

# It may be a long time until we reach the other side of this dark valley

Opinion | BY DOUGLAS ROCHE | The Hill Times  
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EDMONTON—A 28-year-old woman I know is “heartbroken” at what the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president portends for the world: the agenda for peace will be trampled and militarism will reign. A specialist in climate change issues, she’s despondent that Canada’s defence spending will skyrocket under Trump’s demands, robbing future generations of the funds necessary to combat global warming and to protect everyone’s health. Pointing to Trump’s egregious conduct, she laments: “Boys are being taught that this is how you act to succeed.”

What can I tell her in this dark hour of catastrophic misjudgment by the American people?

First of all, I have no intention of trying to soothe her with placatory words. She sees her professional future crumbling. I know the feeling, for often in my long professional life, I have had the feeling that the forces of evil are just too much, and too often triumph over goodness. Trump’s victory—based on glorifying the powerful and de-humanizing the weak—reinforces the ancient Roman saying: if you want peace, prepare for war.

All my life, I have believed that if you want peace, you must prepare for peace. This means standing up to the powerful who demand weapons to protect themselves while the marginalized are left to beg for crumbs from the tables of the rich. The circle of death and exploitation seems to go on and cannot be stopped. Humanity, fallen, cannot lift itself out of the abyss.

I do have such thoughts, and I would be false to my young friend if I did not admit it. But I overcome them by recognizing the blossoming of intelligence that is a chief characteristic of our time. Just because he won does not mean that Trump speaks for all Americans; after all, some 70 million people voted against him. We are not fated to Trump’s dark view. Rather, we must join with the millions of people who understand that our world has become a human community interconnected in every sphere of activity, and we have

the communications and political structures to enable us to interact. This is an empowering discovery, no matter how the American election turned out. It is the trend-line of history we must pay attention to, not just the results of one election. The hope for the future I am offering my friend is by no means an empty gesture of consolation. Rather, it is a call to recognize that the immense changes involved in moving the world from the old culture of war to a new culture of peace require a long period of time, perhaps even a century. The new enlightenment will not descend upon either the public or the political decision-makers overnight. We have to slog our way through the marshes.

My friend worries that she will be of retiring age before progressive policies take hold. Again, I have been there. I've had to learn that hope is not something delivered to you on a platter. It is in working to energize the political process that we find hope and strength. Hope is best understood as a verb, connoting an active desire to fulfil an expectation. We fail, we suffer, but we go on.

The worst mistake is to feel that we are alone. Only a few days ago, the Summit of the Future was held at the United Nations where all countries adopted a Pact for the Future. It promised to create a safer, more peaceful and sustainable world for future generations. This pact, supported by nations and peoples around the world, is greater than the Make America Great Again movement.

It's true that Trump has mesmerized a big chunk of the American public, but he does not have progressive nations with him, even though he will try to bully them. Trump is a last gasp of a dying culture, not the forerunner of the new age.

Yes, he will dominate Canadian policy in dramatic ways. Our trade with the U.S. may suffer. He will try to turn our government into a sycophantic supporter. He will underscore NATO's false claim that nuclear weapons are the "supreme guarantee" of security. He will dominate Canadian newscasts. It may be a long time until we reach the other side of this dark valley.

I want to tell my young friend that I, too, am suffering. I will not reach the world of my vision. Trump has got in my way. But, like myself, my friend must take heart that our personal participation in developing the human security agenda is the indisputable requirement of our times. Hope is its own reward and hope is how we survive.