

RYU JIN ROY

Chairman and CEO of Poongsan Group, Vice Chairman of the Korea-US Economic Council, Vice Chairman of the Federation of Korean Industries

First of all, baseball fans like me will know that the Dodgers just won in the 18th innings. Sorry if you are a Red Socks fan. This is my third year in a row on this panel on Donald Trump, and either I did a great job or I may be the only one who said anything good about Trump. I suspect it is the latter. Last year I had to fly back to Korea after the last session of the World Policy Conference, as President Moon had invited me to a state dinner he was hosting for President Trump. While I was walking down the receiving line, I wondered what I should say to the President, and I had about eight seconds. I told him, 'Mr. President, I like your tweets – keep tweeting.' He replied, 'Believe me, I will be tweeting more. I will tweet one tomorrow morning, and you will see it,' so I take part of the blame.

Seriously, it is his tweets that have made him different from any other US president, or as a matter of fact, any other leader in the world, and it works in America. The intellectuals and the press do not like it, but if you are a common American who works in a factory like mine in the mid-West, they like to hear directly from Trump. They do not want to read the *New York Times*; it is too sophisticated for them. Therefore, whether what he says is true or not, they would rather hear it directly from their leader instead of through the press, and every time Trump tweets it becomes national news and headline news. Whatever you say about him, it is entertaining, and America loves entertainment.

I have my own formula, which I call the 30-30-40 formula. Believe 30% of what he says, verify 30% of what he says, and do not believe 40% of anything he says. Let me talk now about how Trump negotiates. He always starts with threats. Look at how he threatened to leave NATO and how he ended up getting the NATO countries to pay more for defence. Look at how he threatened to get out of NAFTA – he now has a new deal with Canada and Mexico. He threatened Korea about getting rid of the US-Korea free trade agreement; now we have a new one which is not that different from the original. He just wants to win and make his point. Look at how he threatened North Korea and Kim Jong-un about striking first, and how his button was bigger than his, and now he had a meeting with Kim Jong-un, and they are in a love affair, at least for the time being, according to Trump.

Therefore, I am not that worried about trade issues the US has with China. The Chinese will blink in the end and there will be some kind of agreement. I am also cautiously optimistic that he may come back to the TPP; at least he wants to listen and talk. Do not believe everything he tweets, but look at what he does in the process and at what kind of actions he takes. That is what is important.

Regarding the upcoming US midterm elections, it will be a do-or-die election for Donald Trump; if the Republicans win both the House and the Senate, he will have a very good chance of becoming a two-term president. Should the Republicans lose the House and win the Senate, as most people are predicting, he will be handicapped – the Democrats will be controlling the budgets. One thing is for sure – he will not be able to build that big wall on the US-Mexico border if the Democrats win. Should he lose both the House and the Senate, he will be in real trouble and could possibly face impeachment, depending on the outcome of the Muller investigation.

It is not about whether I like Trump or not. I still believe America is the greatest country in the world, and yes, America and the world will survive Donald Trump, whether it takes two more years or four more years.

Steven ERLANGER

Thank you for that note of optimism. It is worth pointing out that Barack Obama probably got more done in his first two years, when he controlled both houses of Congress, than he did in the next six, partly because he did not control the Senate. That is why the JCPOA and the Paris Agreement were not put forward to the Senate but stayed as agreements, and why Mr. Trump felt he could abrogate them.

I just wonder whether you think this tactic will actually work with Kim Jong-un, or is it still unclear? I cannot imagine that North Korea will denuclearise; that seems mad for them.

**RYU Jin Roy**

Had you asked that about his father, Kim Jong-il, I would have said there was no chance he would negotiate, but with his son I feel a little different. This guy has a little bit of a heart and he actually cares about his people. Therefore, if Trump becomes a two-term president and keeps threatening to do something, I think there is an asset to this – I am one of those few, and they said I was crazy, but depending on how they negotiate there could be a solution.

Steven ERLANGER

Yes, and it would help if China again turned the screw a little more rather than turning it back half a notch.

RYU Jin Roy

Yes, but to add to that, Kim Jong-un is also unhappy and cannot trust the Chinese completely. That is why he is also moving with the US and Korea, because he does not. His father never trusted the Chinese, and he advised his son never to do so.

Steven ERLANGER

That is one of the reasons I think he will keep nuclear weapons.