

Asia-Pacific or Indo-Pacific?

- Session:** Session 2
Date/Time: April 26, 2016 / 16:30-18:00
- Moderator:** Gilbert Rozman, The Asan Forum
- Speakers:** Vikram Doraiswami, Embassy of India to the ROK
William Paterson, Embassy of Australia to the ROK
Daniel Twining, The German Marshall Fund of the U.S.
Zhu Feng, Nanjing University

Session Sketch

Session 2, titled “Asia-Pacific or Indo-Pacific?” was moderated by Gilbert Rozman, editor-in-chief of *The Asan Forum*. Prof. Rozman asked the panelists about India’s role in the wider regional context and how regional players conceive the regional architecture. What are we talking about when we talk about regional framework? Is there some sense of community and common value in the discussion? By answering these questions, this session aimed to find what is central to understanding the Indo-Pacific region.

Amb. Doraiswami, the ambassador of India to the Republic of Korea, stressed the importance of the evolution of Asian interest over the century, which has brought fusion of Pacific and Indian interests. Ideas, goods, and commodities flow between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, creating a connected space and establishing an Indo-Pacific community. Amb. Doraiswami, borrowing Rory Medcalf’s words, described this as a “maritime super highway.”

Next, Amb. William Paterson, the Australian ambassador to the Republic of Korea, said that the term ‘Indo-Pacific’ well-describes Australia’s dependence on the two oceans. While Australia is often not considered as part of Asia, its trade with regional states is growing, with trade volume with India particularly strong. Amb. Paterson noted that economic connections are obvious. China is Australia’s biggest trading partner, followed by Japan and South Korea

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being the fourth. Similar to Amb. Doraiswami, he described the Indo-Pacific trade route as ‘a power highway,’ emphasizing the significance of energy trade among regional countries.

Dr. Daniel Twining, director and senior fellow for Asia at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, emphasized India’s geopolitical position. Dr. Twining described India as being located at the pivot of Asia. Also mentioning the fact that India attracted more foreign direct investment than China in 2015, he asked the audience to imagine how India would look like in twenty years, especially taking into account where China stand now after twenty years of growth. He also insisted that India offers a different model of growth from China for developing countries to benchmark, and portrayed India as a swing state in the region which contributes to sustaining an open liberal order.

Finally, Prof. Zhu Feng, executive director of China Center for Collaborative Studies of the South China Sea, Nanjing University, stressed that China had no intention of seeking dominance over the U.S.-controlled sea lanes of communication in the Indo-Pacific. He noted that the China-India relationship was once traumatized during the 1960s with the Chinese revolution and the impact from this has not yet fully dissipated. He insisted that China is now different and Beijing has consistently mentioned that it will treat Islamabad and New Delhi the same.

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