

JIA QINGGUO

Professor and Dean of the School of International Studies of Peking University

Marcus NOLAND

In American baseball, a sport which I am sure all of you are intimately familiar, the manager usually puts the most powerful hitter in the number three spot in the line-up, so Dr Jia, you are at the plate. If you could keep it to eight minutes, I would appreciate it.

JIA Qingguo

Thank you very much, it is a great honour to be here to share some of my views. I will probably expand the topic a little.

I think uncertainty is probably the key word to capture the situation of Asian security. It is uncertain, at least for three major reasons. Firstly, we seem to be witnessing an emerging rivalry, or strategic rivalry, between China and the US. Americans appear to be more and more concerned about the rise of Chinese military, especially the rise of Chinese naval capabilities. There are a lot of people predicting that we will have more confrontations in the South China Sea over the construction of and on the concerned parties' features, as well as on their military activities on the constructed features. We are talking about China, Vietnam, the Philippines. These countries may continue to do certain things, and then we may see military frictions and confrontation. The Trump administration also begins to advocate the so-called free and open Indo-Pacific, and some people say this is an American strategy to forge some kind of alliance in the region against China, and a lot of Chinese are also very wary about what the US is up to. We have been talking about trying to avoid the so-called Thucydides' Trap, but it seems to me that we are moving in that direction, even if we are not there yet.

It is also uncertain because the territorial and maritime disputes remain very much alive between China and India, among the South China Sea claimants, and between China and Japan in the East China Sea. Despite the fact that the situation there has been improving, and appears to be stabilising, things can happen, frictions may rise again any time in the future because there are no institutional arrangements so far as to how to manage these problems.

The situation is also uncertain because of the North Korean nuclear threat. The North Korean government has resisted the international pressures and disregarded the international sanctions in its efforts to push for its nuclear weapons programme. This has prompted President Trump's threat to make a pre-emptive strike. A lot of people are nervous, we are too, but it seems to me that the chances for that to happen are increasing. Even if this does not happen, we still have a problem of the outbreak of a crisis in North Korea in a number of scenarios. One is a failed nuclear test, which may touch off a crisis in North Korea. Some people say, given the backward facilities that North Korea has in developing nuclear weapons, a failure is going to happen sooner or later. The second scenario is an earthquake induced by the test which would touch off the volcano in the Changbai Mountains between China and North Korea. This could have a disastrous effect both on the environment and on human lives. The third scenario is a crisis in North Korea induced by UN or other sanctions. The sanctions are becoming tighter and tighter, and if North Korea continues its nuclear programme sooner or later the day will come when China will completely cut-off the oil supply to North Korea, which may bring great problems to North Korea's economy and domestic politics. There is another scenario, which is factional struggle within the North Korean government and party. Some people expected this to happen a long time ago, it has not so far, but that does not mean that it will not happen in the future, you never know.

The good news is that President Xi and President Trump seem to have gotten along with each other so far, it is quite impressive that these two strong characters find each other worthy of respect. They are likely to work together to address the North Korean nuclear issue, so President Trump is going to visit Beijing, and we will see the results. The second good news is that the relations between China and its neighbours, especially Japan and South Korea, are



improving. This may lessen the tension and help to manage the disputed territories and maritime interests in the East China Sea.

Finally, I think China and the US have much more interests in common than many people realise. Many people have been saying that these two countries will be getting at each other very soon, but I think they have too much at stake to worry about doing that. Despite uncertainty, Asian security may not be doomed. I think the best we can do is to hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

Thank you.

Marcus NOLAND

Thank you very much.