

Panel: China and Japan (Lilac & Tulip Room)

Date/Time: Tuesday, December 11, 2012 / 12:45-14:00

Talking Points for: Ralph A. Cossa, President, Pacific Forum CSIS

- Upcoming election in Japan and leadership transition in China provides both countries with opportunity to hit “reset” button.

- Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute is more than just a bilateral issue: reflection of how a rising or risen China will deal with its neighbors (as is South China Sea dispute); complicates broader Sino-Japan and trilateral cooperation with Korea; sets potentially unhelpful precedents in dealing with other territorial disputes (including Korea-Japan over Dokdo/Takeshima); risks putting China in direct confrontation with US due to existing US security commitment to Japan.

- Opportunity of Xi Jinping to distinguish himself from his predecessor and demonstrate willingness/capability to engage in international diplomacy (despite having direct hand in formulating existing policies). Current confrontational attitude and actions are seriously damaging China’s international image and raising concerns about Chinese motives and intentions.

- Opportunity for new Japanese leader to demonstrate strong leadership credentials and increase global positive image of Japan.

- If, as currently anticipated, Abe Shinzo returns as Prime Minister, it will give him an opportunity to overcome his image as ultra-nationalist hardliner. Given his credentials, he will have greater flexibility in reaching solution than any other Japanese leader (a “Nixon to China” opportunity). A hardline approach will have serious repercussions for Japan’s international image and soft power and could complicate Japan-Korea cooperation as well.

*** The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.**