

UPF Europe and the Middle East: Experts Explore US-Russia-China Relations

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Europe and the Middle East - The first session of the June 2021 International Leadership Conference was "The State of Relations between USA, China and Russia."

As moderator, Dr. Michael Jenkins, president of UPF International, explained that the June 24 session was the first of six ILC webinars, which would be held until June 30. Before introducing the session panelists, Dr. Jenkins emphasized the need for cooperation among these three superpowers, as well as among the "six parties" (also including Japan, North Korea and South Korea).



The first speaker, Doug Bandow from the United States, a senior fellow with the Cato Institute think tank, said that China and Russia are the two most important countries with which the United States has to deal. The danger with the U.S. policy toward China is that it is encouraging Russia and China to come together. Some think Russia will realize that China is not a good ally, but this is not sure. Others think there is nothing we can do about it, since neither of them is really communist. Antagonism toward the United States is what is pushing them together. So the question is: Can we do something to prevent this?

Overall, China is of greater concern, Mr. Bandow said - but the United States shouldn't underestimate Russia, which has a significant nuclear threat. The U.S. has a bad relationship with Russia at the moment, but there are opportunities. Russia is a great power and wants to be treated as such. There is no existential threat from the Russians for the United States, but they are very sensitive to issues involving the Eastern European countries. For example, a compromise might be found concerning Russia's relations with Ukraine and Georgia, and there are other areas in which discussions could be useful. Human rights are always going to be an issue, he said, and this is unlikely to change.

China is a tougher issue, Mr. Bandow said, with a bigger economy and having relations with our allies.

The main issue is U.S. domination in East Asia. The U.S. expects the Chinese to accept things in their backyard that the United States itself would not accept. The United States has to de-escalate certain issues, such as the issue of Taiwan. There are also many trade and cybersecurity issues. China has a lot of weaknesses, even economically, so the United States needs to play a long game and emphasize peace. We need to recognize our differences and settle them peacefully, he said.

Mr. Bandow concluded by expressing hope that new leaders may seek peace in the future.



Guy Taylor from the United States, the national security team leader of The Washington Times, said the 1950s represents the period when the organizing bedrock of global security was established. It is wise to consider the history of the past 70 years as we try to understand the present three-way dynamic between Washington, Moscow and Beijing. These relations have shifted a lot over the past decades, up to the current situation in which the United States is increasingly concerned by China's rise as an economic and military power.

We are now in a new era, and the risks of conflict are real, Mr. Taylor said. He cited the U.S. political scientist Graham Allison, who wrote about the "Thucydides Trap" in a famous essay and subsequent book - Greek philosopher Thucydides concluded that the trap of war is almost inevitable when a rising power challenges an established power - in this case, China and the United States, respectively.

This three-way dynamic loomed over the recent Biden-Putin summit, Mr. Taylor said. We saw this in Chinese and Russian media reports, which attempted to project unity between Russia and China against the United States. The goal of the Biden administration is to free up U.S. foreign policy to concentrate on China and counteract its rise. The United States doesn't want to be sucked into quagmire conflicts with Russia.



Finally, Mr. Taylor said, the nuclear arms control or "strategic stability" agreements have been eroded by the development of more sophisticated weapons. China is not a party to START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties), but now that it is becoming an increasingly important economic power, it should bear a greater responsibility in these nuclear arms agreements. We must take into consideration here the

rogue state of North Korea, which has a border with China and Russia. The question to ask is "What is the strategic benefit for Russia and China to keep this nuclear regime going?" Mr. Taylor concurred with the idea that new leaders in the coming generations may seek peace.

Dr. Georgy Toloraya from Russia, the director of the East Asia section of the Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Sciences, explained that in Russia, and the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) in general, the overwhelming view is that the old post-liberal world order is starting to give way to something else, whose makeup is as yet unknown. The greatest discrepancy in viewpoint between them is that, unlike the United States, the BRICS countries consider that the world already has become multipolar. Dr. Toloraya appreciated that China wants to increase its political clout but doesn't want to impose its political regime on others.

How does all this influence the Korean situation? Both Russia and China have a long history of cooperation with North Korea, Dr. Toloraya said. Russia and China are just across the river from North Korea, unlike the United States. Russia and China are interested in maintaining the status quo, even if the situation after unification would be more beneficial.

North Korea has become self-sufficient in its defense through the nuclear missile shield it has developed, Dr. Toloraya said, and he doesn't think it is looking to be aggressive with this. North Korea considers that it has achieved strategic parity with the United States, he said, and this parity brings about a somewhat stable situation.

However, he said, there is little hope of denuclearization. No one will ever recognize North Korea legally as a nuclear state, but it's unlikely that North Korea will denuclearize. We can only talk about arms control, Dr. Toloraya said. We have to recognize this reality, which he thinks the Biden administration may be considering. North Korea wants some kind of equal and meaningful dialogue with the United States, and there are few prospects for Korean reunification in the near future. The best scenario is for North Korea to become a "conventional country," cooperating with its neighbors. To get there, however, there is a need to diminish the sense of danger and threat on both sides, he said.

Finally, the three speakers were asked to offer suggestions for the Biden administration with regard to North Korea, China and Russia.

Guy Taylor said that what the Biden administration wants is not so different from what the Trump administration did, but its style is softer. The U.S. interests are the same, and we should consider that, going forward. Mr. Taylor said his advice would be to remember the mantra of peace through strength. The United States should not be too weak and should not pander to autocracy.

Dr. Georgy Toloraya said the Biden administration should do something practical - for example, regarding sanctions. A lot of experts believe the United States wants to see North Korea disappear.

Doug Bandow said we have to realize that North Korea is independent. We can do only so much.

