

Chairperson's Summary

The Security Environment in Modern East Asia

SHOJI Junichiro

The theme for this year's forum is "The Security Environment in Modern East Asia." This reflects the fact that the "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2019 and beyond" (Defense Guidelines) indicates that in the security environment surrounding Japan, inter-state competition is prominently emerging "in which states seek to shape global and regional order to their advantage as well as to increase their influence" since that changes in power balance are accelerating and becoming more complex. Such uncertainty over the existing order was shown in the international war history in modern East Asia and competition among great powers was truly developed across the political, diplomatic and military realms.

Therefore, in this forum, we have chosen the security environment in modern East Asia in the first half of the 20th century (mainly the periods of the two World Wars) as the theme and focus on the politics, diplomacy, and military affairs of Japan, China, Russia (the Soviet Union) and the Western countries. In particular, we discuss the roles played by the policies of each country with respect to the uncertainty over the existing international order and regional order. Through the debates in this forum, we aim to provide a historical perspective for discussing the defense and security policy of Japan at a time when the security environment in contemporary East Asia is becoming more complex.

The overview of this forum is as follows.

At the start, Professor Nakanishi Hiroshi gave a presentation titled "Reconstructing the History of Modern East Asia" as the keynote address. At the beginning of the presentation, Professor Nakanishi touched on the current situation in which liberalism and the liberal international order occupied a dominant position in the world after the end of the Cold War are being exposed to challenges and stated that it is necessary to reconsider and reconstruct the history of the 20th century from new perspectives in order to confront these kinds of contemporary issues as well.

Professor Nakanishi mentioned that Eric Hobsbawm's "short 20th century" view of history which regarded the two World Wars and the Cold War as the defining events of the 20th century could not be simply applied to East Asia, and then he explained that the important changes that provided the foundation for the international relations of East Asia in the first half of the 20th century occurred in about 1890. In particular, he focused on two changes, the move by Qing dynasty China to institutionalize its traditional imperial order in response to the imperialistic advances of the great Western powers and the move by the great Western powers to territorialize their Empires based on the principle of the sovereign states, and pointed out the importance of the impact of these rivalry. Furthermore, he stated that there was "ambiguity" in the construction of the East Asian order as a Western-type colonial Empire led by Japan instead of Qing dynasty China, and then looked back on the developments from the second half of the 1920s to the middle of the 1930s as the process of the United States and

the Soviet Union strengthening their leaderships in international politics on a global scale and promoting the alignments of Europe and East Asia while Japan and the United Kingdom were reducing their influences. And he positioned the subsequent process leading up to World War II as the process of Japan becoming allied with Germany and Italy for the purpose of reducing the influences of the Soviet Union and the Anglo-American countries. Moreover, he touched on the size of the impact that two “unexpected events” — Japan’s early surrender in the Pacific War and China’s communization — had on the post-war East Asian order, and indicated that the developments from the beginning of the Cold War to the outbreak of the Korean War hindered opportunities for the formation of a sovereign states system comprised of multinational countries in East Asia after the disintegration of the Japanese Empire. In conclusion, he stated that in East Asia it is necessary to reorganize the international order taking into account changes in power balance, and that it is not appropriate to make the principle of the sovereign states the single, absolute one for organizing international relations in East Asia; rather it is important to base these relations on the principle of the sovereign states while also combining with another principles.

In the first session, presentations concerning “The Regional Order in Modern East Asia” were given and there were comments and questions with respect to the presentations.

At the start, Professor Matsuura Masataka gave a presentation titled “Pan-Asianism in Modern Japan and the East Asian Regional Order.” Professor Matsuura redefined the “Pan-Asianism” in modern Japan, which had been treated mainly in the field of the history of thought, as a national policy and revealed the realities that “Pan-Asianism” had changed depending on the period. Then, he pointed out that the “Pan-Asianism” from the late Edo period to the Meiji period was an idealistic, unrealistic, and anti-Western idea by non-mainstream factions in contrast to the realistic policy of the government that gave priority to collaboration with the Anglo-American countries, and named Saigō Takamori as the source of that idea, indicating that “Pan-Asianism” was reconstructed by the emotional empathy of the people who revered him. On the other hand, he raised doubts about the possibility that the Japan, Qing and Korea alliance was becoming a counterbalancing power against the great Western powers, because the factions allied with Japan inside Qing and Korea with whom the Pan-Asianists of Japan attempted collaboration had weak domestic foundations and collapsed under their respective political conditions.

Professor Matsuura also stated that these conditions changed greatly before and after World War I and that “Pan-Asianism,” which had only been an idea until then, was converted into policy due to (i) the development of the Japanese economy, (ii) the collapse of the two Empires in East Asia (the Qing Empire and the Russian Empire), (iii) structural changes to the Japanese Army (the rise of the “new China experts”), and (iv) changes to the Pan-Asianists (attenuation of personal relationships). Moreover, he argued that Japan, which deepened its isolation following criticism by the United Kingdom after the Manchurian Incident, etc., went on to formulate “Greater Asianism” which aimed for justification of the Manchurian Incident and for opposition to the British Empire at its core. This was converted to national policy as the Statement on the New Order in East Asia after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and finally it became a “monster” which drove Japan. In conclusion, he stated critically that

this kind of “Greater Asianism” was different from the “Pan-Asianism” of the Meiji period, and became an aggregation of global (Greater Asian) logic which reflected the logic of the local agencies of the military and the colonies.

Next, Professor Liu Jie gave a presentation titled “Modern China’s Foreign Relations and East Asia.” Professor Liu confirmed the nature of the Japanese people’s perceptions of China since the First Sino-Japanese War, then explained the footsteps of China’s modern diplomacy divided into three periods, and revealed how China entered the international community. He pointed out that the Japanese people’s perceptions of China changed completely due to the victory in the First Sino-Japanese War, and touched on the image of China that it “does not obey the rules of the international community and only enjoys benefits without fulfilling its obligations” became entrenched as an important part of the Japanese people’s subsequent perceptions of China, and a tendency toward disdain for China became widespread. He mentioned that in response to these perceptions of China in the international community, there were some discussions inside China about placing importance on the rule of law, but he determined that no specific measures for achieving harmony with the values shared by the international community were presented in the “Full Rejuvenation of Traditional Culture” project China announced in 2021.

Professor Liu also explained the footsteps of China’s modern diplomacy divided into the following three periods. He presented that the first period is the “traditional diplomacy period” from the First Opium War to 1901 when the final protocol concerning to Boxer Rebellion was signed, in which China pursued a Hua–Yi order based on Confucian traditions, did not abandon its sense of superiority as the “Celestial Empire” and rejected modern international law and international relations, with the active space of career diplomats barely existed. He pointed out that the second period is the “modern diplomacy period” from 1901 to 1949, in which career diplomats led their diplomatic policies to realize the abolition of the “unequal treaties” in order to establish equal relations between China as a modern state and foreign countries, and contributed to the establishment of China’s position as a great power through cooperation with the Anglo-American countries. He stated that the third period is the “major country diplomacy period” after the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, in which Deng Xiaoping reflected on the Mao Zedong era when diplomats had no roles, and switched to a modernization policy, focusing on the development of diplomats to achieve a peaceful international environment. On the other hand, he analyzed that it is difficult to reflect the intentions of career diplomats in Xi Jinping’s “major country diplomacy” advocating the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” so there is caution about the return of traditional Sinocentric diplomacy. In conclusion, he indicated that the “modern diplomacy period” in the first half of the 20th century was an exceptional era, and the Westernization of China was produced by the strategic judgments of traditional leaders under the traditional ruling structure, and stated that attention would be focused on what kind of path China chose between tradition and modernization going forward.

Based on these presentations, Vice President for Academic Affairs Shoji Junichiro, as a discussant, presented the following comments and questions. Firstly, he stated with respect to the presentation of Professor Matsuura that he agreed that in recent years “Pan-Asianism”

has not been used, instead the term “Indo-Pacific” is being used. He said that it is necessary to consider the significance of that term. Furthermore, he mentioned that the transformation in the “Pan-Asianism” of Japan, namely the change to justify the continental policy targeting the abundant resources of China, was behind the changes to the policies of Japan in the 1930s. Finally, he asked the following questions: (i) what do you think of the vulnerabilities of “Pan-Asianism” in the Meiji and Taisho periods which had no shared ideology, (ii) what were the biggest factors causing “Pan-Asianism” to become a “monster” and (iii) the civilians advocated “Pan-Asianism” while the Japanese government was consistently realistic, so why was “Pan-Asianism” brought to the forefront in the 1938 Statement on the New Order in East Asia?

Next, with respect to the presentation of Professor Liu, he referenced the words of Yamagata Aritomo that “a strong China is pleasing and at the same time frightening” while stating that the sentiment of the Japanese people towards China is always ambiguous and ambivalent. Furthermore, he stated that the approach of China’s diplomacy is very suggestive because of its similarities with pre-war Japan, so attention would be focused on China’s diplomacy in the future. Finally, he asked the following questions: (i) is the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” advocated by Xi Jinping aiming for a regression to the Qing dynasty era when China considered Japan to be a vassal state and (ii) in China the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is considered to be in a low position, so will the China’s diplomacy continue to be advanced away from reality in the future?

With respect to these questions, Professor Matsuura answered (i) at the time, there was study of the Chinese classics instead of Christianity, mutual written communication was possible, and in addition commonalities such as the nature of self-assertion and skin and hair color were recognized, (ii) it is thought that the common position of the disadvantaged, namely that they “were oppressed by the great powers,” was a factor leading to “Pan-Asianism” becoming “a monster,” and (iii) the process of the Second Sino-Japanese War and the personality of Konoe Fumimaro, had a large impact. Professor Liu answered (i) the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” was unilaterally announced by the Chinese government without going through any intellectual discussions, and cannot be considered as an image of the state reflecting discussions by civilian intellectuals, and (ii) it was rare for the opinions of diplomats and intellectuals to be reflected in the policy making of China, except for in the Deng Xiaoping era when slight signs of this were seen, and the China’s diplomacy will probably continue to be strongly influenced by the opinions of the inner circles of the administration.

In the second session, presentations concerning “The International Order in Modern East Asia” were given and there were comments and questions with respect to the presentations.

Professor Brian P. Farrell gave a presentation titled “Going their separate ways: The British Empire, Japan, and Reordering Asia between the World Wars.” Professor Farrell stated that the United Kingdom, which had previously formed an alliance with Japan, gradually began to consider Japan as a presence which threatened the regional order of East Asia and the interests of the British Empire with the conflicts of interest surrounding China as the main factors. Then he indicated that the United Kingdom regarded the claims of Japan seeking a special status in China as the main cause to blame for destabilizing the domestic situation in China, and moreover that due to the commencement of the Northern Expedition, various problems concerning the

future vision of China emerged among the great powers. He mentioned that the clash of agendas between Japan and the United Kingdom regarding Shanghai was particularly symbolic, because this was the center of the interests of the United Kingdom in China and was also the cornerstone of the East Asian order based on the Washington Treaty.

Professor Farrell also emphasized that the British Empire was based on a global and stable political and economic order, but the other countries could not fully respond to the gradually changing situation in China. He brought up the riot in Shanghai which occurred at the beginning of 1927 as a good example of this, and indicated that differences in perceptions with respect to the exercise of military force by the United Kingdom existed between Japan and the United Kingdom. When exclusionary nationalism rose and chaos grew in Shanghai, the United Kingdom searched for cooperation among the great powers when exercising military force, but Japan did not provide cooperation because it misunderstood the intentions of the United Kingdom. Professor Farrell concluded that this incident led the United Kingdom to consider Japan as a threat to its interests in China, and that Shanghai in 1927 was positioned as the turning point of Japan and the United Kingdom growing apart.

Next, Senior Fellow Hanada Tomoyuki gave a presentation titled “The Soviet Far Eastern Strategy and International Order.” He focused on war and diplomacy in the history of Japan-Soviet relations during the two World Wars to pay attention to the Soviet Union’s factor in the security environment in modern East Asia while discussing a coexistence of war and peace with great power relations between Japan and the Soviet Union. Then he explained that the Soviet Union leveraged military victories in the Far East to play an important role in the formation of the international order in modern East Asia, divided into the following three periods.

He indicated that the first period is from the Manchurian Incident in 1931 to the Nomonhan Incident in 1939 when, under the circumstances of an anti-Soviet, anti-Communism regime based on the conclusion of the Japanese-German Anti-Comintern Pact, the Soviet leaderships strengthened its defense capabilities in the Far East while constructing collective security system with the Mongolian People’s Republic and the Chinese Nationalist Government, and achieved a military victory in the Far East and a diplomatic victory in Europe through the battle in the Nomonhan Incident and the conclusion of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. He pointed out that the second period is from the outbreak of World War II to the conclusion of the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact in 1941 when, due to the concept for a “Quadripartite Entente” between Japan, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union advocated by the second Kono Cabinet and the subsequent conclusion of the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact, stable bilateral relations were formed in the Far East even though their diplomatic and military agendas were different. Finally, he explained that the third period is Japan’s war termination diplomacy and the Soviet Union’s entry into the war against Japan in 1945 when, although Japan and the Soviet Union superficially maintained stable bilateral relations during World War II, the great power relations of Japan and the Soviet Union ended due to the Soviet Union’s entry into the war against Japan based on a “secret agreement” at Yalta Conference and the Japan’s diplomatic failure to end the war with a peace initiative at the Soviet Union by the Suzuki Kantaro Cabinet. As a result, the Soviet Union obtained an exit to the Pacific Ocean, namely the Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, and succeeded in securing a strategic foundation in

post-war East Asia. In conclusion, he ended his presentation by stating that the Soviet Union fully utilized its two military victories in the Far East to form the international order in modern East Asia.

Based on these presentations, Professor Tohmatsu Haruo, as a discussant, presented the following comments and questions. Firstly, Professor Tohmatsu indicated the necessity of linking the discussions over the international order and the discussions over the security environment, and in particular stated that when discussing the international order of East Asia, the roles played by major countries that do not belong to geographical East Asia, most notably the United States, and Nazi-Germany in the second half of the 1930s should also be taken into consideration. Then with respect to the presentation of Professor Farrell, he mentioned that in East Asia moved from optimism to pessimism and then toward the maelstrom of war during the interbellum, of the three countries of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, although the United Kingdom was the partner country that Japan could work out differences with the most easily, it was Japan and the United Kingdom that worsened their relations over China, and this paradox was interesting. In addition, he indicated that the United Kingdom maintained the interests of the British Empire in East Asia which included China, Southeast Asia and dominions, and there was a possibility that all of these could be affected by the Japan's expansion, and asked a question concerning the significance of the British Empire as a regional factor, in particular with the framework of defense of the Empire which had Singapore as the hub. Next, with respect to the presentation of Senior Fellow Hanada, he noted that conducting a war on two fronts against both China and the Soviet Union was nothing more than a nightmare for the Japanese Army, so for that reason it is thought that the battle with the Soviet Union in Manchuria was frightening for the Japanese side, and asked a question about how the Soviet Union perceived that point. Furthermore, he presented points for discussion such as how far the Soviet Union placed importance on communist ideology, how that was related to Japan's perceptions of the Soviet Union, and how the "matching the concepts of the international order" of both countries differed from the ideology.

In response to Professor Tohmatsu's questions, Professor Farrell answered that although the United Kingdom was opposed in a variety of situations to the United States, which advocated anticolonialism and isolationism, their agendas matched on the point of maintaining the stability of the economy, a global interest of the British Empire. Then he stated that it was important to view the individual events that occurred in East Asia in terms of the big picture, in fact the United Kingdom's base was established in Singapore before the Washington Naval Conference and, in addition to the frustration of the United States, there were various opposite opinions within the British Commonwealth of Nations. So he stated that it was necessary to consider how the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was to be utilized in these contexts. Furthermore, regarding the paradox of the opposition between Japan and the United Kingdom over China, he emphasized that it was a phenomenon that occurred in the context of the interests of the United Kingdom being damaged and revolts also frequently occurring, so this also should be discussed from a big-picture perspective.

Next, Senior Fellow Hanada noted that in principle communism was an ideology which repudiated the Japanese Emperor, and for that reason the greatest hypothetical enemy for

the Japanese Army was undoubtedly the Soviet Union, while on the other hand he indicated that a pro-Russian/pro-Soviet faction, which considered the Soviet Union as a great power recognizing each other's spheres of influence, had a presence in Japan to some extent. Furthermore, he answered that the diplomatic relations between the great powers based on realism in international politics were also being pursued at the same time. Moreover, regarding the war on two fronts against both China and Soviet Union, he answered that although naturally there was a sense of crisis of that kind, it existed a different logic in the local agencies of the military, as the occurrence of circumstances in which the Nomonhan Incident was provoked while the Second Sino-Japanese War was underway, and for that reason the Soviet Union consistently aimed for military victories.

In the overall discussion, firstly, Professor Nakanishi and Professor Liu were asked questions about the uncertainty of the existing order in the contemporary world. Furthermore, Professor Liu was asked for an opinion concerning the Indo-Pacific concept in the diplomacy and security policy of Japan (there is no word "Asia"). In response to this, Professor Nakanishi answered that the big problem in the Asia-Pacific region is that the foundation of the world built by the United Kingdom and the United States is destabilizing, but we cannot return to the pre-modern order, while on the other hand no prospects for a new order can be seen. Then with respect to questions which cannot be resolved with the principle of sovereign states only, he introduced the example of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in Brexit, stated that this was important as a precedent of finding compromise even when the national borders do not match the boundaries of the economies, and emphasized the significance of searching for a path to a comprehensive resolution. Professor Liu answered that the search for a way to "deconstruct the post-war era" and the moves of China, which is continuing the construction of a sovereign state, could have an impact on the international order, and pointed out that China's self-awareness as a great power is growing due to economic growth that even China itself did not anticipate, but China receives large benefits from the existing order. In addition, he expressed the perception that the limit to interpret things as the word "Asia" is being gradually exposed, as symbolized by the issues of historical perceptions and the territorial disputes, so the term "Indo-Pacific" is beginning to be used to handle these kinds of circumstances.

Next, Vice President for Academic Affairs Shoji and Professor Tohmatsu were asked how Japan during the two World Wars attempted to deal with the changes in the security environment and international order. In response to this, Vice President for Academic Affairs Shoji answered that international order and security are connected in East Asia even today, and looking at the historical situation, both the First Sino-Japanese War and the process from the destabilization of the Washington regime to the Second Sino-Japanese War were inseparable from the issues over international order. Then he stated that the security issues surrounding contemporary China were also related in international order at their core. Professor Tohmatsu emphasized the importance of being aware of the difference between order and regime, and then argued that the regime has stability to a certain extent, but the order destabilizes when arise the issues of profit and loss among states, and sometimes the security environment becomes shaken due to attempts to maintain order. Then he mentioned that the contemporary world is truly at a stage when the post-World War II framework is destabilizing. Furthermore,

he concluded that the current moves by China are extremely similar to moves by Japan in the 1930s, and so, it is necessary to deepen understanding the view of order not only in one's own country but also in the other country which has a different logic.

In a final summary of the forum, Senior Fellow Hanada asked all of the panelists about the contemporary implications derived from the discussions. In response to this, Professor Nakanishi stated that it is necessary to reconsider the view of history claiming that the history of imperialism, namely the colonization of China, the Republic of Korea, etc., was the beginning of the modern world. Professor Matsuura indicated that firstly the moves of economic actors, such as multinational corporations, etc., secondly the geopolitical meaning of buffer zones and frontier regions, and thirdly the role of "fictions" and ideologies such as Greater Asianism, etc. will be important. Professor Liu stated that it is important to think how to interpret the issues of historical perceptions when there were various opinions concerning those issues in each country, and of the reasons why the deepening of economic interdependence and international migration did not prevent war. Vice President for Academic Affairs Shoji stated that the key question is how to overcome the view of order in each country. Professor Farrell emphasized that both the trends in China and the Japan's approaches should be interpreted in a global context and it is important to deepen multilateral cooperation. Senior Fellow Hanada stated that the formation of stable relations with Russia is possible, and finding points of agreement brought about by different principles of action can be expected even when diplomatic and military agendas are different. Professor Tohmatsu concluded that self-preservation and self-defense are major prerequisites for security, but it is important not to make a mistake in choosing partners and to continue taking into consideration to which extent of their values can be accepted.