

INTERNATIONAL AND STRATEGIC STUDIES REPORT



OCT 21, 2015

ISSUE. 27

Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Peking University

How to Build the Asia-Pacific Security Architecture An Overview of the Public Forum for the Second Annual Meeting of “North Pavilion Dialogue” hosted by IISS, PKU

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On the afternoon of October 19th, 2015, the second annual meeting of “North Pavilion Dialogue” hosted by International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Peking University (PKU), opened its public forum themed “How to Build the Asia-Pacific Security Architecture” in Yingjie Overseas Exchange Center. This grand event was presided over by Prof. **Wang Jisi**, President of IISS, and Professor of School of International Studies, PKU, and attended by seven distinguished guests, including **Shivshankar Menon**, Former National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of India, Former India Ambassador to China; **Stapleton Roy**, Former US Assistant Secretary of State; **Kim Sung-hwan**, President of Gangwon Art and Cultural Foundation, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Korea; **George Yeo**, Former Foreign Minister Singapore; **Gudrun Wacker**, Senior Fellow in the Asia Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP); **Victor Larin**, Director of the National Institute of Far Eastern History and Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Science;

Wang Yizhou, Vice President of School of International Studies, PKU. They had a friendly discussion and interaction with faculties and students from PKU as well as Chinese and foreign media present at the forum. The main issues discussed at the forum are herein reviewed as follows.

1. The Current situation in Asia Pacific

The participating experts pinpointed that rapid economic growth and the overall stability of international relations are two important features of the current situation in the Asia-Pacific, and hopefully this trend is here to stay for a long period of time in the future. **Wang Yizhou** believes that the Asia-Pacific region remains the world's most active areas of economic development. For the 35 years since mid-1980s, Asia-Pacific witnesses the most rapid development all over the world in trade, people's living standards and social advancement, and it is still very likely to maintain a high-speed and sustainable development for a long term. In addition, the Asia-Pacific region over the past three decades has been peaceful without any major war in spite of some problems and frictions and this peaceful environment is sustainable. Compared with other regions (such as South America), Asia-Pacific can be free from confrontation and focus on development for a relatively long period of time, reflecting the unique feature of the Asia-Pacific region as well as a creative contribution to the world. It is of high importance to figure out how to maintain the momentum of development and prosperity, since it is an important starting point to design the new mechanism for the future of this region. **Shivshankar Menon** believes that since 1970s the Asia-Pacific region has maintained peace and stability, good security situation, and satisfying economic performance, especially for China. Compared with other regions of the world, this region has experienced rapid growth, which is still here to continue. Therefore, a security structure needs to be built to maintain the established prosperity in the future.

Economic development serves as an important driving force for international relations. China and India are important trading partners for each other and their bilateral trade is growing with a value of tens of billions. With both being a fast developing economy, China

and India still share huge potential common interest in investment, manufacturing and other fields. Although the changes in economic structures may lead to frictions, competition is not terrifying as long as both stick to the fair rules, therefore a good momentum of bilateral trade and exchanges will proceed. **Wang Jisi** pointed out that it is a perspective with Chinese Characteristic to combine development with security issues. The economic development of Asia-Pacific has laid a solid foundation for security and stability. Economy and development should be taken into account in the design of security structure in Asia-Pacific.

The rapid development of the Asia-Pacific region has generated a transfer of power. **George Yeo** noted that within 20 years, China's economy will surpass the United States and China will become a counterpart of the US with its ability to use the land, sea, air, outer space and cyberspace resources. By 2050, India may become the world's largest economy. China and India combined will take up 40 percent of the world's population and more than 40 percent of total income. 30 years later, if China and India maintain good relations, the ASEAN countries will automatically maintain good relations with China and India. The total population in China, India and Southeast Asia will account for half of population in the world and therefore the stability in this region means stability for half of the world. That's why the stability of Sino-Indian relation is of high importance, which will benefit Southeast Asia as well as the whole world.

2. Existing contradiction and potential problems for regional security

The transfer of power could lead to a lack of strategic mutual trust among different countries especially between China and the US, which has been a widespread concern of the participants. **Stapleton Roy** believes that the different understanding of international law is one of the major reasons for the current Sino-US disputes. In his view, in accordance with the provisions of international law, only those "islands" above water at high tide can be supplied with 12 sea miles territorial sea while this rule does not apply to the "reef" under water at high tide. Many countries including China have claimed sovereignty over

those islands in South China Sea, and the construction of facilities has turned some under-water reefs into artificial islands. The United States does not recognize sovereignty over territorial waters coming with this kind of artificial islands and holds that the surrounding waters still belong to the free passage of the high seas.

China claims sovereignty over all the South China Sea islands but does not clearly distinguish between “islands” and “reef” and even never clearly defines the legal implications of “nine-dash line”. Chinese people do not know which one above is sought by the Chinese Government. Since there is no authoritative definition of the international community, the problem becomes more complex. However, sovereignty over the territorial sea is closely related with the US Navy and other navies in the sea. Taking no sides on this issue, US supports Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea signed in 2002 and welcomes the early completion of “the South China Sea code of conduct” consultations. The United States attaches great importance to the statement made by Xi Jinping recently, which noted that China has no intention to militarize the South China Sea islands, and also notices China’s resolution to safeguard maritime rights and interests. The United States has no intention or interest to directly challenge China's position in the region but will stand against any direct challenge to the international Law of the Sea Convention and relevant international regulations as well as challenge to the interests of other countries. Only with proper management and control can we avoid the expansion of conflicts and solve the problems.

George Yeo believes that the rise of China has made the United States feel anxious not only because China will surpass the US in GDP figures but also it will pose a threat to “the No.1” status of the United States. After World War II, the United States has been shaping an image of “the chosen one”, spreading its values to other countries and making comments on “the level of democracy” in Singapore and other countries. It is difficult for an ancient civilization like China to accept this kind of judgment. Therefore, the United States worried that once China becomes a major power, whether it will export its values to the world and try to dominate and then replace the United States as the “world police”? However, in **George Yeo’s** opinion, Chinese people

have no intention to sell their own culture to others. China would like to make friends without the need to turn them into the same ones. There are two dimensions concerning the issue of South China Sea. One is the conventional struggle between China and the US. The other is that China's activities in Southeast Asia have threatened the US presence in the region. Philippines and Vietnam have asked the United States to intervene into the South China Sea issue. But the problem is that the involvement of US may make Chinese tougher and the situation in the region more complex to deal with. If the US decides to stay completely out of it, there is no way for Vietnam to weigh against China, which is not in the interests of the US. Therefore, the United States has to answer to the pressure coming from outside and at the same time tries to avoid excessive intervention.

Kim Sung-hwan pointed out the emergence of new security order in Asia. On the one hand, China maintains that Asian affairs should be resolved by the people of Asia, but on the other hand, the traditional military alliance with the United States still persists in the region. Therefore, it is very important to maintain friendly and cooperative Sino-US relations. Chinese people believe that the United States puts forward the "rebalancing Asia policy" and strengthens the alliance in order to contain China. Some people in the United States also suggested that the Asian investment banks have been direct shock to the postwar economic order established by the United States. This shows that mutual doubts are making an impact and the key question is how to weaken this effect. He puts forward three proposals in this regards. Firstly, the "Asian rebalancing" policy should be limited to foreign affairs and also should be conducive to the harmonious and constructive relations between countries in the region rather than exacerbate tensions. Secondly, as two regional powers, China and the United States should take the initiative to build mutual trust over issues of the East China Sea and South China Sea. Thirdly, China and the United States should expand bilateral channels for dialogue and promote public diplomacy, which will lay hopes on the younger generation to solve these issues. **Gudrun Wacker** also said that it is widely recognized that the Sino-US relationship is of great importance. Both sides need the political will to reduce the current distrust by

cooperation between each other.

Other issues affecting the security of the Asia-Pacific region has also been a concern. **Victor Larin** believes that the world has become chaotic mainly for three reasons. The first one is the different views between democratic countries (the United States, Western Europe and Japan) and the rising big countries (China, India and Russia) on the world order and global governance. And the second reason is the contradictions caused by historical issues between the countries and regions. The third one is mistrust between countries and regions. The lack of mutual understanding between actors may exacerbate security issues. The sole security threat for Russia in the Asia Pacific region right now is the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. However, no practical solutions for this issue have been put forward by now. **Stapleton Roy** and **Wang Jisi** both pointed out that there is apparent improvement in Sino-Japanese relations and the two economies have been closely related and interdependent to each other and non-governmental exchanges are quite active. There will be no major conflict in the foreseeable future, which will guarantee a relatively stable Sino-Japanese relationship.

Shivshankar Menon said that a country often takes action basing on its own subjective perception of the situation but not on objective circumstances. Compared with ten years ago, countries in the Asia-Pacific region feel more insecure. Maritime security, terrorism, cyber security and other transnational issues still bother us. **Wang Yizhou** believes that diversity and difference of the Asia-Pacific region has brought some new problems in the development process, which could be called “growing Pains”. For example, with a substantial increase in the volume of trade, there is a variety of new arrangements in the fields of energy, trade, import and export, intellectual property and investment, such as One Belt and One Road, WTO agreements and TPP, etc. And there are often some differences between the existing arrangements and the new arrangements. In addition, some new issues have arisen in non-traditional security areas, such as nuclear proliferation, terrorism, the fisheries dispute, development of islands. And there will also be some tension and problems along with the acceleration of economic growth and social development

within societies. **Gudrun Wacker** said that the rapid flow of the ever-changing information gives rise to a widespread mindset of urgency. People do not look into the future in 15 or 20 years from now but will pay more attention to the current crisis and events. Though time being limited, the regional organizations of the Asia-Pacific region have been slow to take actions, especially for ASEAN who has to adapt to the pace of all its member states and thus a slow response. This may be a problem common to many regional organizations.

3. Security structure: based on existing mechanisms and led by specific issues

Participants generally agreed that there is no need for a new regional security organization in Asia-Pacific. Security cooperation should be based on existing regional organizations and mechanisms, focusing on some existing practical problems. **Shivshankar Menon** notes that the Asia-Pacific economic ties should be converted to links between security on the Asian continent and a mature security order is being formed. For example, the model of One Belt and One Road initiative is trying to build integration of many aspects in economic and trade. Since most countries in the region, including some major powers share profound common interests and most difficult problem are beyond the coping capacity of a single country. The Asia-Pacific region needs a security order. For example, countries in this region have ensured the safety of sea lines of communication and maintained free trade and free movement of goods through cooperation in combating pirates in the Malacca Strait. However, such action is a reaction to the crisis instead of a new international organizations or international structure.

Kim Sung-hwan pointed out that since there is no sign of conflict or revolution, it would be a more realistic option to control conflict. The existing structure should be strengthened to make the principles of the East Asia Summit more adaptable to the reality of the situation. **Gudrun Wacker** believes that we should activate the existing international mechanisms, such as the ASEAN East Asia Summit (ASEAN +8) established on the basis of ASEAN, whose members are important actors in this region. It is a good starting point. ASEAN Regional Forum and a series of ASEAN-led forums should work better

with other multilateral mechanisms in the region such as East Asia Summit to improve work efficiency and put the non-real-traditional security and other important issues on the agenda. The most important thing is not the resolution to solve the conflict immediately, but how to deal with the conflict and incidents when they happen. Therefore, we need to advance the development of practical principles and mechanisms and countries in this region need to have enough political will to use these mechanisms. According to **Victor Larin**, Russia also advocates that the security construction in Asia Pacific should be based on existing institutions such as ASEAN, SCO, CICA, etc., while strengthening bilateral relations between Asian countries. **Wang Yizhou** noted that tensions should be prevented from escalating to serious confrontation. What is urgent is to open a comprehensive regional process of development, security and cooperation instead of establishing an organization or mechanism. Maybe five or ten years from now, the proposal of this dialogue can indeed grow into a stable regional structure of security and cooperation.

Wang Jisi points out in his summary speech that from the discussion on the meeting and forum, we can sense the confidence of participating countries to coordinate their different views on certain issues. He hopes to see broader, more detailed and more profound professional thinking on national strategy in the future.

This public forum is one important part of the Second Annual Meeting of “North Pavilion Dialogue” hosted by IISS, PKU. This version of “North Pavilion Dialogue” focuses on the security structure in Asia-Pacific where 14 international guests and 11 domestic guests are invited. **Dai Bingguo**, former State Councilor and honorary President of IISS, PKU attended all meetings and discussions except the public forum.

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