

## **The Japan-America Society of Washington DC Japan in 2018: A Look at the Year Ahead Report**

Japan in 2018 was the fifth installment of the annual program series “Japan in the Year” hosted the Japan-America Society of Washington DC (JASWDC). The event is an all-day symposium that gathers the top experts on Japan from think tanks, academia, the government, the press, and the business and non-profit sectors to look at Japan’s domestic and international prospects for the coming year.

The event was held at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which partners with JASWDC on Japan in the Year to assist in finding panelists and speakers as well as providing a venue and logistical support. Welcome remarks were given by Mr. James L. Schoff (Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment and JASWDC trustee) and Ms. Abigail Friedman (CEO of the Wisteria Group and Treasurer, Japan-America Society of Washington DC).

The first panel of the day focused on domestic issues within Japan, with Mr. Peter Kelley (President, National Association of Japan-America Societies), Mr. Wataru Sawamura (Bureau Chief, Asahi Shimbun), Ms. Sheila A. Smith (Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations), and Amb. James Zumwalt (Chief Executive Officer, Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA). Mr. Kelly introduced the panel discussion by outlining Japan’s unique political stability. Ms. Smith started the discussion by focusing on what recent domestic political developments say about Japanese society. She concluded the Japan is not moving towards nationalism as all parties embrace the current global liberal order. Mr. Wataru Sawamura urged the audience to tackle real issues and learn the lessons of Europe to tackle xenophobia and populism before they become issues in Japan. Amb. James Zumwalt highlighted the strength of the US-Japan relationship and the analyzed evolving relations with Japan’s neighbors such as South Korea and China. He concluded with concerns regarding the current administration’s stance on free trade and hoped for Japan to go unnoticed amidst more high priority issues for the United States such as NAFTA. The panel concluded with a question and answer session which analyzed key issues such as constitutional revision, the acquisition and deployment of new weapons systems, tensions over different views of globalization and finished by revisiting the topic of Japanese nationalism.

After lunch, Mr. Hiroyuki Tsurugi of Mitsui & Co. gave his keynote speech on US-Japan relations in the energy sector. Mr. Tsurugi outlined the Japanese government’s vision for energy through the “Strategic Energy Plan” which focused on energy security, economic efficiency, environment and safety. He emphasized that engaging China in joint energy ventures through a sound legal framework is crucial to the future of energy security in the Asia Pacific Region.

Mr. Tsurugi’s keynote address was followed by a panel discussion on Japan’s foreign policy that featured Ms. Jane Nakano (CSIS), Mr. Jonathan Elkind (Columbia University), Mr. Max Hori (Mitsui & CO., Ltd.) and was moderated by Mathew P. Goodman (William E. Simon Chair in Political Economy/Senior adviser for Asian Economics, CSIS and Chairman of JASWDC). Ms. Nakano opened proceedings by highlighting the emergence of the US as a major oil supply side player through the Shale Revolution. Mr. Elkind described the evolution of natural gas from a field to plant relationship to the increased popularity of liquidized natural gas in the Asia-Pacific region. Max Hori described the focus on deregulation as a

positive development for business but noted that there is more uncertainty in the market because of President Trump. The panelists all noted that China needs to be a partner in global sustainable energy governance based on fair rules and transparency.

The final panel included Julie Chung (Japan Desk Director, US Department of State), Taisuke Mibae (Visiting Senior Fellow, The Atlantic Council), Eric Sayers (Adjunct Fellow, CSIS) and was moderated by James L. Schoff (Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace). Ms. Chung expressed confidence in the strength of the US-Japan relationship and hoped for increased cooperation between the two states in the Indo-Pacific Region and in infrastructure development in emerging countries. Mr. Mibae emphasized the importance of a rules based international order and sharing common interests between South Korea and Japan. Mr. Eric Sayers focused on the return of the quad (Australia, India, Japan, US) in security cooperation through the framework of multilateral discussions and the Malabar exercise. Mr. Schoff remarked that Japan has remarkably built up relations with former victims of its aggression citing polls showing approval ratings around 90% in many Southeast Asian states. All panel discussions involved active participation by the audience through question and answer sessions.

Thanks to the National Association of Japan-America Societies and Keizai Koho Center, as well as the speakers and sponsors, JASWDC will continue to sustain its mission to promote friendship and understanding between the people of Japan and the United States through events like Japan in 2018. After the event, JASWDC received thanks and positive reviews. With 200 participants, this was the largest Japan in the Year symposium in its history.