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Trump's Asia Policy and the Concept of the "Indo-Pacific"

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It is frequently said that the fate of the twenty-first century will be determined in Asia.¹ As President Obama declared in a 2011 address to the Australian Parliament, "With most of the world's nuclear power and some half of humanity, Asia will largely define whether the century ahead will be marked by conflict or cooperation, needless suffering or human progress."² With the world's two most populous countries and currently three of the world's ten largest economies, sitting at the intersection of global trade and commerce, events in the Asia-Pacific are unlikely to impact only the countries in the region. When combined with increasing military expenditures by regional powers, multiple nuclear-armed states, and historical disputes over territory, the region's trajectory could result in a potentially lethal combination for global stability. These fundamental dynamics are why successive U.S. presidential administrations have made the Asia-Pacific a priority even as the United States has been engaged in seventeen years of counter-terror operations in the Middle East and Central Asia.

While the administration of George W. Bush increased U.S. attention toward the region³, a notable shift in U.S. strategy began under the stewardship of President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Writing in *Foreign Policy* in 2011, Secretary Clinton

¹ See former Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell's 2015 testimony in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/15-04-14-us-defense-policy-issues-pertaining_to-the-asia-pacific-theater, President Obama's November 17, 2011 speech to the Australian Parliament <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>, and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's October 18, 2017 speech at CSIS for several examples of this theme <https://www.csis.org/analysis/defining-our-relationship-india-next-century-address-us-secretary-state-rex-tillerson>

² <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>,

³ Dan Blumenthal notes that this trend began during the George H. W. Bush administration and cites the "breakthrough in relations with India, the creation of "mini-laterals" such as the U.S.-Japan-Australia, and the movement of more forces into the Pacific" as key legacies of the George W. Bush administration. See <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/03/pivoting-and-rebalancing-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/>

noted that the United States needed to be “smart and systematic” about where to invest U.S. time and resources. She argued that “One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment — diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise — in the Asia-Pacific region.”⁴

The “pivot,” or what later became referred to as the “rebalance” to Asia involved deepening and strengthening alliance commitments with U.S. treaty allies including Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and building new partnerships with Southeast Asian states. Perhaps most importantly, building on the Bush administration’s revolution in U.S.-India relations, India assumed a central role in U.S. strategic thinking as a partner that had the potential to develop into a key strategic ally.⁵

Central to this refocus of U.S. attention was a commitment to remain engaged in the region. As President Obama put it in his 2011 speech:

“As President, I have, therefore, made a deliberate and strategic decision -- as a Pacific nation, the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future, by upholding core principles and in close partnership with our allies and friends.”⁶

In practice, this meant that even as the U.S. began cutting defense spending, operations in the region were to be less affected. The U.S. military committed to eventually maintain 60 percent of its global naval assets in the region. Deployments to places like Australia were increased for symbolic as well as strategic purposes. The Obama administration invested significant diplomatic effort to reassure U.S. allies such as Japan and the Philippines, both embroiled in territorial disputes with China, about U.S. commitment to their security. U.S. planners began to speculate about new basing opportunities throughout the region, even as the U.S. military was withdrawing forces from Europe and the Middle East.

The Obama administration’s approach to the region, however, did have gaps. The United States struggled to develop an economic pillar to complement its diplomatic and military initiatives in the region. The economic strategy for the “rebalance” was primarily built around the Obama administration’s hopes for the Trans-Pacific partnership, holding up the eventual agreement as a panacea for countries in the region concerned about their increasing economic dependence on Beijing.

After much initial time and attention paid to the region by Secretary Clinton and her team, the new strategy suffered significant challenges once she departed the administration. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel attempted to fill the void, devoting significant time to the region, but this unbalanced engagement, sparked fears that the U.S. strategy was primarily a military strategy rather than one utilizing all aspects of U.S. national power. The

⁴ See Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>

⁵ For the Bush administration’s thinking regarding India’s strategic potential see Nicholas Burns, “America’s Strategic Opportunity with India,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2007 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2007-11-01/americas-strategic-opportunity-india>

⁶ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>

Obama administration, which had hoped to capitalize on a receding tide of war, to paraphrase the President, and “pivot” to Asia, away from Europe and the Middle East, found itself pulled back into both theaters in 2013, with Russia’s annexation of Crimea and subsequent invasion of eastern Ukraine. In his haste to withdraw from the Middle East, President Obama took risks in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria that led to the prolonging of both conflicts, and in the case of Iraq and Syria, the rise of new terrorist groups that threatened Europe and the United States and even stretched its reach to parts of the Asia-Pacific.

These events occurred at a time when China was steadily increasing its strategic actions in its near abroad. In the South China Sea, China embarked on land reclamation projects and island building that generated significant international attention, but little concrete action in response. Chinese repression increased at home and in places like Hong Kong and Taiwan to little international pushback. Meanwhile, China’s ongoing efforts to deepen its economic engagement in the region, including with U.S. partners, was met only with ongoing TPP negotiations that struggled to find an end until several months into President Obama’s final year in office, only to have its erstwhile champion, Secretary Clinton, distance herself from the agreement in her own campaign for the White House.

By the end of his tenure in office, as they dealt with an administration team increasingly focused on the Middle East and Russia, Asian allies often complained about American neglect and questioned U.S. commitment to a region that once again, had fallen off of the front pages. The very doubts that President Obama had foreshadowed about U.S. resolve in 2011 had surfaced once again. The perennial challenge of the coming century again struggled for the attention of the moment.

The Trump Vision of the Free and Open Indo Pacific

This was the situation that faced the Trump administration upon taking office in January 2017. Candidate Trump ran for President advocating a confrontational approach toward China yet also stressed his deal-making ability with the Chinese.⁷ The Obama administration had carefully couched its “rebalance” to Asia in non-confrontational terms, warning of the consequences of a rising China that disrupted the rules-based international order, but still holding out hope for cooperation with Beijing. Secretary Clinton spoke of building “mutual trust” and encouraging “China’s active efforts in global problem-solving.”⁸ Her successor, Secretary of State John Kerry, devoted significant time to engaging the Chinese on climate change, resulting in Chinese support for the Paris climate agreement.⁹

While key Obama administration officials continued to stress engagement, elements of the bipartisan Asia policy community in Washington, seeing Chinese actions at home and abroad, began to come to the conclusion that the “responsible stakeholder” thesis of U.S.-China relations had been flawed.¹⁰ Efforts to integrate China as a responsible participant in global institutions tended to end up changing those institutions rather than changing

⁷ <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/10-times-trump-attacked-china-trade-relations-us/story?id=46572567>

⁸ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>

⁹ See John Kerry, “China, America and Our Warming Planet,” New York Times, November 11, 2014

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/12/opinion/john-kerry-our-historic-agreement-with-china-on-climate-change.html>

¹⁰ See Robert Zoellick, “Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?” Remarks to National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, September 21, 2005 <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/53682.htm>

China. Instead of liberalizing its political system as it liberalized its economy, Chinese state managed capitalism appeared to thrive in part through a closing political space and similar models were increasingly being promoted by China in its neighborhood. Commentary regarding a Chinese alternative model to the inefficient and at times struggling Indian economic and political model became common.

The 2016 election showed that the American public was also skeptical of the “responsible stakeholder” thesis. Republican candidates raced to see who could be toughest on China, with Gov. Scott Walker going so far as to call on President Obama in August 2015 to cancel a meeting with a visiting Xi Jinping.¹¹ On the Democratic side, frustration about outsourcing of jobs and production to China and other countries played a key role in Senator Bernie Sanders’s arguments about trade and Secretary Clinton’s reversal on TPP.

On his first full weekday in office, President Trump announced his withdrawal from the TPP, fulfilling a campaign promise and undermining his ability to outline an overarching economic vision for the region to compete with Chinese initiatives, such as the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership or the Belt and Road Initiative. An early summit with President Xi Jinping at Mar-a-Lago several months later raised concerns in some Asian capitals about the President’s seriousness towards Beijing. Combined with a seeming administration inattention to ongoing Chinese strategic gains in the South China Sea, which the Obama administration had publicly discussed but done little to counter, these developments renewed concerns about the new administration’s intentions in the region.

This began to change in October 2017 with then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s speech outlining the new administration’s approach to relations with India. Using the term “Indo-Pacific” repeatedly, Tillerson embraced a concept that had been used for some time by U.S. allies in the region. Highlighting a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific “protected by two strong pillars of democracy: The United States and India,” Tillerson’s speech was not a significant departure from the Obama administration’s approach, although Tillerson’s characterization of China’s actions was more stark than the previous team’s focus on engagement:

“China, while rising alongside India, has done so less responsibly, at times undermining the international rules-based order, even as countries like India operate within a framework that protects other nation’s sovereignty. China’s provocative actions in the South China Sea directly challenge the international law and norms that the United States and India both stand for. The United States seeks constructive relations with China, but we will not shrink from China’s challenges to the rules-based order and where China subverts the sovereignty of neighboring countries and disadvantages the U.S. and our friends.”¹²

While Tillerson’s tenure lasted less than six months after his CSIS speech, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific became the Trump administration’s “rebalance,” a framing concept that

¹¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2015/08/24/politics/scott-walker-china-xi-jinping-2016/index.html>

¹² Secretary Rex Tillerson, “Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century,” October 18, 2017, CSIS <https://www.csis.org/analysis/defining-our-relationship-india-next-century-address-us-secretary-state-rex-tillerson>

all elements of the U.S. government could rally and organize behind and likeminded partners in the region could embrace and echo, with their own variations. The National Security Strategy released by the White House in December 2017 adopted the framing, “A geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order.”¹³ The National Defense Strategy, released a week later, termed China a “strategic competitor.”¹⁴ In May 2018, Secretary of Defense James Mattis announced the renaming of the U.S. Pacific Command to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. In July 2018, Tillerson’s successor, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, and other officials participated in an Indo-Pacific Business Forum at which \$113.5 million in seed funding to promote U.S. private sector investment in the region was announced and Pompeo detailed the contours of the Indo-Pacific strategy that Tillerson had announced previously, outlining a vision for the region where the global commons are accessible to all, disputes are resolved peacefully, and an economically “open” region that includes “fair and reciprocal trade, open investment environments, transparent agreement between nations, and improved connectivity.”¹⁵

Like the Tillerson speech, Pompeo’s announcements were positively received by regional partners hungry for U.S. leadership. Yet, beyond the announced investment incentive programs, which were dwarfed by the more than \$1 trillion of investments China has announced as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, the administration’s attempt to outline an economic pillar to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept was underwhelming.

Old Challenges Persist

Beyond the slight differences in the Trump administration’s framing of its strategy toward the region, many of the same challenges to the concept that bedeviled the Obama administration persist to this day and some have been deepened during the tenure of President Trump.

Alliance Dynamics

First and foremost is the alienation of allies and likeminded partners. Any strategy to shape the contours of the rise of China will be dependent on partners. China lacks natural allies and the extensive web of partnerships between democracies in the Indo-Pacific as well as smaller non-democracies in China’s shadow interested in closer ties with the U.S. and its partners is a strategic opportunity to be grasped.

The Trump administration’s trade agenda, challenging U.S. allies and trading partners and questioning the cost and sustainability of U.S. security commitments, has undermined much of its Free and Open Indo Pacific agenda. It has also caused U.S. partners, such as the Philippines, to hedge their bets. Under Rodrigo Duterte’s leadership, the Philippines has moved closer to China, seeking additional Chinese investment and undermining momentum to pressure China regarding its actions in the South China Sea in the wake of the July 2016 ruling of an international arbitration panel.

¹³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

¹⁵ Secretary Mike Pompeo, “America’s Indo-Pacific Economic Vision,” U.S. Chamber of Commerce, July 30, 2018 <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/07/284722.htm>

Alliance relationships have also suffered from the rotating cast of Trump administration officials in key national security positions. Even those, like Secretary of State Pompeo, whose position presently appears somewhat secure, have faced similar challenges to their predecessors late in the Obama administration, who had to spend their time putting out diplomatic fires rather than advancing the long-term strategic goals of the administration in the Asia-Pacific.

The Trump administration, while highlighting the key roles of countries like India and Japan in their strategic framework, has also not emphasized alliance considerations or regional multilateral frameworks, such as ASEAN, as much as their predecessors, likely due to the President's own questions about the efficacy of some longstanding U.S. partnerships and multilateral arrangements. The administration has attempted to reinvigorate the Quad, with occasional working level meetings of officials from the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, yet concerns about Beijing's response to the initiative and a lack of trust between some of the partners have limited its usefulness.¹⁶ The President's erratic statesmanship has significantly undermined efforts to get all U.S. partners in the region moving in the same direction. An early leap forward in U.S.-India relations has been followed by a return of Indian debates about the wisdom of getting too close to Washington, in part because of U.S. policy toward Russia and Iran, but also reportedly because of suspicion about President Trump's own motives.¹⁷

The President has developed a close working relationship with Prime Minister Abe of Japan, yet U.S.-Japan relations has become dominated by the President's view that Japan needs to provide more in trade concessions to offset the U.S. security commitment.¹⁸ U.S.-Australian relations also suffered at the onset of the Trump administration, although the recent change in leadership in Australia may present an opportunity to reset the tone. Because of uncertainty about the trajectory of U.S.-China relations given the President's mixed messages, allies in the region have been forced to balance their own strategic competition, with continued engagement of Beijing.

As during portions of the Obama administration, U.S. strategy in the region lacks a central figure capable of helping to maintain close relationships with partners. Despite appointing special envoys at the State Department to handle several international challenges, the Trump administration has yet to appoint a high-level diplomat to cover the entire Indo-Pacific region. The portfolio remains bifurcated across multiple State Department bureaus, and thus overseen by multiple Assistant Secretary positions that remain unfilled almost two years into the administration.

¹⁶ For a convincing argument about the progress being made despite the Quad's limitations, see Dhruva Jaishankar, "The real significance of the Quad," ASPI The Strategist, October 24, 2018. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-real-significance-of-the-quad/>

¹⁷ See Atman Trivedi and Aparna Pande, "India is Getting Cold Feet about Trump's America," *Foreign Policy*, August 30, 2018 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/30/india-is-getting-cold-feet-about-trumps-america/>

¹⁸ See John Hudson and Josh Dawsey, "'I remember Pearl Harbor': Inside Trump's hot-and-cold relationship with Japan's prime minister," The Washington Post, August 28, 2018 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/i-remember-pearl-harbor-inside-trumps-hot-and-cold-relationship-with-japans-prime-minister/2018/08/28/d6117021-e310-40a4-b688-68fdf5ed2f38_story.html?utm_term=.b1e2d4efc313

Lack of Compelling Economic Agenda

A second major challenge is the administration's lack of a coherent regional trade and economic agenda. Despite some brief wavering under pressure from Republican Senators, President Trump has expressed little interest in rejoining TPP, instead seeking to renegotiate existing bilateral trade deals with partners in the region or seek new bilateral agreements.

In November 2017, the President, speaking at the APEC Summit in Vietnam in what at the time was previewed as a forward-looking address about the economic component of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, instead delivered a diatribe about trade, expressing his willingness to negotiate bilateral trade agreements and saying, "What we will no longer do is enter into large agreements that tie our hands, surrender our sovereignty, and make meaningful enforcement practically impossible."¹⁹

Yet, almost halfway into his first term in office, the administration is running out of time for significant new agreements to be negotiated and approved by Congress before the 2020 elections and the TPP-11 have moved ahead without the United States. In October 2018, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer notified Congress of the administration's intent to negotiate trade agreements with several partners, including Japan. Yet a potential U.S.-Japan agreement would not have the regional strategic impact that TPP would have had, acting as an alternative to China's economic partnerships that gives countries options other than simply deeper engagement with China's economic juggernaut.

Without additional U.S. resources, regional efforts to provide alternatives to China's massive loan guarantees and investments in infrastructure, will likely come up short. While the announcements from the Indo-Pacific Business Forum have been followed up with efforts to reform and consolidate U.S. programs providing development finance, greater coordination between donor countries in the region will need to occur. While the Trump administration has begun to address early Obama-era concerns about Defense Department resources devoted to the region, given the pressure on the State Department and U.S. foreign assistance budgets, U.S. funding devoted to the Indo-Pacific has not matched the supposed prioritization of the region in U.S. policy.²⁰

Doubts about U.S. Staying Power

Finally, the Trump administration faces broader doubts in the region about the duration of U.S. commitments. Asian allies have watched closely as the United States has tried to disentangle itself from Europe and the Middle East to focus on their region, all for naught. They watched when, in 2013, a U.S. "red line" against chemical weapons use in Syria went ignored by a despot and a great power exploited the lack of U.S. leadership to insert themselves into the region in support of a client state. While the Trump administration's willingness to enforce red lines such as those related to chemical weapons use has sent a stronger message about the U.S. commitment to maintain its international commitments, the President's erratic approach to global affairs has raised new questions.

¹⁹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-apec-ceo-summit-da-nang-vietnam/>

²⁰ For some ideas to correct this ongoing challenge, see Eric Sayers, "15 Big Ideas to Operationalize America's Indo-Pacific Strategy," *War on the Rocks*, April 6, 2018 <https://warontherocks.com/2018/04/15-big-ideas-to-operationalize-americas-indo-pacific-strategy/>

These doubts extend to America's schizophrenic relationship with Beijing. For years, U.S. strategists developed a counter China strategy yet were unwilling to call it such. Now, China is no longer a challenge looming on the horizon, and the U.S. gloves are coming off, as evidenced by Vice President Pence's speech at the Hudson Institute in October 2018, which Walter Russell Mead of the *Wall Street Journal* described as the start of a "Cold War II."²¹ China's growing power and influence are on full display on a daily basis across the region as well as globally. Xi Jinping has consolidated his control of the Chinese Communist Party and is violating norms in Hong Kong and attempting to bring Taiwan to heel.

Yet America is increasingly viewed as divided and distracted. Addressing this crisis in confidence of American leadership will be key if the Free and Open Indo-Pacific is to become anything more than a slogan given that unlike the Cold War, there is no formal security architecture that links regional partners beyond the hub and spokes model of bilateral U.S. security ties. If this does not happen, U.S. allies and partners are likely to continue to hedge as they see an administration that speaks harshly regarding Chinese actions out of one side of their mouth as Vice President Pence did earlier this month, while President Trump lauds the fact that "President Xi and I will always be friends."²²

Is there a Role for Europe?

The free and democratic world, both in and outside of Asia will play a significant role in determining the fate of the Asia-Pacific. Representing the second and third largest economies in the world, more than half of global GDP, and home to NATO, the world's foremost military alliance, the United States and the European Union will have a significant say in whether the Indo-Pacific remains free and open.

As the Trump administration has been outlining its approach to the Indo-Pacific and towards China, U.S. allies in Europe increasingly view Beijing with similar skepticism to their American counterparts. Europe simply has too much at stake in the region between India and China to be a mere bystander. As the Trump administration has spurned regional economic engagement, the European Union has been negotiating a series of trade agreements with key regional partners. The EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement signed in July 2018 was the biggest ever negotiated by the EU and will cover a third of the world's economy. Several European states, most notably France, are active players in Asian security due to historical legacy and overseas territories. French frigates have conducted several freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, at times including military service members from other EU member states in "EU FONOPS."²³

Whereas the Trump administration has only begun to think about the U.S. response to China's ever-expanding Belt and Road Initiative, the Europeans, spurred by its tentacles reaching European territory, have been ahead of the curve. The EU recently released a

²¹ See Pence speech at <https://www.hudson.org/events/1610-vice-president-mike-pence-s-remarks-on-the-administration-s-policy-towards-china102018> and Walter Russell Mead, "Mike Pence Announces Cold War II," *Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 2018

²² <https://wwwaxios.com/trump-xi-jinping-china-friends-trade-tweet-1ed4706b-dd7e-4e14-9c48-65b867bf58db.html>

²³ See Jonas Parello-Plesner, "The French Navy Stands up to China," *Wall Street Journal*, June 7, 2018 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-french-navy-stands-up-to-china-1528411691>

connectivity strategy that outlines a sustainable, comprehensive, and rules-based approach to Euro-Asian connectivity.²⁴ An EU India strategy is nearing completion.

Yet to be full participants in the emerging Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept, European perceptions of China and the region will need to change. Many Europeans view China and Asia more broadly purely through the prism of trade and investment. There is not enough recognition that Europe is dependent upon the security that U.S. and its Asian allies maintain in the South China Sea and other regional chokepoints. Many European countries need to upgrade their perspectives and relationships in the region, most importantly Germany, which could do much more to increase the level of diplomatic and military engagements with key partners like India, Japan, Australia, and others.

If the Trump administration is serious about developing a coherent strategy for the Indo-Pacific, allies, including the Europeans, will need to be prioritized. Trilaterals between the United States and key regional partners such as Australia and Japan with key European partners, like France, should be expanded. The administration should consider Japanese proposals to build on the Quad by occasionally including British and French security officials. EU proposals on connectivity should be incorporated into ongoing discussions with Japan, Australia and India about their national capacities in this area as well as discussions with Taiwan about its New Southbound Policy. On trade, continued Section 232 and 301 tariffs against the Europeans run the risk of doing nothing more than alienating the very allies needed to win the broader trade war with China. Finally, there needs to be greater transatlantic coordination regarding human rights, the deteriorating state of freedom in Hong Kong, and towards China's attempts to further isolate Taiwan, and China's expanding political and economic influence efforts across the transatlantic space.

The Trump administration has rightly assessed that the China challenge will likely define U.S. national security for the coming decades. Europeans are America's closest allies, economic partners, and largest bloc of advanced democracies. It would be foolish to ignore the convergence of interests and to instead feud and fight across the Atlantic. Such an approach would only serve Beijing's interests and put any U.S. strategy to support a Free and Open Indo-Pacific at risk of early failure.

Conclusion

For an administration that has set to undo many of its predecessor's strategic initiatives, the similarities between the Obama administration's rebalance to Asia and the Trump administration's Free and Open Indo Pacific strategy are striking. Despite their stylistic differences and different areas of prioritization, the U.S. approach to the region continues to face many of the same challenges that confronted policymakers seven years ago when the Obama "rebalance" premiered.

Until the United States sends a consistent message to U.S. allies and prospective partners about long-term U.S. commitment to the region, a regional strategy in support of Indo-Pacific prosperity and stability will suffer. Ultimate success in avoiding costly conflict will come only if the United States leverages its natural strengths – deeper partnerships with

²⁴ See https://cdn3-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfutre/_014y_ZmZOKD0lvjc4Zx1hfTSz91fMhUGyXRUHp25I/mtime:1537348892/sites/eeas/files/joint_communication_-_connecting_europe_and_asia_-_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf

allies in the region and likeminded partners like the Europeans, and America's significant economic power, not as weapons, but as a force multiplier. Otherwise, Chinese power and influence throughout the Indo-Pacific region will only increase and the rules-based order that the transatlantic democracies created will be threatened, risking conflict and instability both in the Indo-Pacific and globally.

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