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Greetings from the President

Welcome to the Asan Plenum 2015.

Theorists and pundits have predicted American decline since the 1950s. They argued that the 1950s would be dominated by the Soviet Union. They were wrong. They waited 30 years before declaring in the 1980s that Japan would be a near equal superpower. Again, they were wrong. Despite this dismal record of prognosis, these declinists have resurfaced to claim that China would surpass the United States in the 21st century.

The U.S. is showing incredible resilience, overcoming a decade of warfare and a global financial crisis. Revolutions in energy, finance, and military affairs have sparked the U.S. resurgence. The U.S. remains unmatched in sectors such as information technology, finance, and higher education. Its military has no equal, in sheer arsenal, operational experience, and quality of personnel.

Despite these positive indications, there are looming challenges ahead. Terrorism, cyber-warfare, and nuclear proliferation not only pose severe threats to the United States, but also to the international community.

The U.S. is here to stay, but can it maintain leadership in a fast-changing world gripped by uncertainty? Can the U.S. manage the ever-growing number of crises instigated by state and non-state actors? What does the ‘return of the U.S.’ mean for the rest of the world?

We look forward to your intellectual contribution, fellowship, and discussion throughout the Plenum.

Sincerely,

Hahm Chaibong
President
The Asan Institute for Policy Studies
The Asan Plenum is a yearly gathering of the world’s leading think tanks in Seoul to discuss the pressing challenges facing the world today. The Plenum aims to positively influence the policymaking process and enable the global community to better address these challenges.

Asan Plenum 2015: “Is the U.S. Back?”

American decline has emerged as a powerful discourse in recent years. A decade of war, a protracted financial crisis, and the return of multipolarity were all seen as eroding American global leadership. This also raised doubts about the American commitment to its partners and allies around the world, including in East Asia. But, today we are once again witnessing a resurgence in American power backed by groundbreaking revolutions in energy, finance, and military affairs. At the same time, transnational threats such as terrorism, cyber-warfare, and nuclear proliferation continue to call for global leadership. How does the “return of the U.S.” affect regional balance of power in different parts of the world? Can it overcome the strategic distrust that presently dominates interactions between great and small power alike?

This year’s Plenum will bring together distinguished experts, policymakers, scholars, and members of the media in Seoul for two days to provide insights and seek answers to these questions. The Plenum will feature four plenary sessions and 12 panels over two days.

Format

In terms of both timing and location, the Asan Plenum is designed to maximize its impact on the unfolding global conversation on leadership issues. The “conversational” format of the plenum will allow for maximum interaction among the panelists and participants. Parallel break-out sessions will also provide further opportunity for in-depth, focused discussions.
The Asan Institute for Policy Studies was founded with a mission to become an independent think tank that provides effective policy solutions to issues which are critical to Korea, East Asia, and the rest of the world.

The Institute aims to foster wide-ranging and in-depth public discussions which are essential for a healthy society. By focusing on areas including foreign affairs, national security, public governance, energy, and the environment, it strives to address some of the major challenges that our society faces today.

The Institute addresses these challenges not only by supplying in-depth policy analysis but also by endeavoring to promote a global and regional environment favorable to peace, stability, and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula.

In addition to policy analysis and research, the Institute undertakes the training of specialists in public diplomacy and related areas in an effort to contribute to Korea’s ability to creatively shape its own future.
Plenary Session I
Is the U.S. Back?

Session 1
Revolution in Military Affairs

Geopolitics of Finance

Geopolitics of Shale

Plenary Session II
Limits of U.S. Power?

Session 2
Cyberwar

Terrorism

Nonproliferation

Plenary Session III
G2 or G1? U.S.-China Relations
Opening Ceremony

Date: April 28, 2015
Time: 09:30-10:10
Place: Grand Ballroom II
Welcome to Asan Plenum 2015, I hope you enjoyed the provocative video we provided you to provoke your thinking. Before we start I must of course remember the tragedy that is unfolding in Nepal and all those that are suffering. 12 countries including South Korea have sent rescue teams and our hearts go out to all those that are suffering from this tragedy.

This year we chose our theme “Is the U.S. Back?” Now, you can answer that in whichever way you feel. This year’s theme, as I have said, we purposely tried to be provocative. Things look somewhat different from the outside world. At least enough so that we wanted to propose this theme for thought and see first, whether the U.S. is really back? Second, if it is, what does it really mean for many regions and many countries in the world?

Before we start I have this most distinct and always the greatest pleasure of introducing to you the founder and the honorary chairman of our institute, and who’s greatest achievement I always tell him is the founding of this institute.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. MJ Chung.

Opening Remarks
Chung Mong Joon
Founder & Honorary Chairman,
The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Good morning and welcome to the Asan Plenum. Please allow me to start with a joke that I heard from a Mexican friend. He is the former general secretary of the OECD. One day, the president of Mexico said, “Mexico is far from God but too close to the U.S. and it is a big problem.” Later the prime minister of Israel said, “Israel is very close to God but is too far from the U.S. and it is a big problem.” How about South Korea? South Korea is a deeply religious country with a large Christian population. So I can say that South Korea is close to God but too close to Japan, too close to China, and too far from the U.S. and it is a big problem.

In the real world it is not a joke. Today we face North Korea that
is on the verge of acquiring an operational nuclear arsenal. Ten years ago, even before North Korea’s first nuclear test, Graham Allison of the Harvard Kennedy School warned in his book *Nuclear Terrorism* that on the current course, North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon production line promises to become the greatest failure in the nearly 230 year history of American foreign policy. Unfortunately, few heard his warning. Currently the world’s attention seems to be on Iran. In contrast, there seems to be little attention on North Korea’s nuclear program. The irony is that North Korea’s nuclear program is several years ahead of Iran’s.

North Korea also continued to develop unconventional warfare capabilities such as cyber warfare, electromagnetic pulse (EMP) bombs. North Korean cyber attack on Sony has received global attention. However, their attacks on South Korea have been much more extensive and threatening. Two years ago, North Korea hackers attacked South Korea’s leading television networks such as KBS, MBC, and YTN as well as major financial institutions such as National Agricultural Corporative Federations and Shinhan Bank. Last year they also attacked South Korea’s hydro and nuclear power headquarters. In this month, North Korea fired more than 20 short range missiles off its coast. They received little attention even from the South Korean press. They have almost become routine events.

However, former CIA director James Woolsey warned that North Korea may be testing EMP bombs. North Korea may use one of the missiles to detonate an EMP bomb as part of its “quote unquote” routine test firing. An EMP bomb will be a disaster for South Korea—destroying power grids, computers, and electronic devices. A North Korea EMP bomb will be a game changer.

This morning we are all gathered here but we do not know what the end game of the North Korea’s nuclear program will be. However, we will all agree that the current situation cannot continue at it is.

The ultimate goal of the Republic of Korea is peaceful unification. It can be a disruptive process even if a war is avoided. As German unification showed, Korean unification can only be achieved with the help of our neighbors China, Japan, Russia, and the U.S.

Distinguished guests and friends, if we look at the sheer magnitude of the geopolitics of this vast Eurasian continent, the fact that a small country like South Korea, located at the Eastern tip of the continent, remains a free democracy is a miracle in progress. As someone said, “The better idea does not have to win just because it is a better idea. It requires great powers to champion it.” We are fortunate that the U.S. has been willing to champion our cause.

What is the U.S. to South Korea? First, it is a country that has no territorial ambition on the peninsula. Second, it is a rare country that tries to balance realism and idealism in its foreign policy to have its foreign policy reflect an idealistic component. Chaibong used to tell me that the U.S. is on its way back. I hope the deliberations of the *Asan Plenum* can help us understand what this means.

Thank you very much.
Let me thank my friends Dr. MJ Chung and Dr. Hahm Chaibong for giving me an opportunity to make a few remarks for this very important conference. My understanding is that the title of this conference is “Is the U.S. Back?” Of course there are people who will argue that America never left and that therefore it is not a subject that requires deep discussion. But it calls attention to a very important challenge of our period. In our time, there are more upheavals going on in more parts of the world than in any previous period in history. Moreover, these events in different parts of the world are connected with each other in a way that has never been the case before. Finally there are evolutions of great consequence in technology that will change the major of the interactions of society with each other and indeed of people with each other.

So the important question is, “Is America able to contribute to so many crises simultaneously?” I will argue that most of these crises require a significant American contribution and all of them require some participation by America in their definition and in their execution. In the political field, the most important, immediate issue is the number of crises that are occurring in regions such as the Middle East that have different origins and that are occurring simultaneously. But in other parts of the world, the traditional balance of power has shifted to some extent under the impact of a globalized economy and the advancement of technology.

First of all, what is the role of the U.S. in relation to this? In the end of the Second World War, the United States produced over 50 percent of the world gross national product (GNP) and they were inevitably in the position to dominate the solution of crisis by the allegation of its resources. Today, the percentage of the United States GNP in relations to the rest of the world is between 20 and 25 percent. That still represents a significant role, but it means America now has to have a greater understanding of the global consequences of its actions.

In the decade ahead, I think it will be seen what will look like an American withdrawal was really a necessity of the United States to redefine its role in the world and to find a new pattern of relationships. I am confident that in the decades ahead it will be seen that the role of America will be different, but equally crucial than it has been in the past.

The complexity arises because some of the problems within each region have their own momentum. What must be prevented is that the international system becomes a conflict of regions with each other, because that will inevitably lead to a kind of balance of power of conflict that led to World War I.

So the United States is inextricably a part of Asia, and involved in the Middle East, and tied to Europe, but of course the regions themselves will grow insignificant and the challenge will be how to find patterns of cooperation that are not confrontation and how to make sure that the requirements of evolution take precedence over the purely confrontational aspects.

This is the challenge that your conference faces. It is a very important subject for our period and the chief message I want to bring is that America will be a major contributor with commitment and ideas to the solution of a world that will evolve peacefully towards greater cooperation.

Thank you very much.
Dr. Chung, Dr. Hahm and Distinguished Guests

Dr. Henry Kissinger whom we all wish were here today and for whom I am a frail substitute recently wrote another of his remarkable books called, *World Order*. If you haven’t read it, you surely should. Unfortunately, as Dr. Kissinger would agree, what we are facing today as we look across the globe is an almost unprecedented degree of world disorder.

The Middle East, of course, is in near total chaos as proxy wars between a hegemonic Iranian regime and a fearful Saudi Arabia spill from country to country engulfing Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, and most recently Yemen with surely more to come.

An expansionist Russia, having feasted on Crimea, clearly is looking to expand further into Ukraine, and even more alarming, potentially into the Baltics. This latter step would pose a direct Russia-NATO confrontation. A military engagement could be costly, but a failure to defend the Baltics would spell the end of NATO with the attendant costs in credibility worldwide for the United States, NATO’s leader.

Closer to Seoul, we see an increasingly assertive China bullying smaller Southeast Asian neighbors, claiming effective ownership of the South China Sea, expanding its military capability to levels far in excess of any defensive needs and labeling the U.S. presence in Asia a “Cold War relic” which must end. In short, China is seeking to remove the U.S. from Asia and also challenging U.S. interests and influence beyond Asia.

If all that isn’t enough, non-state actors like Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Boko Haram are creating mayhem in multiple parts of the world. Whatever degree of global order has existed from time to time since the treaty of Westphalia in 1648—and there were other periods when it didn’t—clearly global order is nowhere evident today.

You might challenge me by arguing there is reasonable regional order in Europe and here in Asia. And while that may be relatively true, compared to the Middle East, I would suggest both Europeans and Asians are whistling past the graveyard. Europe indulges in a form of escapism, expanding its welfare states, dismantling its militaries, and largely ignoring problems around it even as Mr. Putin encroaches. Here in Asia, the tendency is to focus on the growing trade with China not on mounting intimidation by China.

I. AMERICA, A BYSTANDER NOT A LEADER

So what about the United States, which ever since World War II—through both democrat and Republican administrations—and often though not always with a fair degree of bipartisanship in foreign policy, has been the primary upholder of at least some degree of world order?

That has not been American altruism, but rather has reflected a deeper understanding that the United States is not an island and that its own national security and prosperity require a continuing commitment to maintaining order abroad.

Like me, most of you are old enough to remember that there have been periods when the United States shrunk from this responsibility, most notably in the years immediately following America’s painful experience in Vietnam. At that time the country turned inward and Congress cut military spending, hobbled intelligence gathering and more broadly sought to constrain the president’s ability to conduct foreign policy.

Yet, it was only a half dozen years later with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 that national confidence was restored, military spending soared and America faced up to a blustery, but brittle Soviet Union and won the Cold War.

The problem with America today, however, is rather different than in the late 70’s. For the first time, even including Jimmy Carter, a reluctant global leader, we have a president who believes that...
American power is the cause of most of the world’s problems rather than a potential solution to them.

Rather than being steadfast in supporting traditional allies, Barack Obama is a supplicant on the doorsteps of adversaries. His Middle East policy increasingly is the avid pursuit of Iran in the mistaken impression that history will see his Iran diplomacy as comparable to Nixon’s historic opening to China. His determination to diminish America’s role in the Middle East is frightening and is uniting allies as dissimilar as Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Similarly, President Obama watches Putin’s invasion of the Ukraine and declines to provide Ukraine even with basic defensive weapons or worse yet, to take steps to deter Putin’s clear lust for further expansion into the Baltics.

The aim, of course, is not to seek military confrontation with Russia, but precisely the opposite. As my former colleague Bret Stephens argues in his new book, America in Retreat, America’s role should be akin to that of a policeman on the beat—walking the beat to “reassure the good, deter the tempted and punish the wicked.” That, of course, is the concept of troops as a trip wire.
that has helped to protect South Korea for the past six decades.

President Obama continues to place great faith in dialogue, though so far nothing has come of it. Chatting with Raul Castro is not a foreign policy. If Teddy Roosevelt famously said America should speak softly but carry a big stick, the United States these days prefers to employ a big microphone while carrying a twig.

And having drawn a redline in Syria and abandoned it unilaterally, drawing a new “redline” against Putin in the Baltics would be credible with no one unless backed by U.S. troops, which the president clearly seems determined to avoid.

Indeed, the refusal to protect the Baltics actually invites Russian aggression which, as I noted earlier, will be costly to confront or, even more costly in terms of U.S. credibility in the world if unconfronted.

If Saudis and Israelis, Taiwanese and South Koreans, Poles and other U.S. allies already worry about the constancy of U.S. commitments, what then?

II. AND CLOSER TO US HERE?

President Obama’s “pivot to Asia” has turned out to be a pirouette. Rather than facing up to the regional and increasingly global challenge from China, the Obama Administration is largely ignoring it. Or much rather, it is encouraging Japan to play a larger role in East Asian security, which is clearly unsettling our South Korean allies.

Rather than seeking to balance China’s growing assertiveness with a strong foreign policy and an increased military capability to back it up, the United States is allowing the balance of military power to shift in China’s favor and is pretending that a policy of seeking to integrate an authoritarian and assertive China into a liberal world order is a goal China shares—despite strong evidence to the contrary.

China’s goal is not to be the junior member in a G2 marriage, but rather to displace U.S. power and influence in Asia and ultimately around the globe.

As Henry Kissinger noted in describing the traditional sino-centric system, China, he wrote, “considered itself, in a sense, the sole sovereign government of the world,” wherein the emperors purview was not a “sovereign state of China…but ‘All Under Heaven,’ of which China formed the central and civilized part.”

A new study from the Council on Foreign Relations starkly warns that the United States must craft a more coherent U.S. response to China’s growing influence/intimidation in Asia. The authors argue “Washington’s current approach towards Beijing, one that values China’s economic and political integration in the liberal international order at the expense of the United States’ global preeminence and long-term strategic interests, hardly amounts to a grand strategy, much less an effective one.” They conclude that a more coherent U.S. response to increasing Chinese power is long overdue.

Yet, such a response seems remote for now.

So why is this administration largely a bystander in world affairs?

The Obama Administration genuinely believes that foreign affairs are a distraction from more important domestic priorities. The president’s goal is to remove the United States form the world, not lead the world. Displaying U.S. power and influence abroad, in the president’s mind, is a distraction from income redistribution at home.

In short, the White House sees all of this as a zero sum game—which it isn’t.

The truth is, as much as idealists might wish it otherwise, there is no substitute for American leadership if the goal is to preserve a liberal world order.

The idea being peddled in the United States that America must choose between fixing problems at home and having influence abroad is a false and truly dangerous dichotomy. Repainting and refurbishing your own home won’t prevent its being vandalized or burned down in a deteriorating and dangerous neighborhood.

For proof of this proposition, look at Europe. The more that European nations focus on expanding their welfare states and coddling their citizens, the less inclined or capable any of them (with the modest exception of France in its former colonial territories) are to resist external threats. Indeed, even as Mr. Putin threatens neighbors to the East, they convince themselves as Europeans did pre-World War II that it won’t happen here.

III. IS THE UNITED STATES INEVITABLY HEADED THE SAME WAY? NO

Recall it is not the first time the United States has been weak and vacillating. In the years leading up to both World Wars, America sought to hide behind its oceans and declined to engage. Much more recently, Jimmy Carter early on pursued an Obama foreign policy—avoiding use of U.S. power and simply preaching peaceful virtues and values. Even Carter reversed course after being shocked by the Iran hostage crisis and a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
The reversal was accelerated by Ronald Reagan. So in less than four years, America moved from Carter’s malaise to Reagan’s “shining city on a hill,” from paralysis over hostage taking to “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall”; from American retreat to winning the Cold War.

An optimist would argue that the United States, given all its underlying strengths can return to a role of world leadership quickly if it makes up its mind to do so.

The underlying American economy remains far and away the world’s strongest even if hampered by budget deficits and debt. U.S. GDP has grown at 2.4 percent over the past two years, behind the 3 percent average from 1980 to 2007. But if we just begin, as some believe we will, to approach the average growth rate of 3 percent, the United States will remain far into the future the world’s largest economy.

American innovation is alive and well, even if frustrated by overregulation. American higher education remains the best in the world, even if secondary education seems resistant to improvement. America’s ability to attract and assimilate waves of immigrants remains a strength that constantly injects new enterprise and energy into the society, and this is true notwithstanding the controversy over America’s porous Southern border.

American military strength, albeit diminishing under the weight of sequestration, and a president who prefers domestic spending, remains the most effective in the world.

I wrote a controversial series for The Wall Street Journal in 1989, when much of conventional wisdom saw the United States slipping behind Japan as much as it sees the United States slipping behind China these days. I argued this was nonsense for many of the reasons just enunciated, and that proved true. I was an optimist.

A pessimist these days would argue that U.S. problems run much deeper than those of 25 years ago.

They would point out that the United States today lacks a cohesive set of values from which it can draw strength and when needed rally Americans to make sacrifices.

They would argue that the national demographics are rapidly shifting with less and less social cohesion. And that a steadily growing number of people are dependent on government largess and thus ask “what can the country do for me rather than what can I do for my country” (The number of Americans on food stamps rose 50 percent to 47 million between 2009 and 2013!)

A pessimist would further point out that the American political system is badly broken; that all too many politicians see public service as self-service, and that the partisanship that pervades domestic politics has now extended to foreign policy, rendering a bipartisan foreign policy a relic of the past.

Still, I remain more optimist than pessimist. I truly believe there is nothing wrong with America that inspired leadership cannot fix.

A leader who genuinely put America’s future first could, I believe, begin to reverse the negative trends, restore bipartisanship in foreign policy, and reassert and explain the need for America’s global leadership.

Such leadership emerging from either political party would summon what is best in Americans. Rather than indulging Americans in the false belief that government can provide a risk free life in a risk free world, such leadership would summon them back to individual responsibility and global responsibility. Such leadership would teach Americans as previous generations had learned that we cannot enjoy comfortable and prosperous lives in a world dominated by powers antithetical to our liberal values.

That is not simply idealism. That is realism.

Thank you.
Is the U.S. Back?

Moderator
Hahm Chaibong
The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Speakers
Joshua C. Ramo
Kissinger Associates
James Steinberg
Syracuse University
Togo Kazuhiko
Kyoto Sangyo University
Wu Jianmin
International Advisory Committee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Plenary Session 1, titled “Is the U.S. Back?” examined a number of key issues that the United States has been confronted with in recent times, ranging from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to American innovations and its ‘network power.’ The session began with a short introduction of each speaker by Dr. Hahm Chaibong, President of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, followed by an invitation for each speaker to freely explore whether the United States is ‘back.’

Mr. Joshua C. Ramo, Vice Chairman of Kissinger Associates, began by echoing Dr. Kissinger and questioning whether the United States had ever even ‘left’ in the first place, and if it is indeed ‘back,’ upon what is its ‘basis.’ Mr. Ramo stated that the world was at the beginning of an ‘information revolution,’ a radical age that is as ‘powerful as the industrial revolution.’ Networks—be it the Internet, trade, finance—are driving the new dynamic of power in the world. This network power provides an opportunity to reexamine how to build a grand strategy in an age where the United States struggles with problems of legitimacy.

Mr. James Steinberg, Dean of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University and former Deputy Secretary of State, emphasized the strengths of the United States, with special focus on American innovation and technology. He reminded us that whilst it may be true that China is developing rapidly and at a rate quicker than the United States, the American advantage is clear—a three trillion dollar stock lead over China.’ Mr. Steinberg called for a ‘dose of reality’ in how we frame China in contemporary discourse. With regards to forming a ‘grand strategy,’ we must be prepared to see a ‘diversity of challenges’ and to look at issues with a long term perspective.

Ambassador Togo Kazuhiko, Professor and Director of the Institute for World Affairs at Kyoto Sangyo University, provided his insights on the American ‘Pivot to Asia.’ He praised the Obama-Abe joint statement on the Senkaku Islands, but noted that American strategies in the region may be weaker in other areas, such as regional cooperation, Russia and Japan-Korea relations. He used the example of Mike Honda’s recent denouncement of Japan on the comfort women issue.
to explore what role the United States may be able to take in ameliorating tensions between the two nations.

Finally, Ambassador Wu Jianmin, a member of the International Advisory Committee at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, began with a provocative question: ‘What went wrong with Washington?’ Declaring that the United States ‘misread’ and ‘misjudged’ both the situation and Chinese intentions regarding the formation of the AIIB, he ultimately acknowledged that the United States had ‘misbehaved.’ He argued that the AIIB was a ‘win-win, positive sum game.’ China, he explained, was not ‘undercutting’ existing institutions, and it was in the interest of the United States to join the AIIB.

The panel’s opinions on the AIIB were further explored during the Q&A section of this session. Ambassador Togo answered that he personally did not see any reason for the United States and Japan to oppose the AIIB. Regarding ‘trust problems,’ Mr. Steinberg pointed out the challenges of ‘elucidating intentions behind inherently ambiguous actions,’ remarking that ‘testing’ intentions may be the only way to assuage fears.
Session 1, titled “Revolution in Military Affairs,” compared capabilities of different military powers, assessed impacts of revolution in military affairs, and addressed challenges that nations are facing due to changing military dynamics. As traditional, conventional weapons are replaced by more high-tech weapons, empowered countries implement tactical strategies that were considered impossible in the past and confront new challenges as a consequence. All of the participating speakers could concede to the following three points: 1) technology, while vital, does not completely determine a nation's military power; 2) the United States is the world leader in military affairs; and 3) human resources are critical.

Dr. Bruce Bennett, Senior Defense Analyst at RAND Corporation, emphasized that military capabilities must be assessed from a variety of dimensions. While technology is certainly a critical aspect, without the capable manpower to control such weapons and devices, technology does not contribute much to a nation's military power. With regards to human resources, Bennett expressed his concerns about the diminishing number of soldiers in the Korean military. He noted that the Korean military decreased in size from 560,000 to 500,000 in a decade and expects this number to further diminish to about 300,000 in twenty years.

Bennett highlighted that the United States, while very influential and powerful, has limited resources and is entering an era of diminishing American dominance. He cautioned the audience from drawing quick conclusions about U.S. dominance in military power and concluded his remarks by stating that the nature of military is to destroy as opposed to create. In saying so, it is essential to adopt and use new technologies in a manner conducive to peace and stability.

Sr. Colonel Xu Weidi, Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University in the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA), stated that the United States is leading the world in military affairs and predicted this reputation to hold for at least twenty more years. Moreover, according to Xu, we now face completely different types of weapons that require a new way of thinking about and conceptualizing security. During World War II, for example, no one was concerned about weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which alludes that the body of thought surrounding nuclear security emerged in response to the changing military environment. Xu noted that China, while arduously developing its military capabilities, still lacks high-tech weapons and manpower to manage and utilize new technology. It is why the PLA is increasingly focusing more on “core capabilities.”

Lt. Gen. Yamaguchi Noboru, Professor at the International University of Japan, also argued that the United States is dominant in terms of conventional, traditional military power. Korea and Japan, however, have greatly enhanced their capabilities in information technology. While having more information generally helps improve military capabilities, commanders often wait too long to gather more intelligence without remaining conscientious of the decisions they should make. Yamaguchi also noted the importance of realizing the gap between advanced militaries and less advanced militaries when the two countries collaborate with one another.
Session 2, titled “Geopolitics of Finance,” explored future challenges of the global financial system in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis. The moderator of the session, Dr. Bark Taeho, Professor at Seoul National University, began by presenting three questions to narrow the scope of the debate that was to follow. Explaining how initial efforts of the G20 to examine and address shortcomings of the current system lost its momentum after the peak of the crisis had passed, Dr. Bark brought up the trends and substitutes that had emerged in its wake. His first question explored the process of quantitative easing, which many countries such as the United States, Japan, the European Union nations and even China have undergone to cope with the aftermath of the 2008 recession. Because normalizing these unconventional financial policies could have negative effects on regional neighbors, when and how were countries to go about implementation? His second question revolved around potential restructuring of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) given the new world stage and different requirements for international development, which segued into his last question regarding countries' positions on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Taking U.S. opposition into account, Dr. Bark used this last point to assess U.S. global influence in the face of rising foreign institutions to bring the debate back to the central question guiding the entire Asan Plenum: Is the U.S. back?

Troy Stangarone, Senior Director of Congressional Affairs and Trade of the Korea Economic Institute, started by exploring the different frameworks used to evaluate U.S. return. He made the point that slow changes add up to a big systemic shift, and suggested that one should focus on what stage of the transition that the United States is in to have a better view of the entire situation. Mr. Stangarone acknowledged that the United States is taking significant steps to improve itself economically, such as getting rid of bad loans. However, for the United States to maintain its leadership in finance, it must learn to adjust to a changing world and respond accordingly. Taking China as an example, the U.S. approach to dealing with China is a double-edged sword that achieves very little. On one hand, the United States has officially broadened its policies for increased engagement with China. On the other hand, it does not take opportunities to interact with China and bring it into the international community, which it could have done with China’s AIIB. As argued by Benn Steil from the Council on Foreign Relations, the AIIB presented a chance for the United States to increase its foothold in the Northeast Asian region, despite contrary beliefs. Rather than opposing its allies joining the AIIB,
Dr. Steil argued that it should have encouraged them, particularly Japan. Given that China had made major concessions to woo U.S. allies, such as offering Japan large voting shares in the AIIB's decisions, the United States could have fulfilled both objectives to limit Chinese dominance through allies and geo-strategically facilitated better ROK-Japan relations, whose economic interests would have aligned.

However, U.S. opposition to the AIIB combined with parts of America’s political right that have taken a hard-line stance against multilateral bailouts have only bolstered the rise of new institutions. They give credence to the belief that there must be other outlets that give voice to rising powers. Despite studies conducted by the IMF that show the need for government to play a strong hand in economic development or recovery, the U.S. Congress increasingly sees such efforts as currency manipulation. This has led to trading tensions between the United States and others. Moreover, as former organizations spearheaded by the United States, such as the World Bank, seem to become more focused on poverty reduction rather than infrastructure, institutions like China’s AIIB become an attractive alternative. However, as economist Oh Suktae of the Societe Generale Corporate and Investment bank maintained, the AIIB will never be a commensurate alternative for the Northeast Asia region. Given the region’s institutional problems that could not support new infrastructures, there are issues of governance that undermine credibility. For example, the fact that China is forgoing its veto privileges in the AIIB is a cause for pause.

Session 1, titled “Geopolitics of Shale,” began by exploring the sustainability of the ongoing shale revolution. Panel moderator, Dr. J. James Kim, Research Fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, began by asking about the overall energy landscape in the United States in the new unconventional revolution era. Mikkal Herberg of the National Bureau of Asian Research thought the production is resilient given the trends in the scale of shale and tight oil production. For example, the United States already surpassed Russia as the top natural gas producer in 2009, and production has increased 15 folds over the last 8 years. With shale extraction technology improvements decreasing costs, shale will be sustained an unconventional source of energy. Edward Chow, Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, agreed with Dr. Herberg that the shale revolution has helped enlarge the U.S. base of energy resources. Acknowledging that it is still in its early phase, Mr. Chow sees the revolution as sustaining.

Mr. Chow next turned to the impact of shale on oil markets. Edward Chow assessed the price downturn as a net benefit to consumers. From the producers point of view, $100 per barrel of oil is never a good thing since the consumers will be driven to raise efficiency which will mean decreasing dependence on oil. In terms of historical price trend, the average price of oil over the last 150 years is $35. This is not to say that Saudi Arabia did not enjoy the temporary benefits of the high price of oil—but it was only a temporary phenomenon from his vantage point.

Regarding the impact of the unconventional revolution on the
Chinese market, Chen Weidong of China National Offshore Oil Corporation observed four results: 1) increased production; 2) expanding of knowledge of oil resources; 3) industry structure change; and 4) delinkage of the price of gas and oil. There has also been an increase of investment and financial business in energy/oil industries.

In the United States, Mikkal Herberg found a reversal of economic investment trends, where U.S. petrochemical companies abroad are returning to set up domestic operations. According to Mr. Herberg, this is the result of cheap energy prices that lower costs of production and subsequently increase profits for U.S. manufacturing and petrochemical companies. Moreover, such economic benefits aside, Dr. Philip Andrews-Speed from the National University of Singapore finds a political advantage in that the unconventional energy revolution has rekindled U.S. ‘soft power’ after the IT revolution, calling it the “industrialization of science.” As other countries look to the United States in developing their own shale industries, U.S. influence is strengthened.

Mr. Chow noted two geopolitical implications of the U.S. unconventional revolution. One is the change of the U.S. status from a net oil/gas importer to a net exporter. The change puts the United States in different positions with allies, including NATO and its Asian allies. Pointing out that China became the largest oil importer last year and is going to increase consumption, Mr. Chow saw that China is also benefiting in the unconventional revolution. Moving ahead, the positive benefits from a new supply source will only grow into the future.

Mr. Chen sees the revolution as an opportunity and challenge to China. Russia and Middle East began to compete for the Chinese liquefied natural gas (LNG) market, but the challenge is how China may manage the lower the gas price. Chen suggested that the East Asian countries, which consumes 70 percent of the global LNG, needs to cooperate on the issue.

On the impact in the Middle East, Mikkal Herberg insisted that U.S. policy toward the region has fundamentally changed its approach but that the overall importance of the region will not go down. Acknowledging that the Middle East would be the biggest winner of the revolution and remain to be so as the region controls the oil market as the big and low cost producers, Mr. Herberg projects U.S. engagement in the region to be just as important as before. Mr. Chow agrees that from the objective standpoint, Middle East will continue to remain important but from the psychological and emotional point of view, U.S. foreign policy in the region is likely to be impacted by the recent history in this region. He also noted that the United States is no longer importing West African oil from the region. It would be more interesting to see how U.S. foreign policy and security posturing in the region may change going forward. However, if we take a look at the U.S. “no boots on the ground” policy regarding ISIS, it is clear that there is already some change in U.S. posturing as far as military engagement is concerned. What this suggests is that the United States would share some burden for security matters in Africa and Middle East. Are countries like China interested in participating? According to Dr. Chen, this is a question that China is still wrestling with and has yet to formulate a solution.
Limits of U.S. Power?

Moderator
Lee Chung Min
Yonsei University

Speakers
Edwin Feulner
The Heritage Foundation
Han Sung Joo
Korea University
Philip Stephens
Financial Times
Yao Yunzhu
Academy of Military Science, PLA

Plenary Session 2, titled “Limits of U.S. Power?” explored the obstacles that the United States faces in achieving more effective U.S. leadership and how they should be overcome.

Dr. Edwin Feulner, Chairman of Asian Studies Center at The Heritage Foundation, began by responding to the title of the conference “Is the U.S. Back?” by saying that it never left to begin with. He pointed out that military issues, economic relations, or Asian issues cannot always be prioritized. However, he stressed that budgetary challenges in Washington should seriously be addressed, especially in regards to the military budget. The United States should also maintain its presence in the Asian region because of the rise of China. The United States should continue its role as the honest broker between Japan and Korea, India and Pakistan, and perhaps also China and Taiwan, ensuring regional stability.

On the contrary, Minister Han Sung Joo, Professor Emeritus at Korea University, opined that the report of U.S. decline was not an exaggeration. He focused his presentation on the six limitations upon U.S. power: 1) diffusion of power exemplified by other powers such as China; 2) multiple layers of global crises; 3) extreme partisanship in the United States; 4) conflict among its allies; 5) U.S. fuzziness of policy threatening its own authority and credibility; and 6) troubled relationships with other major powers such as China and Russia. Nevertheless, Minister Han pointed out that current nuclear deal with Iran shows the continuing relevance and robustness of U.S. power. He also noted unchallenged U.S. soft power. Acknowledging that President Obama has overcome many of the aforementioned limitations, he argued that U.S. leadership will continue if it overcomes its unilateralist and isolationist position.

Mr. Philip Stephens stated that U.S. power is both ‘indispensable’ and ‘insufficient.’ While he agreed with Dr. Kissinger that the United States was undergoing an adjustment process, he noted that it is strongly perceived to be in decline. Given this, he suggested that the United States should
firmly decide the extent to which it wants to use its power. But overall, the American solution will continue to be the most pertinent for the next decade at least.

Finally, Maj. Gen. Yao Yunzhu of the Academy of Military Science, PLA, structured her presentation around the question: Why does the U.S. power have a limit? To this, she gave four reasons. First, the United States has overused its power after the Cold War by leading wars one after another. Next, its power has gradually been balanced by other powers. Third, the utility of unilateral power is undermined as international powers are becoming more and more interdependent. Lastly, in the digitalized era, power disperses both horizontally and vertically. Network power changes how national power will fit into the changing world.

While Maj. Gen. Yao acknowledged that the United States is still the world’s superpower and that it is the most experienced in terms of capability, she suggested some changes that the United States should take into account to improve relations with China. First, China would like the U.S. leadership to be more supportive in sharing multilateral responsibility. It expects the United States to be more open-minded and less ideological as Western democracy is not the only system that can succeed. It also expects the United States to be more engaging and cooperative in reforming global institutions.

The moderator of the session, Dr. Lee Chung Min, Professor of International Relations at the Graduate School of International Studies at Yonsei University, proceeded by asking questions.

Regarding Korea’s dilemma with the AIIB and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), he asked Minister Han whether it will worsen in the next coming years and what Korea’s optimal strategy for the future is. Minister Han’s opinion was that the fuss was created by the media and mishandled by the government. He cautiously suggested that Korea should deal with these issues in a way that ensures one country is not favored over another, considering that our alliance with the United States will continue in the foreseeable future and China is the largest economy in the region.

Maj. Gen. Yao was then asked why countries sharing borders with China do not feel comfortable with China even though they are not natural enemies. She answered that China has been making efforts towards peace, but still needs to work more on better conveying its intentions to its neighbors so that they are not misinterpreted. Maj. Gen. Yao was also asked about the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula to which she stressed that for China, a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear proliferation does not simply mean the absence of nuclear weapons on the peninsula; it means an absence of nuclear deterrence as well. In saying so, she noted that Beijing shares the same position as the United States in denuclearizing North Korea. In fact, to another question regarding China’s thoughts about the future of U.S. power and influence, she replied that the mainstream sees ample opportunities for multilateral cooperation in areas including the Middle East.
Cyberwar

Moderator
David Sanger
The New York Times

Speakers
Van Jackson
Center for a New American Security

Park Nohyoung
Korea University

Michael Raska
Nanyang Technological University

Ren Lin
Chinese Academy of Social Science

With recent events that exemplify the rise of cyberattacks against other nations and their infrastructures, Session 2 titled “Cyberwar” explored the implications of the changing nature of cyberspace. Led by moderator David Sanger, Chief Washington correspondent for The New York Times, this panel juxtaposed cyber warfare with conventional warfare and examined the new challenges that arise from this new kind of security threat.

Mr. Sanger began by stating that a nation can conduct cyberwar without triggering an actual war. Because of the divide between the physical space and cyberspace, arms discussions are considered inappropriate when responding to cyberattacks. Thus, comparisons between nuclear attacks and cyberattacks are misleading. While the former are expensive and serve as a powerful deterrent, the latter are cheap and inexpensive to maintain as well as hard to attribute, which add to the tactical value of conducting them.

Mr. Sanger brought up the infamous North Korean Sony attacks to introduce his first question to the panelists. According to him, of all the different kinds of cyberattacks that have been conducted in the past, the 2014 Sony Pictures Entertainment hack had the most impact. Intended to make a political point, North Korea’s cyberattack was in direct response to Sony’s planned release of the film “The Interview,” a comedy about a plot to assassinate North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Given this, Mr. Sanger asked how North Korea conceptualizes cyberwar, especially in relation to its nuclear program.

The first speaker, Van Jackson, a Visiting Fellow of the Center for a New American Security, stated that North Korea does not treat cyberspace as a space that is distinctly military; it serves multiple purposes and goals. Consequently, this makes deterrence extremely difficult because of the many factors to consider when trying to understand the intentions behind North Korean cyberattacks. As such, the United States has attempted to categorize cyberattacks under the military realm in an effort to narrow and organize responses.

In this vein, Mr. Sanger asked for the speakers’ opinions on President Obama’s choice to label the Sony hack as cyber vandalism and not cyber war. According to Dr. Park Nohyoung of Korea University, Obama approached the issue in the appropriate manner. “War is a strong word,” he said in reference to its strong political and military connotations.

Michael Raska, Research Fellow in the Military Transformations Program at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, stated that cyber as an overall strategy has evolved over the past few years. Moreover, due to the progressive complexity and variant evolutions of technology depending on locality, every country has formed its own conception of cyber warfare. For example, China emulates Russia’s hybrid warfare,
which integrates cyber tactics to supplement conventional warfare. In the United States, the Pentagon has officially recognized cyberspace as a new warfare domain, adopting information warfare strategies known as weapons of mass effectiveness. Mr. Sanger pointed out that both Iran and North Korea have invested heavily in weapons of mass effectiveness. This alludes that both countries realize military arms are fundamentally not as effective and wide-ranged as cyber arms. While cyber weapons will never replace the potential devastation of military weapons, their limited strikes have great strategic effects. As follows, wired nations like the United States are often the most vulnerable to such strikes, while disconnected countries like North Korea are unaffected.

During the question and answer section of the panel, the discussion focused on finding the different thresholds for different responses to cyberattacks. A particularly interesting topic that came to light was if cyber war will ever kill. Dr. Jackson's response was: "Cyber doesn't kill; the response to cyber kills." Therefore, one should fear the threat of miscalculation, not of a "cyber Pearl Harbor." One nation can misjudge and conduct a cyberattack that it believes is below a certain threshold only to suffer what can be perceived as disproportional retaliation leading to a dangerous escalation that will spill over into the physical realm. Moreover, because individual actors and not only governments can pose cyber threats, there is a growing need to codify rules of cyber warfare.

Session 2, titled “Terrorism,” focused on the challenges that terrorism continues to pose to regional and global security and its impact on U.S. leadership in different regions. Moderator Mr. Nisid Hajari, Asia Editor of the Bloomberg View, began the session by exploring the affect of terrorism on the United States’ ability to pursue its goals abroad. The session sought to illuminate the past decade and a half in which the threat of Al Qaeda largely drove U.S. security policy in places such as the Middle East and the emergence of new terror networks such as the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL. Speakers proposed a range of factors that could have exacerbated such violent extremism, ranging from the failure of governance and state institutions to deprivation of liberty, and recommended a spectrum of solutions.

Efraim Inbar, Professor of Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University and Director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, argued that a different analytic framework was required to explain current terrorist groups. He noted that a more appropriate description would be “sub-state groups that operate in ungoverned areas.” Pointing out that the emergence of failed states preceded the Arab Spring uprisings, Prof. Inbar cited the rise of sub-state actors in Lebanon, Somalia, and Palestinian Authority and attributed the radicalization of segments of Muslim society to “a disgruntled Muslim population that is not able to face modernity.” The rise of groups such as ISIS has been further facilitated by state backing, in this case, Turkey, and the growing number of ungoverned areas within some Middle Eastern countries.
Critiquing U.S. Middle East policy as driven by a desire to remake societies in the image of the United States, Prof. Inbar noted that “sometimes the best intentions lead us to unwanted places.” Declaring the current strategy of regime change in the Middle East as risky, he advised a more modest strategy of military attrition that degraded the threat posed by sub-state groups in accordance with an Israeli doctrine referred to as “mowing the grass,” in which periodic conflict replaces a decisive victory as the security objective. Prof. Inbar posited that terror is a second-order problem with which the West should learn to live. The real danger of terrorist groups is that they acquire nuclear weapons through states.

Ms. Ellen Laipson, President and CEO of the Stimson Center, noted that terrorism is global in the sense that it arises in any region where there is contested politics. Once thought to be receding in the age of globalization, terrorism has changed and mutated. After the September 11 terrorist attacks, the United States has successfully created new global mechanisms to deal with terrorism, including terrorist financing, new legal frameworks, as well as paramilitary, law enforcement, and border security cooperation. However, the rise of ISIS raises questions about the efficacy of such counter-terrorist measures. Ms. Laipson noted that ISIS is a larger and more difficult threat than Al Qaeda. Its excessive violence and use of cruel force aside, it has been able to attract a following of people who defect to ISIS-held territories.

Prof. Park Hyondo of Myongji University assert that this motivation to join ISIS has no bounds, as exemplified by the high-profile case of a South Korean teenager named Kim who was rumored to have run away to join ISIS during a trip to Turkey. While Koreans have always battled the threat of terrorism from the failed state of North Korea, they have been somewhat lulled into a false sense of security as a result of geographical distance from the Middle East. However, the defection of Kim to ISIS territory served as a wake-up call of terrorism’s spreading influence.

Given this expanding threat of terrorism, latter parts of the debate focused on how to deal with these acts of violence. The recommendations of Joseph Kéchichian, Senior Fellow at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, focused on strengthening governance and overcoming government failure. Given that violent groups are able to arise in place of weak state institutions, he emphasized protecting the rule of law to safeguard one’s liberties. As liberty can sometimes give way to violence, there was a need to implement and normalize the proper policies to restrain it. However, considering the state’s role in decreasing terrorism, the inevitable question of U.S. responsibility to take care of people of the world was brought to light. Dr. Kéchichian surmised that Western powers should not involve themselves with this issue so as to limit the amount of damage they can inadvertently impose. He suggested allowing individual countries facing these issues to find their own solutions as terrorism is not a problem that is ever going to disappear.
Session 2, titled “Nonproliferation,” examined the past and current state of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime. Focusing on the main points of international nonproliferation efforts, it explored the possibility of further nuclear arms reduction dialogue between U.S.-Russia and U.S.-China.

The moderator of the session, James Acton, Senior Associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, began by highlighting positive developments such as the 2015 NPT Review Conference, which kicked-off on April 27, the U.S.-ROK 1-2-3 agreement, and the painfully negotiated Iran nuclear deal. He also made a reference to the North Korean nuclear program due to the proximity of the issue to the conference’s location in South Korea.

Sven Jurschewsky, a retired Foreign Service Officer from Canada, began by stating that “the history of nonproliferation was the history of U.S.-U.S.S.R competition up until the collapse of U.S.S.R,” and pointed to the Middle East region, the Korean peninsula, and India-Pakistan as “critical flashpoints to international nuclear nonproliferation.” He went on to argue that “suffocation policy and the status quo policy mainly applied during the 1980s in the Cold War era are doomed to fail.” He insisted that “the interest between a nuclear state and a non-nuclear state within the NPT framework is very different,” and that “non-nuclear states, raising moral issues of possessing nuclear weapons, were very much interested in how their national security could be guaranteed; but nuclear powers were indifferent to their demands.”

Shin Chang-Hoon, Research Fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, introduced recent analysis by a Chinese expert that argued that the DPRK may already have 20 nuclear warheads and also enough weapons-grade uranium to double the number within a year. Dr. Shin pointed out that “North Korea enjoys risk-taking and stirring instability,” and “the change in Kim Jong-un’s perception of nuclear weapons and its utility in particular could cause great danger.” Furthermore, he stressed that “from the human security perspective, North Korea’s nuclear weapons can have humanitarian impacts in China, South Korea, and Japan; thus, close trilateral cooperation on the North Korea nuclear problem is essential.” Dr. Shin also noted that North Korea is a major supplier, broker, and end-user of nuclear materials, know-how, and technology, and that there is danger of them doing illegal business with terrorists in the black market. Especially having taken advantage of loose security measures after the collapse of the Soviet Union, fissile materials could have been smuggled into North Korea, creating a huge gap between perceived and actual number of nuclear warheads.
Richard Weitz, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Political-Military Analysis at the Hudson Institute, stated that “the return of geopolitics and emerging military technologies have made nonproliferation more complicated.” As such, he argued that “trilateral cooperation between the U.S., Russia, and China is important.” However, pointing out that the difference between Americans and Russians had always been very clear, he said that negotiations are in deadlock. Russia is concerned about their strategic balance with other nuclear powers such as China and the complexity such development entails. Russia and China also share concerns regarding strategic defense systems such as missile defense and precision strike. Despite these differences, Dr. Weitz argued “all three countries have done well in the Iran talks, and their cooperation on a Korean deal could be another positive example.”

Finally, Yang Xiyu of the China Institute of International Studies stated that he disagrees with the analysis that DPRK has 20 nuclear warheads, insisting that they would not have enough fissile materials to produce that many after three nuclear tests. He doubted that North Korea could have succeeded in producing sufficient quantities of weapons-grade uranium with good quality. Nevertheless, he believed that a fourth nuclear test is a question of when for North Korea. In addition, Dr. Yang claimed that the collapse of the ongoing Iran deal and failure to address the North Korean nuclear threat would mean the end of the global nonproliferation regime. He concluded by voicing China’s fears of being the only nuclear power to be geographically surrounded by other nuclear powers. Accordingly, Dr. Yang insisted that China’s ultimate goal is to maintain the NPT regime and, in the long-term, to pursue a complete test-ban and comprehensive disarmament, similar to President Obama’s famous and Nobel prize-winning “World Without Nuclear Weapons” initiative.
Plenary Session 3, titled “G2 or G1? U.S.-China Relations,” focused on China’s capacity to rise as a superpower that could match or even exceed the United States, and examined the present and future of U.S.-Sino relations.

Panel moderator, Mr. Philip Stephens of the Financial Times, began by commenting on the importance of transparency in interstate relations and how it serves as a prerequisite for cooperation and avoiding conflict. He then proceeded by asking questions.

Prof. Jia Qingguo of Peking University began with a discussion about China’s intentions in the East Asian region in response to a question about whether China should exercise primacy as a rapidly rising power. Professor Jia explained that China seeks peace and prosperity both for itself and for its Asian neighbors. Although there are some voices within that call for a tougher, more assertive China (in part as backlash from the days when China was “weak), Professor Jia emphasizes that China seeks mutually beneficial and constructive regional relations. The more the United States and China become interdependent, the more both nations can contribute to building peace and prosperity for all.

Noting Prof. Jia’s moderate views, Dr. Evans Revere of the Albright Stonebridge Group maintained that others in China seek to “draw a line in the Pacific.” He explained that speculations about the U.S. role in Asia are uncomfortable both for the United States and its regional allies. Dr. Revere also stated that “the day of G2 will never arrive,” and that at best, China will end up as “something between a G1.3-G1.7.”

Next, Mr. Eric Li of Chengwei Capital drew attention to the AIIB and the reasons behind China’s push towards its formation. He pointed out that when international financial institutions were created, China was not able to participate in the rule-making process. Despite this, China has largely followed these rules. Fears concerning the AIIB, therefore, are results of American
insecurity rather than Chinese aggressiveness. Too often, the United States has jealously guarded its financial world order to the point of diluting the integrity of the very institution that the United States itself set up.

Back on the American side, Dr. Douglas Paal from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace argued that American policy in East Asia and towards China is often misguided as a result of “deprofessionalization, politicization, and bureaucratization” in Washington. As such, he encouraged greater debate on the nature of the U.S. role in Asia as a resident power.

Dr. Chung Jae-Ho of Seoul National University introduced the Korean perspective on the issue. He argued that China was set to become G2 as evidenced by how contemporary international discourse places China as the challenging superpower to U.S. hegemony. Dr. Chung argues that China is the opposite to Fareed Zakaria’s depiction of nineteenth century United States as the rising “imperial under stretch” global superpower. Considering the strategic importance of the East Asian region in the twenty-first century, China cannot help but become a challenging force to the United States.
Session 3
Reordering U.S.-Russia Relations
Reordering the Middle East
Reordering East Asia

Session 4
Never Been Worse?
Korea-Japan Relations

Could Be Worse?
China-Japan Relations

Never Been Better?
Korea-U.S. Relations

Plenary Session IV
Korean Peninsula: The End Game?
“Reordering the World Order: A Saudi Perspective”

In the name of God, the most merciful and compassionate, may God’s peace and blessing be upon you.

It is a pleasure to join you in this important conference. I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to Dr. Hahn Chaibong, President of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies for his kind invitation to speak to such a distinguished audience.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is not only, is the U.S. back? The question should be: is the world back? The questions of restructuring or reordering the world order and the place or position of certain states and regions in such an order are legitimate and pressing ones. Calls to reform the UN system, which is a metaphor for the waning international order, have been on the agenda of the international community since the early nineties of the last century. Alas, all calls fell on deaf ears despite the continuing talk of the need for such restructuring to reflect the new realities of the world. Failing to do so led the world to the state of uncertainty that we are witnessing nowadays. Therefore, I find myself in agreement with Henry Kissinger’s statement in his latest book, *World Order*, that “A reconstruction of the international system is the ultimate challenge to statesmanship in our time.”

Needless to say that the world of today is not the world of 1945 when victors of World War II envisaged an international order that guarantees their prominence and dominance while working to preserve “peace and security of the world.” In realpolitik terms this was understandable and acceptable as a matter of fact and as a reflection of the balance of power and the reality of the world at the time. It is fair to state that this order, unlike the ones that preceded it has sustained itself and has succeeded in becoming a system for world governance and global politics for the last 70 years. This order was able, despite its shortcomings, to rid the world of wars between great powers which was the norm of international affairs in previous centuries; it has successfully integrated almost all states of the world into an international order; it has contributed to freeing many countries and societies from the plight of colonialism and subjugation, it has helped in organizing global life into many successful international bodies that deal with all kinds of international issues that touch upon humanity: peace keeping, health, education, environment, refugees, development, etc. Above all, it consolidated the principles of equality between states, the right of self-determination, and the primacy of international law. This, however, does not mean that the world has rid itself of all diseases and overcome all threats facing humanity.

Alas, the Cold War lasted almost four decades and made the world order into a bipolar system, where the United States of America and the Soviet Union enjoyed almost all political, economic, military, and cultural influence internationally and regionally. That order divided the world and brought it in many occasions to the brink of total war. It was unfortunate that millions of people’s
lives in many countries were lost as under that bipolar system. Countries like Vietnam and Afghanistan are still suffering from that time. Certain regional problems were left without real resolution; pending international justice and international conciliation. The issue of Palestine is a standing manifestation of such failure.

The Cold War ended with the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 and bipolarity transformed into “unipolarity” where the United States solely enjoyed almost all political, economic, military, and cultural influence on the world stage. The world was hopeful that such a grand transformation in the international order would lead to a more equitable international order that reflects the principles that the U.S. was preaching during the Cold War: rule of law, self-determination, human rights, freedom and equality. This hope was consolidated by freeing Kuwait from occupation and afterwards by the announcement of President George Bush in 1991 that and I quote: “Until now, the world we’ve known has been a world divided—a world of barbed wire and concrete blocks, conflict and cold war. Now, we can see a new world coming into view. A world in which there is the very real prospect of a new world order. In the words of Winston Churchill, a “world order” in which “the principles of justice and fair play [...] protect the weak against the strong...A world where the United Nations, freed from cold war stalemate, is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders, a world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations,” end of quote.

This could have been the ideal for the international community that was becoming more global, more interdependent, more interlinked. In another word the oneness of the world was closer than ever before. This hope was dashed by the reality on the ground. The forces of nationalism in the Balkans and the Caucasus regions, and the scourge of global terrorism were unleashed. The failure of the international community to act jointly in facing such threats and the outstanding issues of peace in the Middle East constituted a crisis for the United Nations system. And with the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001 unipolarity became unilaterality that disregards the dictates of being part of an international order. It goes without saying that the dust of unrestricted wars on Iraq and Afghanistan and their ramifications have buried unipolarity and, I hope, unilaterality, in issues of war and peace. In short, unipolarity is not better than bipolarity in increasing people’s suffering in many parts of the world. The question arises as to whether multipolarity is the suitable formula for managing world affairs? It is a fad now talking about this issue but if we look into the history of world order since the Westphalia arrangements of 1648, multipolarity was behind colonization, division of the world into spheres of influence, great powers competition, and great power wars. This was in the past. However, there is no guarantee that greed and self-interest in international politics is obsolete. In fact, signs of such retreat from the ideals of world order to the principles of power politics in international relations are crystal clear. The strains in American and European-Russian relations over Ukraine, the inability of the Security Council of the UN to act in solving the tragic Syrian crisis, and other regional crises are good examples of such a slide toward power politics on the world scene. As Dr. Kissinger said yesterday, there are more areas of conflict, today, then ever before.

Ladies and Gentlemen:
No doubt, to be fair, the international order needs restructuring to be inclusive (and reflective) of international reality, where power, in all its aspects, is shared by many power centers. The world is conscious of unfairness of the present order and sees it as an outdated structure and not being able to tackle the issues of the day. This consciousness was correctly captured by Zbigniew Brzezinski when he wrote: “For the first time in history almost all of humanity is politically activated, politically conscious, and politically interactive. Global activism is generating a surge in the quest for cultural respect and economic opportunity in a world scarred by memories of colonial or imperial domination.” In this kind of situation, how can we understand that one billion and a quarter Indians, one billion and a half Muslims (Arabs, Turks, Iranian, and others), close to a billion Africans, and more than half a billion Latin Americans are without effective representation at the helm of such a structure?

Ladies and Gentlemen:
The world does not need a world war to have a new world order to prove that world orders in history are byproducts of major wars. The advancement of humanity in all aspects of life, the realization that we share a common destiny, the belief that peace and security is a common goal for all on earth, and the achievements of the last seven decades of dealing with all issues affecting human lives, dictate that all of us must work seriously to reform the UN system for it to be fair, inclusive, reflective, and up to the aspirations of the people of the world. It is unfortunate that all recommendations that deal with restructuring the UN organs were and are ignored by the permanent veto members of the UN Security Council. This must not be the end to calling for democratizing the UN system.

Ladies and Gentlemen:
No region in the world has ever suffered from the unfairness of the international order, when bipolar and when unipolar, more than the Middle East region, particularly the Arab World. Our region has been the hell where the principle of the right of self-determination has been burned. By the same principles that were behind the creation of the State of Israel the Palestinians were deprived of their homeland and denied their basic rights of self-determination and statehood. The United States’ use of the veto power to protect Israel from sanction is a case in point. For almost seven decades our region has been going from one war to another, from one catastrophe to another, and from one UN Resolution to another; and justice is still elusive. Hypocrisy on the part of great powers that are at the helm of the world order and the guardians of its basic principles becomes crystal clear when it comes to Arab, Muslim, or Middle Eastern issues.

The inaction of the UN Security Council to stop the killing and mass massacres in Syria and the irresponsible use of the veto by Russia and China is another case to prove that calling for
restructuring the world order is a legitimate cause.

Saudi Arabia calls for and supports all efforts to reform the UN system, including reforming the Security Council to be more representative and truer to the basic principles of the UN, and for the General Assembly to have an international legislative power that cannot be vetoed if the veto is to be preserved under any restructuring of the Security Council. Had Korea not avoided the Russian veto, 65 years ago, there would not have been the thriving and dynamic Republic of South Korea.

Reforming the UN requires new thinking by all member states including the five permanent veto members. The sustainable international order that can preserve peace and security in the world and that can meet the pressing challenges and threats facing humanity must be an equitable one. The whole world has a special responsibility in realizing this noble goal.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Now, I refer to the conference’s theme: “Is the U.S. Back?” I am not fond of the rise and decline theories when it comes to the United States of America. Relative material power of states may rise and fall in comparison to others; however, the U.S. is still one of the greatest powers on earth in all means. In this respect the U.S. is and will continue to be there and does not need to come back. The issue then “Is the U.S. back to its ideals and its world responsibilities that guided its foreign policy since World War II.” I hope so. The U.S. never said that it is abandoning such principles and responsibilities. However, the current administration’s policies toward many issues facing the world and especially with its strategy of “Pivot to Asia” have ignited discussions at all strategic circles all over world about the American intentions. What this pivot (or rebalancing) means to the world balance of power, to the future of Asia, to the future of American engagements and commitments in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa are the debated questions.

While all these questions are legitimate ones, it is hard to envision, in an interconnected, interdependent, globalized world, a great power pivoting away from its global responsibilities or its global role. If this is the case the U.S. stops being a leader even if it is a superpower. The U.S. withdrawal from its global responsibilities in preserving world peace and security is a prescription for anarchy that threatens regional and world peace and order. Let us look into what is happening
in the Middle East and see how the American withdrawal from its responsibilities impacted the balance of power in the region and opened Pandora’s Box to disastrous ramifications.

Mr. Obama has a strategy for the Middle East. From his first campaign rhetoric, it should have been obvious that he was pivoting towards Iran. In March of 2009, the newly elected President Obama sent his first Nowruz New Year greeting to the Iranian leadership. In June of that year, when the Iranian people rose up in revolt against the fraudulent election results that brought back Ahmedinejad to power, the President of the United States did not issue a single word of condemnation about the brutal repression by the Baseej militias and revolutionary guards against innocent Iranian demonstrations. There was no call for Ahmedinejad to leave office, as there was, six months later, when the Tunisian and Egyptian people rose against their presidents. It went on, like that, even at the height of the Syrian uprising against the brutish Assad regime and the President’s red lines, which were not acted upon. The President obviously wanted to show the Iranian leadership that reaching a nuclear deal was more important to him than Iran’s persecution of the Syrian people. His praise for the Iranian people through many television and printed interviews clearly signaled his hopes to engage Iran after the nuclear deal.

To be fair, President Obama also ratcheted up the sanctions regime against Iran, but he did so in order to convince the Iranian leadership that he can do things to harm them. But he did go behind the backs of the traditional allies of the U.S. to strike the deal with Iran.

The small print of the deal is still unknown, but from the parameters of the deal there are two glaring risks. One, the deal opens the door to nuclear proliferation, not close it, as was the original intention of the negotiations. Two, 10 to 15 years hiatus from developing nuclear weapons is hardly reassuring for the world; not to mention Iran’s continued holding of enriched uranium stockpiles and the unexplained and plainly flimsy snapback approach to sanctions. Who is going to snap back, the Russians, who are already agreeing to supply Iran with missiles that can defend their nuclear installations; or the Chinese, who are already contracting to buy oil and gas from Iran, or the European banks and manufacturers who are swarming into Tehran to sell their financial and industrial products; or even the American merchants, from oil companies eager to contract for renovation of Iran’s oil industry and auto manufacturers, eager to set up auto manufacturing in Iran?

In parallel to the President’s pivot to Iran, look what happened. A vacuum created by leaving Iraq in 2010 without making sure of leaving behind a sustainable national political structure, and by delivering it to thuggish sectarian political forces under the influence of Iran contributed to the collapse of the regional system of the Middle East, and the unleashing of radical terrorist forces that are destroying the concept of nation-states in the region. The failure to act on the Syrian crisis is another example of the worsening situation and encouraging regional forces, like Iran and its proxies, to advance their sectarian agenda that threatens regional security. One of Iran’s proxies, the Houthis’ blatant overthrow of the legitimate government in Yemen has led to operation Decisive Storm by ten regional allies to restore the legitimate government to power. Therefore the U.S. is leading, but in the wrong direction, at least in the Middle East.

The U.S. must rethink its policies in the Middle East to be a trusted leader again and it must look into the region holistically free of its obsession with a nuclear deal with Iran and Israel’s security.

Thank you.
Session 3, titled “Reordering US-Russia Relations,” examined the root causes for conflict between the United States/European Union and Russia and whether Russia could still be a partner for peace. The moderator of the session, Dr. Choi Kang, Vice President for Research at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, began by asking the speakers the cause of confrontation between Western powers and Russia.

Dr. Svitlana Kobzar, Research Fellow at RAND Europe, provided a European perspective on this problem. She argued that the cause of conflict is not rooted in the role of the United States. Rather, Russia felt insecure because NATO had expanded without including Russia as part of the new order.

Dr. Dmitry Suslov, Deputy Director of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies at National Research University Higher School of Economics at Russia, analyzed that cooling U.S.-Russia relations is due to the fact that there was no fundamental agreement on the modalities for managing world order after the Cold War. Both the United States and Russia have excluded any opportunity for reconciliation. As such, they perceive each other’s steps as a challenge to the current system.

Dr. Gilbert Rozman, Editor-in-Chief of *The Asan Forum*, stated that this crisis is not about Ukraine; it goes back to the 1990s when Russia chose to turn towards China, with whom it shares a legacy of communist national identity. In saying so, Dr. Rozman analyzes that this conflict is not based on national interests but more on identity, which is a big threat to western civilization.

Finally, Dr. Eom Gu Ho, a Professor in the Graduate School of International Studies and Director of the Asia-Pacific Center at Hanyang University, argued that the United States does not have a good policy towards Russia and makes excuses for it by demonizing Putin, while Russia’s policy that it will not tolerate violations of its dominance in the former Soviet region has grown resolute. Moreover, he pointed out that common national interests are decreasing because of factors such as U.S. demand for Russian energy resource dwindling due to shale gas development.

On the implications for South Korea, Dr. Eom emphasized that, recently, Korea-Russia relations
Session 3, titled “Reordering the Middle East,” focused on the range of issues currently undermining peace and stability in the Middle East. Panel moderator Dr. Jang Ji-Hyang, a Senior Research Fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, began the debate by asking the speakers for their opinions on what are the most urgent or critical issues under the theme of reordering the Middle East. She then followed up with a question on the policy implications of said issues for East Asia.

The first speaker, Salam Fayyad, former Prime Minister of Palestine, admitted to being initially taken aback by the words “order” and the “Middle East” being in the same sentence. As he said: “When it comes to the Middle East, any derivative of order does not apply, for the region is in a constant state of turmoil and upheaval.” This chaotic situation is expected to continue into the future without a clear end. In response to Dr. Jang’s question, Dr. Fayyad emphasized that he could not uniformly apply certain features across the entire region. However, he was able to pinpoint two salient traits. The first was a deficit in good governance, meaning that the region was run by powerful figures within weak government structures. This lack of check and balances against executive power allowed a handful of strong men to have complete monopoly over the public space. Secondly, Dr. Fayyad brought up the deficit in opportunity. Exemplified by incredibly high rates of unemployment among youth and extreme poverty, much of this region is characterized by a lack of socioeconomic mobility.

Dr. Eom pointed out that if Russia is willing to be integrated into Asia, it should focus more on strengthening its economic foundation in Asia. In turn, he explained that the United States should not take such an endeavor by Russia as an anti-American maneuver, but rather as an enhancement of pragmatism that is in the interest of the United States. Given Kim’s visit to Moscow, U.S. support for this kind of pragmatic approach will also facilitate South Korea’s Eurasian and reunification policy.

During the question and answer session, questions on Russia’s turn to Asia and the possibility of Kim Jung-un’s visit to Moscow were made. On Russia’s turn to Asia, Dr. Suslov commented that the United States limiting Russia’s outreach towards Korea and other countries will only make China stronger. Dr. Rozman replied that the United States, who is hoping for constructive cooperation, should be encouraging Russia to get along with countries in the Asian region as long as it makes peaceful commitments.

Dr. Eom acknowledged Russia’s pivot to Asia as its opportunity to take a positive role in the Asia-Pacific. It would also provide the change to put more leverage against Pyongyang by allowing Russia to exert a positive influence on the North Korean nuclear issue. He noted that Russia does not have a policy to protect North Korea nor does it agree to a split in the trilateral alliances of Russia-China-North Korea and U.S.-Japan-South Korea.

Dr. Eom pointed out that if Russia is willing to be integrated into Asia, it should focus more on strengthening its economic foundation in Asia. In turn, he explained that the United States should not take such an endeavor by Russia as an anti-American maneuver, but rather as an enhancement of pragmatism that is in the interest of the United States. Given Kim’s visit to Moscow, U.S. support for this kind of pragmatic approach will also facilitate South Korea’s Eurasian and reunification policy.
Fayyad mentioned the deep sense of injustice and anger that is tied in with the region’s tumultuous history. Bringing up examples such as the Gulf War and the worsening Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he stressed that many incidents or events that took place in the Middle East never received the appropriate attention or resolution; there was never an end. Consequently, one sees a rise of organizations that represent nothing but destruction and grotesque violence, such as Al Qaeda and ISIS. Even worse, these groups are able to evoke pockets of sympathy and pity for they could be seen as physical manifestations of regional anger and feelings of injustice. As such, anything short of a serious resolve to address the issues at hand will not promote change.

Pepperdine University Professor Karen House brought up the fundamental lack of interest in the Middle East as detrimental to America and the wider community. This prevents the United States from engaging with the region in a productive and fruitful way and can lead to severe consequences. Using this point to voice her criticisms on Iran’s nuclear agreement, she lamented that the United States was narrowly concerned with trying to establish Iran as an unlikely partner without consideration of the ensuing consequences. In Professor House’s view, the Obama administration was mistaken in trying to replicate Nixon’s opening to China through diplomacy with Iran. The Iranian nuclear deal that emerged concedes too much by allowing Iran to continue its uranium enrichment programs, and its weak security dynamics empower the country’s hegemonic ambitions: “The winner of the Iran nuclear agreement is Iranian hegemony. The loser is U.S. credibility.” Consequently, she predicted that individual Middle Eastern countries will respond by more actively organizing for its own defense and influence in the region.

Kwon Hee-seog, Director-General of the African and Middle Eastern Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Korea, added to the conversation that the Middle East is undergoing a great transformation that has resulted in numerous transitional and new crises. While the nuclear deal with Iran may provide an opportunity for reordering the Middle East, for better or for worse, the outcomes are contingent on how Iran responds. On one hand, Iran can become expansionist and try to project its influence and assert its authority across the region. On the other hand, Iran could choose to act as a stabilizer and pacify the Shia belt, consolidating its leadership position in the Shiite world and balancing against Sunni powers and extremists such as ISIS and the Taliban.

Dr. Sinan Ulgen from the Centre for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies brought up the fact that the Middle East is in a deep crisis of legitimacy, which goes back for centuries. As he put it: “Countries in the Middle East were created by people drawing lines on a map.” Thus, building order to ensure lasting legitimacy is a tough task. In this vein, Dr. Ulgen explored the U.S. role in the Middle East. The first point he had to make in this regard was that the United States had to be humble and not upend a social order that can’t be built in a reasonable period of time. The United States should also reconsider the feasibility of state-building and recognize the differences from building legitimacy in Iraq; the United States can be at times blinded by these past experiences and try to apply them where they don’t fit. Moreover, Dr. Ulgen stressed that the international community can help mitigate the situation in the Middle East by relieving economic burdens and humanitarian crises. While little can be done from the outside to address the domestic turmoil from lack of authority and legitimacy, outside actors can address the spill-over effects.
Session 3, titled “Reordering East Asia” began with an introduction by Mr. Simon Long from The Economist. Starting with a brief review of East Asia’s path towards modernity and its visions in the present and future, Mr. Long asked each speaker to comment freely on the topic.

Mr. Eric John, President of Boeing Korea, distinguished two categories of diplomatic and economic engagement to measure change and shift in East Asia. Remarking that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is “huge,” he noted that the current trend towards moving from a network of bilateral relations to a comprehensive, multilateral agreement was the most important paradigm shift in the East Asian order. In the same vein, other multilateral frameworks such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Six-Party Talks are also meaningful with an East Asia that is increasingly interdependent. In regards to U.S. engagement with China, Mr. John warned that media coverage of the relationship focuses on matters of confrontation, but largely ignores the sheer breadth of engagement and cooperation that actually takes place between the two nations at all levels of government and society.

Professor Kikuchi Tsutomu of Aoyama Gakuin University agreed that what is occurring in contemporary East Asia is a paradigm shift rather than a power shift. He noted that “power” is more complex than a U.S.-China dichotomy, and that there are regional middle powers such as ASEAN (“small countries, one great player”) and South Korea who hold “substantial bargaining power.” Support from Asian nations is crucial for either China or the United States to have legitimacy in their regional dominance, Dr. Kikuchi argued. With regards to regional institutions, he commented upon the difficulties of the time frames for establishment and success: strategies take time to unfold, but anxious allies demand quick results. He also expressed that the most important immediate challenge in East Asia was the rapid conclusion of the TPP. This would change the perception of Asian nations towards the United States.

Dr. Charles Morrison from the East-West Center stressed the importance of having a security community. Is it possible, and if so, how could we have a region where war becomes “unimaginable” within the next few decades? Dr. Morrison argued that economic integration is an essential part of this process and that multilateral institutions matter even when they fail to make great strides economically. The role of providing a space for leaders to mingle is meaningful in itself. Echoing the words of Mr. Stephens from Plenary Session 3, he argued that the United States is “indispensable” but “insufficient” in this process. Further cooperation is key to solving three key issues: territorial disputes, North Korea, and interpretations of WWII history.

Next, Professor Ren Xiao of Fudan University provided the audience and panel with a Chinese perspective. Giving the example of how IMF reforms encompassing further integration of developing countries were blocked in Congress five years ago, he stated that the United States is “not constructive.” The AIIB is merely China’s alternative to “meet the demands of the developing countries in the region.” Dr. Ren criticized Obama for misreading the establishment of the AIIB as a threat and pressuring allies in the region not to join. He argued that existing institutions need reform, and that the G20 needs to be revitalized. Dr. Ren advised that the United States can do better by working with China rather than seeing China as a challenge to its hegemony and power in Asia.

The last speaker, Professor Sohn Yul from Yonsei University, examined the role of Prime Minister Abe and Japan’s policies in influencing the region. As Japan increasingly takes a more proactive role in security, it has contributed in both positive and negative ways to the region. Professor Sohn voiced concerns over “securitizing issues that should not be over-securitized.” For example, he explained that Chinese concerns over the TPP were virtually non-existent before 2012, until
Japan began considerations for joining. It was only then that China became more assertive about “undoing” the TPP. Professor Sohn also stated that as an important middle power in the region, Korea must do more to improve relations with Japan. The unholy “anti-history alliance” of Korea and China that seems to be forming in recent years is impeding trilateral relations among the United States, Japan, and Korea. Nevertheless, Professor Sohn was also critical of Prime Minister Abe’s “somewhat reluctant” stance to support the Kono and Murayama Statements.

The Q&A session focused on further exploration of the capacities of both the TPP and the AIIB, as well as reflecting upon the roles of other multinational institutions.

Session 4, titled “Never Been Worse? Korea-Japan Relations,” explored whether the recent deterioration of relations between Korea and Japan was truly the “worst” relations have ever been in history and the reasons that contributed towards decline.

Mr. Martin Fackler, the Tokyo Bureau Chief of The New York Times, began by exploring the notion of whether relations have “ever been worse.” He points out that they are indeed the worst they have been in his career; there have been no summit meetings in recent years and mutual negative sentiments are remarkable considering the shared ground in cultural identities and strategic concerns of the two nations.

Professor Alexis Dudden of the University of Connecticut drew attention to the fact that 2015 is being framed as the seventieth year of South Korea’s liberation from Japanese colonial rule rather than the fiftieth anniversary of normalization of relations between the two nations. She explained that discourse of historical contentions is often not about history but about competing memories. This contributes to why the United States cannot play a role as a mediator in these tensions, as the United States itself is implicated in this narrative of memory. With regards to the lack of summit meetings, Professor Dudden suggested that Prime Minister Abe visit Seoul to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Korea-Japan normalization.

Next, Professor Park Cheol Hee of Seoul National University observed that the current decline of bilateral relations has not been unprecedented, and explained that recent years have
The panel also warned that Koreans should be more accepting of and give enough credit to Japanese efforts for reconciliation. Mr. Snyder added that the United States should play the role of the moderator, who “established the guard rails” so that bilateral relations do not deteriorate further.

Mr. Fackler concluded the session with a summary of the “three layers” of issues in Korea-Japan relations: geopolitical concerns, domestic politics (nationalism), and the interpersonal dynamic of leaders.

Dr. Nishino Junya of Keio University followed with similar observations. Dr. Nishino explained that the rise of China and the differences between Japan and Korea in their perceptions of this fact was a salient factor in worsening relations. While Japan perceives China as a military threat, Korea not only disagrees with this viewpoint, but sees China as an increasingly important partner in the region. Furthermore, opinion surveys in both states show that mutual affinity is also at an all-time low. Dr. Nishino explained that fatigue and frustrations regarding bilateral problems induce indifference and lack of awareness about Korea’s status as an ally nation. He declared, therefore, that leaders should step away from rhetoric and emotion to show the importance of shared Korea-Japan values.

As the final member of the panel, Mr. Scott Snyder provided us with insights into the U.S. role in Korea-Japan relations. If the United States truly is “back,” the best assertion of its power would be to stabilize the decline of bilateral relations among key allies in East Asia. Mr. Snyder argued that this was a matter that takes precedence over TPP negotiations. He also pointed out the inability and lack of understanding among U.S. policymakers and the danger of attempting “even-handedness” in the likes of Ms. Wendy Sherman and her recent comments attributing responsibility to both Japanese and Korean parties.

The panel then explored a number of different aspects of Korea-Japan relations. Firstly, on the point of the harmful effects of misconceptions and misunderstanding between the two nations, Professor Park and Dr. Nishino elucidated the need for both sides to approach each other without prejudice and suspicion. Professor Dudden followed this with a plea for both sides to understand that both Japan and Korea are democracies and that plural opinions exist.

The Q&A session highlighted a range of subjects, spanning from Japan’s constitutional revision to anti-Korean sentiment in popular culture in Japan. Most importantly, however, the session provided insight into why Japanese apologies were considered insufficient. Professor Park explained that while it may be true that Japan has “formally” apologized enough, there are problems in how Japanese apologies are perceived (“they need to say ‘Sorry,’ rather than ‘Sorry, but…’) and that apologies need to be consistent to carry sincerity. Professor Dudden added to this by quoting Haruki Murakami, who said that apologies should be made until the recipient party “says okay.”

The panel also warned that Koreans should be more accepting of and give enough credit to Japanese efforts for reconciliation. Mr. Snyder added that the United States should play the role of the moderator, who “established the guard rails” so that bilateral relations do not deteriorate further.

Mr. Fackler concluded the session with a summary of the “three layers” of issues in Korea-Japan relations: geopolitical concerns, domestic politics (nationalism), and the interpersonal dynamic of leaders.
Ms. Jane Perlez, Chief Diplomatic Correspondent in the Beijing bureau for *The New York Times*, opened the session titled “Could Be Worse? China-Japan Relations” highlighting signs of both improvement and deterioration of the relationship. Though anti-Japanese sentiments have reduced compared to 2012 levels, and Abe and Xi have had two official meetings, there are still conflicts in the East China Sea and negative reactions to U.S.-Japan defense guidelines in Beijing. The speakers discussed and analyzed how current improvements have been made and their future sustainability.

Mr. Chen Ping, Deputy Editor for the English edition of the Beijing-based newspaper *The Global Times*, argued that the bilateral relationship has not worsened, given the top level meetings held two times in the last six months, continuation of working-level contacts and recent reduction of anti-Japan sentiments in China. However, Mr. Chen noted that the tie is unlikely to be improve in the near future. As he explains, these current conflicts based on historical and territorial disputes are not easy to resolve within a short time span. At the same time, Japan regards China as a threat, while China feels threatened by the U.S.-Japan alliance’s defense measures. Mr. Chen laid out four factors that have shaped the current relationship: 1) Japan’s attempt to revise its constitution, especially Article 9; 2) Tokyo’s ambition to be a permanent UN Security Council member; 3) Japan’s possible attendance in Russia’s WWII ceremony; and 4) Japan’s attitude towards the AIIB.

To improve the relationship, Mr. Chen suggested that the two nations need to identify common interests and integrate them into decision making processes and diplomacy efforts. It was noted that the two countries had previously made efforts to resolve tensions without external interference and that Japan had implemented past political agreements in good faith, such as the 1972 Joint Communiqué and the 1945 Instrument of Surrender. Mr. Chen also underlined the importance of crisis management cooperation.

Ms. Bonnie Glaser, Senior Adviser for Asia in the Freeman Chair in China Studies at CSIS, stated that relations could become much worse. Acknowledging modest improvement, Ms. Glaser finds that the drivers of such change in China’s strategic landscape have begun to shift again. Beijing now sees the China-Japan conflict as too costly, exemplified by increased hostility in Japan, and has dropped Japanese investments. Moreover, as China keeps confronting Japan over historical issues, the possibility of direct collision increases. Ms. Glaser observed that the United States cannot remain neutral as a Japanese ally and suggested that it not try to mediate the situation between Japan and China. However, it was suggested that the United States should encourage the two countries to find common ground for cooperation and establish crisis management mechanisms. She recommended that the United States, China, and Japan revisit the trilateral dialogue mechanism, which came close to being realized in 2009.

Mr. Kato Yoichi, National Security Correspondent at *The Asahi Shimbun*, argued the China-Japan ties could worsen but not for the time being. Mr. Kato listed three incentives for Abe to relax its policy towards China: 1) to deal with political vulnerability and win the September election; 2) to accumulate enough political capital to amend the constitution or the political legacy; and
3) to enhance Japan’s alliance with the United States by not aggravating regional tensions. Mr. Kato pointed to the 4-point agreement as evidence of evolving China-Japan relations that mutually accept “ambiguity” on historical and territorial issues. However, such a tie is still fragile and can worsen at any time. Abe’s statement on the seventieth anniversary can reverse all the improvements made so far, and Xi can utilize anti-Japanese sentiment to restore its legitimacy domestically if Chinese economic performance deteriorates or its war against corruption endangers his domestic legitimacy. Mr. Kato expects that the United States will continue to stand strong behind Japan, simultaneously deterring China’s attempts to isolate Japan in the region and urging the two countries to resolve the conflict.

Dr. Kim Heung-Kyu, Professor in the Department of Political Science and Director of the China Policy Institute at Ajou University, believed that the bilateral relationship can be improved. Dr. Kim focused on five structural factors to assess the future of the relationship: 1) power transition; 2) leadership; 3) legitimacy; 4) U.S.-China relationship; and 5) China’s new diplomatic strategy. Dr. Kim assessed the first three as negative factors that can undermine relations. China’s economic growth, which has already surpassed that of Japan, is expected to continue and destabilize the region. Moreover, the two nations’ leaders are both strong nationalists, who will utilize anti-sentiment to gain domestic supports. U.S.-China relations can go either way as the United States has not yet fully embraced China’s newfound diplomatic influence as a major country since its rise as a global power. He acknowledged that the two countries cannot avoid competition for the time being.
Mr. Yang Xiyu, Senior Fellow at the China Institute of International Studies and Executive Vice President at the Institute of Boao Forum for Asia, said that ROK-U.S. alliance is in the middle of a historical transition as the dynamics on the Korean Peninsula is changing. Commenting on closer ROK-U.S. relations as the result of bad inter-Korean relations, he argued that the two countries’ different strategic ambitions are a source of friction. Thus, the fundamental challenge for South Korean policy makers is how to rebuild ROK-U.S. relations regardless of inter-Korean relations. Mr. Yang also pointed out that the military alliance can either positively or negatively influence Chinese actions, depending on whether the scope of the alliance’s endeavors stay within the boundaries of the Korean Peninsula or goes beyond it as the U.S.-Japan alliance has done.

The last speaker, Professor Sakata Yasuyo, Professor of International Relations at the Kanda University of International Studies in Japan, argued that the Japan-U.S.-ROK trilateral cooperation does exist. For the United States to sustain its influence in the region, it should keep the alliance robust. She also mentioned that a robust alliance with the United States is important for South Korea and Japan as well. Expressing her frustration regarding Korea-Japan cooperation, she said where Japan is positioned within the South Korean strategic mindset is important for future discussions of this bilateral relationship. Professor Sakata stressed that Japan’s security strategy and policy still remains pacifist, and the fundamentals have not changed despite recent developments. She argued that Japan is merely responding to changes in the global and regional security environment. At the same time, she recognized the need for the Japanese government to reassure regional neighbors about its intentions and goals. Suggesting the adoption of additional information and logistics sharing measures and utilizing the China-Japan-Korea trilateral mechanism to engage China, she pointed out humanitarian security and general maritime security matters for possible areas of future cooperation.
Korean Peninsula: The End Game?

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The New York Times

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The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Sven Jurschewsky
Global Affairs Canada

Sydney Seiler
U.S. Department of State

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David Sanger, Chief Washington correspondent of *The New York Times*, moderated Plenary Session IV, titled “Korean Peninsula: The End Game?” The Plenary Session examined whether the Kim regime was nearing its final demise.

Amb. Chun Yungwoo, Senior Advisor at The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, argued that North Korea will not collapse anytime soon. He stated that Kim Jung-un’s dual policy, which emphasizes developing both the military and economy, has been quite successful. He pointed out that the introduction of individual farming and grassroots capitalism has eradicated starvation in North Korea. He also argued that the Kim regime is effectively controlling its elites and was able to reduce the budget deficit by exporting North Korean laborers.

Regarding sanctions, Amb. Chun said that the current sanctions imposed on North Korea will not change the Kim regime’s strategic decisions because the sanctions do not pressure the regime to actually consider giving up their nuclear weapons. He argued that even if the sanctions were a success it would only suppress one-tenth of North Korea’s current nuclear weapons capability. China is technically also “participating” in these sanctions but this does not significantly hurt the Kim regime.

Amb. Chun warned that during negotiations for denuclearization, participating countries must not mistakenly recognize North Korea as a nuclear power. Finally, he stressed that the collapse of North Korea will be chaotic and thus requires much preparation. He suggested that the best option for South Korea is to increase pressure towards North Korea, while also providing security incentives.

Sydney Seiler, the U.S. State Department Special Envoy to the Six-Party Talks, stated that the U.S. pursued a realistic and flexible North Korea policy. He explained that the two-track approach would narrow the choices available for North Korea and would eventually lead them to make the right decision. According to Special Envoy Seiler, every time the U.S. had an opportunity to understand North Korea’s true intention they used this approach. Consequently, the U.S. successfully limited North Korea’s nuclear capacity developments.
Special Envoy Seiler further stated that North Korea must change the perception that Hussein was ousted because he gave up his nuclear weapons. North Korea must reassess whether developing and possessing nuclear weapons would be beneficial for them. Finally, he pointed out that North Korea must remember that the Six-Party Talks is a framework involving all five nations that can provide security assurance to North Korea.

David Sanger asked Dr. Zhang Tuosheng of the China Foundation for International Strategic Studies whether the North Korean collapse will be beneficial to China. Dr. Zhang Tuosheng answered, “Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, regional stability, and reunification of the Korean Peninsula without foreign intervention are key factors of China’s Korea policy.” He agreed that North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests go against this policy. The fact that China considers its relations with South Korea when dealing with North Korea is a new phenomenon.

Dr. Zhang explained that China is able to pursue a two handed North Korea policy. On one hand, they warn North Korea that their nuclear development threatens their own self interest and the region. On the other hand, China pushes North Korea to develop its economy and improve the standard of living for its people. According to Dr. Zhang, most of China’s North Korea experts believe that North Korea will not collapse easily and are worried about how North Korea is continuously testing and developing its nuclear program. He worries that if North Korea continues to pursue its nuclear program, no one knows what will happen in the future. He warned that if the North and South engage in armed conflict, China and the U.S. must avoid getting involved.

Regarding the Six-Party Talks, Dr. Zhang stated that North Korea should learn from the Iran nuclear deal and restart the Six-Party Talks. He argued that if North Korea re-enacts the 2005 9.19 Joint Statement, other participating countries must consider whether the prerequisites were met and resume the Six-Party Talks.

President Clinton: The collapse of North Korea is unlikely and warned that if the Kim regime does collapse, the military will likely have control over the nuclear weapons.
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