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In Search for Conflict Resolutions in a Turbulent World ——An Overview of the Public Forum of the First Annual Meeting of “North Pavilion Dialogue”

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On the afternoon of December 3rd, 2014, the first annual meeting of “North Pavilion Dialogue” hosted by Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IISS), Peking University (PKU) opened its public forum themed “In Search For Conflict Resolutions in a Turbulent World ” in Yingjie Conference Center. The event was presided over by Prof. Wang Jisi, President of IISS, PKU, and attended by eight distinguished guests including Kevin Rudd, former Australian Prime Minister; Robert Zoellick, former US Deputy Secretary of State; Menon, former Indian National Security Advisor; Wang Yizhou, Vice Dean of School of International Studies (SIS), PKU; Mikheyev, Deputy Director of the Institute of World Economy and



International Relations of Russian Academy of Sciences; Masahiro Akiyama, former under-secretary of Japan Defense Agency; Nabil Fahmy, former Egyptian Foreign Minister and Montbrial, director of the French Institute of International Relations. They had a friendly discussion and interaction with teachers and students from PKU as well as Chinese and foreign media present at the forum. The main viewpoints and contents of the forum are summarized as follows.

1. Security Threats in a World of Uncertainties: Multiple Challenges and Global Disorder

The nuclear issue of Iran and North Korea is one of the key common concerns of all the attendees. Zoellick believes that Iran's nuclear program is the biggest threat to the international community including the United States. Once Iran is armed with nuclear weapons, other countries in the Middle East will have an incentive to develop nuclear weapons, thereby undermining the stability of the entire region and that of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. The long-term turmoil in the Middle East makes it more possible for those terrorists to lay their hands on nuclear weapons, which will surely destabilize the world order. Montbrial also believes that a troubled Middle East centering on Iran's nuclear program poses the biggest security threat to France. However, he adds, this threat could only be removed by cooperating with Iran and bringing Iran into a larger regional framework. Meanwhile, the North Korean nuclear issue, according to Rudd, is the biggest threat to Australia considering North Korea has gained some nuclear capability and has always kept a bad record of credibility. Mikheyev points out that the nuclear issue of North Korea is different from that of Iran since North Korea has made it clear that it possesses nuclear weapons. Thus it is difficult to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through negotiation. What's more, the missile technology of North Korea is

still immature, which will be a threat to regional security. Masahiro Akiyama also opines that North Korea's nuclear program and missile development is Japan's biggest security threat in the short term.

Mikheyev blames the mistrust between the major powers as the biggest obstacle undermining the security of Russia as well as that of the world. This kind of mistrust, he argues, belongs to the old way of thinking and arises from the attempt to gain national interest through balance of power and zero-sum game, which is not conducive to global and regional security in the era of globalization.

There are some strategic disagreements between "hub Nations", as noted by Prof. Wang Yizhou, such as the dispute between Russia and the US on European territory, the differences between China and Japan on the claim of certain islands, the tension between South Korea and North Korea, as well as the conflict between Israel and Arab countries. Instead of being resolved, all the disagreements mentioned above seem to have intensified lately, which could hurt the regional and global security, Masahiro Akiyama identified the shift in the balance of power and the rapid development of technology innovation as the biggest threats to our international community. A shift in the balance of power could destabilize regional security and even lead to military conflict when the rising powers try to challenge the existing superpowers. The rise of China and its tough foreign policies have triggered concerns within Japan and could be viewed as a threat to Japan in the long run.

Some non-traditional security issues also attracted the attention of the guests. Menon believes that the greatest threat for India at country level is extremism and cross-border terrorism. On the international level, Menon adds, the cyberspace deserves our

attention in the near future since it is closely related to every single person and is reshaping our economy and society profoundly. But all of these are happening in a state of anarchy. The energy security is still our long-term threat that could undermine the future development of mankind. Rudd deems climate change as a menacing issue. A mere two degree Celsius rise in global temperature will endanger not only the water resource but also many costal countries, the development of fisheries and many other marine resources, resulting in population movements and even massive destruction for human society. Only through international cooperation could it be possible to solve this problem. Prof. Wang Yizhou noted that such global security issues as “911” terrorist attack, the spread of Ebola virus, and “Islamic State” arise in an unexpected way and pose threats to every country in the world.

Many attendees express their concern for the capacity of the existing international system and international order to address these security issues. Montbrial believes the biggest threat comes from the collapse of the international system. Without unified global action, the interrelated issues within this system could lead to disastrous consequences. For instance, nationalism, currently pervasive all over the world, might spur our governments to take massive action that could bring about a global impact. Fahmi worries most about the possibility of global disorder. Globalization is changing the international system while our governments fail to deal effectively with these changes. What’s more, it is difficult for the international community to confront these challenges together since people always put their own national or community identity in the first place, which in turn gives rise to xenophobia and exceptionalism. We are striving for existence at the price of sacrificing the interests of others. According to Rudd, the current international order faces many challenges at the same time. It’s

already hard enough to tackle these challenges one after another. But now we have to deal with them all together. So as one can imagine, the international system is under huge pressure.

2. China and the World: “perception gap” and the possibility of communication

How would you like China to see your country? In response to this question raised by Prof. Wang Jisi, every guest has shared his comment. Masahiro Akiyama says that though China would criticize the militarism tendency or the preference for the use of force in Japan, this is far from the truth. Japan is one of the most peace-loving nations in the world. Anyone who has visited Japan in person would find it quite different from what they thought before. Masahiro Akiyama hopes Chinese people, especially those youth leaders in China would know about Japan as it is. Likewise, Fahmi believes that the best way to know Egypt is to visit this country in person. Though in the midst of civil unrest, Egypt is still trying to build a modern society, a society that opens to all groups, respects the international standards and also hopes to have some positive impact on these standards. He hopes that these endeavors could be acknowledged by Chinese people. Menon shared a similar idea by inviting Chinese people to know more about the multicultural and diversity of India. India, says Menon, not only has its unique culture, but also more importantly shares the same values in humanity and virtues. It is important for Chinese people to get a full picture of India so as to promote world peace and common development.

At the same time, all the guests express their expectations for China. Zoellick said what China has achieved in the past three decades has brought great influence. The younger generation in China may not only be able to shape the future of China, but also can affect the decisions made in other nations. American students

now are quite concerned about how China would change the international order. People are already talking about the possibility of a new order established by China. The rest of the world would not rest until China sets out its vision. Rudd points out that both younger generations in China and in Australia are increasingly becoming “global citizens”. This does not mean that we are losing our national identity but that global reality and the public goods we shared globally ask for a greater sense of identity as global citizens. Montbrial expresses his concern that China may adopt nationalism if its development hits the bottleneck. He hopes China could tackle such issues in foreign relations as territorial disputes through diplomatic and intellectual resources instead of resorting to nationalism. Egypt, Fahmy says, relies on China to play a bigger role in the economic as well as political fields on the international arena and also wish for a balanced power structure in the international community.

Prof. Wang Yizhou shares with other guests the “Chinese characteristics” that he would like the other countries to know about. According to him, the foreign policies of China now have both similarities and differences with those in the past. The diplomatic goal for Mao Zedong was to overthrow the western system. And later for Deng Xiaoping it was to develop the market economy. China’s new leaders now are more ambitious in making China a world power and spare no effort to achieve this goal. There are two priorities in this diplomatic strategy. One is to gain access to international resources and the other one is to provide more public goods to the global community. The rise of China will drive the future development of the Asia-Pacific region and bring about a “creative growth” in this region, which will attract the attention from all over the world.

3. Facing the Future: is global citizen real or illusory?

The concept of “Global Citizen” raised by Rudd has triggered a heated discussion among all the guests and the audience. Montbrial gave an introduction to this concept and noted that though the real “global citizen” is still rare today, the youth exchange programs are very important and effective to promote the mutual understanding of different countries.

Zoellick, however, believes in no such concept as “global citizen” and says that people are still citizens of their own nations. What we could find, even in Europe, are still a collection of nation states. In the discussion of global governance, the legitimacy of the international system is still more important than the nation states. The influence on policies regarding global issues has to be exerted through political institutions within the sovereign state. Therefore, young people should first get to know the political system of their own nation, to understand the way it functions, and to learn about the cultural background of the international system and that of other countries in order to achieve mutual benefits.

Menon does not think that the existence of “global citizen” and that of “national citizen” are contradictory. Nowadays, many issues are transnational. If isolated from the international community, one nation could never handle its domestic issues properly. That’s why we need cooperation and global perspective when facing challenges. The younger generation, despite the existing differences, is the first generation to have all the resources required by global thinking, including Internet access, information flow, and an unprecedented level of education, etc. Fahmi thinks there is often no choice in being a national citizen or a global citizen. Global issues will arise independently of man’s will. Different generations may have entirely different ways of thinking. Prof. Wang Yizhou quoted a Chinese scholar Fei Xiaotong’s view that the key to settle the conflicts between national and global identities is to appreciate

not only their own strengths but also the strengths of others, and to learn about the cultures, histories and institutions of other nations. Only by doing this could we bring the international relations to harmony.

At the end of the forum, Dean Wang Jisi made the following conclusive points concerning the discussion. To begin with, facing the rise of China, what worries the rest of international community most is not a strong China itself but the diplomatic stand, military actions and the possible policies China may adopt in the future. Secondly, all the attendees to this forum agree that we should solidate and improve the existing international structure instead of destroying it. Last but not least, to flourish in a future full of uncertainties, we should not only rely on the effort, wisdom and vision of this generation represented by the eight guests on stage but also on the younger generation.

This public forum is one important part of the First Annual Meeting of “North Pavilion Dialogue” hosted by IISS, PKU. IISS is aiming to build a high-end think tank platform out of this “North Pavilion Dialogue” to promote the exchange and cooperation between domestic and international peers. This could help China better shoulder its responsibility as a world power and promote harmony, stability and common development of the world.

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