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Executive Summary

Perceptions of the U.S. Elites on Foreign Affairs



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*This article is written based on the author's personal opinions
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Executive Summary

○ Threatening factors to the U.S. diplomacy according to the American elites in 2018: Unlike the general public, the elite group overall maintained a liberal attitude toward the threatening factors to diplomacy. At the same time, the American elites differentiated and assessed six threatening factors.

- A. 78 percent of the elites pointed out the threat of climate change.
- B. 27.1 percent of experts recognized North Korea's nuclear threat to be vital.
- C. 14.7 percent said that international terrorism is vital.
- D. Only 2.7 percent considered illegal immigration vital.

○ The importance of elite groups

- Chicago Council on Global Affairs surveyed elites in 2014, 2016, and 2018. 890 respondents to the 2018 survey are professional, elite officialdom, who experienced in various fields related to diplomacy and security.

- The elites differ from the general public demographically and in terms of policy preferences. They were in government service, such as the White House's National Security Council. 22 of 338 were ambassadors. Understanding the elites' stance and thinking is essential to understand and predict the direction of the government's diplomatic policy.

○ The role of the U.S. in international affairs

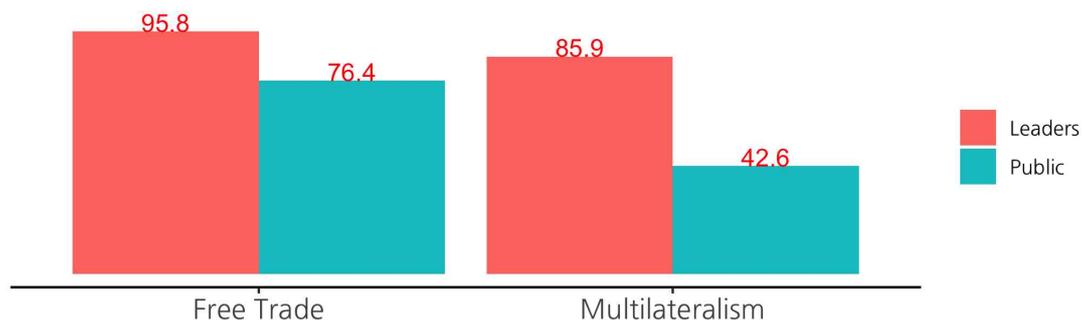
- The Trump administration unilaterally advocated America First policy. Meanwhile, the elites wanted active participation in world affairs. In the 2014 survey, an active role in international affairs was included as a factor that highlights the role of the U.S. as a strong leader.

○ Assessment of multilateralism and free trade policies

- Multilateralism and free trade system are traditional international institutions that the U.S. has established and maintained for a long time after the war. As in the past, the elite group supported the idea of multilaterally solving international problems.

- In a survey that asked about participating in international organizations, 86 percent preferred “to participate more than now.” Other responses included “less than now,” “as now,” and so on (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Attitudes of the Foreign Policy Opinion Leaders on Multilateralism and Free Trade %



Chicago Council Survey 2018, 2020

○ Attitudes toward alliance policy

- The elite group's assessment of the direction of the traditional alliance organization, NATO, contrasts to that of the Trump administration (Table 1). Unlike the Trump administration's policy enforcement, the elite group supports to maintain or strengthen the NATO alliance.

NATO Commitment	2016	2020
Withdraw entirely	1.7	1.8
Decrease commitment	6.0	7.5
Keep commitment the same	73.8	54.0
Increase commitment	18.3	36.4

○ Policy implications: the elites' perception of the Korean Peninsula

- The perception that China's development is a "vital" or an "important" threat to U.S. security began to widespread since China's participation in international trade in 2001.

- The fact that a growing number of the U.S. elites are expressing opinions that China's development should be checked and pressed actually indicates the possibility of the U.S.-China conflict to be recreated at any time in the future. The South Korean government must note that the relationship between the U.S. and China will not easily go well during the Biden administration and consider policies toward the U.S. and China accordingly.

Table 2: Attitudes of the Foreign Policy Opinion Leaders on the Korean Peninsula
2019

Chicago Council Survey 2019

Security Threat	2016	2019
Nuclear Threats of North Korea		
Not important	7.4	13.3
Important	54.8	59.5
Vital	37.7	27.1
Threats of China		
Not important	4.4	6.2
Important	60.7	46.2
Vital	34.8	47.5

- In 2018, 27.1 percent of the U.S. elites described North Korea’s nuclear threat as vital. This is a 13 percent decrease from 37.7 percent in 2016. The U.S.-North Korea summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un must have had an impact. In conclusion, the data shows that the U.S.-North Korea summit has let the opinion leaders in the U.S. think that the threat from North Korea is not vital. ♣

※ Translator’s note: This is a summarized unofficial translation of the original paper which was written in Korean. All references should be made to the original paper.