

## **Asan Plenum 2019 Panel Descriptions**

### ***G1 or G2?***

Strategic competition between the U.S. and China has intensified. As embodied in the Trump administration's support for the Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept, U.S. strategy to counterbalance the rise of China has become more defined. China's Belt and Road Initiative has raised concerns among neighboring countries about Beijing's intentions. Is great power conflict inevitable? What should the two sides do to avoid the Thucydides Trap? Under what conditions can Washington and Beijing construct a peaceful relationship? What are the implications of U.S.-China strategic competition for international order? Will the American predominance persist? What should South Korea do in the era of strategic competition between its longstanding ally and predominant trading partner?

### ***ROK-U.S. Alliance***

Under the "America First" principle, the Trump administration has revised the KORUS FTA and increased South Korea's share of the USFK costs. Large-scale joint military exercises, including the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercises, were also suspended. In terms of coordinating a North Korea policy, there appears to be a widening rift between Seoul and Washington over how to denuclearize North Korea. With intensifying competition between the U.S. Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy and China's Belt and Road Initiative, South Korea may no longer be able to maintain its policy of strategic ambiguity. Against this backdrop, what strategy should South Korea pursue vis-à-vis North Korea? Will the bilateral working group between Seoul and Washington help bridge their gap on North Korea? What is South Korea's role in the Indo-Pacific Strategy? What should South Korea do to sustain or strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance?

### ***U.S.-Japan Alliance***

China's increasingly assertive behavior in the region has compelled Japan to articulate the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy and promote the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). Whilst strengthening the alliance with the U.S. is a core pillar of its national security, Japan is hedging against the uncertainty in American foreign policy under President Trump, by seeking to improve its bilateral relations with China, Russia, and ASEAN member states. In line with its hedging strategy, Tokyo expressed strong support for Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative. How can Japan reconcile its engagement in the Belt and Road Initiative with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy? What is Japan's role in the Indo-Pacific strategy? What are the implications of Washington's call for a more equitable defense cost-sharing as it relates to the U.S.-Japan alliance and security in Northeast Asia? How can the U.S.-Japan alliance contribute to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula? What is the U.S. role in promoting ROK-U.S.-Japan trilateral security cooperation?

## ***NATO***

The year 2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the oldest and, by far, the most successful alliance in the world. Since the start of 2017, however, there has been a growing division between the U.S. under President Trump and its NATO allies. Some progress was achieved on the issue of burden sharing as Secretary General Stoltenberg promised that non-U.S. member states will raise their defense spending by \$100 billion by the end of 2020. However, important challenges remain beyond burden sharing. How can NATO work to better deter Russian aggression in the east? What is NATO's role in counterterrorism? How can NATO address security threats in new military domains such as the cyberspace, some being linked to 5G risks? What should NATO countries do to tackle these traditional and emerging security challenges in the face of weakening American leadership? On what areas could South Korea as a global partner promote cooperation with NATO?

### ***Collective Memory or Collective Future?***

Collective memory is a useful political instrument in domestic politics. Yet, when used to bolster the politics of us-against-them, it can prevent countries from cooperating even when their national interests are compatible. Under the strategic pressure of the Cold War, former WWII adversaries managed to overcome their existing grievances and reconcile; in some cases, they even became allies. By contrast, historical issues in East Asia remain deadlocked with lingering historical animosity toward Japan. While South Korea insists on historical justice, it also recognizes a growing need for security cooperation with Japan. When values, such as justice and human rights, contradict national interest, what choice should countries like South Korea make? What role should apologies and reparations play in international reconciliation? Which should South Korea prioritize—realizing justice through the settlement of historical disputes or reinforcing cooperation with an emphasis on strategic partnerships? What kind of lessons can East Asia learn from other regions?

### ***North Korea's Choice: Nuclear Issue***

North Korea returned empty-handed from the second U.S.-DPRK summit. President Trump walked out from the negotiations when North Korea only offered to dismantle *Yongbyon* nuclear facilities in return for significant sanctions relief. It seems that the U.S. and North Korea had different notions of denuclearization: the U.S. understood it as denuclearization of North Korea while North Korea considered it as denuclearization of the entire Korean peninsula. After the summit, it became clear that North Korea is at a crossroads between nuclear retention and economic development. North Korean media have so far refrained from openly criticizing Trump, but recent intelligence reports raise suspicions about North Korea's continued nuclear activities. Given the failure of the Hanoi summit, does North Korea intend to go back to confrontation as in 2017? Or does it merely wish to build up its negotiating power? Will the U.S. and North Korea continue the denuclearization process? If so, will North Korea offer to do more? Or will the U.S. change its position? What should South Korea do to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea?

### ***North Korea's Choice: Economic Reform***

Economic development is one of two pillars of Kim Jong-un's *Byungjin* policy. Standing in the way of delivering on this promise is the crippling sanctions regime imposed on North Korea by the international community as of 2016. As evidenced by the Hanoi meeting, North Korea strongly desires sanctions relief. Is this an indication of the impact that the sanctions have had on the North Korean economy? Estimates suggest that North Korea's annual economic growth is between 1 and 5 percent. What explains these numbers? What are the short- and long-term implications of the existing sanctions regime? What does North Korea mean by economic development? Should South Korea pursue economic engagement with Pyongyang? If so, under what conditions?

### ***Nationalism or Internationalism?***

The "imagined community" has become a "plausible community" within the national border. With the end of the Cold War and American preponderance, liberal internationalism had been the uncontested norm. However, growing inequality coupled with the 2008 global financial crisis and the Eurozone debt crisis have led to the rise of nationalism. Indeed, President Donald Trump's aversion to multilateralism has led to the decline of conventional multilateral cooperation. Across Europe, mainstream parties have been steadily losing ground over the past few years to more extreme forces on the right and the left. With Xi Jinping's "China dream," Chinese nationalism has intensified. How can political leaders strike the right balance between domestic political interests and international cooperation? Can ideals tied to universal human rights, individual freedom, and democracy survive in an era of rising nationalism? Will the current multilateral organizations, such as the EU and the WTO, be reformed or disbanded in response to growing nationalist pressures?

### ***Is Democracy in Crisis?***

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many believed Western liberal democracy would last forever. Several decades have since passed and such belief now appears illusory. A series of recent events have challenged the resilience of liberal democracy. Authoritarian strongmen have successfully turned their fledgling democracies into populist regimes in Turkey, Russia, and the Philippines. Even in more mature democracies, the 2016 presidential election and Brexit heightened concerns about the rise of populism. Is liberal democracy in crisis? How can we avoid a democratic system becoming merely a set of electoral institutions without liberal values? How can we deal with the tyranny of the majority? Does social media increase political polarization or invigorate participatory democracy? Can other forms of democracy, such as deliberative or direct democracy, substitute for representative democracy?

### ***Immigrants or Refugees?***

According to recent UN estimates, over 258 million people live outside their country of birth today. The sources of increasing human mobility range from armed conflicts and economic crises to climate change. To promote safe and orderly migration, the UN General Assembly is working on global compacts for migration and refugees. According to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees, countries should admit refugees fleeing in fear of persecution. The scope of internationally protected refugees is, however, limited, and the host state has the final say on whether or not a person is a protected refugee. Further, some states are more reluctant to admit migrants, claiming it would strain their resources and undermine domestic security. By contrast, others welcome them as a valuable labor supply and a source of economic growth. In South Korea, the number of immigrants and foreign workers has steadily increased each year. In particular, the country faced a refugee crisis last year, with hundreds of Yemeni nationals seeking asylum on Jeju Island, sparking a fierce debate over the country's refugee policy. What are the advantages and disadvantages of migration for migrants, host communities, and communities of origin? How should countries distinguish between refugees and economic migrants? Should host states be allowed stronger discretion in their migration policies? Is South Korea socially prepared to embrace multiculturalism?

### ***Values or Interests?***

Today, values that have undergirded the Liberal International Order (LIO) are under attack with the rise of illiberal forces. President Trump's approach to foreign policy emphasizes bilateral negotiations (rather than multilateral institutions) and national interests (rather than shared values). This has caused growing concerns among U.S. partners and the international community about the viability of the LIO, which was built and led by the U.S. At the same time, however, several like-minded democratic countries—the Quad—are promoting the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, which upholds the liberal values of freedom and openness in the face of China's increasing disregard for them in its implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. Is the "China Dream" really incompatible with the LIO? Does China engage in values-based diplomacy? Should governments pursue universal values before interests? Is values diplomacy sustainable and effective in the era of weakening American leadership? How should leaders of the LIO promote liberal values in an increasingly illiberal world order? What should be Korea's choice between values and interests to become "Global Korea"?

### ***Free Trade or Fair Trade?***

Today's multilateral trading system faces serious challenges from the proliferation of preferential trade deals and protectionist trade policies. The U.S. renegotiated NAFTA and the KORUS FTA and is working on new bilateral trade deals with China, the EU, and Japan. The Trump administration is threatening to exit the WTO and levy tariffs against allies. The administration prioritizes "fair trade" over free trade. Some fear that a weakened international economic order would negatively impact the world economy. Others, however, welcome such a move, observing that the WTO has failed to deal effectively with unfair trade practices, such as subsidies through state-owned enterprises, forced technology transfer, and intellectual property rights violations. Is the international economic order shifting its focus from free

trade to fair trade? Will preferential trade agreements serve as a stepping stone or a stumbling block to global trade liberalization? Will the trend of trade regionalization grow stronger, or will there be an eventual return to broader multilateralism? What kind of trade policy should South Korea adopt in the face of the declining multilateral trading system?

### *Arms Control*

U.S. President Donald Trump has announced that the U.S. will withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), which is an arms control treaty with Russia. The rationale behind Washington's decision to pull out of the INF goes beyond an alleged Russian violation of the treaty. Equally important is the need to constrain China that is increasingly challenging the U.S. dominance in the Pacific. Meanwhile, South Korea purchased 40 F-35A stealth fighters and Japan ordered 105 more F-35s and plans to jointly develop a next-generation stealth fighter with the U.S. to replace the F-2 fighter. Are we entering a new arms race? What are the implications of the U.S. withdrawal from the INF for Northeast Asia? Will new multilateral arms control regimes involving China emerge? What are the implications of the inter-Korean military agreement signed on Sept. 19 last year for South Korea's arms buildup?

### *Technology: Competition or Cooperation?*

Rapid technological advancement impacts international power dynamics in various ways. The debate on free versus government-regulated technological development is now playing out in the international arena. Recently, the Trump administration imposed tariffs on Chinese imports as punishment for its alleged theft of American intellectual property. Which is more important – stronger protection of intellectual property or smooth technological transfer for economic development? Beyond such economic considerations, new technologies also pose grave security risks, as demonstrated by the U.S. ban of Huawei's 5G technology. Should state regulators have stronger authority to block new technologies or should new technologies be allowed free access to domestic markets? In addition, to counter the spread of disinformation and illegal personal data collection, some countries have introduced extensive censorship and automated surveillance systems. Would this unduly undermine freedom of speech and internet access? Together, do these developments suggest that the internet will eventually bifurcate into two distinct camps, based on the order to which they belong—liberal or illiberal?

### *CVID or Peaceful Co-existence?*

Since the recent U.S.-DPRK summit in Hanoi, it has become clear that the U.S. pursues a “big deal” approach, under which it would only accept “complete, verified, and irreversible denuclearization (CVID)” from North Korea. North Korea, however, maintains its preference for incremental and conditional denuclearization, deeming it as “the most realistic method for denuclearization.” The significant gap between the U.S. and North Korean positions on denuclearization is not likely to be bridged anytime soon and the negotiations for denuclearization are expected to drag on for a much longer period. Would the U.S. approach

of “all-or-nothing” CVID, combined with the “maximum pressure” campaign, be a more effective strategy to achieve denuclearization? Or, considering the current impasse in denuclearization negotiations, should the possibility of “peaceful co-existence” with nuclear North Korea be given greater attention?