

Session 7 on “Risk and Trust from Socio-Political Perspectives” started with a presentation by Hiroshi Murakami (Ritsumeikan Univ.) on conservative dominance, populism and democracy in Japan. Shigekazu Kusune (Kanazawa Univ.) discussed whether mass media mitigate international conflicts. Takashi Namba (Osaka Univ. of Economics) talked about the role of local governments and the US military bases in Okinawa, and Yuichiro Minami (Kwansei Gakuin Univ.) focused on its historical aspects. Kazue Haga (DIJ) presented a case study on sustainable regional economy and entrepreneurship.

In the Concluding Session, G. Trommsdorff commented on the various perspectives of the presentations and discussed the relations between risk and trust by focusing on problems in the social sciences.

In addition to fruitful discussions during the formal meetings, informal discussions were encouraged by the friendly atmosphere and hospitality provided by the DIJ and at the conference dinner. The organizing team consisted of M. Kobayashi, G. Trommsdorff and C. Hommerich.

More information about the conference as well as the GJSSS is available at: <http://www.psychologie.uni-konstanz.de/en/trommsdorff/german-japanese-society-for-social-sciences-gjsss/>.

Laura Froehlich

## **Mongolian–German Dialogue on International Relations and Security in East and Central Asia**

Ulaanbaatar, September 21–22, 2015

This track II conference — the first of its kind — was organized by the Mongolian Institute of Strategic Studies (ISS) and the GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES). The participants were welcomed by Stefan Chrobot, the local representative of the FES, D. Ganbat, the director of the ISS, Patrick Köllner, the director of the GIGA Institute of Asian Studies, and Gerhard Thiedemann, the German ambassador to Mongolia. The conference was attended by around 60 Mongolian and Mongolia-based academics, think tankers, diplomats, ministry officials, senior officers, and civil society representatives.

Since the 1990 transition to democracy, Mongolian foreign policy has aimed to balance between its two powerful neighbors, as highlighted in the presentation on “The Trilateral Relationship between Mongolia, Russia, and China” by Ch. Narantuya (ISS), and the complementary talk on “Russia’s Foreign Policy and Asia” by G. Bazarvaani (ISS). Russia and China perceive Mongolia as an arena for competition and a buffer state. Russia has shown increased interest in promoting links with Asian countries for some years now — a development that received further impetus more recently due to the strained relations with Western nations in the wake of the Crimean crisis. In contrast, Mongolian participants noted the positive attitudes held by many Mongolians vis-à-vis Russia given the country’s role in Mongolian development and independence.

The presentation by Sebastian Harnisch (Heidelberg Univ.) on “The US Pivot to Asia and its Unintended Consequences” and the talk by L. Byambakhand (ISS) on “The Role of the Great Powers in the Security Structures of East Asia: The US Rebalancing Policy” addressed the regional consequences of the shift in US foreign policy from the Middle East to Asia. Some

Mongolian participants perceived China as keen to consolidate its influence on its neighbors; Mongolia is landlocked and dependent on its neighbors for transit, especially of its main export item, coal. It may thus be unable to capitalize in more substantial terms from the US pivot to Asia to mitigate Chinese influence. Some participants mentioned the potential benefits of integration into a tighter regional economic structure, especially regarding the new Silk Road project, as detailed in the presentation on "China's Partnership Strategies in East and Central Asia: Between Regional Interests and a Global Agenda" by Georg Strüver (GIGA).

In his presentation on "The Mongolian Initiative for Security in Northeast Asia", G. Uranbaigali (ISS) identified rising pressure on the third neighbor policy due to increased regional complexity; Mongolia entertains cooperative links to non-democratic countries such as the DPRK and Kazakhstan with the aim of developing its regional network for promoting economic and security cooperation. The promotion of collective security arrangements aimed at socializing states and reducing tensions was discussed in the presentation on "German and European Experiences with Cooperative Security: A Model for East Asia?" by Michael Staack (Helmut Schmidt Univ. of the Armed Forces). Some members of the audience expressed skepticism regarding Chinese and Russian willingness to participate in cooperative security mechanisms in East or Central Asia.

Mongolia's more distant neighbors were addressed in the presentation on "Iran: Disruptive or Stabilizing Factor in Central Asia?" by Henner Fürtig (GIGA and Hamburg Univ.), who posited Iran as essentially divided between the revolutionary nature of the state and the pragmatic thinking of its foreign policy. Fürtig highlighted the potential contribution of Iran as an alternative partner for Central Asian states. An animated discussion centered on the implications of the religious identity of the regime in Tehran for its regional involvement.

Collective security as a mechanism for détente in Northeast Asia was explored by D. Munkhtur (ISS) in his presentation "'New Helsinki' in the East and the OSCE as Role Model?" This talk complemented the review of mechanisms in Europe, though prospects were perceived as limited in Northeast Asia due to lack of interest by regional powers and the lack of substantial outside security partners. This concern formed part of a broader discussion on neutrality based on the talk on "Regional Stability and Security Structures in the Post-Soviet Sphere" by Alexandr Burilkov (GIGA). Discussion here centered on the sources, consequences, and lessons learned from the Crimean crisis.

Some participants argued that the issue of neutrality was intrinsically linked to Mongolia's relationship with China, which is domestically controversial. China accounts for around 90 percent of Mongolia's exports and outward-oriented elites tend to be positive on engagement with China. Some Mongolian participants noted the strong role played by business leaders in politics, much as in other post-Soviet republics.

Migration was discussed in the context of Inner Mongolia. Though there is no territorial dispute, a few Mongolian participants suggested that migration from China, especially from Inner Mongolia, might eventually dilute Mongolian identity and potentially erode the country's independence in the long run; a sentiment echoed by fringe nationalist groups in Mongolian civil society.

The final presentation on "Foreign Policy Think Tanks in China and Japan: Characteristics, Current Profile, and the Case of Collective Self-Defense" by Patrick Köllner (GIGA and Hamburg Univ.) explored Japanese and Chinese foreign policy think tank scenes and highlighted potentially positive aspects of independent policy advice for advancing Mongolia's role in international relations. Discussion revolved around the topics of cooperation with Chinese think tanks and on Mongolia's armed forces, which are optimized for international

peacekeeping missions. Given the great disparity of capabilities between Mongolia and its neighbors, most participants agreed on the value of international and regional cooperation and integration, but some members of the audience, perhaps mindful of the Crimean crisis, were more enthusiastic about military modernization.

In the closing session, participants concurred that conferences of this kind are very useful for a better understanding of relevant viewpoints and assessments as well as for strengthening 'human pipelines' between Mongolia and Germany. Future exchanges along similar lines, possibly also involving academics and policymakers from other Asian and EU countries, are to be explored.

Alexandr Burilkov