

Asan Plenum 2016

“New Normal”

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Welcome to the Asan Plenum 2016.

The Asan Plenum is Korea and East Asia’s premier international affairs conference. Over 300 renowned experts, scholars, policymakers, and members of the media will gather in Seoul to discuss the rising challenges of the “New Normal.”

At the dawn of the 21st century, “new” economic, technological, environmental, and security threats fundamentally transformed the nature of international relations. Yet even in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks, the global economic downturn, and the near collapse of international financial markets, optimists still hoped that the world would move in the direction of a rational, liberal, and inclusive world order. Diplomatic breakthroughs alleviated global economic downturns, just as economic growth palliated worsening security situations. The rapid and extensive dissemination of information via social media connected people as never before and contributed to the advancement of democracy and human rights.

Such optimism has largely dissipated. With low economic growth rates spreading from the advanced economies to developing countries, no solutions to get the world economy back on track are in sight. Expansion of the postmodern EU has clashed with an increasingly assertive Russia. Intense and cruel civil wars and sectarian violence have replaced the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the representative struggle of the Middle East. China’s assertiveness in the South and East China Sea along with North Korea’s relentless pursuit of a full nuclear operational capability contributes to heightened tensions in the region. Information technology that undermined repressive states has now degenerated into a tool of authoritarian regimes that further suppress their people.

Anarchy, conflict, and war mark the international system, a condition that international relations theory characterizes as the “normal” interaction between nation states. We have entered an era of the “New Normal.”

Will we have to adjust to the “New Normal?” Who will take the lead in offering viable solutions? What is the role of global and regional institutions in this “new” environment? How will multilateral or bilateral alliances adjust and recalibrate? This plenum intends to address these very important questions.

Thank you for joining us.