

**Thumbnail Image:**



Dec 16, 2016 by **Markos Kounalakis**

## **Trump's Trip Abroad: An Important Signal** <sup>[1]</sup>

Barbara Streisand and Lena Dunham may be some of the higher profile Trumpfugees leaving the country and heading to Justin Trudeau's Canada. What is less certain is if a President Donald Trump will make Ottawa his first foreign port of call — a long-standing presidential and foreign policy tradition.

Post-election, Trudeau quickly called to congratulate Trump on his victory and tweeted, "(W)e agreed to meet soon to keep building the Canada-US relationship."

Trump may want to use the high-visibility first trip to do something other than affirm tradition and reflect the importance and strength of U.S.-Canadian ties. He may want to make a grand strategy statement, letting the world know he is going to shake-up the global status quo.

Once in office, Ronald Reagan began the tradition of new U.S. presidents making Canada the first foreign presidential visit. George W. Bush notably broke from this tradition, making his first stop Mexico, a country he knew well. He also hoped his trip and Cinco de Mayo parties

on the White House lawn would attract Latino voters to the Republican Party.

Trump has already been to Mexico, met with President Pena Nieto, gotten a great presidential photo-op and made his talking points. It is unlikely he will be heading south of the border first.

Making a splash abroad will likely require a large rally — similar or bigger than candidate Barack Obama's visit to Berlin in the summer of 2008 — and may be chosen based on the right mix of pomp, circumstance, strategy and significance.

If two big border nations are knocked out of the running for the primary reception of America's new head of state, where might he go first?

There are any number of early supporters in other countries who could be rewarded and elevated by a presidential visit. The scramble to send invitations to Trump Tower has already begun.

U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May is considering an invitation on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II. Trump's friendship with and preference for Brexit leader Nigel Farage as Britain's next diplomatic envoy will require Trump to balance Buckingham Palace pageantry, the "special relationship," Brexit forces and a potentially restive urban populace before deciding to touch down in London Town.

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Numerous foreign leaders supported Trump's candidacy early on, mostly opposition politicians. A few, however, are running countries. They include Hungary's Viktor Orban, North Korea's Kim Jong Un, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and, of course, Russia's Vladimir Putin. Rewarding them with an American inaugural visit would be revolutionary and could set in motion dramatic changes in how America's global relations, alliances and power balancing is perceived and conducted.

Big, bold, groundbreaking unprecedented moves were the hallmark of Trump's campaign. Trump's brand of politics is proudly unconventional — from his brand management business to his Fifth Avenue transition tower to his tweet-centric campaign.

Where will he go? Japan, Russia, China, Italy, Germany, France — maybe even India, Australia or Argentina? Tipping favor toward any of the G8 member countries other than Canada for a "first visit" would create both new foreign policy opportunities and challenges.

To avoid granting any nation the favor of a first foray, however, he may decide never to leave the country at all, requiring all foreign leaders visit him at Trump Tower, Mar-a-Lago, the Trump National Golf Club Bedminster ... or maybe even the White House.

***Note from the CPD Blog Manager: This piece originally appeared at Online Athens.***

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