



## SUNG-JOON YIM

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### Bertrand COLLOMB

Our next speaker is Yim Sung-Joon, former security advisor to the president of Korea. How do you see the challenges to democracy and to cooperation in East Asia?

### Sung-Joon YIM

As you said, my name is Yim Sung-Joon and I formerly worked as a national security official. It is my great pleasure and honour to become a part of a prominent group of panellists for the final debate. I would like to make three points for this final debate. My first point is about whether the surprising election of Donald Trump as the next president of the United States constitutes a challenge to democratic governance in the United States.

Simply speaking, I never had a doubt that Mrs Clinton would win, despite all the flaws and weaknesses the US media has continually reported about her during the campaign. I heard many speakers at this conference referring to Trump's victory as a shock, stunning and even as an earthquake as well. My personal judgment on Clinton's victory was mainly based on the most credible US media, including *The New York Times*, CNN, *The Washington Post* etc.

As election day approached, these media even rated the chance of Clinton winning by over 90%. Out of this confusion, two questions came to my mind. First, what went wrong with the US media? It predicted Clinton's victory even in the last moments. We all know that the US media employs the most advanced, state-of-the-art technology, so-called Big Data, in the analysis of public opinion polls and election results. To me, this was even more surprising than actual Trump victory.

Here, let me introduce one Korean university professor, who perfectly predicted the outcome of the US elections, very differently from those in the US media. He could have jeopardised his teaching job if he had got it wrong. Professor Woo of Sejong University in Seoul teaches Big Data economics and became a celebrity overnight, soon after his prediction of Trump's victory was translated into reality. He predicted that Donald Trump was going to win, with 275-285 electoral votes to Hillary's 253-263.

Based on his calculations, Hillary never reached the 270+ electoral college votes to begin with. Professor Woo used a Google trend to analyse the entire race from the primaries all the way through the three presidential debates. Despite a poor performance at the debates, despite disparaging words about women and despite his racist overtones, he found that people Googled Trump far more than Clinton.

Secondly, what lies behind all these political upsets, such as unprecedented terrorist attacks in Europe, Brexit, the Trump victory and President Park Geun-hye's turmoil in my country. Why did the American people vote for a man with no previous public service experience and expect that he could realise a great America during his 4-8-year term of presidency? Can you say that the election of Trump and Brexit constitutes challenges to democratic governance in the US and UK? How should we define these phenomena, as normal trends or abnormal, as described by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in his dinner remarks?

I know that economists invented a new terminology to describe the contracted Chinese economy in recent years as 'new normal'. I think new normal seems to be more appropriate than abnormal in perceiving a series of upsetting happenings in global affairs. Abnormal implies that we can or may return to normal if things are put on the track again. However, I think the turn of global affairs will ride not always on the track but off the track a lot more than we may think. In conclusion, we may have to live with new normal in the years ahead.

My second point is about North Korea and the Trump presidency. As a national security official of my country in the past, I worked a lot on North Korea. This was on North Korean nuclear and missile issues in Washington DC and back in Korea. I can pinpoint one person who was most shocked by the election of Donald Trump as the next president of the US. This surely is none other than the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. I am sure that Kim Jong-un and his inner-circle officials must have followed the Hillary-Trump election campaign very closely and seriously as well. He was apparently briefed for a Clinton victory, as was my president, Park Geun-hye.

Before the election, South Korean public opinion polls showed that over 90% of the Korean people supported Clinton, and only 9% favoured Trump, which is the lowest in Asia. I myself also thought that the game was over and believed in a Clinton victory until CNN showed the electoral map on the night of the vote counting, when I was in Budapest in Hungary. During the campaign, I felt uneasy and bewildered about Trump's thoughtless statements on the Korean peninsula issues. On South Korea, he said it should bear all the costs of the deployment of US forces. In fact, South Korea now pays about USD 1 billion for half of the expense.

I quote, 'South Korea would be better off if it were to start protecting itself', implying that South Korea and even Japan could develop and possess nuclear weapons. Regarding North Korea, he said, if elected, he would invite Kim Jong-un to Washington DC to discuss the nuclear issue and eat a hamburger with him. I just dismissed his remarks as jokes, because I believed he was the last person who would be elected in the US. However, now that Trump has been elected as the next president, Kim Jong-un must be terribly busy in Pyongyang, developing a strategy. This is to deal with him and with the new administration.

The North Korean media very unusually kept silent and did not make any comment on the Trump election. In my view, North Korea may try to put the Trump administration to a test. This is by firing a long-range ballistic missile targeting the US or by conducting another nuclear bomb test, in order to knock on the door of Trump's White House. In that case, President Trump should take a difficult decision on which direction the US should turn. This is between a hard line to put more pressure on and set a deadline for a potential military action, and a negotiation path towards another agreement following the two previous ones. These were in 1994, with the Geneva Framework Accord, and in 2006, with the September agreement.

To sum up, North Korea will test the mettle of the Trump administration in the early months, to see how far they can go. The showdown between Trump and Kim Jong-un could be a big show. It could result in either Trump's first spectacular foreign policy victory or in catastrophic consequences on the Korean peninsula. My last point is, on a personal note, I was one of the early supporters of the WPC process, which as initially envisioned has evolved into a mechanism for discussing the most urgent issues of global governance. Thereby, it seeks the solutions to problems facing the globe. As for me, this conference is like a three-day university curriculum to study and learn new knowledge from numerous global leaders, experts and scholars in global affairs.