



Changes in the US Foreign Policy of President Trump (post inauguration)

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President Donald Trump, during his campaign and in his speeches as president –elect, had indicated a few foreign policy issues he and his administration would focus on. The administration stated that its foreign policy would be focused on American interests and American national security. Peace through strength will be at the centre of that foreign policy. In outlining the policy, the administration stated that, “Defeating ISIS and other radical Islamic terror groups will be (its) highest priority. To defeat and destroy these groups, (it) will pursue aggressive joint and coalition military operations when necessary. In addition, the Trump Administration will work with international partners to cut off funding for terrorist groups, to expand intelligence sharing, and to engage in cyber-warfare to disrupt and disable propaganda and recruiting.” There is also a focus on rebuilding the American military. ¹ With the new administration having settled in, this paper is an attempt to understand if there have been any perceptible changes in the foreign policy outlined by President Trump before and after he assumed office.

Issue	Post election statements	Current policy
1) China	President Trump not only broke from protocol to take a congratulatory phone call (on 02 December 2016) from Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, but he also questioned the relevance of the ‘One China Policy’ stating that he saw no reason to continue with the policy unless he	In a telephone call (09 February 2017) between President Trump and President Xi Jinping, at the request of his counterpart, “President Trump agreed, to honor the United States’ “one China” policy.” ²

	<p>received concessions from China on trade, North Korea, the South China Sea and other issues.</p> <p>His viewed China as a currency manipulator.</p> <p>China warned of strained relations in the future.</p>	<p>President Xi visited the United States (06-07 April 2017). This was the first meeting between the two leaders. In the press briefings prior to the meeting it was suggested that President Trump would not be discussing currency manipulation with President Xi. Rather this was to establish the foundations of the relations between the two Heads of Government for future talks.</p> <p>On maritime issues it was stated that “the United States would continue to fly and sail where international law allows it.”³</p> <p>In an interview to The Financial Times (02 April 2017) before the visit, President Trump stated, “...we will talk about North Korea. And China has great influence over North Korea. And China will either decide to help us with North Korea, or they won’t. And if they do that will be very good for China, and if they don’t it won’t be good for anyone.”⁴ He was of the opinion that trade would be the incentive that would motivate China to help the United States. Nonetheless, Vice President Pence on his visit to South Korea stated that the US was appreciative of the actions of China in helping fully implement UN Security Council Resolutions to convince North Korea to abandon its illicit weapons programme.⁵</p> <p>The two leaders discussed cooperation on trade and investments.</p> <p>In an interview to The Wall Street Journal newspaper (12 April 2017) and also through his twitter handle, President</p>
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		<p>Trump stated that, he would not call China a currency manipulator. “Why would I call China a currency manipulator when they are working with us on the North Korean problem? We will see what happens!” (@realDonaldTrump April 16, 2017)</p>
<p>2) North Korea</p>	<p>During his campaign President Trump had suggested that, he was willing to hold talks with North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un. In his victory speech President Trump said, “...(the US) we will get along with all other nations willing to get along with us....”⁶</p> <p>North Korea’s main newspaper Rondong Sinmun, while not referring to President Trump’s victory specifically, warned that the incoming administration would have to deal with North Korea as a nuclear power.⁷</p>	<p>In his interview to the Financial Times, on the issue of North Korea he stated, “Well, if China is not going to solve North Korea, we will.” He declined to comment how he will solve the issues with North Korea. The comments were made after North Korea tested ballistic missiles of the coast of the Korean Peninsula. The primary concern surrounding North Korea’s weapons program is the possibility of the use of nuclear warheads on its missiles. Similar tests were done by North Korea in February 2017, coinciding with the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the United States.</p> <p>It was assumed that North Korea would mark key anniversaries in the coming weeks, by test firing missiles. The US sent its naval strike force from its pacific command to the Korean peninsula. It is a ‘show of force’ and in support of Japan and South Korea, long term allies of the US in the region. President Donald Trump warned that Kim Jong Un has “gotta behave” and Vice President Mike Pence sternly advising Kim not to test America’s resolve and military power.⁸</p> <p>President Trump has made no comment on the failed missile test by North Korea on 15 April 2017 after a military parade to celebration of the 150th birthday of its founding leader Kim IlSung.</p>

		<p>On the occasion of the 85th anniversary of the foundation of the Korean People’s Army, it conducted its largest ever military drill. It is being reported by South Korea that live fire was used during the drill. The United States, Japan and South Korea held a live fire military drill off the coasts of the Korean peninsula (25 April 2017).</p> <p>President Trump held a meeting with the members of the US Senate on 26 April 2017 to discuss developments on the Korean peninsula. The meeting was a thorough accounting of the Administration's diplomatic and military options when it comes to dealing with Kim Jong Un.</p>
<p>3) Russia</p>	<p>President Trump expressed hope of developing better relations with Russia than had been possible under President Obama, especially on the issue of defeating ISIL. His nomination of Secretary of State, Mr. Rex Tillerson and National Security Adviser, Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, both of who have good relations with businesses and the political class of Russia, was viewed as a pro-Russia stand.</p> <p>On allegations that Russia did meddle in the elections process, he has maintained that the allegations are false.</p> <p>In August 2016, President Trump told ABC “This Week” that he would “look at” the 2014 annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea by Russia, adding that “the people of Crimea, from what I’ve heard, would rather be with Russia than where they were.”⁹</p>	<p>The White House continues to face questions regarding US intelligence agencies reports which say that Russian hackers directed by President Vladimir Putin sought to put President Trump in the White House instead of Ms. Hillary Clinton, as Mr. Trump was considered friendlier towards Russia. The Kremlin denies the charge.</p> <p>Lt. Gen. Flynn, resigned as Nation Security Advisor, as it was revealed that he had misled Vice President Mike Pence and other top White House officials about his conversations with the Russian ambassador to the United States on the sanctions applied by President Barak Obama a few weeks prior to the inauguration, over efforts by Russia to hack the US elections.</p> <p>The US missile strikes on Syrian Air Force Base (06 April 2017) in retaliation for the use of chemical weapons allegedly by the Syrian Armed Forces has further strained relations between the two</p>

		<p>nations.</p> <p>President Trump tweeted that Crimea was TAKEN by Russia during the Obama Administration. Was Obama too soft on Russia? (Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump, February 15, 2017) and the White House stated the President "... continues to raise the issue of Crimea, which the previous administration had allowed to be seized by Russia. His Ambassador to the United Nations, Ms. Nikki Haley, stood before the U.N. Security Council on her first day and strongly denounced the Russian occupation of Crimea." "President Trump has made it very clear that he expects the Russian government to deescalate violence in the Ukraine and return Crimea."¹⁰</p>
<p>4) Iran</p>	<p>President Trump nominated Gen. James Mattis as his Secretary of Defence. Gen. Mattis favours a tough stand against Iran and has stated that the nuclear deal might have slowed Iran's ambition for a nuclear weapon but it has not stopped it.</p> <p>President Trump continues to be of the opinion that the Iran Nuclear deal is harmful to the interests of the United States. However, withdrawing from the deal is likely to isolate the United States internationally, as other countries have started to invest into the relationship with Iran and unlikely to follow the US view.</p> <p>Companies such as Boeing are also interested in working in Iran, which is</p>	<p>Iran test fired a ballistic missile on 29 January 2017. In response President Trump tweeted, "'Iran is playing with fire - they don't appreciate how 'kind' President Obama was to them. Not me!'"¹¹</p> <p>US Defense Secretary James Mattis has called Iran the world's biggest state sponsor of "terrorism", hours after the Trump administration announced fresh sanctions on the country following a recent missile test.¹²</p> <p>Iran is one of the seven majority Muslim countries named in President Trump's January executive order on travel restrictions and then again one of the six countries named in his second executive order.</p>

	<p>possible now because of the deal. A re-negotiation may also halt such economic opportunities for US companies and hurt job prospects in the US.</p>	
<p>5) Syria</p>	<p>In his interview with The Wall Street Journal he said that his administration’s top priority in Syria would be to defeat the Islamic State (IS) group, rather than ousting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.</p>	<p>In his statement on the US missile strike on Syria President Trump stated that he “ordered a targeted military strike on the airfield in Syria from where the chemical attack was launched. It is in the vital national security interest of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons.”¹³ He further stated that, “Years of previous attempts at changing Assad's behavior have all failed, and failed very dramatically. As a result, the refugee crisis continues to deepen and the region continues to destabilize, threatening the United States and its allies.”¹⁴ He called, “...on all civilized nations to join us in seeking to end the slaughter and bloodshed in Syria, and also to end terrorism of all kinds and all types.”¹⁵</p>
<p>6) The United Kingdom and European Union (EU)</p>	<p>President Trump has been supportive of the UK’s decision to exit from the EU.</p> <p>In an interview to The Times (UK) and Bild (Germany), (16 January 2017) with reference to the EU and Brexit President Trump had stated, “Merkel is by far one of the most important leaders. 'Cause you look at the UK and you look at the European Union and it’s Germany. Basically a vehicle for Germany.”¹⁶ President Trump has been critical of countries of the EU, a majority of which are members of NATO, for not paying their dues to the alliance.</p>	<p>Prime Minister Teresa May was the first foreign Head of Government to meet President Trump after his inaugural. He stated in the joint press conference that, “A free and independent Britain is a blessing to the world...(and the US looks) forward to working closely with (UK to)... strengthen ... mutual ties in commerce, business and foreign affairs. ”¹⁷</p> <p>The UK has been supportive of the US air strikes against Syria and calls on Russia to pressure the Syrian Government to negotiate the end of the civil war.</p> <p>Vice President Pence in his visit to Brussels assured the EU of “...the strong commitment of the United States to continued cooperation and partnership with the European Union.... increased</p>

		<p>collaboration in the global fight against terrorism. And the United States will remain a full partner with the EU and with all of our European allies to accomplish that....(The US and the EU) must stand strong in defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations in Europe.”¹⁸ He further stated, “President Trump and I look forward to working together with you and the European Union to deepen our political and economic partnership.”¹⁹</p>
<p>7) ISIL</p>	<p>President Trump has stated that he would like to concentrate solely on bombing ISIL</p>	<p>In his address to the joint session of the US Congress, President Trump stated that he had directed the Department of Defense to develop a plan to demolish and destroy ISIS.²⁰</p> <p>The plan is build to a comprehensive strategy and plans for the defeat of ISIS and recommended changes to any United States rules of engagement and other United States policy restrictions that exceed the requirements of international law regarding the use of force against ISIS; public diplomacy, information operations, and cyber strategies to isolate and delegitimize ISIS and its radical Islamist ideology; identification of new coalition partners in the fight against ISIS and policies to empower coalition partners to fight ISIS and its affiliates; mechanisms to cut off or seize ISIS's financial support, including financial transfers, money laundering, oil revenue, human trafficking, sales of looted art and historical artifacts, and other revenue sources; and a detailed strategy to robustly fund the Plan.²¹</p> <p>The US has dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb it has ever used in combat in eastern Afghanistan on a series of caves used by the ISIL group, according to the Pentagon.²²</p>

<p>8) International Trade</p>	<p>President Trump has reiterated his plan to levy 35 percent tariffs on goods imported by US-based firms that have moved their production offshore.</p> <p>He opposed the TPP.</p>	<p>President Trump signed an executive order to withdraw the United States from the TPP. He has also stated that he would like to re-negotiate the NAFTA. However, no timeline for the latter has been announced.</p> <p>He has signed an Executive Order on Buy American and Hire American. It calls on the executive branch to buy American products and to enforce laws that govern the entry of foreign workers.²³</p>
<p>9) Immigration</p>	<p>In an interview (13 November 2016) post his victory, President Trump stated that he would deport three million illegal migrants. “What we are going to do is get the people that are criminal and have criminal records, gang members, drug dealers, we have a lot of these people—probably two million, it could be even three million—we are getting them out of our country or we are going to incarcerate,” President Trump said in an interview with CBS’ 60 Minutes. “But we’re getting them out of our country. They’re here illegally.”²⁴</p>	<p>President Trump in his Executive Order on Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements stated that border security was critically important. Border security will be achieved through various means, one of which is through the immediate construction of a physical wall on the southern border, monitored and supported by adequate personnel so as to prevent illegal immigration, drug and human trafficking, and acts of terrorism.²⁵</p> <p>President Trump signed the first Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States²⁶ on 27 January. Apart a review of the visa issuance process within a 90 day period, the order also stated that corresponding to this time period, immigrant and non-immigrant entry from six countries was suspended, (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Sudan and Somalia) and suspended the entry of Syrian refugees indefinitely. The Order was challenged and the US Federal Court ruled that the ban was rejected and did not protect national security.</p> <p>On 06 March, the President signed a new Executive Order making some changes</p>

		<p>from the first Order. The second Order, allowed the entry of refugees on a case by case basis. It also placed a temporary pause on the entry of nationals from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, subject to categorical exceptions and case-by-case waivers. Iraq was marked as a special case. Decisions about issuance of visas or granting admission to Iraqi nationals should be subjected to additional scrutiny to determine if applicants have connections with ISIS or other terrorist organizations, or otherwise pose a risk to either national security or public safety. Those individuals whose visa was revoked or cancelled were also entitled to a travel document confirming that the individual is permitted to travel to the United States and seek entry.²⁷ The second Order has also been challenged and two federal courts have put a stay on the order.</p>
<p>10) Climate Change</p>	<p>President Trump selected former Texas Governor Mr. Rick Perry to be his nominee for energy secretary. Mr. Perry has advocated lighter regulation on the fossil fuel industry, and has called the science around climate change “unsettled”. .</p> <p>President Trump has also appointed, Mr. Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency. Mr. Pruitt has spent a considerable time fighting litigation against the EPA’s regulation on environmental protection.</p>	<p>President Trump has made statements during his campaign which indicate that he does not believe in man-made climate change.</p> <p>In an Executive Order, President Trump revoked a number of previous memorandums and orders on climate change. The order also seeks to review the EPA’s Clean Power Plan²⁸ which encourages clean energy and reduce the dependence on coal. The Order has thrown open federal land to coal mining, and halted new vehicle emissions standards but he has so far not acted on his campaign pledge to “cancel” the Paris compromise.²⁹</p>
<p>11) Defence Policy</p>	<p>President Trump had indicated that there would be a change in the US defence spending, which would be project ‘Peace through Strength’. He has called for a better equipped</p>	<p>In the broad outlines of the first defence budget to be presented, the Trump administration is likely to ask the US Congress to approve US \$ 54 billion increase for military spending in the</p>

	<p>military force that is has modern technology at its disposal to address the threats to US national interests.</p> <p>He said that the US will stop building new nations in far off lands/areas. Instead will focus on national security threat of US which is terrorism and radical Islam</p>	<p>fiscal year.³⁰ “This is historic increase (of about 9 percent) in defense spending to rebuild the depleted military of the United States of America...”³¹ It is going to be offset by spending cuts in other departments notably by the State Department and US Foreign Aid and Assistance Programmes etc.</p> <p>The recent air strike by the US against Syrian forces and the use of Massive Ordnance Air Blast, or MOAB bomb in Afghanistan are being viewed as indication of increased US involvement in the two conflicts. Especially in Afghanistan in the backdrop of the visit to Kabul by the new United States National Security Adviser (NSA) Lt General H R McMaster.</p> <p>President Donald Trump has granted the CIA authority to conduct lethal drone strikes once again, according to a news report, rolling back the limits his predecessor President Obama imposed on the spy agency’s paramilitary operations.³² The limits were placed to ensure that civilian casualties were minimal to nil.</p> <p>President Trump in a joint statement with the Secretary General of NATO, reversed his earlier position that NATO was obsolete as it does not fight terrorism. He stated he “...had a productive discussion about what more NATO can do in the fight against terrorism. I complained about that a long time ago and they made a change, and now they do fight terrorism. I said it was obsolete; it’s no longer obsolete. It’s my hope that NATO will take on an increased role in supporting our Iraqi partners in their battle against ISIS.”³³ In an interview to the Associated Press (23 April 2017) he stated, “I said two things.</p>
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<p>11 a) NATO</p>	<p>During his campaign he had stated that NATO was an obsolete institution.</p>	<p>NATO's obsolete — not knowing much about NATO, now I know a lot about NATO...And the reason it's obsolete is because of the fact they don't focus on terrorism." You know, back when they did NATO there was no such thing as terrorism."³⁴ Nonetheless, he stood firm on his views that NATO members meet their financial obligations and pay what they owe. Secretary of Defence, Gen. Mattis also stated the same at the NATO HQ in Brussels. He stated that while the alliance was the 'bedrock' of US defence policy, other nations need to come forward and follow through on their budgetary commitments.</p>
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Conclusion

There are some visible changes in the policies of the Trump Administration towards Russia and China. President Trump has stated that relations between the United States and Russia are at a low point. He remarked, "Right now, we're not getting along with Russia at all. We may be at an all-time low in terms of a relationship with Russia. This has built for a long period of time. But we're going to see what happens. Putin is the leader of Russia. Russia is a strong country. We're a very, very strong country. We're going to see how that all works out."³⁵ However, relations with China and the EU have witnessed a positive turn. The focus on immigration, promoting American businesses and change in the American climate change policy remain the same.

There has been some focus on South Asia region. While President Trump has yet to outline his policies with respect to the region and the United State's role in the various multi-lateral organisations here, the new United States National Security Adviser (NSA) Lt General H R McMaster visit to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India maybe the first step in that direction. The visit of the General McMaster comes shortly after the visits of Indian NSA Ajit Kumar Doval and Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar to the United States, who had meetings with Trump administration officials in March. The visit comes just days after the United States dropped its largest non-nuclear bomb in Afghanistan. Officials said the target was an ISIS cave and tunnel complex in the remote area in the country's east which borders Pakistan. It is being assumed that the visit to Afghanistan was in part to assess the situation on the ground to make an informed discussion on the call for more US troops to counter the re-emergence of the Taliban and other terrorist groups. The Administration's NSA, has signalled a more stern line of the US against Pakistan, especially in its efforts to tackle terrorism. During his visit, the US NSA asked the Pakistani leadership to confront terrorism in all its forms through diplomacy and not through

proxies. The follow through remains to be seen. For India stability in Afghanistan in particular and the region at large is important for its national interest.

The foreign policy of the Trump administration is still being developed. It is too early to pass definitive judgment on the Trump administration. However, President Trump's willingness to take bold action, suggests that former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger may have been right when he told CBS News last December that Trump's presidency could present "an extraordinary opportunity" for U.S. foreign policy.³⁶ Nonetheless, opportunities are not without risks. What has been made clear is the fact that the new administration has a preference for bi-lateral relations rather than depend on multi-lateral sphere to develop relations.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed are of author and do not reflect the views of the Council.*

End Notes

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