

## **The New Normal**

**Session:** Plenary Session 1  
**Date/Time:** April 26, 2016 / 10:30-12:00

**Moderator:** Hahm Chaibong, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

**Speakers:** Han Sung Joo, Korea University  
Gilbert Rozman, The Asan Forum  
Tanaka Akihiko, University of Tokyo  
Zhu Chenghu, National Defense University, People's Liberation Army,  
China

### **Session Sketch**

Plenary Session 1, titled “The New Normal,” explored the complex issues redefining the rules of international relations in our time. The conversation ranged from China’s role in dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue to the upcoming US presidential election and the return of geopolitics in shaping the actions of nation states. The moderator of the session, Dr. Hahm Chaibong, President of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, opened the session by welcoming the participants and thanking the Keynote Speaker, John Hamre, for setting the tone of the conference.

Han Sung Joo, professor emeritus at Korea University, began by illustrating the effects of North Korea’s actions on “The New Normal.” Dr. Han claimed that, while North Korea used to be afraid of UN sanctions and sought to downplay their nuclear weapon capabilities, they now flaunt their weapons and actively threaten both South Korea and the United States. Although China had previously been more concerned about keeping the North Korean regime afloat than stopping their nuclear program, they are beginning to feel threatened by North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and are stating their support for sanctions.

Next, Gilbert Rozman, editor-in-chief of the Asan Forum, claimed that US/China cooperation on the North Korean nuclear program is not in a positive phase, but rather represents a fundamental divergence of opinions. Dr. Rozman went on to assert that the answer to the

---

*\*The views expressed herein are summaries and may not necessarily reflect the views of the speakers or their affiliated institutions.*

## Asan Plenum 2016 Session Sketch

problems the world faces is not just greater US involvement, but a strengthening of commitment from its allies. Dr. Rozman claimed that states' reconstruction of national identities is causing problems, and that today, challenges once again originate from the states themselves, especially in North East Asia.

Tanaka Akihiko, professor at the University of Tokyo, offered a more optimistic assessment of "The New Normal" by pointing to some of the achievements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including the success of the Millennium Development Goals to halve the population living in extreme poverty. Prof. Tanaka also stressed two factors that are creating the challenges in our time. The first is the emergence of new threats via 21<sup>st</sup> century technology as exploited by groups like ISIS. The second is the return of symptoms similar to those of the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including nationalism and disregard of international norms.

Finally, Zhu Chenghu, professor at the National Defense University in China, delineated the threats faced by the world today. Low economic growth rates, an arms race between major powers, and the lack of effective institutions are but some of the challenges outlined by Maj. Gen. Zhu. Regarding North Korea, he emphasized the importance of negotiations instead of sanctions as the main pathway to denuclearization and stability on the peninsula. Maj. Gen. Zhu also stressed the need for active cooperation between the US and China.

During the question and answer session, Maj. Gen. Zhu claimed that no one in East Asia should accept a nuclear armed North Korea, but acknowledged that denuclearization will be difficult to achieve, given the amount of time and resources they have spent. Prof. Tanaka responded to a question by stating that it is highly unlikely that Prime Minister Abe will change his security policy after the upcoming elections. Dr. Rozman talked about the possibility of Hillary Clinton winning the US presidency and the possible effects on US foreign policy. Dr. Han ended the debate with his view that, regardless who wins the US presidency, US foreign policy will change, in accordance with whether or not North Korea is seen as a core issue.

---

*\*The views expressed herein are summaries and may not necessarily reflect the views of the speakers or their affiliated institutions.*