



Session Sketch

Asan Plenum 2019: “Korea’s Choice”
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Session: Arms Control

Date/Time: April 24, 2019 / 13:30-15:00

Rapporteur:

John Jihyung Lee, Yonsei University

Moderator:

Kato Yoichi, Asia Pacific Initiative

Speakers:

Abe Nobuyasu, Harvard Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

Alexander Gabuev, Carnegie Moscow Center

Park Jiyoung, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Nicolas Regaud, French Ministry of Defense

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The third session on arms control revolved around four main questions. First, is Northeast Asia entering a new arms race? Second, what are the implications of America’s withdrawal from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty? Third, will a new multilateral arms control regime emerge? Lastly, what are the implications of the inter-Korean military agreement for South Korea’s arms buildup?

In response to these questions, all four panelists painted a bleak picture. Many agreed that an arms race is already underway. What makes this particular arms race unique and difficult to manage is that more players, including China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and potentially Iran, are involved. Moreover, there are added elements to the arms race which include cyber weapons, hypersonic weapons, artificial intelligence, high-precision weapons and others. With regard to the potential for a multilateral arms control regime, participants stressed the importance of such a regime but, at the same time, acknowledged the difficulty mainly due to the asymmetric nature of the current arms buildup.

In terms of the United States’ decision to withdraw from the INF, the panelists pointed to two factors: Russia’s violations of the treaty and American concerns regarding China’s military buildup. One panelist raised the point that the United States now has the legal basis for stationing ground-based missiles in the region, although a number of other panelists remained skeptical due to oppositions from the host countries and China.

The session concluded with all four panelists showing deep skepticism regarding the potential for an arms control mechanism in the region. They urged the importance of 1.5- and 2-track meetings, diplomatic and military engagements, and stronger public demands for an arms control regime.

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