



Trump is between a rock and a hard place and somebody will have to pay!

Gregory Krieg of US news channel *CNN* reported (*Last updated version: 12:53 GMT, 13th January, 2017*) tumultuous events in US politics under the headline: "What the last 48 hours told us about Trump's next 4 years." Donald Trump's first press conference in 5 months came at the same time as the start of a long series of US Senate hearings for Trump's cabinet choices who are being questioned publicly by oversight committees of the Senate, which has the constitutional power to reject the president elect's choices. *CNN's* headline addressed the question everybody is asking: what will happen after Donald Trump becomes president next week? Will he build a wall on the border with Mexico and make Mexico pay as he promised? Will there be a new relationship with Russia and China? It will not be possible to answer such questions only by studying Trump's statements, because awareness of the nature of US politics and policy formulation is also required. As an example of that, the media have reported at least 10 areas where Trump's cabinet nominees have expressed opinions at the Senate hearings that differ with what Trump has said.

It is important to remember that Donald Trump won the support of the Republican Party before he won the support of the American people, and that Donald Trump is nothing without his party, and his Party is nothing without the privileged billionaire donors and lobby groups that fund political parties in the US. Despite Trump's populist claim to have been funding his own campaign, much of the financial support still came from these privileged donors who will continue to fund his Party; in support of their, not his, policies. These same donors fund multiple think tanks to provide a web of policy analysts and experts to work with politicians to fuel the media with voices in support of desired policies. Their ongoing support will be needed to face the political challenges ahead of Trump and to maintain the support of his own Republican Party, which currently dominates both chambers of the United States Congress. However, this party is not a homogenous whole, and there are differing factions within it.

During the second Bush administration, it was the neoconservative faction that ruled the Republican Party, and it called for direct, powerful and even pre-emptive projection of US military power throughout the world and especially the Middle East. With the discrediting of the neoconservative doctrine, the Democrats took control of US policy but during two Obama administrations, a little heard of faction within the Republican Party called the 'Tea Party' rose to prominence. Organizations such as 'Citizens for a Sound Economy' and later 'Americans for Prosperity', both funded by the Koch brothers, supported 'The Tea Party', which began to mount serious opposition to Obama's economic policies.

The Tea Party faction advocates lower taxes, lower government spending and a reduction in federal government interference. These were the central principles of Trump's campaign. In matters of foreign policy, the 'Tea Party' calls for a limited form of the doctrine of 'American exceptionalism' based on the idea that as the US was born of revolution, it is inherently different from all other countries and is superior to them. However, in contrast to the former neoconservatives of the Bush era, the 'Tea Party' is skeptical about its ability to create a free and liberal world in its own image. Likewise, Trump has emphasized America's uniqueness and superiority in the world without accepting moral leadership or responsibility for it. This view was also clear during the US Senate hearing for Trump's nominee for Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, who resisted intense questioning from Senator Marco Rubio about human rights violations and when asked: "Is Vladimir Putin a war criminal?" Tillerson claimed not to have enough knowledge to make a judgment and refused to make any commitment to enforcing human rights when questioned about other countries as well.

The 'Tea Party' view is that the US should not be a global policeman, but the views expressed by Trump go too far beyond this, which explains why he was only able to win the support of the Republican Party at a very late stage in his campaign. The Koch brothers, for example, who *Forbes* lists as the second richest family in America, donated hundreds of millions of dollars to support the 'Tea Party' movement. Yet Charles Koch, who is the ninth richest man in

the world, complained about both Trump and Clinton at the Fortune Brainstorm Tech Conference on the 11th of July, 2016: "Are you going to put a gun to my head? If I had to vote for cancer or heart attack why would I vote for either?" Koch's dilemma with Trump is that although Trump supports tax cuts, he has promised to do something else that Koch has called "a monstrosity." Trump promises to end free-trade agreements such as 'NAFTA' and impose tariffs on imports, and this could be very harmful to Koch Industries.

Trump upset some of the powerful capitalists in the US by his trade agenda, which risks sparking trade wars, in order to gain the support of another branch of America's right wing that is much more radical than the 'Tea Party' faction of the Republican party. This extreme movement is the alternative right, which is also called the 'alt right'. It believes that the US and its old politicians have become corrupt, and that the US is losing its racial identity and losing jobs because of cheap foreign products replacing US made ones. An example of this attitude can be found in Trump's speech at a rally in Louisiana, on the 9th of December, where he said: "We'll renegotiate our trade deals, stop the product dumping and the currency manipulation which is a disaster for our country... Every time we get going, China and others, they just knock the hell out of the value of their currency and we have to go back and back, and it just doesn't work, folks." On the 8th of December he gave a victory speech, where he said: "immigration security is now national security... We will put our people — not people from other lands, our people — back to work," and Trump still promises to build a wall to keep Mexicans out of the US.

The alternative right have also focused on ideological identity, and they have targeted Islam. Trumped gained popular support during the election with his threats against Muslim immigrants, and he continues to promote policies of the alternative right and has surrounded himself with people who share such views. Trump's campaign manager Stephen Bannon was the editor of the alternative right website called *Breitbart News*, and he was chosen immediately to be chief strategist for Trump's new administration. General Michael Flynn will be the national security adviser. Flynn published a new book called "The Field of Fight," which expounds his view that the Obama administration failed to identify the true enemy of the US, which he says is radical Islamism. This view is shared by Bannon, as well as Kathleen McFarland from *Fox News* who will be deputy national security adviser. General "Mad Dog" Mattis was chosen to be defense secretary. He is famous for saying on television in 2011: "You go into Afghanistan, you got guys who slap women around for five years because they didn't wear a veil. You know, guys like that ain't got no manhood left anyway. So it's a hell of a lot of fun to shoot them."

Despite Trump's fierce rhetoric and the appointments of those associated with the alternative right, other members of his new cabinet have been chosen from the Tea Party movement, as well as more conservative members of the Republican Party, which indicates an appeasement to keep his Party together. He has even appointed people to some positions who criticized him publicly, such as Nikki Haley for US representative to the UN, who said during the campaign: "Mr. Trump has definitely contributed to what I think is just irresponsible talk". Trump also named Betsy DeVos for education secretary, who said about him in March: "I don't think Donald Trump represents the Republican Party."

The more the various forces supporting Trump can be understood, the more US policy can be made explicable over the next 4 years. As long as the Tea Party agenda and the alternative right agendas overlap, the US will move quickly and powerfully, with Trump's Republican Party dominating the US Congress, to pass new legislation, while the media are kept distracted with Trump's wild accusations and distortions of truth. The Republicans in Congress are now happily engaged with Trump to end one of Obama's most cherished achievements, which was the establishment of the 'Affordable Care Act', also called 'Obamacare', and this and other agreed projects will likely keep the new president and the Republican Party as a whole working together harmoniously through the early stages of Trump's presidency. However, where the agendas do not overlap, such as on free-trade, there will be disputes, and Trump will be forced to make difficult choices in the months ahead.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Dr. Abdullah Robin**