Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

The Asia Chessboard Podcast

"Public Opinion and the Asia Chessboard: Views from the U.S. and Abroad"

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Andrew Schwartz: Welcome to the Asia Chessboard, the podcast that examines geopolitical dynamics in Asia and takes an inside look at the making of grand strategy. I'm Andrew Schwartz at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Hannah Fodale: This week, Mike is joined by Bruce Stokes of the German Marshall Fund, to discuss US public attitudes about the world, and how the world sees the US leadership role abroad, especially after January 6th. Stokes differentiates between public opinion about the United States, faith in the US public, and faith in US ideas about democracy. How can the incoming administration implement a foreign policy for the middle class while dealing with trade and security issues in Asia?

Michael Green: Welcome back to the Asia Chessboard. I'm joined by Bruce Stokes, who is about the best person I can think of to help us un-bundle what's happening in American public attitudes about the world, and what it means for US strategy, and also what the world thinks of the US. We're a Republic. We're a Democracy. The US, as I've argued, is capable of grand strategy but it has to reflect where the American people are coming from. And where the American people are coming up from right now is a very confusing topic, after what happened with the insurrectionist attack on the US Congress on January 6th, and all kinds of currents in our politics.

Michael Green: So Bruce has been covering domestic politics of trade and international affairs his whole career. He was a journalist with the National Journal. We were together in the Council on Foreign Relations. We worked on trade policy, with a special focus on the domestic politics. And for a long time, he was with the Pew Research Center, designing and interpreting their Global Economic Attitudes surveys. Now, with German Marshall Fund. Bruce, welcome.

Bruce Stokes: Great to be with you.

Michael Green: So we get a lot of listeners who always want to know why we're here. And so, what's the short version? I know you went to Georgetown, and SAIS, two schools near and dear to me. But how did you get into the business of trade and politics and American attitudes?

Bruce Stokes: It's a very funny story. When I graduated from Georgetown and SAIS, I had a minor in economics. And I didn't really like economics, wasn't very interested in it. And years later, not years later, maybe a decade later, I got offered a job as the chief international economics correspondent for a magazine called the National Journal in Washington. And my college roommate at the time, called me up and said, "You do realize that our economics professor is turning over in his grave." Because it wasn't at all clear that economics was my future.

Bruce Stokes: But I actually found that it was fascinating, because it led... if you pursue it, I think the way you should pursue it, which is the economics from the ground up, it leads you into politics, it leads you to understanding where people are coming

from and the challenges they're facing in the domestic economy. And also, it enabled me to wrestle with some of the broader challenges, facing all communities around the world- how we adapt to an ever-changing world, where the pace of change is accelerating very rapidly. It's not just globalization, its technological change, its strategic change. And so, it's been a very rewarding career.

Michael Green: And you're not from inside the Beltway?

Bruce Stokes: No, I'm actually from a small town in Western Pennsylvania, which, by the way, voted two thirds for Trump in 2016, and two thirds for Trump in 2020. And it was a good place to grow up in the sense of understanding the changing American industrial economy, because the largest employer in my hometown, when I was growing up, was the steel mill. The steel mill, thank goodness still exists, but it only employs a third of the workers and until recently, it was owned by the Japanese, which is a sign of real globalization. But what's interesting in that town is that the largest employer is now the hospital, which is a reminder that when a country spends 17% of its GDP on medical care, it's industrial policy, you create jobs. And it's a service economy no longer, not an industrial economy.

Michael Green: So that's a part of Pennsylvania my mom's family's been from, going back centuries, but I was born in DC. I'm very swampy myself. So looking at January 6th, people around the world are asking “is the American leadership role in the world done? Is American political life too adversarial, too polarized, too prone to cult-like trends for the world to count on us?”. So we're going to go and break down China policy, trade a bunch of things. But to start off, when you looked at what happened on January 6th, I'm sure you were as horrified as I was. But you must have been putting on your Pew and your National Journal hat and wondering what this meant for America's role in the world? What were your thoughts when this was all happening?

Bruce Stokes: Absolutely. I think that America's soft power was always one of its real strengths. It's the fact that even when people disagreed with our policies, as they had a right to do and often did, they believed in the American people. And all of our series of Pew over the years showed that even during the Bush-era, or the Trump-era, people around the world had greater faith in the American people than they might have had in the American leaders or even in the US itself. But that soft power was waning, even before Trump. We saw in the Pew surveys that, we would ask a question periodically, do you think the United States protects the rights of its own people? And it's just kind of our human rights, American image question. And in the wake of the NSA scandal, we began to see a decline.

Michael Green: And that's the Snowden issue.

Bruce Stokes: The Snowden and the revelations that the US National Security Agency was spying on government leaders, as well as other people around the world. We began to see a waning of belief in that aspect of American soft power. It got worse after Ferguson and the Black Lives Matter movement began, the abusive killings by American police. And then it got worse under Trump. And while we have no new data in the wake of January 6th, it seems to me that the trend suggests that this can in no way can help the image of the United States, its soft power, and faith in the American people. There's a new survey, not in Asia but in Europe, that just came out today by the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Bruce Stokes: And they did ask a question about whether the public's faith in the American people was strong or weak or whatever, how the exact question was asked. And it was done before January 6th, it was done late last year. So it's not directly related to January 6th. But already in Europe, people's faith in the American people was down. And when you compare that to where that faith had been in prior Pew polls, it's really come down. And so I think that what America risks losing by this January 6th event is faith in the judgment of the American people.

Bruce Stokes: And by extension then, American ideas about democracy. And here at Pew, we would ask periodically how people around the world thought about American ideas about democracy. And what was striking is that 57% of people in Asia liked American ideas about democracy. So again, this is one of our aspects of our soft power. We don't know how January 6th has affected that, we'll see in the future. But it cannot have helped. I think that's the logical conclusion.

Michael Green: It is different by region, though, isn't it? I mean, this new poll by the European Council on Foreign Relations, in some ways wasn't surprising, because Europeans had sort of looked down on the United States since Johnson or Reagan.

Bruce Stokes: You're absolutely right.

Michael Green: I mean, in Asia, first of all, China's in their neighborhood. So they don't have the latitude of condescending to the Americans. But in the polling, we've done a CSIS and elsewhere, there is more confidence in the US and Asia. And there is more of a recognition they need us. Do you think it gets bad in Asia the way we've seen in Europe?

Bruce Stokes: No, look, I would be shocked and really worried if it got as bad in Asia as it has in Europe. And let's face it, it was bad under Bush in Europe, it was very bad under Trump in Europe. But under Trump, what we found was the strongest support for Trump other than Israel, was places like Korea, places like the Philippines. They both liked the strong leader aspect of the Trump presidency, and they recognize the need for the United States to help defend them against China. And that's not going to change whoever is US president.

Bruce Stokes: Maybe they will embrace a less authoritarian leader, a little bit less than they did under Trump, but I don't think it will totally undermine their belief. But it will be interesting to see whether there's a slight decline in the faith in American ideas about democracy when America doesn't seem to be practicing its own ideas about democracy. But you're absolutely right. The last time Pew asked this question, the strongest support for American ideas about democracy was in Asia.

Michael Green: Yeah. And in the survey CSIS put out in September, the country in the world where respondents were most likely to advocate putting pressure on China on human rights was not in Europe, it was Japan. And so, some of these attitudes are shifting in part I think due to proximity to China in some ways. One thing that's hard to explain to allies in the region is they look at what happened on January 6th, they look at Trump-ism. And there's no simple domestic debate about foreign policy. It's not like one party is in favor of retrenchment and one party's in favor of engagement, both parties are a complicated mix in the US. And Trump was very in his administration, which by the way, are two different things.

Michael Green: But let's just say the Trump administration was pretty forward-leaning in terms of military engagement in Asia, pushing back against China, but then retreated on trade. And looking at the Pew polls, are there clear... It seems to me like their political parties no longer represent different schools of thought on foreign policy, that there aren't really easily identifiable camps or constituencies, it's all in flux. Do you see a kind of engagement group versus a retrenchment group in the US, or is it just too complicated right now?

Bruce Stokes: Well, I mean, I think it depends how you, I guess, define engagement and retrenchment. In purely military terms, the surveys that we did at Pew showed a couple of things. One is that both Democrats and Republicans said they were willing to go to war with China to defend our allies in Asia, and the allies were enumerated: South Korea, Japan, Philippines. And the republicans were slightly more willing to do that than Democrats, but a majority of Democrats as well. So I think Asians can rest assured that our security commitments in Asia are strong, just as they are in Europe, by the way. I mean, Trump railed against allies that didn't support us. But frankly, the American public is still willing to support our allies. It is interesting that when you look at other data that asked whether other countries take advantage of the United States, 80% of Republicans say yes, and only 27% of Democrats say yes.

Bruce Stokes: So there is this kind of victimization belief that Republicans have. But frankly, the questions aren't so specific as to, do the Japanese victimize us as opposed to somebody else? But there is that seed bed there for Republican resentment to come out of. But what's interesting is that when you talk about specific issues like China, it is Democrats who are less willing to be tough on China than Republicans, on a whole range of measures, especially if it puts at risk our economic relationship with China. And I think that's going to be difficult for

Biden, a road for him to walk, because I think, among the foreign policy elites in the Democratic Party, there is a sense we have to be tough on China. We'll be tough in different ways than Trump was, but we're still going to be tough.

Bruce Stokes: The polling data doesn't suggest that the public, when you actually get down to specifics, I mean, they don't like China. I mean, both Republicans and Democrats have a negative attitude of China, which is the highest it's ever been at least since the Cold War. But when you ask them specific questions, like is it more important to get tougher than to build a strong relationship with China on economic issues? Only 33% of Democrats say yes, whereas 66 of Republicans say yes. So there is a divide there. And so, how Biden is tough in a way that I think foreign policy elites and trade elites think he needs to be, but not so tough, that it doesn't follow along to his constituencies' gut feelings about these things. Because as you said in your opening, Mike, American policy has to be rooted in public opinion, and it can't stray too far from that.

Michael Green: Is the situation you're describing in the Democratic Party ranks, demographic? I mean, in our surveys at CSIS, Millennials are least worried about China as threat, and most worried about issues like climate change, social justice. Is it demographics? Because the Democratic party base is much younger now than the Republican.

Bruce Stokes: Yeah. No, look, I think that's exactly what we're seeing here. I mean, you can't prove it, because obviously, it's a fluid situation. And generally surveys aren't big enough to slice it and dice it enough to get really specific but we know that the Democratic Party is increasingly a party of younger people, minorities, and women. And they have different priorities, as you say, climate change, and also have generally tended to be less bellicose in their support of international relations. And the Republican Party is increasingly a party of older, less educated white men. And on a variety of measures, they tend to be tougher on these international issues and trade in particular, because let's face it, many of those people are the people who have suffered the most from globalization.

Michael Green: So both parties and Independents don't like China. They do like allies. They do believe in defending our allies. That difference comes down to what they're willing to put at risk, and it sounds like Democrats are less willing to put other priorities like social justice, climate change at risk than Republicans. So is there a constituency for Biden for competition with China? Because the elites around him are ready to compete. You look at the appointments in this administration, these are internationalists who do not want to cede the field to China. Will they have constituencies in their own party to do that? Or is it going to have to be a kind of cross the aisle, cobbling together of constituencies around defense and other issues?

Bruce Stokes: Now, it's a very good question. I think that he will have to maintain many of the trade measures that Trump instituted against China, simply because he had the strong support of the unions. And even though unions in the United States are

much weaker than they used to be, he can't afford to alienate them. Similarly, there are major American interests who prevailed on Trump to do some of these tariffs, steel interests, aluminum interests, etc., who are going to continue to pressure Democrats to do the same thing. And we can't dismiss the fact that policy also will reflect how China behaves. And the Xi government has become increasingly entrenched and hard-line on a number of issues that will, I think, harden American attitudes, public attitudes.

Bruce Stokes: I mean, the treatment of Uyghurs in Shenzhen, the situation in Hong Kong, the growing concern about Taiwan, which I think most Americans probably couldn't find Taiwan on a map. But, Mike, you and I have both been in conversations where, I'll speak for myself here, but I think you might agree, there seems to be more concern among foreign policy professionals about what the future of Taiwan and there has been in my lifetime, at least since Quemoy and Matsu in 1950s. And which ages me, I think. And I think that while Americans will be offended by this and will want Biden to do something, the Biden administration will have to be very cautious, because let's face it, after Tiananmen and Bill Clinton saying we can't have anything to do with these butchers in Beijing, within a year or so, we were doing business with China again. There are limits to what we can expect to happen from the United States.

Michael Green: The new National Security Advisor-designate Jake Sullivan has talked about competition and cooperation with China, "We're going to push back where we have to, we're going to cooperate where it's in our interests." And I think that's the tone for the whole Biden team. The Trump team left out the cooperation part. Which our surveys show most Americans and most of allies think was a mistake. Where it's in our interest, we got to work with China. But we're not going back to the old G2 ideas, or the idea that showed up in a lot of polls that China's a partner, not a competitor. The polls, the Congress, everybody now sees them as a competitor.

Michael Green: The tricky part is how you play politically. And there are some proposals I've heard bubbling up around Biden that maybe you frame everything around China, domestic infrastructure, or health care, education. We're talking about how you organized constituencies and politics to do international engagement, is it possible that we see China become the theme for everything domestic going forward? Because in some ways, that'd be bad for foreign policy, because the foreign policy leadership could lose control of that, if all of a sudden, China is the boogeyman for everything from health care policy to education. You and I saw that with Japan.

Bruce Stokes: Two things there. Your first point about cooperation. There's very good data from Pew, that Democrats are much more supportive of international cooperation on a range of some of these new issues than were the Trump supporters, on climate change, on the coronavirus, on improving the economy. So I do think that there will be support where it's appropriate for cooperation with China, or cooperation with our other allies in Asia on a variety of issues. I

do think you're right. Your question addresses, I think, one of the real challenges of the incoming Biden administration, which is that they said they want a foreign policy for the middle class. And that grows out really of a study done that I was part of marginally, at the Carnegie Endowment where they did a series of studies in Ohio, Nebraska, and Colorado on what the public and the middle class in particular thought about foreign policy, what they were worried about, what they wanted to get done.

Bruce Stokes: And it was run by a guy who now is going to be the Director of Policy Planning at the State Department. So it's going to be his job to try to implement a foreign policy for the middle class. I must tell you that one of the challenges was, it's not at all clear from the survey data that the middle class thinks that much differently about foreign policy issues than anybody else. There's a couple of issues, they're certainly much more worried about job loss, which would suggest that a foreign policy for the middle class will be quasi-protectionist in the eyes of foreigners, at least, we'll never say is protectionist. We could argue it isn't protectionist, but it'll be seen as an extension of that. There seems to be in a couple of other areas a concern.

Bruce Stokes: But it's disparate. I mean, for example, in Colorado, which has an enormous amount of defense spending, foreign policy for the middle class has a strong defense. And in Ohio, where there's still big scars of loss of the industrial economy, it's trade. And so, how they fashion foreign policy for the middle class that holds together their coalition, and is a convincing argument that our foreign policy is defending the interests of the American middle class, while still cooperating with our allies, I think is going to be a major, major challenge. And frankly, I don't have any good answers for that. I think it's a real tough nut to crack.

Michael Green: So Bill Clinton, in his own way, with his bridge to the 21st century, made the case to the American middle class that NAFTA and trade, not at first, of course, first year until he got his credentials, his bona fides lined up by beating everybody up, Japan, China, everybody. But eventually, by I guess the second-third year of his first term, Bill Clinton was making the case to the American people that international trade agreements were for the middle class, we're going to build the bridge of the 21st century, we're part of this whole domestic agenda. Is that something Biden can do? Or have the politics of trade just gotten too topsy turvy?

Bruce Stokes: Well, I mean, I do think that... Having gone to college with Clinton, so being of the same age-

Michael Green: Was he in your Georgetown?

Bruce Stokes: Yeah, he was two years ahead of me. I can't say we were close, though. But I think Clinton understood better than any president before him, or frankly, any president maybe except Obama after him. But globalization meant to people

and how we had to adapt to it, we couldn't stop it. But I think Clinton's failing was... In his stump speech in the '92 campaign, he would repeatedly say, and one of the stock lines was, "Every citizen in America will have a right to get retrained-- comma, because you're going to have six or seven jobs in your lifetime." And when they studied that stump speech, they found that people loved the first part of the sentence and hated the second part of the sentence.

Bruce Stokes: And the real failing of the Clinton administration was they really weren't able to create the kind of retraining, safety net, helping people transition, that was needed. And no one, since then, has really been any good at it either. I don't know, maybe Americans aren't good at it. We know the Germans are good at it. And I think that one of the challenges Biden will face is that he needs to find a way to help Americans deal with the accelerating pace of change of modern life, which includes globalization, includes trade, but it's also increasingly going to be technological change, and automation and robotics.

Bruce Stokes: And frankly, we're in virgin territory here. And like I said we don't, based on the Clinton experience and others' experience, we don't have a good track record of being able to do that. And I don't think you can get middle class support for globalization and economic engagement with the world and economic engagement with the technological future, unless you are there to help people through this. Clinton used to say, "I can't stop this, but I'll be with you every step of the way." And then he wasn't. And I think Biden has to try to find a way to do that.

Michael Green: So it sounds like the politics for trade, and this is at a time when there are two huge multilateral trade agreements in Asia, RCEP and CPTPP that we're not in. Looking at public opinion polling and knowing trade politics as you do, it sounds like he's got to rebuild his credentials first, helping the middle class before he can make any case for joining international trade agreement. Sounds like that's what you're saying?

Bruce Stokes: Mike, I totally agree with you. Historians will write that one of the major failings of the Obama Administration was not finishing TPP in time to try to get it through the Congress. Now, they might not have been able to get it to the Congress. I mean, let's be honest with ourselves. But there's no reconstructing TPP with America in it. I mean, we'll have to come up with some jerry-rigged system at best. And it's not going to happen for years because at least the Biden people I've talked to say their first priority is going to be trying to fix the WTO. Frankly, they aren't terribly sanguine about the ability to do that. But I think they fully realized that it would be a huge distraction politically to try to sign new trade agreements and try to get them through the Congress with a bare majority in the Senate.

Bruce Stokes: So I think that we'll probably see US trade policy in the first couple of years focusing on enforcement. The new USTR used to be in the General Counsel's Office at USTR with a focus on China. So there'll be some strong enforcement

activities. But I think that's about it. And I think the problem is, as you know better than I do Mike, by the time we would get around to maybe trying to dock on to TPP or RCEP or whatever, they will have moved on. And it could be even harder to do that in the future, because we don't know what role China will be playing in both those organizations by the time we do it.

Michael Green: I mean, I can see the new USTR, combining fixing the WTO with trade enforcement by taking China to the WTO, on the mercantilist embargoes on Australia, on cyber theft as a whole, there's a lot. There's a very rich menu for lawyers at USTR and their counterparts in Japan and Europe and elsewhere to revitalize US, the WTO by taking China to task in a way. They got a free ride for four years under Trump. So that's one thing that sort of shows American leadership in multilateral trade in a way. I guess the other might be this idea of a sectoral agreement, a digital trade agreement. The US-Japan Digital Trade chapter or USMCA, Mexico-Canada chapter, turn that into something in the Pacific Rim.

Michael Green: In some ways, I see the merit to that, which is TPP was kind of a 20th century agreement. It's a lot about tariffs and trade and services. Maybe we just break off the pieces that are about digital trade technology, 5G, the future and organize around those. Do you think domestic US trade politics will be more tolerant of that kind of effort than the traditional tariff reduction?

Bruce Stokes: I guess, I mean, as someone who's a huge proponent of both TPP and TTIP with Europe, and had my heart broken in both cases, I have to question my own judgment. But no, I agree with you, Mike. I think that if I were advising them, I would say what about a bilateral with Japan on digital? Or maybe it's a pluri-lateral on digital in the Asian region. I was head of a task force at the German Marshall Fund that recommended this for Europe, but I would certainly include Japan. Could we do just a green-products agreement, or what we call blue products, medical supplies and equipment, in the wake of the pandemic?

Bruce Stokes: Create new supply chains that are among allies, that we can maybe have a greater degree of trust in terms of being able to rely on them, in the hopes that public opinion in the US would understand that digital is different, would understand that the pandemic made medical supplies different, that the concern about climate makes green-goods different. Whether that would float and fly, politically, I think trade people have to be very wary of. Because political types often think that we trade people, overestimate the appeal of our arguments. And I've learned that, to my chagrin, in a number of cases.

Michael Green: And among the trade people, you've been the most careful not to overstate the case for training to understand Western Pennsylvania views.

Bruce Stokes: Yeah. But on the other hand, it does seem to me that the real challenge for our society is how we help people through these transitions and the integration of our economy with the rest of the world is going to happen, whether we like it or

not. Questions whether it's going to be by rules, or there's going to be no rules, and it's just going to happen. And, frankly, I'm of a political view or intellectual view, that a well-regulated economy is a much better economy.

Michael Green: I was involved in this in the Bush administration, these trade deals got through because basically, the advocates would cobble together, it was rent-seeking. We'd cobble together people who won and pay off the losers through trade adjustment assistance, which was not really effective. It was just, I mean, a cynical way to put it was a bribe. That's not going to work the way it used to. But if you reimagine trade deals around some of these themes, one step at a time, I wonder if you can recreate something of a constituency for trade. That's not just the rent seeking, you know ag and financial services, but actually constituencies that care about climate, like with green trade or care about technology. It's an experiment. Nobody really knows. I'm not sure what the polls tell you on this one. It seems like there's an opportunity.

Bruce Stokes: Yeah, I mean, I think it's too detailed and technical to get much insight from public opinion polls. But it does seem to me that we can't just throw up our hands and say, "Well, there's nothing that can be done. Well, it was us. Americans are historically protectionist." In fact, the polls are very clear. Americans increasingly believe that trade is good for the society. Now, if you ask a more specific question about does trade create jobs? Does it lower wages? People will say, "No, it doesn't create jobs, and it lowers wages." So, it's mixed. But NBC did a poll a couple of years ago, where they showed increasing support for trade, and then they broke it down demographically. And in every single demographic category, age, income, education, it had improved over time, in terms of the support for trade.

Bruce Stokes: So I think in principle, people get it, that this is the future. And our challenge as policymakers or advisors to policymakers is to say, "Okay, how do we do this? How do we accommodate people's legitimate concerns?" I think there was a time in the past where we kind of dismissed people's concerns and said, "You just got to get over it and get on with it, and you've got your head in the sand." And now, these are people whose lives will change because of this. And if you're 50 years old and you lose your job in the steel mill, you're never really going to have that kind of life again. And we don't do a very good job at all in helping people with that transition.

Michael Green: So when Democratic administrations come into power, going back to Clinton and then Obama, they often frame their foreign policy strategies around this issue of the middle class and domestic investment. And so I remember, maybe you were in the audience, but sitting as a student at our alma mater at SAIS, when Tony Lake gave the first preview of the Clinton National Security Strategy in 1993, and it was said, it's going to be about investing in America and investing institutions and investing in education. And then Barack Obama's first National Security Strategy was premised on the idea that investing at home will make us strong in the world. And for Biden, its Build Back Better, which has some of the

same flavor. And I'm trying to think, if you were in the foreign policy team, how would you internationalize that?

Michael Green: I mean, a foreign policy for the middle class is not necessarily going to resonate in Tokyo or in Delhi, it's not necessarily going to resonate in Brussels. This idea of Build Back Better is better. The other theme is starting here is resilience, a grand strategy of resilience. After COVID, let's all work together, form a coalition of countries and partners, where we're more resilient, our healthcare systems are better. And I know the Australians and Europeans are beginning to pick up on this theme with the administration. Can you see that? How do you see, looking at the polls and having a sense of where public opinion is, Is that a frame that could resonate well at home, resilience at home, resilience in the international system?

Bruce Stokes: Yeah, I think you're right. In the work I just did where I interviewed more than 150 foreign policy thought leaders, the word resilience came up again and again and again. It is one of the new buzzwords. I am afraid that if I used resilience in a public opinion poll, people wouldn't know what it meant. But who can be against resilience? Right? I mean, it is one of those things where, yes, if COVID has not taught us anything it's taught us that we need to be more resilient, more adaptable to sudden changes, certainly economic upheavals in the last two decades have, should have taught us the same thing.

Bruce Stokes: And how you sell that... I mean, one of the conundrums of Biden's approach is that without using buy-America explicitly, in essence, he's advocated for more buy-America, which is, it puts the hair and the back of the necks of all foreigners up. And I think, on one hand, there's a political reality that if you're going to spend my taxpayer dollars to build a bridge, then for goodness sakes, you should use American steel to build that bridge. On the other hand, it may actually be a waste of American taxpayers' money because it's a less efficient use. And the reality is, if you want foreigners to buy something else that America makes, you got to buy some of the stuff that they make.

Bruce Stokes: And I think that's where the public probably doesn't understand that. I mean, maybe at a principled level, they do, but at practical level, they don't. And I come from a state where when I was growing up, there was not only buy-American legislation, there was buy-Pennsylvania legislation. But I think it's going to be one of the dilemmas Biden faces, is if he has his way, we are going to spend billions and billions of dollars finally on infrastructure, which is long overdue. It will help the economy, it'll help jobs, it'll certainly help infrastructure. But how we navigate this Buy America theme, without alienating our allies, I think it's going to be a huge issue and get retaliation as a result, which we of course, don't want.

Bruce Stokes: One thing I wanted to go back to that came to my mind when you were talking initially is while Biden is talking about foreign policy to the middle class, I was just on a call with a leading Republican foreign policy person who's a non-

Trumper and never-Trumper, who was using the term “Foreign Policy for the Working Class.” And I thought this is interesting. I hadn't heard anyone say this, or Republicans say this. And if the Republicans begin to articulate a theme of work “Foreign Policy for the Working Class”, then Biden's going to have some kind of message competition here, which again, reflects the changing demographics of the Republican/Democratic parties, basically.

Michael Green: Yeah. No, I think there's going to be a very deliberate play by the Republican leadership to become the party of the working class, while also being the party of the super-rich, and both parties are the parties of the super-rich.

Bruce Stokes: Hey, you can have a twofer. That's great.

Michael Green: Yeah, I think that's... So there'll definitely be message competition. And what you say about Buy American on infrastructure applies to climate, and it applies to post-COVID medical, securing supplies. So if I were in the foreign policy part of the administration, and you and I have a lot of friends and connections who are, I mean, I'd be thinking about how do I make this strategy resilience a partnership theme with core allies and push back a little bit against the protectionist instincts that they'll go with it. When you have a big theme like resilience or policy and middle class, it's too easy to make it a protectionist theme. But if you can start to define resilience as being about supply chains, about democratic governance, you can start to make it a foreign policy theme.

Bruce Stokes: Yeah. One of the things I think that for example, with Japan that we should be actively engaged in in a Biden administration, is to make the argument that neither one of us, Japan nor the United States, have enough financial resources or scientific talent or a market that's big enough to compete in emerging technology with China. We need to work together on robotics, on AI, on quantum computing, on synthetic biology, things of those that are cutting edge, and work together doing pre-competitive R&D funding, to try to jumpstart some of those industries for both of our societies. And once we get a competitive technology, we can compete as we normally do.

Bruce Stokes: But I think that if we continue down a separate path, and to go to your point about a digital economy, it does seem to me that the Chinese are pursuing a traditional market development, in the digital economy, right? They're walling it off from everybody else. They're funding the hell out of it. They're developing their own standards and products, and then they'll be able to compete in the world in ways that will blow our socks off. And we don't have the money or the resources or the market to actively compete without cooperation with others, it seems to be. And we Americans, until very recently, I think, have had an arrogance about this like, "We don't need anybody else to do this."

Michael Green: Maybe the generous six, the silver lining will be, we come to realize that.

Bruce Stokes: Yes I agree with you.

Michael Green: The body politic comes to realize, we need partners, we ain't so great, and we need countries like Japan.

Bruce Stokes: Japanese officials I talk to, get this. I mean, they understand that they need to have this kind of cooperation. And let's hope that Americans are listening.

Michael Green: When you and I were together at the Council on Foreign Relations in the late '90s, you were doing a study group and I was doing a study group. Yours was on trade with Japan, mine was on foreign policy. And we were saying the revolutionary thing that maybe we ought to be on the same side, maybe we got to work issues together. Because there was such low trust in Japan in the '80s and '90s. And now in Pew, in Chicago Council, in our surveys, Japan is one of the most trusted countries in the world. And there are other countries like that. So it seems to me, taking these themes we've been talking about in American politics and turning them into an internationalist agenda is going to be more likely if we do it with partners, because people do like allies, they do like partners.

Bruce Stokes: And polls show Democrats in particular like allies and support cooperation in principle. Look, we have to be honest with ourselves. Once you get into the details of cooperation, there'll be people who push back and say, "I didn't mean that. I didn't understand it to be that." But the point is, in terms of at a political level to sell it, there's a receptive audience among Democrats.

Michael Green: So this is great. Bruce, I want to thank you. The strategic business in Asia is like moving around on a chessboard. But it's a three-dimensional chessboard. And one of the dimensions is how you build an enduring strategy for the American people. And we didn't find it tonight. But we definitely put in place what would matter to a Biden administration that wants to do that. So we'll all keep an eye on it. Thanks for joining us and good luck with all your research and work going forward.

Bruce Stokes: Thank you, Mike, and I enjoyed this a great deal.

Andrew Schwartz: Thanks for listening. For more on strategy and the Asia Program's work, visit the CSIS website at csis.org and click on the Asia Program page.