Why American presidents matter

The zeitgeist of the world is infused by the character of the US leader. Biden will bring back the civility and generosity that the American spirit is associated with.

You make your people dispirited.” Fortunately, Mr Carter was succeeded by the two-term Ronald Reagan, another admirer of Mr Lee. I was present when they met in the White House. Still, as a Singapore diplomat in Washington and New York during Mr Reagan’s era, I experienced the condescension the liberal media displayed towards him. However, history has been very kind to Mr Reagan, especially because of his spectacular victory over the Soviet Union.

Mr Reagan was succeeded by another great friend and admirer of Mr Lee, George H. W. Bush. I was present in a small room in St Petersburg, Russia, in the late 1990s, when Mr Bush confirmed that the No. 1 leader he admired in the world was Mr Lee. I reported this to him. Sadly, Mr Bush became a one-term president, and his departure was another huge blow to Mr Lee.

The point of these stories is a simple one. The selection of an American president has huge consequences for the world, and Singapore.

WHAT BIDEN OFFERS

Indeed, given the overwhelming power of America, especially in the media and communication dimensions, the zeitgeist of the world is infused by the character and personality of the American president.

Donald Trump’s narcissistic and self-absorbed personality has deprived the world of a major source of inspiration, especially after Barack Obama.

So what does the election of Joe Biden bring to the world? Will good times return? The short answer is yes and no.

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