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Thank you very much. I would like to join my predecessors in thanking Thierry and the WPC staff for putting on a wonderful program. I recently had surgery which prevents me from travelling and I hope to be able to rejoin you in person in the future.

The situation in the United States is concerning. We have mounted a mediocre pandemic response, the conduct of the Afghanistan withdrawal left much to be desired and we have a narrowly divided Congress engaged in financial brinksmanship. We also face a basic issue of credibility associated with the likelihood that the Democrats will lose one or both houses of Congress next year, creating paralysis. Then in 2004 we face the possible return of Donald Trump and wholesale policy reversal.

President Biden has a radically different public persona than former President Trump and his trajectory on domestic policy is significantly different. However, there has been more continuity in foreign policy than one might have expected. This in part reflects a tendency within the American political system to devalue efforts that sustain international institutions and cooperation and to prioritize domestic policy concerns. While the United States is polarized politically, American attitudes toward China across the political spectrum have been hardening at both the elite and mass level. That consensus appears to be largely attributable to the assumption that the government of China is engaged in increasingly oppressive behavior internally as well as aggressive external behavior. This shift is not uniquely American, and polling done by Pew Research indicates that negative appraisals of China are widespread, including in Asia.

In terms of US policy, for example with respect to Taiwan, the Biden administration has conducted high-level meetings with Taiwanese officials and has begun talks on a trade investment framework agreement.

With respect to China, it has kept most of the Trump administration tariffs and export controls in place. It is grappling with how it would like best to address the issue of Chinese industrial subsidies and state-owned enterprises. The Biden administration has criticized China over its refusal to cooperate on a rigorous independent investigation into the origins of the Covid-19 virus and it has reaffirmed the Trump administration's characterization of the situation in Xinjiang as genocide. Like the Trump administration it has admonished China for its violation of the "one country, two systems" principle in Hong Kong.

With the revival of the Quad and the recent AUKUS submarine deal, the US is trying to come to a military alliance to balance China in the Indo-Pacific region. The problem with this strategy is that China is the leading trade partner for most countries in the region and the US

moves are not being accompanied by a robust economic policy component. The result is that countries feeling this centrifugal pull of the Chinese economy are being put in the difficult position of choosing between political and military interests and their pocketbooks. In Australia's case, it has been the object of hardball Chinese actions in the economic sphere, which have contributed to a significant hardening of the Australian public's attitude towards China. Similar stories of Chinese economic pressure followed by shifts in public attitudes can be told for Japan and South Korea.

In this context, China's announcement that it wanted to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, CPTPP, has wrongfooted the US. For domestic political reasons the Biden administration will have difficulty countering this move. Historically, Republicans in the US have tended to be pro-trade while Democrats were the more skeptical of globalization. The Trump takeover of the Republican party has flipped that identification. Now Republicans are more trade skeptical while a plurality of Democrat-affiliated voters are pro-trade. However, Biden and the Democratic party are beholden to the unions, which are traditionally protectionist, so today in Congress a coalition of Republicans and the so-called progressive wing of the Democratic party, can block trade initiatives such as US accession to the CPTPP. If the Chinese application to join the CPTPP moves forward, and I believe it ultimately will, this could create a crisis moment for the WTO. The trade policy action will have shifted to the CPTPP without the United States or EU being involved.

One foreign policy area where the Biden administration policy differs markedly from the previous administration is with respect to climate change and here, China and the rest of Asia are central. China and India alone are projected to account for half of the increase in global energy consumption to 2040. In terms of CO₂ emissions from coal-fired powerplants in train, China accounts for 54%, India 11%, Indonesia 7%. Together, these three Asian countries account for 71% of the projected increase of CO₂ emissions from coal-fired powerplants, so any solution to climate change must include China.

The outstanding issue is whether the US and China can cooperate on issues such as climate change while continuing to work together on more problematic issues, such as North Korea where their interests do not entirely align, while disagreeing on other matters, including sensitive domestic policy issues such as genocide in Shenzhen. The Biden administration wants to pursue this kind of multifaceted approach but the evidence is thin as to whether such an approach can be successful.

Thomas Gomart, Director of Ifri

Thank you very much, Marcus, for reminding of us of the importance of domestic factors within the US system, as well as the continuity of its foreign policy regarding Asia and China in particular.