



Session Sketch

Asan Plenum 2019: “Korea’s Choice”
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Session: Nationalism or Internationalism

Date/Time: April 24, 2019 / 09:00-10:30

Rapporteur:

Kathryn Botto, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Moderator:

Lee Chung Min, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Speakers:

Pascal Boniface, French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs

Edwin J. Feulner, The Heritage Foundation

G. John Ikenberry, Princeton University

Yuli Tamir, Shenkar College of Engineering and Design

Paul D. Wolfowitz, American Enterprise Institute

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The third plenary session of the Asan Plenum dealt with the dichotomy between “nationalism and internationalism.” As Pascal Boniface of the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs, G. John Ikenberry of Princeton University, and Yuli Tamir of Shenkar College of Engineering and Design described, the relationship between the two principles has oscillated over history. Boniface pointed out that while President Donald Trump is symptomatic of this changing relationship, nationalism is also on the rise in Europe and the world over. According to Ikenberry, internationalism arose initially as a system internal to the bipolar system of alliances, and subsequently became an external system encompassing these bilateral relationships. Tamir characterized the current moment as one of rebalancing in the relationship between the two concepts rather than one forcing the world to make a choice between one or the other.

The issue of who the international order serves was central to the discussion. Edwin J. Feulner of the Heritage Foundation maintained that the United States has borne a disproportionate cost of supporting internationalism, while Ikenberry intimated that the tangible and intangible gains the U.S. receives from internationalism have far outweighed the costs. Paul D. Wolfowitz of the American Enterprise Institute argued that it is very difficult to discern who wins and loses from internationalism, but that international institutions have not always had a positive impact. At a moment when certain countries are threatening the international order, multilateral coalition building may be more impactful than international institutions in promoting mutually beneficial national interests.

Tamir made the important point that nationalists have raised valid issues, particularly in terms of the redistribution of power and wealth away from the middle class. Nationalism has

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illuminated a need to reevaluate foreign policy and to communicate internally the ways in which it benefits not only elites, but all classes within a nation. Looking to the future, Ikenberry sees an opportunity for a resurgence of internationalism in the backlash to nationalism. Countries that have a stake in the international order and see it eroding, such as South Korea and Japan, have incentive to step up as new leaders.

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