



Session Sketch

Asan Plenum 2019: “Korea’s Choice”
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Session: U.S.-Japan Alliance

Date/Time: April 23, 2019 / 13:00-14:30

Rapporteur:

Ross Tokola, East-West Center in Washington D.C.

Moderator:

Park Cheol Hee, Seoul National University

Speakers:

Kent E. Calder, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

Richard McGregor, Lowy Institute

Tokuchi Hideshi, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

Wang Dong, Peking University

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Professor Park Cheol Hee opened the panel with praise for the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance, as demonstrated in how it has progressed over time, in how it has widened its scope across the Indo-Pacific, and in the frequent meetings between U.S. and Japanese heads of state.

Professor Kent Calder discussed how the regional context of the alliance is strikingly different than from the time of the signing of the security treaty establishing the alliance in 1951. He also outlined the differences between the nature of the U.S. alliances with Korea and with Japan, including with respect to the U.S. and Japanese roles as maritime powers. Mr. Richard McGregor highlighted Chinese views on the U.S.-Japan alliance and China’s relationship with Japan. He also outlined differences between the Obama and Trump administrations’ approaches towards the U.S.-Japan relationship, including how Trump administration policies towards the global trading system have incentivized closer cooperation between China and Japan.

Mr. Tokuchi Hideshi described the U.S.-Japan alliance as the central piece of a U.S.-centered alliance network in the region, emphasizing that the United States and Japan share to a unique degree the core issues of China, North Korea, Russia, and international terrorism. He also argued that Japanese collective self-defense has compensated for the asymmetry in the alliance. Professor Wang Dong discussed how the U.S.-Japan alliance was reinvigorated in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War. He also noted the discrepancies between how the United States and Japan view a “Free and Open Indo Pacific,” and the potentially emerging dilemma between Japanese rapprochement with China and the current direction of U.S. strategy.

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



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The panelists concluded with recommendations for the South Korean government regarding the U.S.- Korea alliance, including their views on its place in the broader context of U.S., Japanese, and Korean relations with China.

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