

## DÉBAT

### **Dominique MOÏSI, conseiller spécial, Ifri**

We have had a fascinating discussion about Asia, and each of the speakers' emphasis was extraordinarily significant. The Chinese speaker mentioned global architecture, and although the Chinese refuse to speak of a G2, he spoke as if there was some kind of G2, as the only comparison you could make with China was of course the US. The Russian speaker spoke about Russian identity, particularly Russian identity in Asia, and it was fascinating to hear a sentence from Mr Lukin at the end: 'If you do not want us in Europe, we will choose Asia,' but clearly that choice was not that obvious to you.

The Japanese spoke of repentance in very moving terms. Why can we not be Germans? What makes us different from the Germans? It is as if the distant past, what happened 70 years ago, were still very present in your deepest mind, and in fact I recently saw a Chinese movie on the Nanjing Massacre of 1937, called *The City of Life and Death*, and it was all the more moving that the hero of that movie, made by the Chinese, was a Japanese. It was looking through the eyes of the Japanese at what was happening, which was fascinating. The Indian spoke in universal terms, bringing in ISIS and what it meant for the region, and the Korean was obviously obsessed with the Korean Peninsula and its relationship with Japan in terms of the issues of the past.

What emerged from that debate confirmed something which I already found very preoccupying yesterday, this opposition between what I would describe as territorial flexibility and ideological inflexibility. You think more and more that territory can be changed, boundaries can be modified, yet at the same time you look at that with an even more fierce ideological approach, and at the end of the day there is that sense in Asia that your problems are far from being solved. However, when you see what is happening in the rest of the world, particularly in the Middle East, you have a tendency to relativise your difficulties, with one key exception, the perception that the Chinese are more defensive, or lately more aggressive, as if there were a balancing between the growth of China inside and the speech and actions of China outside.

### **YIM Sung-Joon, conseiller chez Lee International IP & Law Group**

I worked as Korean Ambassador in the Korean Foreign Service and I was deeply involved in the resolution of North Korean WMD issues. I am now retired. I found all the remarks very enlightening and very interesting. I do not want to challenge what Mr Okamoto said, especially about my President's address and Ban Ki-moon's attending the victory ceremony in China. However, I am here to put a question to the Chinese panellist, Mr Zhang, about the Chinese policy toward North Korea.

I do not my President saying in her address that Koreans should not forgive Japanese atrocities for the next 1,000 years. Most Koreans have forgiven what the Japanese did to the Korean people during the colonisation, except for a small group of comfort women who are still alive and awaiting a genuine apology from your government. We may not forget what you have done for some years in the future, but not 1,000 years. I do not think Ban Ki-moon attended the ceremony as a purported or potential candidate for Korea's next presidential elections; he never implied or said he would come back to Korea as a potential presidential candidate, and he asked the Korean press and people to leave him alone to assume his high duties of UN Secretary General. I would like to stress those two points.

My question is on Chinese policy toward North Korea. We cannot think of Asian security without having our eyes on North Korea and what they are doing now. I do not know the size of the nuclear arsenal North Korea possesses now, but they clearly have some, and they have also developed long-distance missiles, ICBMs, which can target any point in the US using this nuclear arsenal. Since we normalised our relations with China in the last 50 years, it has been a dramatic bilateral relationship. China is very important for South Korea, especially in resolving the dangerous North Korean WMD issues. I know the official position of China; they have always said they will support the peaceful reunification of the two Koreas and never supported the development of WMDs on the part of North Korea.

However, if there should be some change or even some contingency in the near future, the defining factor is how China reacts to that, whether there would be a military intervention and whether they would cooperate with South Korea and the US for a soft landing of the contingency. You are not in the Government, and I know the Government line or party line of your country, but what is your observation on China's genuine policy vis-à-vis North Korea?

**Franciscus VERELLEN, directeur du Centre Hongkong de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)**

I would like to thank the panel for offering this historical perspective, which is really essential for understanding the way the security equation is changing in Asia as a function of China's rise. One should step back even further than that, and remember that for the last several millennia of Chinese history it has been a continental power, all of whose threats came from the north. The capitals were first in the northwest and then in the northeast as a function of the shifting threats, and the Great Wall is still standing as a monument to this single-minded preoccupation with putting all of its defensive resources there. However, even with this single-minded approach, China was not always able to prevail over those enemies.

China's only significant maritime adventure occurred in the early Ming, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as you know, and it lasted a very short time. It was an exploration into the Indian Ocean, and as soon as Admiral Zheng He came back and reported that there was no serious threat from there to the Ming Dynasty, the fleet was immediately scrapped as an expensive waste of time. The next episode worth mentioning in this context is the British Embassy of Macartney at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, where Britain essentially offered what we would call today a trade agreement to China, with a view to rebalancing imbalanced trade and also enlarging its scope. This was dismissed as a ridiculous proposition. Half a century later the British fleet was back, and forcibly took Hong Kong, and forcibly opened the door, and it was this strategic error of assessment that China had made that caused what China today calls a century of humiliation that followed, with unequal treaties and so forth.

That is important to understand in terms of China's position today. Since Deng Xiaoping's opening in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, China has become a global maritime trading power, and it is perhaps not surprising that it now remembers that Britain was a global maritime trading power by also being a global naval power. Therefore, what we are witnessing now is China becoming something more like the US, effectively, both a continental and a maritime power, rather than the British model, which was only to be a maritime power.

It is in that context that the idea of the One Belt, One Road has all its significance, and it seems ambitious, certainly, but coherent. Established powers today who do not recognise this long-term historical development are in danger, to borrow a phrase from President Obama, of being on the wrong side of history. This is something which we have to understand.

Making one final observation, having said all this, it is in no way to make an apology for any specific territorial claims. The legality of these claims and their historical foundation is a whole different issue, and how this will be resolved is globally. This is an issue that China has to contemplate as a new world power, along with the rest of the world, if we want to find a way in which China, as this new power which will be comparable to the US in the future, wants to live with its neighbours and the rest of the world community. This is a very large subject which one should deal with separately.

**Bilahari KAUSIKAN, ambassadeur itinérant et conseiller politique au ministère des Affaires étrangères de Singapour**

Let me make two very brief observations. Firstly, Professor Kim mentioned, in the context of the history issue, that Prime Minister Abe's efforts to enable Japan to play a more active security role has evoked, and I think he used this word, fear in Southeast Asia. This is simply not true. All the ASEAN countries, all the Southeast Asian countries, have in fact welcomed a more active role for Japan in Southeast Asia. This is because we have made a political choice to look forward and not backwards in relations with Japan, and if this has not happened in other parts of the broader East Asia region, that is also a matter of political choice.

My second observation has to do with Professor Zhang's very eloquent presentation about China's intentions. I agree substantially with what Professor Zhang has said about China's intentions, but that is perhaps the wrong way to conceptualise the issue. China enjoys a good relationship with all the Southeast Asian countries, including those with which it has a very complicated history, like Vietnam. All the Southeast Asian countries want to have the best possible relationship with China, but at the same time it is a fact that China has aroused anxieties in Southeast Asia. These anxieties are not to be understood just in terms of China's intentions; in fact, the issue is simpler and more difficult. It is an existential issue. The fact is that China is big and we are small, and all of us combined are smaller than China. Small countries that live on the periphery of big countries will always feel some degree of anxiety. Big countries therefore have a duty to reassure them, which China has only partially fulfilled.

The issues in the South China Sea contribute to these anxieties but are not their source. However, the use of history to justify these claims does add to the anxieties because China has such a long history and it can be used to justify almost anything.

**Dominique MOÏSI, conseiller spécial, Ifri**

Professor Zhang, you have been challenged.

**ZHANG Yunling, professeur, membre de l'Académie et directeur des études internationales, Académie chinoise des sciences sociales (CASS)**

Most of the questions at these meetings are about China. It is a fact that it is a large and rising power, and it answers so many questions by itself rather than their being answered from outside. Concerning China's policy toward North Korea, many of my South Korean friends believe that if China cut off relations with North Korea, the situation would be better, but I believe that it is not that simple, because, like the nuclear issue, we all understand how and why it has come to today's situation. Therefore, I think that China will continue to engage with North Korea while exerting pressure at the same time, and work on the nuclear issues together with the other parties. China will continue to support any kind of change within North Korea, but that is not to be decided by China but by North Korea alone.

The second observation is that China continues, and probably more actively, to continue supporting any kind of efforts in the engagement between North and South, with the difference that China has been fostering closer relations with South Korea, meaning that we have more cooperation on the Korean Peninsula issue with South Korea. My third observation is that, though it is very difficult, China will continue to work out some future resolution involving a collective security architecture in the north of Asia, including the Korean Peninsula, under the Six Party Talks; all the parties will probably have changed, but we will continue under a restructured Six Party Talks. However, the effort will be a collective one, because, as I mentioned, for the first time in this long history, all the major players are sitting at the same table, so that is something more positive.

However, maybe we have better expectations; recently North Korea agreed to open a new dialogue with the South, so we have to very carefully and skilfully manage this situation, as it is a very vulnerable one in the current world. North Korea probably feels more vulnerable than the others, so on some occasions I have said that the other parties need to understand the concerns of North Korea before we can find a way out of this.

Concerning the question from Singapore, we understand that it is about facilitating a better understanding with the ASEAN countries in terms of China's intentions and policies. Sometimes it seems that the more you explain, the more your neighbours worry, but we try our best. For example, on China and Vietnam, we have had heated debates and even some confrontations on the South China Sea, but Xi Jinping's visits to Vietnam and previous Vietnamese leaders' visits to China show that the top leaders and policymakers have tried to manage the situation rather than let it go too far.

Xi's visit to Singapore also makes it clear that we want to play a more active role in mitigating the situation and teaching about its modernisation experience, and China has just invested USD10 million in Singapore to train Chinese bureaucrats. These kinds of things will probably need time, because we are in a very important, historical and lengthy transition in this power relationship in the region.

**Dominique MOÏSI, conseiller spécial, Ifri**

You were going to say that it will not take 1,000 years for Korea to forgive Japan, so I am saying it in your place. I want to thank all the participants and attendees very much, and we end slightly reassured about Asia.