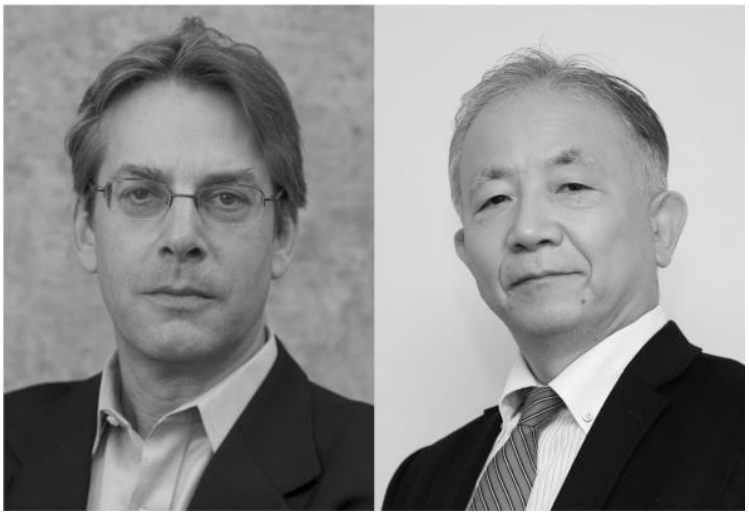
The New Global Order after the US Election



Tuesday 24th November 2020

Event page: https://dajf.org.uk/event/contemporary-dance-during-lockdown

On 24th November 2020, the Daiwa Foundation hosted a webinar on the subject of, "The New Global Order after the US Election." The speakers were Professor G. John Ikenberry of Princeton University, and Wataru Sawamura, Washington Bureau Chief of the Asahi Shimbun.

Speaker: Professor G. John Ikenberry

Professor Ikenberry's talk focused on international relations and the future of the global order. He started by discussing the presidential election and how it has arguably been the most important election of his lifetime. He noted that the new Biden administration will hold important implications for how the US acts in the world and that the Trump administration has taken the US down a very controversial and dangerous path. He explained how, during Trump's time in power, we have witnessed a revisionist wrecking operation on the American post-war order that was created over the last 75 years in areas such as trade, alliances, public health, arms control, the environment, and human rights. Professor Ikenberry stressed that, with the Biden administration, we are going to see a major reorientation of foreign policy and that, to those who support Biden, he is in some sense the vaccine to be used against the Trump virus.

He then explained that the US will attempt to rebuild its global status and position. He believes the first two steps of the Biden administration will be to re-join the Paris agreement and the WHO and there will be an effort to re-establish and reassure across the US-alliance world. He also predicted a return to the fundamentals of diplomacy, multilateralism, security cooperation and traditional leadership. This entails a return to the 75-year American playbook for exercising leadership, which focused on institutions, partnerships, and affiliations with like-minded states. Professor Ikenberry argued that the Biden administration will find itself facing great headwinds as it tries to reorient American foreign policy. He stressed that Trumpism runs deeper than Trump, that the Republicans will still have a

Senate majority, and that Trump may run again. Professor Ikenberry also discussed how global issues we see unfolding today, such as the pandemic and the economic crisis, are reinforcing the trends of nationalism, populism, and authoritarian liberalism. It will therefore be a very demanding exercise to try to reorient America's position in the world.

Professor Ikenberry then argued that we are in the midst of three deep generational and global crises and that these will make it challenging to govern the world and to cooperate going forward on key issues. The first is a crisis of geo-politics, meaning the global power transition of the US and its trilateral Western and Japanese allies. Professor Ikenberry explained that the core of the old global order is shrinking, weakening, and giving way to the rise of China and the larger non-western, non-liberal-democratic world. He argued that this decades-long struggle over rules and institutions will last for another cycle of history. Secondly, there is a crisis of modernity - in other words, the intensification of economic, environmental, and human interdependence. He argued that now is the Anthropocene era, with truly global-scale problems for the environment and the ability of humans to sustain their civilisations. The big three challenges are climate, pandemics, and weapons of mass destruction, all of which pose truly existential challenges to the global community. How we respond to these challenges of modernity will form much of what becomes international cooperation in the second half of the 21st century. The third crisis is the crisis of liberal democracy. This is the weakening of the old liberal democratic institutions, certainly in the United States and Western Europe, and this also means the unravelling of the growth coalitions, class compromises and pluralistic ethos of these societies that have been part of the success story of the post-war era. In its most severe form, this includes the worry that the enlightenment values that make up a part of the 200-year ascent of liberal democracy, such as open society, science, rationalism, the rule of law, freedom of speech and civil society, are all at risk.

Professor Ikenberry explained that these three crises mean we have a demanding environment for the next phase of trying to develop a form of global governance. He believes that the low point of the ability of our countries to govern themselves was in April 2020, when the G7 countries got together in the face of the worst pandemic in 100 years and the worst economic crisis in 75 years and the G7 ministers could not come up with an agreed communiqué. He argued that the closest parallel to this would be in the 1930s and '40s when we were at a moment of existential crisis for liberal democracy, and he stressed that we need to return to this period to see how that generation put the pieces together after WW2.

His next set of comments focused on how we should rebuild the international liberal order. This is also the focus of his book, *A World Safe for Democracy*. Professor Ikenberry urged us to acknowledge that the internationally-oriented elites in our countries have not stood up well in the face of the 2008 financial crisis and how, in the United States, the Iraq war also discredited them. More recently, the failure of what might be called the "liberal bet," in other words, to bring China into the liberal order as a responsible stakeholder, has served to contribute to this undermining of a belief in a liberal-oriented global order. Professor Ikenberry argued that the first step in rebuilding is to defend and recall the successes and not just the failures of the post-war order. The liberal democratic states did create something that can be called a functioning international order in the shadow of the Cold War. They created regional and global institutions, alliances, partnerships, and bargains built around core convictions that they shared.

Professor Ikenberry explained that he believed four convictions make up the core of this liberal world order. Firstly, the importance of openness, as opposed to protectionism and

mercantilism. Secondly, institutions that facilitate cooperation. Thirdly, liberal democracies, which have a capacity for cooperation and have shared values that can be leveraged for creating coalitions of leadership to drive efforts. Finally, cooperation. He noted how under the auspices of this liberal order our countries opened the world economy after WW2 and created a framework for Germany and Japan to reorient themselves after WW2 and become partners in this system. Furthermore, France and Germany settled their differences after centuries of hostility and launched the European Union. There was a platform created across these countries that allowed older industrial societies to modernise and become social democracies. He noted how we all made a passage to a more modern form of social democracy and the trilateral countries together played a central role in building institutions that still provide tools for governance such as the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and the OECD. This complex of institutions provided a framework for the integration of rising states such as South Korea and other counties in East Asia that were making transitions from authoritarian rule to liberal democracy.

Professor Ikenberry then went on to suggest how we can critique and diagnose what has happened so that we can put liberal internationalism on a stronger footing. He argued that the failures of the last decade can be viewed as failures of success. The moment the Cold War ended there was an explosion of integration and mobilisation of societies that overran the bargains, institutions, and foundations of that order. This globalisation of liberalism was unsuccessful, and we must remember that the golden era of the liberal order was an order inside a bipolar system. The order was not the global system and it was a sub-system, the so-called free world. This order had a “club” system and the liberal democracies saw themselves working together as part of a confederation posing as an alternative to the other side. To be inside this liberal order was to have protections, to have access to trade and institutions, and to buy into a suite of responsibilities and obligations. With the end of the Cold War, this liberal order lost that “club” character and countries could join and integrate in different ways. This new club turned out to be less effective and became a kind of shopping mall where states could join the WTO but did not have any obligation to buy into the other values and responsibilities. Professor Ikenberry argued that, in some sense, this is the story of China.

The next section of Professor Ikenberry’s talk focused on an agenda for the future. He explained that there will be an effort made very early on in the new Biden administration to rebuild and reaffirm alliances. He explained how President-elect Biden has said that one of the first things he wants to do is organise a kind of community of democracy meeting where not just the old G7 states, but a larger array of counties come together and reaffirm their international commitments to one other and their agenda for strengthening the fabric of the international order. Secondly, Professor Ikenberry believes there will be an effort to bring down the temperature on globalisation. The Trumpian America-first ideology has been an attack on globalisation and the liberal international vision needs to separate itself from that caricature. He noted that the Biden administration will hope to remind people that liberal internationalism, as it has been handed down from the 1945 period, has not been about tearing down borders and globalising the world, but about creating capacities among governments to manage inter-dependence. Professor Ikenberry stressed that we are currently living in a world we cannot entirely reshape and that we are going to live through a period of economic insecurity and environmental interdependence. It is the task of liberal internationalism to handle this. He also noted that the National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has spent the last few years trying to reattach internationalism to domestic politics. This connection was broken after the Cold War and it needs to be re-established.

Professor Ikenberry’s talk then turned to East Asia and China as he believes this is where the focus of the Biden administration’s foreign policy will be. He argued that we must

acknowledge the reality that the Biden administration is not necessarily going to bring about a more cooperative relationship between the United States and China. He also noted that Biden will try to rebuild alliances, including East Asian alliances, and that if South Korea, Japan, and other countries agree, there will be a strengthening of the security framework in East Asia. He also mentioned that Biden will focus on human rights more than Trump and this will mean attention is focused on Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the oppressed minorities in China and this may lead to heightened tension. He explained that he does not think the TPP will get approved by Congress in the first year as despite Antony Blinken's support, Jake Sullivan is not enamoured of it. He instead believes that initially bilateral trade agreements will be pursued and then they will be bundled. Finally, the speeches by Michele Flournoy, who may be the next Secretary of Defence, have focused on re-establishing deterrents across East Asia, but in particular for Taiwan. He believes the great threat of an inadvertent war in East Asia could well be Taiwan and that the Flournoy position on deterrence will also be the Biden position. Professor Ikenberry also believes there has been a change in attitude towards China as the world has moved on from the liberal vision of trying to integrate China into a unified system. He believes the new consensus is more about the return of great power rivalry. He explained how China is not just a great power problem but also a problem of modernity because it offers a very different ideology of the future - in other words, capitalism without democracy and liberalism.

Professor Ikenberry's talk concluded by noting that, despite competition in other areas, there can be a new convergence of effort on tackling climate change. China has pledged itself to a goal of carbon neutrality by 2060 and Japan has met this pledge with a goal to be carbon-neutral by 2050. He believes Biden will pledge American efforts to move towards a carbon neutral economy by the middle of the 21st century and this is an area where there will be "good competition" with China, a competition to see who can lead better on taking us into a world where we pollute less. At present, China puts 27% of global carbon emissions into the atmosphere and the US 15%, so together they account for approximately 42% of carbon emissions. This is therefore an area where he believes there is an opportunity to forge some pragmatic agreement to move forward in a post-Trump world order.

Speaker: Wataru Sawamura

Mr Sawamura's talk started with a flashback to 3.11. He explained how the US supported Japan during that tough time, referring to large-scale operations such as "Operation Tomodachi" (friendship), and Joe Biden's visit to a heavily affected area in Tohoku in the summer of 2011. He explained how Biden exhibited a great deal of empathy and compassion during this visit and how he offered flowers to a tsunami victim and provided comforting words for survivors. At present, the United States is suffering from various issues due to the Covid-19 pandemic such as a huge loss of employment, social and economic inequalities, and racial injustice. Mr Sawamura explained that he believes that the American people have finally decided to choose a political leader who is capable of listening to the grievances of ordinary people and his previous displays of empathy and compassion demonstrate this.

Mr Sawamura first discussed the relationship between Japan's previous Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Trump, and whether the new Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and President-elect Biden will have such a strong personal relationship. Alongside Boris Johnson and Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, Abe was one of the few western leaders who successfully forged a close, personal relationship with Trump. Mr Sawamura explained that this was possible because Abe always supported and never embarrassed Trump. Abe was the first national leader to have a direct meeting with Trump after his Presidential election victory and at the time, Trump was a political outsider who knew nothing about foreign policy

and did not trust his own bureaucracy either. Abe offered Trump advice on how to develop foreign policy towards Asia, especially China and North Korea, at the beginning of his presidency. Mr Sawamura explained how this personal relationship was the only effective option for Abe to gain Trump's trust when you consider how Trump conducted decision-making without listening to advice from foreign policy experts, and without a carefully constructed strategy. Mr Sawamura then recounted how when he interviewed the previous National Security Advisor John Bolton last summer, Bolton commented on the relationship between Trump and Abe. Bolton said that Abe had exhibited a great deal of self-restraint in his meetings with Trump. Furthermore, according to Bolton, Abe always listened to Trump with great patience and never refuted what Trump said. Bolton mentioned that while it was impossible to know what Abe was really thinking, he thought it must have been difficult for Abe. Mr Sawamura argued that Suga would not have had such a close relationship with Trump. Suga is a self-made, practical, no-nonsense person and politician and he would not have acted as a foreign policy advisor like Abe.

Mr Sawamura then evaluated the last four years of US-Japan relations. He urged that we acknowledge that Trump's commitment to Asia was generally weak. Trump rarely participated in multi-national dialogues in Asia, such as the East Asia summit and APEC, and his anti-China policy was not based on a coherent and comprehensive strategy but more based on his signature America-first campaign and his own personal political interest. Mr Sawamura also explained that, despite the historic summit with Kim Jong-un of North Korea, Trump never made any substantial, effective agreement to stop his nuclear and missile programmes. He claimed that, during the time Trump was getting along well with Kim Jong-un, North Korea was given plenty of time to improve their nuclear capabilities, given the green light for short and mid-range missile testing, and provided with a reduction in US-South Korea military exercises. Mr Sawamura stressed that Trump did not enhance stability in East Asia which was the most crucial goal for Japan. He also considered the positives that Trump's presidency had for Japan. He explained that Trump was indifferent about other nations' foreign policies. For instance, Trump did not care about the deterioration of Japan and South Korea's bilateral relations in the last four years. In contrast, the Obama administration had tried facilitating dialogue between the two nations and put on pressure behind closed doors. Furthermore, Trump did not show an interest in or concern about Japanese politics, policies, or contributions to global issues such as climate change and mass migration.

Mr Sawamura then speculated how the new US-Japan relationship will look between Suga and Biden. He noted that the two leaders have much in common, both being self-made politicians who have spent a long period of time as number two. In Japan, many people are expressing expectations that Biden will work closely with traditional US allies. There is also a growing feeling of relief among Japanese policy-makers that Biden will pursue a more traditional institution-based approach rather than a heavily personalised approach. On the other hand, there are concerns among the Japanese public about some of Biden's policies. Historically, the Japanese government has had better relations with Republican administrations and some people point out that, even though Biden's position is centralist and moderate, his policy platform will be more influenced by progressives inside the Democratic party. Typical sceptical comments in Japan towards Biden are about his policy toward China. There is a sense of trauma among Japanese policy-makers that the Obama administration, especially during its first term, was naïve when facing the rise of China, not only as an economic superpower, but also with regard to its growing military ambitions. Mr Sawamura stressed that this soft attitude was perceived by China as a green light that paved the way towards a more aggressive approach. Mr Sawamura noted that, in contrast, Japan should not worry too much about Biden's China policies. Antony Blinken, the next State Secretary, has repeatedly said that China is now the biggest concern. This view is already

broadly shared by the bureaucracy and is the general consensus in Congress. For the Democrats, human rights issues are also very important, so there is a lot of attention on China. In addition, as Biden was elected by flipping states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, there will be attention on China due to the anti-China sentiment in these states. Mr Sawamura elaborated that, while we can observe that there is a protectionist element in Biden's policies, a hard-line approach to China is likely to continue to some extent.

Next, Mr Sawamura stressed that Biden's most important priority, without doubt, will be the Covid-19 crisis and rebuilding American industry, economy and society. Climate change will also gain attention, and the younger generation and business leaders in the US are getting more vocal on climate issues. He noted the possibility that Biden would do big deals with China to create a broader consensus to tackle Covid-19 and climate change. It will also be important to pursue involvement from China to put pressure on North Korea to ensure the stability of the Korean peninsula, as Biden is unlikely to pursue direct negotiation with the authoritarian leader as Trump did. Mr Sawamura also voiced his concern that China's view of the US has changed dramatically over the last four years during the Trump administration's time in power. He explained that there is a growing notion in China that the US is entering into decline and that developed democracy does not function well. This has been supported by America's failure to contain the pandemic and the current economic crisis. Trump's America-first policy also undermined US interest in foreign trade and US influence in global institutions. Mr Sawamura argued that Biden will therefore focus more on domestic issues and on bringing back America's strength and national unity, and he believes this to be essential for the US to win back its self-confidence.

Mr Sawamura then speculated on Japan's new role in the global order and its relationship with the United States. He explained how, as a journalist, he is obliged to be a watchdog for Japanese politics and a safeguard for Japanese democracy. Compared to other western nations, Japan has been very fortunate not to see a steep rise in violent populism. Instead, Japan has experienced issues that other countries will soon face, such as an ageing population. Mr Sawamura explained how, as a developed country facing challenges, Japan has much to share with other nations. In terms of foreign relations, he stressed that Japan must have better relations with neighbouring Asian nations. Suga did choose Vietnam and Indonesia as the two Asian nations for his first official visit but Japan should make far more effort to normalise its relationship with South Korea. Mr Sawamura then indicated three key words he believed to be crucial concepts for the US-Japan relationship in the future:

Capability: Trump's four years in power have shown that even a global power and a free country like the United States is vulnerable to populism, and Covid-19 has highlighted the previous administration's incapability in tackling such a global crisis. The Biden administration must form bonds with like-minded nations.

The Big Picture: Japan should be willing to commit to global issues such as climate change, nuclear proliferation, inequality, and mass migration. Mr Sawamura noted that Japan's announcement to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050 is good, but he would like to see Suga be more vocal about global agendas.

Diversity: The Biden administration is diverse. In contrast, Japan is behind in this respect and has a severe lack of women in high positions. While the demographics are not the same between the two countries, it is time for Japan to change its mindset and try to value diversity highly and have more women in politics.

Question and Answer Section

Q: Professor Ikenberry, you mentioned that you believe we should try and bind China into various international institutions in the hope that it will join the liberal democracy "club." This

is likely Japan's approach, as it cannot take an aggressive stance due to its geographical proximity to China and it hopes any aggression might instead come from the US. What do you think about opportunities for building links with China other than on areas such as climate, membership of international organisations, person-to-person links and student exchanges? Is it a useful option for the US to try and pursue further links with China or is this a lost cause and should we instead be focusing on a community of democracies and regard China as outside that community?

Professor Ikenberry: That is a great question. I suppose the short version of my answer is that we must do both. I think we must look for ways to engage China as the problems themselves require China to be at the table. These problems are global issues such as climate, pandemics, refugees, and nuclear proliferation. Without China's input these cannot be solved. I personally believe that strengthening the community of democracy, a kind of coalition, is important if we want to get policy towards China right. A more coherent, unified front in engaging China will be more productive than this fragmented external environment that China finds itself confronting at present. We need a solid, consistent and reasonable set of positions that come out of a united liberal democratic world that say that we want to uphold global institutional structures, but we also want to defend liberal values as well and these values are what China is contesting. This is a competition that must be undertaken and cannot be avoided. In summary, we must do both. We must have a global vision that includes China, and we must also strengthen bonds between like-minded countries to drive a reform agenda for the next era of global cooperation. I believe that both are possible.

Q: One issue for the Biden administration is that it will presumably be somewhat constrained by continuing Republican power in other parts of the government. Can you give us a bit more detail as to how that constraint will affect American foreign policy?

Professor Ikenberry: We are still waiting to see how the Senate will be fully composed. There are two seats, both in Georgia, that will be up for election in early January. If those two seats go to the Democrats, there will be a marginal majority for the Democrats in the Senate. That is not too likely, and the most probable outcome will be that we will have a Republican-controlled Senate led by Senator McConnell, who is a very stubborn Republican who will not allow Biden any victories. In other words, there will be resistance in the Senate to anything that is "big". I think we can take international treaties off the table as well as the TPP, not just because of the Republicans, but also because on the Democratic left there is a certain scepticism of trade agreements that might undermine worker positions. The choice of foreign policy team that Biden has come up with and is continuing to announce is a mission where certain figures cannot make it through the Senate, such as Susan Rice. There is a kind of movement towards a more centrist position that will be necessary because of the Republican Senate. I think the deeper problem is that the election did not give a full repudiation to Trump's America and that will still survive, and Trump may be around for a while longer. There is going to be a hangover of this toxic polarisation that will make it very difficult. Biden is precisely the person who can cut through this, the person for the moment, but it is going to be very difficult to do so-called "transformative policy".

Q: Prime minister Abe's strong relationship with President Trump was often commented upon by both people and the press, but in fact one could argue that it did not produce any practical benefits for Japan. Could you comment on this Mr Sawamura?

Mr Sawamura: I cannot blame Prime Minister Abe for having a close, personal relationship with President Trump because this was the only option for Japan. Japan did not have any leverage on President Trump and instead, it was known that every time Prime Minister Abe met with President Trump, he brought proof of how much Japan has invested in the United States. In terms of the general relationship, Trump's approach has been very transactional. In other words, if Japan wanted to be protected by the American military, it had to purchase more American products. This transactional approach between security and trade is very toxic. I think the good news is that we will leave behind those kinds of deals, where transactions mix with trade and security.

Q: There has been a shift in the US towards pro-Israel policies. How do we expect President Biden to deal with the Middle East?

Professor Ikenberry: I think there will be a slight evolution of policy. The track record of Biden and his team suggests a potential effort to return to the old even-handed approach, to separate itself from what has been an extraordinary melding of Trump and Netanyahu, and an effort to bring diplomacy and a slightly more detached role as an outside party to Israel-Palestine issues. There are certain difficulties for Biden in pulling back from Trump's positions, so this will not be a simple return to Obama-style foreign policy. I think there will be an evolution and a willingness and continuation of this exploration of building ties between Israel and Gulf states. There may also be a step to return to the Iran agreement, to see if there can be an updated agreement which may add more years to this understanding, as the "sell-by date" was one of the central critiques of the old Obama agreement. I think there will be the most change in finding a more stable engagement with Iran and I hope that there is movement on that front as well.

Broadly speaking, I think China will be the central focus of American foreign policy, not the Middle East. But, because the Biden team is so full of Obama veterans, I think if you ask for their honest view they will agree that during the Obama years the area they were weakest in was the Middle East, other than the Iran agreement. I think that as they do not feel they got the Middle East right the first time, there will be an attempt not to make it as important in the overall portfolio of American foreign policy.

Q: Professor Ikenberry, you mentioned Taiwan as the most likely "flashpoint" for a potential war in Asia. If China's approach is to encroach gradually, the Senkaku islands may be a likely next target. Could you both comment on what you think about this outlook?

Mr Sawamura: Recently, China has mentioned that they are interested in joining the TPP in the future. I personally think that China is playing hardball, especially knowing that the US is in a period of transition and is struggling because of the pandemic and social unrest. We must note that while the United States is absent, China is ready to fill that vacuum and expand its influence in Asia, including the East China sea, where the Senkaku Islands are. Most of all, we must understand the context. We should not overreact, but we must be realistic.

Professor Ikenberry: I do not have a specific view on the Senkaku Islands and what China's intentions might be. I do not expect that to be where the "flashpoint" is. There is clearly a lot of high-risk manoeuvring in the South China Sea as well and there are a lot of places where things can go wrong. If I were to make a prediction, I think you would get out of the Biden administration an effort to re-establish a crisis diplomacy channel. This would be a kind of protocol for communication when things go bad and to make sure there are no inadvertent moves that lead to escalation.

I will also make a general comment about China and the last four years. In some sense, Trump has given China an extraordinary opportunity. The US basically left the playing field for four years and this was a gift to China. We can all ponder whether China took advantage of this and whether it is in a stronger position than previously. Certainly, the US looks weaker and looks as though it has not been a very responsible or attractive global leader. But I am not sure China looks that attractive either. I am not sure that the internal evolution of the Chinese system is one that is consistent with the expansion of its international influence. I know that the competition will increase but I am not convinced that China's assessment about who is rising and who is falling is correct.

About the Speakers

Professor G. John Ikenberry:

Professor G. John Ikenberry is the Albert G. Milbank Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University in the Department of Politics and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He is also Co-Director of Princeton's Centre for International Security Studies and Co-Director of the Princeton Project on National Security. He was the 72nd Eastman Professor at Balliol College, Oxford, in 2013-14, and Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, in 2018-19. He has previously served as a member of the Policy Planning Staff (1991-92), as a member of an advisory group at the State Department (2003-04), and as a member of the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force on U.S.-European relations. He is the author of numerous journal articles, essays and books, including *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American System* (2011); and *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (2001) which won the 2002 Schroeder-Jervis Award. He is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Wataru Sawamura:

Wataru Sawamura is Bureau Chief of the Asahi Shimbun's Washington Bureau, heading the leading Japanese daily newspaper's office there since July 2017. He previously served as Deputy Managing Editor (Editor-in-Chief of the morning edition) and Foreign Editor, supervising the company's 30 foreign bureaux and 50 overseas correspondents. He graduated from Tokyo University with a BA in literature in 1986. He has held various positions at the Asahi Shimbun including New York Correspondent, London Correspondent, Paris Bureau Chief, and European Editor (chief of London Bureau). He also spent 6 months in Beijing as a visiting scholar at Tsinghua University from 2013 to 2014.