



Electoral postscript

Barack Obama will officially be inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States. It is a fantastic achievement by a young, dynamic political novice who has managed to conquer the hearts and minds of the majority of American voters and the vast majority of citizens around the world. Stryker McGuire of *Newsweek* wrote “The World Hopes for Its First President (Newsweek, Nov. 1), while Jonathan Freedland of *The Guardian* wrote that the past seven years have been a long, painful public education for the world in the importance of decisions made by the United States.

It seems the majority got what they wanted, and in the good spirit of American presidential politics, the minority (or at least the majority of the minority) has accepted the results, and starting January they will call Mr. Obama, “my president”. From the international reaction it is also clear that most would be ready to truly accept the frequently uttered description of the US president as “the leader of the free world”, something that they would not have been comfortable with during the presidency of Mr. Bush.

History will remember President Obama for who he is, and the world hopes it will also remember him for what he does once in office. Because of who he is (not just racially, or in terms of his international background, but also because of his political innocence, fresh ideas and an unshaken sense of morality and idealism) he is in a better position than any US president in history to mend the wounds of the world. His global popularity and international public support grants Obama additional political capital on the world political stage, one that is not singularly derived from the power and the status of the country he represents.

It remains to be seen whether our hopes and expectations from an Obama presidency have been simply too high. During the roundtable discussion about the US elections organized by the Center for Research and Policy Making, the participants agreed that not much will change with regard to the position of the United States vis-à-vis the Balkans and that because of the constraints on the president and the limitations to his power we may simply have exaggerated the changes the new president can introduce, both at home and abroad. But the world needs changes and so does America, and in because of that we hope our predictions were wrong.

The Center for Research and Policy Making

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