

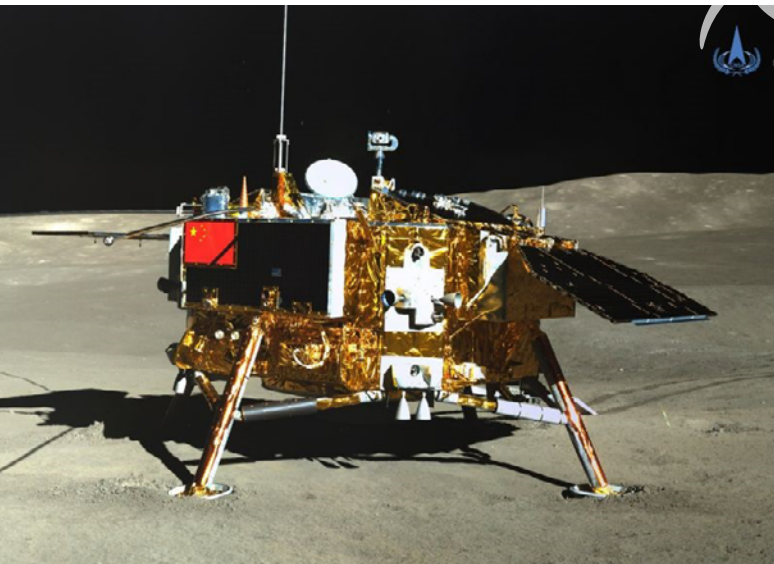


THE DITCHLEY WINTER PROJECT

1st – 11th December 2020

As 2020 drew to a close, Ditchley hosted a carefully curated series of panels and talks to review the implications of the US elections, assessing the impact on world order and multilateralism, as well as at regional and local levels.

The Project was also an opportunity to inform our collective thinking and action on themes that will be critical to recovery from the pandemic: the state of our educational systems and our ability to grow and benefit from talent from all parts of society; our approach to living in the hybrid face-to-face and digital world that the pandemic has accelerated; and citizens' trust in science, facts, the media and politics.



Introduction

The US elections

Most participants in the discussions were relieved that Biden had won and reassured that the elections had passed peacefully. The transition of power was expected to pass smoothly, although no one expected that President Trump would concede. Participants thought that it was unlikely that the Democrats would win Georgia's senate seats to take the House but the upside of this was the Republicans were expected to be more pragmatic once that hurdle

was cleared. Despite the divisions, it was judged that President-Elect Biden would have the best chance of anyone of building bipartisan consensus on a number of issues and of beginning to heal divisions. An increase in development finance and re-engagement in Africa was one example given, with both sides recognising the risk of famine and its national security as well as humanitarian impact. It was noted in the discussion on the future of the media that President Trump's hardcore supporters were leaving conservative mainstream

channels that accepted the elections and doubling down on yet more partisan echo chambers that did not. That said, only 10 percent of people were believed to consume news as a primary shaper of their world view. The other 90 percent of people got their view of the world from entertainment, other people including via social media, and other uncertain sources.

The US and the UK

For the US and the UK relationship, it was emphasised that the UK would need to show that it could be a responsible partner and work effectively alongside the US with the EU. A UK-EU trade agreement would be a good step towards this. The new administration was suspicious of Prime Minister Johnson as a 'mini-Trump' but appreciated his early recognition of the Biden victory. Biden administration instincts remained Transatlanticist, despite the strong focus on China and the Pacific. But they would put the American working man first on trade and would not want too many adventures abroad.

Enabling talent wherever it arises

The economic impact of the pandemic and the accelerated move to hybrid digital working led to calls for a 'Marshall Plan for Education'; a renaissance of the regions; and perhaps a more substantive twinning of cities across countries building region-to-region alliances. We were urged to find new ways to help more boats rise as we recover from the pandemic. Democracy could no longer afford to leave so many people behind and remain viable.

The Pandemic

The pandemic continued to spread but vaccines were on the way. Christmas, and in the UK a promised relaxation of restrictions, was on the horizon. There was regret and frustration but an implicit sense that light was at the end of the tunnel.

China and world order

We were urged by Dr Kissinger to consider the end-

game and be clear on our goals for a future relationship with China. Good advice with regard to our own strategy but I came away with a sense that there were also questions that we might not want answered definitively right now for the risks they could provoke, such as: what is China's ultimate ambition? Can the US reconcile itself to China becoming the world's largest economic power?

January reflections

Writing now in January and looking back to early December, we were too sanguine about both the outcome of the election and the course of the pandemic. On China and the US we have yet to see, although the crackdown in Hong Kong and scorning coverage of the Capitol violence are not encouraging signs. Authoritarian allegations that democracy has entered its decadence and death throes have been emboldened. The new variant of COVID-19 is dangerously escalating the health crisis in the UK and is already in the US.

Despite the deterioration in the context, the remedies put forward in December still seem right. We need a strategy for the West, a compass setting, that unites not divides. We need to renew the sense of opportunity for all, across all parts of our countries. And we are going to get there by offering openings to talent and enabling education in the broadest sense. To heal the political divisions, whether in the UK, Europe or the US, we must define our friends as broadly as we dare and our enemies as narrowly as we can tolerate. The same applies abroad. But it is also clear that we are going to have to be resolute on the ultimate limits of tolerance, insisting on the rule of law and defending democracy's integrity when red lines are crossed and reason is abandoned.

James Arroyo,
Director

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**THE DITCHLEY
WINTER PROJECT**

Key Point Summaries

Whither the US?

Key points

- **Cause for celebration.** The transfer of power in the US remains a sound and peaceful process. However, President Trump's approach to the transition is unusual and it is therefore not easy for people to think about a reset.
- **We need to think about the place and purpose of politics and economics in order to bridge and heal tensions in the US.** Although President-elect Biden received the highest number of votes of any president, the cultural, political and social divisions of the US will not be solved by the election. Healing these divisions cannot be achieved solely through abstract philosophical discussions of what we want from our economy, politics or foreign policy.
- **Solidarity is critical to heal divisions in the US but also beyond.** Domestically, the challenge ahead of the US is huge. Conditions for solidarity need to be rebuilt in order to connect with different parts of the States and to get stuff done. Although philosophical discussions are important, these must be accompanied by tangible, concrete policy decisions which meet the needs of real people in the places they live. Investment in local communities, supporting small business, bottom-up work from civic renewal organisations and open conversation are essential to heal tensions in the US. This need is not exclusive to the US.
- **The incoming Biden administration is likely to take a more domestically focused approach to foreign policy.** Given President-elect Biden's previous stances on foreign policy issues it was predicted that Biden's administration will take an America-focused approach more similar to President Trump's administration than to more expansionist predecessors. This should

Panellists

Congressman Jeff Fortenberry

US REPRESENTATIVE FOR
NEBRASKA'S 1ST CONGRESSIONAL
DISTRICT

Ambassador David Lane

PRESIDENT, ANNENBERG
FOUNDATION TRUST AT
SUNNYLANDS

The Rt Hon Rory Stewart OBE

SENIOR FELLOW, YALE JACKSON
INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Matthew Turpin

VISITING FELLOW, HOOVER
INSTITUTION, STANFORD
UNIVERSITY

Facilitator

James Arroyo OBE

DIRECTOR,
THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION

be noted when considering US policy on Africa and the Middle East covered below. President-elect Biden is likely to take advantage of the significant acceleration of cooperation between Japan, Australia and India.

- **A trade deal could emerge between the UK-US but not as easily or quickly as we would like.** How will a no deal Brexit affect the US-UK relationship under President-elect Biden? A key Brexiteer argument was that strong trade deals can be made between the US and UK in case the UK leaves the EU. Whereas a bipartisan trade deal is the direction in which both the UK and US want to

go in, protectionism, especially in agricultural trade deals, may mean this is an unrealistic expectation and not a priority for the incoming administration. Leaving agriculture aside could help.

- **Optimism for speedy wider international engagement.** Under President-elect Biden, there is hope that the US administration will hit the ground running, taking up multilateral issues on an international stage – something Americans and indeed the world are hungry to see and somewhere the President-elect may find it easier to be more presidential, assuming progress is hard and slow domestically. On the US's potential significant role in Africa and the Middle East, interests have previously been undermined as China, Russia, and other powers have moved to fill the policy spaces left vacant by the US and other Western nations. In response, the US needs to put good people on the ground, reinvigorate development finance and think seriously again about its roles within the UN.
- **The US should be taking far greater interest in Africa.** Trump's administration was less involved in Africa deploying fewer diplomats and taking generally less interest. The US should not overlook Africa for a number of reasons, including its resources and China's presence in Africa. This is where bipartisan cooperation could happen. Developmental finance needs rethinking from simply providing large infrastructure. For example, investment in diplomatic staff, renewable energies and ensuring this development attends to a social metric.
- **The US/China relationship is uncertain but there will be a rebalance to Asia.** China's entry to the WTO in 2001 has had unexpected results creating a new set of challenges. We cannot assume traditional trade policies

from the Biden administration. With China's superpower status, the US will expect China to fulfil this responsibility especially in regard to protecting the environment.

- **The US will likely continue to work to limit China's ambitions, but it is likely to try to build on common interests to improve co-operation, for example in relation to climate change.** The Biden administration has put a very high premium on this threat and to advance that agenda meaningfully will require collaboration with China. We may see a more moderated approach to competition with the PRC but not an end to contestation.

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The US-UK special relationship on shared prosperity, culture and narratives

Views from across generations

Key points

- **Maintaining a Special Relationship built on dynamism.** The United States and the United Kingdom have cooperated on multiple endeavours since World War II, and ought to sustain the dynamism of this relationship as they address new rising issues in society. Much of the progress on economic issues between the US and UK is likely to take place outside of a large free trade agreement, building on the extensive networks between countries in government, finance, technology, education and civic society. The shared prosperity between the US and UK depends in large part on activating and sustaining these extensive networks.
- **We should not take the stability of US and UK democracies for granted.** There is continued optimism in the special relationship and a sense that the US and UK can lead the way on a range of issues - from climate to technological and financial regulation - building on the stability of their democratic systems. The last years have witnessed a rise in populism in both countries and across parties, but these systems have remained remarkably resilient. It is crucial not to take the stability of our democracies for granted, but instead maintain confidence in our systems and build dynamically on this.
- **Promoting a regional renaissance across both countries.** The special relationship represents the opportunity to think new things at regional levels. Both countries are emerging from seismic political events, with lessons still to be learnt from these. A 'regional renaissance' was highlighted as an opportunity, one that could drive growth, prosperity and regenerate

Panellists

What can the US and the UK learn from each other on bringing about shared prosperity and greater opportunity in our economies emerging from the pandemic?

Ambassador Ertharin Cousin

DISTINGUISHED FELLOW, CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS & VISITING SCHOLAR, STANFORD UNIVERSITY CENTER ON FOOD SECURITY & THE ENVIRONMENT

Dr. Jerrold D. Green

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PACIFIC COUNCIL ON INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Sir John Sawers

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, NEWBRIDGE ADVISORY

Gal Treger

MANAGER, ECONOMICS & POLICY, SCHMIDT FUTURES

Facilitator

Emerson Csorba

CHIEF OF STAFF, THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION

communities from Newcastle to Manchester in the UK, and from Detroit to Pittsburgh in the US. It may be worth revisiting and renewing the idea of twinning cities. Twinning of cities in the past has often focused on cultural ties, but with little follow-through on the initial political ceremony and celebration of these new ties. The twinning of cities in the future could focus on economic issues, sharing best practices and stories in transitioning to digital

economies and in preparing talent for new forms of work.

- **New frameworks for central and local leadership.** One of the main tensions that we have seen on leadership and power in the pandemic is the tension between centralisation and decentralisation. There is a need to establish new frameworks for central and local leadership, particularly as pandemic responses have demonstrated the value of leadership and resources close to where people live and work - the importance of mayoral leadership but also local councils and councillors and informal local support networks. We will need to keep focused on achieving the right balance between centralisation and localisation or devolution of power with lessons to be learned between the US and the UK.
- **Addressing domestic poverty through an investment in lifelong learning.** The US and the UK should not forget that an important part of their populations is being severely impacted in the pandemic, and that domestic poverty remains a challenge. This might not be only a social and economic issue but potentially a national security issue if we're not careful. Education - particularly the promotion of wide, lifelong learning and academic cooperation between the US and the UK - can help to combat this but there needs to be real vision and delivery here if we want transformation. The US and the UK can lead on this front and there are opportunities in using hybrid approaches to engaging learners across entire populations, rather than limiting education to place.
- **Understanding the other side and leaving few behind.** The results of the last US elections represent an opportunity to build enhanced cooperation and a common agenda. We should

What can the US and the UK learn from each other on culture - norms, customs, capabilities and the transmission of ideas - and on the narratives for democratic renewal as we emerge from the pandemic?

Miles Celic

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
THECITYUK.

Ashish Gadnis

CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER, BANQU INC.

Sam Lowe

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW,
CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN REFORM

Jami Miscik

CEO AND VICE-CHAIRMAN, KISSINGER
ASSOCIATES INC.

Her Excellency Dame Karen Pierce

BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO THE USA

Dominique Raymond

STRATEGY DIRECTOR FOR
PARTNERSHIPS, LUMINA FOUNDATION

remember that we live in an age of rising extremism and where finding commonality and sustaining the middle requires constant effort. Hence why we must—more than ever—continue to listen, communicate and understand the other side. A core focus in the US and UK special relationship needs to be to ensure that we leave as few people behind as possible in our democracies, sustaining our core institutions while promoting innovation. If successful in activating people's talents and leaving few behind, this will be a defining feature of the twenty-first century special relationship.

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World order: what can and should it mean today?

A Ditchley conference in honour of Dr Henry Kissinger

This landmark conference began with a conversation between Dr Henry Kissinger and Bloomberg News Editor-in-Chief John Micklethwait. Other conference participants included former Prime Minister of Australia, The Honourable Malcolm Turnbull; former Prime Minister of Finland, Alex Stubb; from China His Excellency Dai Bingguo and Madam Fu Ying; from Silicon Valley, Dr Eric Schmidt and Ms Julie Brill; and American Ditchley chairman Ambassador Nicholas Burns, who were joined by others from across the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Europe, Russia, India, Australia, Canada and other countries.

The aim was to explore the extent to which the ambitions and fears of the major powers for world order are compatible or conflicting and to identify how to build on convergence of interests and mitigate the risks flowing from divergence. The discussion with Dr Henry Kissinger about his hopes and fears for world order drew on the themes in his 2014 book: a country must ask what does it want to achieve, what must it stop happening, and what might it achieve with allies?

The World Order conference was by invitation but was followed by a debriefing session on Friday 4 December between a panel of conference participants and the wider Ditchley community as part of the Ditchley Winter Project.

Key points

- **Dr Kissinger warned that the Cold War is not a good comparison to our current situation which, in his view, is more akin to the set of circumstances in play before the First World War.** It is important to maintain dialogue between the United States and China seriously and to think about how to defuse potential tensions.
- **As regards China, Europe might be expected to side with the US, but some uncertainty or reticence can be perceived.** On relations between the US and Europe, Dr Kissinger thought that the UK could (still) be a bridge with the EU. Regarding Russia, there was a warning not to expect it to revert to ambitions to become a democracy as it once did, and a warning not to ignore it. Particularly as the US makes the transition to a new presidency, there was a reminder that domestic politics determines what a country can do, more than strategy and this is particularly important now within the US.

Conference debrief panellists

John Fallon

ADVISER, PEARSON, PLC

Brittan Heller

COUNSEL, FOLEYHOAG LLP

Nora Topor-Kalinskij

REGULATORY & POLITICAL ANALYST,
EDF TRADING

Dmitri Trenin

DIRECTOR,
CARNEGIE MOSCOW CENTER

Bobby Vedral

PARTNER, MACRO EAGLE

Facilitator

James Arroyo OBE

DIRECTOR,
THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION

- **The threat from technology was particularly highlighted, with the advance of AI in security systems further on than most of us realise.** From a business perspective, the effect of AI is to concentrate wealth and power in a few platforms, with implications for democracy and regulation. While business increasingly wants or has to take values into account alongside commercial interests, democracy is in danger of losing its appeal, among younger generations especially, as it is no longer seen as a guarantee of rights or wealth creation.
- **World order cannot mean restoration of the Western liberal hegemony that has been lost:** something new needs to evolve, otherwise there is a risk of great fracture, with two sets of values and spheres of influence. It is possible however to hope for stable tension and important to realise that some issues cannot be solved by democracies alone – not least climate change.

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Recognising talent and regaining aspiration & opportunity

How can we make our work systems and democracies work for the middle and working classes?

Key points

- **Defining talent.** Talent is more than innate ability; it is instead a combination of a person's knowledge, skills and abilities developed through education and which must then be deployed. A definition based only on innate ability lends itself to bias based on factors such as race, gender and income.
- **Talent is not a one-off.** Given the rapidly evolving nature of technology and the increasing complexity of modern democracies, talent needs to be returned to continuously, with life-long, continuous learning systems integrating opportunities for work and service to others.
- **We need a vision for talent.** In order to maintain the talent - and productivity - of people, governments need visions for developing talent. A Lifetime Skills Guarantee is a step in the right direction in the UK; the next step will be the government's White Paper on skills. At the same time, these are only steps - the work needs to be maintained over a long period of time and viewed as an investment.
- **Both race and income are significant barriers to talent development.** In the US, disadvantage is concentrated largely in Black and Hispanic populations; in the UK, white working-class boys demonstrate very low levels of educational achievement. Alongside educational programmes focused on race, there is a need for programmes targeting individuals from low-income families in order to raise everyone's boats. Very careful thinking is needed as to the balance on these programmes and language used, so that we do not pit low-status groups against each other.

Panellists

Dr Fiona Hill

SENIOR FELLOW, FOREIGN POLICY, CENTER ON THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE, BROOKINGS

Minister Gillian Keegan

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS AND SKILLS

Jamie Macfarlane

CEO AND FOUNDER, CREATOR FUND

Jamie Merisotis

PRESIDENT AND CEO, LUMINA FOUNDATION

Dr Tony Sewell

FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, GENERATING GENIUS; CHAIR, COMMISSION ON RACE & ETHNIC DISPARITIES

Deborah Yedlin

CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Facilitator

Natasha Whitmill

DEVELOPMENT LEAD, THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION

- **Universities as regional engines of innovation.** Many of the UK's unicorn-level status start-ups began in universities. More university-centred venture capital funding deployed across the UK could help to provide talented students with early opportunities to build companies and grow talent within their regions (rather than needing to move to London in order to access resources).
- **Invest in building local advice networks through schools and other institutions.** There has been considerable investment in university outreach programmes to underserved areas, but not as much in the other direction with transformation of local advice networks. It is the combination of informal and formal networks that help to show a person what is possible in their lives. Many of these networks have atrophied in recent years with the decline of local initiatives but now is an opportunity to build these back up.
- **A Marshall Plan for Education.** The US, the UK and Canada share many commonalities in their education and talent development systems and can also learn from each other based on their differences. More can be done jointly by education leaders in these countries to prepare for the future. This is strategically important given the evolving nature of the work of the future and the complexities of modern democratic life. A 'Marshall Plan for Education' type goal is worth aiming for.

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The implications of living in a hybrid world

Key points

- **Virtual communication and building relationships.** COVID-19 has fundamentally disrupted our personal and professional interactions, with the rapid shift to virtual communication facilitating a new space and mode of communication. There have been many positives to life online, such as reduced costs and increased diversity of people involved in conversations. A hybrid world can break down geographical barriers and widen accessibility to a variety of groups, increasing innovation and democratisation of opinions.
- **Addressing inadequacies.** While we should embrace a hybrid world, it is not perfect, and we have all experienced the challenges of authentic communication online. In the virtual world, complex interactions to connect and build relationships with people, from eye contact to tone, are lost through the screen: we are either all on or all off and we lose the organic interactions and spontaneity required to build new relationships.
- **Accelerating organic interaction.** COVID-19 has accelerated the development of virtual technology, but can the industry find ways to simulate more organic attributes online as we move further toward a hybrid world? This was identified as an idea of opportunity for technologists.
- **Demand for in-person engagement.** While living and working virtually has proven to be successful with flexible working hours and reduced travel time, employees are still eager to get back to the office. There are downsides to working from home, including the lack of boundaries between work and leisure, drops in morale, and living circumstances. The pent-up demand to get back to the office is high.

Chair

Tara L. Lemméy

CEO AND FOUNDER, LENS VENTURES

Panellists

Revd Dr Christopher J. Benek

PASTOR & CEO, COCREATORS

Brian Finlay

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THE STIMSON CENTER

Ambassador Heidi Hulan

AMBASSADOR OF CANADA TO AUSTRIA AND SLOVAKIA AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN IN VIENNA

Professor Anthony Steed

PROFESSOR OF VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS & COMPUTER GRAPHICS, DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

Haiyan Zhang

CHIEF OF STAFF, XBOX

- **Returning to normal or a new normal?** Offices will continue to be the central focus, as a space for collaboration, connection, and innovation that cannot currently be replicated through technology. At the same time, while in-person contact is important, the demand to move into a virtual world has opened new spaces and new modes of working that we can continue to harness in the “new normal”.
- **Future of technology.** The pandemic has evolved how we use technology, an experience we can harvest to better understand human interaction online and offline. Virtual realities and online games are paving the way of online spaces as placeholders to mediate relationships.
- **Shared experiences.** At present, online communication is bounded and structured, whereas gaming and virtual realities offer a more organic interaction for shared experience and connectivity in a shared place. Can we redefine gaming in the professional space to mediate communication? Perhaps it is time we delve deeper into virtual realities and embrace new spaces, new boundaries, and new modes of communication.
- **Further apart but closer together.** The push from the pandemic into the virtual world has illuminated how vulnerable we are as humans and therefore the need for innovation to improve digital communication. COVID-19 has forced us to adapt and embrace a hybrid world, hopefully preparing humanity for the next hurdle.

Trust in the media and opportunities for renewing the relationship between the media and citizens following the US elections

Key points

- **A struggle for the public's attention.** Only 10 percent of the public regularly consume news. Most people's views aren't shaped by the media therefore but other sources, both digital and personal. Improving journalism can only do so much to improve public discourse.
- **Responsibility and blame.** Journalists carry the responsibility of providing fair, impartial and accurate information to the public. Repeated criticism has worn journalists down over recent years and is driving some journalists to take safe options when reporting.
- **The divisiveness in the press reflects a deep societal fracture.** Divisions within politics have reached most parts of society, encouraged by loud radical voices. Right wing voters are abandoning news services that do not reflect President Trump's view of the election. People are social creatures and social media is determining views.
- **Regulation balanced with the opportunities of social media.** More needs to be done to counter the surge of fake news but we should think carefully of demanding the social media platforms be regulated as media companies or broadcasters. Do we want these big companies or governments deciding what we read? That said, more editorial responsibility at the companies is inevitable and essential.
- **A domination of COVID-19 discussion.** The recent US elections reporting focused largely on the pandemic, paying less attention to the candidates' other policies. For example, commentary on foreign policy by major newspapers took place largely after the Biden victory; a marked shift from past practice. A

Chair

Richard Gingras

VICE PRESIDENT, NEWS, GOOGLE INC.

Panellists

James Arroyo OBE

DIRECTOR, THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION

Rafael Behr

COLUMNIST AND LEADER WRITER, THE GUARDIAN

Jennifer Griffin

NATIONAL SECURITY CORRESPONDENT, FOX NEWS

Craig Newmark

FOUNDER & CSR, NEWMARK PHILANTHROPIES, FORMERLY CRAIGSLIST

Professor Rasmus Nielsen

DIRECTOR, REUTERS INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF JOURNALISM

Manveen Rana

HOST OF STORIES OF OUR TIMES, FROM THE TIMES AND THE SUNDAY TIMES

David Sanger

NATIONAL SECURITY CORRESPONDENT, THE NEW YORK TIMES

desire from the media to a return to political normality risks giving Biden too easy a ride.

- **The UK following the US?** The United Kingdom face some similar risks on political polarisation as the US. A political centre is re-emerging in the UK but the culture wars are still raging. The Biden administration may attenuate this somewhat by changing the context.
- **Maintaining rigour on fact-checking and presentation.** The Biden administration will not translate into an era of truth and objectivity. Journalists will need to be just as hard on Biden as they were on Trump. A desire from the media to a return to political normality risks giving Biden too easy a ride. Much more can be done visually and digitally to separate out news and analysis from opinion.

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In conversation with Admiral James G. Stavridis

Geopolitics and leadership in the time of coronavirus

Key points

- **We should expect the Biden administration to be cohesive, collaborative and innovative.** The Biden administration is composed of experienced politicians who value internal cooperation and collaboration. Much of the administration already has senior-level experience in government and business and knows what they are doing: it will be a “no-drama” White House. We should also expect innovation but with judgement on what the political market will bear.
- **Innovative communication.** The Biden administration will innovate through new and sophisticated use of technology, such as on Facebook, to facilitate two-way communication with Americans and the world.
- **China will emerge from the pandemic stronger.** China’s effective handling and quick containment of the virus, via its authoritarian approach, will leave it relatively unscathed from the pandemic. China will emerge emboldened from the pandemic, continuing its Belt and Road initiative, making territorial claims in the resource rich South China Sea and further building its cyber force.
- **The US must form a strategy to navigate China’s rise in power.** The US must decide what economic, cultural and political tools it will use to approach China. The US must confront China where it is needed, for example on gross violation of human rights, but also collaborate. It is vital that the US and China collaborate on tackling global issues such as the climate crisis and distribution of the new vaccine.

Participants

Admiral James G. Stavridis

OPERATING EXECUTIVE,
THE CARLYLE GROUP,
FORMER SUPREME ALLIED
COMMANDER, NATO

James Arroyo OBE

DIRECTOR,
THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION

- **What is the future leadership role of the US?**
Due to a poor handling of the coronavirus pandemic, the US's position as a world leader will weaken temporarily but this will only be for several years, if not less. The US still has a growing and diverse population, mature university system and innovative population. Over the next few decades, we should expect the US to play an important role in leading and demonstrating core values. The US will encourage other nations to stand for democracy, liberation and racial equality.
- **Is the time ripe for a reorganisation of American politics?** Despite the deep divisions within the US, we should not overestimate support for Trump. He has a rock-solid base of loyal supporters but they only add up to 20 percent of the adult population. Many of his voters are looking for better options. As Trump's salience decreases over time there is a renewed chance for younger, talented, centre right politicians to rise. This could also be the time for the emergence of a new party in the US with a new leader.
- **Europe will have a stronger position emerging from the pandemic.** Having handled the pandemic fairly well, once Brexit negotiations are completed, the EU can focus its energy on participating in more international affairs. The independence of the UK from the EU will most likely lead to closer US-UK relations. An effective place for the UK to build its relationship with the US is through their position in NATO.

In conversation with William M. Daley

Leadership on domestic and international crises in a time of transition

Key points

- **A rapid transition.** President-elect Joe Biden is faced with the massive challenge of balancing political experience and diversity in his team in his selection of his incoming administration. Part of the challenge is dealing with jockeying and recommendations of over three decades worth of political relationships. Every selection that confirms one friendship creates many more disappointed enemies. He must move quickly to select the core of his administration before January 20th.
- **The team reflects the leader's personality.** Experience shows that the selection of an administration is reflective of a President's personality. This was true of Presidents Trump, Obama, Bush and Clinton. We can expect Biden to leverage his core traits — his decency, wealth of experience in government, his strong relationships with political leaders, and his faith in the system — when pulling together his team. So far there have been few surprises.
- **Keeping team members within their lanes may be a challenge.** Can you align long-standing personal relationships with your key staff to create a cohesive team? Biden's administration will test this over the next years. Biden's selections - particularly of well-known prominent personalities - will provide the Chief of Staff Ron Klain with a challenge in keeping people in their lanes. He will need to watch friends even more closely than enemies.
- **Healing political polarisation.** Biden is taking over at a time of political polarisation and crisis, with continued populist sentiment from Donald Trump's core supporters. But there is

Participants

William M. Daley

VICE CHAIRMAN OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS FOR WELLS FARGO & MEMBER OF THE COMPANY'S OPERATING COMMITTEE, FORMER WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF (OBAMA ADMINISTRATION)

James Arroyo OBE

DIRECTOR, THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION

a sense that “Trumpism” will soon fatigue and that Biden can reduce this polarisation through his goal-oriented approach to leadership, his ability to unite people, and his optimism in the US system.

- **Fight for the Senate.** Although tensions between Republicans and Democrats are high right now, much of the Republican position at present is driven by the fight for Senate control by ensuring victory in the two seats to be elected in Georgia in January. Once a Republican senate majority is confirmed then the way will be open to be more pragmatic. Biden will approach this person by person.
- **Balancing domestic and international challenges.** Biden’s immediate priorities lie within the US tackling economic disparities, political division, and the fallout from the pandemic. However, the path to long-term global position of the US requires a restoring of relationships with key allies on foreign policy issues. Biden will empower Tony Blinken to fuel transatlantic alliances and quickly re-engage European partners - particularly rebuilding the relationship with Angela Merkel.
- **Brexit and the UK.** Although Biden has both a proud Irish heritage and an appreciation for the US-UK relationship, he will have no intention to get involved in Brexit discussions and will instead work hard to build a consensus with the UK and the EU. Prime Minister Johnson is not well respected by the Democrats and is seen as a mini-Trump, but his early reaching out to Biden was a good gesture.
- **China-US relations.** Relationships between China and the US will remain contentious, and signs suggest Biden will move with caution and discretion in this relationship.

Concerns with China will be tackled as a global democratic issue, with unity among allies a priority. Biden will challenge China on human rights, economics and trade but look to cooperate on COVID-19 and climate.

- **The Middle East.** On the Middle East, Biden will likely aim to reduce involvement but maintain diplomatic ties and caution with allies.
- **Reshaping the US.** What is the new America? The US is grappling with the need to redefine the country. Increased calls for diversity and equality, alongside political polarisation, are causing strain on the system. Working to diminish the political tensions and address inequalities across the country, Biden will aim to rebalance government systems through the prism of equality. This approach toward healing and bridge-building is literally who Biden is as a person.
- **Preparing for the next election.** Biden is not ready personally to discount running again. He will need to change the political dynamic from that of Trump’s presidency if he wants to secure a Democratic victory in 2024. The next four years will be focused on demonstrating successful Democrat leadership and setting up probably VP Harris for a possible campaign.

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The Ditchley Foundation
Ditchley Park
Enstone
Chipping Norton
Oxfordshire
OX7 4ER United Kingdom

Please contact us by email
director@ditchley.com

Charity Registration Number 309657
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ditchley.com

