



SESSION SKETCHES

Asan Plenum 2013: "New World Disorder"
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New World Disorder

Panel: Plenary Session I (Regency Room)

Date/Time: Tuesday, April 30, 2013 / 10:15-11:30

Moderator: Hahm Chaibong, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Speakers: Jia Qingguo, Peking University
Douglas Paal, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
James Steinberg, Syracuse University
Tanaka Akihiko, Japan International Cooperation Agency

Rapporteur: Victoria Tuke, Tokyo Foundation

The first Plenary Session addressed the central theme of the Asan Plenum 2013: New World Disorder. To begin, Jia Qingguo, took a largely positive stance, stating that the world is always in some form of 'disorder'. Jia noted the fact that with no large-scale war, either hot or cold and the gradual spread of shared values such as free markets and human rights, we are not currently living in a 'disorderly world'. The United States and China are increasingly seeking common ground and if looked at from a long-term perspective, the gap between the rising power of China and established hegemon, the US is narrowing. China is increasingly aware, for example, that cyber-security is an important issue.

Nevertheless, there are many serious challenges which also characterize the current world order, including the proliferation of WMD, climate change, and power transitions in states such as China, which is facing 'dual identities'; being both a developed and developing country, an ordinary as well as a superpower. China's economic development is also slowing and international society will need to be patient as China negotiates its future global role.

Douglas Paal, continued the optimistic outlook, noting the improvement in Sino-US relations from late-2010. When Xi Jinping visited the United States in February 2012, Paal noted the welcome given by Secretary of State Clinton to Xi's desire for a 'great power relationship'. Paal called for a 'regional reset' to establish a new agenda for cooperation and identified the Economic Dialogue to be held in July 2013 as a suitable forum to elevate issues of mutual benefit such as maritime security, cyber-security and regional issues such as fishing rights. Paal also suggested the beginning of a 15-year effort to reach a free-trade agreement.

In contrast to earlier contributions, James Steinberg, voiced anxiety over the capacity of the international system to deal with issues such as climate change. Steinberg noted that there remains a disconnect between what is being done by governments and the seriousness of the problem. In addition, Steinberg raised the problem of another pandemic such as bird flu, which could unleash a whole new set of phenomena for states to address.

Tanaka Akihiko began his remarks by stating further reasons for optimism regarding the

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current world order. Tanaka cited the Indian Ocean as an emerging ocean of prosperity, reforms in Myanmar, peace in Latin America and average growth of 5 percent in sub-Saharan Africa as examples of this trend. On the subject of disorder, however, Tanaka noted the European financial crisis, Asian inter-state politics and the ‘dry region’ from Afghanistan to northern Africa as areas for concern.

To conclude, Hahm Chaibong, repeated the views of the panelists that there are no easy solutions to today’s ‘new world disorder’. As Steinberg had previously stated, we cannot freeze the international system so we must continue to adapt to a system more prone to disorder than order. The crucial question for the future, will be how to identify situations in which we can effectively intervene.

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