

DEBAT

Stuart EIZENSTAT

One area has surprisingly not been mentioned at all and I would like to start Mr. Qiao with you and get comments. That is China's decision to militarize coral reefs, creating really militarized zones for your jet fighters and under the extended economic zone claiming that your sovereignty extends hundreds of nautical miles beyond that and then up with your airspace. It ignores a decision by the court under the Law of the Sea that the Philippines brought. How do you justify that kind of provocation and how would you expect others to react? I was on the Defence Policy Board with Obama and we recommended, and he did, and Mr. Trump has continued it, to have our warships go by there to make it clear that we believe it is international waters. How do you justify this? It seems to me a highly provocative action.

Tatsuo MASUDA

I have a burning question to Ms. Aoi and Mr. Kim. Donald Trump allowed North Korea to test short to mid-range missiles, which are very difficult to even intercept by Aegis or PAC-3, so increasingly exposing neighbours like Japan and South Korea to the threat. The point is, is the Japanese government taking some actions vis-à-vis the United States or just holding its breath? and the same question to Mr. Kim about the Korean government.

Yoichi SUZUKI

Like Ambassador Kim I spent years in Japanese diplomacy, not necessarily in the field of security and like him I stepped aside to the side lines recently. It is not my intention to get into some kind of debate with Ambassador Kim, but I would make two observations on our bilateral relationship. Using his expression, qualify that we are not on the edge of a divorce but certainly our marriage has bumpy stages and it is another bumpy and tense period. However, I think there is a bit of a difference in perception between Japan and Korea on this issue and I think it is not that bad. At the same time, I would say that in spite of a fairly close public sentiment, the relationship between our two leaders is quite difficult at this moment. I think the point is that as you said, Japan and South Korea to a large extent share common interests and we can even say that to a certain extent we share a common destiny because we are under the same threat. I think that in the past our two countries had the wisdom of even having somewhat difficult relationship on historic issues and setting this aside, somewhat separate this from the vital security issues. I think this is exactly what the two leaders should be doing right now to identify the longer-term common interests for both of us and not jeopardize this at the expense of what you qualify as a retaliation, which we qualify as normalizing the export control of some material used for semiconductor production. We suspect that these semiconductors produced in South Korea end-up in the hands of people who we do not necessarily appreciate.

I have one question. Some of you have referred to Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un talking as a positive move but I think this move actually, as some of you have alluded to, somewhat lifted the pressure on North Korea on sanctions. Had Donald Trump not met Kim Jong-un and had this relaxation of the sanctions not taken place, would it have been more conducive to producing a more constructive move on the part of North Korea?

Steven ERLANGER

That is an excellent question. We are basically out of time, so you have 30 seconds each. There was an actual question directed at you, Mr Qiao.

QIAO Yide

I am going to answer the question regarding the islands in the South China Sea. It is a big controversy and I am not an expert in this area, but the basic fact is that these islands are not the territory of any internationally recognised sovereign land. They are disputed; they are not part of the Crimean Peninsula; it is not part of that. From the Chinese

perspective, they regard these islands as being part of China, so obviously from their perspective they have put some weapons there for self-defence. I do not think it is a big deal. You look at which country occupies the largest number of islands and it is not China, it is other countries, so why is the US only targeting China? That is the confusing thing. Also, so far, the Congress has not yet recognised the United Nations Law of the Sea, so how can they have legitimate reasons to react so strongly to China? That is something very strange for me.

Steven ERLANGER

It is something that you and Mr. Eizenstat might want to discuss more later, but let us go to Doug.

Douglas PAAL

Just to follow-up on Stu's question, I have always assumed that China moved on the islands initially because other states that were claimants in the same area had similarly put some facilities there and China wanted to be sure that it was left out of the bargaining. How it became so militarized is a separate question. Of course, we were going to do freedom of navigation operations through that region with all parties. When the Secretary of Defence asked me my advice, I said put in five comparable facilities at low-cost with Seabees on five Philippine-controlled islands nearby so that the military effect of China's facilities could be nullified. Then launch a diplomatic initiative by running constant freedom of navigation exercises. The issue of response in China is left to the military sector, not to the diplomatic sector. The Foreign Ministry is frozen-out, the military gets to call the shots. That should not be in our interests, we want to get the diplomats involved. My proposal would have been to start serious negotiations on fisheries agreements in that region. They are being rapidly depleted. Everybody has got an interest in conservation of those fish resources and we could put it in the hands of some neutral parties to take the lead, but it would be a diplomatic way of getting at this issue without militarizing it.

Steven ERLANGER

Thank you. Mr. Kim?

KIM Hong Kyun

North Korea's launch of short-range ballistic missiles is a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions, but the Korean government did not condemn such a launch because President Trump said they were just small missiles. I do not think that President Trump meeting with Kim Jong-un was wrong. As I said earlier, the timing was wrong. There was a strong international sanctions regime against North Korea, and we should have allowed time for these sanctions to take effect.

Steven ERLANGER

Thank you. Miss Aoi? Last words.

Chiyuki AOI

I think that the most recent North Korean trials and errors we have encountered involving short-range missiles and SLBM are certainly provocative. But my own view is that deep-set deterrent stalemate on the Korean Peninsula – it is a deterrent stalemate --, underlined by superior conventional and nuclear capabilities of antagonising [US] side, might be difficult to break. I think that all of these trials and errors will provide for manoeuvrability for the regime but I think that deterrence will still stay for the time being. I also think it is very important to think of US-Japan relations as needed, so it is important to develop these relations and I do not think it is anything to be ashamed of, it is very important. Also, at the same time Japan needs to build working relations with China as well as developing broader partnerships with states outside the region. All these things matter and provide for critical strategic context.

Steven ERLANGER

Thank you to the panel. I wish we had more time. This also gives me a pretext to thank Thierry, the organisers, all of you, your patience, the incredible Song-Nim. I think we all understand the work that goes into this meeting, so let us give them a round of applause too.