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We are going to move now from East Asia to, what might be called Eurasia. Needless to say, Russia has loomed large in the new Trump Presidency, but in a way I do not think Donald Trump ever anticipated. Rather than a breakthrough like we saw in the relationship between Nixon and Brezhnev in the late 1960s and early 1970s, for example, or Reagan and Gorbachev in the 1980s, what Trump confronts is not a new era of cooperation with Vladimir Putin, but rather a scandal in Washington that is reaching almost Watergate-type proportions. The question I have for our Russian participant this morning, is: has Vladimir Putin written off Donald Trump, or does he still believe it is possible for the two leaders, in Moscow and Washington, to somehow salvage some form of cooperation, whether in the Middle East with Syria or in Europe with the Ukraine? To help us address this critical question, we have Alexander Panov, who serves on the advisory board of the Security Council of the Russian Federation and heads the department of diplomacy at an important Russian think-tank, MGIMO.

Alexander PANOV

Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I would like to say that many in Russia would see this humour and amusement in Washington these days, so many serious people in Washington are engaged in a very interesting and important activity, trying to find a black Russian cat in a completely dark room, where there is no cat at all. We wish them every success and it seems to be an endless story. More importantly, we want to understand who Mr. Trump is. In my view, he is the leader of a yellow, blond revolution in the United States. At last, the United States has its own colour revolution and I think he represents some, though not all, of the middle class living in middle America, who are tired of the Washington American establishment. That is why the American establishment is so much against him.

What happened and why he was elected, was because many Americans were tired of seeing two families, Clinton and Bush, in charge. Two days ago, there was information that a year before the election, Clinton and the Democratic Party had already decided that she would be the candidate and all the primaries were useless, so Sanders never had a chance from the beginning. Maybe it is real American democracy, I do not know.

In my view, Trump has foresight and the ability to predict. His weak points are about America's external position and internal development. He wants to revive American production capabilities to make America economically strong once again, and to think about American interests, more than those of its allies at American expense. He thinks that multilateral agreements do not represent the interests of America, so he has started to move out of the loop of international organisations and agreements, such as UNESCO, the Paris Agreement, TPP. There are now rumours that the US is thinking about leaving the WTO. He is trying to change things with bilateral agreements that are much more in favour of the United States.

It is interesting that after the fall of the USSR, the American establishment was very happy and euphoric, because there was no strong rival or enemy anymore and their goal was to prevent the revival of a strong Russia. The political elite in the United States missed the appearance of China as the more serious challenge to them than Russia. China can lead the reorganisation – during the Gorbachev era, we called it Perestroika – of the world order in its favour, pushing the United States aside. Xi Jinping said in Dallas this year, that it was not globalisation that was the source of the problems, but the absence of an adequate system of global governance for these positive processes. The Chinese started to change the situation according to their views and the slogan of the United States of freedom and democracy is challenged by the Chinese slogan, justice and equality.

You may say that there is a new ideological competition between American-style capitalism and Chinese-style socialism. Trump is a businessman and he showed during his campaign that he was afraid of China's economic might.

For him, Russia was and is not a threat to the United States. Nuclear war is impossible, and Russia is not strong enough economically to challenge America. China knew this and supported Clinton. I am not warning you about China, it is an objective process. Trump intended to be tough with China, but he has now been forced by American bureaucracy to change this policy and be tough with Russia. However, the tougher he is with Russia, the closer it moves to China. Russia is not interested in a conflict with the United States, because what would it be for and why? Russia does not understand why the United States is so anti-Russian, which was the case even before the election.

I think that because of internal problems, Trump now and for the future, while he might be successful on the economic front, in general is already a lame duck. I call it lame rabbit, because he is jumping in a variety of directions and it is now difficult to catch him because he is unpredictable in his movements. He does not have full power and cannot produce a regional strategy, let alone a global one. The best example is North Korea; shouting diplomacy is not what we expect from a great leader of a great country. There is also the Middle East, which we discussed yesterday, where there is also no leadership from the United States.

I think that we all need a strong, just America, that is not selfish. We need an America that can have good ideas on how to organise the world order after the Cold War, but we do not see leadership of that kind. I am very sorry to say that there is no communication between Putin and Trump and they have only met once, on the sidelines of some conference. Political dialogue on all levels has almost frozen. If witch hunts continue in the United States I cannot see a possibility of improving bilateral relations. I only hope that this history of Russia in the United States will not finish in the same way as in the 1950s during the Cold War, when the defence minister jumped from the window and killed himself while crying, 'The Russians are coming'.

Richard BURT

Thank you, Mr. Panov. I was interested in your invention of the lame rabbit; I will have to remember that. I must also tell you, that unlike Mr. Roy, you will not get a job offer as a roving Trump ambassador.