

The Seventeenth Korea-U.S. West Coast Strategic Forum

June 29, 2017

The Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center,
Stanford University

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The Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center,
Stanford University

in association with

The Sejong Institute

Forum report
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The seventeenth Korea-U.S. West Coast Strategic Forum was held at the Sejong Institute on June 29, 2017. Established in 2006 by Stanford University's Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Center (Shorenstein APARC), and now convening twice annually and alternating in venue between Stanford and Seoul, the forum brings together distinguished South Korean (Republic of Korea, or ROK) and U.S. West Coast-based American scholars, experts, and former military and civilian officials to discuss the U.S.-ROK alliance, North Korea, and regional dynamics in Northeast Asia. The Sejong Institute, a leading South Korean research and educational organization, is co-organizer of the forum.

Operating as a closed workshop under the Chatham House Rule of individual confidentiality, the forum allows participants to engage in candid, in-depth discussion of current issues of vital national interest to both countries. Participants constitute a standing network of experts interested in strengthening and continuously adapting the alliance to best serve the interests of both countries. Organizers and participants hope that the publication of their discussions at the semiannual workshops will contribute to the policy debate about the alliance in both countries and throughout Northeast Asia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sejong Institute hosted the seventeenth session of the semiannual Korea-U.S. West Coast Strategic Forum on June 29, 2017, in association with its U.S. partner, the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Center at Stanford University. The forum continued its focus on Northeast Asian regional dynamics, the North Korea problem, and the state of the U.S.-Republic of Korea alliance. Participants engaged in candid, productive discussion about issues relating to these topics.

NORTHEAST ASIAN REGIONAL DYNAMICS

Participants observed the new challenges facing the Northeast Asian region with the Trump administration in power. They agreed that the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, along with its inconsistency and unpredictability in foreign policy, posed challenges for Northeast Asian nations. Vacancies in many of the top positions of the administration's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs made communications difficult and had led countries in the region to doubt the U.S. commitment to the region. Nevertheless, North Korea seemed to be at the heart of the Trump administration's Asia policy, making some participants hopeful, while others expressed concerns over Trump's apparent perception of military strength as the most primary expression of national power.

Many participants defined current U.S.-Chinese relations as a power struggle and expressed concern that the constant pressure facing other countries in the region to choose between the United States and China was making those countries troubled and fearful. With the power vacuum left in the wake of an American retreat from Asia, China was attempting to compete with the U.S. position in the regional and global economic and strategic order.

Concern was also expressed about the current state of Japanese-Korean relations. With the Trump administration unlikely to mediate between the two countries, tension could potentially deepen, given the widespread anti-Korean sentiment in Japan and the South Korean public's strong opposition to the comfort women deal made in December 2015. Despite this, participants stressed that it would be useful for the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan to find ways to strengthen their regional networks, with trilateral cooperation with Japan as a good first step. One U.S. participant added that the United States could not militarily defend South Korea without Japan playing a *de facto* role as partner.

NORTH KOREA

Participants generally agreed that North Korean nuclear development was no longer a bargaining chip for negotiation and that the denuclearization of North Korea was not a realistic goal at this time. Some argued that it would be necessary to accept and live with a nuclearized North Korea for a significant time, pointing out that the alliance had already done so for more than a decade. Participants engaged in a heated discussion about whether the United States and South Korea had anything more to offer North Korea as a motivation to return to the table. While some thought that the alliance should expand the scope of negotiations to matters other than just denuclearization, others believed that any "comprehensive" deal reached in the future would fall apart, as seen in the past.

Many agreed that dialogue remained the best way to approach North Korea. Participants thought that it was critical to reach a common understanding with North

Korea that a war on the Korean Peninsula would be a disaster and would spell the end of its regime. Such an understanding could not be reached immediately, but one way to start the process would be for presidential envoys from the United States and South Korea to begin discussions with the North. Some participants did not rule out the possibility of the Trump administration giving the nod to a preemptive attack on North Korea and expressed concern that such an action would put South Korea at great risk.

Participants also acknowledged that it was naïve to expect China to play a greater role and take the lead in resolving the North Korean nuclear problem. Some doubted China's willingness, while others questioned how much influence China actually had on North Korea.

U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE

Participants agreed that despite these new challenges, the foundation of the U.S.-ROK alliance remained strong and could overcome these hurdles. Korean participants explained that, despite concerns in Washington, the Moon administration's foreign policy would be less ideologically driven and more pragmatic than previous liberal administrations. U.S. participants pointed out that Trump, in an effort to not be the president on whose watch North Korea developed the capability to strike the American homeland, had rather desperately brought China in to help resolve tensions with the North.

Much of the discussion centered on THAAD deployment. While participants were in general agreement that Korea needed THAAD at least until it developed a missile defense system of its own, some Korean participants regretted the lack of transparency in the deployment process. Participants felt that China might regard the THAAD dispute as an opportunity to drive the United States and South Korea apart and noted that the alliance should focus on pragmatic interests of its own in order to remain strong, despite any potential acts of sabotage by China.

U.S. participants cautioned against being overly pessimistic about the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance under the Trump administration. While Trump himself held a transactional view of the alliance, others in policy circles fully understood the value of the alliance. Participants expressed hope that if changing circumstances were to call for redefining the alliance, the process would only lead to a healthier relationship.



Participants at the seventeenth Korea-U.S. West Coast Strategic Forum at the Sejong Institute

THE SEVENTEENTH KOREA-U.S. WEST COAST STRATEGIC FORUM

I. NORTHEAST ASIAN REGIONAL DYNAMICS

THE IMPACT OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

A U.S. expert proposed that the most notable change in regional dynamics since the Trump administration came to power had been America's regional disengagement, which had rapidly eviscerated many of the most valuable tools in America's diplomatic toolbox. The decision to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) destroyed the U.S. ability to play a leading role in forging the principles that will structure trade for 40 percent of the global economy; the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement and Trump's campaign promise to act likewise on the Iran nuclear deal also raised serious concerns. The Trump administration's wrecking ball had also been swung toward U.S. alliances with Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Australia, as well as the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA). Another manifestation of U.S. disengagement is the absence of

policy expertise among members of the administration and the administration's seeming indifference to staffing government agencies and embassies responsible for American foreign policy. The failure even to nominate individuals for senior posts in a host of agencies has left longstanding U.S. interlocutors in East Asia devoid of counterparts, leading to skepticism about Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's efforts to reassure them that U.S. regional engagement would remain unchanged. The presenter argued that U.S. regional disengagement—together with other factors such as China's rapidly expanding influence, escalating nuclear and missile threats from North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK), Japan's foreign policy quandary, and the election of progressive presidents in Taiwan and South Korea—had injected a great deal of volatility into regional relations. It was highly possible, the expert said, that in five years the region would have a very different power configuration than it does today.

A Korean expert opened discussion by asking the broad yet fundamental question of whether the United States would continue to play its traditional role as global leader under the Trump administration. The expert believed that Xi Jinping's attendance at the Davos World Economic Forum earlier this year had been the boldest Chinese attempt to date to compete with the dominant U.S. position in the global economic and strategic orders. At Davos, Xi proclaimed that China would seize the role of leader of "globalization," in contrast to Trump's seeming move toward isolationism. The expert acknowledged the widespread concern that China might fill a power vacuum in the region resulting from an American retreat from Asia. At the same time, the expert wondered if it was Trump who was bringing about the demise of the U.S.-led liberal order, or if this decline would have occurred for structural reasons regardless of who had been elected president.

Another Korean expert noted that in the months immediately following Trump's inauguration, the United States did not conduct any Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) in the South China Sea. Only in late May, after this was reported in the U.S. media, did the Pentagon resume FONOPS. The expert believed that the Trump administration appeared to be copying the Obama administration's strategy of deferring FONOPS so as to enhance other aspects of the U.S.-Chinese relationship. The resumption of FONOPS reassured U.S. allies in the region, but the initial "flip-flop" had already called into question the U.S. regional commitment. The expert then wondered whether the United States was willing to acknowledge China's leadership in the western Pacific in exchange for more cooperation from Beijing on issues such as trade, terrorism, nuclear nonproliferation, and regional conflicts.

Subsequently, both U.S. and Korean participants candidly discussed issues relevant to or raised by these opening presentations. Participants agreed that the Trump administration's inconsistency and unpredictability in foreign policy had become challenges for Northeast Asian nations.

A U.S. expert stated that President Trump was passionate about addressing the North Korean issue whenever possible, as seen in his meeting with the Indian prime minister just prior to this forum. North Korea was clearly a top priority of the Trump administration's Asian policy.

Another U.S. expert downplayed some of the concerns raised by others, cautioning them not to underestimate the strength and stability of the liberal order. Against beliefs that the liberal order was extremely fragile, the expert suggested that the system was indeed stable—not just because of the role played by the United States, but because it was a collective institution. Responding to the view of another expert that the strength of U.S. and international institutions was being put to the test, this expert felt that such a test was a good thing. The expert also strongly believed that there was no possibility that

the United States would abandon Asia, though he did acknowledge that U.S. reassurances were needed. Even the U.S. withdrawal from the TPP did not change the imperative for U.S. engagement in Asia, in the expert's view.

Another U.S. expert disagreed with the claim that President Trump was an isolationist. This expert believed that Trump was instead a nationalist with a very simplistic worldview—namely, one in which the world economy was divided into more or less discrete national economies. In addition, according to this worldview, the only true interests were the interests of nation-states. The expert thought that Trump also believed in military strength as the primary expression of national power. Fundamentally authoritarian in his worldview, Trump felt most comfortable with other authoritarian leaders. The expert suspected that alliances with democracies would be problematic for Trump because he views them as messy and inefficient.

THE KOREA-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP

A Korean expert asked about the extent to which Trump might care about the Japanese-Korean conflict over comfort women and other historical issues. Despite the Moon administration's two-track approach to Japan, separating comfort women and other issues of conflict from cooperative efforts, tension between the countries could potentially heighten. Unlike the Obama administration, which had worked to mediate between the two countries, the Trump administration was unlikely to want to get involved, a fact of which Japan was aware. The expert stressed that the United States should seek to understand the "special" history shared by Korea and Japan, as well as Koreans' concerns about recent Japanese moves, including the revision of its constitution and military normalization.

Another Korean expert expressed concern that as U.S.-Chinese tension grew, Japan would take on an increasingly important role in the region, especially militarily.

A U.S. expert reiterated an earlier-expressed view that it was important to distinguish between words and actions. Rhetoric, of course, was important, but it often led to unnecessary speculation and concern.

A Korean expert predicted that U.S. strategy in the region would remain the same—that is, selective engagement—a primary goal of which was to prevent hegemony in Asia. North Korea appeared to be at the core of the Trump administration's Asia policy, but the administration likewise seemed to be testing to see how far China would go, in an attempt to learn how to lead the regional order vis-à-vis China.

THE FATE OF MULTILATERALISM

A U.S. expert claimed that, under the Trump administration, multilateralism was seemingly being abandoned—or at least being abandoned in principle. The budget priorities of this administration were profoundly different from those of previous administrations. There had been a major boost in the military budget and a significant drop in the U.S. capacity to provide assistance for disaster relief, education, and transnational exchange: in short, a drop in all those aspects of foreign policy that, according to the expert, were most important in a multidimensional alliance. The expert felt that security relationships were built around economic and personal ties, educational cooperation, and shared values, but the Trump administration seemed indifferent to such things. Although the expert did not see absolute disengagement in the region by the United States, he maintained that some fundamental changes were nevertheless occurring.

This same expert also felt—in contrast to a view presented earlier by another U.S. expert—that in the United States, the Republican-dominated Senate, House, and Supreme

Court would not provide meaningful institutional checks on the Trump administration's agenda.

THE SPECTRE OF A U.S.-CHINESE POWER STRUGGLE

A Korean expert concluded the session by observing that East Asians' greatest fear was the power struggle between the United States and China. U.S.-Chinese relations were at the core of all the challenging issues that faced Korea—THAAD, North Korea, and the U.S.-ROK alliance. It was difficult to expect traditional U.S. values and leadership from the Trump administration. The expert wondered, then, what the new U.S. identity would be, what its new values were, and what new roles it would seek to play under the current administration. The expert urged U.S. policymakers to think about such issues for their Asian friends who found themselves pressured to choose between the United States and China.

II. NORTH KOREA

THE NORTH'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL

A U.S. expert described the current state of North Korea's nuclear development program. He estimated that North Korea possessed twenty to forty kilograms of plutonium, sufficient for four to eight bombs, and between two hundred to four hundred and fifty kilograms of highly enriched uranium (HEU) in its inventory, though he was less certain about this latter figure. He noted that less was known about North Korea's ability to weaponize its nuclear devices, but given the country's five nuclear tests in the past decade, he believed that North Korea could build nuclear warheads small enough to mount on short- and some medium-range missiles. The combined plutonium and HEU inventories may have provided North Korea with sufficient fuel for twenty to twenty-five nuclear devices by the end of 2016.

The expert suggested that as the country's nuclear arsenal grew in size and sophistication, North Korea viewed the devices first as a bargaining chip, then as a deterrent against U.S. aggression, and finally as a means for unifying the Korean Peninsula under terms favorable to the regime. Increasing sanctions and continuing to lean on China would have little effect, while preemptive military intervention could slow but not eliminate the nuclear program, and might very well result in unacceptable consequences. In the expert's view, the most urgent order of business was to convince Pyongyang that any use of nuclear weapons must be avoided—and this would require dialogue, not negotiation.

THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATION

A Korean expert then presented on the current situation in North Korea. He felt that Kim Jong-un held absolute power in the government and was viewed positively among the North Korean population, as a leader who had led North Korea's economy to an upturn. The expert agreed with the American presenter's views, suggesting that among the options of pressure, sanctions, dialogue, and negotiation, dialogue and negotiation were most likely to produce agreements. Thus far, however, attempts at dialogue and negotiations had not offered North Korea enough incentive to change its present strategic trajectory. The expert recommended that China's proposal of "suspension for suspension"—which called for simultaneous suspensions of North Korea's missile and nuclear activities and

the joint military drills held by the United States and South Korea—be given serious consideration. Furthermore, he thought that China’s efforts to promote parallel progress in denuclearization and the establishment of a peace mechanism were likewise worth consideration.

In response, another Korean expert argued that North Korean nuclear development was no longer a bargaining chip for negotiation. North Korea, he said, did not trust deterrence achieved through diplomatic means—through a nuclear agreement or extended deterrence, for example. Instead, North Korea relied on deterrence by force. For this reason, the expert was doubtful that North Korea would agree to denuclearization as part of a peace mechanism.

Another Korean expert suggested that it was impractical to expect China to play a greater role in denuclearization efforts. He felt that the alliance had to find ways of pursuing a North Korea policy that did not require an active Chinese role.

Another Korean expert backed this view. The expert felt that President Moon should convince President Trump not to consider military options against North Korea, as these would have detrimental consequences for South Korea. Despite its alliance with South Korea, the United States would have the option to sacrifice South Korea if its own security were threatened.

When asked what the red line was for the United States regarding North Korea, a U.S. expert said that defining a red line was not a good idea, as it would have no meaning. In his view, however, the red line had already been passed.

Another U.S. expert agreed that North Korea had already passed the red line and said that it was now in the “red zone.” The expert expressed doubt as to whether Trump had any North Korea policy in mind or whether his words on the matter were impromptu. In fact, no one really knew what his “maximum pressure, maximum engagement” policy was. The expert did not rule out the possibility of the Trump administration giving the nod for a military attack on North Korea.

Another U.S. expert felt that North Korea had always posed a problem for the alliance, even without its nuclear program, and said that the alliance could probably make further progress with North Korea if it worked with the country on other problems. This was the idea behind the Agreed Framework. The expert suggested that North Koreans were strategic thinkers and were thinking about what their place would be in Northeast Asia in the long term. In his view, North Korea was so committed to its nuclear weapons program because it was convinced—with good reason—that the alliance’s primary goal was to bring down the regime. He said that the alliance should convince North Korea that it was prepared to live with a North Korean state for some period of time—which was something the alliance had not yet done.

In response, a Korean expert argued that a “comprehensive solution” sounded nice but required step-by-step implementation. Thus, what mattered was not whether the deal itself was comprehensive or step-by-step, but whether the agreement was comprehensive and its implementation step-by-step.

Another Korean expert felt that there was nothing more that the alliance could offer North Korea. North Korea had turned down everything. Whatever “comprehensive” deal the alliance offered in the future was likely to fall apart, with no effect but to buy North Korea time and economic incentives.

ACCEPTING A NUCLEAR NORTH AND THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

A U.S. expert asked why the alliance was unwilling to live with a nuclear North Korea. The expert wondered whether possessing nuclear weapons would make North Korea more dangerous and aggressive—or, conversely, more cautious—and whether achieving unification or accepting the fact of parallel regimes for a time would have a greater payoff for the alliance.

A Korean expert replied that acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear state would lead to South Korea's own desire to go nuclear, followed by other countries such as Japan. He acknowledged the perception gap between Americans and South Koreans regarding a nuclearized North Korea, but noted that South Koreans viewed the issue in more dire terms.

A U.S. expert shared the story of when President Kennedy sent a message to Chairman Khrushchev of Russia to take a stand against China's nuclear program. Khrushchev reportedly responded that when people didn't have nuclear weapons, they talked a lot, but when they did have them, they calmed down. The expert did not recount this story in order to predict how the North Korean situation would play out, but he suggested that it was useful to remember that the Kennedy administration had regarded the possibility of Chinese nuclearization as a threat to international security and failed to prevent it from occurring—nevertheless, it turned out not to be a meaningful threat.

A Korean expert agreed with the basic premise that dialogue was still the best way to approach North Korea. However, he cautioned against granting North Korea concessions in order to bring it back to the table. Instead, he argued, the alliance should strive to create an environment in which North Korea would voluntarily return to dialogue. Presenting the use of military force as an option was one possible means of establishing such an environment. Even with the possibility of unacceptable consequences, he believed that having this option on the table would itself be an effective form of deterrence. He also thought that the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula would be a useful step. The only nuclear attacks that had taken place—against Japan in 1945—had been possible because the United States was at the time the only country with such weapons. In the twenty-first century, that was no longer the case: it was an era of mutually assured destruction. In the expert's view, once South Korea brought in tactical nuclear weapons and strengthened sanctions against North Korea, North Korea would be eager to come to the table for dialogue on its own.

A U.S. expert reiterated that the current situation was dangerous—a crisis situation, in fact. To prevent a war or the use of nuclear weapons, the alliance would have to work to reach a common understanding with the North Koreans that war would be a disaster and, for them, the end of the regime. Such an understanding could not be reached immediately, but one way to start the process would be for presidential envoys from the United States and South Korea to have that discussion with the North. The expert also asserted that it was necessary to accept that the alliance would have to live with a nuclear North Korea for a significant amount of time. To the view that this was unacceptable, he responded that it had already done so for fourteen years. The ideal end-state would be a North Korea without nuclear weapons, but for now the alliance would have to accept nuclearization as a fact.

III. U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE

REEVALUATING THE ALLIANCE

A U.S. expert opened the session by stating that in the United States there was fear that North Korea might launch a nuclear attack against North America. Because alliances rely on confidence in each party's commitment to mutual defense obligations, this presented a great challenge for the U.S.-ROK alliance. As in the case of NATO, it was sometimes necessary for a country to restate its commitment to an alliance and reassure its partners; at the very least, there should be ongoing discussion ensuring that allied partners possessed a shared understanding of how each partner would respond in the event of a contingency. The expert perceived no problems in the foundation of the U.S.-ROK alliance, which, the expert said, was essentially a U.S. commitment to defend the security of the Korean Peninsula. Although the alliance also had economic and social dimensions, its ultimate purpose was to prevent war and provide security.

The expert felt that, due to North Korea's success in developing nuclear weapons, the alliance now faced a situation that was to some degree unprecedented in its history. North Korea's continued focus on the goal of creating a wedge between the United States and South Korea, along with the emergence of the People's Republic of China as a regional and global power, combined with a new U.S. administration unique in its character and ideology, likewise posed challenges for the alliance.

A Korean expert defined the U.S.-ROK alliance as a very special, precious, but ultimately *abnormal* relationship. The expert compared the alliance to a parent-child relationship: one side began as the protector of the other, but as time passed and the weaker side gained strength, it no longer needed the other's absolute protection. In such a situation, it was to be expected that the relationship would become more balanced, but the current arrangement did not allow that to happen. In the expert's view, it would be healthy if the relationship between the United States and South Korea were redefined.

THE MOON ADMINISTRATION

The expert predicted that, despite concerns in Washington, the Moon administration's foreign policy would be less ideologically driven and more pragmatic than previous liberal administrations had been. Even a progressive government in South Korea was not so naïve as to trust the North. While the majority of South Koreans supported the Moon administration's efforts to reach out to the North, they realized that the situation today was far more complicated than it had been a decade or more ago. North Korea was stronger than it had been then, and it possessed weapons of mass destruction, forcing President Moon into a much tougher bargaining game. The expert agreed with the view raised in the previous session that it was necessary to accept a nuclearized North Korea for the time being, but noted that it was also essential to ensure that nuclear weapons not be used.

A U.S. expert pointed out that Trump, in an effort to not be the president on whose watch North Korea developed the capability to strike the American homeland, had rather desperately brought China in to help resolve tensions with the North.

Another U.S. expert strongly believed that Trump would not take military action against North Korea due to the possibility of North Korea attacking Seoul in response. He also claimed that, contrary to what South Koreans may have believed, the United States never intended to attack North Korea. According to the expert, the U.S. priorities in regard to the Korean Peninsula since 1950 had been (1) to protect South Korea and (2) to prevent another war from occurring in the region. In other words, the United States would go to war with North Korea only if it were absolutely necessary for the defense of South Korea.

A Korean expert predicted that, in order to emphasize cooperation on North Korea, the Moon administration would downplay the comfort women issue with Japan. It would be useful for the United States, ROK, and Japan to find ways to strengthen their regional network, with trilateral cooperation with Japan as a good first step. A U.S. participant added that the United States could not defend South Korea without Japan playing a de facto role as partner.

THAAD DEPLOYMENT

As for THAAD deployment, a Korean expert said that the United States should defend South Korea against China's verbal threats and any possible acts of economic retaliation. A U.S. expert suggested that closer cooperation with Japan could ease the situation for South Korea, through such efforts as the relocation of companies to Japan. A Korean expert said that many South Korean liberals already viewed the THAAD system as inadequate in light of the threats from North Korea. Another Korean expert said that if the deployment process were transparent, it would calm many of the disputes over THAAD, but so far it appeared transparency was lacking. A U.S. expert argued that U.S. forces' belief in the importance of THAAD to the defense of the peninsula should be sufficient for completing the deployment. To do otherwise, at this point, would undermine cooperation in the alliance and communicate to the world that South Korea was eager to acquiesce to China's strategic ambitions for regional hegemony. A Korean expert said that China might regard the THAAD dispute as an opportunity to drive the United States and South Korea apart and recommended that the United States back up its commitment to the alliance with greater strength.

Another Korean expert suggested that the United States viewed THAAD deployment as the incorporation of South Korea into the U.S.-led missile defense system. This had raised red flags in China. Even so, the expert thought that South Korea needed THAAD deployment, at least until it developed a missile defense system of its own. If South Korea focused more on pragmatic interests and showed less concern for other countries' rhetoric, the expert felt that the alliance would remain strong.

HOW TO VIEW THE U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE

Another Korean expert urged the U.S. side to understand the reality of the U.S.-ROK alliance, which was that it was becoming increasingly difficult to manage within the context of the U.S.-Chinese strategic competition structure. He urged the United States not to compare the U.S.-ROK alliance to its alliance with Japan: South Korea faced a great challenge from North Korea, and its goal was to achieve a unified Korea. The expert felt that in the alliance relationship there were some things that South Korea needed to do and some things that South Korea hoped that the United States would do for it. He emphasized what Korea hoped the United States would do, because many of the challenges that Korea faced were occurring in the context of global competition and multilateralism, in which the U.S. role was growing.

A U.S. expert claimed that Trump, as a businessman, held a transactional view of the alliance. But the expert felt that others who were engaged in and thinking about U.S. foreign policy well understood the value of the alliance—and also that the transactional view would not persist following Trump's presidency. For these reasons, the expert was less pessimistic.

A Korean expert thought that Trump's transactional view of the alliance was not entirely a bad thing because it "secularized" the alliance, which the expert felt was a healthy step in U.S.-ROK relations. Alliances, after all, were contractual relationships

through which countries sought to further their national interests. The expert urged South Korea to approach the alliance relationship with greater flexibility and composure.

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