

Asia Be Self-reliant ——2015 Shanghai Roundtable Forum on Topic "Is Asia Able to Solve Its Own Problem?"

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I. Main present security issues Asia faces

Asia is playing an increasingly important role in shaping the world. There are more and more trade and economy exchanges among Asian countries and they rely on each other. And on the whole, Asia is in a relatively safe environment though it also faces a series of complex security challenges including conventional security challenges and unconventional challenges.

For the unconventional challenges, poverty, imbalanced development, terrorism, religious extremism, natural disasters, pirates, environment and hygiene, climate changes, epidemic disease, human trafficking and drugs are main security challenges facing Asia, which are closely related to social injustice. All the guests believe that these are not only disastrous to the region but also to the world in need of dealing with these challenges jointly.

Most guests hold that the more urgent problem in Asia is the conventional challenges, including the distrust between countries, the issue of Korean Peninsula, and the issue of reconstruction of Afghanistan. Professor Chintamani Mahapatra from Nehru University says that, the conventional challenges in Asian countries include territorial disputes and territorial waters with historical factors, and also the intervene from superpowers, for example, the relations of China and Japan, China and India are intertwined with the factors of history, territorial disputes and superpower competition, which inevitably added to the complexity of the issue. In East China Sea and South China Sea, disputes are also on the rise. So maritime disputes may be the most serious issue Asia confronts.

Masood Khan, former Pakistan ambassador to China pointed out that Asia is a diverse continent in national scale, development level and military power. Asia has confronted some challenges from the past including the Diaoyu Island dispute between China and Japan, issue

Introduction>>

2015 Shanghai Roundtable Forum was held concerning the topic "Is Asia able to solve its own problem?" on 23rd, 2015 in Pudong International Convention Center in Shanghai. About 20 guests from Hindu, Pakistan, Korea, Russia, America and China are together to have a heated and awarded discussion over the issues like "The main security problems now Asia faces" "The ability of Asian countries to solve their own problems" "The role of extra-regional countries like America in solving Asia security problems" "Asia security management mechanism".

of Korean Peninsula, South China Sea disputes, and the reconstruction of Afghanistan, etc. The issues above are knotty and some are even worsening especially in the maritime disputes between China and its neighboring states.

Frank Jannuzi, the president of The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation pointed out that although East Asian countries are closely connected but there are a series of issues and disputes left over by history which added to the uncertainty of China's future. All the different factors may lead to a security dilemma in Asian countries.

Han Yong-Sup, the president of Associate of Nuclear Policy in Korea also believes that there is a paradox of Asia's economy and security. They are closely connected in economy but extremely attached in preserving security. From a strategic point of view, the situation of Asia is like what it was in the WWI. The competition between China and the United States, the militarization of Japan, the increasing Chinese military power, and the DPRK's Nuclear Crisis, all of which harass the Asian countries.

The president of Council on Foreign and Defense Policy of Russia, Fyodor A. Lukyanov states that globalization has brought many changes to the international relations, yet uncertainty still exists. What recently happened in Asia like the chaos in Middle East Asia and Ukraine crisis poses great crisis on Asian security. The chaos in Middle East Asia will not be solved easily and Ukraine crisis make the relation between Russia and Western countries reach a deadlock. Unlike the Cold War Era, Asia now is the central concern of the world as well as of power balance, where any tiny skirmish will lead to huge disaster. In one word, any issue deserves conscientious attention.

II. The ability of Asian countries to solve their own security issues

The scholars expressed that Asia countries should first assume the responsibility of Asian security; yet concerning what measures should be taken to cope with the security problems. For the unconventional challenges like natural disaster, epidemic disease and climate change, the regional and non-regional countries should work together. Yet for the conventional challenges, regional countries have no ability to solve no matter they are willing or not. Therefore they need help from non-regional countries. However, some believe that with increasing power and strength, Asia countries should find more resources and solutions by themselves

rather than rely on other countries.

Mr. Jannuzi holds that there are many problems in East Asia that Asian countries cannot solve due to lack of ability and trust. For example, China and Japan cannot work efficiently to solve the security problem in Asia. Also is the case in the DPRK's Nuclear Crisis. If Korean and Japan were negotiating with the crisis together, they are very likely to develop nuclear weapons on both sides, which is by no means a good result to the entire security. There are also a lot of unconventional problems like pirates, illegal migration, natural disaster and epidemic disease, requiring united efforts from international community to solve. Asian countries should overcome the divergence and conflicts caused by dignity, fear or profit.

Mr. Lukyanov believes that Asian countries must address the issues on their own because there is no such case that a country ever did a favor for another country to solve its security problem. But are Asia countries well prepared? His answer is not yet.

Professor Liu Ming from Institute for International Relations, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences proposes that the main obstacle in solving Asian security problem is the deep-rooted distrust. When making policies and strategies, Asian countries usually think of themselves only with even hardly considering other countries. The result of this pragmatically mindset is a deterioration of the regional relations, which can be no helpful at all in solving the discrepancies and conflicts.

Han Yong-Sup points that Asian countries are more active in their efforts to combat security challenges, and also come up with many constructive suggestions and are cooperative than before. But he emphasizes that Asian countries are still limited in their ability to solve the conventional security issue for big powers lacking of mutual trust while medium and small countries lacking of capability. ASEAN only has limited function as a regional international organization that still needs assistance from non-regional countries like the United States.

Khan points out that Asia develops quickly in national economy strength, the ability to solve their own problem also needs enhancing. In particular, the “Belt and Road” initiative proposed by China has boosted the economy and improved regional security. He also adds that the future of Asian countries should be in their own hands rather than relying on other countries, i.e. more intensive cooperation in Asia are needed for more regional stability.

The researcher Zhao Gancheng from the Institute of South Asian Studies, Shanghai International Studies Institute believes that Asian countries can resolve the safety problems they are facing. America retreated from Middle East and Afghanistan and shifted its focus on East Asia Sea, which provides an opportunity for Asian countries to solve their problem on the continent. The key is to build an appropriate mechanism. If it works, all the issues about security will be resolved. In particular, recover and reconstruction of Afghanistan will be a test for Asia more than a challenge.

Professor Wu Xinbo, deputy dean of Fudan International Studies Institute, indicates that Asian countries have become more pragmatic with increasing ability and awareness. Yet the core is that Asian countries should discover a suitable mechanism and build a proper structure to jointly deal with these security issues and challenges.

The former Chinese ambassador to France Wu Jianmin briefly states that Asian countries should find the solution by themselves. Since People's Republic of China was founded, we have long taking that domestic problems should be resolved by its own while global issues be addressed by all.

III. The Role of Extra-Regional Countries in Solving Asian Security Problems

For extra-region super countries especially the United States, most thinks that Asian countries do not reject but fear what they do will make the situation more troublesome instead of contributing help.

Jannuzi maintains that America contributes a lot for Asia's peace and prosperity after WW□ and for a long time America plays an important role in world peace and it can definitely be constructive in East Asian problem-solving process. Besides, as one of the ally country of Asia, America is by no means an extra-region country. Han Yong-Sup thinks that because Asia is still limited in their ability to resolve their own problems, America is therefore much needed in solving Asia's security problems. He also mentions that America has long been an ally of East Asia, so it cannot be excluded from this problem-solving process. Khan also agrees that Asia should welcome America to exert positive effect in Asian issue. The researcher Sun Degang from Institution of Middle East Relations from Shanghai International Studies University states that

the distrust and jealousy between countries largely disturb the security process. And if it continues, it will inevitably disturb the development of problem-solving.

Lukyanov holds that most of Russia's territory is in Asia rather than in Europe although most of main cities are in Europe so it is still an Asian country. In 21st century, Russia should be more active and take more responsibilities in Asia. Unlike Western countries, Russia thinks that Asia's solution is more suitable. Russia has long been worrying that China may become powerful and ambitious but ever since China in crisis with Ukraine, Russia worries now more about Western countries.

Mahapatra reminds us that America's intention to help Asia out with its security problems is not simple and pure. For a series of Asian issues like the issue of Korean Peninsula, the issue of Taiwan, the issue of South China Sea, America has long been intervening, so it is hard to say whether America is actually wants to solve the problem or not.

Doctor Zhao Minghao from Department of External Relations of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party points out that Asian countries should assume the region security responsibility and meanwhile they also want to build constructive relation with America. China hopes to build constructive relationship with America, but America's Asia-Pacific rebalancing strategy barely has positive effect.

Professor Wu Xinbo believes that many of Asian security problems like the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the issue of Korean Peninsula cannot be resolved through force. Instead, we need a more open and multilateral structure which involves more countries in Asia. Certainly, Asia should be the first one to assume responsibility.

Ambassador Wu Jianmin also mentions that America sometime acts too sensitively, assuming that China tries to kick America out, which is impossible.

IV. Security Management Mechanism of Asia

As for what mechanism should be established in Asia, the guests present have two opinions. Some think that the bilateral alliance system that America built in East Asia has exerted positive influence on its peace and economy development. In this sense, it should be well-maintained and expanded in its function to cope with unconventional security challengers.

And if possible, it should also be developed to a multilateral network. Other people think that the bilateral alliance system is the result of the Cold War Era, therefore it should be replaced by other strategies and mechanisms because it fails to meet the demands of current situation in Asia.

Zhao Gancheng points out that we need a bilateral security mechanism rather than a bilateral military alliance in the Cold War Era. The current mechanisms can be grouped as marine mechanism or continental mechanism. The former mainly includes the regional organizations like CICA summit and The Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Asian Council of Security, which includes almost all Asian countries on the basis of the member of the CICA, is mainly in charge of the continental security problem. Among them, China, India and Russia are three main countries. In the future, perhaps, Japan should be included. Whether America should be included depends on the future development Asian Council of Security.

For Zhao's proposal, Khan says that Asia's Security Council should be more tolerant, which means America should not be excluded. The multilateral security mechanism should be equal each country and great powers should not be entitled with any privileges. Mahabod proposes that there should be security dialogue mechanism between China, America and India, or between China and India to reduce suspicions and mistrust between China and India. Multi-dialogue mechanism should also be established among other countries in Asia. But we have to notice that the mechanism should be more tolerant as possible.

Han Yong-Sup holds that from the past history, the military alliance of East Asia really has exerted positive influence to Asia's security and prosperity, which we cannot deny. However with the development of Asia's situation, traditional bilateral military alliance should be expanded to multilateral mechanism.

Jannuzi points out that the value of America's allied chain lies in that hard power is the core to solve the real problem. For example, America's alliance in East Asia has been greatly helpful when facing natural disasters like the tsunami of Southeast Asia and the earthquake in Japan. No country in Asia can solve the problems on its own except America's alliance in East Asia. Yet this alliance is still in the old structure of the Cold War Era, so it needs to be adjusted according to today's situation and become more tolerant. And when faced with unconventional security

challenges like pirates, epidemic disease and natural disasters, America could transform the alliance from a bilateral mechanism to a multilateral one.

Liu Ming believes that America still relies heavily on bilateral military alliance. Although America is in favor of six-party talks, but it's more like a practical solution and a little opportunism. America is very careful and vigilant in its attitude toward China and believes China is a huge threat. If China proposes to build an Asian security mechanism, America won't be very glad because it believes China is going to seize power from itself (America). Therefore it is very difficult for China and America to have talk on Asia's multilateral security mechanism.

Lukyanov wonders in such an era where the political, social and geopolitics situation is hugely different from that of the Cold War Era, is the concept of alliance out of time now? The idea of alliance alone cannot solve Asia's problem. Asia should figure out its own way of resolving problem. Shanghai Cooperation Organization may someday develop into an economy and security organization between Europe and Asia to solve Asia's security problem in a multilateral way.

V. Suggestions

The conference now comes to conclude with what we've discussed above.

First, the level of capacity building-up in Asian countries should be enhanced. Ability building-up is of extreme importance to solve Asia's security problem and keep its peace and prosperity. It includes not only nation governance capacity and economy potential, but also the political, economy and military ability of the major powers in this region to deal with security problems.

Second, cooperation and coordination in Asian countries should be improved. Because of many reasons, many Asian countries lack mutual trust both in strategy and political affairs, which is undoubtedly an obstacle for Asian countries to solve problems together. Therefore, to enhance the communication and cooperation of Asian countries in politics, economy, culture, and security area is extremely helpful.

Third, a risk management mechanism should be built. Many territory disputes and maritime disputes recently are still unsettled in Asian countries, which are obviously harmful to Asia's peace and prosperity,

but also an obstacle for their ability to solve the security problems. Asian countries should build bilateral or multilateral risk management mechanism on territory and maritime disputes.

Fourth, a multilateral security mechanism should be built. Asia lacks an effective multilateral security mechanism to deal with conventional challenges as well as unconventional challenges. Given to the fact that Asia is still limited in its ability and there is distrust and suspicion among Asian countries, the building-up of Asian multilateral security mechanism cannot be completed in one day, but should be built step by step.

The mechanism could be divided into two parts: maritime and continental mechanism to be built. Also, it is suggested to start from unconventional security challenges. The continental mechanism can be based on what already exists currently and gradually make it the main mechanism to tackle the regional security problems.

Fifth, Asia should enhance communication and cooperation between big powers like America. Though America is not one of Asian countries, it has long been important in Asia's politics, economy and military issues, therefore it must be included in the security mechanism building process. Before Asia is willing and is able to solve the security problems, and also before an effective mechanism is established, the role of America should never be ignored, though America may not be right all the time. As America has long been suspicious and defensive toward China, any action that may mislead America to believe China is driving him out of Asia should be given twice thought.

Translator/ Li Mengmeng