

Report on U.S. Politics and Asia-Pacific Policy under President Trump

Taipei Forum Foundation

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Introduction

In order to gain a deeper understanding of U.S. politics and its Asia-Pacific policy under President Trump, the Taipei Forum Foundation organized a small group consisting of the board members of the Foundation and scholars, led by Dr. Fu Chien (aka Fred Chien), former President of the Control Yuan of the Republic of China (R.O.C.) and former Foreign Minister, to visit the U.S. between June 4th and 10th, 2017. The group visited New York City and Washington DC, and had extensive discussions with officials, members of the Congress, and think tank experts and scholars.

In addition to President Chien, the group members included: Ambassador Chien-Jen Chen (aka CJ Chen), former Foreign Minister and Representative to the U.S. and EU; Dr. Chi Su, Chairman of the Taipei Forum Foundation and former Secretary General of the National Security Council; Dr. Yun-Han Chu, Academician at Academia Sinica; Dr. Jaw-Ling Joanne Chang, a Research Fellow from the Institute of European and American Studies at Academia Sinica and former Deputy Representative to the United States, and Dr. Guan-Yi Leu, a visiting lecturer from the Department of Political Science at the University of Richmond. A list of the interlocutors and their affiliations is attached at the end of the report.

Based on conversations between our group and U.S. officials and experts, the following report contains the information and perspectives provided by the interlocutors and is divided into six parts: current U.S. domestic politics, foreign policy making in the Trump administration, U.S.-China relations, U.S.-Taiwan relations, Taiwan's major challenges, and the North Korea nuclear issue.

U.S. Perspectives

I. Current U.S. Domestic Politics

“President Trump is an unorthodox political figure, and it is hard to predict his words and actions,” said a senior think-tank fellow with close connections to the White House. Rather than just reading memos and documents, Trump prefers to watch “teams of rivals” debate one another, learning the information orally, and finalizing the decisions by himself. White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon and Counselor Kellyanne Conway often remind Trump of his campaign promises, whereas Secretary of Defense James Mattis, National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the Director of the National Economic Council Gary Cohn are widely considered to be more “mainstream”. It is not easy to categorize Trump’s daughter Ivanka Trump and his son-in-law Jared Kushner, but the fact that Kushner occupies the same office previously used by Edwin Meese, former President Reagan’s most trusted counselor, seems to indicate his unrivaled influence. However, it is still unclear whether Kushner’s wings would be clipped because of the Russia investigation.

Experts close to the White House counseled against paying too much attention to Trump’s tweets, since that is his way to directly communicate with his supporters. Trump felt that he could not trust the mainstream media, which would distort or deliberately ignore some of his efforts. For instance, when visiting Belgium, Trump first went to visit the king, but not its politicians, to show his respect. This did not receive coverage on any major news networks, said one of the experts.

Quite a few experts expressed their concerns that many key positions of the government remain unfilled. Of the more than 500 important appointments required for approval by the Senate, only about 200 had been nominated and less than 50 nominations were confirmed. Compared to the first five months of the Obama presidency, when 13 of 15 undersecretary positions at the Department of Defense and Department of State had already been confirmed, only one undersecretary at the Department of Defense had been

confirmed under Trump. (Note: According to the Political Appointee Tracker website put together by the Washington Post and the nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service, as of July 10th, of 564 top-level positions, only 46 were confirmed. At the Department of State, a total of 124 high-level executive and ambassadorship positions needed to be appointed, but only 19 were nominated and nine were confirmed. Of the six undersecretary positions, only one was nominated and none were confirmed. Furthermore, according to the tracking website, 22 assistant secretary positions were awaiting appointment but only one was nominated and none were confirmed; all executive positions in charge of East Asian affairs are still vacant.)

The high number of top-position vacancies could be the result of Trump's distrust of bureaucracy and his interest in "shrinking the government." It could also be that potential candidates were deterred by Trump's leadership style, his demand for loyalty, and scrutiny driven by fierce competition among parties and factions. No matter what, most of our interlocutors hoped that Trump's emphasis on his personal relations with foreign leaders would not lead to a neglect of normal exchanges and diplomacy. They were worried that the longer the nomination process drags on, the more difficult it will be to recruit qualified people willing to join the government. The phenomenon of unfilled top positions would have two adverse effects on US national interest. First, it would render U.S. diplomacy more passive than proactive, because acting officials were usually reluctant to take initiatives. Second, it would be difficult to manage crises, which would require a significant amount of quick coordination. Both would be unfavorable to U.S. international leadership.

According to several experts, the abovementioned difficulties at the federal level reflected the divisions in U.S. society. Trump's approval rating had dropped to 40 percent, but 80 percent of Republicans continued to support Trump; at the same time, 80 percent of Democrats opposed him. Worse still was the polarization within both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. The move further leftward of the Democratic Party and the rise of the far right in the Republican Party caused difficulties for moderates of both parties to reach a consensus. With no strong basis for a domestic consensus, there are clear disagreements regarding foreign policy.

Our group members were also concerned whether Trump could withstand the tests of lasting political conflict and legal investigations, which might eventually lead to his impeachment, as with Nixon. That said, many experts noted it was not easy to initiate an impeachment (requiring a simple majority vote in the House, and a two-thirds majority vote in the Senate), when the Republican Party controlled both the Senate and House. If the U.S. economy deteriorated or the Russia investigation reached a damaging conclusion, many Republican members of the Congress might feel pressured to turn against Trump for their own sake. Nevertheless, the current domestic battles are already consuming Trump's energy on foreign policy. An expert studying Asia-Pacific security said Trump may maneuver crises to divert domestic opinion and criticism against him; thus, policy toward North Korea and U.S.-China relations may change.

When asked whether the U.S. was experiencing a decline, most experts answered "yes," with two additional notes. First, inefficiency at the federal government level was the main reason for the decline, but local governments at all levels and the society itself were still very vibrant. Second, the decline was likely a temporary phenomenon, hence reversible.

II. Foreign-Policy Making in the Trump Administration

In general, most experts believed that Trump's worldviews, his unique personality, and his leadership style brought uncertainty to U.S. foreign policy, although the nature of U.S. global strategy was still characterized by stability and continuity. Due to his major revisions, his overall strategy was still highly uncertain.

Experts pointed out that Trump's policy preferences were influenced by his experience and ideology. In fact, the main ideas of his criticism of U.S. conventional global strategy, such as defense policy, alliance duties, and free trade could be traced back to his public comments from as early as the 1980s and 1990s. Trump's governance style was not bound by rules and norms, and his words and actions often surprised his

advisors and deputies, such as not following scripts for speeches, his frequent tweets, and criticism of the media. All these movements easily provoked more debate and disputes, adding uncertainty to the decision-making process. Moreover, Trump's personality and worldviews also affected his personnel choices. Because of his unfamiliarity and prejudice toward bureaucracy, he preferred to choose businessmen or generals with limited experience in politics, anti-establishment political figures, core supporters, and family members and confidants for cabinet and top positions. These uncommon arrangements raised questions about the course and stability of Trump's foreign policy.

Some members of the Congress and experts stressed the stable and continual nature of U.S. foreign policy. After all, Trump was still new to the arena of foreign policy and dependent on his deputies and professionals for policy making. Meanwhile, Trump has already compromised somewhat on his campaign positions, in front of international realities and pressure from mainstream Republicans in favor of the traditional line and concerns of U.S. allies. On the other hand, several experts close to the White House pointed out that Trump was more open-minded than expected, as he was willing to compromise and revise his position, to encourage staff to debate with conflicting viewpoints, and to accept unorthodox ideas. These experts argued that the press tended to overreact to what Trump said or form narratives with their own interpretation because there were many non-traditional politicians with business backgrounds among Trump's executives. For instance, Trump was not the first president to refer to the U.S.' unbalanced burden sharing in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and his administration has reiterated U.S. defense commitments to its allies in various public statements and official reports. Therefore, one should not interpret Trump's failure to mention Article 5 in his Europe visit as a sign that the U.S. would change or default on its responsibility to its allies.

Furthermore, many experts believed Trump's foreign policy would focus on economics and trade, particularly stressing "America First" policies in promoting U.S. jobs and the trade balance. Domestically, the priority for Trump and the Republican Congress was to pass tax and health care reform. Trump would also love to talk to foreign leaders for initiatives to have foreign business and investment bring more jobs to

the U.S., particularly to the “Rust Belt” states, which have experienced a loss of manufacturing jobs. On international trade, Trump would adopt more complex trade policies, including turning to more unilateralism, such as retaliatory sanctions or import and export restrictions, or conduct negotiations with individual countries for comprehensive or partial bilateral agreements.

An expert in international economics indicated that the Trump administration would re-adopt special bilateral measures like those in the 1980s and 1990s, demanding trade-surplus countries to impose sector or industry-based voluntary export restrictions. Trump would also take necessary measures on medical, education, and infrastructure at the federal level to protect U.S. products, businesses, and assets. On the other hand, the expert said despite Trump’s withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) and his inclination to protectionist policies, these issues would not alter the global trading system and the trade policies of other countries. Many founding and member countries of the TPP were still committed to expanding the TPP, and the U.S. may join later. Also, Trump already changed his original position on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), considering that completely abolishing or renegotiating the agreement would provoke great opposition from agriculture and business sectors. Trump would only amend the outdated chapters for greater standards or renegotiate some articles and chapters of NAFTA.

Accordingly, scholars and experts speculated that given the weight of trade and economic policy, the officials familiar with or in charge of the matters would be included in foreign policy making; thus, they would strongly influence Trump’s foreign policy. Some experts believed economic nationalists such as Chief Strategist Steve Bannon and Trump’s campaign supporter, billionaire Robert Mercer, would still have influence on immigration and energy policy, whereas Peter Navarro, Director of White House National Trade Council, would see his role marginalized. The pro-trade camp had more influence on Trump’s economic policy, including the Republican establishment, such as Vice President Mike Pence and the Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, and those in good relations with the finance and business communities in New York, such as the

Director of the National Economic Council Gary Cohn, Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner.

III. U.S.-China Relations

Trump's skepticism toward multilateral regimes could weaken U.S. credibility, providing China the opportunity to enhance its global leadership. While Trump has stressed "America First," criticized globalization, withdrawn from the TPP and the Paris Agreement, Chinese leaders reaffirmed support for free trade and commitment to fighting climate change. A U.S. retreating from its role of maintaining free trade, democracy, and global governance would allow China, Russia, and Japan to take the lead on relevant issues at global summits. U.S. allies' confidence in U.S. leadership was also shaken by Trump's questioning of alliance burden sharing and his strong demand for NATO and Asian allies to increase their defense spending. Russia and China might also establish dominance in neighboring regions given Trump's neglect of democracy promotion, his closeness to strong authoritarian leaders, and his limited interest in active US involvement in regional military conflicts.

The North Korea issue, the most important aspect of Trump's Asia policy, might also affect the development of U.S.-China relations. There were great concerns about North Korea's capacity to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)- more so than those toward nuclear weapons. According to many experts, most in the Trump administration and his policy circle believed that to deal with the potential military threat of North Korea to the U.S., the attitude of China was critical. Trump has since softened his position on trade, currency, the South China Sea, and Taiwan, while expanding cooperation with China on investment, insurance, and finance. According to some experts, the shift of Trump's attitude has made China complacent in dealing with Trump, and enhanced China's confidence in bargaining with Trump. China has come to believe that Trump might bluff initially but would eventually bend to realities.

Nevertheless, some other experts questioned whether the U.S. and China could continue to expand cooperation on the North Korea issue and keep a mutual understanding of economic issues. First, Trump has pressured China to assume greater responsibility over the North Korean nuclear issue. If the U.S. believed China did not live up to its promise to help effectively constrain North Korea, it would give Trump more leverage to maneuver. It was said that the most likely situation would be Trump stepping up pressure on trade or issues related to China's security environment. When assessing China's action, one official bluntly told us the U.S. was not happy with China's effort to sanction North Korea. Second, the U.S. and China had different strategic considerations on North Korea. Several experts in Washington said although they understood China's emphasis on its limited influence over North Korea, they believed China's fear of a collapse of North Korea and the resulting chaos prevented it from exerting tougher pressure. Third, a few experts also admitted that U.S. policy needed a reexamination. For many years, the U.S. pursued a policy of "containment and deterrence," a strategy aimed at unifying the Korean Peninsula. This created a deep sense of insecurity in North Korea, thereby causing it to develop nuclear weapons and missiles for survival. Had the U.S. lessened its pressure to North Korea, North Korea would have had less incentive to pursue a nuclear capacity. However, it was admitted, such a change might be unpopular within the U.S.

In addition, experts familiar with military and security issues said that eventually the Trump administration had to prepare and respond to China's military modernization and expansion in the South China Sea. In contrast to China's upgrades in air and navy navigation capacity and its military buildup in the South China Sea, the combat readiness of the U.S. and NATO countries were in a state of deterioration, as budget constraints inhibited them from pursuing a comprehensive plan for military improvement, new construction, and personnel training for the long-term timeframe. The U.S. was also losing its ground in Southeast Asia. Differences on political issues had held back the U.S. to have stable, lasting, and wide-ranging dialogues and cooperation with the governments and leaders in Southeast Asia. The U.S. had to restore its political and military influence in the area. Nonetheless, a senior Asia-Pacific Study scholar in Washington said, despite the disagreements between the U.S. and China and occasional tensions in the South

China Sea, the long-established peace in the area since the 1970s would most likely continue. Also, both Trump and Xi did not desire to have major distractions, as they were preoccupied with the North Korea issue - Xi with the 19th Party Congress, and Trump's undetermined strategy toward the area. In the short term, the South China Sea issue would not be a major concern.

When discussing the domestic effect of the power transition between the U.S. and China, experts and scholars proposed various positive and negative views. Experts recognized that divergences within U.S. society constrained the government to achieve efficiency and upgrade tangible and intangible power. For instance, first, because of growing disparity from globalization and the changes in the sociocultural environment, different opinions existed on the allocation of national resources and the orientation of foreign policy. Second, the decentralization of government, ineffectiveness of the two-party system, and interest group boycotts were not helpful to properly diagnose the roots of social problems and to take necessary measures on health care, education, public infrastructure, and community building at the federal level. Third, some media groups and politicians mistakenly attributed the problems to immigrants and unfair trade with foreign countries. In fact, the U.S. should pay more attention to issues such as labor shortages in the high-tech and high-skilled sectors, the stagnation of social mobility, misallocation of resources, the inefficiency of government and party function, the rise of populism, and the 10 million-plus people who choose not to participate in the labor force and instead live on disability benefits. If the Trump administration does not handle tax and health care reform appropriately, it will likely expand the gap between the rich and poor, and social differences.

On the other hand, experts reminded us of the resilience of the American democratic system. The strength and autonomy of civil society could be witnessed in the flourishing of non-profit organizations, newly emerging industries, and young entrepreneurs. State and county governments, communities, and universities jointly cooperate with industries and businesses for new developments. These are the powerful assets to help the U.S. continuously grow, transform, innovate, and develop. Meanwhile, some experts familiar with China's development also referred to various socioeconomic

pressures facing China at home, including overcapacity, over-lending and bad debt, outflow of talent and capital, and uneven distribution. These issues raised questions whether China could sustain rapid growth.

IV. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

Our group expressed concern that Taiwan's interests might be sacrificed in the process of Trump's pursuit of cooperation with China on economics and the North Korea issue. The officials in charge of the matters reaffirmed the U.S.' consistent stance on maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and managing the Taiwan issue in accordance with the Three Communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). The official also emphasized the importance and exemplary value of Taiwan's freedom and democracy. A senior official told us that they were aware of Taiwan's sense of sensitivity and urgency facing cross-strait relations, and the rapid changes in East Asia and the international situation, but the U.S. had no intention to use the security commitment to Taiwan as a bargaining chip with China. The interviewed officials at the Department of State said that their agency worked hard with the Department of Defense to assist Secretary Tillerson and President Trump, to support the U.S. "One China Policy" and the TRA to maintain Taiwan's prosperity and security, and oppose any attempts by either side to change the status quo. Officials also said that the U.S. previously lobbied hard to convince UN officials to include Taiwan in this year's World Health Assembly, and expressed a strong dissatisfaction to China, warning of possible consequences of the incident. Officials at the Department of State stated that they would continue to promote Taiwan's participation in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and to expand Taiwan's international space.

Our group further asked for the U.S. officials' views regarding a comment often made by Chinese experts on the U.S. and Taiwan: that Taiwan was no longer a key issue to U.S.-China relations, and not a core interest of the U.S. because of a U.S. shift in global strategy. A senior official replied that this comment showed China's misunderstanding of the U.S. position and its overconfidence in managing cross-strait

relations; if China continued to hold this belief and act, China may misjudge the situation, leading to a negative result.

A respected senior expert in Washington said Taiwan's suspicion and its sense of uncertainty on Trump's policies were understandable, but there was no fourth communiqué in the pipeline, and neither the U.S. nor China desired one, given the high stakes involved. He further pointed out that China would continue its patient strategy to avoid intensifying public grievances inside Taiwan, but would increase diplomatic pressure on Taiwan. Some experts in New York also said that following his inauguration, and facing a reality that constrained him, Trump returned his policy to the mainstream, including back to the policy of strategic ambiguity on cross-strait issues. However, other senior fellows in New York believed Trump did not care much about Taiwan, viewing it as a bargaining chip for transaction. Trump might sell Taiwan for China's assistance on the North Korea issue, but the fellows also reassured the group that there was no need for Taiwan to worry, because support for Taiwan remained robust in Congress. They added that public support was still very strong and would be able to provide a balance to Trump's views. A senior expert familiar with cross-strait affairs in Washington said Trump was unlikely to use Taiwan as a bargaining chip, given the issues at stake. Only if the risks to U.S. national security and the costs amounted to such a high point would the U.S. ever consider using Taiwan as a bargaining chip.

Member of the Congress, experts and scholars emphasized that there was solid bipartisan support for Taiwan in policy circles, Congress, major think tanks, and mainstream academia. One congressman expressed that many members of U.S. national security and foreign policy were familiar with Asian and Taiwan issues and were experienced in security issues, and they were aware of the importance of adhering to the TRA and a commitment to Taiwan. The congressman also stated that more efforts in the future would focus on strengthening economic and trade relations between the U.S. and Taiwan and between Taiwan and the Asia-Pacific, and he would urge U.S. agencies to actively take more specific steps to promote Taiwan's prosperity and the values of its democratization.

When discussing the possibility of a U.S. and Taiwan bilateral trade agreement, one senior official said that economic and trade issues were a policy priority of the U.S. government, but that authorities had doubts about Taiwan's ability to accept a trade agreement with higher standards and bolder terms. A State Department official made it clear that a bilateral agreement would only be considered if major issues between the U.S.-Taiwan were resolved first, such as U.S. pork and beef imports, trademarks, patent and copyright issues, etc.

Several experts in Washington said that after the withdrawal from the TPP, Trump already indicated an interest in renegotiating bilateral agreements with some individual Asian countries; therefore, it would be possible for the U.S. to consider a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Taiwan once major differences on economic issues were resolved. However, Taiwan should be aware that given the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) was so short-handed, it would be difficult to list a U.S.-Taiwan FTA on the work schedule. A scholar of international economics indicated that considering many countries' trade dependence on complex multinational supply chains, the economic benefits brought by bilateral agreements, including a U.S.-Taiwan FTA, would be limited. The expert also warned that Taiwan's government had to build a coalition with the U.S. business community. Without the support of U.S. businesses, it would be difficult to achieve a U.S.-Taiwan FTA.

Our group also discussed with US hosts about how to improve U.S.-Taiwan relations. In addition to the importance of U.S. support to maintain Taiwan's prosperity, democracy, and security, our members also expressed a sense of uncertainty among the Taiwanese people to the changes in U.S. policy. To avoid confusion about relevant policies and information, we hoped there would be clear and continual policy statements addressed by the U.S. administration to Taiwan, and more direct governmental channels between both sides for communication. We also suggested to have a more comprehensive plan to expand U.S.-Taiwan exchanges in the societal dimension, to strengthen the American public and especially young generation's understanding of Taiwan's people and society.

V. Taiwan's Main Challenges

US hosts also expressed their views on the major challenges facing Taiwan and the Tsai administration. Several officials were particularly concerned about Taiwan's security. An authoritative senior official said Taiwan's security had depended on China's self-restraint and possible U.S. involvement in the past, but Taiwan should now rely more on its own defense for security. The official said that although the U.S. supported Taiwan's security at this moment, how about "four or eight years from now?" Taiwan's defense budget had long fallen short no matter which administration was in power; compared to China's preparedness and investment in military technology and strategic doctrine, Taiwan's self-defense capacity was truly worrisome. The senior official added that Taiwan's move from conscription military service to voluntary system was a wrong decision, as the reduction of service term and the end of compulsory service would result in inadequate military personnel, affecting Taiwan's combat capacity and effective mobilization. Several other experts and scholars in think tanks also reminded us that Taiwan's military policy and personnel training in peacetime were critical not only to prepare for combat readiness and endurance of resistance, but also to provide a symbolic effect to convince U.S. society of the Taiwan people's determination to defend the island.

Additionally, officials at the State Department expressed their concern about the lack of high-level and regular communication channels between two sides across the Strait, fearing that disputes and conflict would escalate and spark a conflict. Our group responded that on cross-strait issues, in addition to Beijing and international pressure, the Tsai administration was also constrained by party factionalism. Not only did Tsai have to shape a consensus on the island, she also had to seek out the support from various factions of her party. Tsai had little room to say things publicly without facing strong criticism. Therefore, if the government of mainland China could understand this and pay more attention to "what she does," not "what she says," it would be helpful to break the cold deadlock in current cross-strait relations, said one of our members. U.S. officials said in later meetings with Chinese delegates they would encourage Chinese officials to

understand the complex process of formulating policy in Taiwan's democratic society and to consider more flexibility in reopening channels for communication and negotiation.

Some officials told us that given China's concern about a rising Taiwan identity among Taiwan's youth and its high distrust of Chairwoman Tsai and the policy of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the Beijing government expected greater overtures from the Tsai administration before responding more positively. Meanwhile, another former U.S. official alerted us to the implications of former China State Councilor Dai Bingguo's appointment as the new president of the National Society of Taiwan Studies. He described Dai as a "strategist" and interpreted Dai's new job to mean that China would rely on him to manage the international fallout from the future settlement of the Taiwan issue.

U.S. officials and several think tank experts also asked about the policy contents and outcomes of the "new southward policy" launched by the Tsai administration. Our members said that in line with emerging consumption and the needs for industry upgrades in Southeast Asian and South Asian countries, the policy aimed to expand the economic and business ties with countries in the area, and placed more emphasis on language and cultural training in the long term to strengthen networks. The obstacles for Taiwanese businesses and overseas personnel in the local market included: the differences in customs and legal systems, the instability of local politics, Taiwan's lack of diplomatic relations with regional countries, and the hesitation of local governments facing pressure from Beijing. These factors prohibited a significant rise in economic impact in the short term. In addition, the officials also expressed their concern about the future of the Kuomintang Party (KMT) in Taiwan.

VI. The North Korea Nuclear Threat

Our interlocutors consistently told us that the North Korea issue topped Trump's Asian policy agenda and that Trump was inclined to adopt tougher measures against North Korea. The U.S. believed North Korea was actively developing a nuclear deterrent

and was on its course to successfully test an ICBM that could carry a nuclear warhead and hit the U.S. homeland. In addition to the nuclear threat, North Korea also posed a growing global threat in cyber security, financial attacks, overseas fraud, and other illegal activities. A senior member of Congress said that since various policies adopted in the past had failed to curb North Korea's development of nuclear weapon, the U.S. needed to take more proactive action to prevent the situation from getting worse.

As for possible policy options toward the North Korean nuclear threat, most think tank experts said at this stage the U.S. would focus on expanding sanctions and limiting North Korea's diplomatic options. Trump criticized Obama's policy of "strategic patience," and the U.S. itself would enlarge the enforcement of sanctions against North Korea, pressure China economically to enhance its sanctions, and seek to expand military cooperation and the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea.

A specialist on Northeast Asian security pointed out the difficulty for the U.S., China and South Korea to establish significant cooperation on the North Korea issue. Besides the differences among the three on policy objectives in dealing with North Korea, China has put political and economic pressure on South Korea to stop the deployment of THAAD, while the Moon administration in South Korea has been skeptical of the effectiveness of THAAD and its potential negative impact on national security. All these factors would affect the strength of the joint efforts by the three countries to force North Korea to denuclearize.

A senior expert in Washington also indicated the biggest problem of Trump's policy was that his team did not put forward a clear policy framework, procedural steps, and operational objectives to tackle the nuclear issue and North Korea's provocative behavior. A specialist in New York also mentioned that to successfully enforce sanctions against North Korea, the U.S. needed not only the strong support of China but also the assistance offered by the EU, countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and other allies working together and at the UN. To do so would require close coordination and cooperation between the ministries of allied countries and the

departments of the U.S. government. But with numerous unfilled top positions at main agencies, how could the U.S. carry out such immense planning?

Most experts believed that it was unlikely for the U.S. to execute a preemptive strike against North Korea. First, although an increasing number of policy analysts in Washington believed North Korea had a growing capability to hit the U.S., there was no consensus yet. Second, the costs and consequences of a preemptive strike were prohibitively high, which could expose the U.S. and regional countries (particularly South Korea) to the risks of nuclear retaliation and radiation. As noted by a senior expert in Washington, Trump may choose the preemptive strike option if North Korea successfully developed an ICBM. Yet if that were to occur, the U.S. would have to be ready to accept the possibility of a North Korean attack on the U.S. or its allies in the region. A few experts said the U.S. may also consider dialogue or negotiation with North Korea, but the following factors prevented its advance: the U.S. public reaction, the effect of reunification on the two Koreas, and the impact on the direction of the U.S.-South Korea alliance. Considering all these factors, some experts therefore said the most likely outcome would be to accept the status quo, to recognize the difficulty to completely resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, and the necessity to rely on long-term management.

Interviewed Agencies, Institutions, and Personnel

U.S. Executive Branch

Mr. Matt Pottinger

Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Asia, National Security Council, The White House

Ms. Leah Bray

Director for China, National Security Council, The White House

Ms. Laura Stone

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs,
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Jim Heller

Director, Office of Taiwan Coordination, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S.
Department of State

Ms. Erica B. Brefka

Taiwan Senior Advisor & Mongolia Country Director, Asian Pacific Security Affairs at
the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy, Department of Defense

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International Relations Officer, Office of Taiwan Coordination, Bureau of East Asian and
Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Mr. John Norris

Managing Director, American Institute in Taiwan, Washington Office

Mr. Daniel W. Peck

Director of Political Military Affairs, American Institute in Taiwan, Washington Office

Mr. David Sacks

Political Military Affairs, American Institute in Taiwan, Washington Office

U.S. Congress

Mr. Pat Roberts

U.S. Senator from Kansas

Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

Mr. Gregg Harper
U.S. House of Representatives from Mississippi
Co-Chair, Congressional Taiwan Caucus

Mr. Ed Royce
U.S. House of Representatives from California
Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee

Think Tanks and Research Institutions
(alphabetical order)

Asia Society

Mr. Daniel Russel
Diplomat in Residence and Senior Fellow, Asia Society
Former Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S Department of State

Mr. Anubhav Gupta
Assistant Director, Asia Society Policy Institute

The Brookings Institution

Dr. Jonathan D. Pollack
Interim SK-Korea Foundation Chair, Korea Studies at the Center for East Asia Policy Studies & Senior Fellow, John L. Thornton China Center, The Brookings Institution

Dr. Thomas Wright
Director, Center on the United States and Europe & Research Fellow, The Project on International Order and Strategy, The Brookings Institution

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Dr. Douglas Paal

Vice President for Studies, The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Former Director, American Institute in Taiwan, Taiwan

Dr. Michael D. Swaine

Senior Fellow, Asian program, The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Dr. John J. Hamre

President and CEO, CSIS

Former Deputy Secretary, Department of Defense

Mr. Scott Miller

Senior Adviser and Scholl Chair in International Business, CSIS

The Council on Foreign Relations

Professor Jerome A. Cohen

Professor, New York University School of Law

Faculty Director, U.S.-Asia Law Institute

Adjunct Senior Fellow for Asia Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations

Ambassador Winston Lord

Chairman Emeritus, National Committee on American Foreign Policy

Co-Chairman, International Rescue Committee

Former Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State

The Heritage Foundation

Dr. Edwin J. Feulner

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Mr. Walter Lohman

Director, Asian Studies Center, The Heritage Foundation

Dr. Dean Cheng

Senior Research Fellow, Asian Studies Center, The Heritage Foundation

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Former Director of International Economic Affairs, National Security Council

Dr. Christopher Lu

Senior Fellow, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia

Former Deputy Secretary, Department of Labor

National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP)

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Former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State

Mr. Earl Carr

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Associate Project Director, Forum on Asia-Pacific Security, National Committee on American Foreign Policy

Ms. Juliet Lee

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Ms. Louie Anne Batac

Program Assistant for Asia, Henry Luce Foundation

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