

PANELISTS DEBATE

Steven ERLANGER

I will not focus on you all the time. Is it your view, obviously you are speaking for yourself, that Kim would ever give up nuclear weapons? After all, they are partly meant as a deterrent against Beijing as well, one presumes.

QIAO Yide

I do not think so. I guess North Korea would set very high conditions for them to give up. If the US met their requirements they might give up, but of course they would set very high conditions and the US would not necessarily accept that. They might even not necessarily ask for agreement between two governments, they want legislation passed by Congress. That might be something very hard for the US to do. That is a lesson they learned from other countries.

Steven ERLANGER

Mr. Kim, do you want to talk on that question? Has Mr. Trump made things better by bringing Mr. Kim in from the cold or made it worse?

KIM Hong Kyun

I think the approach President Trump took to have a direct deal with the North Korean leader was not bad at all. In previous negotiations for the last 30 years we dealt with North Koreans for the denuclearization process and there were working level negotiations and once there is agreement at working level it goes up to the ministerial level and then to the leadership and it never succeeded. President Trump's so-called top-down approach is not bad at all, but I think the timing was very wrong. In 2016 and 2017 there was unprecedented provocation on the part of North Korea in nuclear explosions and the ballistic missile launch and a strong sanctions regime was being built by the international community by the end of 2017. If the sanctions could work for another year without being weakened too early, then I think the US would have been in a better position to have a good deal and good negotiations with North Korea. What I am saying is that the timing was too early and that is why there was no progress in the negotiations, and we lost the sanctions regime which means we lost our leverage on North Korea.

Steven ERLANGER

President Trump is not known for his patience and his long-term thinking. Miss Aoi, looking at these developments, does Japan feel that the US is there for Japan in the same way? Or does Japan begin to feel a bit nervous?

Chiyuki AOI

I think Japan has historically had a dilemma of being drawn too much into US views and relations in global affairs and also being abandoned. I think that basically the trend continues but I think the fear of being abandoned is becoming more pronounced.

Steven ERLANGER

Is Japan making outreaches in the region because of this?

**Chiyuki AOI**

In part but I do not think that is where it started. Japan has pursued values-driven efforts to reach out to a broader group of partners, if not outright allies. I think that has been a constant policy in the last decade and a half so I do not think I would trace everything back to the policies of President Trump, although of course, he has had a large impact on certain aspects.

Steven ERLANGER

Just to ask others too, it is not brand new but there is a new Japanese nationalism under Mr. Abe. More money has been spent on the self-defense forces, I think it is a phrase in the constitution so that is what we have to call them, but it is the Japanese military and the Japanese navy. Is that making others in the region nervous, given the past? I remember this terrible phrase of Lee Kuan Yew when Japan wanted did do peace keeping in Cambodia and Lee said, 'It is like giving liqueur chocolates to an alcoholic'. It was not very nice, but it was at the time very funny.

Chiyuki AOI

That is very kind, but I think that might be a question that is probably better answered by my colleagues here. From my perspective, I do not think that Japan has really gone overboard when it revised the constitutional interpretation regarding collective self-defense and it upgraded some of the activities that Japanese forces could do in peace and stability contingencies. I would say those are very limited changes and I think there is a legitimate academic debate among experts whether this is something that puts a stamp on something that has already been going on, without the authorities actually making a fundamental break in our culture and actual policy.

Steven ERLANGER

Right. Others? Doug?

Douglas PAAL

On the question of whether Japan is an unwelcome guest in the region, I think that for all practical purposes Japan has passed the point of being unwelcome, but in Korea it is a different case, as we discussed just a moment ago. The coincidence of Mr. Abe being in office and Trump taking a strong anti-China policy has probably brought Tokyo and Washington more closely together than in a long time and where Trump sets a tone that the Japanese take comfort from because someone is standing-up to their big rival in Asia, China, and at the same time, Abe has been hyperactive in regenerating Japanese diplomacy. So that there is Japanese competition with China for railway building in Indonesia, Thailand and India. There is a sense that Japan really is willing to put its money where its mouth is under Mr. Abe, so it has been a pretty good coordination.

Steven ERLANGER

Alright. Mr. Kim?

KIM Hong Kyun

It is alarming to Korea, especially if Prime Minister Abe would like to revise the constitution to fight a war, then it would be quite alarming to the South Korean people. Coupled with other historical disputes, this gives a good excuse for the people who would like to bring about some anti-Japanese sentiment in Korea to use them for a domestic purpose. I guess that is what happens between Korea and Japan now.

Steven ERLANGER

It has gotten quite ugly, but we see this in Europe too I have to say, the same sort of politics. Mr. Qiao, how does China look at Japan? Do you see Japan as in the way?

**QIAO Yide**

I do not think so. A couple of years ago for the first time China's GDP overtook Japan's and now it is almost double the number of GDP. For some Chinese, they were a little bit overconfident in terms of dealing with Japan, but now I guess they keep a bit cooler. They know Chinese weakness. Although they have a large GDP, because so many Chinese visit Japan they know that manufacturing there has a good quality which is better than China. So now they have a more balanced attitude to Japan. Particularly in maybe the past two years, relations between China and Japan have improved. For example, recently the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Prime Minister Abe made a congratulation and also said some Chinese words, which have a very positive response in China. Probably next year Xi Jinping will have a state visit to Japan. Yes, in some ways a competition exists in terms of making investments in South-East Asia but at the same time they have started to cooperate, they have some agreements to target third countries with joint investments in infrastructure. I think that is a good idea and a good sign for coordination, not just trying something like you win, you lose kind of things.

Douglas PAAL

Yesterday, Kevin Rudd talked about how China has 14 neighbors they have to deal with and none of them wants to be an ally of China, China has to deal with them all individually. Under the circumstances of high-pressure relations with Washington it is no surprise that Japan and China would start to improve relations. It suits Japanese purposes of other sorts and for China it is to break-out of isolation, to make sure that they are not fighting on all fronts at one time. It is an understandable phenomenon.

Steven ERLANGER

It is a very good point because I get a little tired of people in Washington saying, well, you know we have allies and China has no allies, as if somehow China has no friends. That is not really the point, China has countries that depend on China, whether they are allies or not, they are not exactly free-floating actors. Before I go to the audience I have maybe one odd, provocative question. As you said, Doug, when Presidents say words and do not back them up, it creates uncertainty and problems. Xi Jinping has been very outspoken about China 2050, about lots of things. In a way, I just want to ask all of you, what do you think China really wants? Are there limits to what China wants or is this still unclear? Or, should we take Xi's words as a kind of programmatic statement as opposed to an aspirational one?

Mr. Kim, do you want to tackle that? No, you do not want to deal with it.

Douglas PAAL

Just to start the discussion, I expect help and to hear from Yide on this. Xi Jinping's practice has been to set big rhetorical targets and then in subsequent iterations to sort of rein them in. He went to the conference called CICA and the South Korean friends did a lot to save us from a motion being passed by a lot of countries friendly to the US that would have been highly critical of America; China was very ambitious at that. At the second iteration of that conference, they reined in their ambitions in a lot. Another thing is the famous Belt and Road initiative. A lot of rhetoric, a tremendous amount of money went out on the first rush and then people started to think again. There was some criticism externally, but a lot of criticism internally and in this latest summit of the Belt and Road initiative, Xi Jinping said, we have to stop painting with big brush strokes and start using Chinese fine calligraphy. That means rules and more control. Things do change and so I think you should not take every big programmatic statement at face value, much as you would not from most politicians in the West.

Steven ERLANGER

Right. Miss Aoi, do you want to respond?

Chiyuki AOI

Before I respond to the question, may I just take half a step back. I just wanted to emphasize that I can fully understand the historical sensitivities in the region, but I think it would be actually wrong to interpret the recent change in



constitutional interpretation as a sign that Japan is now going to fight a war anywhere globally. That goes for collective self-defense and that goes for collective security too. Japan is not going to fight a war alongside the US in the Middle East tomorrow, so expectations should not be held too high on that ground either.

With that note, I think that what China wants, in my personal and uninformed view, is it can change, it can transform as situations and conditions change. The Chinese people seem to me to be very pragmatic.

Steven ERLANGER

Mr. Qiao, do you want to respond at all?

QIAO Yide

I guess, Dong Manyuan sitting on the panel this morning, yesterday, he described a very interesting fact and I also chatted with him this morning. He said, very interesting, that only two major countries in living history had never had their system collapse, the United States and Britain. However, only in these two countries now populism prevails, so he described something like that.

Steven ERLANGER

I am not sure it is still true of Britain I have to say. Let us see.

QIAO Yide

Further he said that maybe three or four hundred years ago there was the so-called Glorious Revolution and after that the system had almost had no fundamental change. What I want to say is that the so-called national memory actually plays some role in shaping the future direction. Back to the topic you asked, the Chinese government or particularly top leaders, try to use this national memory to say that we want to take away the history of humiliation in the past one hundred years. They want China to be re-evaluated, become one large power respected by the rest of the world. I guess that is probably the obvious goal. I would say that in the past two or three years, or maybe several years, in some way it has overreached in many ways, but you see on the one hand that China claims it is still one of the largest developing economies, and at the same time it spends so much resources and efforts overseas. It should make a balance between overseas efforts and domestic people's livelihood. I have to say in the past one or two years that the tone of Chinese leaders has been soft, like they wouldn't say something like China moving to the center of the world arena. I think that is a good sign for China to keep the modesty in Chinese history.

Steven ERLANGER

Yes, or to become again, as Dong suggested, a little more modest. What intrigues me is what you say and also China will not be backward again, I think that is part of it. I am very struck by this. Also, one of the great clichés now is decoupling, but it is really fascinating to see China developing its own Internet, its own Amazon, its own Facebook, its own WeChat and even with social credit. It is creating a Chinese world where the outside world exists, but it is filtered, put it that way. That is the most neutral way of putting it. I think the result is going to be fascinating and I am very eager to see what is going to happen, but I hope I do not say the wrong thing and get denied a train ticket.