

Session: The Rise and Fall of LIO

Date/Time: April 24, 2018 / 10:30-12:00

Rapporteur:

Karl Friedhoff, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Moderator:

Hahm Chaibong, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Speakers:

Funabashi Yoichi, Asia Pacific Initiative

Karel De Gucht, Free University of Brussels

Charles A. Kupchan, Council on Foreign Relations; Georgetown University

James B. Steinberg, Syracuse University

Session Sketch:

In Plenary Session I: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order (LIO), Dr. Hahm Chaibong stated that the operative word in the title should be “fall.” Dr. Funabashi Yoichi then provided a starting point for the beginning of that fall, noting he first felt tremors in the LIO in 2010 when China’s foreign minister declared that “China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that’s just a fact.” This fall has been aided by both China chipping away at the rules of the LIO and a simultaneous effort by the United States to tear down the system it constructed.

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

The panelists discussed whether this is a temporary detour from liberalism or a historical inflection point. Early data points suggest that it is a temporary detour for the United States—the swing of a pendulum towards illiberalism—but it is unclear how long this detour will last. In that time, it will be necessary for the European Union and countries like South Korea and Japan to hold the line.

The participants argued that as the pendulum swings from the liberal to illiberal international order, the corrective is not to be found in foreign policy. Instead, it is domestic policy that needs to be the focus. For too long, the public has been left out of the equation, and this has allowed support for the LIO to erode in the United States and Europe. Correcting this will mean reengaging the public, improving education, and better communicating about the international system and the benefits it delivers. But ultimately, it will also mean rethinking national tax structure to ensure gains from the system are spread more equitably.

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