

DEBATE

Thierry de Montbrial, President and Founder of the World Policy Conference

If the World Policy Conference can play any role in the future in facilitating these sorts of things, we would be very happy to do so. We now have time for questions. Firstly, we have Ambassador Wu Jianmin from China.

Wu Jianmin, Executive Vice Chairman of China Institute for Innovation and Development Strategy

Thank you, Thierry. I may be the only Chinese person in the room and at this stage I perhaps need to inject a few thoughts. Firstly, as regards the Yasukuni Shrine, Ambassador Oshima said that it was a complicated issue. It is not complicated. The substance of it is that Japan has to come to terms with history. Just suppose today that the German Chancellor went somewhere to honour the memory of Adolf Hitler, what would happen next? The next day, she or he would have to step down because when people mention Hitler we remember the Holocaust. Six million Jews died in the Holocaust. At the Yasukuni Shrine, Japan honours 14 Class A war criminals. That is the problem. How many people died in the Sino Japanese War? It was five times those who died in the Holocaust. This is, therefore, the problem. It is not complicated. Ambassador Oshima says that the Chinese are angry. It is not only the Chinese; even your American allies are not happy about it. That is the truth.

My second point is that we need to look at the bigger picture. When we look around the world today we see three focal points. The first focal point is an epicentre of turbulence, wreaking war and hatred, located in North Africa and the Middle East. It is very unfortunate and it is a big issue facing the world.

The second focal point is that I believe that the epicentre of the financial crisis is in Europe. People talk about a lost decade for Europe and perhaps that is not an exaggeration. European leaders are still struggling with the financial crisis.

The third focal point is that the global growth centre is being located in East Asia and this growth from East Asia is needed by the whole world. If that is true, the countries in the regions will therefore have their best interests served by maintaining East Asia as the global growth centre. For people outside this region, I do not see any power or group of countries that has a policy to break up the momentum of East Asian growth. This is true and while the countries of East Asia have their differences, we should not exaggerate these differences. We have territorial disputes and very difficult issues, but we need to remember one thing, which is that there is no Hot War here. All parties concerned advocate a peaceful solution. No country advocates war to resolve this issue. Therefore, if you look at the countries of East Asia, China, Japan, Korea and so on, and at their relationships in a comprehensive way, you can immediately see that their common interests by far outweigh their differences.

My last point is on the Monroe Doctrine. With every respect for my good friend, Jean David, I think that he has confused different times and different centuries. The Monroe Doctrine is from the 19th century and we are in the 21st century. In the 19th century, the world was divided into different spheres of influences, as Thierry said; today, the world is so interdependent. Please do not confuse the different centuries.

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Let me just say one thing here. The risk in East Asia both politically and economically does not stem from the fact that there is a will on any side to wage a war; the risk comes from the risk of an accident and the rise of nationalist and

populist feelings. I will give Mr Oshima the opportunity to say one sentence, after which we will have what, unfortunately, has to be the second and last intervention.

John Manley, President and CEO, Canadian Council of Chief Executives

I have a question for Richard Haass, to take us back to the European security venue, and it has to do with his distinction between the core and the periphery of Europe and NATO membership that has been extended to countries along the Baltic Sea in particular. My question goes to provocative geopolitical engineering, and since we are not naming anyone, we have seen adjacent territories actually being taken under the jurisdiction of a regional power in the past year. I would like to know whether Richard sees some of the more recent NATO members as part of the periphery or as part of the core and how will NATO respond to the risks that are implicit in that?

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Thank you, John. Among other things, John was Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Finance of Canada.

I gave one minute to Mr Oshima to respond and I am glad that this has heated up the atmosphere a little bit.

Shotaro Oshima, Chairman, Institute for International Economic Studies (IIES) and Visiting Professor, Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Tokyo

I will not take much time. With due respect to Ambassador Wu, the issue is still very complicated, in my view. The point is that the shrine was not built as a dedication to war criminals; it was a dedication to millions of our war dead throughout history in modern times. The leaders do not go there to pay respect to war criminals but to pay respect to the millions of soldiers and sailors who died. I understand the sentiments expressed by China and the Chinese people. In Japan, we are very remorseful for what happened during the war. However, the fact that millions of soldiers and sailors are enshrined there and that people like to pay respect is almost a natural sentiment, aside from this issue of the war criminals.

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Thank you. These are, of course, extremely emotional and therefore political subjects. The last word goes to Richard Haass.

Richard Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations

I will make three points. Firstly, the question of what we have just heard goes beyond the shrine and the museum associated with the shrine and deals with public statements and textbooks and what is taught in schools. The shrine is therefore part of the problem, but it is in fact a bigger problem. It is about coming to terms more broadly with the past.

Secondly, I thought that Thierry made a very good response to Ambassador Wu's statement. I think that Ambassador Wu is too sanguine and too relaxed about the Asia security system. It is not a question of whether people have the will; it is a question of whether the system is resilient or brittle. At the moment, I would say that it is quite brittle and there is the possibility of accidents. One of the things that we learned from before World War I was that

interdependence, as valuable as it is, does not make conflict impossible. What history is often about is countries doing things that are not in their self interest and what we need to do is to build barriers to that.

Thirdly, any country in NATO is definitely part of Europe's core. To me, that is not in doubt. However, I think that there are two issues here. Firstly, we can still have interests where we do not have formal legal commitments, and that brings in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and so on. Secondly, Article 5 of NATO, which is the formal obligation, is clear and I do not believe that there can be compromise there. Nevertheless, there are scenarios that might be less than that and you can imagine scenarios where Russia could do in other countries some of the things that it has done in Ukraine. Again, history is not always black or white; sometimes the toughest decisions operate in the grey zone. We could face some very difficult security challenges, but the basic question is clear. There cannot be any doubt about NATO's willingness and its ability, which is just as important, to defend the countries that are members. At the moment, I have serious questions about this ability and one of the real challenges for the USA and the members of NATO is to narrow the gap between NATO's obligations and NATO's capacities.

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Thank you very much, Richard and all the panellists.