



Munich Security Conference Special Session: President Biden's First Multilateral Diplomatic Message

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The Munich Security Conference Special Session was held last week (February 19). The Munich Security Council was established in 1963 by a West German journalist, von Kleist, as a security dialogue between high-ranking officials of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization: US & Western Europe). During the Cold War, the U.S. and Western European defense officials met in Munich every year to coordinate national defense policies. With the end of the Cold War order, German reunification, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia and China's foreign and security chiefs gradually began to discuss various international security issues. Non-traditional security topics such as climate, health, and cyber have evolved into a global security forum where leaders from Asia, Africa, and South America participate as needed. As a result, Munich has become a city that attracts worldwide attention every February.

As the 57th annual meeting was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic this year, the organizers of the Munich Security Conference held a small-scale, virtual meeting on the planned date. The 57th meeting will proceed at the end of the year, as soon as an agreement is reached. President Biden, who was inaugurated in January, leaders of major Western countries, such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, and heads of major international organizations (UN, WHO, EU, and NATO) attended the special meeting.

It was Biden's first multilateral diplomatic stage since his inauguration along with the enlarged G7 summit held in the morning of the same day. For European leaders, Biden has cemented friendship across the Cold War as a member of the U.S. Senate and vice president. Therefore, there is a lot of expectation for him. Even for President Biden, who has frequently attended the Munich Security

Conference as a public official in the past, he must have felt uneasy. In particular, he was present as a non-executive two years ago (2019) and hinted at the weakening of U.S. international leadership and the desire for an alliance under the Trump administration, and promised that the U.S. would return. This special meeting was the first for U.S. President Barack Obama to pledge "America is Back" to his European allies. As the incumbent U.S. president has never delivered a speech to the Munich Security Conference, the special conference seems to have served as a guide to reuniting relations with European allies as well as Biden, despite the enlargement.

For the past 4 years, the U.S. has complied with President Trump's withdrawal from international agreements and appeals to European allies under 'America Firstism'. Concerned about this, the organizers of the Security Council in Munich used the term "Westlessness" as a topic of conversation at the 56th regular meeting in February last year. It was a warning that the values and norms of democracy established by the U.S. and Western Europe after the war and the future of the liberal international order led by them are uncertain. The theme of the special session was "Beyond Westlessness," as it suggested the formation of new Biden administration that prefers multilateralism and emphasizes alliances of democracy.

At the special session, Biden did not directly mention the Trump administration and admitted that North Atlantic relations had been on the test for several years. While insisting on its own alliance based on democratic norms, he stressed that Western Europe should overcome global challenges such as competition with China, threats from Russia, COVID-19, climate change, and nuclear proliferation. Here, on a short sheet of paper, I will briefly try to reorganize his core message from three aspects. All three aspects are expected to be significant in Biden's future Indo-Pacific policies.

First, he showed the will to restore relations with European allies. Biden emphasized the need to respect NATO as a collective security system, strengthen the military capabilities of the alliance, and invest in defense by European countries. In recognition of the alliance's efforts to carry out operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and the elimination of IS, the government announced that it would suspend the reduction of U.S. troops stationed in Germany set by the previous administration. The foundation of the alliance, which contributed to the collective security and prosperity of the member states in the last century, will certainly work against the challenges of the 21st century. To him, allies and partners are countries that share the value of democracy. It is a relationship in which

both traditional and non-traditional global threats must be dealt with. It is important to note that relationships between countries that share the values of democracy are not just transactional relationships. As democracy in the U.S. and Europe is facing challenges both domestically and internationally, we should be interested in protecting them." He was generous in warning those who argued that tyranny was effective in solving various challenges such as the 4th Industrial Revolution and the global pandemic. He emphasized his trust that democratic partners with power and confidence can overcome it together.

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Second, he pointed out "strategic competition with China" and "threat from Russia" as realist challenges that the alliance must tackle. President Biden insists that democracies such as the U.S., Europe, and Asia must work together to protect peace, joint values, and prosperity in competition with China. Competition with China is a tough task, but the belief that the global system that the U.S. and its allies have built in the past 70 years was made clear. He urged Western Europe to pursue democratic values and open governance and cope with the economic abuse and pressure of the Chinese government, which "shakes the foundation of the international economic system." In particular, he emphasized the need for norms and rules in cyberspace, AI, and biotechnology. On the other hand, the threat from Russia and its system of governance through corruption are forms of penetration into a Western democracy. It seems like Russian leaders are trying to undermine the cohesion and morale of the European project and NATO alliance by contacting individual European states. For this very reason, Western Europe should further support Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and should stop reckless Russian hacking of computer networks in the U.S., Europe, and the world. This is a danger to collective security.

Third, despite competition and distrust in China and Russia, President Biden does not want to return to the Cold War and emphasizes that at least he must not block the possibility of cooperation with them on global challenges. COVID-19 Pandemic, Climate Change, Nuclear Proliferation, and Nuclear Terrorism are some of these factors. (i) At the G7 summit on the morning of February 19, President Biden declared a \$2 billion fund for COVAX, a global vaccine. He also stressed that allies must cooperate to strengthen and reform the WHO. It is a reconsideration of the Trump administration's declaration of non-participation in COVAX and withdrawal from the WHO. (ii) President Biden also applied for re-entry to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, which the Trump administration withdrew from shortly after taking office. At this special meeting, he thanked Europe for its climate leadership over the past four years and said that he would hold a climate summit with a more ambitious goal on Earth Day (April 22): (iii) President Biden decided to extend NewSTART with Russia for five additional years. It is aimed at minimizing the risk of strategic misjudgment. It also promised to coordinate with Iran against the nuclear agreement and the threat of nuclear terrorism. North Korea was not mentioned.

President Biden's last message was that "the U.S. is back, democracy is in operation, and there is nothing we cannot do together." It is expected that the positions of the European countries and the reaction of China and Russia on how the practice will unfold in the future will be discussed. What is particularly noticeable in Korea is that even though this is the first meeting with European allies, there was an emphasis that not only European countries but also Indo-Pacific partners will participate in the competition against China. In short, Indo-Pacific democracies such as India, Japan, Australia, and Europe are seeking a new multilateralist international order with the U.S. Biden administration. This point seems to be a point that Korea, an ally of the U.S., and which shares the value of democracy with the U.S., should not miss.

※ 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.

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