

The Presidential election

Over the long campaign so far I have kept off the topic of the Presidential election. I strongly believe that politicians and commentators from another country should keep out of other people's elections. Today I do not break my silence so far to recommend one of the candidates. US voters do not need another UK MP or commentator telling them how to vote. I was appalled by President Obama's clumsy and ill judged intervention in the UK EU referendum, though I soon realised he had if anything helped the Brexit cause he wished to damage.

I write today to make two main points. Many of us follow the debates and stories of the election because the USA is still the leader of the democratic world. The person, policies and team the voters choose matters to us all. We need a USA that is strong in the defence of freedom, a good ally and friend, who respects us and our different democratic views and decisions. This election is particularly important, because the USA has before it two champions of very different world views and policy prescriptions that mirror the debates this side of the Atlantic and have read across to us.

I will leave aside the candidates other than Mr Biden and Mr Trump, as practically all UK and European media do as if they do not exist. I accept the polls and past history suggests the two main party candidates will command well over 90% of the vote between them and only those two have any chance of winning.

I will also leave aside all the character and behaviour issues which are part of the US debate because both sides have chosen to make character a big issue. Chance and often unfortunate or unpleasant remarks are in the USA as in the UK treated with undue fascination with extreme reactions to words, when what matters more for US voters and the wider world is what use would either man make of the large powers of the office of President if elected.

The essence of the debate between the two revolves around two major disagreements. The first is rooted in the immediate background. Mr Trump stands for livelihoods and Mr Biden for lives. The President argues fear of CV 19 is overdone and there are limits to what government can do to grant people immunity so he favours getting the USA fully back to work and a more normal life. Mr Biden believes the virus needs strong state powers to block social contact and shut down business that thrives on it to stop the spread and so bring the death rate down. Damage to jobs is a price worth paying to stop or delay infection. These two contrasting views are also very prevalent in our own country.

The second is their attitude to world government and the so called international rules based order. Mr Biden for example agrees with the fashionable consensus that climate change is the most crucial problem besetting our world, and wishes the USA to tread the EU and UN route to closing down the oil, gas and coal industries and forcing a rapid transition to electrical power at home and in transport. Mr Trump backs cheap energy and

defends all the jobs dependent today on fossil fuels and fossil fuel using vehicles and machines. He sees that as part of the prosperity machine he sought to unleash.

I will look in a later post at some of the other big differences, especially in foreign policy, their attitude to military intervention and different approaches to the Middle East, terrorism and borders. Be in no doubt this is a big moment in the history of the advanced world and in its impact of the democracies on world politics.