

DEBATE

Stanislas COZON

I have a question for Mr Okamoto on North Korea. What could China do using trade and economic levers to get the country to 'choke', using your term, before it gets full nuclear capabilities?

Yukio OKAMOTO

Before that, I wanted to say that I was very envious listening to Mr John Sawers. I wish I could be as scathing as he is, but then I have no agency to protect my safety, so I have to be moderate. With a small reserve, which relates to your question, I have worked with many Americans through the Gulf War, Iraq War, when I was in the government and it is my impression that military people are more cautious than civilians in using force, because they know what military force can do. It all depends on the individuals, so I still have great faith in the current generals advising Mr Trump, because in all honesty, if I had to guess, there is a 15% chance of real war breaking out in the Korean Peninsula. What if Mr Trump after hearing all the military options, orders that while there would be many sacrifices and casualties, there is no other way but to do it. What can the generals do? They must obey the supreme commander, or they will be charged with mutiny, or they can just resign. It all depends on what Mr Trump himself thinks.

It is much better if we can choke North Korea through sanctions, which only China can do. North Korea has proven it can survive all the pressures so far, but the fatal blow to them will be the ban on all exports from China to North Korea. However, I have always doubted how serious China is about really sanctioning North Korea. For China, it is a brother country and the real threat to them is not if they go nuclear, rather than the risk of seeing China cooperating with the United States and pushing Kim Jong-un into a corner, almost to the verge of falling and inviting South Korea-led unification to take place with US forces on the Peninsula. In my judgement, China has been half-hearted so far, but now because of Mr Trump's fierce rhetoric, China may have begun to suspect that they may be a real chance of a military clash between North Korea and the United States, which will have to involve China, so they are now doing that. We have, maybe a year or a year and a half, before Kim Jong-un, this crazy man, has his own nuclear arsenal, but it all depends on how China can pressurise him and Russia to an extent as well.

Richard BURT

A year or a year and a half.

YIM Song-Joon

From the Korean perspective, the Trump Presidency, almost 10 months into the four-year term showed some positive as well as negative signs. In my view, the positive sign is that Trump has put his heavy hands on the North Korean nuclear crisis; I think we may come back to this issue in the later session on Asian security. The negative signs for Koreans, were that Trump did not like the five-year old Korean FTA. Unfortunately, that was included, in the moderator's term, 'the worst deal ever', and ordered his trade negotiators to make some changes. I do not know how, maybe by revising, terminating or making a new one. Trump also withdrew from the TPP and almost terminated NAFTA. Trump's America First slogan did not stop there, but the US walked away from more important international agreements like the Paris Climate Change Agreement, nuclear agreements on Iran, UNESCO membership, etc. Many experts say that these actions by President Trump will lead to further weakening of US global leadership and furthermore to the disintegration of the international liberal order, the backbone of the post-war global governance system. What will happen in Asia then? We have already experienced the strong rise of China. My question for my old friend Ambassador Alexander Panov, with whom I worked for a long time, is: should we expect that the US-led liberal international order will eventually be replaced by the new Chinese international order, in Asia if not the world, and in what form?

Richard BURT

I am going to let Mr Panov take a minute to answer that, but let us try to keep it short because there are a number of questions.

Alexander PANOV

Very short; I do not know.

Richard BURT

You do not know? I have had to come to Marrakech to find an honest man.

Odeh ABURDENE

My question is to you Mr Ambassador. When Ronald Regan was elected in 1980 I heard his first speech at which he talked about the evil empire and seemed very hawkish. By the end of his term he had evolved and become a moderate and achieved a détente with the Russians. Do you think that Donald Trump could follow that path?

Richard BURT

I would hope and love if he did, but I have to tell you that I think there is a fundamental difference between Ronald Regan and Donald Trump. The way I would describe that difference is that many people do not know that Henry Kissinger had an older brother, who also grew up in the United States, they were both born in Germany. When Henry Kissinger's older brother was interviewed he spoke with a perfect American accent and someone once asked him why he had an American accent and Henry Kissinger still has a German one, and he said: 'because I was the one who listened'. I am afraid that the difference between Donald Trump and Ronald Regan, is that Ronald Regan listened.

Bogdan KLICH

Let me return for a moment to the Euro-Atlantic zone and refer to what Mr Sawers said about the role of the United States from the position of the global leader. A year ago, I would have totally shared your opinion, after the presidential campaign in which Mr Donald Trump undermined many of the fundamental pillars of American or Euro-Atlantic policy with its allies. However, after he softened his position concerning, for example, Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, and decided to strengthen his cooperation with Japan and to support South Korea in the danger of attack from the Northern part of the Peninsula, I would say that your opinion about his thinking on global affairs is incorrect. The position of the generals surrounding President Trump, Mattis especially, is one of those pillars that put the current Presidential policy on course for traditional American behaviour. Do you really think that without the influence of McMaster or Jim Mattis, that the US would be able to repeat its commitment to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty? Do you think that it would be able to successfully continue the coalition or leadership of the coalition against ISIS and finally to return to Afghanistan, after three years of pushing it aside?

John SAWERS

Do not get me wrong, I have huge admiration for those who are serving the President of the United States, but I think that they are serving their country despite their President, rather than serving their President. I think that on many issues, they are containing the damage that President Trump might otherwise do. I am a huge admirer of these people and getting President Trump to recommit to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the core NATO defence guarantee, was an important step, which was led by them. However, I think it is clear in President Trump's body language and public language, that he is not really personally committed to allies and alliances. That is why I share the concerns, as voiced by Mrs Merkel earlier this year, that Europeans do not feel that they can rely on the United States in the same way as they could before. When I urge that we exercise some caution about the military advice around President Trump, and Mr Okamoto picked me up on this as well, I do think that generals, to their credit, like clear-cut answers. They like things to be solved, but in the North Korean case, I think the generals are also coming to the conclusion that containment is not an acceptable policy, which for most Europeans would seem to be the only acceptable policy. I also think a conflict over North Korea is more likely now, I put the chances at greater than 15% and rising, because of some of the attitudes we see in and around President Trump. Hubert, I do not know if you wish to add something?

Hubert VEDRINE

Concernant la Corée, je voudrais simplement évoquer un témoignage sur les généraux. J'ai revu il y a quelques jours Madeleine Albright, nous sommes restés en relations amicales, et elle m'a dit : « En tant que démocrate américaine, je suis extrêmement perturbée, parce que pour la première fois de ma vie, je souhaite que les généraux soient le plus forts possible ».

Aminata TOURÉ

I would like to add a Southern voice to this debate and maybe a feminist one. I would advise the organisers to get more female participants in the debate, because we are talking about global governance and I believe that women might add value to the discussion. Of course, the United States is an important country for everyone for different reasons. Talking about minorities, I think that Hilary Clinton won the popular vote, so the math was right but maybe the strategy was wrong, but that is not the question today.

My question to all of you is: do you not feel that there is a deep misunderstanding between the leaders of what you call global governance, and the simple people? This has led to some weird ways of voting. That may have been the case in the United States; with stronger wins for the far right in many countries; and even where I am in Africa, where young people are in despair when they think that cynicism is in the driving seat in international affairs. When we hear the global discourse, with the leaders of the world using very disrespectful terms towards women, who are half the population; when racism is dealt with in a very casual way and some religions are also treated with equal disrespect; why do we not think there is a link between the lack of ethics and morality at a global level? What we are seeing in terms of dysfunction in the global world?

In Africa, we also have some deep issues, for example, with young people and in some places, we see how that translates into terrorism. When you talk to young people, they feel deeply disenfranchised. There is no specific discourse that addresses their fears and hopes, and we have to look at that. I would like to end by asking if we can find a way to really connect the global with the capital development, etc., that we have discussed so far, and the local? In many places, that is very specific, such as access to basic health, basic education, participation for women and young people. That must be factored into discussion of the macro, so we can link both. So far, we are seeing a disconnect that translates into violent action in many places.

Richard BURT

Thank you, I think that was a very important statement. I hope we can continue to pick-up elements of what you have said in our conversations today and throughout the conference.

Renaud GIRARD

En 1965, le Général de Gaulle, dans une conférence célèbre, a parlé du privilège exorbitant du dollar. Votre panel traite du problème des rapports entre l'Amérique et le monde. Vous n'avez pas parlé de l'hégémonisme américain en matière financière et juridique, c'est-à-dire la prétention américaine de l'extraterritorialité du droit américain, qui marche très bien en Europe. Hubert Védrine y a fait allusion dans son allocution, mais c'est tout. J'aimerais avoir votre avis, y compris celui de M. Panov, sur la question de savoir si cette force du droit américain et ce privilège du dollar va se maintenir dans les cinq ou dix ans qui viennent, ou connaître des brèches.

Richard BURT

That is a good question. I am going to call on John in a moment, but first I will make a brief comment, because something may have happened recently in the United States that you might have actually missed. In July, the US Congress passed a wide-ranging sanctions law that was originally focused on Iran. Somebody decided at the last moment that we had so many sanctions against Russia that we should just add a few more, because we do not trust the Trump administration. Some more sanctions were added and built into that law were a number of secondary sanctions; that is extra-territorial application of those sanctions. If anybody was doing any business transactions through American banks and any of those transactions were converted into dollars, the United States could then



influence if those transactions went forward. The first thing that happened was that Jean-Claude Juncker made a very strong statement in Brussels, saying that if those sanctions are invoked we will respond.

Secondly, and I think more importantly, to give the Trump administration some credit, in August and September there were some consultations by the administration, the EU and European governments and guidance for those sanctions imposed, have now been produced and the secondary sanctions element has essentially gone away. What I am saying is that I think that Washington is becoming sensitive to how our friends and trading partners are reacting and responding to what you might call dollar imperialism. I also think that there is a certain rationality in terms of our sanctions policy and we are trying to impose them in a way that do not give our friends and allies secondary status or without a voice on how those sanctions are implemented.

John SAWERS

I thought I had addressed some of the issues you raised about the drive by China and other countries, including Russia and maybe India as well, to separate themselves from the dollarisation of the global economy. I think what we have seen is that the United States has had that leadership role since 1945 and by and large, has exercised it responsibly. There have been times, for example in the 1990s under Clinton, when the US tried to exert extra-territorial sanction on Europe and other countries relating to Iran, and there was some pushback against that.

The US has maintained its position by being the guardian of international financial stability. What we are now seeing is the United States' commitment to that goal is weakening. Perhaps it has over-used its position in the global system. Also, America's role is less powerful because of the rebalancing of the global economy. As recently as 1990, the G7 countries represented some 70% of the global economy; that is now about 43% and China is now a bigger economy than the United States in purchasing power terms. As a result, countries are looking to free themselves from the exposure and vulnerability brought by being dependent upon the United States because of, exactly as you say Rick, your exposure to sanctions. I think that this will be a major weakening of the Western-designed international system. Although there is irritation in France and other European countries, at some of the ways America has exercised this power, by and large it will be a net loss for the West when we find ourselves competing in a world where the dollar does not have the dominant position it has had for the last 75 years.

Richard BURT

Before getting the evil eye from Thierry, I am going to bring this session to an end. I want to congratulate the audience, for asking some very good and interesting questions, but perhaps more importantly, I want you to join me in congratulating our excellent panel, which has been very fascinating.