

Asia Program

2018 Annual Report



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Cover (From Top)

Wilson Center CEO **Jane Harman** speaks at Habib House in Seoul, South Korea.
Asia Program Director **Abraham M. Denmark** at a Wilson Center event in Washington, D.C.

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Introduction

For four decades, the Wilson Center's Asia Program has been a critical voice in Washington, bringing leading-edge research to debates about Asia's geopolitics and their meaning for the United States. There is no doubt that Asia is the emerging center of global power, and is in the midst of historic change. Dedicated to improving American understanding of the region's geopolitics, the Asia Program has greatly enhanced its role in the region and in Washington as a significant voice on political, economic, and security issues in Asia and on U.S. policies and strategies toward the region.

Our work has focused on four core areas: South Asia, Northeast Asia, the Korean Peninsula, and Allies and Partners. In each of these areas, we have produced cutting-edge research and hosted high-level events while at the same time greatly enhancing the program's media engagement. Our team is regularly featured on CNN and BBC, and our commentary has been featured in the New York Times, Washington Post, Foreign Affairs, and in publications across Asia.

Our team has also grown in the past year. Jean Lee, a Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist who served as AP Bureau Chief in Seoul and established the AP Bureau in Pyongyang, joined the team as Director of the Hyundai Motor-Korea Foundation Center for Korean History and Public Policy. We welcomed Dr. Van Jackson and Prashanth Parameswaran as new Global Fellows to contribute to our work on Korea, regional order, and Southeast Asia. We also established a new Asia Advisory Council, composed of senior scholars and former officials from the United States and across the region.

Asia is the most dynamic and geopolitically significant region in the world, and I am honored to work with such an extraordinary team. Without them, the Asia Program would not have been able to become such a critical voice in the discussion about the future of this critical region.

Abraham M. Denmark
Director, Asia Program

December 2018

Global Trade and Economics



Events

The Asian Financial Crisis, 20 Years On:

A Conversation with Lawrence H. Summers

Bangkok's decision in 1997 to float the baht after failing to support the currency from speculators led to a financial crisis not only in Thailand, but across Asia, most notably Indonesia and South Korea. Two decades since the crisis, countries have enhanced their financial oversight, built up their foreign currency reserves, and have dealt with non-performing loans. But is Asia now better prepared for another financial crisis?



U.S. Trade Policy in Northeast Asia

The Trump administration views trade surpluses as evidence of winning in the global economy and deficits as proof of losing out. As such, the goal for bilateral trade deals should be to reduce the U.S. trade deficit with key trading partners, most notably in Northeast Asia. The focus has been on pursuing bilateral trading arrangements, but the price of that policy stance has been to sow doubts about the credibility of U.S. leadership in the Asia-Pacific.

Politics and Policy of East Asia's Economic Future

The Trans-Pacific Partnership is the most recent, and a highly ambitious, step along a familiar road of international economic liberalization and integration through multilateral trade-plus pacts. Experts gathered for two panel discussions, "After the U.S. TPP 'Opt-Out'" and "Looking to the Future."

Japan's Leadership Role in the International Order: Global Expectations, Domestic Challenges

From taking the lead to ensure that the Trans-Pacific Partnership thrives even without the United States to concluding a deal with the European Union for a free trade agreement, Japan has been taking an active role in ensuring that free and fair trade rules prevail through a multilateral approach. At the same time, there has been a significant change in how political leadership within Japan is defined, particularly under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Whose Rules for the Digital Economy? Shared Visions, Competing Interests

How can international trade rules adequately address the needs of data protection and intellectual property rights, while promoting new growth sectors using online platforms? What are the prospects of harmonizing policies and rules, or will divergence into the digital economy be inevitable?



What's Next for Afghanistan's Economy?

In recent years, as Afghanistan's security situation has suffered, its economy has struggled as well. Poverty has risen significantly, and a worsening drought has caused major damage to agriculture, a key economic sector. At the same time, there have been some successes, including drops in inflation and rising rates of revenue collection.

Publication

Paying for Retirement: Challenges for Private Pension Development in Eastern Europe

by Michael Corbin, Asia Program Fellow

How to meet the economic as well as social needs of the elderly is a challenge for any government. It has been particularly taxing for countries transitioning from a command economy into a free market economy, as citizens have had to adjust expectations for what they should expect from the private as well as public sectors to fund their retirement. Adapting expectations and educating current and future pensioners have been tremendous hurdles for governments as they look to make fundamental changes in paying for pensions.

On The Blog

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Energy Geopolitics in Asia

"When it comes to assessing the implications of CPEC, issues of energy geopolitics may not be as sexy as concerns about China's growing influence and presence in South Asia and other matters of grand strategy. And yet considerations about energy geopolitics are no less important—particularly given the precarious state of energy security in a world where supplies are dwindling even as demand remains insatiable." - Michael Kugelman

In Trade, Getting to Yes is Not a Surrender

"Yet President Trump's insistence on fair trade on a level playing field that reciprocates rules of business practices is something that all industrialized countries are clamoring for. In fact, one of the biggest needs to update existing trade rules would be to protect interests that have not been under consideration in trade deals until now, such as protecting intellectual property rights." - Shihoko Goto

U.S. Trade, North Korea Policies Bring Asia's Biggest Economies to Table

"..both Tokyo and Beijing have been flummoxed by the seismic shifts in U.S. trade policy. At the same time, with the United States having no interest in pursuing multilateral trade deals including the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, there is greater motivation for China and Japan to look to concluding the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement in an effort not only to facilitate regional trade, but also to further political ties as well." - Shihoko Goto

The Cost of Inconsistent Trade Policy

"By imposing punitive tariffs and challenging the WTO as a forum for international trade dispute settlement, the White House should be prepared for the build-up of a coalition of its allies who remain committed to ensuring that trade rules remain not only fair, but also consistent and predictable." - Shihoko Goto

Demographic Challenges in Asian Pensions

"Paying for pensions is vital to the quality of life for future retirees in Asia. It's also an issue of great political and economic importance to current and future policy makers in the region. They are currently wrestling with the dual problems of growing population in the poorest of countries while more developed Asia powers face the quickly approaching reality of rapid aging and declining population." - Michael Corbin

When and Whether National Security Plays a Role in Trade

"As the White House looks to impose more tariffs on an array of sectors in the name of national security, the time has come to define what exactly constitutes a national threat in the realm of economic security." - Shihoko Goto

U.S. Political Uncertainties Could Rock Trade Ties Further

"Further politicization of trade may be inevitable. With an eye to the presidential elections in two years' time, the impetus for the White House to step up efforts to demonstrate U.S. strength will only increase..." - Shihoko Goto



Wilson Center NOW

TPP, Revised and Reborn with Shihoko Goto



Wilson Center Podcasts

Talking TPP: Japan, the Prize

South
China
Sea
Mindoro



Security and Defense

Events

Security Challenges in East Asia

The National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP) in collaboration with the Wilson Center's Asia Program conducted a briefing addressing Cross-Taiwan Strait relations after the 19th Party Congress; prospects for U.S.-China relations in the Trump era; the North Korea nuclear issue; and the state of Sino-Korean relations.

Changing Patterns of Extremism and Terrorism in Pakistan

Current tensions between the United States and Pakistan underscore the problems posed by the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network, groups that Washington blames for orchestrating attacks on U.S. troops in Afghanistan from safe havens in Pakistan. However, the story of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan extends well beyond these two groups, and it continues to evolve—even as Pakistan has experienced major reductions in terrorist violence in recent years.



Deepening a Natural Partnership? Assessing the State of U.S.-India Counterterrorism Cooperation

Nearly a year after the Washington summit meeting between U.S. President and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, U.S.-India relations, and particularly bilateral security relations, are making ample progress. One critical area of the security partnership lies in counterterrorism cooperation.

Chinese Expansion and the South China Sea: Beijing's Strategic Ambition and the Asian Order

China's ambitions to become Asia's undisputed regional hegemon is perhaps most evident in the South China Sea, as Beijing creates military bases along remote reefs and islands in a 1.5-million-square mile expanse. Humphrey Hawksley, author of *Asian Waters: The Struggle Over the South China Sea and the Strategy of Chinese Expansion* and Los Angeles Times Deputy Washington Bureau Chief Bob Drogin joined us for a discussion on the rivalry between China and the United States, and the dilemma facing countries in the region including Vietnam, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, and the Philippines to challenge China's dominance.

The Quetta Experience: Attitudes and Values Within Pakistan's Army

What do we know about members of the Pakistani Army? What are their values? What are their attitudes toward the United States and other key countries? How do they perceive internal and external threats? What are their thoughts on Pakistan's political situation? What do they think about Pakistan's nuclear weapons program? How do these perspectives differ, if at all, within the Army and over time?



Contested Spaces, Tangled Webs: Indian Geopolitics Today

Over the last decade, the United States and India have sought to build a strategic partnership. At the same time, the rise of India's neighbor China, along with Chinese military assertiveness and trade imbalances and security threats emanating from China, have fueled new tensions with the United States. This event will offer an Indian perspective on the geometry of the India-U.S.-China triangle in the Indo-Pacific region.



'The China Challenge: Security and Military Developments'

Asia Program Director Abraham M. Denmark testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia, The Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy on September 5, 2018. Visit our website for video of his testimony and a copy of his prepared remarks.

Publications

Chinese Strategic Assessments of Southeast Asia by Marvin Ott

Southeast Asia has been, and remains, a natural focus of China's geopolitical ambitions. Beijing's strategic approach toward the region has crystallized as Chinese capabilities have changed. The geopolitical future of Asia is in play, the pace of change is breathtaking, and the stakes both for the region and for the United States are enormous. To understand the game it is vital to better understand how China's strategic approach to Southeast Asia has evolved.

U.S. National Security Strategy: Implications for the U.S.-Japan Alliance edited by Shihoko Goto

Tensions continue to rise in East Asia, not least with the continued threat of a nuclear North Korea, coupled with China's ever-growing military, economic, and political aspirations for regional hegemony. Expectations for Japan to play a critical role to ensure peace and stability have increased as a result, and strong ties between Tokyo and Washington remain critical for the two sides to work closely together.

The Quetta Experience by David O. Smith

A new Wilson Center study offers a revealing window into the thinking of three groups of Pakistani Army officers—senior officers (brigadier and major generals); senior mid-level officers (lieutenant colonels and colonels); and junior mid-level officers (captains and majors)—who served at the Pakistan Army Command and Staff College in the city of Quetta between 1977 and 2014.

On the Blog

Another Grim Milestone for the War in Afghanistan

"How can the Taliban remain so strong after being hit so hard on the battlefield for nearly 20 years and after experiencing a rapid succession of leadership changes that has caused dissension and fracturing within the ranks?" - Michael Kugelman

Modi's Vision: ASEAN and Indo-Pacific Security

"Within that broader vision, Modi's 'Act East' Policy has also begun having notable gains for India's ties with Southeast Asian states on the defense side as well. Even as progress has been uneven and slow, the gains have not been insignificant..." - Prashanth Parameswaran

A Ray of Hope in Afghanistan

"What this all means is that constituencies for peace have grown in Afghanistan. Not just Afghan civilians, but also Taliban members themselves, have now had a taste of peace and experienced just how wonderful it can be." - Michael Kugelman

Why We Ignore Bangladesh at Our Peril

"In fact, this lack of attention is unsurprising; Bangladesh is frequently off the radar. In the West and especially in the United States, it typically attracts bursts of media attention only when there has been a major terrorist attack or a catastrophic flood. Given recent developments in Bangladesh, however, we ignore the country at our peril. Bangladesh is a powder keg, and it could well explode." - Michael Kugelman

China Looks South

"For America, the simple fact of China's rapid growth and modernization would be hugely important, but not necessarily threatening to U.S. interests. China's emergence has become a first order strategic concern as the scope of Beijing's geopolitical ambition has come into focus." - Marvin Ott

The Big Opportunity for U.S.-Pakistan Relations in Afghanistan

"The idea of launching a peace process, much less concluding a deal, within the next six months beggars belief. When it comes to negotiating an end to insurgencies, the timeframe tends to be years or even decades, and not mere months. The simple objective of getting the Taliban to start talking will be a major challenge." - Michael Kugelman



Ground Truth Briefing:

Global Implications of Exiting the INF Treaty



Wilson Center NOW:

Can the U.S. Influence Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Efforts? with Michael Kugelman



Pakistan's Institutions:
We Know They Matter,
But How Can They
Work Better?



Elections and Governance in South Asia



Events

Ghosts from the Past? Assessing Recent Developments in Religious Freedom in South Asia

In recent years, questions about religious freedom and the rights of religious minorities have reemerged as issues of concern in Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. This conference brought together a series of academic and policy experts to consider how and why issues first debated during the crafting of these countries' constitutions have returned to South Asia with greater urgency and consequence.



Understanding Secessionist Struggle in South Asia

Since 1945, much of the world's conflict has been separatist in nature. South Asia is especially prone to such disputes. At this event, Dr. Ahsan Butt, drawing on his new book, *Secession and Security: Explaining State Strategy Against Separatists*, argued that it is states, rather than separatists, that determine how much violence there is in these conflicts.

What to Expect from Pakistan's Election?

On July 25, 2018, Pakistan held an election that constituted the country's second consecutive peaceful transfer of power. The incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party, hit by corruption charges that have resulted in a 10-year jail sentence for former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, tried to fend off several opponents. They were led by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, headed by cricket star-turned-politician Imran Khan.

Governing the Ungovernable: Institutional Reforms for Democratic Governance in Pakistan

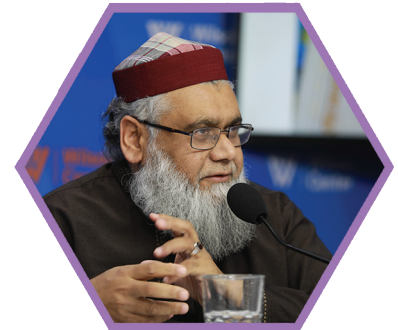
Why has Pakistan experienced an extended economic slowdown since 1990? Why has it suffered through volatile and inequitable growth over the last 25 years? In his new book, *Governing the Ungovernable*, Ishrat Husain, a distinguished Pakistani economist, Wilson Center global fellow, and former Wilson Center public policy fellow, argued that the answer lies in the decay of institutions of governance.

Fears of the Fourth Estate: Current Challenges for the Pakistan Press

In recent months—and particularly in the weeks leading up to Pakistan's July election—journalists, activists, and analysts have expressed concerns about growing threats to the Pakistani press. How has Pakistan's media climate and its challenges evolved over the years? What are the implications of press crackdowns and censorship for democracy in Pakistan?

Pathways to Change: Pakistan Policy Symposium

Pakistan has enjoyed a series of recent achievements in economic, political, and foreign affairs. Yet it continues to suffer from major challenges that threaten to squander the progress of recent years. What can Pakistan do to capitalize on its opportunities and address its challenges?



Islamic Law, the Nation State, and the Case of Pakistan

Most Muslims today live in political systems that operate on a nation state model. By contrast, classical Islamic jurisprudence developed in the context of empire and a robust and relatively independent scholarly class. Is there something about the nation state that makes "Islamization" unworkable? In what contexts might "Islamization" be most successful? Is there a role for classical Islamic law in Pakistan, and, more generally, for Muslims living within the framework of modernity?

Publications

Pakistan's Institutions: We Know They Matter, But How Can They Work Better? edited by Michael Kugelman

Given the significance and far-reaching consequences of institutional struggles in Pakistan, the Wilson Center and the Fellowship Fund for Pakistan hosted an all-day conference on the topic in 2017. The event focused on the problems, but also on the encouraging reforms and success stories that highlight the possibilities for turning institutions around for the better. Edited versions of the papers presented at the conference appear in this volume.

Pakistan Election Day 2018: News and Analysis

"For his supporters, his triumph offers resounding proof that there is a "third way" in Pakistani politics — that a civilian leader not linked to family dynasties or older and established parties can rise to the very top. For his detractors, his victory represents a soft coup led by a Pakistani military determined to bring its preferred candidate to power." - Michael Kugelman

On The Blog

Malaysian Miracle

"Then it happened. An electorate sick of corruption and cronyism and nostalgic for the days when everything seemed better under Mahathir, voted in numbers that overwhelmed all the schemes that the ruling party had devised to guarantee a victory. Much of the Opposition's success was due to young voters who wanted to move past traditional communal politics where every policy and every person was identified in terms of race, religion, or ethnicity. They were tired of being compartmentalized as Malays, Chinese and Indians. They simply wanted to be Malaysians." - Marvin Ott

Secularism and India's Electoral Democracy

"If the 2014 election campaign is a harbinger of things to come, India's largest political party, the BJP, will again take care to select as few Muslim candidates for the elections as possible. What's worse, the Congress party, its secular credentials dented ever since its role in the partition of India, will also most likely continue to ride the wave of Hindu majoritarianism." - Neeti Nair

Before Pakistan's Election, a Tale of Two Narratives

"This more reasonable and less sensationalistic middle ground may be closer to the truth, but it's also unlikely to generate headlines or galvanize political party rank and files. And so, in the final blitz before the election, expect the two loud narratives to remain dominant—and, in the process, to drown out a number of key election storylines." - Michael Kugelman

The First Crisis for Pakistan's New Government

"Pakistan's troubled global image—a frequent source of anxiety for Pakistani officials—has taken another hit. Mian's international prominence ensures that the world—and particularly his fellow academicians in the West—will take note of what happened to him." - Michael Kugelman

Can Pakistan Experience an Era of Change?

"It's way too early to tell how successful the PTI will be in these efforts. Admittedly, the obstacles will be considerable...Still, all this aside, Islamabad does appear genuinely committed to bringing about change—and given the broad consensus in Pakistan that policy corrective are needed across the board, such commitment is a very good thing." - Michael Kugelman

After the Pakistan Policy Symposium: Next Steps

"At a moment when there is a degree of 'Pakistan fatigue' in Washington, the strong turnout throughout the two days was an indication that there still is sustained interest in the country. One of the questions that we frequently received from the audience was 'What's next?'" - Michael Kugelman



Ground Truth Briefing:

Elections in Pakistan: What to Make of the Results?



Wilson Center NOW:

Pakistan Selects a New Leader with Michael Kugelman

Understanding Leverage through U.S.-Pakistan Relations with Robert Hathaway

Additional Publications:

Governing the Ungovernable by Ishrat Husain, Global Fellow (Oxford University Press)

Asia Affairs Special Issue: Ghosts from the Past? Assessing Recent Developments in Religious Freedom in South Asia (Taylor & Francis)



North Korea and the Singapore Summit



Events

Games and Gamesmanship: Unity and Stability at Pyeongchang

When athletes from North and South Korea united under one flag at the Pyeongchang Olympics, it was more than a political statement. It may have also paved the way for a new approach to deal with Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions.



U.S. National Security and the Korean Peninsula: Perspectives from a Defector, a Russian, and an Analyst

In February, the Wilson Center hosted a discussion in partnership with the Institute for Korean-American Studies (ICAS) featuring a former senior ranking official of the Kim Jong-Un regime, a professor from St. Petersburg University, and a renowned author on issues related to North Korea.

New Year, New Strategy: Shifting Policies on North Korea in 2018

After more than a year of escalating tensions over North Korea's nuclear provocations and a war of words between Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump, we have seen an abrupt shift in strategy on the Korean Peninsula. Declaring himself content with North Korea's nuclear weapons arsenal in late 2017, Kim Jong Un began 2018 with a new approach: diplomatic outreach. A summit between Kim and ROK President Moon Jae-in inside the Demilitarized Zone was held, the first inter-Korean summit in more than a decade. On the eve of the summit between the leaders of the Koreas, several leading scholars discussed this shift in strategy, including lessons from history, prospects for peace and reconciliation, and implications for the United States.

"The Spy Gone North" film screening

The Hyundai-Motor Korea Foundation Center for Korean History and Public Policy, the Korea Economic Institute, and CJ Entertainment presented the East Coast premier of *The Spy Gone North*, A Yoon Jong-bin film.

2018 Korea Global Forum

A New Path Forward: Charting a Roadmap to Peace on the Korean Peninsula

Last year, tensions between the United States and North Korea brought the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war. North Korea's Kim Jong Un ramped up testing of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles designed to strike the American heartland. President Donald Trump threatened "fire and fury" in response to Pyongyang's defiance. One year later, the Korean Peninsula finds itself at a very different place: poised to declare peace between North Korea and the United States, and prepared to embark on a new era of engagement and reconciliation – if Kim and Trump can agree on a roadmap to denuclearization aimed at bringing the region lasting peace.



Additional Events

Seoul Defense Dialogue 2018:

U.S.-China Competition and Implications for the Korean Peninsula

On September 13, 2018 Asia Program Director Abraham M. Denmark spoke at the Seoul Defense Dialogue 2018 for Plenary Session II: Strategic Balance in Northeast Asia: Cooperation and Confidence Building. Visit our website to read his prepared remarks.



The Trump-Kim Summit: Outcomes and Oversight

On June 20, 2018, the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific held a hearing to discuss the Trump-Kim summit. Abraham Denmark testified about what happened in Singapore. Visit our website for video of the hearing and a copy of his prepared remarks.

Publications

When Trump Meets Kim by Abraham Denmark and Nirav Patel

"The long-simmering crisis between North Korea and the United States has reached a new, consequential phase. President Trump's decision to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un will be a decisive moment in a struggle that has lasted since the United States first suspected North Korea of harboring nuclear ambitions in the 1980s. Regardless of how the summit may transpire, one thing is clear: this challenge, and the geopolitics of East Asia, will never be the same again."

Games and Gamesmanship: 2018 Olympics Coverage and Analysis:

The politics of sports were on full display at the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, but this is hardly the only time that the world has seen the intersection of sports and diplomacy. From Munich to Los Angeles to Sochi the games have often been fraught with diplomatic tension.

On The Blog

Singapore Center Stage

"This anxiety is long standing and the recent dramatic relaxation in Korean tensions is profoundly welcome. The fact that a Southeast Asian venue has been selected for the historic meeting between Trump and Kim puts icing on the cake." - Marvin Ott

Next Steps with Pyongyang

"Even if North Korea is genuinely committed to denuclearize—a highly debatable assumption—negotiating the highly complex details of such a process would take months if not years." - Abraham Denmark

Forget Defining Denuclearization: South Koreans are Pushing Ahead with Reconciliation

"The South Korean government's attitude right now is: Get on board or get out of our way. The more protracted the U.S.-North Korean negotiations, the more potential for a gap between Washington and Seoul on North Korea policy, as South Korea makes moves to lift its sanctions to allow for economic partnership." - Jean H. Lee

Missing-But Not Forgotten: What the Return of Korean War Remains Means for the Daughter of One American Soldier

"Still, 55 caskets draped in the flag of the United Nations were loaded onto a plane in Wonsan and then flown to a U.S. military base in Osan, South Korea. The images of American and North Korean officials working side by side served as a powerful reminder of the need for confidence-building measures between the wartime foes." - Jean H. Lee

'Farewell Reunions': Time is Running Out for Korea's Divided Families

"Reuniting separated families is a matter that must be addressed with urgency and with greater cooperation between North Korea and South Korea. Then what is holding North Korea back?" - Soojin Park

Talking North Korea in Hollywood

"Trump has already criticized South Korea as a security free rider and suggested he would reduce U.S. forces there. We are not sure what North Korea might do if the U.S.-South Korea alliance is weakened." - Narushige Michishita

Ground Truth Briefings



Winter Games: What's Going on With North and South Korea
Is North Korea Ready for Peace or Playing for Time?
North Korea Summit: Historic Deal or Just a Historic Handshake?



Wilson Center TRENDING

Hopeful Signs on the Korean Peninsula?
Why 'Singapore Makes Sense' for U.S.-North Korea Summit

Additional Events and Analysis



Events

Public Diplomacy and the Evolution of U.S.-Japan Relations

Wariness of political correctness and distrust of intellectuals has led to the proliferation of “post-truth” or “fake news.” That has made it more difficult to distinguish between the role of public diplomacy and outright propaganda. How the United States leverages its soft power could define Washington’s relations with key allies worldwide, including Japan.

Taiwan’s Energy Challenge: Meeting the Needs to Power Growth

The inability of supply to keep up with the ever-increasing energy needs of Taiwan was made all too clear last summer as the island faced a blackout. Facing a dearth of energy sources within its own boundaries, Taipei will need to introduce major changes in how it secures and distributes power.

Japan’s Strategic Power in International Relations

The so-called lost two decades of Japan’s economic power since the early 1990s have generated the idea that Japan is no longer a significant player. Instead, policymakers and academics alike now focus far more on the rise of China. In *Re-rising Japan: Its Strategic Power in International Relations*, Yoichiro Sato and Hidekazu Sakai challenge this idea head-on with evidence that Japan is actually a major power in today’s international relations where the interests and power of the United States and China have increasingly clashed over many issues.



The Sixth Annual Nancy Bernkopf Tucker Memorial Lecture

Sustaining Taiwan Through the 21st Century with Shelley Rigger

For the better part of seven decades, Taiwan has occupied a unique position as the only self-governing entity in the world to thrive without widespread diplomatic recognition. Here we are, 70 years on, and Taiwan is more recognizably itself than ever. Nonetheless, the challenges confronting Taiwan in the 21st century are daunting and some are new; the path through those obstacles is hard to envision. Are Taiwan’s successes—economic, cultural, political, and social—sustainable in the face of rising PRC power?

Soft Power Amidst Great Power Competition

As the contours of a renewed era of competition between great powers become more clear, soft power has emerged as an increasingly significant measure of national might. Yet soft power is not as amorphous and undefinable as was once believed. A country’s ability to attract and influence can be measured, damaged, and strengthened.

Asserting Taiwan’s International Space: The Challenges Ahead for Taipei’s Leadership

Taiwan’s unique status in the world came under greater pressure in 2018 as China stepped up efforts to challenge Taipei’s global standing. Taiwan remains a leading Asian economy and a vibrant democracy. Yet strained cross-strait relations have made it increasingly difficult for Taipei to ensure its standing in the international arena.

Publications

Public Diplomacy and the Evolution of U.S.-Japan Relations

by Yasushi Watanabe, Japan Scholar

Among experts, the concept of “public diplomacy” is getting more ambiguous and problematic. If “diplomacy” is an art of shaping realities and setting agendas, or negotiating over norms and institutions (or boundaries and categories at large), how is it different from “public diplomacy?”

Soft Power Amidst Great Power Competition by Irene Wu, Fellow

In this report, Wilson Center Fellow Irene Wu discusses why soft power matters more today than ever, and how to measure its influence on broader considerations of global geopolitics.

ASEAN’S Role in a U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy by Prashanth Parameswaran, Global Fellow

In 2018, top U.S. officials began fleshing out a vision for the Indo-Pacific region. Successfully integrating Southeast Asia into a strategy in the coming years will require U.S. policymakers to recognize both the opportunities and challenges that come with the region, as well as being cognizant of how to navigate this mix of considerations that play into U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia.



On The Blog

Southeast Asia's Balancing Act

"It may be shocking to consider the possibility that major countries in Southeast Asia may align with China at the expense of the United States, especially considering lingering historical animosities and roiling anxieties about China's long-term ambitions for regional dominance. Nevertheless, many in Southeast Asia see the dynamic in starkly realist terms: China is on the rise and close, the United States is on the decline and distant." - Abraham Denmark

Does the Indo-Pacific Matter for Washington?

"There is little doubt that the Indo-Pacific will be a driving economic and political force in the 21st century, and of increasingly critical geopolitical interest to the United States. And while each U.S. administration has sought to enhance U.S. engagements in the region, these efforts have been relatively modest. If geopolitical competition with China is truly a top strategic priority for the United States, Washington will need to start matching that rhetoric with a significant shift in investments and initiatives." - Abraham Denmark

Can the Indo-Pacific Open Doors for Taiwan?

"But the fact that Taiwan distinguishes itself so sharply from mainland China by adhering to the rule of law, ensuring that intellectual property is protected, and committing to promote freedom of speech is as attractive for businesses too, and not just for the success of the Indo-Pacific strategy. In short, there is clearly tremendous financial value in Taiwan continuing to be a thriving democracy, and key U.S. businesses depend on it to remain distinct from the mainland and flourish." - Shihoko Goto

The Future of the Quad is in Southeast Asia

"Most countries in Southeast Asia would prefer to enhance their relationship with the United States if given the chance, yet reality is that opportunities for Southeast Asian nations to substantially improve relations with Washington have been limited, and Beijing keeps knocking at the door. They know that China is close and the United States is far away, and some in Southeast Asia are increasingly considering leaning in China's direction more explicitly in order to sustain positive relations and avoid coercion from an increasingly assertive Beijing." - Abraham Denmark

ASEAN and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy

"Southeast Asia is a complex and diverse region, and fashioning a strategic approach to the region and connecting that to wider U.S. Asia policy in a sustainable way has long proven difficult for U.S. policymakers. And like past and future U.S. administrations, the Trump administration will also no doubt face its own share of frustrations and distractions along the way that may impair the evolution of U.S.-Southeast Asia ties independent of its own views." - Prashanth Parameswaran



Wilson Center NOW:

Can Soft Power Be Measured? with Irene Wu

Additional Events:

With the Kissinger Institute and the Kennan Institute:

Eurasian Integration: A Partnership Lost in Translation

With the Latin America Program, Canada Institute, and Mexico Institute:

The Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership: Implications for Global Trade

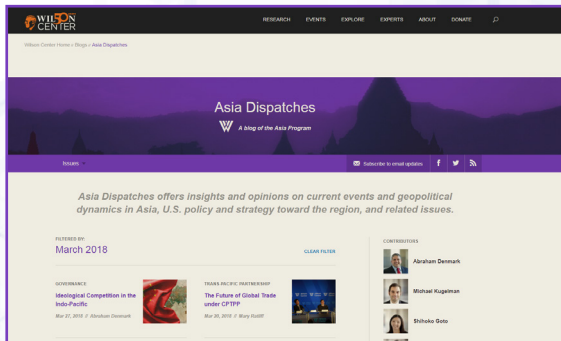
With the Latin America Program and the Argentina Project:

Obstacles to Japanese Investment in Latin America

Outreach and Social Media



Welcome to Dispatches



Blog:

On January 4, 2018 the Asia Program launched its new blog, Asia Dispatches. Over the course of the year, we have published commentary, analysis, and research from our staff, scholars, and fellows each week.



Top Posts:

2018: The Year Ahead in Asia

A New Era of Intensified U.S.-China Competition

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Energy Geopolitics in Asia

The Future of Global Trade under CPTPP

Forget Defining Denuclearization: South Koreans Are Pushing Ahead With Reconciliation



Visitors from:

The United States, Pakistan, India, China, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Australia, Singapore, Canada, Japan and many more.

Newsletter:

On October 1, we sent our first email newsletter. Dispatches gathers the latest program news, analysis, events, and publications from the staff, scholars, and experts at the Asia Program and Hyundai Motor-Korea Foundation Center for History and Public Policy into a monthly digest.



Welcome to Dispatches, the monthly newsletter of the Wilson Center's Asia Program. Please feel free to forward us around!

Highlights



[2018 Korea Global Forum: A New Path Forward: Charting a Roadmap to Peace on the Korean Peninsula](#) / South Korean Unification Minister Cho Myoung-Gyon [gave the keynote speech](#) at the Wilson Center conference, which also included remarks from former South Korean Ambassador to the U.S. Ahn Ho-young and Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Japan and Korea Marc Knapper / [Read a full report of the event on our blog.](#)

[AfPak File Podcast](#) / [The Aasia Bibi Case: Significance and Implications](#) / [Gauging The Prospects Of Talking Peace With The Taliban In Afghanistan](#)

In the News

[Mumbai terror attacks: The deep legacy of India's 9/11, a decade on](#) / CNN

[Kartarpur corridor: A road to peace between India and Pakistan?](#) / BBC News

[Pakistan's new government has given in to extremists, and not for the last time](#) / CNN

[Pursuing Lashkar-e-Taiba](#) The Hindu

[Why Bangladesh needs foreign observers during election](#) / Deutsche Welle



THE
NEW YORKER
the **japan times**
Bloomberg



THE DIPLOMAT
Read The Diplomat, Know the Asia-Pacific

The New York Times



DAWN



THE STRAITS TIMES

the **guardian**

POLITICO

NEWS



Slate



the **Globalist**

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Washington Post



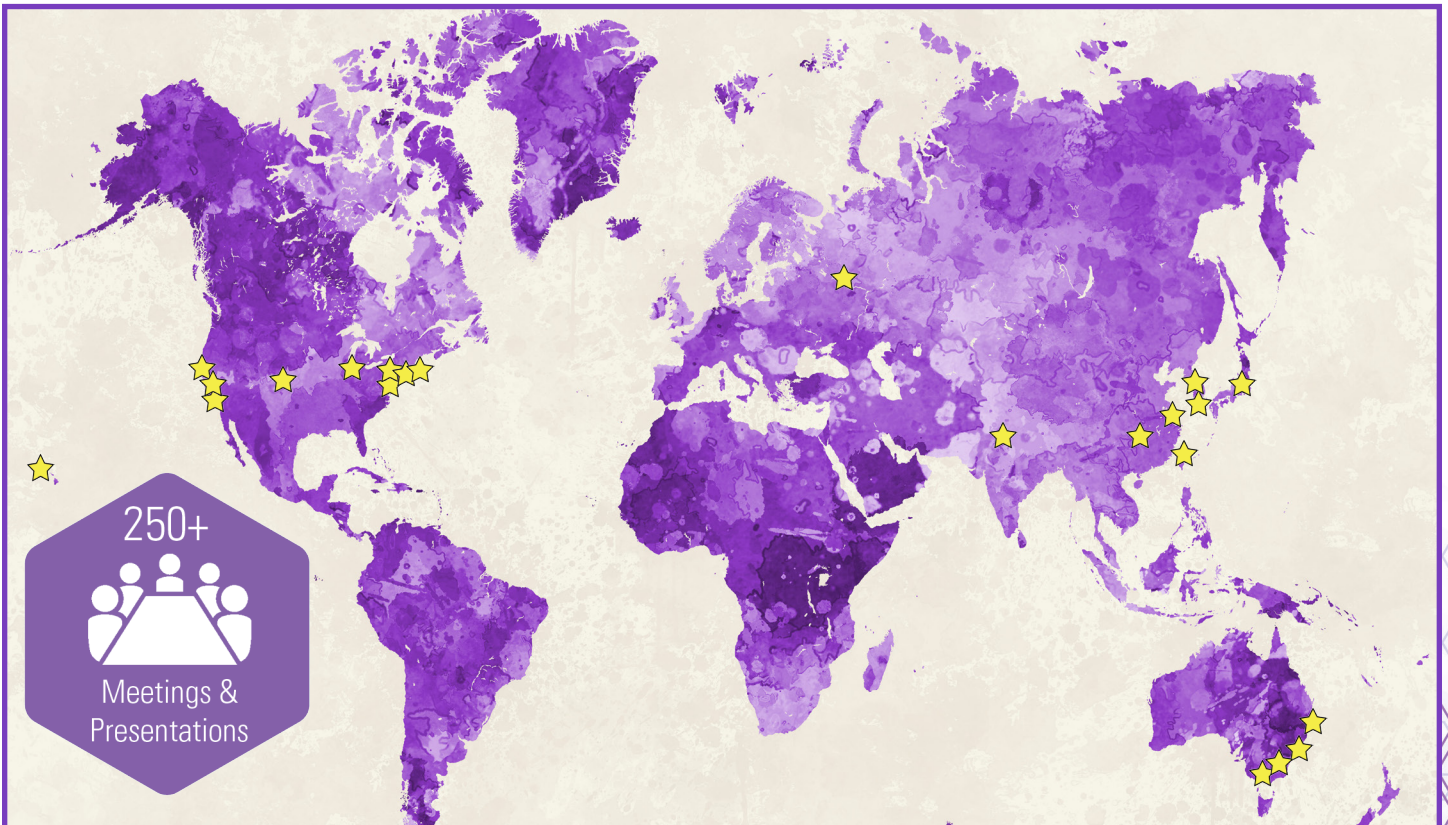


"Perhaps the biggest legacy of Mumbai is plain fear. No matter where in a city one may be – relaxing at the beach, taking in a ball game or concert, strolling on a downtown boulevard, sitting in a café, arriving at the airport – you can never assume you're safe. In the post-Mumbai era, these venues have all been attacked – and could be again." **-Michael Kugelman, CNN**

"As leaders negotiate the future of the Korean Peninsula, they must keep the divergent dreams of the different generations in mind. After all, it's young South Koreans like my cousin, working late into the night baking birthday cakes, who will pay for reconciliation and reunification — or, as I remind her, of provocation." **-Jean H. Lee, NPR**

"Expanding the definition of what it is to be Japanese and encouraging diversity will only further Japan's role as a country fully in tune with the needs of the 21st century." **-Shihoko Goto, The JapanTimes**

"We should also set aside any suggestions that being prepared to deter and respond to North Korean aggression is somehow less necessary now that diplomatic negotiations are underway. No matter what Trump says, North Korea remains just as powerful a military threat today as it was before the Singapore summit." **-Abraham M. Denmark and Lindsey Ford, Foreign Policy**





The AfPak File Podcast

Launched in September 2018, the AfPak File Podcast is a new series jointly hosted by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the Asia Program.

In each episode, a group of experts gather to discuss key topics affecting the region. Asia Program Deputy Director and Senior Associate for South Asia Michael Kugelman joins each program.

Episodes Include:

What's Next for the Haqqani Network?

Pakistan's Economy Under Imran Khan

What Is At Stake In Afghanistan's Parliamentary Election?

Gauging the Prospects of Talking Peace with the Taliban in Afghanistan

The Asia Bibi Case: Significance and Implications

The Precarious State of Civil Society In Pakistan



“Inside North Korea’s Dynasty”



The documentary series “Inside North Korea’s Dynasty” premiered on Sunday November 11, 2018 on the National Geographic Channel in the U.S. The four episode series, created by 72 Films and executive produced by David Glover and Mark Raphael explores the family at the center of “the world’s only communist dynasty.”

The film includes interviews with Korea Center Director Jean H. Lee, along with other first hand accounts of North Korea. Along with in depth interviews and analysis, the series also uses a large collection of archival footage, some of which had not been previously seen in the United States.

Raphael told Variety that the documentary series is “less geopolitical and more the inside track on how this country works,” and uses history to add context to current events.

Check National Geographic Channel’s website for complete listings and more information.



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