



RYAN EVANS

Founder, CEO, Editor - War on the Rocks

Jim HOAGLAND

Our next speaker represents a different segment. As Mr Wang went through the list of reasons why he perceived the possibility that Mr Donald Trump would win, I thought they were the same reasons that we in the media establishment in America saw as the reasons why Hilary would win. It has been a period of real soul searching in the media in the United States, to figure out how we did not get the election results right to put it mildly, and how America has changed so much, there were parts of America that we in the media did not seem to recognise.

Our final presentation comes from a younger American, who is very active in the world of blogs and online journalism. It is Ryan Evans, who is the founder of 'War on the Rocks' and the Chief Editor of 'War on the Rocks', who will give us the perspective of perhaps a different segment of America.

Ryan EVANS

Thanks so much for having me. I am going to try to make it interesting. Unfortunately, I am not going to sing like my co-panellist.

I think to be pretty candid, we have to be prepared for a range of outcomes. It can be very difficult to predict what can happen and I think that range of outcomes is very broad. I think that it starts with something akin to the George W. Bush administration but perhaps more disorganised with an extra side of mayhem. On the other end of the spectrum, I think we actually have to be prepared for the breakdown of democracy in the United States and perhaps even the introduction of some form of autocracy.

If you think I am being too extreme, witness President-elect Trump's recent comment on how, in his words, 'We absolutely need to register Muslims living in the United States'. Just think how new a problem that is for us to be dealing with, to have an American person who is about to be the United States President saying something like that openly. Then we have his Chief of Staff go on TV the next day and say, 'We cannot rule that out'.

I think something we have seen in the development of past autocratic systems, which is not to say that it is definitely what we are seeing now but I think we have to be prepared for the possibility. You do not just see top-down policy changing and hardening society, you also see people that consider themselves the followers of the leader working towards what that man says. Donald Trump says a lot of things and then he contradicts himself the next day. Then, he says it again, as he says, he 'has the best words'. However, when you constantly say extreme things and if people are working to realise your vision, that makes many things permissible, not just in the federal bureaucracy but in American society.

I think a lot of this really hinges on the answer to two questions: is Donald Trump the megalomaniacal borderline psychopath that he plays on television, yes or no? Secondly, can our institutions restrain him? If the answer to that first question is yes and the answer to the second question is no, then we have a problem. Maybe I am being alarmist but I think these are valid questions.

As far as how it affects US policy towards the world, again we have a range of options. I think what we are already seeing develop in the transition and the appointment of the national security team are two factions. This is consistent



with how Trump has run his businesses: he creates these sort of two internal factions and pits them against each other. We have what I will call the Priebus faction, named after the poor person he is appointing as his Chief of Staff and the Bannon faction, the head of Breitbart, who is the Chief Strategist.

The first faction represents the more establishment part of the Republican Party while the second represents the more extreme voices or what has come to be called the alt-right. My predictions have been worth pretty much nothing in this election cycle but I predict he will spilt his appointments fairly evenly between those two camps. This will create a lot of internal tension on major questions of policy. Then, whichever faction sort of wins out will determine policy in that area.

I really think a lot of the major policy questions have been discussed on this panel. However, I think the biggest one is the United States' attitude and approach towards international trade and its relationship with China. I actually think this will be far more determinative of what the world looks like than its relationship with Russia.

I do not think that Donald Trump has an ideology on foreign policy, I think he has strong antipathies and that makes him all the more unpredictable. He has expressed a lot of antipathy towards China. He has accused China of doing everything from destroying industrial America and fabricating climate change, which is my favourite. He also does not express a huge amount of discomfort with what China is doing in the South China Sea.

It could very well be that we see an administration that is very aggressive on trade and waging some sort of a trade war with trade protectionism targeting China but an administration that is also willing to accommodate what China views as its interests in South and East China Seas. I think that all options are open at this point. A lot will be determined by fights within these factions and the sort of cauldron of Trump's ego.

Finally, I was asked to say something about how someone of my generation views this issue. I am just barely a millennial. I was born in 1983. I do not like to admit to being a millennial but I suppose I am. I will tell you that a lot of my friends. I am an independent; I am not a Democrat or a Republican. However, a lot of my friends on both sides of the aisle of my generation sort of express the same profound disappointment with those who came before us. In particular, the baby boomers who we do not really view as being good stewards of our country's power and general affairs.

I do think that there is a real generational divide in the United States. How we approach politics, how we approach the economy and how we approach entitlements, benefits, social issues. I think you are going to seeing that come into sharper relief over the next four years.

Finally, I will just close with one question. I had the misfortune of being around the table with a bunch of political scientists before I came here. If this was an audience of historians, you would have laughed at that one. One of them made a really good point, this puts to the test the Great Man theory of international relations. Is a country's trajectory and choices really about agency of the man on top or woman on top or is it about structural issues and the structure of the international system? I think the next four years will perhaps be the best case studies we will have for that question that we have had in a long time. I will close there and I look forward to your questions.

Jim HOAGLAND

Ryan, thank you.