> **Trade is not his immediate priority. When he talks about jobs, he's going to create them through infrastructure.**

James G. McGann

US professor lays out top policy priorities, possibilities as Trump enters White House

Chen Huizhi

FOREIGN VIEWS

James G. McGann, a senior lecturer in International Studies and Director of the Think Tank and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania, talked to Shanghai Daily reporter Chen Huizhi on November 11 about the results of the recent presidential election in the United States and Donald Trump's stated priorities for his administration. McGann was in Shanghai attending a symposium held at the East China University of Political Science and Law.

Q: Pennsylvania, traditionally considered a "blue state" (ie a stronghold of the Democratic party), also favored Trump in the presidential election. What happened in Pennsylvania?

A: J. D. Vance's book "Hillbilly Elegy" well characterized the people who voted for Donald Trump. It captures the frustration and dislocation largely caused by globalization, which manifests itself on the surface in terms of nationalism, nativism and protectionism. But it's the underlying forces that drive those issues.

Those are major forces, such as the economic insecurity that people feel and the physical insecurity brought on by terrorism and global warming, and the loss of national and personal identity because of the forces of globalization.

I think it is those factors that led and contributed directly to Donald Trump's victory. But I believe that most people who voted for Donald Trump voted out of an emotional response charged with anger and anxiety, not positive and affirmative factors.

Many analysts, pundits, think tanks and others didn't want to see those realities and the implications they would have for the election because they hoped that Hillary Clinton would win. That blinded their understanding of the phenomenon that was taking place.

Q: Hillary Clinton actually won the popular vote with a margin of over 200,000. Do you think that the presidential election resulted in a split society in the US? And how will Donald Trump address this?

A: In two of the last five presidential elections, there were controversies about the electoral college and popular vote.

Many believe that the electoral college is antiquated and needs to be done away with, and that the popular vote should prevail. But getting agreement on that in the next two years certainly will be impossible.

On the other hand, there's a consensus on the importance of an effective and orderly transfer of power that is already achieved. Donald Trump has already been addressing the displeasure about the result of his being elected by being conciliatory — so long as the demonstrations are peaceful.

Q: Donald Trump has announced that his top priorities will be immigration, healthcare and jobs. Concretely what measures do you think will be taken in those areas?

A: Immigration and jobs are the areas that he can directly affect and has the support of the Congress to essentially realize. In terms of jobs, there will be in principle two foci: tax cuts that are intended to spur growth of business and major infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure was meant to be a part of the stimulus package in the economic crisis in 2008, but was never enacted. Having the support of both the Senate and the House of Representatives makes it possible for him to launch major infrastructure initiatives which will put precisely the group of people that were targeted in his campaign — middle class, laborers, unskilled and semi-skilled workers — back to work.

The more complicated thing to undo for him would be "Obamacare." Even though he wants to abolish "Obamacare," the reason why he's deferred is that he would have to replace it with something. He can't just do away with it, so he has to solve some of the fundamental problems that have been identified with "Obamacare" and keep some of the key elements which are attractive and not costly.

The big problem under "Obamacare" is the surge of healthcare premiums, which, for example, didn't help Hillary Clinton in Pennsylvania. The first 100 days for him will be the easiest, and the rest of the term may be more difficult.

Q: During Donald Trump's campaign, he made some statements against current trade arrangements with major economies in the world. What is to be expected in terms of trade policies from the US in the next period?

A: Both TPP and TTIP are dead.

Trade is the hot-button issue with the constituency that elected Donald Trump, and I believe that trade and immigration are the two areas where he needs to deliver major carefully crafted responses.

The delicate thing is that some things he does in trade might not be accepted by other countries, which could result in a backlash... Sanctions and tariffs would result in a retaliatory trade war, and he will also have to take into account Americans who operate businesses abroad.

So trade is not his immediate priority. When he talks about jobs, he's going to create them through infrastructure.

What he can do at this stage is to oppose TPP and TTIP and achieve his objectives without renegotiating already signed agreements such as NAFTA.

The end of US soft power as fear overtakes hope?

Shashi Tharoor

FOREIGN VIEWS

TRADITIONALLY, countries' global political power was assessed according to military might: the one with the largest army had the most power. But that logic was not always reflected in reality.

The US lost the Vietnam War; the Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan. In its first few years in Iraq, the US discovered the wisdom of Talleyrand's adage that the one thing you cannot do with a bayonet is sit on it.

Enter soft power. The term was coined by Harvard's Joseph S. Nye in 1990 to account for the influence a country wields, beyond its military (or "hard") power. As Nye put it, a country's power rests on its "ability to alter the behavior of others" to get what it wants, whether through coercion (sticks), payments (carrots), or attraction (soft power).

The US has been a haven for immigrants, and the land of the American Dream — the promise that anyone can be anything if they work hard enough.

It is also the home of Boeing and Intel, Google and Apple, Microsoft and MTV, Hollywood and Disneyland, McDonald's and Starbucks — in short, some of the most recognizable and influential brands and industries in the world.

The attractiveness of these assets, and of the American lifestyle that they represent, is that they enable the US to persuade, rather than compel, others to adopt its agenda. In this sense, soft power acts as both an alternative and a complement to hard power.

But there are limits to a country's soft power — even America's. In the wake of the US terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, there was an outpouring of goodwill for the US. Then the country launched its War on Terror, in which it relied heavily on hard power.

The instruments of that power — the Iraq invasion, indefinite detention of "enemy combatants" and other suspects at Guantánamo Bay prison, the Abu Ghraib scandal, revelations of CIA "black sites," the killing of Iraqi civilians by private US security contractors — were not received well by the global public.

America's soft-power assets were inadequate to compensate for the deficiencies of its hard-power approach.

Fans of American culture were not prepared to overlook the excesses of Guantánamo. Using Microsoft Windows does not predispose you to accept torture by the country that produces it. America's soft power declined sharply, demonstrating that how a country exercises its hard power affects how much soft power it can evoke.

Nye has argued that, in an information age, soft power often accrues to the country with the better story.

The US has long been the "land of the better story." It has a thirst for new ideas and a knack for innovation. But the story of America told in this election has deeply diminished the soft power the US evokes. Fear trumped hope.

Shashi Tharoor, a former UN under-secretary-general and former Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Human Resource Development, is currently Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs and an MP for the Indian National Congress. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2016.www.project-syndicate.org. Shanghai Daily condensed the article.