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Jim BITTERMANN

Moto, back in 2017 you wrote, if I am not mistaken, the most worrying aspect of the Trump administration is its protectionist stance. Is that still the case? Do you still feel that way? What about his criticism of the car companies in Japan invading the United States and the threats to impose tariffs on them and that sort of thing?

Motoshige ITOH

Before just answering that question, we have to distinguish two things. One is the result of Mr. Trump's actions that we are just observing – what we are doing now here –, but at the same time there must be a reason why Mr. Trump was elected as President. We have to think about why he was elected, and he has been in this kind of business. That is very much related to what I said, that trilemma between three things: globalization, national sovereignty and democracy.

When we have more globalization, we were probably in what we call in hyper-globalization in the last 20 years and there is a lot of pressure on democracy to change. That is what people often call populism. Actually, Japan has actually been very used to very severe trade negotiations with the United States for many years, so we know how we should just respond.

Jim BITTERMANN

You have adapted to Trump?

Motoshige ITOH

No, just the United States in general. My point is Mr. Trump may be populism stage one, and there may be populism in stage two. As long as globalization continues there is always a pressure for democracy to be loaded by populism. We have already just heard the name of Elizabeth Warren, I do not know whether or not she is going to be the next President, but the important thing is whether Mr. Trump continues or we have another, maybe leftist, Democrat or whatever, we still have to prepare to work on the populism.

Another thing I want to emphasize is that when you are facing that kind of protectionism, the negotiation does not just go ahead rather than just defending your previous position. When Mr. Trump became President, Japan and other Asian Pacific countries were already almost finishing the negotiations for the TPP, Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, then unfortunately Mr. Trump just decided or mentioned the United States was getting out of the TPP. Therefore, the other part is very obvious. One, how can the TPP survive and second how can we deal with the United States? That is exactly why Japan had a bilateral negotiation with the United States.

Jim BITTERMANN

You would prefer a bilateral conversation than a multilateral conversation in the framework of the TPP?

Motoshige ITOH

When it is necessary to survive. The TPP has just finished without the United States. We need some kind of implicit agreement with the United States for us to continue the negotiations. The TPP result is actually giving some kind of discriminatory treatment against the United States, because other TPP members enjoy lower tariff on beef. That may be a good weapon for us just to have a deal with the United States giving us a very similar type of tariff reduction,



maybe just as an incentive for the United States not to raise the tariff on cars. It is not just forward-looking; it is more about defending and that is a very important part of the bilateral negotiation when you are facing protectionism.

Jim BITTERMANN

It has to be bilateral. You are working bilaterally rather than through any kind of international organization, which is a bit different and difficult for other countries to have the same kind of bilateral relationship.