

It seems that this presidential election was unique to say the least. A shockingly high percentage of the people polled before the election had unfavorable opinions of both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. I have heard many people say that if Trump won the election, they were going to leave the country. Others, while not quite willing to emigrate, were disgusted by the prospect that Hillary could be the next president. Regardless of whether a democrat or republican had won this presidential election, about half of the electorate would have seen impending doom on the horizon.

Most of this worry is overblown. In a country like China, they really need a good leader, and if they do not get one, they are in trouble. The leader in China can make decisions that have to be followed, even if most other government officials know in their hearts that these decisions will lead to disastrous results. In the US, our founding fathers knew that we could end up with bad presidents, and they took the appropriate precautions to limit the damage that bad presidents could cause. A president cannot just make a law. The president has to get both the Senate and the House to pass a law before he or she is able to sign it. Even if the president can convince the legislature to go along with a bad idea so that it becomes law, there is a chance that the Supreme Court will strike it down if they determine that it is unconstitutional. In general, the president is not the voice of the government, but only one voice, and it is a voice that can be shouted down by the other branches of government.

Also, many of the important decisions that are made in our country are not made by government officials.

When Apple decides what features will be in the next version of the iPhone, it is the employees and leaders of Apple who will make this decision, not the president of the United States. When drug companies decide which vaccinations and drugs they should develop, the president is not part of these discussions. In short, most of the important economic decisions in our economy are made without input from the president.

Further, our country has had no shortage of bad presidents. My list of bad presidents includes President Wilson, who some historians have convinced me should be blamed for getting us into World War I. It also includes Andrew Jackson, who openly defied a ruling of the Supreme Court and failed to renew the charter of a national bank, which caused quite a bit of economic hardship at the time. Most likely, either presidential candidate this time around would not have been as bad as the presidents topping my bad president list. Even if they were just as bad as the bad presidents on my list, history has shown that our country is remarkably resilient. We have institutions that limit the damage a bad president can do. We also have a system that is very good at getting rid of bad leaders. We get a chance to depose of a bad president after four years, and the worst case scenario is that we only get a particular bad leader for 8 years because a constitutional amendment prevents presidents from serving more than two terms.

Finally, it seems pretty close to impossible to predict which presidents will be good and which ones will be bad. Herbert Hoover may have been the most qualified person to ever become president. However, he certainly did not manage the events leading up to the Great Depression very well. On the other side of the spectrum, Abraham Lincoln was a one term congressman who served in office 10 years before he was elected president. Given his lack of experience, many people at the time were concerned that he was not up for the job, but historians always include him as one of our best presidents. After this election, my luggage will remain in the attic and I see nothing to do but cross my fingers and hope for the best.

DR. JOE MCGARRITY is a Professor of Economics at the University of Central Arkansas and he can be reached at [joem@uca.edu](mailto:joem@uca.edu)