



SESSION SKETCHES

Asan Plenum 2013: “New World Disorder”
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Maritime Security

Panel: Session 5 (Grand Ballroom I)

Date/Time: Wednesday, May 1, 2013 / 14:00-15:15

Speakers: Shin Chang-Hoon, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies
Kotani Tetsuo, The Japan Institute of International Affairs
Alan Romberg, Stimson Center
Su Hao, China Foreign Affairs University
Tran Truong Thuy, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

Rapporteur: Moira Alice Kelley, Seoul National University

Moderator Shin Chang Hoon opened the panel discussing the changing nature of maritime security in East Asia. Traditionally the concept has focused on issues such as sea lane communication and piracy, but today’s world is seeing a shift toward terrorism, territorial disputes of rocks and islets, and weapons of mass destruction transportation. Shin stressed the importance of managing the rising conflicts through cooperation and compromise before opening the discussion to the panelists.

Kotani Tetsuo noted that the stability in Asia has rested traditionally on the balance between continental powers, primarily China and Russia, and maritime powers, Japan and its supporter the United States. However, recent developments from China’s naval capabilities have altered this balance—allowing China to move to a more maritime domain in what he called a “territorialization” of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). China has become more assertive and strategic in maritime issues, which has caused concern in the region, particularly with Japan regarding the Senkaku Island disputes. Regarding this issue, Japan should remain firm but peaceful on this issue to avoid China taking advantage in similar future situations.

Alan Romberg began on a positive note citing regional common interests against piracy, trafficking, terrorism, and humanitarian disaster relief. However, with territorial disputes, maritime security becomes a challenge as history complicates the progress of forward cooperation. While the US has no claims to the disputed areas, it has a strong stance

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against the use of coercion and provocation. The US will support resolution of these issues through diplomacy and peaceful means.

Su Hao reiterated the common ground among Asia-Pacific countries stating the importance of the Pacific nations in maintaining peace and stability in the sea as well as in the nation. Commonalities from the Chinese perspective can be seen in maritime security regarding the safety of sea lanes, anti-piracy, non-proliferation, pollution and the environment, and freedom of navigation. Issues should be worked out between the East Asian nations themselves, without the intrusion from the US. Hao notes that while territorial disputes are one of these issues, they will play a more minor role when it comes to East Asian cooperation.

Tran Truong Thuy summed up the key issues of maritime security outlining territorial disputes, overlapping maritime claims, the issue of military occupation in maritime zones, and freedom of activity. One crucial overarching issue is that the region does not have a mechanism to deal with disputes or to prevent them, so the conflicts that arise can be, and have been, easily escalated. Another aspect of maritime security that causes waves is sovereignty and national pride—where states refuse to buckle under conflicts so as to not look weak on issues. When the resolution of these disputes comes to fruition, there will inevitably be one winner and one loser—and this is a situation that states in the region are ardently avoiding.

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