

WANG JISI

President of the Institute of the International and Strategic Studies at Peking University

Donald Trump is a divisive force in the US as well as in world politics, and this is not the only adjective I want to add to his description, though I will refrain from using other words here. He is divisive as world politics is more divided. The world has been more divided since the end of the Cold War, and when we look at world politics, we see three different things. The first is the combination of rising populism and rising nationalism, and they are reinforcing each other, as represented in the US and elsewhere.

The second trend I see is the rise of authoritarianism and strongman politics, which is also represented by Trump in the US and some others in other countries. The third thing I see is intensified geopolitical competition. We see that in China-US relations, in the Middle East between Iran and Saudi Arabia and some other countries. We see that in the US-Russia relationship. However, whether the third trend I see, geopolitical competition, is representative of the Trump administration, is yet to be seen.

Moving to the US-China relationship, Trump himself has waged a trade war with China. What are his goals? What does he want to achieve in a trade war with China? There are two different expectations. The first interpretation is that Trump wants to address the trade deficit. He wants China to buy more goods from the US, and he wants manufacturers to go back to the US. However, what are the other objectives? One other explanation is that Trump wants to change China's industrial policies. IPR is one thing. People are focusing especially on high-tech competition between the US and China. There is the fear that China may catch up with the US not only in terms of economic growth and output but also in high-tech capabilities. That view is represented by Trump's advisers, such as Peter Navarro, Robert Lighthizer, Larry Kudlow and some others.

The third view of the US-China trade war is that it is meant to prevent China from rising up as a global power; this is related to power politics, geopolitical competition, and also to the Belt and Road initiative. These people also have their voices in the White House, like John Bolton. This is mainly about power politics.

The fourth perspective is that the US wants to undermine the leadership of the Communist Party in China. They are now talking about human rights violations in Tibet and Xinjiang, religious problems and so forth. They have their voices in Congress, and what we do not really know is whether Trump is taking care of human rights. I do not think that is his main feature.

However, regarding all four dimensions or explanations for the US-China trade war, what people mainly notice is the trade deficit. China's IPR and industrial policies, as reflected in the Chinese government document *Made in China 2025*, are related to the trade issue, but they are more fundamental in the China-US competition. Whether China's politics and foreign policy are moving in the right direction in the view of the US were heatedly debated in the United States in recent years, and the consensus in America today is negative. The Trump administration has concluded that China is America's chief strategic competitor and long-term threat. It views China's worldview and global behaviour as detrimental to U.S. interests. The US-China relations are undergoing increasing difficulties and are definitely deteriorating.

Trump is actually controversial in China. It is no exaggeration to say that his image in China is better than in Europe and much of the Middle East. I do not know whether his image is better in Japan or China.

Why is he controversial? Firstly, some Chinese people do like him because he represents some kind of political correctness in the US, and those people who like Trump do not like multiculturalism. These Chinese are conservatives as they express reservations about immigration to China from Africa and some Islamic countries, and they are afraid of Islamic extremism as reflected in China's Xinjiang region. The second group which likes Trump, ironically, may be seen in China's foreign policy communities, and they say that Trump is helping China. He is damaging the US in the world, making way for China's rise, so we should welcome Trump. He is doing a lot of harm to the US's image in the world, so China now has more strategic opportunities.



The third grouping who admires Trump says he is a leader who delivers, who fulfills his promises, and gives the US an economic advantage. Some people even say that Trump's pressure on China may help China's economic reform and opening up to the outside world, so that kind of pressure is not necessarily bad. China must take the advantage of competing with the US and improving its IPR record, and so on.

This is my view of Trump in China.

Steven ERLANGER

Michael's theory, which he gave us earlier, is that Trump acts tough as a negotiator but is very happy to claim a modest success as the greatest success in the world. Is that the view in China, or is Trump more worrisome to the Chinese as a too-early challenger for China's future?

WANG Jisi

It depends on who you are talking about in China. Government officials are hesitant as to Trump's role in US-China relations. Trump himself has claimed that he sees Xi Jinping as his good friend, and he actually wants to establish direct connections not only with Putin but also the Iranian leader and Kim Jong-un. So what is wrong with his connection with the top Chinese leadership? That is one thing we can take advantage of.

People also say that he is very unpredictable. For example, if China makes some major concessions in trade with the US, will he be satisfied or will he put more pressure on China? That is debatable in China.

Steven ERLANGER

It is debatable everywhere. We will now have the view from Korea.