

Conference Report: “The 1st CJK Cooperation Dialogue”

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The cooperation dialogue “The 1st CJK Cooperation Dialogue” took place on Thursday, November the 14th, 2014 in Seoul, Korea. It was co-hosted by the China Foreign Affairs University, by the Japan Economic Foundation and the East Asia Foundation with the purpose to feature distinguished leaders from Academe to elaborate the topic. The debate was moderated by Zhang Yunling, Director of Institute of International Relations at the China Foreign Affairs University, and Sang-Hyup Kim, Visiting Professor at the Graduate School of Green Growth.

In his opening address Prof. Zhang Yunling, welcomed the audience and stressed the challenges in the relations between the three East Asian States. He also outlined the trend that the trade volume between China and ROK might overpass the China-Japan economic relations.

In the following congratulatory remarks, Prof. Kazumasa Kusaka, Chairman and CEO of the Japan Economic Economic Foundation, stressed the importance of the connection between the three East Asian states in terms of economics and ecology. He also pointed out various areas of cooperation such as investment, economics, technology, energy and environment. Ro-myung Gong, the Chairman of the East Asia Foundation, focused on the historical relations between the three nations which changed from periods of conflict to eras of cooperation. In this context he outlined the importance of global trade which increased the connection between the three countries.

The first session was introduced by the statement of Qu Bo, Associate Professor and Deputy Director of the Institute of International relations. He stressed the role of the overseas Chinese centered business connections, the role of Japanese multinational companies and the US centered alliance system which integrated the Asia-Pacific region. Shen Minghui, Associate Professor & Director of the Research Division of International Strategy, CASS, outlined the strategic goal of China to enhance the Inner-Asian trade in order to diversify its export market. Yukiko Fukugawa, Visiting Fellow at the Center for Development Studies in Cambridge, explained the reasons for the late institutionalization of East Asia and stressed the importance of political problems overshadowing the relations between the neighbor countries.

After the presentation, the discussion concluded the first session. Shujiro Urata, Professor of Economics at the Waseda University, discussed the general arguments in favor and against FTAs and the assessment of these arguments. Choong- Yong Ahn, Chairman of the Korean Commission on Corporate Partnership explained that the difficulties to measure the effects of an FTA based on a few years impacts. However, it is possible to proceed on the assumption that FTAs affect sectors such as agriculture and the automobile industry.

Finally, Mi-Ae Choo, Member of the National Assembly (NPAD), discussed the different impacts of FTAs on the Korean economy and society. In her opening statement, Ms. Mi-Ae Choo mentioned the bad effects of the EU-Korea FTA agreement for parts of the Korean economy especially for the agriculture and warned for a too quick implementation of new FTAs. However, a future FTA covering all Asian countries would contribute to decrease the tensions in the region.

After the lunch the 2nd session of the conference moderated by Sang-Hyup Kim and labeled “emerging environmental concerns and trilateral cooperation”, tackled the environmental issues related to the three Asian countries. The session was started by Huan Qingzi, Professor at the School of Marxism of the Beijing University. Using the Neo-functionalism theory, he explained the spill-over effects of international cooperation on different issues. Trans-boundary environmental problems can serve as a catalyzer of multinational cooperation. He also summed up the most important projects involving China, Japan and Korea which are combating issues such as the haze and fog problem in China or the nuclear power plant accident in Japan. Wang Xuedong, Professor at the Sun Yat-sen University outlined the necessities and opportunities of climate mitigation. The energy transformation from traditional and environment polluting to renewable technologies would enhance further fields of economic and ecological cooperation in Asia. Mitsutsune Yamaguchi, Professor at the University of Tokyo, emphasized the importance of regional frameworks to reach the 2 degree target. Therefore, cooperation between the CJK countries is not only helpful but also necessary. Prof. Eui-Chan Jeon of the Sejong University took a closer look at the regional air pollution and outlined that this problem can only be solved by multilateral cooperation involving key players such as China and Japan. He also proposed the establishment of a “Northeast Asia Atmospheric Environmental Center”, that provides a common database for scientist of all three countries.

The second session of the conference was, finally, concluded by Eui Soon Shin, Professor of Economics at the Yonsei University. He summed up the areas of cooperation between the Asian countries and thanked the guests for their commitment on behalf of economic and ecological commitment in Asia.