

Summary

Brief Remarks

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Roundtable Discussion

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ROK in the Context of Northeast Asia

An Overview Britain's Foreign Policy Agenda

Following the initial welcoming remarks from Chair Chun of the EAI, the discussion began with comments from the U.K. delegation, which provided an overview of the UK foreign policy considerations with respect to Northeast Asia. From a strategic standpoint, it was explained that the primary concern for Britain was stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The delegation explained that the maintenance of stability and peace relates to UK's strategy toward the 'emerging powers' in the region that are now being increasingly considered as a global center for development and wealth. Therefore Britain is focusing on developing networks and fostering relationships with such countries, old and new friends alike. The delegation pointed out that the British defense strategy needs to fit within this framework as well. Under this premise, the delegation explained that South Korea was one of the countries that UK would like to engage further. The final consideration mentioned by the delegation was that the British are looking to rapidly recover from the position of economic turmoil it found itself in the aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2008. According to the delegation, the need for rapid economic recovery was described as the British pursuance of its own 'prosperity agenda'.

In terms of this prosperity agenda, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in Britain work within a policy framework that crosses over different departments of the British civil service. This includes working with the Cabinet

Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Trade and Industries, and a whole host of other departments in Whitehall. Under what is termed as the 'International Defence Engagement Strategy' (IDES), therefore the defense plan of the UK is aligned with wider goals of developing influence in the international realm. The delegation explained that such an approach can be seen as the British version of the U.S. concept of "International Military Cooperation." The effect of this is that the MOD does not make policy in isolation and the interests of Britain as a whole must be taken into consideration in foreign affairs and defense strategy. Therefore, UK military engagement under the IDES concept plays a dual function; one is to mitigate threats against allies and act as a buffer against events that threaten to compromise UK values internationally, and the other is to open doors of engagement and bilateral partnerships. In other words, it also functions as a key to opening up potential international markets.

Security Demands on the Korean Peninsula and Asia

In terms of issues on the Korean peninsula, the delegation thought, from the standpoint of Europe and Britain, North Korea and the Kim Jong Un regime looks sufficiently stable to endure at this historical juncture. However, it seemed to them that the issue of North Korea is often considered as a blocking point in the South in which it finds difficult to engage with the North as well as on issues to do with China. Moreover, the delegation felt that the poor rela-

tionship with Japan is of great concern for the stability of the region as a whole. It appears that this part of the world does not stick-out as a place where cooperation on security matters is a naturally occurring phenomenon.

Discussants from the Korean panel were keen to know whether the British delegation felt that the security arrangements in Europe may be transferable to the Asian region. To which the British delegation highlighted the unique historical experiences of Europe; at the conclusion of the Second World War, centuries of fighting and millions of deaths served as a major tipping point and catalyst for the drive toward regional cooperation. Whether Asia had reached this tipping point in its relations remains to be seen. From the delegation's perspective, the security arrangements in Europe did not seem to be exportable to Asia as there were also uniquely prevailing forces here at present; and one such issue being that of Nationalism. It had been noted by the British that there are no security structures in place in this region, and forming a cooperative network among parties such as South Korea, Japan, the U.S., as well as Russia and China would make a lot of sense. Another interesting point is that it does not appear that there is any movement toward wider economic or political union in the region.

The panel discussants and the British delegation spoke in detail about the problem of North Korea as well. The question was posed as to whether the Six Party Talks or their resumption was firstly needed and whether they may have an effect on the North's behavior. If they were to be resumed, under what terms would the Six Party Talks be based on? And would the North even agree to the idea of restarting Six Party Talks considering that the main goal of the forum is to denuclearize North Korea. Another issue raised was whether anyone was sure as to what behavior in particular the international community wanted to change. And are they confident that this is the best strategy to take. This in itself was a difficult proposition to have to grapple with.

Korean Unification, the Future of the Region and Possible British Involvement

Related to unification, the question was posed as to whether the younger generation in Korea actually desired it. To which a definitive yes was given by the Korean discussants, however it is a yes tempered with concerns of costs and long term pain that the South will need to incur. Additionally, with the issue of North Korea it was also asked whether the experience of Iran and the P5+1 arrangement held any lessons for the Korean Peninsula. The British delegation believed that there were a unique set of circumstances that broke that situation open with Iran. There is now a leadership in Iran that is willing to negotiate. Regional factors were very contingent as well. At present it is too difficult to even try to understand for sure the defense calculus of North Korea. And the conditions seem far too hostile for such a similar situation to occur here.

Another question which piqued the interest of many on the panel was related to whether the UK would provide peacekeeping troops in the event of a sudden collapse of the regime in North Korea. To which the British delegation answered that policymakers in Whitehall would respond by asking for different options, and evaluating the possible role the UK could have, also what shape it would take before making a concrete decision as to British involvement.

The role of Korea in brokering peace between China and Japan over issues of revisionism and territory was a topic of discussion also broached in the roundtable. The panel discussants responded by placing the ball squarely in China and Japan's court. Saying that much depended on the actions undertaken by both parties, China had to make it clear that it intends to rise peacefully and Japan should not do anything to preempt and therefore self-perpetuate a climate of conflict. Specifically, the panel believed that Abe's revisionist policies were not representative of Japan as a whole, and only denotes the position of the far-right in the nation. However his success depends heavily on whether the economic reforms of 'Abenomics' proves to be successful. If it fails, so too will the influence of the far-right. For Korea it would be most important for Japan to acknowledge the pitfalls of historical revisionism and seek meaningful ways to promote regional stability and cooperation down the road. ■