

**Session:** U.S.-Japan Alliance

**Date/Time:** April 24, 2018 / 16:30-18:00

**Rapporteur:**

Harry Dempsey, Asia Pacific Initiative

**Moderator:**

Martin Fackler, *The New York Times*

**Speakers:**

Michael J. Green, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Nishino Junya, Keio University

Park Cheol Hee, Seoul National University

T.J. Pempel, University of California, Berkeley

Yamaguchi Noboru, International University of Japan

**Session Sketch:**

Session 2, U.S.-Japan Alliance, explored the challenges facing the two long-term allies. The Moderator, Martin Fackler, split the session into two sections. The first section focused upon whether Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s pursuit of a close personal relationship with President Donald Trump has paid off, the effect of President Trump’s unpredictability on Tokyo’s strategic thinking, potential for trilateral cooperation between U.S., Japan and South Korea, and whether Japan can take on a bigger role in the LIO. The second section assessed potential outcomes of the upcoming Trump-Kim summit on the U.S.-Japan alliance.

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

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Dr. Michael J. Green affirmed the positive trajectory of U.S.-Japan relations, in light of dangers to the alliance felt by Tokyo during President Trump’s election campaign. He evaluated the Nixon and Carter shocks to have been bigger than the Trump shock because of the convergence between U.S. and Japanese security establishments.

Dr. Junya Nishino highlighted the political capital held by Prime Minister Abe in virtue of his personal relationship with President Trump and outlined three risks at the summit. Lt. Gen. Noboru Yamaguchi agreed strongly with one point: President Trump could accept North Korea as a nuclear weapons state whilst striking a deal to end long-range ICBM development.

Dr. Cheol Hee Park questioned the strength of the Abe-Trump relationship by highlighting disagreements between the U.S. and Japan on many key bilateral issues. He also cautioned against excessive pessimism towards the summit meeting. In opposition, Dr. T.J. Pempel could not conceive of a positive outcome from the summit meeting. Dr. Pempel questioned Japan’s ability to support the LIO if, on top of the failure to exempt Japan from the steel and aluminum tariffs, the U.S. continues pressure for a bilateral free trade agreement.

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