



US-North Korea and US-South Korea Relations in the Age of Trump

——New Developments Triggered by the Change of Administration

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[Key Points]

- Various scenarios can be envisaged for the Trump administration's North Korean policy, all of which depend on the changing Asia-Pacific security environment. While the possibility of launching direct dialogue cannot be ruled out, there is a strong likelihood that the new administration will adopt a tougher stance than before.
- Among the hard-line policy options are preemptive strikes and even regime change, and the administration is poised to ramp up the pressure on China, as North Korea's main backer. However, military measures bring with them tremendous risks, so schemes involving the use of incentives to achieve phased denuclearization or a transition to dialogue after imposing tough sanctions have also emerged within the USA.
- In addition to the US-North Korean relationship, the political situation in South Korea and direction of its relationship with the USA will have a major impact on the Korean Peninsula. The result of South Korea's next presidential election could completely transform the US-South Korean alliance and inter-Korean relations, and might even affect cooperative frameworks involving Japan, the USA, and South Korea.



Key Data

North Korean Policy Options Open to the USA

- Tough sanctions, including a secondary boycott penalizing companies in third countries that trade with North Korea
- An official statement by the US government, announcing that it is prepared to carry out preemptive strikes in response to serious acts of provocation by North Korea
- De facto approval by the US government of nuclear armament by South Korea and Japan
- Support from the US and China for a denuclearized “united Korea” or “the establishment of two neutral states”
- Effectively unconditional resumption of US-North Korean dialogue and a shift to a policy of appeasement toward North Korea

Source: Compiled by the author