



CIGS and Stimson Center Joint Seminar
**Post-Election Priorities for
Japan and the United States**

EVENT SUMMARY

Date: September 18, 2018

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

On September 18, 2018, the day before the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential election in Japan and about seven weeks before the U.S. midterm elections, the Stimson Center and the Canon Institute for Global Studies (CIGS) together hosted a panel discussion analyzing the policy priorities of Japan and the U.S. after the elections. Moderated by East Asia Program Co-Director Yuki Tatsumi, the panel featured Kuni Miyake from CIGS and Daniel Twining from the International Republican Institute.

Tatsumi opened the discussion by acknowledging that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was likely to win the LDP election and asking Miyake his thoughts on Abe's priorities for his final term. Miyake noted that Abe has long wanted to amend the Constitution of Japan, but doubted that he could achieve it; instead, Miyake thought that Abe would be preoccupied by dealing with the changing security environment in East Asia, which he argued was largely instigated by U.S. President Donald Trump. Tatsumi then asked Twining to comment on the Republican Party's priorities regarding Asia. Twining said he expected to see significant changes after the midterm elections and hoped for a new consensus on U.S. foreign policy in Asia. He observed that the U.S. had bipartisan support for its Asia policy after World War II, even with strategic errors like the Vietnam War, and argued that consensus will be especially important with the tectonic shifts in Asian geopolitics today. With the U.S.'s enhanced military posture in the region, the U.S. has the hard power to back its leadership in Asia, but the trade element is still missing.

Miyake then elaborated on the changes in East Asia's security environment, contextualizing his analysis as the end of a system begun in 1953, when the Korean War armistice was signed, with the new peace allowing strong economic development in both Japan and South Korea, as well as China's Open-Door Policy, in subsequent decades. Miyake asserted that Trump had begun dismantling the system when he gave North Korean leader Kim Jong-un a measure of international recognition during the Singapore Summit, while receiving little in return. Miyake admitted that he had a pessimistic view of the outcomes of the current North Korea rapprochement: that North Korean denuclearization might be irreversible and that there will be no viable military option to resolve the nuclear issue. The result, thus, would be a nuclear-armed North Korea permanently situated in the middle of East Asia. Miyake asserted that Japan would need to reassess its national security policy in that case, including the prohibition against permitting American nuclear weapons on Japanese soil.

Twining expressed more optimism in the current process with North Korea, though he remained skeptical, recalling North Korea's broken past commitments to

denuclearize. He viewed the Trump administration's progress from threats of a "bloody nose" to negotiations as valuable, and also saw China's anxiety about a U.S.-North Korea deal as a sign of American strategic initiative in the region. Twining argued that the dynamics between the U.S. and China require the U.S. to participate more in Asia, not less, and that means the U.S. must strengthen its relationships with allies and partners. Twining stated that the controversy in the U.S. political establishment was not the alliance system in Asia, but rather how to manage the relationship with China.

Tatsumi invited questions from the audience. Rust Deming from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies asked Miyake to discuss Japan's relationship with Russia. Miyake responded that though Abe is being criticized for a muted response to Russia's pressure to sign a peace treaty before resolving the territorial issue, what is important is stopping a statute of limitations, so to speak, on Japan's claim to the territories despite Russia's longtime occupation, through continuing dialogue. Tatsumi asked Twining to comment on how Putin's efforts to reach out to U.S. allies looks from Washington. Twining observed that Russia was putting significant resources into hot and information wars in the Middle East and Europe, while also selling military assets to China, and he wondered why Russia does not seem to be concerned about China's power.

Gilbert Rozman from the Asan Forum asked why Japan seemed willing to give Russia the benefit of the doubt in dialogues despite the Sino-Russian relationship buildup. Miyake cautioned that the Japanese were not naïve about Russia's intentions, but were rather facing a double threat in the region by handling one at a time. Andrew Oros from Washington College noted that Miyake had a more negative characterization of the impact of the Trump administration's policies in Asia than Twining, and asked the panelists whether there were specific aspects of each perspective they would criticize. Twining offered a criticism of the Trump administration's economic engagement in Asia, which was not making use of the full toolkit of influence developed by the U.S. over the decades, and which did not have a plan for engaging hundreds of millions of consumers in India and Southeast Asia. Miyake also noted that he distinguished Trump from the rest of Washington, and wondered whether the wisdom of the rest of Washington would ultimately prevail, or if Trump was just the beginning.

Tatsumi asked Twining about other areas in U.S. foreign policy that needed course correction after the midterms. Twining predicted that more politicians would reconsider their views on trade and, if Democrats took Congress or the House of Representatives, there would be less pressure to cut foreign assistance budgets. Anthony Volk from the

Institute for State Effectiveness asked whether there were any likely challenges to Abe's leadership in the near future, and what policy changes such a challenge might bring. Miyake stated that though Abe will likely be reelected, he might not remain president through the end of the term. However, since Abe does not have any challenges so far and the opposition is weak, unless he faces some difficulty, he is likely to remain LDP president. Liu Senhao from Hong Kong Phoenix TV asked about the planned visit of Abe to China in October and potential areas for progress in the meeting. Miyake argued that simply holding the meeting without disruption was a sign of success in itself, since if there were overpowering problems in the relationship the meeting would not occur at all. He also observed that China-Japan relations tended to warm when relations with the U.S. soured, but asserted that since Japan and China had strategic differences, areas for cooperation would remain mostly tactical, such as hotlines and dialogue. Twining wondered whether China and Japan would discuss an alignment of interests on North Korea or whether they would have diametrically opposed interests.

Tatsumi thanked the panelists and audience for the discussion and closed the seminar.