

Leadership Changes and Their Implications for Security in Northeast Asia

Panel: Session 1 (Orchid)

Date/Time: April 25, 2012 / 15:45-17:00

Organizing Institution: China Reform Forum

Speakers: Pan Zhenqiang, China Reform Forum (Moderator)
Chung Jae Ho, Seoul National University
Jin Canrong, Renmin University
Alan Romberg, Stimson Center

Panel Short Summary

Sarah-Lena Vonderberg, Seoul National University
Hanna You, Yonsei University

General Pan Zhenqiang from the China Reform Forum opened the panel, as the moderator, with the refreshing idea to arrange this panel a little different than others, with the emphasis on a lively discussion between the three speakers and him about the leadership changes in Northeast Asia. After the introduction, each speaker gave a short overview about his personal opinion over the latest leadership changes and the occurring consequences.

Professor Jin Canrong from the Renmin University started with the implications of the Chongqing event; however, he does not believe that the inner conflict with the local leadership is going to change the direction of China's foreign policy. The leaders, the technocrats, are not willing to change, and the result of the bargaining progress will be only minimal. He commented that he doesn't expect big changes in Chinese foreign policies in the near future. Therefore, with domestic voices rising, the pressure on the central government is increasing. His perspective for the future in terms of the Taiwan issue is more and meaningful dialogues with Beijing.

In regards to the US-East Asian relations, Alan Romberg, Fellow and Director of the East Asia Program of the Stimson Center, opened his speech that the East Asian nations do not have permanent friends or enemies but only permanent interests. He added that the leadership situation and perception may undergo major changes in Northeast Asian countries; however their foreign policy interest will remain steady. He highlighted that the US-South

Korean relationship has been, in terms of the alliance, very much focused on the North Korean problems because of the latest circumstances, but that the relationship goes beyond that. As he quoted Martin Luther King Jr.,

“ the Ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy”,

he added that Japan, China, and Korea will continue to have productive relationships and the leaders are well aware of the importance of the cooperation. Lastly, he emphasized that the basic course of the US-China relations should be a positive and understanding one.

Professor Chung Jae Ho, from Seoul National University, analyzed the first half of 2012 in terms of leadership changes in Northeast Asia. He argues that despite the transitions, problems will remain the same. As mister Pan asked about his personal opinion about the upcoming presidential election in South Korea, he evaded with the answer that it is too early to predict. As of the presidential election in the United States he is sure that regardless who becomes president, the big picture will not change. Regarding recent criticism on China he pointed out, that the South Korea-China relation is cold when it comes to foreign security issues. He also stretches the fact that the recent bombings on Yeongpyeong and Cheonan Island are raising negative sentiments towards the Chinese government.

Despite different opinions, the panelists agree on one idea: Even though the leadership might change, they will have to work together to solve the existing problems.

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