ASK-Y SESSION 2

MEETING MINUTES

October 30th, 2023 12:00-14:00

**Session Title**

War and Peace in the Digital Era

**Attendees**

Asia Society Korea Staff: Yvonne Kim (Executive Director), Amy Kim (Program Coordinator),

Elisabeth Meissgeier (ASK-Y Staff)

ASK-Y Participants: Alissa Yanik-Woods, Edwyna Kurniawan, François de Navacelle,

Ignacio Barroso Gómez, Jevon Dixon, Zumaro Zumaro

**Introduction**

Beginning with warm greetings, Yvonne introduced the session's framework with a historical discourse on Russian involvement in conflicts, especially near the Korean Peninsula, including the Russo-Japanese War and implications from the Joseon Dynasty.

Alissa explained the session through a role-playing exercise on conflicts, explaining their backgrounds and implications.

**First Conflict: Russia-Ukraine**

Alissa initiated the session by adopting the Russian perspective on the conflict, examining the US global hegemon, the Minsk Agreement, and anti-Russian sentiment. She pointed out the avoidability of the influence of US imperialism into Russian territory, NATO/EU expansionism, and the argument of self-defense. Additionally, she explained tactics and strategy, including escalation/de-escalation, digital war and technology, as well as undersea cables and pipelines. Lastly, Alissa noted the consequences according to international law.

Jevon then took the Ukrainian perspective, beginning with an opening statement on territorial sovereignty. He explained the background of the conflict as the imperialism of Russia, emphasizing that the conflict was not avoidable due to Russia's claims and unprovoked aggression. Jevon also highlighted implications for international regimes and the global community, such as the Russian veto in the UN, effects on Ukraine's humanitarian situation, and impacts on world food security. Furthermore, he suggested a peaceful resolution, emphasizing territorial integrity and possibly considering giving up authority.

Yvonne briefly reviewed the session and raised questions about Russo-phobia and Nazism in Case 1, as well as the ability of Ukraine to recover their territory or retaliate against Russia.

Alissa acknowledged the serious concern of Russia regarding Nazism but indicated that Russo-phobia is less discussed since they consider Ukrainians as Russians and part of the homeland, which must be inclusive to the narrative.

Jevon argued that such rhetoric is only used by Russia to delegitimize Ukraine and that Ukraine has the means to defend itself, for example, against cyber-attacks and push-backs from Russia or in reclaiming territory.

**Second Conflict: The Korean War**

Zumaro introduced the historical context and geopolitical consequences of the Korean War. Taking the perspective of North Korea, Zumaro enumerated possible triggers and frames, such as historical divisions, Cold War tensions, and the lack of diplomacy. He then explained the strategies employed by North Korea and the consequences they faced, detailing how sanctions and isolations constrained their sovereignty. Zumaro concluded by highlighting the delicate balance between concerns and diplomatic opportunities shaped by a unique position and national interest, with a possible positive outlook for resolving the conflict and recognizing sovereignty.

François, on the other hand, took on the side of South Korea and emphasized the distinctive geopolitical position of the Korean Peninsula, surrounded by great powers, and the quest for identity and independence. Regarding the avoidability of the conflict, François noted the struggle of ideological blocks in the international realm. Additionally, he introduced the rhetoric of the "aggressor" and "bad guy," highlighting their sudden initiation of war and human rights abuse issues in North Korea, in contrast to South Korea's commitment to human rights, democratic development, and peace.

**Third Conflict: Myanmar**

Ignacio provided background information detailing the case's process until 2020. Edwyna then took over, introducing the recent circumstances and placing a specific focus on the 2020 elections and the strained diplomatic relations during that period.

Subsequently, Ignacio returned to present the perspective of the military government, emphasizing the importance of the current rule and highlighting aspects such as the continuity of administrative and governance structures remaining operational.

Edwyna, in turn, accounted for the national unity government (shadow government), elucidating their vision of building a peaceful federal democracy union that guarantees freedom, justice, and equality with robust domestic and international support. Additionally, Edwyna noted and emphasized the importance of government legitimacy as a pivotal component for achieving a sustainable resolution to the conflict.

**Open Discussion**

In the discussion, Yvonne raised a question to all participants regarding the meaning and marginalization of civilian casualties in various conflicts, citing the example of Koreans in Japan who suffered from the nuclear attacks during World War II.

François contributed to the dialogue by emphasizing the significance of the proportion of casualties, stating that the number of people who die in a war matters. He argued that war is costly and there is a connection between warfare and the civilians involved, asserting that war is not solely about the economy but also about the commitment of civilians to it.

Alissa, taking a different perspective, brought up the relativism of the definition of war. She questioned North Korea's situation, considering its precarity, and discussed how the international community could benefit from accepting them.

Contrastingly, Zumaro directed the focus to the domestic politics of North Korea. He pointed out the family rule of Kim and their ideology, shedding light on the dynamics of a single family ruling an entire nation.