

the ROC public diplomacy during the Cold War era. In the panel “Governance for What?”, among others, Ek-hong Ljavakaw Sia (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen) reported on the different governance strategies employed by NGOs after the destruction caused by Typhoon Marokat.

To summarize, the conference offered refreshing perspectives on the development in Taiwan studies bringing together scholars from Europe and Taiwan.

In 2015, the conference will take place at the Jagiellonian University at Cracow, and in 2016 at the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague.

Ann Heylen and Jens Damm

Regional Dynamics and Afghanistan in 2014

German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg, 26.–27. May 2014

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The workshop, which focused on regional dynamics concerning Afghanistan against the backdrop of the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops, was held at the GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies on May 26 – 27, 2014. The workshop was organized under the framework of a project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) with the aim of promoting the bilateral cooperation between GIGA and the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), India’s most important security think tank. Speakers from GIGA, IDSA and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (IFSH), Humboldt University, and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) participated in the workshop. This workshop was followed by a talk on India’s foreign and security policies at GIGA’s Berlin office on May 29, 2014.

The workshop put particular emphasis on the role of the countries in Afghanistan’s regional neighbourhood, which would be most affected by a further destabilization of Afghanistan and are seriously concerned about developments there. The international community has tried to promote “regional solutions” for Afghanistan and would like regional states to assume greater responsibilities. However, regional countries have not been able to develop meaningful forms of regional cooperation. At the same time, a flurry of “minilateral” diplomatic activities among these states shows that there is, at least, substantial interest in an exchange of information. The workshop specifically addressed the question of how domestic changes within Afghanistan and the withdrawal of international troops have impacted the perceptions and policies of regional actors and what this could imply for future regional cooperation.

The first panel was devoted to domestic and international developments in Afghanistan. Michael Brzoska (IFSH) discussed current developments in Afghanistan from a German perspective, while Rumel Dahiya (IDSA) provided an assessment of the situation from an Indian point of view. Further insights into domestic developments in Afghanistan were provided by Vishal Chandra (IDSA). Overall, the situation in Afghanistan is observed with a mix of concern and cautious optimism. Both European and South Asian observers agreed on the fragility of the security situation, but were of the view that the execution of presidential elections allows for some hope. Florian P. Kühn (Humboldt University) in his presentation discussed the way knowledge about Afghanistan is generated and reproduced by resorting to the concept of “myths.” Several myths drove the international peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, leading to attempts to create a centralized state as the only solution to monopolize violence.

In the lively discussion that followed this first panel, most participants agreed that some kind of federalized setting will be the most realistic and desirable outcome for Afghanistan.

The second and third panels of the workshop focused on how regional actors have dealt with the situation in Afghanistan. There was a particular focus on the role played by Iran, Pakistan, India, Central Asian countries and China in Afghanistan. In the panel on Iran and Central Asia, Henner Fürtig (GIGA) outlined the evolution of Iran's policies towards Afghanistan and its current goals and interests, which have broad overlaps with those of the "West." Iran, in fact, has a clear interest in a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. He referred to the overwhelming cultural influence that Iran has had on Afghanistan and said that all this needed to be factored in while discussing regional solutions. Azamjon Isabaev (IFSH) focused on Central Asian countries' approaches to Afghanistan. These countries constitute an extremely heterogeneous group with different degrees of interest in Afghanistan and different vulnerabilities. In his presentation, Sebastian Schiek (IFSH) focused particularly on Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, highlighting how these countries used the conflict in Afghanistan for their own purposes, playing the United States and Russia out against each other. Among the contributions in the panel on South Asia and China, two presentations focused on Pakistan, which is arguably the most problematic neighbour of Afghanistan. Ashok Behuria (IDSA) discussed Pakistan's notion of "strategic depth" vis-à-vis Afghanistan, while Hannes Ebert (GIGA) provided insights from his recent field research in Pakistan. Both presenters agreed that there are first encouraging signs in the Pakistani strategic community towards a less disruptive approach in dealing with Afghanistan, but that no major shift in policies can be detected so far. Nadine Godehardt (SWP) assessed the role of China, which is mainly focused on economic interests and is otherwise characterized by a "wait and watch" approach.

Sandra Destradi (GIGA) and Meena Singh Roy (IDSA) in a joint presentation argued that sub-regional forms of cooperation could be the most suitable way to overcome the numerous challenges to regional cooperation related to Afghanistan. Christian Wagner (SWP) called into question the notion of "regional solutions" for Afghanistan, but argued that regional cooperation can nevertheless be a useful tool for confidence building among regional countries.

The lively discussions among the experts on different regions and from different regions made the workshop a useful and enriching event. A larger conference on the topic "Changing Asia: Perspectives on Regional and Global Cooperation" is planned for November 2014 in Hamburg and will bring together scholars from GIGA and its partner institutes in India (IDSA), China (China Foreign Affairs University, CFAU) and the United States (University of Virginia).

Sandra Destradi and Meena Singh Roy