

Many of my friends, who self-identify as liberal democrats, hold two thoughts in their heads that are both not true at the same time. First, this group believes that the government can solve society's problems. They believe the problems of poverty, social injustice, and the like can be greatly alleviated if the correct policies are adopted and executed well. That is, good governance can play a heroic role.

The second idea that my liberal democratic friends strongly believe is that elections continually produce a series of horrible leaders. There is a lot of support among this group for impeaching President Trump, mostly because they see him as unfit for the office. They believed that George W. Bush was not up to the job and even thought that Ronald Regan was not smart enough to be president – even though he was a two-term governor of California.

My liberal democratic friends believe the government will perform heroic tasks if we can only get the right people in place. In their minds, the past failures of government programs were not due to a failure in the government's ability; instead, they claim we just need better people doing the job. They do have a point. Certainly, great leaders can accomplish great things. I would argue the greatest world leader since World War

II was China's Deng Xiaoping, who initiated economic reforms that have brought millions out of poverty. In China, a great leader can emerge and because of his nearly absolute power, he can do a lot of good. Of course, China runs the risk of getting an all-powerful leader who is awful and who can do a lot of damage and perhaps even destroy the regime.

In the United States, our system allows us to weather a bad leader much better than China could. The other branches of government, businesses, and people in general all have significant decision making ability, so that a bad president, at least one who does not lead us into war, can only do so much damage. On the flip side, a great president can only do so much good because of the limited power we give our leaders.

Further, I think my liberal democratic friends will admit that democracies often do not produce great leaders. This leaves my friends with two options. They can ignore the pattern of the election results and hope for better electoral outcomes in the future. However, this is a faith based on how they believe things should be rather than an accurate assessment of reality. This hope will also leave the liberal democrats consistently disappointed. Another option is that they can start from the premise that they will not be happy with the elected officials. With that as a given, they can move on from hoping for better election results in the future to thinking about how they can help make the world a better place given the crop of elected officials that a democracy will generate. The conversations among the liberal democrats will move to issues like: What constraints should we place on elected officials? How can we make elected officials more accountable? What solutions can outside institutions like civic groups or churches contribute toward solving various problems?

By accepting the world as it is, rather than how feel it should be, we can all play a more effective part in moving the world in the direction of where we believe it should be.

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