



Session Sketch

Asan Plenum 2019: “Korea’s Choice”
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Session: Values or Interests?

Date/Time: April 24, 2019 / 10:45-12:15

Rapporteur:

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

Moderator:

J.James Kim, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Speakers:

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

Fujisaki Ichiro, Nakasone Peace Institute

Gao Fei, China Foreign Affairs University

Linda Jakobson, China Matters

T.J. Pempel, University of California, Berkeley

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Professor Kent E. Calder outlined how the question of values or interests has reflected in classic international relations theory debates between realism and idealism, as between balance of power diplomacy versus Wilsonianism, and how these conceptions have warred over the past two centuries. He highlighted how idealism has emerged in times of extremity through appeals to values to bring people together.

Professor T.J. Pempel argued that the bifurcation of ideas and interests presents a false dichotomy. Countries in fact define interests based on conceptions of who they are and who they wish to become to face their challenges. Second, overlapping and competing conceptions of values and interests shift with a pendulum effect within domestic politics.

Ambassador Fujisaki Ichiro posited that long-term interests are a country’s values. Compared to US directness, he explained that Japan and other East Asian countries support international organizations and multilateralism more indirectly because they best serve their values.

Dr. Gao Fei, argued that values and interests are mixed, that China and the United States are not on separate sides of a cold war, but are interdependent and have many areas of cooperation. China, a risen power, has benefited from international institutions and a rules-based order, and has an interest in jointly shaping rules and institutions. Korea can play a beneficial role in being a bridge between China and the United States to build peace and prosperity.

Ms. Linda Jakobson argued that the extent to which China emphasizes authoritarian values and a selective approach to abiding by international law and the rules of international

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organizations, is incompatible with the liberal international order. China will not overturn that order, but it could try to shape that order to make space for illiberal values. Middle powers can band together to present their values and interests to both China and the United States.

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