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# TRUMP, TAIWAN, TWITTER AND TIME

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US President-elect Donald Trump was named by Time magazine on December 07, 2016 as its 'Person of the Year'.<sup>1</sup> Who would have thought a year ago that the man from 'The Apprentice' would be the winner in the race for the top job in the US. The last few weeks have seen the US President-elect grabbing the headlines as his unorthodox moves continue to stump the US polity along with friends and rivals of the US alike.

The first week of December 2016 saw the President-elect speaking with the Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen on the phone breaking more than three decades of adherence to the 'One China' principle.<sup>2</sup> Trump's transition team has said that it was just a congratulatory call during which they also spoke of the close economic, political, and security ties that existed between Taiwan and the United States. While being infuriated, Beijing tried to play down the call dismissing it as "just a small trick" by Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> China blamed Taiwan for the call and also took up the matter on diplomatic channels.<sup>4</sup>

Trump's response was to take to Twitter and lash out at China for devaluing its currency, taxing imports from the US and building military installations in the South China Sea.<sup>5</sup> Unconventional and clearly a man who isn't shy to speak his mind, he even takes to ending his tweets with "I don't think so!"<sup>6</sup>

Trump has now been using twitter for seven years, starting May 2009.<sup>7</sup> His use of twitter or rather the number of tweets and retweets that he puts out per month has kept increasing over the years. And correspondingly so have his followers, which now stand at around 17 million.<sup>8</sup> But why does Trump use twitter so much? For one, his distrust of the mainstream media. Trump announced his candidacy for the president of the USA on June 16, 2015. Since then the US presidential elections saw a brazenly biased media trying to wreck Trump's chances of winning the US presidential elections from 'Day 1'. For those who watched the world media cover the run up to and then the elections, it was abundantly clear that there were starkly differing views amongst the major TV networks like CNN,



BBC, Al Jazeera, France 24, or RT. And so Twitter. So much so that Trump hasn't held a single press conference since 27 July this year while he has tweeted more than 130 times on everything from domestic issues to foreign policy.<sup>9</sup> But it seems to be serving him well. While his tweets may sometimes not appear to be so well thought through, is it really so? Take the tweets in response to China's take on his Taiwan call. Aggravating China? Or is it necessarily as it seems? But then the President-elect subsequently goes ahead and appoints the Iowa Governor Terry Branstad, 70 who is known for his close ties to Beijing's leaders, as his administration's US Ambassador to China.<sup>10</sup>

So is it surprising that a man who unreservedly tweets his mind out and isn't averse to ruffling diplomatic feathers has been named as the 'Time Person of the Year'? To borrow Donald Trump's tweet sign off – 'I don't think so!' His latest tweet regarding China's seizure of an US underwater drone in the South China Sea after Beijing agreed to return it in an appropriate manner was "let them keep it!"<sup>11</sup> - showing that he hasn't changed his tack one bit. Time magazine's managing editor Nancy Gibbs said the choice of Trump this year was "straightforward".<sup>12</sup> While going on to explain its choice, Time had this to say - "For reminding America that demagoguery feeds on despair and that truth is only as powerful as the trust in those who speak it, for empowering a hidden electorate by mainstreaming its furies and live-

streaming its fears, and for framing tomorrow's culture by demolishing yesterday's, Donald Trump is Time's 2016 Person of the Year."<sup>13</sup>

Trump believes in deals. Period. He has said that he is good at making deals and seeing as to where he is coming from we should give him that. So despite criticism from an oft biased conventional media, one cannot discount that perhaps Donald Trump is indeed in control. His recent tweets and moves reflect a shrewd mind at work. The mind of a person who is not afraid to speak his mind and someone who is cleverly building his team and himself a foundation from which to leverage the best deals for America. As Hillary Clinton said while conceding her loss in the US Presidential election "We owe him an open mind and a chance to lead."<sup>14</sup> Come 2017 and a tweet then from a 'President' is definitely not going to be the same as one from a 'President-elect'. Will 2017 then see the "@realDonaldTrump"<sup>15</sup> backing up his words with actions? This is something that we will have to wait and watch – carefully and preferably without any prejudice.

*(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS])*

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> News18.com, "Trump Beats Hillary Again, This Time to Become Time Person of the Year", December 07, 2016, <http://www.news18.com/news/world/Trump-beats-Hillary-again-this-time-to-become-Time-Person-of-the-Year-1320415.html>, accessed on December 08, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> The US had closed its embassy in Taiwan in the late 1970's following a historic rapprochement between Beijing and Washington that stemmed from Richard Nixon's 1972 trip to China, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/03/trump-angers-beijing-with-provocative-phone-call-to-taiwan-president>, accessed on December 14, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Times of India.Indiatimes.com, "Who collects costs for Donald Trump's Taiwan call?", *Reuters*, December 05, 2016, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/us-elections-2016/who-collects-costs-for-Donald-Trumps-Taiwan-call/articleshow/55810336.cms>, accessed on/December 06,2016.

<sup>5</sup> Hindustantimes.com, Sutirtho Patranobis, "US will pay dearly for 'rookie' Trump, warns Chinese media", December 06, 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/us-will-pay-dearly-for-rookie-trump-warns-chinese-media/story-h8aB6GCvW2YKadGMIVBjUO.html>, accessed on/December 08, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Bloomberg.com, Ros Krany, "Trump Takes On China in Tweets on Currency, South China Sea", December 05, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-12-04/trump-takes-on-china-in-tweets-about-currency-south-china-sea>, accessed on/December 21, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> BBC.com, "Trump on Twitter: A history of the man and his medium", December 12, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-38245530>, accessed on December 13, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Hindustantimes.com, "Trump's cabinet: Homeland security, China ambassador, environment posts filled", December 08, 2016, <http://hindustantimes.com/world-news/trump-s-cabinet-homeland-security-china-ambassador-environment-posts-filled/story-hLjVy85vWT9UruqjOPCwHK.html>, accessed on December 09, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Thehindu.com, "Let China keep the drone: Trump", December 18, 2016, <http://thehindu.com/news/international/Let-China-keep-the-drone-Trump/article16899439.ece>, accessed on December 19, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid,n.1.

<sup>13</sup> Time.com, Nancy Gibbs, "The Choice", <http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2016-donald-trump-choice/>, accessed on December 08, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Nytimes.com, Alan Rappeport and Alexander Burns, "Highlights of Hillary Clinton's Concession Speech and President Obama's Remarks", November 09, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/us/politics/donald-trump-won-now-what.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/us/politics/donald-trump-won-now-what.html?_r=0), accessed on December 21, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Donald Trump's Twitter handle.