

February 26, 2013, 14:00-16:00

Venue: CIGS Meeting Room 3

Roundtable Discussion with

Dr. Surin Pitsuwan

**Former Secretary-General of ASEAN and
Professor Emeritus of Thammasat University**

"Stability in Asia and Roles of Stakeholders"

< Speech of Dr. Surin Pitsuwan >

It is my great honor to be with you this morning. I would like to thank Mr. Fukui, President of the Canon Institute for Global Studies, for his invitation.

It is my privilege to serve ASEAN for these 5 years, during which I have engaged East Asia as well as the world to tackle the challenge of how to create a network of relationship that would serve for, among others, its own security in East Asia where the landscape is very diverse. There is full of flashpoints in East Asia, and the members of this landscape have little in common among themselves. Let me quote the observation of Dr. Kissinger who said at the end of last century, "East Asia, as far as innovation and economic vibrancy are concerned, is equivalent to the US in the 20th century, but as far as involvement of institutions and processes is concerned, is equivalent to Europe in the 19th century because there are so many differences among themselves."

The situation in East Asia that we have seen at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century is that East Asia has become economically important to the global community. With the vibrancy of major economies in East Asia including Japan, Korea, China, Australia, New Zealand, India as well as the 10 countries of South East Asia, the combined GDP of these countries amounts to 20 trillion US dollars. East Asia involving all these countries has formed a new center of growth, has become a locomotive of global recovery, and has become more important to the global community if compared to that

in a decade or two decades ago.

Stability and security in East Asia for security's and stability's sake

The challenge is how to create institutions and networks of cooperation that would ensure stability and security in East Asia for security's and stability's sake. There are many flash points in many places that would go into open at any time as well as many fault lines which are China-India, Korea-Korea, Japan-China, China plus some of the smaller countries in Southeast Asia, Vietnam and the Philippines, etc. The world's interest in this region is to secure the stability of this region. For example, the US pivoting towards East Asia is made precisely because of the possible insecurity in the region, which would affect American interest. In the first meeting of ADMM-Plus in Hanoi in October 2010, in which ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting engages ASEAN dialogue partners in dialogue and cooperation on defense and security matters, Mr. Gates said about the definition of the US presence in East Asia, "We are a Pacific Nation," and he paused and said, "We are a resident power." This is our home position. The interest from around the world is to ensure that there is stability and security here in East Asia for security's and stability's sake. In other word, if anything happens in this region, it will have tremendous impact on the global community.

Stability and security in East Asia for the sake of global economic recovery

The second point is that the world wants stability and security for the sake of maintaining the environment for continuing growth in East Asia. Without the environment of stability, security and confidence, it would be difficult to foresee East Asia keep on growing and keep on pulling the locomotive of recovery of the global economy.

In October 2008, when the issue of Lehman Brothers was beginning to unveil, the 7th ASEM meeting was held in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing chaired by Mr. Wen Jiabao. All European partners who attended the ASEM meeting including Mr. Barroso, Mrs. Merkel, Messrs. Berlusconi and Sarkozy, said the same, "East Asia, please keep it cool; please keep it coming; please keep importing from us." That was my first experience to feel that the pendulum had swung to the East. Mr. Miliband representing Mr. Blair pulled me

aside and said, "Mr. Secretary General, this is a very strange meeting indeed." He said, "We from the West are asking East Asia particularly in the Great Hall of the People in China to keep it coming to help us and pull us along." What I am saying is that the global community wants to see stability and security in East Asia for the sake of economic growth and prosperity that the world needs in order to keep it going for the time being before Europe and North America would get up on their feet again. Mr. Obama during the second meeting with the ASEAN leaders in September 2010 also said, "If America is going to get out of all the crisis and if we are going to get out of this deep economic downturn, we need to sell more and export more. We look around to find where the markets are and where the consumers are. They are you, East Asia."

Security for East Asia is global commons. It has become an objective and a goal of the entire global community.

Four major players who concern stability and security in East Asia

The question is how we will establish institutions and processes that would guarantee stability and security in East Asia. There are four major players; China, Japan, the US and ASEAN. ASEAN has been trusted for lack of other credible or acceptable players to take the lead. Why can ASEAN itself play on the state of East Asia? Because ASEAN is the only forum that exists, the only forum that is region-wide, and the only forum that is legitimate. All players from outside East Asia have to come onto the state of ASEAN and to articulate their agenda, their interests, their concerns and their aspirations. That has made the ASEAN forum, ASEAN Regional Forum and other ASEAN stages more acceptable and more legitimate in the eyes of the world.

These four major players – Japan, China, the US and ASEAN – come from totally different backgrounds and starting points. ASEAN is extremely diverse. The best role that ASEAN can do is to offer a forum. ASEAN is able to talk to concerned parties, and try to connect them, coordinate the procession and facilitate communication among them. But ASEAN itself does not have the strength to take the lead on its own because of the diversity among ourselves. In the last few years, we have built up our profile and our legitimacy and have won confidence and recognition. But we have a limitation due to our role of mediation or reconciliation and our role of trying to put parties together.

For example, we got all the six parties of the six-party talks including North Korea into the ASEAN Regional Forum. We offered our forum for the six parties to talk to each other and connected them with each other. But it will be up to the six parties to make use of the forum. ASEAN cannot enforce. ASEAN can offer the legitimate forum, but does not have enough influence or power to force the parties to sit together and get the result. We could encourage. We could give moral support. We could provide the ambience and the forum, but not the real power that has to be recognized.

The US and Japan come from similar ideological background; the rule of law, the transparent norms, the open and free movement, free expression, freedom of navigation, etc. All these things are something that the US and Japan have in common.

Those are good until China becomes more assertive with its own confidence. China says, "Rules and norms have been established by you. Now it is our turn to interpret these rules and norms or to pick and choose them." My direct experience in dealing with China is the issue of the South China Sea. For a long time, China claimed, but did not assert nor did it project military presence to assert the claim. But the last 3 or 4 years China's military projection has come down to South East Asia, and all the countries in South East Asia particularly those claimants felt naked. My understanding of what China is saying is: "Yes, we are engaged in drafting the code of conduct for the South China Sea. This code of conduct is for all of those who come into the territory. China owns the territory. The sovereignty is not the issue. It is a question of avoiding misunderstanding, misinterpretation, misperception or miscalculation over the South China Sea." That is precisely the fact and the reason why you cannot even raise your concern about stability and security over the South China Sea. Because mere raising it is already questioning the sovereignty, and is already questioning the right and ability of China to guarantee peace, stability and security in the South China Sea. China says, "It is ours. What do you mean?"

When I came up with the statement around November 2012 that "if you are not careful, the South China Sea would be a Palestine of East Asia," it was not very well received. My point was that this issue would have tremendous consequence and repercussions throughout the region. You cannot solve the problem if you cannot agree on the problem. You will have a lot of problems emanating from this conflict. The US and the Philippines have the alliance

treaty. How would the US react if there is a conflict over the Scarborough Shoal and others? Thailand and Vietnam and the US and Vietnam are getting closer to each other. Kamran base is being reopened. These are simply sensitive issues for all of us to handle or solve.

What I am saying is that all four major players in the region are coming from different perspectives, different backgrounds and different starting points. So it is very difficult to get them to sit down and work for common consensus on some issues including the issue of the South China Sea and stability and security of East Asia.

Japan's role in East Asia

Now, what is Japan's role in all of these environments? Japan has been an economic power established and recognized by the members of this region. Japan has shared its prosperity with the members, and has shared a lot of experiences with them. I have called these collectively as Japan's soft-power or smart-power. In fact, from the 1970s to the 2000s Japan has been very much involved and engaged in many of the strategic security and stability issues in East Asia, especially in South-East Asia. But, lately in the current contentious environment, the role of Japan has been a little diminished, partly because of its own economic difficulties, partly because of the rise of competition in the region and partly because of the complexity of the issues that involve more players in the region.

I can take some of the examples in which I have been personally involved. As for the settlement of the conflict inside Cambodia, the idea on what to do with the monarchy came from Japan. Cambodia had only one house in their parliament. In order to set up the platform that would accommodate conflicting and contending powers, Japan proposed to create the senate.

As you may remember, South East Asia was in the severe financial crisis in 1999 to 2000. The problems of East Timor were partly the consequence of the financial crisis of Indonesia. It found very difficult for South East Asian countries to handle it. Then, the challenge came from the East Timorese and it became violent. East Asian countries were invited by Indonesia to come in East Timor and help it with the support of the UN and other major powers. We could not have gone there, rescued and helped it, and restored law and order if Japan had not provided financial support. There was the doubt that maybe

Japan could not handle such issues as human security to help stabilize, institutionalize or create institutions, systems or processes that would help guarantee or contain potential conflicts and violence. But Japan could actually contribute to the settlement in a different form, in a different way or in a different style from power projection or power confrontation, which is a traditional way of building institutions.

Japan certainly can share values. Japan certainly can help others in the various soft issues that Japan has achieved. Japan certainly can emanate the respect for the rule of law, the respect for the principles of democracy, and the respect for human rights, equality and freedom of expression. All these things have been achieved throughout the history of Japan. Japan can help create those values and norms all across the landscape of East Asia.

Current status of East Asia and its role

East Asia is in the state of flux. Many things are percolating at the same time. Players outside East Asia want to come in. Two years ago we have admitted the US and Russia into the highest form of consultation in the region, called East Asia Summit (EAS). Japan has been the member of it from the beginning. Now, the European Union is knocking on the door wishing to come in. It is difficult to explain why Europe is qualified in EAS because Europe does not have the military and security presence in the region. EAS primarily discusses strategic, political and security issues along with economic issues.

The challenge before all of us is how to look through all these very murky and unclear situation that form the region, how to pick and choose rules and norms, and how to make our own contribution to the institutional building that we are working on. The ASEAN way is incremental and step by step. The ASEAN way is not imposing. It is more of a persuasion.

All the issues that you are worried about, such as cybercrime, a dual use of technologies or the freedom navigation, need to be revisited and addressed anew in the context of East Asia with experiences from outside.

How about the code of conduct (CoC) for the South China Sea? They are collection of elements of such rules and norms as are already applicable and used in the global community. But we want to bring them into our CoC so that

we can say together, "Yes, it is ours." This package of rules and norms must be ours. We must commit to it and abide by it. For example, when two ships pass each other, what should be the distance and how you send signals that you do not commit violence, your engine stops and you are floating in the territory in dispute? These things are already in existence and already applied somewhere around, but we want to put it here in the context of East Asia.

We will have to revisit a lot of these issues based on our own experiences and on our own limited structure or limited institution. We will have to consult and work with each other mostly in order to achieve a new "order of security or stability in East Asia," and these could be force, could be institutions, could be systems, could be processes that would address some of the problems challenging us. CoC of the South China Sea will be just one element. But there will be others.

I do not know how you will solve the problem of the Senkaku Islands. Thailand and Malaysia have something similar. They have 7000 square kilometers of joint development area in the lower Gulf of Thailand. You do not want to talk about delineation of line of sovereignty and territory now, which is too complicated. But let us jointly benefit from the minerals below the water in 7000 square kilometers of the area.

Some of these modalities may be adopted into East Asia, which would be helpful. It would be one step into creating a new regime or a new order for East Asia. The problem is that Thailand and Malaysia are small countries. It is easy for them to get along, and they can decide on things easily. Issues that you are facing in East Asia are between giants. You have problems of deciding who should concede, who should lead, who should follow, who should accommodate and who should compromise. That is the problem and the challenge you are facing. Maybe, ASEAN can help. Maybe, the ASEAN Regional Forum can help. As I said, for the six-party talks, all members are of ASEAN Regional Forum.

In the six-party talks, they mentioned ASEAN Regional Forum. I personally brought North Korea into the forum hoping that that will be the beginning of the utilization of the forum, but all six countries are holding back and said, "You are too young, you are too immature, you have not experienced enough." My appeal has always been; if you treat a child as a child forever, the child will

be a child forever, it's simple as that. I base my assumption on the fact that if North Korea is going to make any concession it will not make concession to South Korea or to the US. It might whisper some information to this lobbying ambassador from ARF, from South-East Asia, from ASEAN and that can lead to....

Well, we got the two chief negotiators together in Bali the year before, that led to their meeting in Geneva and in New York. We thought that we could contribute to the restarting of the six-party talk. We did not get that far. But, that was the utility and value-added that ASEAN can provide in search of solution to some of the vexing and stuck problems.

Remember that we do not stop here. East Asia is more important to the global community now than before. Every major power is interested in East Asia for the sake of security itself. Anything that happens here will affect the world. Every major power is interested in East Asia for the sake of the continuing prosperity and economic growth because that will also affect the world. We cannot keep anybody out. Our role is how to balance all these conflicting interests, conflicting agenda and conflicting purposes here in the region. It is critical for us to find a way to accommodate them and to balance them. ASEAN is open to them and has a forum to offer but not the answers to all these problems and challenges.

Thank you very much for your attention.