



CIGS Daniel Sneider Seminar

“Managing Japan-U.S. Relations in the Era of Donald Trump”

(Summary of Q&A)

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Venue: CIGS Meeting Room, Tokyo, Japan

Questioner 1: With regards to the new tariffs revealed in terms of the theft of intellectual property, since this is a big issue, I want to know whether this is a unilateral project with Trump. Is there any other pressure from the top tier guys in the United States which has forced him to take this decision?

Daniel Sneider: This is not a Mr. Trump issue. The Obama administration spent a lot of time raising this issue as well and so has the American Chamber of Commerce in Beijing. I live and work in Silicon Valley where people have been talking about intellectual property issues and theft and piracy in China for a long time. A lot of people including myself are happy that the administration has taken this seriously and taken some action on it. I think a lot of people would prefer a multilateral approach and one which involved industry a little more. The problems of technology transfer and forced technology transfer are really complicated issues when people do business in China. A lot people have accepted those types of joint ventures which involve technology transfer as a price for doing business and having access to the Chinese market.

Questioner 2: There are many important positions of the State Department to be filled, and the State Department seems to be not very happy under Mr. Tillerson. Now that Mr. Mike Pompeo is coming, some reports said that under Mike Pompeo, the State Department may divide and may have some more power. There is a growing concern in Asia, North Korea, and China about the empty positions. What do you think about it?

Sneider: I am not that hopeful that things are going to get much better. I feel there are many models for being the Secretary of State. Mr. Tillerson created his own model. He was highly disliked as the Secretary of State by people inside and outside the building, including Republicans. The argument is Mike Pompeo has a really good relationship with the president and Mr. Tillerson didn't, which would not necessarily be good for the State Department. Sometimes you get people inside the Secretary of State who have a really good relationship with the President, but they ignore the building. Basically, it's a relationship between the 7th floor and the White House. Condi Rice was not liked in the State Department either, but she had a great relationship with the President.

The only most well respected person that I know as the Secretary of State within the State Department was Colin Powell. Condi Rice did not, and I don't think Mike

Pompeo does either. But he was very smart. He delivered the President's national security briefing when he was Director of CIA. As a CIA Director, he spent more time than usual in the White House, and that's what he'll do with the Secretary of State. It would be nice if fills the empty positions with professional diplomats, but I am not overtly optimistic.

Questioner 3: Is it a real possibility for Donald Trump to deal with Kim Jong-un to let them have some short-range missile and disband the long-range missile and maybe reduce the number of US troops in South Korea?

Second question is about the rationality and logic in the Japan-US relationship, but Paris Agreement also had rationality and logic. I presume that many of the Trump supporters are not so much fond of the Japan-US alliance. What do you do not to make them understand but to communicate with them to maintain this alliance?

Sneider: In terms of first question, the scenario that worries people, including me, is that the President wants to claim victory. There is no chance of there being an actual denuclearization agreement because the North Koreans are never going to denuclearize, I believe. When North Korea says denuclearization, it means they are going to talk about getting the United States security presence off the Korean Peninsula. However, there is a possibility that there could be an agreement to freeze or even limit North Korean ICBM testing and development.

The President can declare victory by saying that he has reduced or eliminated a threat to the United States. We have seen some people in and around the President make this distinction between the security of the Continental United States and the security of our allies. I want to appeal to the President to consider the presence of hundreds of thousands of Americans, including American servicemen and their families serving in Japan and Korea who will still be under the threat of North Korean attack. Logically, it leads to the idea that if we withdraw, they won't be under threat. That's the fear of separation of our security from our allies. The good thing about Mr. Bolton's presence is that he would never sign off on a partial freeze agreement with an endpoint. On the other hand, the President will do what he wants to do, but it may alter the way they prepare for those talks. According to me, there is a 50:50 chance of this meeting taking place.

With regards the value of our alliances, isolationism is a strong and deep tradition of American foreign policy. I have spent a lot of time studying the history of the events that led to World War II and President Roosevelt had to engage in all sorts of subterfuge and maneuver to be able to provide aid to Great Britain when it was under attack by the Germans because the American population didn't want to get involved in wars in Europe. The Republican Party for a long time was led by people like Howard Taft and others who were opposed to that type of alliances. However, majority of the people understood that these alliances are securing relationships and preserves the peace. Barring the President, the rest of the American policy elite and political league still understands the lessons of history and are able to communicate them to the American people.

Questioner 4: To what extent do you think that Trump is a temporary phase and afterwards the US will return to normalcy? Do you think it's a long-term affair and Japan should find an alternative to live without United States and has to be ready for the US that's strongly different in terms of its foreign policy, its economic policies, and its domestic makeup?

Sneider: My short answer is I really believe this is an aberration. There are underlying issues in American life, as in Europe and to some degree in Japan, due to the present economic structure, which has undermined income equality and the livelihoods of the working class. There are a lot of people who are angry, who want to talk and focus on those things, and there is isolationism and nationalism on the left as well as on the right in the United States. I don't think that is going to go away. Being optimistic, I feel in November, the President will suffer a really huge political defeat and we'll move into trying to understand how to make our politics return to some form of rational discourse again. However, I am not sure about it.

Questioner 5: You mentioned that General Mattis is the last bastion. I agree. I think he is the last guy standing between sanity and mayhem. Do you foresee any sort of scenario of General Mattis leaving the cabinet?

Sneider: I am sure we are going to see a lot of speculative writing on this subject in the coming days. I have met General Mattis. He is a soldier, a warrior, and a marine. He is very proud of being a marine and a soldier. This is the most militarized administration I have ever seen. Their main complaint over the last decades is they don't want to go out and fight unless they are going to win. They don't like to lose,

and they want to be empowered to win their wars and they feel like they haven't been allowed to do that.

General Mattis thought the war in Afghanistan could have been won, and he was very unhappy with the way President Obama put limits on the Americans that went there.

I believe he knows his duty very well. He is not loyal to the President. He is loyal to the country and to the constitution. I don't think he is going to leave. The President is intimidated, I think, by military people to some degree. We all know he avoided service during the Vietnam War. However, he went to a military school and has a lot of respect for these guys in a certain kind of way. I don't think he would ask General Mattis to leave.

Questioner 6: In Syria, there is a serious battle going on between the US armed Turkish militia and the Turkish army. What are your views about what is going on in Syria with regards to the feeling of allies?

Sneider: I am sure there are allies who feel that they have been betrayed by the United States. The alliance issues are not new. The Turkey situation will be complicated. The key is to manage alliances so that both allies feel in the end that their interests have been served even when they have to make some very fundamental compromises. It requires some understanding of the world and some ability to see this as a process of give and take. I am yet to see the evidence that this administration really understands that. They are not incapable of it, but it certainly seems to be a challenge for them.

Questioner 7: Since the US Ambassador to South Korea position is still vacant, do you think the new ambassador to South Korea is necessary to improve the relationship between the North Korea and the United States? What kind of a person should be filled in for that position, a military guy or business value or Korean Peninsula specialist?

Sneider: My father is a former US Ambassador to South Korea. I have spent a lot of time in Korea, and I know everybody who served as ambassador in the last decades. Most of the reporting on this is terrible. The US Ambassador to the Republic of Korea has nothing to do with North Korea policy. His job is to manage our alliance with our allies. The job of the ambassador in South Korea is to remind people in Washington what the South Korean government is thinking and to make sure that we take them into

account when we formulate a policy, which we don't always do. I would prefer that job be left to professionals who know Korea and know South Korea well.

Questioner 8: Japan is not on the list of countries exempted from the steel tariffs. What do you think is the reason?

Sneider: I am sure that this question is being discussed here in Tokyo quite a bit. The Special Trade Representative, Mr. Lighthizer, made this statement to the Congress. I think it is a strange decision to make. It may well be a bargaining thing to force Japan into a bilateral FTA negotiation.