



CIGS and Stimson Joint Seminar
**The United States, Japan and the World:
Opportunities and Challenges**
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Date: 25 January, 2017

Venue: 1211 Connecticut Ave NW, 8th FL, Washington, DC 20036

On January 25, 2017, the Stimson Center hosted a panel discussion about opportunities and challenges for the U.S.-Japan relationship, particularly in the context of the Trump administration. The panel was moderated by Yuki Tatsumi, and included Daniel Twining from the German Marshall Fund, Julianna Smith from the Center for a New American Security, Kuni Miyake from the Canon Institute of Global Studies (CIGS), and Ken Jimbo from CIGS.

Twining began by discussing three elements of hope for the U.S.-Japan relationship under Trump. First, Trump has surrounded himself by professionals in his Cabinet. Second, Trump wants to be a great president and will not jeopardize alliances that can help him. Third, Trump's mandate to "shake things up" focused mainly on domestic issues and the economy. Twining emphasized that hearing from allies, including Prime Ministers Shinzō Abe and Theresa May, should hopefully help Trump make good decisions.

Smith responded next, calling the new administration truly "not normal," in that historically, no matter the administration, there would be familiar faces within the high levels of government – but not this time. She also questioned whether the Cabinet, which she feels more comfortable with, will reorient the foreign policy into more "normal" waters, or whether it will be composed of early-morning Trump tweets, or both. She emphasized that the new administration has brought a lot of uncertainty that is worrying allies everywhere, and that even the basic logistical functioning of D.C. is uneven so far. Miyake emphasized that he thinks this is a critical moment in world history, that a larger movement feeds Trump and is willing to tear up important or fragile agreements. Jimbo restated that most people in Japan (and elsewhere) are simply confused. He touched upon Obama's Pivot to Asia, which he views as a military (more partnerships, physical footprint) and economic (TPP) strategy, combined with a closer linking of allies in Asia. Theoretically, it should have worked well, but in the later years of the Obama administration, the pivot fell apart, notably with the end of TPP. ASEAN now does not know where to position itself, even as it historically sought middle ground between the U.S. and China.

Twining stated that he is also very concerned about the uncertainty that the Trump administration is creating in the world. But he also thinks there could be some upsides, such as better cooperation with leaders that are more similar in leadership style to Trump (e.g. Duterte and Abe). He also critiqued the Pivot, stating that it had not delivered on rhetoric. He added that he hopes Trump will commit to a larger military presence in Asia, and that Trump is able to rejuvenate the U.S. economy, which would

really enable the U.S. to be more muscular in Asia. Smith rebutted that the narrative about the Pivot would be different had TPP passed the U.S. Congress. She questioned Trump's ability to sort himself out in a complex network of resets: would allying with Russia to work in Syria also mean allying with Iran, a country to which Trump wants to take a harder line? She stated that the most effective way to convince Trump to continue to work with the alliances and institutions that U.S. has relied upon for decades is to explain their tangible benefits and show how they help the U.S. Miyake brought up the important distinction between a security-nationalist and an economic-nationalist; he was puzzled about which exactly Trump is, and what that would mean for Senkaku or Ukraine. Miyake worried that if Trump proves to be an economic-nationalist, he might bargain away some key security interests. Jimbo followed up with a comment about how we have to convince not only Trump of the value of these institutions, but also the people of the U.S. and the world, who seem increasingly skeptical. He worried though, that Trump will question the foundation of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the U.S.'s commitments in Asia. Without that foundation, the U.S. and its allies cannot effectively deter and send signals to competitors in the region.

Smith discussed the negative tone of the inaugural address, noting that the emphasis on "America First" was not paired with any positive message for the future. In the Bush and Obama presidencies, the pendulum of U.S. foreign policy swung from more to less involvement in the world, and American dissatisfaction with military engagements since Iraq fell as well, issues that Trump must now face. Smith pointed out that as lower level positions at the State Department start to be filled with more "traditional" individuals with experience in Washington and foreign policy, the Trump administration's approach to foreign policy might change. The divide between foreign policy elites of various parties in Washington is not large; rather, the gap persists between the elites as a group and the rest of the country.

When asked about the concern brewing among allies regarding a complete shift in the administration's policies towards them, Twining gave reassurance by stating that most of the new members of the Trump administration do not share Trump's own worldview. While the new staff will not be the people with whom allies are used to communicating, they will still be open to doing business with the allies, particularly as the administration comes to recognize the importance of the U.S. alliance network. Twining also asserted that countries like Japan and South Korea will have the least to worry about, as the new staff will be sure to remind Trump of Japanese and Korean contributions to the alliances, and the burdens both countries have shared over the last few decades. However, he mentioned that the European allies should worry, as their

commitment to the alliance has been questioned even by President Obama, and that it is difficult to defend America's military commitment to Europe against Trump's hardline isolationist supporters.

Miyake tried to find the bright side of the Trump administration by asking Twining and Smith if they see a parallel between Donald Trump and Ronald Reagan, to which Twining immediately disagreed. Twining observed that Trump, having been both a Democrat and a Republican in his time, is simply assuming a role that feeds on part of the country's desire for a populist insurgency. Smith added that, unlike Reagan, Trump has a thin-skinned temperament that will adversely affect his presidency, as it will constrain his ability to interact with other world leaders. She allowed that there may be a brighter side, as Trump is a disruptor who may bring positive changes to old institutions that have resisted change so far.

Following Smith's comments, Tatsumi opened the floor to questions. A representative of Tokyo Broadcasting System asked how Trump and his advisors' negative view on Japanese trade would affect the U.S.-Japanese alliance, and how the Japanese could respond to false statements made by the Trump administration. Twining joked that Japan should be flattered that the Trump administration feels threatened by the Japanese economy, and added that despite Trump's claims about Japan exploiting the trade deficit, Trump will come to realize that America is no longer a manufacturing economy, and the conversation will have to move from trade to investment. When Trump learns that Japan manufactures four million cars in the United States and that Japanese investment has led to a positive outcome on the American services industry, he will come to believe in the alliance. Smith stated that the administration's views on the alliance are a result of a lack of governing experience. When a crisis hits and Trump sees how it is necessary to partner with allies to alleviate the crisis, he will realize the value and indispensability of these alliances and begin to shift his rhetoric.

A representative from Voice of America asked about the effect of the Trump administration on Japan's relationship with Russia. Jimbo answered that due to the changing geopolitics of the region over the last few decades, it is in Japan's interest to maintain good relations with Russia, not just to establish claims over the Northern Territories and investment in eastern Siberia but also to ensure that Japan does not face a Sino-Russian joint force in strategic geopolitical issues in East Asia. Japan intends to take advantage of Russia's diversifying interest in Asia to gain a foothold between Russia and China so they may assist in future strategic developments, just as Russia did with Vietnam in the Paracel islands. Miyake said that there will be no change to

Russo-Japanese ties due to the Trump administration. Even though Trump might bring the U.S. and Russia closer together, such increased cooperation would probably not affect Japan even on issues such as the Northern Territories.

Tatsumi inquired if America's perception of Japan as a good ally would change if Abe moved closer to Russia. Twining replied that one of the significant shifts that will accompany this administration is the changing attitude towards Russia's relationship with Asia. In the past, American allies in Asia were warned not to get too close to Russia, but Trump's alignment with Putin might allow Asian countries like Japan to finally develop a closer relationship with Russia without American interference. When asked how a closer relationship with Russia would affect European ties, Smith said that things were not optimistic on the European front. She pointed out that due to the changing political landscape in Europe, the decision of whether or not to maintain sanctions against Russia has gained supporters on both sides of the argument. While countries like Italy and France are moving towards lifting sanctions, Germany and the U.K. are still hesitant to pardon Putin without clear evidence of progress. Another concern among Europeans is that Trump will go over their heads when dealing with Russia and might not consult them before he makes a decision regarding the sanctions. This will lead to further fracturing of the European continent, which will ultimately benefit Putin.

A representative from the International Center for Terrorism Studies asked Jimbo and Miyake about Japan's reaction to Trump's suggestion that Japan develop its own nuclear force. Miyake replied that Japan would never have nuclear weapons, and observed that Trump has not repeated the suggestion since the first mention. Even if Trump was serious, Miyake argued, Japan would not go nuclear due to its past experiences with atomic bombs. Jimbo allowed for the possibility of a nuclear weapons force in the future, but only if the nuclear umbrella of the U.S. no longer covered Japan; in such a case, Japan would have to develop its own countermeasures to combat North Korea and China's arsenals. Jimbo noted that Japan has already begun to adjust to the changing geopolitical situation in East Asia by acquiring new missile defense systems like the PAC-3, THAAD, and SM-3.

Tatsumi asked about the implications of appointing General James Mattis as Secretary of Defense and the reassuring role he will play in East Asian geopolitics. Twining noted the advantage of having a military man serve as the Secretary of Defense, as this will reassure U.S. allies, and that by making his first foreign trips to South Korea and Japan, Mattis sends a signal that these alliances will continue to exist through the

Trump administration. Twining also observed that the alliances will face unknown terrain and challenges in the future, such as potential conflict with China and cyber conflict. Smith added that Mattis' trip will help maintain the status quo in the international order. However, she warned that Mattis also needs to be active in getting the right people appointed to critical positions, as well as maintain a presence in the Situation Room.

A representative from the Department of State asked for the panelists' opinions on Shinzo Abe's plans to deal with the shifting geopolitics in Asia and what advice they would offer him to deal with these challenges. Jimbo stated that Abe's foreign policy has been to attempt to take advantage of these changes in geopolitics while maintaining the legitimacy of important institutions, such as ASEAN, which has not only helped Japan maintain its edge in the region, but has also helped preserve the liberal international order that was crafted over 70 years ago. While Abe reinvigorated old partnerships, like U.S.-Japan defense cooperation, he also sought new relationships, such as trade deals with China. Miyake supplemented Jimbo's statement by reiterating that Japan was a status quo power and that the fundamentals of its foreign policy would not change. However, he also mentioned that the G-7 summit would be completely different this year as Abe and Merkel would be the only leaders who were present at the previous summit. He stated that this would be a key opportunity for Abe to argue for the importance of the liberal international order, not only on behalf of Japan but also the rest of the G-7 powers. Jimbo added that there were a couple scenarios Japan would prefer to avoid as the U.S. changes its foreign policy in Asia, including retrenchment, emotional responses to precarious scenarios, and a new bargain between the U.S. and China that hurts Japan.

Smith reiterated her earlier point that the allies really have to "toot their horn," specifically highlighting the benefits alliances currently provide, but also adding what kind of steps could be taken to make the alliances even more fruitful. Twining added that Japan in particular should stress its strengths, like Abenomics, Womenomics, and the ways it can help the U.S. with challenges (North Korea, China, Russia), but should avoid romanticizing the past. Miyake added that it was as if Trump needed an "interpreter" to better explain to him the crucial stakes of these complex issues.

An audience member asked how allies would perceive the U.S. differently as Trump made changes, especially considering the Economist Intelligence Unit's downgrading of the U.S. democracy to "flawed," and the potential return of torture. Miyake stated that things would only really change if this became permanent as opposed to a temporary

shift. Smith agreed, stating that torture does not lead to positive results, but only hurts U.S. cooperation on counterterrorism with European allies. It would also mean a significant departure from what Secretary Mattis stated in his confirmation hearing. Twining confirmed this, stating that it was typically military people who opposed torture first and foremost. He pushed back on EIU's report, questioning whether Theresa May was really elected democratically, and whether Brexit was a real example of democratic action, since perhaps democracy varies from country to country.

Tatsumi closed by concluding that we will all, for the moment, have to continue psychoanalyzing Trump, and think tanks have a lot of work to do during the Trump administration.