

Stacey Boateng

American Presidency

Dr. Tanya Corbin

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Mock Debate Reflection

For the mock debate, I was on the Clinton Vs. Trump team. I played the role of the chief foreign policy advisor for Hilary Clinton. In order to prepare for my role, I had to conduct in-depth research about what a foreign policy advisor's role would be in the midst of a presidential election. I also researched Clinton's chief foreign policy advisor and looked at some of the policy recommendations he had given to her. As Clinton's chief foreign policy advisor I had to not only advise her on topics to speak about, but also provide the background information and my recommendations for a strategy for each point.

I am not really sure what I thought preparing to be a foreign policy advisor would look like but I do know that I didn't expect to do as much in-depth research as I had to in order to ensure accuracy. I had to look at her views, her chief foreign policy advisor's views and the views of her opponent Donald Trump. I would say on my own time I spent between 10-14 hours total preparing for the debate. I constantly had to continue researching and elaborating on the points I wanted my candidate to touch on.

I chose my role based on the fact that I desire to one day be in the realm of foreign policy. This is what I desire to go to graduate school for. American politics was never really something that excited me as much as looking at things from a global perspective. I also chose this role due to the fact that I desire to be more behind the scenes than front and center. It was so surprising to me how much research it genuinely takes to be a foreign policy advisor. You

have to know several topics inside and out and be prepared for any curveballs the, media and your opponent might throw at you. In regards to the foreign policy questions, the success of my candidate rested mainly on my shoulders because I was the only one in charge of coaching her and preparing her for success. I found it really enjoyable to research the topics and learn more about how Hillary felt about each one. It was enjoyable for me because I actually do agree with a lot of her foreign policy. I think a pathways system to help illegal immigrants who have children here stay without the constant fear of being deported is a great idea because it ensures their safety and guarantees them a better life. She also made great points about the importance of us accepting more refugees from Syria. I think the most challenging part of this role was the fact that I constantly had to research and elaborate on points. I didn't realize how much foreign policy changes constantly and how much I had to stay on top of things in order to give my candidate the best advice.

During this process was able to learn so much about the mechanics behind the presidential debates. Everything is negotiated from where my candidate stood on the stage to the lighting, to what kind of glass she would take her water in. We also had to negotiate with the moderator what kinds of questions we wanted her to answer. I really pushed for her to be asked about immigration reform, Syria, ISIS and how Muslims have been treated in this country. I also had to work with the communications directors as they were the main ones coaching and formulating questions for her to practice with using my information. There was also a sense of pride and community in the Clinton team. We were all working together to ensure our candidate was successful and seeing all of our hard work behind the scenes play out on stage was a truly amazing experience.

The debate between Regan and Carter were extremely different from the Clinton and Trump debate. The first debate was a lot drier and about substance. There was also minimal attacking of the candidates and most of the time the candidates did not run over their time like our candidates did. During the Clinton and Trump debate, there was a lot of questions of substance but there was a lot of the candidates airing out each other's dirty laundry, for example, Hillary bringing up Trump's taxes, degrading of women, and racism. Also, Trump attacked Clinton on a number of occasions one could not possibly bear to count but a few points he brought up included her emails and several references to her husband's infidelity. I believe this made the audience more entertained and engaged. The moderator had to inform the audience to quiet down on several occasions. Both debates had similar styles in regards to the fact that the moderator asked all of the questions. The spin rooms were also very similar and the communications directors from both debates did a phenomenal job.

It is valuable to compare the two debates because I think it really does show the drastic changes that have occurred in the election process. The media now plays a monumental role in the process of elections. I also think it is interesting to see the change that has occurred in who is able to be a candidate. It went from being two men who both held some form of political office, even though Regan was an actor previously, to a woman and a reality star with no prior political experience.

If I was ever to participate in another presidential debate, I think I would still desire to be a foreign policy advisor for sure but I might explore what it would be like to be a foreign policy advisor for an older debate. I also would have loved to work with the communications directors more closely to ensure they were also prepared for the questions they would be

asked. There was a question on Guantanamo bay and Edward Snowden that none of us had bothered to research due to the fact that we didn't think it would be relevant. I would have spent more time researching other topics regardless of their relevance to the debate due to the fact that the spin room was anyone's game.

This experience although it was challenging, I believe would be extremely beneficial to political science students. I believe so because it is so important to know more about the presidential election process and this is an amazing way to see in small part what the candidates have to go through and what the team has to endure as well. I would advise a future student to really assess their strengths before choosing a role in the debate. I would tell them to research in depth any positions they felt they wanted to do and even go to their professor and ask what they thought would be the right fit. I would also advise a future student to really work with the other members of the campaign team in order to ensure everyone was united. This experience was amazing and I am so glad I was able to be a part of it.