

How Does Alex Wong, Trump's Incoming National Security Deputy, View China?

The former State Department official said the CCP has based its legitimacy and survival on abusing the liberal international order.

15

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(L-R) U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Alex Wong, aide Lisa Kenna, and NSC Korea director Allison Hooker walk back into the Park Hwa Guest House after attending a

meeting with Kim Yong Chol, a North Korean senior ruling party official and former intelligence chief, in Pyongyang, North Korea, on July 6, 2018. Andrew Harnik/Pool/AFP via Getty Images



By Lily Zhou

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Alex Wong, a senior official under the first Trump administration, has been appointed by President-elect Donald Trump as his principal deputy national security adviser.

A lawyer by training, Wong had served as Trump’s deputy special representative for North Korea. He helped negotiate the 2018 summit between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

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Before taking on North Korea-related roles, Wong oversaw regional and security affairs at the State Department’s Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and led the department’s implementation of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Regarding China, Wong has criticized the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), voiced support for Taiwan, and advocated for more active engagement with Indo-Pacific countries to counterbalance the CCP’s hard and soft powers in the region.

In 2020, Wong condemned the Chinese regime, saying it was in “[flagrant violation](#) of its obligations” by helping North Korea evade the United Nations’ trade embargoes.

He was also a member of the Congress-appointed U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC). He contributed to the commission’s annual report to Congress as a commissioner in [2021](#), chairman in [2022](#), and vice-chairman in [2023](#).

In response to Wong’s appointment, Rep. Mike Waltz (R-Fla.), the incoming national security adviser, said he’s “thrilled” on social media platform [X](#). The congressman applauded Wong’s “proven record of

delivering results” during Trump’s first term and said Wong will “have an essential role in helping keep America safe.”

Yao-Yuan Yeh, chair of International Studies and Modern Languages at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, recently told The Epoch Times that Wong has a “really deep understanding” of “the nature of the Chinese Communist Party.”

“On the one hand, you can say he’s pretty hawkish against China, and on the other hand, he’s also very American-centric, understanding that our primary strategy is [that] we got to ... stay on top of these hegemony competitions,” he said.

Here’s what we know about Wong’s views on China.

Endgame Debate

Much of Wong’s assessment of China is reflected in his article published in October 2023 by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute (RRPFI), a Washington-based nonpartisan organization.

As China closes its power gap with the United States on military, diplomatic, and technological fronts, Washington has arrived at a consensus that the CCP is the biggest geopolitical threat to the United States. However, debate persists on the details, such as what endgame the United States should aim for.

Some envision a democratic China free from the control of the CCP, while others focus on strengthening the United States’ military and industrial power to maintain an advantage, using diplomatic tools to prevent a hot war with China.

In his [article](#), Wong posited that the largely similar policy prescriptions, which came from all sides of the debate, reflected a “reality” that the endgame had already been “predestined” by the CCP because the ruling party of China has based its legitimacy and survival on abusing the liberal international order.

“It is a reality in which regardless of whether the United States pursues détente with China or democracy within it, the CCP will increasingly be presented with dilemmas for its legitimacy,” he said.

“This is because the CCP has based its domestic legitimacy—and its ultimate capacity to rule—on an aggressive international grand strategy,” including unfair trade practices, absorption of foreign investment and knowledge, diplomatic coercion, winning in territorial disputes, and suppressing minorities in violation of international rules, he added.

Regardless of what actions the United States takes in self-defense, the CCP will perceive them as threats he said, urging Americans to “get comfortable with that reality.”

Taiwan

Wong has shown staunch support for Taiwan, as have his future colleagues such as [Waltz and Sen. Marco Rubio \(R-Fla.\)](#), Trump’s nominee for secretary of state.

In 2018, Wong was the first senior U.S. official to visit Taiwan after then-President Trump [signed](#) the Taiwan Travel Act. The law reaffirms U.S. support for Taiwan’s right to self-determination and encourages bilateral official exchanges at all levels.

Both the signing of the law and the visit—days apart from each other—were met with protests from Beijing.

The CCP has never ruled Taiwan, but it considers the self-governed island part of its territory and has not ruled out [using force](#) to bring it under its control.

Beijing has a record of sabotaging Taiwan’s [diplomatic ties](#) and its [participation in international organizations](#), and its ambition to annex Taiwan makes the island one of the potential flashpoints in the Indo-Pacific region.

In recent years, the Chinese military has conducted drills and coast guard patrols in the Taiwan Strait. For example, on Oct. 14, days after Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te said China and Taiwan “do not belong to one another” in his National Day speech, Beijing dispatched military planes and ships to encircle the island.

In March, Adm. John Aquilino, then-head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, said he believed that the Chinese military would be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027. Some analysts have said Beijing will more likely launch an economic warfare rather than a kinetic one.

Speaking at a reception attended by then-President Tsai Ing-wen during his Taiwan visit, Wong, then-deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific, said the U.S. commitment to Taiwan’s determination had “never been stronger.”

The commitment “doesn’t change from administration to administration, from president to president,” he said.

“It doesn’t change [with] the rise or fall of the fortunes of other powers in the region. It doesn’t change with the emergence of new challenges or new threats because our relationship isn’t transactional.

“Instead, it is undergirded and animated by shared and enduring values. The United States has been, is, and always will be, Taiwan’s closest friend and partner.”

Wong also reaffirmed U.S. support for Taiwan to be included in international fora, saying its exclusion was “unjust” for the island nation and those who would “benefit from Taiwan’s contributions” to the world.

In the 2022 USCC report, Wong and other commissioners recommended that Congress significantly boost funding for a proposed U.S.–Taiwan joint defense planning team as long as Taiwan passes a law for more funding to buy arms.

With several pro-Taiwan officials in the second Trump administration, Yeh said there could be “much higher level symbolic support for

Taiwan” and more military placement around the area and elsewhere in East Asia.

Indo-Pacific Strategy

In another [article](#) published by the RRPFI, Wong laid out his view on the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy.

He said the United States should prioritize its own interests and those of its regional allies rather than getting distracted by China’s internal politics and the demands of the CCP.

Wong recommended that the United States lean on AUKUS—a security partnership between Australia, the UK, and the United States—and Japan for security in the Indo-Pacific.

That’s because the three allies have a combined military capability that’s the strongest in the region, they are willing to work with the United States, and each has historic ties in the region that run deeper than those of the United States, he said.

With other regional partners, Wong said, the United States needs to actively pursue trade ties, friend-shore critical industries, and support liberty and human rights.

Trump faces a more challenging geopolitical landscape than during his first term, with two ongoing wars in Europe and the Middle East and an increasingly aggressive Beijing, with Russia, Iran, and North Korea drawing [closer to its orbit](#).

‘Very Tough’ Administration on China

Wong’s appointment, and the [nomination of Jamieson Greer](#) as the U.S. trade representative, completed a China-focused ensemble in Trump’s Cabinet as the United States prepares to curb the CCP’s ambition to replace it as the world’s only superpower.

Yeh told The Epoch Times that he expects Trump to be “very tough” on China, more than he was during his first term.

“I think he is very aware of the challenge of China compared to the moment he was on board in 2017. He was trying to befriend Xi Jinping in 2017, but it didn’t work well, and it doesn’t seem like China is actually listening to Trump,” he said.

“Given what has happened over the eight years, especially the pandemic, I think now he’s very aware of the dangers of China.”

In 2020, the Trump administration signed a phase one [trade deal](#) with China following a two-year trade war, but Beijing did [not](#) fulfill its pledge to buy an additional \$200 billion in U.S. products.

In the same year, the Chinese regime’s initial cover-up of the COVID-19 outbreak led to delayed responses in most countries. According to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), more than 1.1 million Americans died from the disease. Pandemic prevention measures had also battered economies, including that of the United States, just before Trump was up for reelection.

The president-elect has set up the stage for another potential [trade war](#), [accusing](#) Beijing of failing to keep its promise to [curb the flow of fentanyl](#) into the United States.

Another reason the administration will be tough, Yeh said, is the urgent need to counter the increasingly belligerent Chinese regime.

Yeh stated that the CCP’s [aggression](#) in the Indo-Pacific region is not “tolerable” for the United States, as the regime is “endangering our security parameters.”

Describing the CCP as the “No. 1” challenge to U.S. hegemony, he said, “If we’re not containing China, if we’re not doing more at this current moment, we may be too late.”

The president-elect has said he will adopt the strategy of “peace through strength.” He repeatedly underscored his China policy when

announcing his Cabinet selections, including [Waltz](#), [Pete Hegseth](#) for secretary of defense, [John Ratcliffe](#) for director of the CIA, and [Tulsi Gabbard](#) for director of national intelligence.

Yeh describes Trump’s team as geopolitical “realists” and anticipates a “new height” in U.S.–China competition.

The Epoch Times reached out to Wong and Trump’s transition team for comment but did not receive a response by publication time.

Terri Wu contributed to this report.

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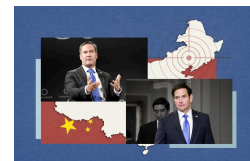
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