

Special Lecture Report: “Challenges and Opportunities Facing U.S.- Japan Relations: U.S. Perspective”

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The Asan Dosirak Series on the topic “Challenges and Opportunities Facing U.S.-Japan Relations: U.S. Perspective” with Mr. Brad Glosserman took place on Monday, 22 September, 2014 at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, Seoul. The event was hosted and moderated by Hahm Chaibong, the president of The Asan Institute for Policy Studies. The invited speaker, Mr. Glosserman, is an executive Director of Pacific Forum and one of the U.S. leading experts on Japan. Prior to joining Pacific Forum, he was a member of the Japan Times editorial board for 10 years and he also lectured on Japanese politics at the Institute for the International Education of Students.

Mr. Glosserman opened his presentation by elaborating the political situation in Japan: “*How far the gap between leadership and public relations can get?*” He tried to answer this question in relation to the administration of the current serving leader, Prime Minister Shinzō Abe. He stated that Japanese government does not effectively react to public wishes and therefore does not represent the people of Japan. Mr. Glosserman presented himself as an opponent of Abe’s policy making actions.

A major obstacle in the evolution of Japanese politics as well as a society in general, he sees in the disinterest in making differences. “*Japanese are comfortable where they are and they are not ready to face any changes.*” To improve this situation the will and determination from the ruling authorities is needed.

In context of US-Japan relations Mr. Glosserman pointed out the fact that Japan represents the key source of US foreign policy in Asia but on the other side he made very clear statement that Americans do not automatically expect Japan to fight along with them. He defined the mutual cooperation as a commitment to the region where the presence of the US has very strong historical roots. “*The United States fingerprints are on every big decision in Northeast Asia that has been made since 1900*”.

The presentation focused more on the security issues although deep economic ties with Japan were mentioned to be at the first place. The picture of security architecture in the Northeast Asian region was analyzed more in detail. The security structure has been developed with joint partners across Asia and the speaker in particular appreciated the sizeable Japanese contribution with its wide range of capacities and resources. Regarding the topic of the debate, Mr. Glosserman noted that achievements in the Japanese defense policy are most of the time naturally linked to the enforcement of US - Japan relationship.

The event culminated with a round of questions and an energetic discussion. At this point the Korea-Japan relations were analyzed and Mr. Glosserman was asked to make a standpoint of United States government in this issue. How much The White House had pushed Japan into the formal apology for its wartime past? Regarding to the common historical experience, especially the attitude of current Japanese Prime Minister is considered to be very arrogant by many Koreans. Mr. Glosserman reacted very promptly with the argument that the government of the United States does not take any part in this dispute and in addition, he presented a very last conclusion in this discussion. He mentioned the gap he sees from his

own experience between Korea and Japan. “*Seoul has always been wondering what the US does in Tokyo and the same works the other way around.*” This lack of trust is the problem both countries need to resolve and establish relations the whole region can benefit from.