CHINA IN THE WORLD PODCAST

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Guest: Chen Dingding

Episode 151: China-India, John Bolton, and U.S. Presidential Elections
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Welcome to the China in the World podcast, a series of discussions examining China's foreign policy and shifting engagement with the world. Brought to you by the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center in Beijing and hosted by Paul Haenle.

**Paul Haenle:** Welcome back to the China in the World podcast. I hope everyone is staying healthy and safe today. I'm delighted to welcome back to the program, Dr. Chen Dingding. This is his third appearance on the China in the World podcast. Chen Dingding is a Professor of International Relations at Jinan University and Gong Co. He is also the founding director of the Intellisia think tank, which is a research center dedicated to international affairs in China. We've been fortunate to have a number of Chen Dingding's junior scholars and students from Intellisia intern in our Young Ambassadors Program at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center, and they've always been top notch, which I would say is a testament to the institute that Chen Dingding runs. Chen Dingding's also served as a visiting instructor in the government department at Dartmouth University, and a China in the World program fellow at Princeton University. He earned his Master's and PhD at the University of Chicago. Professor Chen Dingding, welcome back to the show. It's great to have you join us.

**Chen Dingding:** Thank you very much, Paul, it's a great pleasure to be back with you.

**Paul Haenle:** We've got a lot of a lot of issues to cover. But the world's attention has been on the India-China border recently. There's been developments over the past week. Beginning in early May, there was a standoff which began with Chinese and Indian troops along the border in the Himalayas. Last Tuesday, of course, June 15th, the situation escalated dramatically. Soldiers were fighting in what I understand to be hand to hand combat, using rocks and wooden clubs, resulting in the deaths of at least dozens of soldiers. The border dispute has been an ongoing issue in China-India relations since the founding of both countries, but the recent clash was the first loss of life since 1967. Tensions seem to have dissipated, but it's far from clear what led to the sudden hostilities and what, if any, off ramps exists to prevent it from happening again. And so, Professor Chen, I'd like to start out and just get your perspective on what you believe happened last Tuesday, what actions taken by the two sides led to this sudden outbreak in violence.

**Chen Dingding:** Okay, thank you, Paul. I think I should just mention this border dispute between China-India is a long-term issue. So, any events like this incident, like this, should be understood within that large context. So, it's a long-term issue, and even though this time there were more than a dozen casualties, but even before this time, they were decent, that kind of conflicts, maybe not this serious. But you know, it has always been there, this kind of incident. What makes this one special is, of course, the timing, and the global background and the recent developments in the Indo-Pacific, so to speak, and of course, under the umbrella of a global pandemic. So, I think I tend to view this as a sort of isolated incident because it happened in the evening and most of the casualties, as I understand, were a result of the evening chaos. You know, people really identify
with that affair and so that's not a normal kind of, you know, fighting that you actually intended to kill each other. So, I tend to see that as a more of a very serious incident. But of course, as you see, those leaders from both countries have tried to calm down the situation.

**Paul Haenle:** I noticed it hasn't been played up in the press in China, and it appears as though the two sides are working to find some resolution here. What was it, from your understanding, that prompted the action and prompted the Chinese side to take action? It's been a long running dispute, as you have indicated. Was there a message that was meant to be conveyed by the Chinese side to the Indian side in all of this?

**Chen Dingding:** I don't think this particular incident had any particular message. I think it was kind of a typical incident, but unfortunately, resulting, you know, in serious casualties. So, the incident itself is really not so uncommon, but the outcome is uncommon. So, there are two different things. So, I think the nature of the incident is not really much different from the previous ones, or maybe, you know, future ones. But the unique outcome, obviously was very, very serious. So I don't think that there was any message to be sent with this from either side. By the way, I think Indian Prime Minister Modi mentioned, if I remember correctly, that this, from the large point of view, is a natural result of infrastructure built up by both sides. So, you build more roads, bridges, so you get closer and closer to each other, and certainly sometimes you're going to bump into each other, and you know, some unfortunate things can happen. So, I think maybe the possible solution, or way out in the future is to calm down, slowly, the infrastructure buildup for both sides. And you basically you have a sort of buffer, so you don't have to get too close to each other. Because once you get too close, bad things can happen.

**Paul Haenle:** Yeah. The you mentioned it was it was certainly much more serious and severe then we've seen as of late. In this case, the decisions made at the local and tactical level are they made, in your understanding, from there, or is it higher level? And what degree is the Chinese leadership in Beijing brought into decisions around an incident of such severity?

**Chen Dingding:** Of course, I don't have any information, but my theoretical training will tell us there is always a tendency, maybe not scientific tendency, to view all these lower level actions from the view of the central bureaucracy or leadership. I think that this is probably not the best way to look at this kind of issue, because things change very quickly on the ground, and unless you are a part of the official intelligence community, you cannot make quick decisions from 2000 miles away. So, I think a lot of that is really contingent on many, many conditions on the ground. I would say nobody really entered into these kinds of incidents with a clear strategy and action plan. I don't think that's the usual case, in any sort of, it's not a battlefield, but I mean, if you use an analogy, in any kind of a battlefield, you would have that kind of clear plan from top down process. So, I tend to see that this is a result of chaos, it's a result of miscommunication, it's a result of miscoordination, misunderstanding of each other, so on and so forth. And that's why I
think both sides needed to make clear to each other, what their intentions are. That's not misunderstanding between the two sides, but it's difficult for many reasons, of course.

**Paul Haenle:** Yeah. Well, I've been watching some of the analysis here in the U.S. and other Western-led countries, and there's a focus on the long-term impact of a conflict like this for China-India relations, and some are looking at how this might encourage New Delhi to more closely align with Washington against Beijing. This is an idea I think that many in India have resisted for some time. But in light of the recent border clashes and the severity, as you indicate, some argue that maybe the consensus of the non-aligned India might be eroding, and that there might be a chance that India would seek to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral ties with partners in the region as part of an effort to resist China. And India has been considered, as you know, by many in the U.S. analytic community as a potential strategic counterweight to China. What is your view on this? Do you think the recent border clash will have that kind of impact? Would it help push New Delhi closer to Washington? And how would that new alignment of that type impact U.S.-China relations?

**Chen Dingding:** I think this kind of thinking already emerged almost three years ago when the Indo-Pacific idea, this concept, was first raised. And I also wrote a piece about two years ago, basically saying that all of this depends on basically how much the U.S. would be willing to offer the Indian side, and how much the U.S. can offer to the Indian side of course, and vice versa, in how much the Indian side can offer to the U.S. I think a very famous lesson, somebody, maybe the foreign minister of India, if I remember correctly, said it just a few days ago—India has already picked a side between U.S. and China. That's the Indian side. So that's quite telling, because India has had this sort of independent, non-alignment, foreign policy mindset very much for the last 70, 80 years since the founding of modern India. So, I think it's not going to happen overnight, immediately that India would move just to the side of the U.S. But of course, that voice is growing, and that the sentiment is growing, not just because of this. And I would, again, sort of downplay the importance of this incident, even though it's very serious in terms of causalities, but it's not as serious as the economic impact actually, of the pandemic. So, if the numbers are accurate, we might get a negative growth in India this year. That's the first time in many, many years. You know, this certainly would have a much larger impact on India's position in the world, in Asia, and its relationship with the U.S. So maybe for us, students of international relations, we tend to downplay the importance of one incident here, one event there, we tend to look at more of the structural conditions. And basically, if I were an Indian Prime Minister, of course, I would ask myself, how much can I get from, you know, the U.S. if we were to side with the U.S.? And how much can I get from China if we were to maintain a more stable and peaceful relationship? And after you're done with that calculation, then your answer probably will be clear. So, I think a lot would depend on not what India wants and what India's emotions are, it actually depends on whether the U.S. is really willing to commit the resources and the strategy into the Indo-Pacific regional concept.
Paul Haenle: Well, let's turn to the U.S. if we could. I spend most of my time talking to you about U.S.-China relations, and I want to turn to that. And get your perspective on some recent revelations of President Trump's approach to China, revealed this week by the former National Security Adviser John Bolton. I assume you've been following his tell-all book called The Room Where it Happened, where he talks about his experience of working for President Trump for 18 months. It's making a lot of headlines in the U.S., revelations about Trump's foreign policy dealings, including, in our case, especially, with China. Have you been following the news or had a chance to read the book? Is it getting attention in China? Is it being talked about there?

Chen Dingding: Yeah, it's getting a lot of attention in China. Every time this kind of book comes out, like last time, the book, you know, Fury and Fire.

Paul Haenle: Fire and Fury, sure, yeah.

Chen Dingding: Yeah, it came out and got a lot of attention this time because it's John Bolton, obviously, people are paying attention. I haven't really read the book or most of the book, but I read some newspaper stories about the book. So, I think maybe I missed many of the stories in the book.

Paul Haenle: Well, with regard to China, Bolton mentions three important aspects of President Trump's policy, first on trade, then on Taiwan, and third on Xinjiang. I've not read the full book yet, although I have a copy of it, and I'm making my way through it. But in the book, John Bolton says that a President Trump pressed President Xi to purchase agricultural products from U.S. farmers in an effort to get reelected and he alleges that Trump would willingly abandon the collective defense promise to Taiwan in favor of U.S. economic interest. And lastly, he mentions an encounter between President Trump and President Xi where Trump says that President Xi is doing the right thing in Xinjiang. Of course, there's been a lot of criticism throughout the rest of the U.S. government on what's been happening in Xinjiang. Are you surprised by these revelations? How are these viewed by the Chinese side and what is your perspective?

Chen Dingding: I think nobody would be surprised by these comments made by Trump because now, after four years of getting used to Trump's style, we understand, maybe as you do that Trump would say anything, in any context. So, I don't think anybody would be any more surprised by Trump. So, this is, of course, in line with Trump's economy-oriented approach to everything or an election-centered approach to everything—reelection basically. So, I'm not surprised that he maybe offered such comments, but I would caution you that nobody would really trust Trump to follow through because Trump can change his mind the next morning, so don't believe anything he promised to you. So, I think you know, for Chinese leadership, it's probably the same. Trump can offer this, offer that, but the Trump administration has been strengthening its relationship with Taiwan. And it just recently passed resolution about Xinjiang and again attacked China for not being able to purchase enough agricultural products. But it's never enough because we know
Trump is basically kind of too greedy to be satisfied with any deal. So, I think this was clear almost already over a year ago, if not two years ago, maybe not only to China but to the whole world’s leaders. Don't believe anything that appears between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, the trade deal may be faced up against the same kind of issues in a dilemma. So, I was not surprised. But I would caution against putting too much faith in Trump's words.

**Paul Haenle:** Of course, the release of John Bolton's book comes just a few months ahead of the next presidential election, November of 2020. And our listeners might recall, because we did a podcast on this, Professor Chen, that ahead of the 2016 elections, you correctly forecasted that Donald Trump would beat Hillary Clinton. I was struck by that and did a podcast with you and we talked about that. And so, let me ask, given your success of predicting the winner of U.S. elections, please tell our listeners, and me, who's going to be our next President. Donald Trump for a second term, or former Vice President Joe Biden?

**Chen Dingding:** Okay, Paul, you're giving me a tough job because four years ago, it was just one prediction that was based on the closed polls, and, of course, the momentum Trump was getting in 2016 for several reasons. I think you or somebody mentioned it to me the other time, or I saw somewhere, this time in the environment or the atmosphere is different. The difference is fatigue. People are getting used to Trump's style. So, whatever he says now is no longer exciting or even thought-provoking like it was back in 2016. Now that's the main difference. Another main difference is, as you know, we have been following U.S. politics for already four or five years. For me, the big turning point, regardless of who's going to win on November 3, is really not this year, not COVID-19, it's not the civil unrest now, it's really 2018, the midterm election. So, I would really look back to the 2018 midterm election. And that's where I saw, since then, that Trump was already on a decline because there was what you might call the mini blue wave in the midterm election back in 2018, right? So, the Democrats took back the Congress, and there was a momentum emerging across the country, of course this year because of the COVID-19, economic crisis, and the civil unrest. So, all of these together are, you know, pushing the momentum toward Joe Biden. So, if you ask me, I think I would have just, you know, look to the polls today and to say, if they vote today or tomorrow, Joe Biden will certainly win. But it's November 3, the 3, 3-4 months ahead, but I would say if Trump won 2016 because of a small miracle, he would need two or three miracles to win this time.

**Paul Haenle:** Now, I know, Professor Chen Dingding, that Chinese citizens cannot vote in our election, obviously, unless you're an American citizen—but in your view, does China have a preferred candidate? Do they want President Trump again? Or would they like to see Vice President Biden and why?

**Chen Dingding:** It’s maybe mixed feelings, because it depends on who you're asking. If you're asking some ordinary Chinese person who's honestly doesn't really know about the U.S. or doesn't care, then maybe the answer is Trump, because Trump is on TV, on social media, is sort of like a
TV show person, right? So, he makes a lot of fun stories sort of from this perspective. But if you care about the long-term U.S.-China relationship, and you care about long-term global governance, then I think any rational person, either from China or from other countries would prefer a leader from the U.S. who is a real leader. So, it doesn't matter whether it's Joe Biden or Trump. If Trump can reform himself into a real leader, then maybe he will be welcome. But if it's Joe Biden or somebody else who's rational, stable, and has a clear vision for the U.S. and for the world, I think that's of benefit not only to China, but also to the rest of the world. So, I think as rational people here, they would prefer a strong leader in the U.S. that would actually also in the long run forge a strong U.S.-China relationship. And by the way, Trump has actually done a lot of damage to U.S.-China relationship, despite his sometimes nice words on Twitter, but his actions certainly have done a lot of damage to the relationship.

**Paul Haenle:** Now, something that I've heard when I've talked to senior Chinese government officials or those from the strategic community, scholars and experts, looking at long term strategy, since President Trump does benefit China, in that he is taking steps that undermine America's international credibility and reputation. He's damaging our relations with our allies. And he's causing damage at home politically in the U.S., and all of this in a zero-sum context. Sam Bresnick and I have written a couple pieces on this. But all of that, in a zero-sum context, over the long term, some Chinese experts and analysts say this is good for China. Have you been exposed to this view by those in China and you believe that there is some rationale in this?

**Chen Dingding:** I certainly have heard about that view, and I disagree with that. I think that's a very short term, short-sighted view of this long-term relationship. If I may use an analogy, a sports analogy, you cannot win a game by relying on unfocused arrows by your opponent, right? That's not how you win a game. You have to build your own game. And yes, your opponent's unfocused arrows might help you. But that's not your strategy. So, I think that kind of thinking or strategy is actually quite misleading and even dangerous, because you put all your hope on the other side, bad arrows misbehaving. I think that's not healthy. And, by the way, I don't think Trump has actually benefited China more than he damaged China's relations with the U.S. or other countries. Yes, the only thing maybe Trump has done so far that's really benefiting China is that Trump is alienating all other countries, the traditional U.S. allies, but not to the degree that they would now abandon the U.S. and join China. So that's not going to happen, anytime soon anyway. So, I'm not saying that benefit outweighs the damages Trump and his followers have done to China and the region. So, I think that's quite a short-sighted view. And I think when democrats or Biden comes into the White House next year, I think things will change a little bit, not meaning that the U.S. will not put the pressure on China, there will be a lot of pressure on China, but would it be more rational, less chaotic, and with more communication. But again, you know, it's like, a sports analogy, you want a competition, but you want a rule-based competition, right? You want healthy competition, you know, you don't want chaotic, crazy competition now that's coming from Trump.
Paul Haenle: I agree with you. I think, a Biden administration, the way I've heard it described, is that the tone will change for the better, not as much reckless rhetoric or race-baiting rhetoric or demagoguery, but the content may largely be the same and the series of challenges in the U.S.-China relationship that a Biden administration will be trying to resolve are similar. China has been an issue in presidential campaigns, as you know, in almost every presidential campaign we've had, if not every one that we've had in the modern era. But to me, something feels different about China in the campaign this time. And we've seen both President Trump and Vice President Biden now arguing that the other is weak on China, and that they will be tougher on China or are tougher on China than the other candidate. President Trump, of course, is, in his campaign, I think, in large part because he feels vulnerable by his performance and dealing with the coronavirus, is blaming China for the coronavirus and the hundreds of thousands of deaths in America and putting the blame squarely on China. So, something seems different in this particular campaign about how China's being discussed, and I wonder if you have the same view or does it just seem like the normal use of China in presidential campaigns?

Chen Dingding: Well, it's certainly not the old use of the China card. Bill Clinton strongly criticized China during his campaign, but he actually later became maybe one of the friendliest administrations, or the friendliest president, towards China during his eight years. So that's as we understand it as part of the campaign strategy. But it's different because of the global or structural conditions that's shifting toward, arguably, China's favor. So, the competition will certainly be tougher and tougher, like you said, right. The tone will be different. But the real issue is competition. But I think the real issue for both countries is: what kind of competition do we want? Do we want rule based competition, or do we want just anarchical competition like a jungle? I think we all have to grapple with that question. This time it's different. It's not the normal kind of China card being played in the campaign. Of course, the difference is, real competition will come even after Democrats, Biden, come to the White House. But that's the issue. I think the blaming China strategy, whether it will be a success, will depend on how American people view this issue. The strategy might actually have been more effective back in March and April, when the pandemic first started more globally, but now as European countries and some other Asian countries are getting better and better every day, so I think the American people will naturally compare Europe and China. So, it's not really the origin of the pandemic. It's really how your leadership is handling the pandemic crisis.

Paul Haenle: Thank you for that. You recently published a three-part series for The Diplomat. We try to encourage our listeners to read the piece, entitled "Why a U.S.-China Detente is Coming in 2021." I was pleased to see your piece because, given the state of relations between the U.S. and China, there are fewer and fewer pieces arguing the relationship might get better. So, yours was a welcome piece. Before I ask you about that piece, and while you're hopeful that the relationship might improve going forward, let me ask you your perspectives on how we have gotten ourselves to the current dismal state of U.S.-China relations. I think bilateral relations between the U.S. and China are at their worst point since we normalized relations in 1979. The relationship, in many
ways, seems to be in a state of total disrepair. And I want to get a sense from you what you see as driving this from, of course, the U.S. side. I'm sure you'll talk a lot about President Trump. But also, what is driving this from the Chinese side? What are some of the things that China is doing that are contributing to the downturn in relations as well?

**Chen Dingding:** Yeah, I certainly agree with you. This current stage of U.S.-China relationship is one of, if not the most serious since 1978. I think, of course, as we say, in Chinese, one hand cannot clap, right? You need two hands to clap. There's two sides. They all contributed to this current stage of the relationship, of course, but they come from different perspectives or different angles. From the U.S. it is mostly Trump, because Trump's unique personality is a really driving force behind this kind of difficult relationship, but I think a lot of people have already analyzed this, so I won't go into details. From China's perspective I think it's the lack of real effective communication. I think China has been doing this quite poorly for the last 20 or even 30 years. I'm sure Paul, you realize this may be what you say in Beijing, the Chinese culture or people or government style, it's not really about effective communication, right? Even though sometimes the intentions are, you know, one matter, the outcome will be quite different. So, in this case, I think that's the number one reason. The number two reason, of course, is its growing impact and the influence in the region and also around the globe. So, it's growing, but we should be careful how to manage our growth. It's also art, you know, it's a very difficult issue because if you don't manage your growth or growing impact, growing influence very carefully, then you will get into trouble. I think China is very much growing too fast, not realizing its own weight or influence. Therefore, some actions are not welcomed by others or misunderstood by others. But me, I'm hopeful because fundamentally I believe the U.S. and China, they share a lot of common interests. They would really strongly benefit from each other. And the problem is how to find the sort of balancing point between cooperation and competition right now. But I would agree that China has a lot, a lot to improve upon in both its actions and in the way it communicates with neighbors and friends and even rivals.

**Paul Haenle:** The two factors you put forward: one is communications, implying I think that the world does not understand China or what China's motives or goals might be, and second, that China is getting stronger and is getting more powerful and that's having an impact. But you hear from a number of countries, not just the U.S., concerns over actual policies, lack of economic reciprocity, for example, dominant technology policies, you know, policies that want to put China in a strong position at the expense of others, some coercive foreign policy practices. And we've seen in recent polls, not just in the U.S., but in Europe and Australia, and elsewhere in Asia, that new policies being enacted by policy makers in those countries and regions are to protect their own systems, the government, from what they see as Chinese policies or behaviors that undermine their own interest. And there seem to be a number of countries, not just the U.S., that are pushing back on China. And how do you see this? Do you think there's recognition? I know that there was a kicker report, I saw it in a Reuters story. That said the anti-China sentiment was reaching or perhaps surpassed the levels found in the aftermath of Tiananmen Square.
Chen Dingding: Okay, yeah. I have to look at that report. I think it's a very important report. And certainly, I think it's well understood within China that there is this kind of pushing back. Some of them are actually understandable. And some of them are even legitimate for the reasons I mentioned earlier. And the actual policies coming out of China, of course, can be improved. And that's why I mentioned that there should have been more dialogues between the two sides between China and India, for example, between the U.S. and China, another example. And some of the policies are actually changing because of these, whatever you call it, negotiation dialogues, or pushing back, or whatever you call it. The policies of foreign investment in China, I think are changing, maybe not to the degree asked by the other foreign partners, but it is changing. For example, they cannot control, I think it's which U.S. securities firm or European securities firm they opened —

Paul Haenle: JP Morgan.

Chen Dingding: JP Morgan, yeah. And there's some others that will be following soon, I believe, or I hope. So, I think maybe it's this kind of actual policy change that is too slow or too little for our foreign partners. But it is changing. It is changing also, it means, the dialogues and everything. Negotiation can be effective. So, I think we should not lose hope just because it's changing slowly, or something like that. But then again, I would certainly agree with you, some of the resentments and even sentiments and pushing back should be analyzed very carefully by our side. It's not something small.

Paul Haenle: Well, I wanted to end our discussion by talking about your recent article because it's forward looking, and it is positive about why a U.S.-China detente, you think, is coming in 2021. And I wanted to get a sense from you, what led you to write this piece, and what are the key factors that led you to that analysis that the future is bright for U.S.-China relations?

Chen Dingding: Yes. Because, you know, like you and me, we have been hearing so much lately about this cold war emerging between China and the U.S. or another, sort of, you know, Thucydides trap. Actually, I translated the book by Allison into Chinese. But I just feel like that voice is so dominant and one sided and we, as you know, scholars and analysts, it should be more balanced. We should not really neglect the bigger picture of the U.S.-China relationship, just because of one president, one administration, or one trade war or this and that. I think we as scholars can have the long-term view of course, not just the U.S.-China relationship, but also global relationships. That's why, you know, I decided to write this piece, basically just trying to balance the current dominant view, which also biased and even a little bit dangerous. You know, a lot of people maybe have more rational and open-minded views, they're not even willing to speak out. I think that's a pity. It's a tragedy because we need more voices, different voices, in this debate. And I hear a lot from our Chinese friends, the same from our American friends, from other European friends, and nobody wants to see a new cold war emerging between the U.S. and China.
Some people, maybe they are pushing for that kind of confrontation scenario. And I don't think we can just stand aside and watch that happen. That's really bad for our countries, bad for the U.S. and for other countries. So, I think we need a more balanced view of that. But also, I'm hopeful because you know, for the reasons Trump has failed, both domestically and externally, right for the last four years, and we cannot even name one major foreign policy achievement by Trump. North Korea, a big failure, and international trade, a big failure, in China, trade war with China, it's a dilemma now. And so, I cannot think of any good foreign policy actions by Trump. So, I think he has done a very poor job, and also because of domestic elections in the U.S. But even if, let's say Trump gets reelected, he would need to adjust his strategies, because clearly, right now, none of his foreign policy strategies are working. So, he has to change. Otherwise, we are maybe doomed because of that, but I think another reason in my short essay is the international environment. Again, I heard this from a German friend, nobody wants to pick a side between the U.S. and China. They would pick their own side. So maybe Trump or the U.S. is not willing to lead the globe and China is not willing or able, you know, all other countries, they will come together, and they will form another third bloc, so to speak, to lead global affairs. That's entirely possible. It's not just the U.S. It's not just Europe, but it's the third group that will emerge because they're not satisfied with either China or the U.S. So, I think it is the detente is coming not because of just the U.S. and China, it's more because of the global audience. They are looking for their own leadership.

**Paul Haenle:** Well, I share your desire for a more balanced and constructive approach to U.S.-China relations. I think we have a lot of challenges in the bilateral relationship. There are areas where we have pretty significant disagreement. But I think that we need to find ways to address those issues where we make progress in a constructive way. I think the stakes for the upcoming presidential election could not be higher. In a second Trump administration, I guess I expect more of the same to be honest, because you know, the genie's already out of the bottle. And it's hard to kind of turn around forces that have been unleashed, because a lot of what's going on in the U.S.-China relationship, in my view, is being done, frankly, without President Trump even knowing and so it may be difficult for him to sort of rein in. But I think a Joe Biden victory will present us opportunities, but we're going to have to move quickly to take advantage of those opportunities by addressing some of the challenges in the relationship in a way, I think, that shows we can work together and address areas where we have differences in a way that is more results oriented. And if we're unable to do that, I think then we may be in for a tough haul. But there will be opportunities presented in the fall and I think you've got some great ideas. And I hope you're sharing those with your leadership. I know a number of us are sharing ideas with our administration and those that are currently supporting Joe Biden. And let's see what our future holds. We've got your prediction now for the presidential election. I heard you say, you lean now closer to Vice President Biden winning the election. And I remember your success at the last go around in 2016. So, we'll see, Professor Chen, if you can be right again.
Chen Dingding: Okay, thank you, Paul. That's a big burden for me. But I would certainly agree with you, I think China also needs to seriously address all these issues by grasping the opportunities that would emerge maybe in the fall, you know, early next year. I think sort of between November, you know, if things develop the way we think would develop, the sort of window of opportunity between November and next summer for the U.S.-China relationship to at least get back to a more stable, more effective communication style. And, of course, as you mentioned, there will be serious competition, but at least it's rule based, it's not chaotic, and it's run by rational leadership. I think the result would be much better than the current one.

Paul Haenle: I agree with that. And I think there's two areas that we can work on immediately. One is the rhetoric, the heated rhetoric. It's on both sides, especially with this new wolf warrior approach on the Chinese side that we see. And I think both sides can take quick steps to trying to cool that down. I think that would be very helpful. But second, I think from the Chinese side would be to get a sense of legitimate concerns or grievances on the U.S. side and acknowledge some of those by looking around the world and seeing where other countries have similar concerns or grievances with China. That might give a starting point for where China could begin to adjust some of its policies where it's getting pushback, not just from the U.S., but from a lot of countries around the world. And that may be a good starting point for the U.S. and China to address some of their challenges.

Chen Dingding: Yes, I agree. Yes, thank you for making those comments.

Paul Haenle: Chen Dingding. It's been a pleasure as always. Your perspectives and insights are terrific. And I really want to thank you for joining the podcast for a third time, and we hope to have you on again, either before or after the U.S. presidential election to talk about U.S.-China.

Chen Dingding: Okay, November 4, we can talk again.

Paul Haenle: Thank you, and stay safe in Guangzhou.

Chen Dingding: Stay healthy, stay healthy. We look forward to seeing you as soon as possible in September, maybe.

Paul Haenle: Thank you very much.

Chen Dingding: Thank you very much, and have a good night.

Thank you for listening to the China in the world podcast. For more episodes and research, please go to carnegietsinghua.org. This episode was produced by Lucas Tcheyan with assistance from Madison Reid, Luke Encarnation, Liqi Xu, John Ferguson and Sofia Raso.