

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** Thank you for brining this quote to us, Mira.

**Sergei Strokan:** I think this is brilliant analysis.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** And I believe we could well use a no less brilliant analysis from **Ted Galen Carpenter - Vice President for Defense and Foreign Policy Studies at the Cato Institute in Washington DC.**

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** *Mr. Carpenter, thank you very much for joining us. There were some comments coming that Barack Obama's rating was following very low, but also there were some optimistic comments. What is the truth? How do you see the whole situation about the elections?*

**Ted Galen Carpenter:** It's very difficult to say. Elections are inherently unpredictable in this country. The most likely scenario is that the election night will be bad for the Democrats - a sort of a catastrophe. In other words, the Democrats will probably lose control over the House of Representatives and probably retain control of the Senate, with a reduced majority. In terms of foreign policy, the biggest impact of the election will be on the prospects for the new START Treaty. That was going to be a difficult ratification fight even with the composition of the current Senate. And with the Senate that is going to be more republican makes the prospects for ratification even more remote.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** *Sound serious. But, Mr. Carpenter, what was that brought Mr. Obama's rating so low? Was it mostly issues of domestic policy or foreign policy?*

**Ted Galen Carpenter:** Overwhelmingly domestic policy. When voters are asked to select their most important issue, even the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan rarely make the top 10. All of the top issues tend to be domestic issues, with the state of the economy being the number one issue, followed by the health care reform that is a highly controversial issue. General foreign policy is hardly on the radar screen at all in terms of these elections.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** How typical is that for the midterm November elections? I mean the choice of high priority issues?

**Ted Galen Carpenter:** Reasonably, typical domestic policy issues tend to dominate, but the degree of this dominance in this election is unusual. Normally, at least one or two foreign policy issues make the top five or six in terms of importance to voters. This time the focus is just so overwhelmingly on domestic concerns.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** How would you explain that?

**Ted Galen Carpenter:** The state of the economy, primarily. During the worst economic situations that we had, Americans are worried, insecure and rather upset that the economy has become this bad and remains this bad.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** If we go back in history, it is not Mr. Obama, who is to blame, it all started several years ago before he became President?

**Ted Galen Carpenter:** Voters tend to have short memories and they hold the current policy-makers accountable for conditions in the country, whether good or bad. One might argue that it is a bit unfair to hold Obama and the Democrats entirely responsible for the economy, but it is also true that it's been over the year and a half since the President and his Party took office and the economy has really not gone better. By some measurements it has even gone worse. So, not surprising that voters are impatient, want progress and are upset with the party that controls both the White House and the Congress.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** Are the Republicans suggesting that they've got a recipe of success that could bring the economy up in less than one-year-term?

**Ted Galen Carpenter:** The Republicans are focusing their campaign overwhelmingly on criticism of the Democrats and their handling of policies. Some Republican candidates do offer at least general outlines of an alternative, but they haven't really stressed that at all. And their message in campaign after campaign is what the Democrats have done wrong, not what the Republicans will propose differently that would be better.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** That's their soft point, isn't it?

**Ted Galen Carpenter:** Well, it is an effective campaign strategy, whether we like it or not. Negative campaigning tends to succeed much more than positive campaigning. I was reading a news story just this morning in which campaign advisers for both parties - campaign strategists - are telling candidates that positive ads, emphasizing what a candidate has done well either in the private sector or in office, are a waste of money. Voters are not in the mood to hear about that and, as one campaign strategist put it to a candidate, "you would do more good giving that money to charity, than by running a positive ad." So, the country is in a very irritated and angry mood right now.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** Apart from the system of parties, there are some brilliant economists in the U.S. and some Nobel Prize winners. Are they coming up with their recipes, with their solutions?

**Ted Galen Carpenter:** Certainly, you get proposals from economists of various ideological persuasions, but it is hard to tell how effective some of these ideas might be. Politics tends to govern policy decisions in the government, not necessarily whether from an economic standpoint. In other words, their influence - even if they may be very bright and intelligent people - is not very great at this point.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** What would you suggest Mr. Carpenter? How would you handle this situation, how would you take the country out of that irritated mood and do some more constructive discussions?

**Ted Galen Carpenter:** I am not an expert in politics and that almost gets into the area of elective psychology. I am definitely not an expert in that. But it is very obvious right now that the country is in an angrier mood than at any time that I've seen, probably since the late 1960s and the early 1970s during the final stages of Lyndon Johnson's administration and the first term of President Richard Nixon's administration. That anger, of course, was generated primarily because of the conflict over the Vietnam War. The origin of that anger was different. But the degree of tension on the country, the degree of animosity is rather similar today to what I saw then.

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** Mr. Carpenter, thank you very much, it was really interesting talking to you.

So, it seems our times could hardly be defined as an age of reason, and this – could well be applied to the story which we are going to discuss in our next chapter - **BETWEEN THE LINES**, which takes us to the other hemisphere, to the good Old World to see how people express their protests there.

Oh, yes, social programs are cut drastically all over Europe, and there's hardly anything funny in that. But – and don't tell me I am a heartless cynic - I've run across a funny story in the Independent newspaper. The piece is about protesters, who say they express their desperation and struggle for their rights, simply by getting stripped off in public. The Independent story is about a group of people in Berlin, protesting against rising rent rates. This group has already got itself a name – Hedonistic International.

To make their protest more noticeable, they strip off, leaving on only shoes and Mickey Mouse masks to hide their faces. They paint their naked bodies with slogans such as "too expensive" and "rip off", and dance around expensive apartments to a deafening music. They also film themselves.

**Sergei Strokan:** But how do they get into those expensive apartments?

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** They pretend they're ordinary tenants, who come to view the apartments to let.

**Mira Salganik:** How about police?

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** Well, in most cases they manage to get away before the police arrive.

**Sergei Strokan:** And what's their protest?

**Ekaterina Kudashkina:** They claim that they want every estate agent and every apartment management company to be aware that if they try to rent out flats at rip-off prices, they can expect a visit from them. At least that's what one of the protesters, who named himself Denis, said on one of the videos. They run a film of their nude protest dance on Youtube the next day after the event

**Mira Salganik:** Interesting! Formally, it's really one of the cases when people get to protest against the worsening of their living conditions and their life standards going down.

**Sergei Strokan:** But Berlin is in a better position than most of the biggest European cities.