

Chicago — the rise and revolt of the city state

Like many other leading cities, the Windy City is a global player that thrives on openness



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It has been **tempting of late to proclaim that we are witnessing the end of globalisation**, that a resurgent populism feeding on economic anxiety signals an era is over.

That may turn out to be true and there is no doubt that the election of Donald Trump as US president and the UK referendum vote to leave the European Union ought to be cause for reflection.

But consider the message that cities are sending and you can arrive at a very different conclusion.

The votes in the US and the UK have highlighted the large gap between urban areas — with their cosmopolitan elites — and a disgruntled electorate in the hinterland.

Yet that gap is not always put into context.

Chicago, like **every leading population centre in the US, rejected Donald Trump**. His rival, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, won 83 per cent of the vote in the city and 2,018 of its 2,069 voting precincts.

In fact she swept the vast majority of cities in the US on her way to securing some 2.7m more votes than the Republican president-elect nationally. The US's quirky electoral college system meant that margin was not enough for Mrs Clinton to win the election.

As American journalist Alec MacGillis tweeted recently, Mrs Clinton's national 2.7m-vote margin was equivalent to the population of Chicago.

And what of the 80,000 vote-margin in three important swing states — Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — that took Mr Trump to victory? That is about the same number of people that it takes to fill a US sports stadium on any given weekend.

Does that matter given Mr Trump's victory and the **new realities** he brings with him?

Well, yes.

According to Brookings researchers, the 472 US counties that supported Mrs Clinton in the 2016 election generated almost two-thirds of the US's economic output.

Cities also, according to Ivo Daalder, president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, represent what we should start seeing as emerging global powers and the emerging defenders of globalisation.

Put another way — what is happening now is **the return of the city state**.

Mr Daalder is a former US ambassador to Nato and served in the White House during the presidency of Bill Clinton.

He is an interested party. However, he also presents a **compelling case for the political battles in the western world today** being not about right vs left, **but between advocates of open or closed economies**. **Cities like Chicago, he argues, are global players that thrive on openness.**

The Windy City is the world's fourth-largest Mexican city, in terms of the ethnic origin of its inhabitants, and has long been home to a vast eastern European population.

Its orchestras and museums survive thanks to its embrace of the artists that come from across the globe. Its world-class universities have global alumni networks.

“Cities are the refuge now of the cosmopolitan citizenry,” Mr Daalder says. He argues that cities are going to be the “first anchor of resistance” to those who want to close borders and limit exchanges of culture, goods or people.

There are **already signs of that resistance**. Soon after Mr Trump's election, thousands of protesters took to the streets in Chicago. Echoing leaders of other leading cities, **Rahm Emanuel**, the mayor, has promised that Chicago will continue to be a "sanctuary city" for immigrants despite the incoming Trump administration's vows to round up illegal immigrants.

"Chicago has been a city of immigrants since it was founded. We have always welcomed people of all faiths and backgrounds and, while the administration will change, our values and our commitment to inclusion will not," Mr Emanuel declared soon after the election.

That revolt is just getting started. But there are other underlying reasons to be hopeful for cities — and globalisation.

Chicago has been a city of immigrants since it was founded

Although the overall number of people living in Chicago has been declining, **the population in its downtown areas has been growing rapidly** as young professionals and retirees have fed demand for residential developments.

That inner city residential revival mirrors a trend in other US cities. Even second-tier cities are seeing more people choosing to live in their inner cores rather than suburbs or surrounding areas.

Cities like Chicago have higher proportions of better educated residents. Some 70 per cent of high school graduates in the US pursue a tertiary education of some kind and polls show that people's support for world trade and globalisation grow as they become more educated and better able to compete in a global economy.

Such trends did not help the defenders of globalisation — and open economies — prevail politically in 2016 and much damage could still be done by the surging populists. But it is too early for advocates of openness despair. Those very same trends could well be enough to ensure the world has a more open future than we are prone to imagine now.