

How the world is changing

The advent of Mr Trump on the world diplomatic scene is making some big changes.

Mr Trump has in many ways a very conventional US view of the world . He sees his main allies as the UK in Europe, Japan in the Far East, and Israel in the Middle East. He tells Israel he wants them to reach a settlement with the Palestinians, but he no longer insists on what that settlement might look like. He warns China on trade, and is friendly towards Taiwan. He condemns the harsh words and warlike gestures of North Korea. He is keen to tackle the persistent large trade surpluses run by China and Germany, which he sees as disrupting the world economy and fair commerce. He wants a world of bilateral relations between nations, rather than complex diplomacy between jostling regional power blocs. The US has traditionally been suspicious of international bodies taking too much power, and has often found itself in disagreement with the liberal consensus that tends to dominate in those institutions.

The biggest change he is proposing in US foreign policy is the reappraisal of the strength and helpfulness of the EU. Where Mr Obama saw the EU as a benign force, and looked to Mrs Merkel to be his best ally in return for his support for the supranational body, Mr Trump is concerned. He sees the dangers of an inadequately resourced European defence activity that weakens NATO further but still expects US military capacity to be the guarantor of the peace. He is concerned about the low level of the Euro allowing Germany to build a colossal export surplus. He sees how the current level of EU integration is creating a force against it in rising independence movements around the continent. He is doubtless not impressed that the IMF has run up large bills lending to the weaker member states of the Eurozone, when the zone overall is rich enough to be able to handle its own financing.