

## Comments

### **LEE, Byong-Chul**

Assistant Professor, IFES/Kyungnam University

Good afternoon everyone. Let me begin by saying that I'm honored to join the trilateral seminar. And it's a great delight to have an opportunity to read Dr. Yu's wonderful paper, which touched upon the perspective of the Biden administration over the troubled Taiwan-China relations.

Fundamentally, I do not disagree with Professor Yu's analysis and his insight over the future of international order. In particular, with regard to America's China policy, Professor Yu predicted that the Biden administration would "walk a careful line." I agree.

Many policy experts and pundits argue that the geopolitical competition between China and the United States will continue for the next decade or two.

Although the outgoing President Donald Trump has divided America, he has received bipartisan support for his trade and technological war against China. Even George Soros, who spent millions of dollars trying to prevent Trump from being elected, has praised Trump on China. In truth, many Americans believe that China represents a threat to America.

We understand that the primary challenge president-elect Joe Biden confronts is fixing America's broken reputation not only at home but also abroad. But as you know, it's not so easy to mend the broken Empire. From Day One, President Biden and his team will face the unique circumstances, specifically, a ranging from pandemic and a changing climate that will put the world into dancer. It is my judgement that it's almost impossible to fix it completely during Joe Biden's tenure.

Sullivan grew up with four siblings in a middle-class home in Minneapolis. His father worked on the business side of the Minneapolis Star-Tribune and later at the University of Minnesota's journalism school, and his mother worked as a public school teacher. They were strict and determined that their kids prioritize education. All five Sullivan kids attended either Yale, as Jake did for undergrad and law school, or Cornell.

Biden said that "America is back." After four years of Trump's unrelenting attacks on norms and institutions, both domestic and foreign, America now needs to persuade other countries.

I am not an expert on the US-China relations, but as a researcher who is interested in the trend of the US foreign policy, I think that the Biden administration will not spend much time and efforts rebuilding the broken foreign relations in the first year of the administration. It means that it will take much more time than you expect to return on the normal path the US previously

walked on.

The Biden administration will also need to persuade the American public that foreign policy matters for more Americans beyond the elites in Washington. Given deep anxieties over the economy, especially in the midst of a pandemic, the administration will need to identify how foreign policy objectives relate to the people's concerns, such as job-creation.

In the eyes of the world, American democracy has been severely tarnished; the bungling of the pandemic has damaged American people's pride. Indeed, many of American allies seek greater strategic autonomy from the United States. America is no longer the big dog on the block. It is my bleak assessment that the emerging China's future will not be so different in nature from what it did in the past. China will likely have centrifugal forces that are strong enough to stand up against the center.

### **POPOVSKI, Vesselin**

Professor, Soka University

Thank you, Prof. Tamai, for inviting me to be a commentator in the third session of the 4th Peace Forum. I would like also to thank our colleagues in the Chinese Culture University, particularly Prof. Chao for organizing this panel on such an important topic "The Cross-Straight Relationships and Prospects after the American Presidential Election in 2020", and especially Dr. Yu, for her excellent presentation today.

I share the comment made by the first commentator, Dr. Lee from Kyungnam University, that uncertainty will continue to characterize the relationship between China and U.S.A. for some time. I would add that this uncertainty would be a result not only of the change in the U.S. Administration from Trump to Biden, but also a continuation of a global uncertainty that exists generally in international relations, where all states, including in East Asia, face tremendous challenges because of climate change, pandemics, natural disasters, nuclear proliferation etc.

The response of China to the result of the U.S. elections was mixed: on one hand Beijing was happy to see the end of Trump, whose rhetoric was anti-Chinese re. Covid-19, Huawei and other issues, and who imposed tariffs and other trade restrictions on China. But on another hand, China would not have been also unhappy with Trump staying for a second term and destroying further the U.S. power and respect in the world, effectively diminishing further the only big competitor on the global arena.

The Biden administration was not immediately welcomed by China, at one point Biden referred to President Xi as a 'thug', and this offence will not easily go away. Also Biden Administration will be more critical to the human rights record of China, much more than Trump, who never cared about human rights anywhere (apart from Venezuela) in the world. However, the new U.S. Administration also presents a chance for improving the U.S. – China relationship, as Biden will be more predictable, respectful, diplomatic, and reasonable. The two

big powers can find certain avenues for co-operation – for example on issues of sustainability, climate change, resilience to natural disasters, science, global health. China will be preparing for the U.S. re-engaging with the world on those issues and seeking possible mutual benefits.

We can expect a significant change of style in the White House once moving from an incompetent and chaotic Trump administration to a serious and reasonable Biden administration; but simultaneously we can face a sense of continuity and predictability, as Biden will run similar to Barack Obama foreign policy. Some of the early appointments – Antony Blinken as Secretary of State, Janet Yellen as Treasury Secretary, John Kerry as Climate Change Envoy – signaled such consistency and continuity from the foreign policy of Obama.

Joe Biden will inherit a very divided political situation domestically, and the biggest challenge would be whether he will be able to become a unifier of the American people, or whether the deep current divisions will persist. This will depend on the elections for the remaining two seats for senators in Georgia, to be elected in January, to find out whether the Senate will end up in the hands of a Republican narrow majority, and if so, some initiatives by Biden might face the opposition of the Senate. The fact remains that 75 millions of Trump voters would not accept a change towards multilateral foreign policy, and Biden will have to make difficult choices. If Biden can unify the divided country, we can see a stronger American global role. But if the domestic divisions persist, the American global role might continue to decline, as it did during the last 4 years. Certainly this is what China (and also Russia) would like to see – weakening of the American global power.

To sum up, Biden would be more predictable and more respected by the Chinese, who will be expecting some relief of the imposed by Trump tariffs, in exchange of Chinese co-operation on climate change, cyber-security, North Korea etc. I fully agree with Dr. Yu presentation in this regard. However, China should also expect a firm voice from Washington DC on human rights, and these include criticism for the mass detention of Uyghur minority people in Xinjiang, and for attempts to disrespect the special status of Hong Kong.

The UN Secretary-General yesterday made it clear that in the midst of the worst global pandemic Covid-19 we should not reduce our commitments to other huge global challenges – climate change, nuclear non-proliferation and cyber security. Covid-19 presented the humanity with five crucial tests: test of leadership, test of international co-operation, test of medical capacity, test of human-human relationship and test of human relationship with nature. East Asia showed an excellent example of dealing with Covid-19, and if we examine the responses of various governments to Covid-19, we will find out certainly proper measures and good governance of Taiwan, South Korea and Japan (our three countries), but not as good and proper response in the U.S., Latin America, the U.K. and some other countries in Europe. It is important that all countries ‘build back better’ and recover their economies and public health systems in the post-pandemic world.

The new Joe Biden Administration will declare that it would like to see China not as an

adversary, but as a competitor. The U.S. – once moving to more multilateral foreign policy - would need the co-operation of China on all big global issues – non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (deals with North Korea and Iran), cyber-security, climate change and implementation of the SDGs.

In the end of this excellent 4th Peace Forum I would like once again to commend the excellent paper presented by Dr. Yu on a difficult but very important topic, and finish by offering my hope – similar to the one in her presentation - how crucial will the next 4 years be with the new U.S. Administration able to work with China and manage peaceful cross-strait relationships in East Asia.

Thank you for your attention.