

Uncertainty over U.S. Foreign Policy Risks Global Instability

WASHINGTON - Endorsed by the "America First" strategy, the U.S. foreign policy of the Donald Trump administration has stirred up controversy and unrest around the world.

As tension lingers on the Korean Peninsula as well as the Middle East, the doctrines the Trump administration will follow regarding international affairs in his remaining years in office will be vital to global stability and development. MILITARY OPTION ON KOREAN PENINSULA?

There were mounting reports in the past months that the Trump administration was weighing attacks to rid Pyongyang of its nuclear program. A limited and preemptive



"bloody nose" strike was reportedly discussed seriously by the U.S. military, though many have warned of the risk of igniting an all-out war.

U.S. policymakers must face the facts, said Michael Fuchs, an expert on U.S. foreign policy.

"There are no acceptable U.S. military options involving a first strike, given the inevitable retaliation and mass casualties that would follow," Fuchs, senior fellow at Center for American Progress, a Washington-based think tank, wrote on magazine Foreign Affairs.

An all-out war on the Korean Peninsula would be catastrophic beyond any imagination. (Xinhua)

Russian, U.S. Top Diplomats Discuss Syria after Turkish Offensive

MOSCOW - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson discussed ensuring stability in northern Syria by phone Saturday, after Turkey started bombing Kurdish forces in Afrin in northern Syria. The Russian Foreign Ministry said Lavrov and Tillerson also discussed promoting a peaceful settlement of the Syrian conflict under the auspices of the United Nations, which should be facilitated by the Syrian National Dialogue Congress to be

held in Russia's city of Sochi with broad participation. Earlier in the day, three Turkish F-16 jets launched 11 airstrikes on Kurdish positions on the outskirts of Kurdish-held Afrin in northern Syria near the Turkish border, marking the official beginning of the Turkish military campaign against the Syrian Kurdish fighters in the region.

Russia withdrew its servicemen from Afrin to avert dangers and urged the opposing sides to exercise restraint. (Xinhua)

PARIS - France on Sunday urged the Turkish authorities to "act with restraint" on the situation in Syria in a difficult context "where the humanitarian situation is deteriorating in several regions of Syria", the French Foreign Ministry announced on Sunday in a statement.

France "underlines the priority importance of completing the mission of the International Coalition against Daesh and recalls the need to create, on the ground, the conditions necessary for the

stabilization of Syria and a lasting political solution, alone, to guarantee the security of the Syrian people as neighbors of Syria," the ministry said. At the same time, France called for the immediate opening of Eastern Ghouta, "where 400,000 besieged civilians are in a critical situation," the ministry said. "Given recent developments on the ground, France "asks for an urgent meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Syria," the ministry said.

France Urges Turkey to "Act with Restraint" on Situation in Syria



French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian held talks by phone on Sunday morning with his Turkish counterpart, Mevlut Cavusoglu. The two ministers discussed the situation in Syria, particularly the ongoing developments in Afrin, Idlib and Eastern Ghouta, near Damascus, according to the same source. (Xinhua)

China to Improve Cultural, Medical, Scientific Infrastructure in Rural Areas



BEIJING - China plans to improve cultural, medical, scientific and technological infrastructure and

services in rural areas, particularly impoverished areas, according to a notice jointly issued by sev-

eral ministerial level departments. Free film screenings and library services will be continued in remote villages and more scientific and technological infrastructure and services will be built, said the notice, which

was jointly issued by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central

Committee and other relevant departments. Specialized medical teams will be dispatched to treat patients in former revolutionary base areas, ethnic minorities areas, border areas and impoverished areas, the notice added. The CPC and relevant government departments should carry out events in poor regions and provide favorable policies in these areas in terms of funding and services, it said. The notice also called for contributions from individuals and private businesses. (Xinhua)

Turkish FM Arrives in Baghdad to Boost Bilateral Ties

BAGHDAD - Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu Sunday arrived in Baghdad on an official visit to hold talks with Iraqi leaders over means to develop bilateral relations, an Iraqi Foreign Ministry source told Xinhua. Cavusoglu and his delegation are expected to meet with Iraqi President Fuad Masoum, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and the Parliament Speaker Salim al-Jubouri to discuss bilateral relations as well as the security and political developments in Iraq and the Middle East region, the

source said on condition of anonymity.

The Turkish FM visit came amid international and regional attempts to heal the rifts between Baghdad and the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan after months of tensions caused by controversial referendum on the independence of the Kurdistan region and the disputed areas on Sept. 25, 2017. The visit also came a day after Abadi's meeting with the Kurdish regional Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani for the first time since the referendum. (Xinhua)

Europe Readies Riposte to Trump's 'America First' Push in Davos

DAVOS, Switzerland - European leaders will be out in force at the World Economic Forum in Davos this week to defend multilateralism before U.S. President Donald Trump arrives to deliver his "America First" message.

Politicians, business chiefs, bankers and celebrities will meet in the Swiss Alps under the banner "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World" for the four-day gathering against an unsettling global backdrop. A decade after the bankruptcy of U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers helped trigger a global financial crisis, economic growth has returned and stock markets are hitting record highs.

Yet there is a nagging fear among many in Davos that the brighter economic outlook could turn out to be little more than a mirage if the daunting array of geopolitical threats - from protectionism and climate change to cyber attacks and outright war - gather pace in 2018.

"Not all geopolitical threats are threats to financial markets," Axel Weber, the chairman of Swiss bank UBS and former president of the German Bundesbank told Reuters. "But I agree that there may be a disconnect, which has been going on for some time already and may well continue for some time."

The Global Risks Report published by the WEF last week showed that many see a heightened risk of political and economic confrontations between major powers this year. Trump, the first sitting U.S. president to attend the forum since Bill Clinton in 2000, is a source of much of this anxiety after a volatile first year in office in which he has turned American foreign policy on its head. (Reuters)

DPRK Warns South Korea against Rhetoric to Chill Atmosphere of Reconciliation

PYONGYANG - The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has warned South Korea against rhetoric from some media and politicians that chills the atmosphere of reconciliation ahead of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics next month. The official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said in a commentary late Saturday that while the DPRK is "making all sincerity and

efforts for the successful holding of the Winter Olympics," "dishonest things are witnessed in South Korea seriously chilling the dramatic atmosphere for the north-south reconciliation." The DPRK has earlier criticized South Korean President Moon Jae-in because the president praised U.S. President Donald Trump for U.S. contribution to realizing the inter-Korean talks through maximum pressure and sanctions.

"The conservative media and persons claimed that the use of 'Mangyongbong-92' and Air Koryo during the Olympic period falls foul of the 'independent sanctions' by the U.S. and south Korea," said the KCNA. Mangyongbong-92 is a cruise liner of the DPRK which is being considered by Pyongyang as a means of transportation to send athletes and visitors to South Korea during the games. (Xinhua)

France, Germany Vow to Deepen Cooperation Amid European Woes

PARIS - France and Germany on Sunday pledged to deepen bilateral cooperation, on the occasion of the 55th anniversary of the signing of the Elysee Treaty of friendship and cooperation between Paris and Berlin. "Our ambition is to define common positions on all important European and international issues," French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in a joint statement released by the French presidency on Sunday. The Elysee Treaty was signed by former French President Charles de Gaulle and former German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer on Jan. 22, 1963. The treaty, a major event in

the history of France-Germany relations, remains the basis of a broad and trust-based cooperation between the two countries. "Since then, the France-Germany friendship has been a pillar of European integration," the statement said. The two leaders also pledged to develop bilateral cooperation in various fields. France and Germany "will explore ways to more effectively promote the common France-Germany interests and values, particularly within the framework of common administrative and diplomatic mechanisms, in multilateral institutions ... within and outside the European Union," the statement said. (Xinhua)

German SPD Leader Urges Party to Back Coalition Talks with Merkel

BONN - Social Democrat (SPD) leader Martin Schulz appealed to his divided party on Sunday to back formal coalition talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives, a move that would bring Germany a step closer to a stable government.

Schulz is facing a backlash from the SPD's left and youth wings, which argue the party should reinvent itself in opposition after in September scoring its worst national election result since Germany became a federal republic in 1949. Speaking at a party congress that will vote later on Sunday on whether to enter talks, he urged delegates to allow the SPD to serve as Merkel's junior coalition partner again - a sign of the party's diminished fortunes.

"The SPD must and will be visible, audible and recognizable!" Schulz, sounding hoarse after a week of lobbying delegates, said to loud applause.

"We ask for your consent to start coalition negotiations," he told a packed World Conference Center in Bonn, the capital of the former West Germany where late SPD chancellors Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt earned reputations as international statesmen.

Around 600 SPD delegates gathered to debate and vote on whether to take the next step to renewing an alliance with Merkel's conservatives that took office in 2013.

The two blocs, which both bled support to the far right in the Sept. 24 election, struck a preliminary deal earlier this month after exploratory talks. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

"Cold War" Mentality for U.S. to Play up "Chinese Military Threat": Spokesperson

BEIJING - China's Ministry of National Defense (MND) said it was "Cold War" mentality for the United States to play up the so-called "Chinese military threat".

The synopsis of the 2018 National Defense Strategy released by the U.S. Department of Defense on Friday was full of unreal assertions of "zero-sum" games and confrontations, Ren Guoqiang, spokesperson of the MND, said Saturday. "China has steadfastly taken the path of peaceful development and followed defensive national defense policies," Ren said, adding that China does not seek military expansion or sphere of

influence and has always been a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a guardian of international order.

"In recent years, the Chinese military has actively shouldered international responsibilities and obligations and provided products of international public security. Its efforts and contribution are widely recognized and applauded by the international society," he said. Ren also said it is within China's sovereign rights to carry out peaceful construction activities and deploy necessary defense facilities on islands and reefs of the South China Sea. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Movement Like Dedication Pivotal to Face Internal, External Challenges: President

KARACHI - President Mamnoon Hussain Sunday said the revival of dedication as shown during the Pakistan Movement was inevitable to cope with the internal and external challenges confronting the country. Chairing a meeting of Quaid-e-Azama Mausoleum Management Board here, he said the nation must hold fast the golden principles of faith, unity and discipline.

Adviser to Prime Minister on National History and Literary Heritage Irfan Siddiqui, Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar and other board members were also present on the occasion.

Prior to the meeting, the president laid a wreath at the mausoleum and also offered Fateha. The president said Quaid-e-Azam

made a remarkable achievement by creating Pakistan through his undeterred resolve.

He said one could easily understand the life of great Quaid by having a sight of his relics.

He also lauded the role of National History and Literary Heritage Division for efficiently preserving the relics as well as the mausoleum.

He said the government would make all out efforts to promote the thought of Quaid-e-Azam without having the volume of funds into consideration. He also appreciated the development projects being executed by the said division at the mausoleum believing that it would highlight the ideological identity of the country. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran Deal 'Fixes' to Dominate Tillerson's Agenda in Europe

WASHINGTON - Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is seeking British and French support for tough new penalties against Iran and preventing a U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal.

Tillerson on Sunday began a nearly weeklong trip to Europe, and a U.S. official said Iran was expected to dominate Tillerson's talks in London and Paris, the first two stops. Tillerson left Washington as the government shutdown enters its second day. The State Department says he's conducting foreign relations that are essential to national security. Britain and France are parties to the 2015 Iran deal that President Donald Trump has warned he will walk away from this spring unless fixes are made to his liking.

The official said Tillerson's intent is "to close the gaps" in the accord that gave Iran billions in sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear program, and to explore more ways to counter Iranian behavior in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen.

The official was not authorized to publicly discuss Tillerson's plans before the trip, and spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity. Earlier this month, Trump pledged to stop waiving U.S. sanctions unless the Europeans agreed to strengthen its terms by consenting to a side deal that would effectively eliminate provisions that allow Iran to gradually resume some advanced atomic work. Trump also wants tighter restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile program. (AP)

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev Met with Military Personnel

TASHKENT - President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited the military unit of the South-West Special District on the second day of his visit to Surkhandarya region, where he got acquainted with execution of tasks determined at the meeting of the Security Council in an enlarged format and held conversation with military personnel. This was reported by the Press Service of the President of the Republic of

Uzbekistan. The purpose of the recently adopted Defense doctrine adopted in the country is to increase the combat power of the national army, ensure tranquility of people, said the Head of our state. Uzbekistan's foreign policy, further development of friendly and mutually beneficial relations with foreign countries, especially with neighboring states, strengthening independence and sovereignty of the state are indicated as priority principles in the doctrine. (UzA)