facing Trump it may be that his own party is the most challenging. He will have difficulties funding all his pet projects. Many Republicans support cutting the US deficit and are unlikely to cooperate in congress when it comes to authorising public spending. Tackling immigration will be costly; allowing the State Department and the Pentagon to take a more robust approach to Russia and China will be costly; keeping the US military entrenched in Europe, South Korea and Japan will be costly. Many of his policy ambitions are likely to be hamstrung or simply unachievable. What is evident is that his antagonistic approach to politics and international relations is unlikely to win him many friends both at home and abroad.

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