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China's response to the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy

Dr. CHUNG Jae-hung

(jameschung@sejong.org)

Research Fellow, the Sejong Institute

English Abstract

Upon its launch, the Biden administration signaled a shift in the Indo-Pacific strategy and a reset of the 40-year-long U.S. public policy toward China. The importance of the Indo-Pacific strategy will not radically change, yet the detailed strategies, rhetoric, and approaches will differ. Such strategy of the Biden administration is based on the perception that the previous administrations' foreign policy toward China has failed to transform China into an open political system, liberal international order, and for China to accept the rule of law and democratic values. Moreover, they rather have left China to grow economic and military power to rise as a strong strategic competitor to the U.S.

The Democratic Party of the U.S. has traditionally placed great importance on democracy, human rights, and values of liberty. Therefore, the Biden administration is expected to pursue a different style—than that of the Trump administration, characterized as unilateral and maverick actions—and pressure China and Indo-Pacific strategy through international solidarity and support from the allies in the Indo-Pacific region.

China has also established a new state objective that sets it must overcome all-out conflicts and challenges with the U.S. in line with the emergence of the Biden administration and the Indo-Pacific strategy. Besides, China began to actively respond with

all of its national capabilities in order to achieve a wealthy socialist power and realize the Chinese dream by 2049 via focusing on the Xi Jinping one-man rule system. In particular, China accepted strategic competition with the U.S. and the Indo-Pacific strategy as a mid-to-long-term war and announced that it aims to unite China as a one-man rule system to achieve modernization of China's distinctive socialism beyond the U.S. and declared the New Long March for the wealthy state by 2035 and a new journey for rich soldiers.

Moreover, Xi Jinping's leadership is actively using the pressure of the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific strategy to promote socialism, patriotic and Chinese nationalist sentiment, and to further nurture internal solidarity and support from the people. It is also making every effort to revitalize the internal economy, which has been dampened by the COVID-19 crisis and to reinforce Xi Jinping's one-man rule system and solidify the one party-state system by visiting Shenzhen to emphasize the second Southern Tour (南巡講話) and dual circulation strategy and to seek the technology self-reliance. It is against this backdrop that China has decided to realize the modernization of the Chinese military by 2027 in the year of the 100th anniversary of its establishment in order to respond to the full-fledged Indo-Pacific strategy of the U.S. and for China's national prosperity and military strength. Such a plan of China has been announced to match its military power to its economic status as the de facto world's second-largest economy, and thus, China asserts that becoming a strong military power that matches with the country's growing international status would achieve peace development and modernization. Therefore, China has declared its plan to achieve a complete military modernization by 2035 and to establish its status as the world's top military power by 2049.

The Biden administration is calling for South Korea to participate in the trilateral security cooperation amongst South Korea, the U.S. and Japan, India-Pacific strategies, and Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) in terms of the Korea-U.S. alliance. On the other hand, China is closely watching South Korea's India-Pacific strategy and participation in the QUAD, by stressing the importance of strategic communication and cooperation, namely President Xi Jinping's early visit to South Korea and trilateral cooperation between the two Koreas and China. The South Korean government also should use its strategic flexibility to prepare and present the most appropriate and reasonable countermeasure in this transition to achieve irreversible peace and stability through the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the peace process, and establishment of a multilateral peace and security system in Northeast Asia.

※ Translator's note: This is a third party's unofficial translation of the original paper which was written in Korean. All references should be made to the original paper.

※ This article is written based on the author's personal opinions and does not reflect the views of the Sejong Institute.