

Session: Middle East and LIO

Date/Time: April 25, 2018 / 13:30-15:00

Rapporteur:

Harry Dempsey, Asia Pacific Initiative

Moderator:

Diederik Vandewalle, Dartmouth College

Speakers:

Jang Ji-Hyang, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Joseph A. Kéchichian, King Faisal Center

Mesut Özcan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey

Siavash Saffari, Seoul National University

Session Sketch:

Session 4, “Middle East and LIO,” examined the history, current situation and outlook of the relationship between the Middle East and the illiberal international order. The moderator began by stressing the long history of the illiberal international order in the Middle East, which was fortified during the Cold War. The Arab Spring in 2011 gave hope for a shift to liberalism.

Joseph A. Kechichian opened by referencing Francis Fukuyama’s End of History and contrasting how far the Middle East is from his vision 30 years on. He stressed that the need for liberty has never been higher without domination by Iran, Turkey or the West.

** The views expressed herein are summaries and may not necessarily reflect the views of the speakers or their affiliated institutions.*

Mesut Özcan stressed the point that the Middle East has not experienced the U.S.-led LIO, and the region is in disorder. He claimed that expectations of political participation and reform were high but that it will take time and require Western financial and political support for the creation of institutions and political parties.

A different perspective was taken by Siavash Saffari, who contended that the Middle East should not be understood as an exception prone to illiberalism and secularism, but rather as a showcase of the changing global power structure from a U.S. unilateral order to an openly contested multi-stakeholder order. He challenged the notion that the U.S. wishes to disengage from the Middle East.

Jang Ji-Hyang surveyed the role of illiberal states, liberal states and swing states in the Middle East. She predicted that the Iranian government is likely to accept a revised nuclear deal, which would put pressure on Kim Jong Un for the summit meeting with President Donald Trump.

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