

Does President-Elect Donald Trump Have a Strategy?

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Region: [USA](#)

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The populism which pervades US politics makes predictions difficult; including those for President Trump. This nation of 'freedom', founded on mass slavery, was always hard to take at face value. As Hillary Clinton said, US politicians need both 'a public and a private position'. Further, Trump will face great pressures to 'normalise' with the military-financial elite, once in office.

Yet there are signs that, behind the crude front, Trump wants to break with the elite consensus; a type of 'American third way' which combines aggressive military expansion and finance capital rule with a facade of social liberalism. He tapped a vein of mass resentment at this consensus, so apparent in the Wall Street and mass media backing for Hillary Clinton. Of course, Trump is eminently capable of betraying any constituency. And his claim to revive the US economy using his property development skills is just absurd.

Yet he is not a stupid man. As José Martí wrote of the US: 'We should not exaggerate its faults ... nor should these faults be concealed or proclaimed as virtues'. There are real forces at work in the former great power which require elite adjustment. The economic dynamism of the US is mostly gone and its military over-reach is evident in the Middle East.

Trump rejects the proxy war on Syria, mainly because he is realist enough to distance himself from a failed imperial venture. He pledges to work with Russia against the terrorist groups Bush and Obama deployed. He even attacks the sacred doctrine of US 'exceptionalism'. All this seems to run against the anti-Russian and 'New Middle East' projects.

Yet Trump has employed old school Pentagon types, argues for military revival and uses strong rhetoric against Iran and Cuba, focal points recently 'de-conflicted' by Obama. We should not exaggerate Obama's 'virtues'. The US was outmanoeuvred in both cases, and maintains vicious economic sanctions against those and other independent countries.

It seems almost certain that Trump will initiate a welcome retreat from the US proxy war on Syria. But to what extent this represents a shift in global strategy remains to be seen. The most hopeful sign for the rest of the world is not that Trump will change Washington from imperial monster into responsible global citizen. The hope should be seen more in a possible internal redirection of US chauvinism, which might allow the rest of the world a chance to breathe.

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