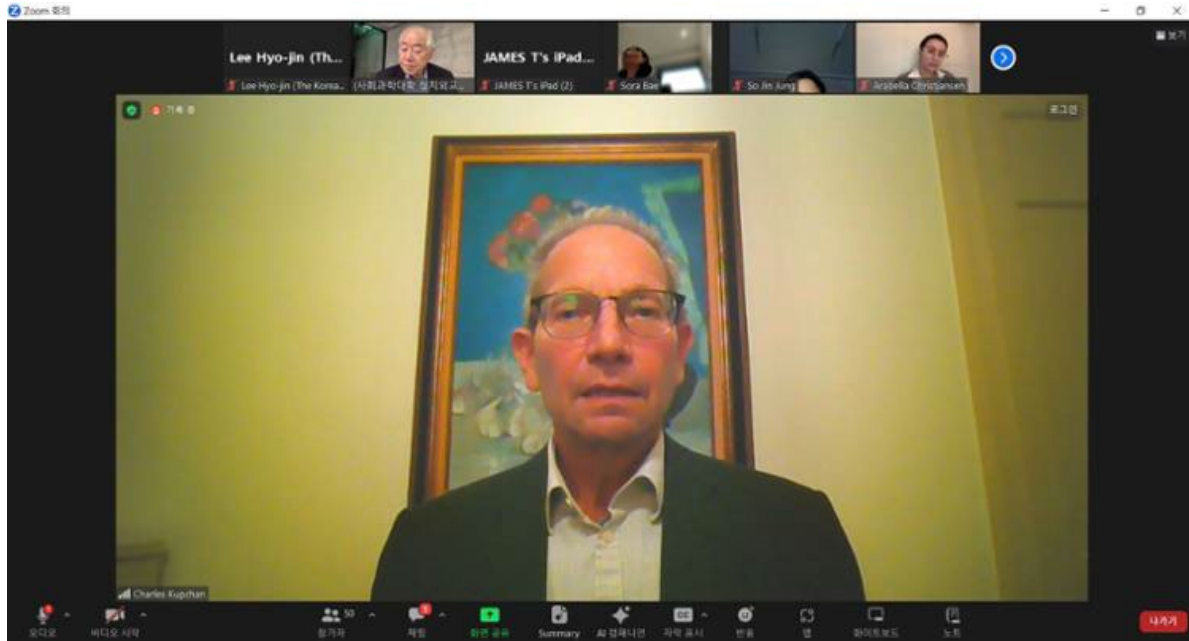


Biden will try to 'manage' NK nuclear issue, not resolve it: US expert

2023-09-26 : 16:12



Charles Kupchan, a professor of international affairs at Georgetown University, speaks during an online lecture on U.S. foreign policy, Tuesday. The lecture was the first in a series of seminars coorganized by Yonsei Institute for North Korean Studies, Medici Media and Los Angeles-based Pacific Century Institute. Screenshot from Zoom

Lecture series to examine US foreign policies
By Lee Hyo-jin

U.S. President Joe Biden will continue to "manage" North Korea's nuclear and missile threats rather than actively trying to resolve the problem, according to Charles Kupchan, a former U.S. diplomat and national security official, Tuesday.

"The U.S. has so many balls in the air right now ... There's the war in Ukraine while China is breathing down on his (Biden's) neck, and the U.S. is trying to prevent a war with Iran that could be just inches away. Some difficult problems will be put back on the back burner," Kupchan said during an online seminar.

"So when it comes to issues like North Korea, Iran, Israel and Palestine, they will be in a 'management mode' under the Biden administration. They are going to be managed, but not resolved."

The seminar, organized by Yonsei Institute for North Korean Studies, Medici Media and the Los Angeles-based Pacific Century Institute, was moderated by Moon Chung-in, a professor emeritus at Yonsei University and former special presidential adviser for foreign affairs and national security.

Kupchan, who currently teaches international affairs at Georgetown University, positively assessed the U.S. government's position on the Taiwan Strait.

"I think the U.S.' policy toward Taiwan is about right. That is to say, it would defend the island if it were attacked by China. Not to rock the boat, but to manage the problem," he said, adding that the Taiwan issue needs to be managed with a cool head so as to avoid provocative actions.

When asked for an overall assessment of the Biden administration's foreign policy, Kupchan said, "In many respects, it is continuing the best of Trump. While one sees Biden as a swing away from Trump, it's important to keep in mind that Biden continued some of what Trump implemented."

The Biden administration's strategic retrenchment from the Middle East and protectionist trade policies are consistent with that of the previous government, he noted.

But an aspect where Biden has set himself apart from Trump was in repairing relations with America's allies.

"It's important to recognize areas where Biden has had significant success, and that is repairing alliances like getting South Korea and Japan to work closely together, forming the Quad and fashioning a new relationship with India that I think will withstand the test of time," he said.

Meanwhile, Kupchan said that U.S. officials' portrayal of the state of world affairs as "a battle between democracies and autocracies" is not helpful for its foreign policies.

"In fact, we (the U.S.) are now out there having to cooperate with non-democracies. So that kind of ideological rigidity, even though it may sell well at home, doesn't help us navigate a world with ideological dividing lines," he said.

Tuesday's seminar was the first episode in a series of lectures dubbed the "James Laney Lecture Series" where prominent American scholars are invited to give lectures on U.S. foreign and defense strategies and their implications on the East Asian region.

Under the theme "The United States and the World," 12 lectures will be delivered from this month until next June in offline and online formats. The lectures will be open to students of Yonsei University as well as the general public.

"The lectures, which will consist of debates and Q&A sessions, will address the impact of U.S. foreign policies on the Korean Peninsula and the East Asian region from a broad perspective," said Professor Emeritus Moon, who organized the events.

The second lecture will be held on Oct. 17 at Yonsei University's Seoul campus, where Walter Mead, a distinguished fellow at Hudson Institute, will discuss U.S. foreign policy from a conservative perspective.

Following that, there will be two lectures in November — one by professors Siegfried Hecker and Robert Carlin from Stanford University and the other by John Ikenberry, a professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University. On Dec. 15, Susan Thornton, former acting assistant secretary of state, will give a lecture on the U.S.-China rivalry.