

인터뷰
커트 캠벨 · 전재성

개요

미국이 ‘아시아 회귀전략’을 수립하는 데 핵심적 역할을 한 커트 캠벨(Kurt Campbell) 전 국무부 동아태차관보(이하 직함 생략)가 전재성 EAI 아시아안보연구센터 소장과 만나 북한 및 동아시아 정세에 관해 대담을 나눴다. 캠벨은 먼저 북한 정권이 내포하고 있는 불확실성이 잘못된 정세판단으로 이어질 가능성을 경고하고 한국이 북한과 지속적으로 대화를 모색해 나가되 중국 등과도 긴밀한 논의를 진행해 나가야 한다고 주장했다. 절대 다수의 한국인들이 오늘날 한미동맹의 필요성을 지지하고 있다는 점을 상기시키면서도 캠벨은 통일 이후 한미관계는 결국 한반도 국민들이 결정할 문제임을 분명히 했다. 그렇지만 미국은 한반도 통일 이후에도 동아시아와 관계를 지속적으로 유지·발전시켜 나갈 것이며 미국의 미래는 여전히 아시아 태평양 지역과 함께 한다는 점을 캠벨은 강조했다. 그는 중국의 부상이 미중경쟁을 초래함으로써 지역 내 국가들이 양자택일의 기로에 서게 될 것이라는 생각은 잘못되었음을 지적하고, 오히려 미중 양국과 모두 좋은 관계를 발전시켜 나가는 것이 효과적이라고 평가했다. 이러한 관점에서 미국에게 한일관계나 중일관계 개선은 바람직하며 그러한 과정 속에서 미국이 좀 더 많은 역할을 할 필요가 있다고 캠벨은 주장했다. 다만 아시아에서 나타나고 있는 국가주의적 대외인식은 지역 내 협력을 어렵게 만들기 때문에 한국을 포함한 국가들이 이러한 인식이 초래하는 부정적 효과를 완화시켜나가야 한다고 주장했다.

“북한은 오판에 따른 도발로 인해 스스로 피하고자 했던 위기상황을 초래할 수 있으며 그 위험성은 최근 더 높아진 것으로 봐야.”

“미국과 중국은 이웃 국가들에게 양자택일을 기대하거나 강요하고 있지 않으며 오히려 아시아 국가들이 미중 양국과 모두 좋은 관계를 유지하는 것이 자국 국익에 도움될 것.”

북한의 전략적 계산

- 북한 정권이 보여주는 행태가 본질적으로 예측이 어려운 것은 사실이지만 도발을 포함한 일련의 움직임들이 정교한 전략적 계산에 따라 이루어져 왔음을 인식할 필요가 있음.

스마트 Q&A는 관련 분야 전문가와의 질의응답을 통해 현안에 대한 시의적절하고 심도 있는 분석을 제시하고자 합니다.

100-786
서울특별시 중구
을지로 158 (을지로4가)
삼풍빌딩 909호
동아시아연구원

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- 북한 정권은 한반도 내에서 전면전이 발생할 경우 한국과 미국이 압도적 전력으로 자신들을 붕괴시킬 수 있다는 점에서 군사도발과 같은 확전지향적 행동들이 스스로의 전략이익과 부합하지 않다는 것을 알고 있음.
- 다만 북한 정권은 최근 들어 자신들의 도발행위가 자칫 전면전으로까지 확대될 수 있다는 점을 간과하는 듯한 모습을 보여 국제사회의 우려를 사고 있으며 이러한 잘못된 전략적 계산이 계속될 경우 한반도 정세는 더욱 위험하고 우려스러운 형태로 전개될 가능성이 높음.
- 북한의 중국 의존도가 높은 상황 속에서 한국 정부는 한반도문제에 대해 중국과 지속적인 대화를 나뉘어야 하며, 이를 통해 한반도 유사시 미국을 포함한 주변국들이 중국이 우려하는 조치를 취할 지 모른다는 우려를 불식시켜야 함.

지역 정세와 한반도 통일의 미래: 미중관계와 동북아시아

- 한미동맹은 그 어느 때보다 강한 결속력을 보여주고 있으며 이는 한반도 통일 이후에도 지속될 것으로 기대됨. 그러나 통일한반도와 미국의 미래 관계는 최종적으로 통일한반도 국민이 결정할 사안임.
- 아시아에서 가장 영향력 있는 국가들은 미국, 중국과 모두 좋은 관계를 유지하고 있는 국가들이며 미국과 중국 정부는 이웃 국가들에게 어느 한쪽을 선택할 것을 기대하거나 강요하지 않고 있음.
- 미국은 ‘아시아 회귀 전략’에 따라 앞으로도 아시아 지역에 대한 관심과 집중을 이어나갈 것이며 이는 미국 정부와 의회는 물론 재계 등 다양한 그룹으로부터 폭넓은 이해와 지지를 받고 있음. 21세기 들어 미국이 전세계 각처에서 여러 형태의 위협과 도전에 직면하고 있는 만큼 각 이슈에 대해 관심을 갖고 효과적으로 대응할 수 있는 지혜가 필요한 시점임. 그 중에서도 아시아 태평양 지역은 미국의 미래에 가장 큰 영향을 미치게 될 것임.
- 악화된 한일관계와 중일관계를 두고 미국이 계속 아무런 조치를 취하려 하지 않는다면 동맹국들을 포함한 동북아시아 국가들은 미국과 거리감을 느끼게 될 위험이 있음. 따라서 미국은 한일관계는 물론 중일관계까지 개선되기를 바란다는 신호를 적극적으로 전파할 필요가 있음.
- 한국을 포함한 아시아 국가들은 국가주의적 대외인식이 심화될 경우 지역 내 협력이 더욱 어려워진다는 점을 직시하고 이러한 인식이 초래하는 부정적 효과를 경계하고 완화시켜나가는 노력이 필요함.

대담록 (요약본):

North Korea's Strategic Calculations

“North Korea could inadvertently miscalculate, and trigger the type of crisis they seek to avoid. [...] They are finding it more difficult to figure out exactly where that line is.”

Chun: Starting with North Korea, in the last interview with the Wall Street Journal, you said “the North Koreans have been very careful, they know exactly how to walk right up to the wire and not to trigger a crisis”. I think this is a very accurate observation of North Korea’s behavior. Can you evaluate how both the South Korean and American governments are doing in terms of deterring North Korean provocations?

Campbell: I think the United States and South Korea, at a fundamental level, have done an outstanding job. We have maintained peace and stability on the peninsula for over forty years. And during that period, South Korea has become one of the most dynamic and innovative countries on the planet, with a robust, thriving democracy and civil society, whereas North Korea has become one of the most brutal, backward, retributive states on the international scene. At the same time, North Korea plays a weak hand very effectively: it prods, it pokes, it creates specific crises in a way to understate and underscore their power, and it attempts to get the United States and South Korea to feel impotent about North Korea’s power. And they’ve done it again and again. The worry is that, that approach requires very delicate calculation and design of provocation. My worry is that in South Korea there is a growing sense, in the armed forces and elsewhere, that if they’re tested, they’re going to respond. And so, North Korea could inadvertently miscalculate, and trigger the type of crisis they seek to avoid. I think North Korea knows fundamentally that if a conflict is started on the peninsula under any circumstances, their regime would disappear. So it’s not in their strategic interests to take it over the line. But at the same time, they are finding it more difficult to figure out exactly where that line is.

Chun: Even though we have some hopes for unification, if North Korea under Kim Jong-un is able to sustain itself for some time then it’s very hard for us to bypass North Korea. Especially as you said we need to put more pressure and give them some incentives towards denuclearization, reform and opening. So how do you expect short term or mid-term resilience of North Korea’s regime, and what are the basic guidelines?

Campbell: In truth, it would be difficult to describe how many times, I have been wrong about North Korea. Much of that has to do with the survivability of the regime. I thought in the 1990’s, during the famines, that there was a very real chance that North Korea would go through instability, and of course it pulled through. This is really hard to predict. The nature of the North Korea regime is that it is inherently unpredictable, rather fragile, and dealing with internal forces that we cannot fully understand. So I would be of the view that we should find ways to talk with North Korea, but also recognize that they are facing enormous internal pressures with increasingly much of their wherewithal coming from China.

Chun: How can we engage China in dealing with North Korea?

Campbell: It is important that we try. I think South Korea should try to have some independent dialogue with China. The Chinese are remarkably demurring when it comes to contemplating next steps on the Korean peninsula, but I'm convinced that if we talk they will listen thereby dispelling some myths about what they think the United States or other countries would do in a crisis.

Regional Dynamics and Future of Unification: U.S.-China Relations in Northeast Asia

“It is very clear that neither the United States nor China is expecting – or asking – countries to chose ‘one or the other’. And I think sustaining relationships with both is in the best interests of countries in Asia as a whole.”

Chun: These days, Chinese scholars or officials say to the South Koreans: “After reunification, what are you going to do? Are you going to maintain the alliance with the United States?” Do you have any idea of the relation a unified Korea would have with the United States? The majority here thinks that the alliance is important.

Campbell: Not just the majority, but the strong majority. In fact, you could make an argument that the U.S.-South Korean relationship has never been stronger. Nonetheless, ultimately this is up to the Korean people. We are not going to force alliance or engagement on anyone. We believe that the alliance continues to serve the interests of both nations, and more importantly the region as a whole. I can imagine a situation where we have a range of engagement at various different levels, but I do not believe that the absence of dialogue is in our best interest. So I like your overall approach, I think it is the right way to think about it, and I think most people who I work with, who follow those issues, would say the same thing.

Chun: As a practitioner and a strategist, do you think some dialogue among the U.S., China, and South Korea could be possible, specifically on the issue of the future relationship?

Campbell: I would like to see a number of minilateral interactions, such as the United States, South Korea, and China having some discussions. I think that could be very valuable. Frankly, I would like to see the United States, China, and Japan. We have found it difficult to get China interested in those kinds of formats, and we are not completely sure why. Part of it could be a Chinese ambivalence with respect to anything other than bilateral interactions, or that it wouldn't serve any Chinese strategic interests, but it's clear to me that it is important.

Chun: And in that regard, we welcome the movement by China, the United States last year about establishing so-called “New Type of Major Power Relationship”. Our North Korea policy and inter-Korea relations is quite dependent upon the relationship between the U.S. and China, so hasty theorists may think that there is an inevitability of clash which leads us to an inevitability of choice. I think it is wrong. There are a lot of complex, multilayered relationships, and the North Korean nuclear issue is only one of them. How do you evaluate that term “new type of major power relationship” and how important would China be in terms of the future U.S. foreign policy?

Campbell: Well, let me first say that the countries that are the most effective in Asia are the countries which have good relationship with both China and the United States. It is very clear that neither the United States nor China is expecting – or asking – countries to chose ‘one or the other’. And I think sustaining relationships with both is in the best interests of countries in Asia as a whole. The Chinese are very fond of bullet and boards of banners, such as ‘great power relationships’. I do not in, a kneejerk way, reject these different frameworks. I understand why they are done. My worry is that they obscure the hard work that needs to be done around some specific issues. It is one thing so say ‘new great power relationship’, but what we need is a deep dialogue between the United States and China on a whole range of issue: military issues, cyber issues; etc., so that we are not surprised when the Chinese government takes a different perspective than we anticipated.

Chun: How do you think the Asia pivot strategy will continue?

Campbell: I think there is a broad recognition that it is in the strategic best interests of the United States. There is a tension between these urgent, as well as extremely difficult tasks in the Middle East and South Asia for the U.S., and with the rising American position in Asia. But we must have the wit and wisdom to find the time and attention to focus on what is going to be the dominant issues in the twenty first century. And I believe it is not just the United States government but the business community and the congress as well. There is a growing recognition that this is where our future lies. I do not think we do enough to communicate that to our friends in the region, but it is still nevertheless the case.

Chun: Under that framework, what I am interested in is the change in hub and spoke structure. Inter-spokes relations, such as South Korea and Japan are really important and you said that your “particular view is that the United States should take a leading role in facilitating a closer relationship between Japan and Korea”. Do you have any specific measures in mind?

Campbell: The dominant wisdom has always been the United States should stay out; for fear that we would alienate one or the other. But I think the real issue by staying out, is that now we are facing the risk of alienating both. We need to send a strong message. An idea could be a senior diplomat who would shuttle between the two countries over a period of time, just listening. I think that simple tool could send the message that the United States is very committed to this relationship. We would not have to say much. Ultimately, I would like to see the relationship improve, and as a consequence, a rebuilding relationship between Japan and China. It is not clear, as we talked about, whether China has decided to basically write off Abe, we just do not know. We will have to test that going forward. But I do believe that kind of diplomacy is in our best interest.

Chun: A last, short question: Having said all this, do you have any recommendations for the Korean government or people, about our foreign policy in the future?

Campbell: Well, first, let me say that I am really confident about South Korea. I believe that this new concept of unification is smart; I think South Korea prepares well and has done its homework on this set of issues. My biggest advice is: be clear and firm with Chinese friends, and recognize the role they play with respect to North Korea. I think that what

you need to understand is that we are dealing with a series of rising nationalisms in Asia that will make it much more difficult going forward. And those nationalisms reside not just in Japan, China, and Myanmar, but they lie in South Korea as well. And I think that is going to be an animating feature of the diplomacy going forward. ■

— 커트 캠벨 박사는 아시아 그룹(The Asia Group)의 공동 설립자이자, 최고경영자 및 회장을 역임하고 있으며, 신미국안보센터(Center for New American Security) 회장, 스탠다드차타드은행 이사를 겸임하고 있다. 2009년부터 2013년까지 국무부 동아시아 태평양 차관보로 재직했으며 2014년에는 한·미 동맹 발전에 기여한 공로로 대한민국 수교훈장 광화장(光化章)을 받았다.

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