



# A Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa®) Report

September 2019

## *Great Power Activities in the Indo-Pacific and Africa*

Deeper Analyses  
Clarifying Insights  
Better Decisions

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## **What is ViTTa?**

NSI's Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) provides rapid response to critical information needs by pulsing a global network of subject matter experts (SMEs) to generate a wide range of expert insight. For the Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) Future of Global Competition and Conflict project, ViTTa was used to address 12 key questions provided by the project's Joint Staff sponsors. The ViTTa team received written response submissions from 65 subject matter experts from academia, government, military, and industry. This report consists of:

1. A summary overview of the expert contributor response to the ViTTa question of focus.
2. The full corpus of expert contributor responses received for the ViTTa question of focus.
3. Biographies of expert contributors.

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**Cover image:** [https://inhomelandsecurity.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2019/04/AdobeStock\\_143921323-china-russia-influence.jpeg](https://inhomelandsecurity.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2019/04/AdobeStock_143921323-china-russia-influence.jpeg)

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## Question of Focus

[Q6] How might US allies and neutral nations be impacted by increasing Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific and Africa? How might US allies and neutral nations be impacted by Russian efforts to assert its influence in the Indo-Pacific and Africa?

## Subject Matter Expert Contributors

Dr. David T. Burbach (US Naval War College), Dr. Ryan Burke (US Air Force Academy), Dean Cheng (Heritage Foundation), Major Christopher Culver (US Air Force Academy), Abraham M. Denmark (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), Michael Fabey (Jane's Fighting Ships), David C. Gompert (US Naval Academy), Dr. Justin V. Hastings (University of Sydney), Anthony Rinna (Sino-NK), Dr. Derek M. Scissors (American Enterprise Institute), Andrew Small (German Marshall Fund), Yun Sun (Stimson Center), Dr. Philip Fei-Ling Wang (Georgia Institute of Technology), Ali Wyne (RAND Corporation), Lieutenant Colonel Maciej Zaborowski (US Central Command)

## Summary Overview

This summary overview reflects on the insightful responses of fifteen Future of Global Competition and Conflict Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) expert contributors. While this summary presents an overview of the key expert contributor insights, the summary alone cannot fully convey the fine detail of the expert contributor responses provided, each of which is worth reading in its entirety. For this report, the expert contributors assess Chinese and Russian activities and influence in the Indo-Pacific and Africa, and how an increasing Chinese and Russian presence in these regions are likely to impact the United States and its allies.

### Russian Activity in the Indo-Pacific and Africa

Russia seeks the ability to influence global events, and acts opportunistically to achieve its objectives.<sup>1</sup> Russian activities, however, are constrained by the Kremlin's inherent limitations, due largely to its flagging economy. David Gompert of the US Naval Academy suggests that, because of these limitations, Russia does not currently have the means to exert great power influence across the globe. Gompert does warn, however, that because of its weak economy, Russia may present a greater danger to United States interests in the short-term than China, as Russia may be more accepting of risk.

In the Indo-Pacific, Russia has been offering itself as an alternative to United States power. Dean Cheng of the Heritage Foundation extends this strategy, noting that Russia has positioned itself as an alternative to Chinese power in the region as well, particularly as a supplier of arms and technology. Cheng highlights Russia's offer to construct a fiber optic cable extending to North Korea as an example of Russia presenting a key regional actor

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<sup>1</sup> See contribution from Zaborowski.

(North Korea) an opportunity to bypass China. Despite this maneuvering, Russian and Chinese interests do align on a key regional objective: decreasing United States influence and frustrating United States ambitions in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Russia and China have developed what Dr. Phillip Fei-Ling Wang of the Georgia Institute of Technology describes as a “marriage of convenience” in pursuit of this common interest of challenging United States leadership in the region. Wang stresses, however, that China maintains the clear upper-hand in the relationship. Wang explains that, while the two states do coordinate across diplomatic, economic, and military channels, Russia has significantly less influence in the region and is largely just a “comrade-in-name” in the eyes of the Chinese.

In Africa, Russia appears to operate with a more short-term view than does China, due partly to its economic constraints.<sup>3</sup> These constraints, Anthony Rinna of Sino-NK notes, also force Russia to be more risk-averse on the continent than China is, particularly with respect to investments and aid allocations to African states. David Burbach of the US Naval War College suggests that Russia is also less concerned with looming security threats in Africa because it has a lighter footprint across the continent than China, and its economic interests therein are minor and mostly in the arms trade. Beyond the arms trade, Russia has influence in global energy markets, and has initiated projects on the continent through Rosneft and Lukoil.<sup>4</sup> The potential leverage that Russia could extract on the United States (but more so Europe) is in the gas trade, particularly in North Africa, according to Burbach. Burbach explains that, strategically and ideologically, Russia seeks to play the role of a diplomatic spoiler, and alternative to the United States, which is more cautious of cooperation with states with questionable records on human rights, democratization, and corruption.

## Chinese Activity in the Indo-Pacific and Africa

Contributors are careful in their characterizations of Chinese activities and encourage readers to think critically about the nature of Chinese behavior. Dr. Justin Hastings of the University of Sydney suggests that Chinese actions are often informed by domestic political considerations rather great power competition. Additionally, Major Christopher Culver of the US Air Force Academy notes that China is not a monolithic actor and that Chinese trade and investment patterns are not necessarily irregular from those states that comprise the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Dr. Derek Scissors of the American Enterprise Institute notes, accordingly, that China is still reliant on the dollar, as evidenced by the tethering of the yuan to it in global currency markets. These conditions underscore Lieutenant Colonel Maciej Zaborowski’s (US Central Command) assertion that China is choosing a path of engagement within the diplomatic, economic, and information domains (rather than within a strictly security context).

Further, Andrew Small of the German Marshall Fund differentiates between different types of Chinese economic activity, one of which is economic activity related to security threats and advanced technology. Small notes that recent United States controls on exports to Chinese companies such as Fujian Jinhua and Huawei illustrate the United States administration’s understanding of such economic activity as threatening. Relatedly, as Abraham Denmark of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars details, United States efforts to prevent its

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<sup>2</sup> See contributions from Fabey and Wang.

<sup>3</sup> See contributions from Burbach, Gompert, and Rinna.

<sup>4</sup> See contribution from Rinna.

allies from installing Huawei hardware in their critical infrastructure has become an issue that can expose partner nations to reprisals from China, illustrating the fragile state of being between those who seek economic assistance from China but security guarantees from the United States.

Several contributors underscore the unspoken tradeoff that many Indo-Pacific nations face between increased economic and cultural ties with China, and security cooperation with the United States.<sup>5</sup> Yun Sun of the Stimson Center asserts that though most states would prefer not to be bound between these two powers, they do feel pressure to choose between the two. Though some Indo-Pacific states may not particularly trust China, they recognize that China is nearby, engaged, and strong, whereas the prevailing opinion of the United States is increasingly one characterized by fickleness and distance.<sup>6</sup> China has been taking aggressive action in the region, particularly in the South and East China Seas, to increase its influence.<sup>7</sup> These actions persist because of lingering doubts of United States commitment to its partnerships with allies in the region, according to Michael Fabey of Jane's Fighting Ships. That wavering commitment, if it continues, could put stress on United States relationships in the region. As China continues to cooperate with United States allies, the United States position and its influence in the Pacific could slowly erode.<sup>8</sup> Southeast Asian nations are particularly vulnerable to China, Hastings notes, because of Beijing's assertiveness in the South China Sea and its activities related to its Belt and Road Initiative. Scissors, however, notes that, in the long-term, an aging China could be met with economically ascendant Indo-Pacific states, such as Vietnam, Indonesia, India, and the Philippines, which would complicate the Chinese growth trajectory. This would also, Scissors suggests, coincide with a potential economic decline of Northeast Asia, which could create space for United States partners to assert themselves in the region.

Chinese engagement in Africa centers on economic development. There is still a need for infrastructure and investment on the continent, which aligns with a commensurate Chinese interest in trade and development rather than security, as Cheng notes. Relatedly, Scissors details how successful Chinese economic development in Africa could bring follow-on demand for consumer goods, which, he notes, could result in a boon for the United States. The United States, however, does not share the same economic priorities as China on the continent (i.e., commodities, energy, and minerals).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, strategically, China occupies a similar space as an alternative and spoiler in Africa as Russia does. China has been similarly agnostic on the recipients of its aid, and Chinese investment packages and loans have represented viable substitutes to United States aid packages.<sup>10</sup> Contributors suggest, however, that investments from the United States and other OECD countries are still preferred across the continent, as China's proposition to many African states (i.e., undemocratic development through unconditional aid) is no longer as attractive as it once had been.<sup>11</sup> Hastings echoes this point, noting that the conditions that often accompany Chinese investment are challenging for target states.

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<sup>5</sup> See contributions from Denmark, Fabey, Gompert, Small, Sun, and Wyne.

<sup>6</sup> See contribution from Denmark.

<sup>7</sup> See contributions from Burke, Fabey, and Gompert.

<sup>8</sup> See contributions from Burke, Fabey, and Gompert.

<sup>9</sup> See contribution from Scissors.

<sup>10</sup> See contribution from Rinna.

<sup>11</sup> See contributions from Culver, Gompert, and Hastings.



# Subject Matter Expert Contributions

Dr. David T. Burbach

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12 March 2019

## *Russian Challenges to U.S. Interests in Africa*

Relative to a very low post-Cold War baseline, Russia has demonstrated renewed strategic interest in Africa. Russia has some ability to act as a diplomatic spoiler and to help autocratic African leaders resist Western pressure for political reform, but overall it will not threaten vital U.S. interests. The one area for significant concern would be the Mediterranean and Red Sea littoral states, where a greater Russian stake in the oil & gas sector would negatively harm the energy security of European NATO allies.

Russia's economic and military interests in Africa are, in general, minor. Russia does not depend on African resources nor is Africa a large destination for Russian exports or investment. Russia has nothing like the economic footprint of China or the EU, and will not even be as important as India or Persian Gulf states to African economies. In sub-Saharan Africa, Russia has little use for traditional military bases or naval port access, whether to protect local interests or to project power elsewhere. The Mediterranean and Red Sea littorals are an exception, discussed below.

Russia's actions in Africa will be opportunistic and in narrow sectors, though may still impinge on some U.S. policy goals. Russian arms sales to the region are growing. Russia increasingly pitches itself as a no-strings alternative to Western suppliers, and it points to Syria as evidence Russia is a more effective counter-jihadist partner than the U.S. Beyond Russian long-time customers, some traditional Western customers in Africa have been wooed – most notably Nigeria, frustrated by U.S. reluctance to sell helicopters and strike aircraft. A newer development is the operation of private military companies (such as Wagner), technically independent but with Kremlin blessing. Wagner's operations in Central African Republic have drawn attention, but Russian PMCs also serve as Presidential guards in Burundi, for example.

Russia lacks an ideology to export, but it does have a "brand": sovereignty. Russia has positioned itself against international criminal courts, as an opponent of humanitarian military intervention, and against using sanctions to pressure political and social change. With its Security Council veto, Moscow has meaningful influence on those questions. Championing sovereignty & stability is, understandably, attractive to incumbent regimes. Russia has not used the "defender of Christian values" narrative in Africa as it has in E. Europe, but conceivably might given growing schisms between African and Europe/N American churches over social issues like gay rights.

The net effect is a reduction in U.S. leverage on democratization, human rights, and anti-corruption, and to make multinational intervention in crises more difficult. The current Administration has downgraded the priority of those goals, so this may not be as great a loss to U.S. interests as other post-Cold War Administrations would have considered. American security will not face near-term, direct harm as a result, but there is a case that without deeper reforms and social welfare improvements, Africa faces more instability, conflict, and greater VEO activity in the long run. Russian weapons and mercenaries may help regimes put down immediate threats, but do not solve long-term problems.

It is worth noting how Chinese and Russian interests diverge on long-term stability. China may not value democracy, but does have such vast investments in Africa as to have a stake in future social and political stability. Weapons are only a small share of China's African trade. Russia, on the other hand, has little reason not to take a short-term perspective -- instability may even help their main lines of business in Africa.

The one area where Russia's interests, capabilities, and U.S./EU vulnerabilities come together significantly is North Africa. Proximity and the ocean connectivity give Russia more access than sub-Saharan Africa, and the Russian navy would benefit from greater access to friendly ports in NATO's "lake". Russian energy firms are well represented in North Africa and Russia is keen on increasing its ownership share at the expense of EU firms. This is especially so for gas, which is not as globally fungible as oil (gas moves through

fixed undersea pipelines or long-term LNG contracts). Russian dominance of North African gas exports, added to direct Russian exports, would leave Europe even more vulnerable to price or supply manipulation.

Despite these areas of concern, the United States should not be overly alarmed by Russian activity in Africa. Just because Moscow finds an endeavor profitable does not mean that countering it would be worth the cost to the U.S. The U.S. has long seen little strategic interest in the Central African Republic, for example, and the presence of Russian mercenaries should not change that. Moscow has limited resources, few friends, and reduced trading opportunities due to sanctions. Russia's actions in sub-Saharan Africa are not welcome, but ultimately will make little difference to deterring Russian attacks on NATO or to the long-term prospects of the Russian economy. The U.S. should be not let a strategic directive to "re-focus on great power competition" become a reason for even *more* expenditure of resources on peripheral interests.

## Dr. Ryan Burke

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15 March 2019

### ***Geography Matters: Key Interests in Future Global Competition and Conflict***

If we ask defense hawks this question, some answers will no doubt emphasize the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) concept. RMA implies that evolving technology will change the nature and character of war, and that those military powers possessing the most advanced technology will prevail in future military conflicts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While possession of superior technology almost certainly provides advanced military capability, superior technology alone does not win wars. The American efforts in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan to date are examples of such efforts where superior military force enabled by superior technology was insufficient to combat irregular factions of "freedom fighters" intent on resisting American occupation and western influence. This is not to say that technology is irrelevant or that it won't aid in military victory. It is to say, rather, that reliance on superior technology alone – and the resulting perception of competitive military advantage stemming from such superior technology – is ill-founded and frankly ignorant. The "tech trend" that so many defense advocates stand behind is not the only trend that will drive future change in global competition and conflict. Those lacking superior technology tend to be more adaptable and creative; even the most technologically advanced militaries in the world find themselves – at times – vulnerable to relatively primitive – yet successful – attacks. To utilize modern technology, militaries require – at the very least – bases and infrastructure from which to employ it. The nature and character of future conflict will be influenced just as much by geography as it will be technology. In this way, military powers with the greatest global influence, regardless of their technology, will be most likely to shape global competition and resulting conflict far into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To support this claim, look no further than the Chinese effort to expand their territorial claims in the South and East China Seas. Though historically contested for centuries, the South China Sea has seen a sharp rise in tensions since 2010. Since their renewed territorial claims in 2013, the Chinese have annexed existing land masses and reefs in the SCS and ECS while simultaneously constructing approximately 3200 acres of artificial islands in the same areas.<sup>12</sup> Why? Depending on one's source, over 30% of global maritime trade flows through this highly-trafficked economic trade zone; and over 60% of regional Asia-Pacific trade traverses these contested waters.<sup>13</sup> With control – or at least geographic influence – of such critical waters to the global economy, Chinese land and power grab efforts in this area should come as no surprise to those familiar with the international security landscape. But regional and economic influence in the SCS and ECS alone are wholly insufficient for a nation in China that – arguably – seeks to supplant the United States as the global hegemon. Given this, it should also come as no surprise that the Chinese are actively seeking to expand their prepositioned military presence beyond the Asia-Pacific.

The Chinese government has been engaged in diplomatic efforts with Nicaragua and Venezuela in recent years. Reports suggest

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<sup>12</sup> Specia, Megan and Takkunen, Mikko, "South China Sea Photos Suggest a Military Building Spree by Beijing." February 8, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/08/world/asia/south-china-seas-photos.html>

<sup>13</sup> Team, China Power. "How much trade transits the South China Sea?" Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC (2017). <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/>



Chinese influence and private funding of the now halted Nicaraguan Canal project, as the Chinese are reported to be militarily interested in controlling this potential maritime throughway.<sup>14</sup> More recently, the Chinese government has refused – unlike most global leaders – to denounce Nicolas Maduro’s contested reelection as President of Venezuela and even blocked a United Nations Security Council resolution to institute new elections.<sup>15</sup> Venezuela’s massive oil reserves and prime location at the extreme northern portion of the South American continent combined with its failing economy make it a target of opportunity and exploitation for a Chinese government seeking to expand its influence into the Americas. With a booming Chinese economy and a failing Venezuelan economy, President Xi and China can serve as Maduro’s and Venezuela’s savior – in exchange – potentially – for future basing and infrastructure rights of operation. With the Chinese Navy’s ongoing efforts to both modernize and expand their naval capabilities and compete with the United States for regional influence, the northern coast of Venezuela seems like a prime location for China’s newest strategic repositioning effort.

But China isn’t the only big power adversary seeking to expand its geographic influence. Russia – like China – refuses to condemn, denounce, or delegitimize Nicolas Maduro’s retention of his office, despite mounting pressure from major international powers like the United States.<sup>16</sup> Russia is also interested in south and Central American basing infrastructure. Reports suggest Russian interest and suspected military activity also in Nicaragua.<sup>17</sup> The list of nations with expansionist interests goes on, but suffice to say that China and Russia present the greatest current threat to United States’ interest internationally.

Beyond central and South America, nations like China and Russia seem interested in establishing greater presence and influence in the Polar Regions. Climatic variations have objectively changed the polar landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> century making these regions – arguably – some of the most strategically imperative areas on the planet for both influence and control. In particular, the Arctic Circle provides a direct avenue of approach for military powers with the capability to exploit dwindling land mass obstructions and to traverse what was once considered an impassable region of the world. The direct approach benefit is one of many such motivations for Arctic expansion. What’s more, controlling territory in the Arctic may yield tremendous economic benefits via oil and liquid natural gas extraction as the Arctic Circle is thought to be an area rich with such energy sources.<sup>18</sup> We know that the Chinese, as of 2018, have expressed interest in the poles via a “white paper policy” document released by their State Council Information Office.<sup>19</sup> As well, we know Russia’s interest in the Arctic Circle is multifaceted given the country’s northern border is immediately adjacent to the circle. With Russia’s apparent interest in reunifying territories of the old Soviet Union, a northern flanking approach via the Arctic Circle may enable surrounding regional influence on the Scandinavian nations first and the Baltic States by extension. Russia could even use a play from the Chinese playbook and seek to expand territorial claims in the Arctic Circle. Such claims may seem sensational to some but are well within the realm of possibility for a nation-state motivated by global power. Complicating matters is the lack of law governing international water ways. Currently, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) is the only document governing maritime conduct in international waters. The problem is that UNCLOS doesn’t actually govern and there few real deterrents built into the system to dissuade Russia or China from complying with UNCLOS parameters. In other words, the Arctic is ripe for military expansion. With the United States’ lack of emphasis on the Polar Regions and the Americas relative to other areas of the world, these are a growing problems requiring reorientation.<sup>20</sup>

Currently, the United States’ prepositioned global military presence far exceeds that of any other nation. However, despite the U.S. force postures influencing diplomatic, military, and economic efforts in myriad global hotspots, the U.S. sorely lacks geographic influence in both the Poles and the Americas. United States Southern Command headquarters is in Doral, Florida and not even in the true Southern Command area of responsibility. The United States military has a small forward expeditionary base in Honduras acting as

<sup>14</sup> Shaer, Matthew. "A new canal through Central America could have devastating consequences." Smithsonian. com, December (2014).

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/new-canal-through-central-america-could-have-devastating-consequences-180953394/>

<sup>15</sup> Wainer, David, "Russia, China Veto UN Resolution Seeking Venezuela Elections," February (2019).

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-28/russia-china-veto-un-resolution-seeking-venezuela-elections>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Sanchez, Alejandro, "Forget Venezuela, Russia is Looking to Nicaragua." September (2017). <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/forget-venezuela-russia-looking-nicaragua-22464>

<sup>18</sup> King, Hobart, "Oil and Natural Gas Resources of the Arctic," n.d., <https://geology.com/articles/arctic-oil-and-gas/>

<sup>19</sup> English Translation by Lu Hui from *Xinhua*: "China's Arctic Policy: The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China," January 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c\\_136926498.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c_136926498.htm)

<sup>20</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the proposed military reorientation to the Polar Regions, see Burke and Matisek's (forthcoming 2019) article "The American Polar Pivot: Gaining a Comparative Advantage in Great Power Competition," *Marine Corps University Journal*. 10(1).

the lead element in the U.S. military's efforts to counter transnational crime among other efforts.<sup>21</sup> Soto Cano Air Base is the home of Joint Task Force-Bravo, a small forward military presence that, despite documented Central American expansion efforts by both China and Russia, sees little emphasis from DoD relative to other geographic combatant command priorities. This and small operating elements of Army and Marine Corps special operations units in Colombia and other countries make up the entirety of the U.S. SOUTHCOM defense posture. With Venezuela soon to be a failed-state ripe for Chinese and Russian exploitation, coupled with Chinese and Russian expansion in Central America, this is insufficient.

As well, U.S. force posture is nearly non-existent in the Polar Regions. Marine Forces Pacific maintains the Marine Rotational Force Darwin program that deploys about 1,500 Marines on six-month continuous rotations to Darwin, Australia.<sup>22</sup> While firmly entrenched in the Southern Hemisphere, this rotational force presence is situated on the extreme north-central coast of Australia, still thousands of miles north of the Antarctic continent. It is difficult to influence operations from this distance. Smaller numbers of Marines have in recent years participated in European theater training exercises in Poland, Norway, and the Baltic States as part of BALTOPS and Saber Strike.<sup>23</sup> While Marine rotational forces actively deploy to Australia and or northern Europe as part of training and readiness efforts, Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) deploy rotationally around the world as well and are far more expeditionary than their Darwinian counterparts. East and West Coast MEUs deploy simultaneously and at any given time can project power in numerous areas of U.S. interests. Deploying more maritime assets in and around the Polar Regions – provided sufficient capability and seasonal conditions to enter or approach arctic waters – is in order as an indication of U.S. interest and commitment to securing the Polar Regions. The U.S. should also consider – in this vein – reorienting carrier strike group and other surface ship package deployments beyond amphibious ready groups (ARG) and MEUs to the Polar Regions in an effort to maximize U.S. presence and military power projection in these regions.<sup>24</sup> Such commitments of visible military force postures to strategically vital regions of the world would speak volumes to Russian and Chinese expansion. There is some discussion on this front as of late 2018 under then-Secretary Mattis' 'dynamic force employment' concept. Such discussions about avoiding unpredictability while integrating newly determined strategic locations is vital to continued global competition.

The U.S. needs a strategic rebalancing effort that extends beyond the INDO-PACOM area of responsibility. As large and sustained combat operations wind down in the CENTCOM AOR, the U.S. must consider its geographic presence in other soon-to-be contested regions, namely the Polar Regions and the Americas. The U.S. no longer enjoys geographic isolation and protection from its 21<sup>st</sup> century adversaries as it once did. The threats from the Arctic and Central and South America now present legitimate concerns for homeland defense. The U.S. needs to meet these challenges before they arrive at our doorstep. Re-orienting rotational force efforts to expand operations in the Poles and the Americas is a necessary first step that may deter continued Russian and Chinese military expansion in these geographically critical regions of the world that, until now, few people have truly emphasized as areas of global interest in the future of great power competition and conflict.

## Dean Cheng

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13 March 2019

Russia: Russia is likely to offer itself as the alternative to the US and China, as a source of arms and other technology (e.g., space, cyber-security software, etc.). As already seems to be the case with North Korea (and possibly Pakistan), it is also trying to serve as spoiler, frustrating both the US and China, again by offering itself as an alternative. The decision to build a new fiber optic line into NK (which

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<sup>21</sup> United States Southern Command: Joint Task Force-Bravo. <https://www.jtfb.southcom.mil/>

<sup>22</sup> Marine Forces Pacific: Marine Rotational Force-Darwin. <https://www.marforpac.marines.mil/MRFDarwin/>

<sup>23</sup> "Exercise BALTOPS 2018 Enhancing Interoperability Among NATO Allies and Partners in Baltic Region." <https://navylive.dodlive.mil/2018/06/11/exercise-baltops-2018-enhancing-interoperability-among-nato-allies-and-partners-in-baltic-region/>; <https://www.eur.army.mil/SaberStrike/>

<sup>24</sup> Eckstein, Megan, "Navy May Deploy Surface Ships to Arctic This Summer as Shipping Lanes Open Up," January (2019). <https://news.usni.org/2019/01/08/navy-may-deploy-surface-ships-arctic-summer-shipping-lanes-open>

hardly needs more bandwidth) would be a case in point, offering NK a way to access the Internet without having to pass through China.<sup>25</sup>

China: China will offer financing, technology assistance, relatively inexpensive but reliable weapons to a variety of countries around the world. (The J-11, for example, is a copy of the Su-27/Su-30.) China will make the argument that it is more interested in trade and development, while the United States is more focused on military threats. This is likely to resonate in many regions (e.g., Southeast Asia), which does not want to choose between America and China, but prioritizes economic development above security threats (because there are relatively few external threats from each other). Similarly, this is likely to resonate in Africa, which is desperately short of both infrastructure and investment.

## Major Christopher Culver

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8 March 2019

China's growing international economic influences and relationships need to be understood in the context of two broad ideas that are often ignored or misconstrued. First, China's trade and investment patterns do not differ significantly in scope or intent from other countries, having much more in common with investments from OECD countries than otherwise. Second, China is not a monolithic actor and its international economic actions are rarely as coordinated and strategically planned as is commonly perceived. Seen in this light, the United States should be hesitant to push back against Chinese investments unless it can be determined that they are both specifically directed by the Chinese state for strategic objectives and outside the scope of what is reasonably expected for a growing economy. Even in the rare case where these criteria are met, China is unlikely to have the ability to coordinate broad economic goals in the international market, and the risk of attempts to thwart these efforts are not worth the unlikely and minimal strategic advantage they might provide. Market forces in the developing world are unlikely to be shaped significantly by either US or Chinese influence. The United States' interests are thus better served by providing strategic alternatives to developing nations that promote economic opportunities while respecting the principles of good governance.

On the first broad point, China's foreign investments and trade patterns are given significant attention because of recent growth trends, but they are generally in line with what would be expected of any economy its size, and do not indicate a massive strategic strategy. China's current annual outward flow of foreign direct investment is around \$100 trillion compared to over \$300 trillion from the United States. China's investment grew steadily since the "Going Out" policy around the turn of the century, and increased significantly since 2013, but has actually declined precipitously from a peak in 2016 at 1.93% of its GDP to its current level of less than 1% of GDP, compared to US and world international investment rates that are both around 1.6%<sup>26</sup>. The majority of both Chinese and OECD investment flows to developed economies. The primary difference is that a greater share of Chinese investment is directed toward developing economies, whereas these countries make up a relatively insignificant share of total OECD investment. The same holds true for trade patterns, where both China and the United States have significantly less overall trade as a share of GDP than average OECD countries<sup>27</sup>. China once again is more economically involved in the developing world, most notably Africa where China's total trade volume is nearly triple that of the United States, though trade has also decreased significantly in the last few years<sup>28</sup>. China's increased proportion of trade and investment in less developed regions should not be surprising considering the resistance from the United States and other OECD countries to encourage Chinese investment in these developed countries. The significant difference that has been identified by scholars regarding Chinese investment behavior is a decreased aversion to investing in regions of poor governance or high corruption,<sup>29</sup> though it should be noted that Chinese investors don't have a particular attraction to these economies, but rather don't show the aversion that OECD investors do.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-02/north-korea-gets-second-route-to-internet-this-time-via-russia>

<sup>26</sup> OECD data, FDI flows. <https://data.oecd.org/fdi/fdi-flows.htm>. Accessed 8 Mar 2019

<sup>27</sup> World Bank national accounts data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.TRD.GNFS.ZS?locations=US-CN-1W&page=4> Accessed 8 Mar 2019.

<sup>28</sup> China Africa Research Initiative, Data: China-Africa Trade. Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-china-africa-trade> Accessed 8 Mar 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Chen, Wenjie, David Dollar, and Hwiwai Tang. "Why is China Investing in Africa? Evidence from the Firm Level." *The World Bank Economic Review*, 32(3), 2018, 610–632.

On the second broad point, while Chinese international investment is likely influenced by the state to a greater degree than the United States or other OECD actors, it is far from tightly coordinated. Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) account for a significant share of international economic activity, but private actors drive trade and investment to a much greater degree in most sectors, with SOEs (many of which maintain limited autonomy from the state) concentrated in natural resources but still not the only players. The United States has recently made efforts to shape economic actions in Africa<sup>30</sup>, but this state strategy is at the mercy of private actors and market forces. China is facing similar hurdles, and even its signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has seen no growth in investment over the past few years as private investors are slow to heed enticement from the state. As Ian Taylor points out, “the idea of the strategic use of economic relations by Beijing as a means of achieving power-politics objectives needs to be treated with caution. It is important not to overestimate the degree to which the Chinese state has been able to control and direct the evolution of its international economic relations.<sup>31</sup>” The broad takeaway from these two points is the Chinese international economic activities look more like a standard, market driven economy that a tightly controlled strategic initiative to achieve geopolitical influence. China clearly has desires to leverage market forces in their favor, but has much less ability to shape these forces than they are often given credit for.

US allies and neutral actors in the developing world, both in the Indo-Pacific and African regions, are generally facing capital scarce economic conditions and will look for foreign investors that meet their interests from any source. Chinese investors may have a comparative advantage with governments that are less accountable to their domestic populations, but US and OECD investment is still preferable in most cases. The Chinese state is unlikely to leverage their small advantage with disparate, unaccountable governments to build a cohesive economic grand strategy. While the US might be able to identify a few economic relationships that are strategically important to China and within our ability to influence, pushing back on these rare cases will be much less beneficial than providing better alternatives across the region, building our own economic relationships that can strengthen rather than undermine good governance practices.

### Abraham M. Denmark<sup>32</sup>

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11 March 2019

The middle powers of the Indo-Pacific are in an increasingly difficult strategic position. For years, they have been able to enjoy the benefits of China’s rising prosperity – many growing more prosperous themselves – while also enjoying the regional security benefits provided by the United States. Yet as competition between the United States and China intensifies, middle powers find themselves under pressure from both sides to choose one side over another. Such a development is not likely to be in the long-term interests of the United States, as there is the possibility that several Indo-Pacific nations – potentially including some U.S. allies – may find themselves leaning toward Beijing.

In a recent interview, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad stated “I’d side with rich China over fickle US.”<sup>33</sup> This sentiment has unfortunately been privately echoed by some officials from other Southeast Asian nations like Singapore and Indonesia: these countries may not like or trust China, but they are powerful, engaged, focus, and geographically close whereas the United States is perceived as easily distracted, disengaged, and distant. While they would likely prefer to maintain close relations with both China and the United States, such a decision-point is likely to draw closer as competition between Beijing and Washington grows more explicit.

For example, U.S. efforts to discourage its allies and partners from allowing Huawei to install hardware into their critical infrastructure significantly complicates allied efforts to hedge between China and the United States. This is especially true if China threatens broad

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<sup>30</sup> Landler, Mark and Edward Wong. “Bolton Outlines a Strategy for Africa That’s Really About Countering China.” New York Times. Dec 13, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/13/us/politics/john-bolton-africa-china.html?module=inline>

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, I. (2009). China’s new role in Africa. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> The views expressed in this submission are those of Mr. Denmark alone.

<sup>33</sup> Bhavan Jaipragas, “I’d side with rich China over fickle US: Malaysia’s Mahatir Mohamad,” *The South China Morning Post*, May 8, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/2189074/id-side-rich-china-over-fickle-us-malysias-mahathir>.

reprisals against middle powers that restrict Huawei's access to the market, and if the U.S. does not offer an effective and affordable alternative.

This single example is indicative of a broader dynamic in which China enjoys significant advantages over the United States in specific investment areas and aspects of the international market, due both to China's tailored approach and to a lack of a cogent American alternative. From infrastructure to trade and investment agreements, China's active approach to the Indo-Pacific's middle powers further exacerbates regional concerns about American distraction.

In areas where the U.S. has sought to compete directly with China – especially in the security sector – allies and partners have been more comfortable with hedging. This can be seen in the East and South China Seas, where U.S. allies and partners alike have generally welcomed U.S. involvement, despite lingering fears of entanglement. This phenomenon speaks to the region's continued interest in engaging the United States, and that the U.S. has opportunities to compete with China if it is able to sustain policy focus and tailor its policy initiatives to the interests of its allies and partners.

## Michael Fabey

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6 March 2019

Perhaps the most immediate and obvious American ally to show influence by China is Australia. The Chinese, along with other Asians, have had a historical connection with Australians for a long time. When I attended Uni in New South Wales in the early 1980s, Australians would play a game there called "spot the Aussie" because of the large number of Asian students enrolled in the college there.

Still, though, the Australians had fought by Americans' side in every major conflict, even in Asia. There has been a special bond between the two countries that has made Australia the staunchest of allies and arguably the most important security partner in the Pacific.

China's reemergence as a global power has come to threaten that special American-Aussie relationship. At first, the issue was trade. Australia and China have become major trade partners and Australians I know have likened their relationship with US to that of husband and wife and their relationship with China to that of husband and mistress. One for security and the other for trade.

If push came to shove, though, Australians would rather have sounder security. But more recent events have brought that into question. And while the query above asks about US maneuvers to protect its interests, recent moves by the administration have cast doubt about US commitment to those interests, which has caused Australia and some other regional nations, especially those with trading relationships with China, to reconsider the extent of their security ties with the US.

Japan, of course, enjoys special status in its relationship with the US. While Chinese forces have harassed the Japanese in some key areas, China lately has been careful to avoid any confrontation that could draw the US into physical conflict. As indicated in my earlier response, though, China may at some time consider it worth it's while to risk such a confrontation.

It is somewhat of a similar situation with Taiwan, as it appears only a matter of time before China "reclaims" the island formerly known as Formosa. There are many in the Pentagon who say it's there for China's taking: China could use aerial and missile bombardment to compel the ROC government to capitulate. Most strategists say the PLA lacks the capability and capacity for a successful invasion of Taiwan. It remains unlikely China will try to take it by military force anytime soon.

Other countries are expressing concern they could be used as pawns in confrontation between US and China. For example, a day after 52s bomber flew over a contested region this month in the Western Pacific, Filipino Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the Philippines-US Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) could result in the Philippines being forced into a war in the South China Sea.

I'm going to pass on Russian influence in the region, mostly because I sincerely doubt Russia will be able to exert enough physical force to have that great of an impact. What Russia does now is provide a jabbing force at the US through cyber attacks on the American elections and other actions on the other side of Atlantic of a more military nature. Both distract the US and weaken American efforts elsewhere, such as the Pacific. However, it's important to keep in mind China's long contentious history with Russia. They are destined to oppose one another, but for now have, again, joined forces to tackle the US.

I am surprised the question did not include Chinese influences in Latin America – particularly in Panama, where China controls the major port facilities on both gateways to the canal.

## David C. Gompert

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15 February 2019

East Asia will be the region of the most formidable and lasting great-power challenge to be faced by the U.S. As U.S. forces come under growing threat, as China becomes bolder in staking out its sovereignty claims, and as economic cooperation with China becomes more important to U.S. allies in the region, the U.S. position could erode. Certain allies – with the important exception of Japan – could hedge their bets. At the same time, to the extent China becomes what Bob Zoellick coined a “responsible stakeholder,” Chinese preeminence in East Asia might be less harmful. However, this hope has faded under Xi. Of course, the U.S. has the option of accepting a de facto Chinese sphere of influence in East Asia (as Britain ultimately accepted the U.S. hemi-sphere of influence). But East Asia is too crucial to the global and U.S. economies to allow it to fall under China's sway.

Europe, which dwarfs Russia by most measures that matter (GDP, population, health, technology, non-extractive industry, military spending, and sobriety), can withstand Russian threats and intrigue, especially if NATO is cohesive and credible. If there is vulnerability to Russia in Europe, it is among former SSRs, especially in not members of NATO.

The wild card in this deck of great-power regional challenges for the U.S. is, of course, the greater Middle East. Although there are no great-power candidates in the region, it is possible that it could become even more of an arena for geo-strategic rivalry than it has been (since Cold War days). Moreover, there are ample conflicts in the Middle East to create great dangers for and demands on the U.S. (anti-West extremism, Iran-Saudi confrontation, civil wars and internal instabilities, constricted energy supplies). It appears that Russia is far more likely than China to exploit and aggravate these conflicts and threaten U.S. interests in this region. Chinese Middle East interests -- mainly in stable energy supplies and preventing nuclear proliferation – are not incompatible with those of the U.S.

Russia does not have the means to exert great-power influence in Africa and Latin America. China's efforts to carve out preferential commodity access through aid and investment are a mixed blessing-curse: these regions can always use resources and revenues; but China's efforts to promote undemocratic development through unconditional aid are unwelcome. Again, the difficulties from China's emergence will remain predominantly where it is at loggerheads with the U.S.: East Asia

*In sum*, Russia presents greater dangers to U.S. interests in the short term but, with a fundamentally poor economy, will find it difficult to support a belligerent external strategy, especially if and as the U.S. compels it to pay a high price for that strategy. China has a sustainable external strategy, which is focused mainly on recovering its losses and its preeminence in East Asia. Though its global aspirations are not necessarily problematic, the importance of the region make China the biggest great-power challenge over the next decade.



## Dr. Justin V. Hastings

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28 February 2019

Southeast Asia is arguably the most important region for US-China competition, outside of Northeast Asia. The members of ASEAN as a block have long prided themselves on a foreign policy stance that is willing to engage with any country, and that is driven by consensus more than competition. The Southeast Asian stance vis-à-vis any US-China competition is that the region as a whole does not need to take sides, and indeed, because of disagreements between ASEAN members, the region *cannot* take sides. Any US measures taken to freeze out the possibility of engaging with China would not be taken well in the region. Among neutral nations and any weaker US allies in the region, any attempts by the US government to place too much pressure on them could also result in moves, even if temporary, toward China to minimize US leverage. With that said, Southeast Asia is also the region where China's expansion is likely to be felt most acutely, inasmuch as it has ongoing territorial disputes with several countries in the region, at the same time as same major Chinese inward investment (including as part of the Belt and Road Initiative). Even if Southeast Asian nations are able to avoid choosing between China and the US, they will be unable to avoid dealing with China's expansion, particularly its economic expansion and increasingly aggressive military posture in the South China Sea.

An important consideration is that much of China's expansion, and even behavior that could be considered part and parcel of great power competition, is driven by domestic factors that have little to do with the US or its allies. The initial Chinese PLAN drive into the South China Sea may have been as much due to competition within the Chinese government for influence as any aggressive push by the Chinese government overall (although it has turned into that). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is arguably driven as much by the need of Chinese companies to send excess capital and capacity abroad as it is by any particular Chinese great power competition imperative, and it is not unlikely that there are a large number of projects that have branded themselves as BRI projects simply to get into Xi Jinping's graces.

While fears of widespread debt traps are probably overblown (in no small part because Chinese companies would rather make a profit than be saddled with an underperforming white elephant infrastructure project), the means by which China has expanded its influence – offering economic aid and infrastructure projects without Western-style preconditions – has presented a conundrum for China's continued ability to expand. Its overtures were initially met with enthusiasm, particularly in Africa and Southeast Asia. But the realization that Chinese aid does come with conditions – Chinese workers, large amounts of debt, no help with maintenance costs once a project is finished, and leveraging of Chinese business for China's political ends – has tempered enthusiasm in many countries, and opened them up to overtures from other countries, not only the US, but also Asian US allies who do not carry the same baggage as the US or China (notably Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan to a certain extent). The question is ultimately whether the US is prepared to take advantage of Chinese missteps as China attempts to expand its influence. A viable US strategy would include more strategic economic investment in Africa and Southeast Asia in particular than has been the case in the past, a rethinking of the structure of US economic involvement in those regions, and a balanced approach that maximizes US influences without directly trying to minimize Chinese influence.

## Anthony Rinna

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4 March 2019

In Africa, the prime risk to US interests and policies regarding Chinese influence is the use of economic measures aimed at bringing countries in closer political alignment with Beijing. African states are increasingly finding Chinese investment and loans more attractive than American aid. Russia also has stakes in Africa, although its leverage is small compared with China. Nevertheless, the US should not fail to take note of Russian attempts to increase its influence on the African continent.

China's primary interest in Africa is securing access to natural resources. In order to build its influence in Africa, China relies on a combination of soft power and economic instruments. Although Africa has not been a notable recipient of Chinese foreign direct investment, Beijing has shown a particular willingness to invest in high-risk countries. Also, despite the growth of democracy across the

African continent, the Chinese government is less particular than the US over the type of government it deals with. Beijing is not especially concerned over whether or not a government in a given African country respects the rule of law or human rights. Thus, China may be able to curry favor with the political elites across the continent. The PRC's aid provisions to African nations potentially undermine the US's ability to exert influence across the continent. If African states are increasingly turning to China for aid and investment, there are fewer openings for US influence, either militarily (using Civil Affairs programs) or through OGA's. Strategically, China seeks to position itself in Africa as a fellow developing territory, yet one that has great investment capability and can provide "win-win" solutions for African states. This, combined with Chinese participation in peacekeeping and anti-piracy operations, means that China can use Africa as a staging ground for positioning Chinese power to challenge the US at the global level.

As for Russian activities in Africa, the Kremlin is also interested in the extraction of natural resources from the continent, although Moscow faces hurdles in cooperating with African states in a mutually beneficial way. The Russian Federation has been increasing both its investment and aid provisions to African states (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, which Russia considers to be more politically stable than the Sahara and Sahel regions). Nevertheless, Moscow is more risk averse than Beijing in this regard. Furthermore, compared with other countries (China, France, Italy, and the US), Russia lags far behind in economic influence in Africa, although some Russian energy companies such as Rosneft (a state-owned firm) and Lukoil have invested in Africa recently. Though Moscow's challenge to US interests in Africa appears to be minimal, some Russian analysts have noted that the African continent is a competitor for Russia in terms of exporting energy to Europe. With its own extensive energy leverage in Europe, the Russian Federation may try to penetrate deeper into the oil industry on the African continent in the name of cooperation and sharing expertise, with an actual goal of exerting greater influence over African energy enterprises so as to help maintain Russia's preeminent position on the European energy market.

## Dr. Derek M. Scissors

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18 February 2019

The CCP's primary goal is preservation of its rule. Even the cult of personality created by Xi does not change this. There are a number of related, secondary priorities. They feature protection of vital and potentially unstable global economic relationships and achievement of political primacy in East Asia. At this time, China sees a comprehensive global challenge to the US as infeasible to the point of being harmful with respect to its other objectives. Global competition is a tool to protect the Party and advance toward secondary objectives, not a bid for leadership.

By far the most important example of China's approach to global "competition" is its continued reliance on the dollar. While Beijing sought inclusion in the IMF's reserve currency group, the yuan has remained wedged between 6 and 7 to the dollar for a decade.<sup>34</sup> The PRC chases the stability of a (loose) dollar peg as if it were a much smaller economy. Challenging the US for reserve currency status, a possibility harped on by some, would require permitting money to flow freely out of the country. This terrifies the leadership.<sup>35</sup> And it is impossible to be a genuine global economic challenger, at least, to the US while remaining tethered monetarily.

One step down, the Indo-Pacific is still much too large to be assessed as a whole, still less with other regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. On the fringe, central Asia and South America are important to the PRC as replacement commodities supply lines if access is lost to major producers. South Asia and the Indian Ocean are a notch higher in the hierarchy. For this reason, Pakistan is the largest recipient of Chinese construction services and Bangladesh is in the top 10.<sup>36</sup>

East Asia south of Taiwan is another step higher. It is worth noting that the Asian economic center of gravity will continue to shift south as Northeast Asia, including China, continues to age. An economic breakthrough in India or the high-population ASEAN countries – Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines – would make those regions progressively more important. However, none is in sight at the

<sup>34</sup> <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/DEXCHUS/>

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314097816\\_Assessing\\_China's\\_recent\\_capital\\_outflows\\_policy\\_challenges\\_and\\_implications](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314097816_Assessing_China's_recent_capital_outflows_policy_challenges_and_implications)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/China-Tracker-January-2019.pdf>

moment.<sup>37</sup> This leaves Japan, the Korean peninsula, the Russian Federation, Taiwan, and the East China Sea as by far the most important area of the world for the PRC politically and economically (including the core role played by ports in coastal provinces).

The US should prepare for Northeast Asian economic decline.<sup>38</sup> If South Asia or Southeast Asia rises as a replacement economic engine, Sino-American competition for market access will be sharpened, for example in the area of standards. More likely, the large economies will merely do well. In this case, South and Southeast Asia will remain neither sources of critical imports nor China's top markets. The emphasis in Beijing will be on energy shipping and the associated political influence needed in the Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and possibly Indonesia.

The PRC's view of central Asia and South America extends in most ways to sub-Saharan Africa. The chief interest is commodities extraction, featuring energy but also metals (and food in South America). Political-security actions are largely in support of this. The US has no such interest and little reason to respond to China on these grounds. Long-term successful local development could also bring growing demand for goods and services and the capacity to support low-cost production and export. These might eventually become valuable to the US and a symbolic free trade agreement, endorsed in principle by the administration, would be worthwhile.<sup>39</sup>

## Andrew Small

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11 March 2019

In pushing back against Chinese economic statecraft and strategic investments, the United States needs to take an approach based on clear principles and conditions. Although broad-based U.S. calls for caution have been useful in drawing attention to the risks and threats associated with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), lack of precision in distinguishing between genuinely problematic investments, potentially beneficial investments, and more ambiguous cases will ultimately weaken both the persuasiveness of the U.S. argument and the credibility of its warnings to friends and allies. As the United States and its partners start mobilizing finance behind alternative infrastructure, energy and digital options to the BRI, there is also a risk that resources will be wasted in this effort unless priorities are very clearly defined and the focus is placed on the quality of the overall offer from the advanced industrial democracies rather than a reactive approach.

There are several criteria that the United States might consider when evaluating when and how pushback against Chinese investments is warranted.

The **first category** of cases is that of direct and verifiable threats to U.S. security interests resulting from Chinese investments in allied countries and close partners, which will typically result either from the acquisition of advanced technologies or stakes in strategic infrastructure. While many U.S. partners have tightened their own investment screening processes in recent years, the ongoing – and often confused – debate over the involvement of Chinese companies in 5G spectrum auctions and continued cases of Chinese investments in sensitive economic sectors illustrate how much work is needed to shore up a common position among even the closest U.S. allies. Given that the parameters of the US position are themselves in flux, with the FIRRMA pilot programs and pending executive orders in areas such as telecoms, this will necessarily be a rolling process. Nonetheless, at this stage the aim should be to make progress in a couple of principal areas.

The first is to have as comprehensive and granular a picture as possible of the likely implications of current or potential Chinese investments for the U.S. alliance system. This would require undertaking a detailed review of Chinese involvement in strategic infrastructure, ranging from ports to telecoms, with a particular focus on the implications for interoperability, forward deployments, intelligence-sharing, cyber-threats, and defense-industrial supply chains. These assessments, undertaken in consultation with allies and through institutions such as NATO, would identify security risks for the countries in question and to various forms of military and intelligence cooperation with the United States. Precision about the nature of these risks would not only provide strong grounds for

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/India-Chooses-Economic-Mediocrity.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/rethinking-the-asian-century>

<sup>39</sup> <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2018/july/statement-ustr-robort-lighthizer-0>

the exclusion of Chinese investments in these areas but would also provide scope for U.S. partners to determine appropriate limitations to the investments that remain consistent with alliance obligations and expectations.

Secondly, the United States would benefit from a deepened effort to coordinate between key states on export controls and China's access to advanced technologies, whether through trade, investment, research partnerships, or access by individual Chinese researchers, with particular emphasis being needed on dealing with countries where the processes in these areas are inadequate or poorly aligned. While U.S. partners may choose to make different trade-offs on issues such as loss of intellectual property versus access to the Chinese market, the goal should be to achieve a common, evidence-based set of assessments on the national security implications of China's access to emerging and foundational technologies, which is both a more expansive and a more dynamic view of security risks than many countries currently adopt. Efforts of this sort have already been undertaken with several U.S. allies, such as the Five Eyes, but the efficacy of U.S. policy will ultimately depend on achieving a deeper and wider political consensus on this issue, from Stockholm to Tel Aviv to Singapore.

Drawing hard lines around this category – investments that constitute a direct threat to the United States, the effective functioning of the alliance system, or the capacity of the United States and its friends to maintain a military edge – would set a baseline for U.S. partners and allies, defining the forms of investment are not just “undesirable” or “inadvisable” but that would have direct ramifications for future security cooperation with the United States. In the absence of this clarity, there is a real risk that U.S. allies will discount warnings, treat the U.S. pushback as being directed at their broader economic relationship with China, and look to resist and differentiate their own position.

The **second category** of cases are those where countries' perceptions of economic dependency on China, or of Chinese capacity for economic coercion, risks affecting their political and security choices in ways that are detrimental to U.S. interests. While it is possible to draw up a set of general indicators and trends – China's share of debt, trade and investment volumes, the sustainability of debts, the availability of substitutes in sectors where Chinese imports or exports play a critical role, and so on – any assessment of “dependency” will depend as much on elite and public perceptions as on hard economic facts. There are also widely differing beliefs (and myths) about what political and security stances are consistent with the maintenance of normal economic relations with China. In these cases, rather than “pushback” as such, the main U.S. goal should be to ensure that states are resilient enough to determine their choices without Chinese coercion. This would mean that they have good alternative options for finance, investment, and trade; that governments, publics, journalists, and opposition parties have a well-informed view of any risks as they develop, and the capacity and expertise to deal with China effectively; and that countries have an escape route if they find themselves in trouble. There have been a number of instances, for involving both autocratic and democratic governments, where the experience of a dependent relationship on China has had a salutary effect and resulted in countries reorienting their strategic direction. Whether these changes came through the ballot box or through a decision by the government itself, they were rooted in public discontent about the imbalanced relationship that these countries found themselves in with China. Cases such as Myanmar, Sri Lanka and the Maldives demonstrate the different forms in which dependency can take, and the very different outcomes and options they faced as they sought to reduce it. They also illustrate the fact that dependency on China is likely to be a by-product of other political choices that countries make, which result in their being denied access to other sources of investment and finance. As these cases show, while it is preferable to head off the risks of a dependent relationship before it develops, leaving countries to face up to the ramifications of their decisions can sometimes be the best course of action, as long as they continue to have ready opportunities to reverse them.

The **third category** of cases are those where specific Chinese investments in states that are **not** close US partners or allies pose risks to U.S. security interests. In these instances, the United States is likely to have to work with a broad coalition of countries to incentivize alternative choices: political pressure, financial incentives, public persuasion, and other means. These are the cases that are likely to be costliest in resource commitments – whether economic subsidies and aid or diplomatic attention and political capital – especially when dealing with non-bankable projects that China is willing to support. As a result, the United States and its partners will need to reach a clear collective assessment on which projects or extensions of Chinese economic presence are likely to pose a high priority risk, how best to pre-empt them, and what division of labor among partners is required. This is likely to involve not only include the like-minded group – Japan, India, Australia, the European Union and its member states, Canada and others – but in some instances may include Gulf States, as a couple of recent examples attest. In both these cases and cases where there is a risk of economic dependency, the less costly interventions are likely to be the early ones, before China has established and consolidated its presence in critical sectors rather than late in the decision-making process. While there are good examples of successful pushback stories in, for instance, decisions around major ports – such as in Bangladesh – the expansion of Chinese presence in telecoms networks in both developing countries

and advanced economies demonstrates how much more difficult the job is when playing catch-up.

The **fourth category** are the cases where Chinese investments are actually (or at least potentially) beneficial for the countries themselves and for U.S. security objectives. Beijing's willingness to take on heightened political, financial and security risks with its investments means that – in certain cases – it is taking on commitments in fragile and failing states that have dire need of outside support. While there will certainly be investments in these states that give cause for concern, it would be perverse to push back against Chinese projects that may – if they succeed – provide essential jobs, tax revenue and economic activity in countries that have few outside investors and otherwise require significant commitments of U.S. and allied resources. Even if the United States is no longer as willing to coordinate economic initiatives with China in countries such as Afghanistan, allies and partners' efforts to work with China on ensuring that investments adhere to certain standards and serve shared political objectives should be encouraged. The impact of various Chinese projects will vary considerably depending on the macroeconomic picture in these countries, and the political and security conditions that underpin it: the World Bank's BRI appraisal notes that certain Chinese investments may simultaneously provide the best prospects for augmenting countries' economic growth and the greatest risk of placing them in debt distress. While there may be examples where the United States can afford to be sanguine about the failure of Chinese projects, there are also cases where the best outcome will be that they proceed effectively.

The **fifth category** of cases is by far the largest: Chinese investments that embody both the virtues and flaws of the existing BRI model without having a clear-cut impact on U.S. security, where any overall assessment – even if it tilts negative – has to be cognizant of its appeal. On the one hand, corruption, lack of transparency, lack of job generation or opportunities for local companies, high interest rates, diminished environmental standards, and – in areas such as surveillance and internet restrictions – alignment with China's own authoritarian practices. On the other hand, speed of implementation and decision-making, low cost, increasingly attractive technology standards, the availability of significant volumes of finance, and politicized projects that are timed to electoral cycles or directed to specific constituencies. For some politicians and officials, the “negatives” – such as corruption and the importing of elements of China's authoritarian model – are evidently also part of the appeal.

Whether or not this model serves China's interests is currently a question in the balance. While the initial enthusiasm of a number of governments resulted in a flurry of BRI projects, recent elections have brought to power a number of opposition critics who have questioned the BRI model and are looking to rebalance their economic situation away from China. In this sense, the most effective pushback is coming from governments such as Malaysia and the Maldives that have experienced excessive doses of the BRI's worst features and are now seeking to renegotiate the terms. Equally notable is a case such as Pakistan, where – albeit more discreetly – there is also a clear case of buyer's remorse in what is perhaps the closest Chinese partner. None of these governments intends to give up their economic relationship with China, and many BRI packages will continue on a revised basis or on a diminished scale from their early, loftier goals. But in each instance, BRI investments have had at best an ambivalent impact on China's capacity to extend its influence, and have arguably served to weaken China's political standing. Notably, in all of these cases, China owns the failure and is being held culpable – which may not have been true if U.S. involvement had been more heavy-handed. The most valuable form of support extended by the United States and its partners has been to provide the countries that need it with financial breathing room in the election aftermath, and – in cases such as the Maldives – even a “democratic dividend” of the sort that was conspicuously absent after Rajapaksa's defeat in Sri Lanka. The heightened scrutiny on the BRI has also raised the political costs for China to take an intransigent position in negotiations on debt and contracts.

In this category of cases, the U.S. aims should be twofold. The first is to help strengthen countries' capacities and access to information so that they are well-informed about the choices they are making, project-by-project, whether it comes to the actors they are dealing with on the Chinese side or their options in contract negotiations. Many governments continue to lack not only the requisite expertise on China-related questions but also more basic capability for long-term economic planning and project management, while opposition parties and journalists often lack the material they need to scrutinize deals effectively. Even if, after appropriate scrutiny, governments decide to pursue some of these ambiguously beneficial Chinese deals, they should at least be doing so under conditions where they can obtain the best terms possible and with full clarity about what standards they can demand, the result of which should be lower economic and political risk associated with the projects. The second is for the United States to work with partners, allies, multilateral development banks and international financial institutions to ensure that the alternative offer available to countries is as attractive and comprehensive as possible – access to finance, technology, trade, investment, and security relationships that provide more economic and political value over time than the model that China is extending. There has certainly been progress in this regard, particularly through efforts by the United States and its partners to provide new sources of infrastructure finance and investment. But it is not yet

clear that the whole package that the advanced industrial democracies are putting on the table is sufficiently compelling to make the choice a clear one. Effective competition with China will require not just country-by-country deals and packages but a broader architecture that states can buy into in areas ranging from trade to data, which commands political support. The fact that BRI pushback remains a firefighting effort is a clear demonstration that this architecture is not currently in place.

## Yun Sun

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11 March 2019

US allies and neutral nations are first faced with a question of choice: which great power do they identify and/or cooperate with? Most of them would like to be on their own side. Nevertheless, they feel the pressure to choose.

## Dr. Philip Fei-Ling Wang

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22 February 2019

The United States, its allies and neutral nations in the Indo-Pacific and Africa are under increasingly strong, multi-dimensional, concerted, and sophisticated pressure from the rising power of China, the PRC (People's Republic of China). The PRC has a consistent strategy guiding its diplomatic activities and its military buildup to resist, reduce, and replace (Three-R) the presence of the United States in this vast region. Such an effort started when the PRC was created in October 1949 and has remained a key element and top objective of the Chinese foreign policy ever since. Given the nature of the PRC government, a one-party dictatorship by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the United States, as the leader of the post-World War II and the post-Cold War international order and the anchor of collective security arrangement in Western Pacific, is necessarily the political nemeses and strategic opponent of the CCP-PRC state. Only a political and normative change in Beijing, an American retreat from the region, or an effective American counter-effort may mitigate that PRC pressure in the region.

Shaped by its own power calculation and the pressing issue of the day, the PRC challenge to the United States in the Indo-Pacific and Africa region historically went through several stages, with often colorful and rather misinforming and misleading slogans and labels. There was a direct war with the U.S. in Korea (1950-53), an indirect war with the U.S. in Indochina (early-1960s to mid-1970s), numerous mini-crisis involving the U.S. in the East China Sea particularly in the Taiwan Strait, and a patient and persistent effort to game the U.S.-led world trade system. Lately, the PRC has launched more assertive and aggressive moves for power and influence: the construction and militarization of several islands in the South China Sea; the multidimensional effort to subjugate Taiwan; the territorial clashes with Japan and other U.S. allies; the support to North Korea; the massive buildup of a blue water navy, the "grand external propaganda" campaign, and the ambitious (but awkwardly named) scheme of "One Belt One Road" of expanding influence through trade and investment in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. The growing Chinese economy especially the staggering stockpile of hard currency reserves (chiefly earned from the U.S.), compounded by the extraordinarily large state extraction, have enriched the PRC state and given Beijing unprecedented confidence and resources to push out in just about all directions, from old-fashioned territorial expansion to racing to lead new technologies in AI, space, energy, bioengineering, and telecommunication standard.

This lasting and profound challenge with existential implications is as tragic as it is remarkable in that there is in fact little real conflict and contention between the Chinese people and the peoples of the United States and its allies, other than some lingering territorial disputes and common economic frictions that can all be peacefully settled through honest negotiation and arbitration. Yet, the structural and normative differences between the CCP-PRC regime and the United States has determined that a fundamental Sino-American rivalry both inevitable and unavoidable. To the rulers in Beijing, its Three-R policy against the United States is a long struggle for survival and is also required for its historical destiny of reordering Western Pacific and



then the whole world. For the United States, the challenge of the rising PRC power threatens to undermine and replace the American leadership and power, and ultimately endangers the security of the American way of life. The Indo-Pacific region is the first major stage for the PRC-USA rivalry; it is also likely a main theater for some of the decisive fights of that rivalry.

Comparatively speaking, the role of Russia in Indo-Pacific and Africa is decidedly less significant right now. Russia has become just “another one” challenger to the U.S. leadership in the region but with very limited actual influence. Other than being Beijing’s comrade-in-name, Moscow mostly helps the PRC by selling (at high, almost extortion price though) some military technology to the Chinese and by coordinating with Beijing on certain diplomatic moves. The Chinese ruling elite now increasingly despises and dismisses the Russians and the Russians are fully aware of that. Like the last Sino-Russian (Soviet) Alliance in the 1950s, the current Beijing-Moscow quasi-alliance is a typical marriage-of-convenience that can be easily disrupted and disabled.

The United States still enjoys solid position of forward deployment, extensive and stable alliance networks, and great advantages in fending off the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific and Africa. To see that challenge peacefully managed, if not diminished, however, the United States clearly needs to do more. Beyond what the U.S. already has and has already been doing since the previous administrations in the Indo-Pacific and Africa, the following ideas may worth consideration and implementation: Like in many zero-sum or near zero-sum games of international political competition, the best defense often is offense. The United States should not limit itself to only defending the Indo-Pacific and Africa against the PRC, play by play. Rather, one ounce of American effort in numerous “other” areas will yield many pounds of punch in this region. Some effective measures would include: To limit China’s ultra-lucrative access to the American market; To control PRC’s critical acquisition of American (and Western) technology; To put Beijing constantly on defense about its political legitimacy and stability at home; To impose tit-for-tat penalties to deter the outrageous CCP activists and activities so to level the playfield; To reconsider the obsolete and harmful policies such as *United States–Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992* and *United States–Macau Policy Act of 1999*; And to entrap the “excess” Chinese power in remote and less meaningful places and projects. ... Those ideas and actions require careful coordination and execution but are largely inexpensive and easy to do, often do not involve the untidier legislative process. In fact, given the now quite strong bi-partisan awareness of the PRC challenge in the nation and on the Capitol Hill, those measures that may need legislative actions would not cost much political capital, if any at all.

Ali Wyne<sup>40</sup>

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8 March 2019

***U.S.-China Competition in the Asia-Pacific***

There is little evidence to suggest that America’s partners and allies in the Asia-Pacific wish to “choose” between Washington or Beijing, even those that have the greatest reservations about China’s regional ambitions. Instead, they seem determined to pursue for as long as possible a balancing act that they have been undertaking for the past decade or so: strengthening their diplomatic and military ties with the United States while expanding their trading and investment ties with China. If Washington exhorts them to make a choice, it may end up undercutting its long-term position in the Asia-Pacific: to China’s neighbors, after all, China is a geographical fixture and, despite its cooling growth rate, an economic fulcrum; the United States is a distant superpower and, despite its extant margin of preeminence, an inconsistent presence. One of the chief figures behind the Obama administration’s much-discussed rebalance, Kurt Campbell, laments that Washington “often pursues its Asia strategy in fits and starts, exhibiting an accordion-like tendency to surge into the region and then retreat as concerns elsewhere drain away American attention.”<sup>41</sup>

The credibility of America’s professed commitment to the Asia-Pacific diminishes with each such cycle of surging and retreating; the region’s evolution, however, does not stop. The founding father of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, observed that “Americans seem to think that Asia is like a movie and that [they] can freeze developments out here whenever the [United States] becomes intensely involved

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<sup>40</sup> The views expressed in this submission are solely those of Mr. Wyne; they do not reflect those of the RAND Corporation or any of its other employees.

<sup>41</sup> Kurt M. Campbell, *The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia* (New York: Twelve, 2016): p. 138.

elsewhere in the world.”<sup>42</sup> Beyond affording China more room to translate its economic growth into strategic heft, U.S. vacillation compels China’s neighbors to take measures that insulate their fortunes from the vagaries of U.S. foreign policy; the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Evan Feigenbaum, a prominent architect of the George W. Bush administration’s policy towards the Asia-Pacific, warns that “when Washington absents itself (or merely shows disinterest in the region’s concerns), Asians will grope for their own solutions” (emphasis his).<sup>43</sup> The aftermath of America’s withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership offers a recent illustration: the 11 remaining parties to the agreement proceeded with negotiations, ultimately signing the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Feigenbaum observes that “for all their tensions with one another, forging agreement on pan-Asian rules beats both ‘Chinese’ rules and no rules.”

Though the United States has long maintained an inconsistent disposition towards the Asia-Pacific, its policy towards China has changed significantly in recent years: unlike its predecessor, the Trump administration regards Beijing not as a challenging partner, but as a security threat. While the Obama administration grew increasingly frustrated by China’s theft of intellectual property and espionage for commercial gain, it largely embraced the proposition that economic interdependence between the two countries was a source of stability in their relations. The Trump administration, by contrast, has forcefully challenged that judgment, arguing that the United States was mistaken to support China’s accession to the World Trade Organization and facilitate the economic revival of what has become its principal competitor. Its national security strategy warns that “China is using economic inducements and penalties,” among other instruments, “to persuade other states to heed its political and security agenda. China’s infrastructure investments and trade strategies reinforce its geopolitical aspirations.”<sup>44</sup> Citing Beijing’s technological aspirations as a threat to U.S. national security, the administration has imposed tariffs of 25 percent on \$250 billion worth of Chinese exports, announced that it will impose tariffs of ten percent on an additional \$300 billion of Chinese goods starting in December, and attempted to restrict high-tech exports to major companies such as Fujian Jinhua and Huawei.

It is true, of course, that China had been growing its economic self-sufficiency well before the Trump administration took office. In the aftermath of the 1997-98 Asian-Pacific currency crisis and especially the global financial crisis a decade later, it judged the United States to be an unreliable steward of the world economy, and it adjusted accordingly; where China’s exports to the United States were equivalent to nine percent of its GDP in 2007, that figure stood at just four percent in 2017.<sup>45</sup>

Up until recently, though, there was little evidence that China sought to develop greater autonomy as an alternative to greater interdependence; rather, it appeared set on increasing both. Now, however, in light of the Trump administration’s commitment to readjusting economic ties between the two countries, it appears to have concluded that Washington regards trade entanglement less as an instrument for maintaining stable bilateral ties than for constricting China’s resurgence. As such, what had, until recently, been a gradual Chinese effort to reduce its reliance on the U.S. economy may well accelerate significantly. China is tasked with absorbing the short-term pain of decoupling en route to becoming more competitive over the long run. That charge entails not only rerouting to other countries the exports it has thus far been sending to the United States; it also involves finding alternative providers of advanced technology and concurrently growing an indigenous capacity for advanced manufacturing.

Because the United States is the top destination for Chinese exports and, as the near-death of telecommunications giant ZTE affirms, the principal supplier of high-tech inputs to China, finding a substitute for Washington will not be easy. The Trump administration’s policy could accrue strategic dividends if it induces partners and allies to follow suit and nurtures the formation of a broad-based coalition to counter China’s economic practices; a recent analysis observes that the country’s leadership fears “a potential coordinated assault by the Trump administration, [the European Union], and Japan on their unique model of Chinese ‘state capitalism’ that has been integral to the country’s economic success over the past 40 years.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Graham Allison, Robert D. Blackwill, and Ali Wyne, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master’s Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013): p. 28

<sup>43</sup> <https://macropolo.org/analysis/reluctant-stakeholder-why-chinas-highly-strategic-brand-of-revisionism-is-more-challenging-than-washington-thinks/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/c4df31cc-4d26-11e8-97e4-13afc22d86d4>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/ee361e2e-b283-11e8-8d14-6f049d06439c>. The Chinese international relations scholar Yan Xuetong contends that “the core of competition between China and the United States will be to see who has more high-quality friends.” See “How China Can Defeat America,” *New York Times* (November 21, 2011).

The evidence thus far, however, suggests that such a coalition is unlikely to form. Japan, China, and South Korea are accelerating talks on a free-trade agreement (FTA), and negotiations over the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership—a 16-country arrangement that excludes the United States and accounts for some 30 percent of gross world product—are gaining momentum. All told, China has “17 FTAs with 25 countries and regions, and is in talks over 12 new or upgraded FTA deals.”<sup>47</sup> Beijing is also gaining economic leverage abroad through BRI, though that undertaking has started to experience growing pushback.

In addition, while the Trump administration’s strategy may well cause short-term economic headaches for China, it is unlikely to deal a long-term setback; China presently occupies a commanding position in global supply chains, accounting for nearly 35 percent of clothing exports and over 32 percent of office and telecommunications equipment exports last year.<sup>48</sup> Its GDP, meanwhile, was over three-fifths as large as America’s in 2017, roughly twice as high a proportion as in 2008.<sup>49</sup> China is also expected to account for roughly 35 percent of global growth between 2017 and 2019.<sup>50</sup> In brief, Beijing is unlikely to wither in the face of tariffs. Indeed, concludes Beijing-based economics correspondent Michael Schuman, the Trump administration’s course of unilateral protectionism has only “reinforced the critical importance of [its] quest for greater independence....China is content to go its own way on its own terms.”<sup>51</sup>

The worst-case scenario from Washington’s perspective would be one in which it confronts, without its European and Asian partners and allies, a China whose economy is not only significantly larger but also more resilient; Jeffrey Bader, President Obama’s principal China advisor between 2009 and 2011, made this point powerfully in a recent policy brief:

- Americans need to understand that if we go down the road of disengagement from China in pursuit of unbridled competition, it will not be a repetition of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, when the United States was joined by a phalanx of Western and democratic countries determined to join us in isolating the [Soviet Union]. [...] ...the rest of the world, like us, is deeply entangled with China economically and in other ways. Even those most wary of Beijing, like Japan, India, and Australia, will not risk economic ties with China nor join in a perverse struggle to re-erect the “bamboo curtain,” this time by the West. We will be on our own.<sup>52</sup>

## Lieutenant Colonel Maciej Zaborowski<sup>53</sup>

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11 March 2019

### *Submission One*

Chinese ambitions of having a ‘great power’ status focus on surpassing the US and becoming the leading global power. China’s ‘Great Rejuvenation’ is much more than just a plan to provide connectivity and improve the economy and wealth of the Chinese people. Rather, it should be considered as the largest ever, global, man-invented project which creates conditions to surpass potential adversaries in any possible domain, through mostly economic and political means (but who can guarantee that once having the economic dominance in place, future Chinese leadership would not consider use of military power to do thy bidding?). President Xi Jinping’s ideas of restoration of Chinese greatness and re-making China into the ‘Country of the Middle’ should breed deep and multivector oriented thinking and concerns among the US and Western world.

In pursuit of global goals, China became one of the largest global investors (in some cases even the largest) and one of the largest importers of natural resources. What makes Chinese offers attractive, especially to smaller and weaker countries/economies, is the fact that China usually offers a lot, but asks for little in return initially.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/2165260/china-japan-and-south-korea-aim-speed-talks-free-trade>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/03e4f016-aa9a-11e8-94bd-cba20d67390c>

<sup>49</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=US-CN>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/the-worlds-biggest-economies-in-2018/>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.bloombergquint.com/opinion/china-s-far-from-desperate-to-make-a-trade-deal-with-trump>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/research/u-s-china-relations-is-it-time-to-end-the-engagement/>

<sup>53</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Zaborowski contributed two submissions of relevance to this question.

While not preferring military confrontation and actually avoiding it at the moment, China chose diplomacy, economy and information as the main arenas of their actions. Chinese diplomatic successes could be highlighted by growing number of countries abandoning Chinese adversaries (i.e. diminished international support to Taiwan) and shifting to support Beijing's narratives. To secure its economic position and actions, China tries to create a new global financial system, as an alternative to the existing World Banking System. At the same time, China is more than eager to pursue with their debt trap scenarios, offering huge resources or investments to smaller and weaker states. The cost is a loss of sovereignty of territories important to Chinese global plans.

Unlike China, Russia has a different perception on what it means to be a great power. Russian ambitions do not aim at establishing a physical presence all around the globe. Instead, the Kremlin perceives its status of great power as a set of capacities/abilities to influence a situation, influence developments, or as an ability to make things happen or not happen, preferably wherever and whenever Moscow wills so. From this perspective, Russian hard power assets are meant to demonstrate overwhelming magnitude of military capabilities (regardless whether real or fake ones), establish A2AD and provide projection of power good enough to execute aggressive Russian actions.

Russia's policies and strategies are, therefore, focused on countering the US and NATO's presence and supremacy. Moscow's primary focus remains on Europe and Europe's neighborhood at the moment, and only to some extent in other places where Russian goals could be achieved with relatively little efforts and resources.

However, new, potentially threatening developments from a US perspective have occurred over the last several years. Russia and China, traditionally opposed to each other (rifts between the two countries peaked in 1969, during war in Ussuria, and never truly settled since then), have seemingly entered into a 'honeymoon' relationship, or so called 'marriage of convenience' recently. China, benefiting throughout the decades from the US support and sponsorship, has silently but persistently worked hard on establishing broad economic capabilities, finally announcing the will to surpass the US by 2049. Chinese investments have spread around the globe rapidly, with an intent to establish new 'Silk Roads' across the land and sea and re-make China into the Country of the Middle. On the other hand, Russian leadership needs money and offers an abundance of natural energy resources, which pre-sets the stage for Russia-China relations. In this duo, China may offer the money, which is much needed in Moscow, and at the same time Russia may in return allow some more bold Chinese actions pushing the Belt and Road Initiative through areas contested in the past. Russia might even consider joining some of these Chinese projects. This relationship seems to continue deepening as China and Russia are being cornered by U.S. policies (e.g., sanctions, economic conflicts, military presence, etc.) and, therefore, share a common adversary – the US. Consequences of a merge of Russian resources and Chinese emerging economy and technology should be very attentively monitored, analyzed and assessed. Furthermore, strategies to counter Chinese grand long-term strategies, as well as Russian 'fait accompli' strategies, need to be searched for immediately.

### ***Submission Two***

Due to diverse nature and organic differences between Chinese and Russian ways of thinking, ambitions and behaviors, the US will have to develop strategies that allow it to properly address each one separately but also allow it to cope with potential results of tightening Chinese-Russian collaboration.

Russian opportunism requires pragmatic, straight to the point and decisive responses, since strength and power are the only means that Russia respects. It is not about escalation, but it is about being consistent and being able and ready to respond to Russian actions. It is not about disrespect or disregard, but it is about respect to thy adversary and realization to whom we are talking to. Regardless of how much the West would like to trust Russian leaders and believe in a Russia that is reliable, cooperative and willing to follow common rules and laws, Russians will simply remain who they are and will sooner or later reach to their native, generic attitudes and ways of thinking. Russia not only declares but also pursues the notion of countering the US. Putin's Russia will most likely continue pursuing an old Bolshevik method of putting the enemies to a test: "push the enemy with a bayonet. If it goes in easily, keep on pushing. If it meets steel, pull back and try another spot." Therefore, Russia's behavior under Putin will continue to push the bayonet, be it in Georgia (2008), be it in Ukraine (2014 and on), be it violations of International Air Space, be it kidnappings (just like the kidnapping of an Estonian officer in 2015), be it aggressive cyber-attacks, or be it assassinations of those inconvenient to Putin (Skripal, Litvineko, and many others). This strategy towards Russia requires maintaining good and mutually beneficial relationships with allies, especially those having history and experience with Russia. Unique, first hand experiences and deep understanding of Russian ways of

thinking and behavior seem crucial in not only countering the Russian behavior, but also shaping it.

Chinese long-term and vast strategies, on the other hand, require significantly different approaches. Beijing investments and money are much welcome by governments around the world. But this willingness not always comes with proper understanding of the potential consequences of falling into the Chinese debt trap (examples of Sri Lanka, Malaysia or Venezuela). Contrary to that, however, the populace of countries targeted by China seem to have much more awareness and concerns about crawling, silent Chinese expansion, what seems especially apparent in Central Asian States. Citizens of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan present even some amount sinophobia and call for their governments to not allow untamed 'Chinese invasion'. From this perspective, the US could focus on addressing governments willing to easily accept Chinese money and educate them about dangers hiding behind the debt trap. Furthermore, US-owned or US-led tailored investment projects could provide alternatives to Beijing's offers. At the same time, the natural reluctance among populaces towards China should be highlighted, supported and promoted. Such a comprehensive approach would even further benefit from mature, enduring and responsible alliances. Alliances ready to stand together and still against waves of Chinese expansions, whenever needed.

Another important aspect of addressing Chinese strategies and actions hides behind understanding the complexity and vastness of the Great Rejuvenation and all corresponding projects. Beijing's designed plan is so vast and multi-vectored and encompass every part of our globe, and attempt to extract the US. The plan comes with so many routes, paths and interdependencies, that focusing just on Asia and Indo-Pacific is unlikely to stop it anymore. Proper understanding of all connectivity, interdependencies and dynamics between China and each of the states and regions connecting to Beijing is needed for there to be any hope of developing the policies and mechanisms needed to cope with a China-centered scenario of the future. From this perspective, Eastern, South-Eastern and Southern European allies should play some crucial roles in US strategies to counter Chinese expansion. The US can still enjoy very positive attitudes, trust, and 'battle hardened' friendships within the territories between the Mediterranean, Black, and Baltic seas. All the countries squeezed between growing German power and reemerging Russian power will need strong and reliable allies in order to preserve their sovereignties and independence. In return, once their independencies prevail and economies build up to allow them to become better and stronger partners, they will more than willingly repay with decisive and unbroken support to oppose any malign or trickery actions. However, if left alone or not supported in their contemporary struggles, those smaller and weaker countries will have no choice but to bend the knee to new hegemonies or align with emerging powers. Therefore, it is in the US's best interests to not neglect those relationships, since they will play a significant role in either balancing the future Chinese-European links or contributing and supporting those links.

## Subject Matter Expert Biographies

### Dr. David T. Burbach

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Dr. David T. Burbach is an Associate Professor of National Security Affairs at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Dr. Burbach earned a doctorate in political science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and is a graduate of Pomona College. He has a background in international security and U.S. foreign policy. At the Naval War College, Dr. Burbach has focused on the teaching of national strategy and force planning, regional security in Africa and Europe, and issues with significant technical aspects such as space and cyber. He has published on the future of conflict in Africa as well as the domestic politics of U.S. foreign policy and civil-military relations. Prior to coming to the Naval War College, Dr. Burbach taught at the U.S. Army's School of Advanced Military Studies, and has also worked for the RAND Corporation and several technology start-ups.

### Dr. Ryan Burke

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Dr. Ryan Burke is an Associate Professor and Curriculum Director in the Department of Military & Strategic Studies at the U.S. Air Force Academy. As Curriculum Director, Dr. Burke designs and implements the academic curriculum of instruction for 22 Military & Strategic Studies courses taught to over 1,500 students per year. Ryan received his USAFA appointment after completing a Department of Defense-funded post-doctoral research fellowship in the University of Delaware's Joseph R. Biden School of Public Policy and Administration. He also earned his Ph.D. from the Biden School where – in addition to teaching undergraduate public policy courses – he was awarded the prestigious University Dissertation Fellowship during his final year of study. Ryan's research emphasizes military and defense policy across the spectrum of conflict. He has authored multiple monographs focused on defense policy; peer-reviewed journal articles; book chapters; conference papers, and winning essays in national competitions. He is also the chief editor of *Military Strategy, Joint Operations, and Airpower: An Introduction* (Georgetown University Press, 2018) and is an opinion contributor to *The Hill* on defense and military policy matters. Ryan's research has been featured on TV and in print with Fox News, NBC, ABC, Business Insider, USA Today, *The Hill*, the Modern War Institute, and more. He has been an invited consultant in educational steering groups nationwide, serves as a peer-reviewer for multiple journals, and regularly presents at national conferences. Prior to his academic pursuits, Ryan was a U.S. Marine Corps officer where he served as a platoon commander, operations officer, and company commander during his fleet tour. He then served as the Deputy Marine Officer Instructor at the University of Pennsylvania's Naval ROTC unit. After leaving the Marines, he worked as a Senior Consultant and Logistics Analyst for Booz Allen Hamilton supporting Department of Defense projects in the Pentagon and with the Marine Corps Combat Development Command. He earned his bachelor's from Penn State University – where he attended on a Marine-Option Naval ROTC scholarship – and his master's from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia prior to earning his doctorate at the University of Delaware.

### Dean Cheng

Senior Research Fellow, Asian Studies Center, Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy  
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Dean Cheng brings detailed knowledge of China's military and space capabilities to bear as The Heritage Foundation's research fellow on Chinese political and security affairs. He specializes in China's military and foreign policy, in particular its relationship with the rest of Asia and with the United States. Cheng has written



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## Major Christopher Culver

Assistant Professor, Political Science (US Air Force Academy)



Major Christopher Culver is an assistant professor of political science at the United States Air Force Academy. He teaches international political economy, international security studies, and beginning Chinese language courses. He is proficient in Chinese, and his research interests include international political economy, remittances, authoritarian governments, development, and Chinese economic activities in Africa. Major Culver earned a dual-title PhD in political science and African studies as well as an MA in political science from the Pennsylvania State University, a Masters of Public Policy degree from the Harvard Kennedy School, and was a distinguished graduate and Truman Scholar from USAFA's class of 2006. After graduation, he attended Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training. Upon completion of UPT, he flew MQ-1B Predators at Creech AFB, and then became an instructor at the MQ-1 formal training unit at Holloman AFB. He has flown over 1,000 hours in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn.

## Abraham M. Denmark

Director, Asia Program (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars)



Abraham M. Denmark is Director of the Asia Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, which conducts independent research and hosts frank dialogues to develop actionable ideas for Congress, the Administration, and the broader policy community on issues related to the Asia-Pacific. He also holds a joint appointment as a Senior Fellow at the Wilson Center's Kissinger Institute on China and the United States. Prior to joining the Wilson Center, Mr. Denmark served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia, where he supported the Secretary of Defense and other senior U.S. government leaders in the formulation and implementation of national security strategies and defense policies toward the region. Mr. Denmark previously worked as Senior Vice President for Political and Security Affairs at The National Bureau of Asian Research, a Fellow at the Center for a New American Security, and held several positions in the U.S. Intelligence Community. Mr. Denmark has authored dozens of articles and edited several books on the Asia-Pacific and U.S. national security, including several editions of the *Strategic Asia* book series. He has testified multiple times before the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, as well as the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. His commentary has been featured in major media outlets in the United States and in Asia, including *Foreign Affairs*, National Public Radio, *the Financial Times*, the *National Interest*, *Foreign Policy*, and *the Atlantic*. In January 2017, Mr. Denmark received the Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service. He also received the Order of the Resplendent Banner from the Republic of China (Taiwan), was made an Honorary Admiral in the Navy of the Republic of Korea, and was named a 21st Century Leader by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy. A Colorado native, Mr. Denmark holds an MA in International Security

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## Michael Fabey

Americas Naval Reporter (*Jane's Fighting Ships*)

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Michael Fabey is an award-winning journalist who has more than three decades of experience writing for newspapers, magazines and online news sites. As author of *Crashback*, he gained unparalleled access to the Chinese naval command after 15 years covering the Pentagon. The result is the much-anticipated book about the U.S. and China power clash in the Pacific slated for publication by Scribner (a division of Simon & Schuster) in October 2017. Now the Americas Naval Reporter for *Jane's* and the US Editor for *Jane's Fighting Ships*, Fabey has reported on military matters throughout his career, writing for such publications as *Aviation Week*, *Defense News* and *Janes*. As a foreign correspondent, he worked in newsrooms around the globe for *The Economist Group*, *O. Estado de S. Paulo* and a variety of other publications.

## David C. Gompert

Distinguished Visiting Professor (US Naval Academy)

Adjunct Professor (Virginia Union University)

Senior Fellow (RAND Corporation)



The Honorable David C. Gompert is currently Distinguished Visiting Professor at the U.S. Naval Academy, Adjunct Professor at Virginia Union University, and Senior Fellow at RAND. Mr. Gompert was Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence from 2009 to 2010. During 2010, he served as Acting Director of National Intelligence, in which capacity he oversaw the U.S. Intelligence Community and acted as the President's chief intelligence advisor. Prior to his most recent government service, Mr. Gompert was a Senior Fellow at the RAND Corporation, from 2004 to 2009. Before that he was Distinguished Research Professor at the Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University. From 2003 to 2004, Mr. Gompert served as the Senior Advisor for National Security and Defense, Coalition Provisional Authority, Iraq. He has taught at RAND Graduate School, U.S. Naval Academy, the National Defense University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Union University. Mr. Gompert served as President of RAND Europe from 2000 to 2003, during which period he was on the RAND Europe Executive Board and Chairman of RAND Europe-UK. He was Vice President of RAND and Director of the National Defense Research Institute from 1993 to 2000. From 1990 to 1993, Mr. Gompert was Special Assistant to President George H. W. Bush and Senior Director for Europe on the National Security Council staff. He has held numerous positions at the State Department, including Deputy to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (1982-83), Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe (1981-82), Deputy Director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (1977-81), and Special Assistant to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (1973-75). Mr. Gompert worked in the private sector from 1983-1990. At Unisys (1989-90), he was President of the Systems Management Group. At AT&T (1983-89), he was Vice President, Civil Sales and Programs, and Director of International Market Planning. Mr. Gompert has published on international affairs, national security and information technology. His books (authored or co-authored) include *War with China: Thinking through the Unthinkable*, *Blunders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn*; *Sea Power and American Interests in the Western Pacific*; *The Paradox of Power: Sino-American Strategic Restraint in an Age of Vulnerability*; *Underkill: Capabilities for Military Operations amid Populations*; *War by Other Means: Building Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*; *BattleWise: Achieving Time-Information Superiority in Networked Warfare*; *Nuclear Weapons and World Politics (ed.)*; *America and Europe: A Partnership for a new Era (ed.)*; *Right Makes Might: Freedom and Power in the Information Age*; *Mind the Gap: A Transatlantic Revolution in Military Affairs*. Mr. Gompert is a member of

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## Dr. Justin V. Hastings

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I am currently an Associate Professor in International Relations and Comparative Politics and an Australian Research Council Future Fellow in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney, where I am also affiliated with the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, the China Studies Centre, the Sydney Cybersecurity Network, the Asian Studies Program, and the Centre for International Security Studies. From 2008 to 2010, I was an Assistant Professor in the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at the Georgia Institute of Technology. I received a PhD in Political Science in 2008 from the University of California, Berkeley, and an AB (honors) from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University in 2001. My research is mostly focused on the structure and behavior of clandestine state and non-state actors, such as terrorists, maritime piracy, smugglers, organized criminals, insurgents, and nuclear weapons proliferators, primarily in Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, although I have also written on East Africa and general security issues. I have conducted academic and policy research in South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. My research has been financially supported by the Australian Research Council, the United States federal government, the United States-Indonesia Society, the National Bureau for Asia Research (NBR), the MacArthur Foundation, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), and the US National Science Foundation (through the University of California's Institute for Global Cooperation and Conflict).

## Anthony Rinna

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Anthony V. Rinna is a Senior Editor at Sino-NK, a research organization dedicated to the study of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. Rinna specializes in Russian foreign policy and Northeast Asian geopolitics. His expertise has been sought for research conducted by the Australian and Indian foreign ministries, as well as DoD. His views have been cited in the BBC, CNBC, Reuters and the Washington Post. Rinna, a US citizen, has a working knowledge of Korean, Russian and Spanish, and has lived in South Korea since 2014.

## Dr. Derek M. Scissors

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Derek M. Scissors is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he focuses on the Chinese and Indian economies and on US economic relations with Asia. He is concurrently chief economist of the China Beige Book. Dr. Scissors is the author of the China Global Investment Tracker. In late 2008, he authored a series of papers that chronicled the end of pro-market Chinese reform and predicted economic stagnation in China as a result. He has also written multiple papers on the best course for Indian economic development. Before joining AEI, Dr. Scissors was a senior research fellow in the Asian Studies Center at the Heritage Foundation and an adjunct professor of economics at George Washington University. He has worked for London-based Intelligence Research Ltd., taught economics at Lingnan University in Hong Kong, and served as an action officer in international

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## Andrew Small

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Andrew Small is a senior transatlantic fellow with GMF's Asia Program, which he established in 2006. His research focuses on U.S.–China relations, Europe–China relations, Chinese policy in South Asia, and broader developments in China's foreign and economic policy. He was based in GMF's Brussels office for five years, and worked before that as the director of the Foreign Policy Centre's Beijing office, as a visiting fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and an ESU scholar in the office of Senator Edward M. Kennedy. His articles and papers have been published in *The New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, the *Washington Quarterly*, as well as many other journals, magazines, and newspapers. He is the author of the book *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics* published with Hurst / Oxford University Press in 2015. Small was educated at Balliol College, University of Oxford.

## Yun Sun

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Yun Sun is co-Director of the East Asia Program and Director of the China Program at the Stimson Center. Her expertise is in Chinese foreign policy, U.S.-China relations and China's relations with neighboring countries and authoritarian regimes. From 2011 to early 2014, she was a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution, jointly appointed by the Foreign Policy Program and the Global Development Program, where she focused on Chinese national security decision-making processes and China-Africa relations. From 2008 to 2011, Yun was the China Analyst for the International Crisis Group based in Beijing, specializing on China's foreign policy towards conflict countries and the developing world. Prior to ICG, she worked on U.S.-Asia relations in Washington, DC for five years. Yun earned her master's degree in international policy and practice from George Washington University, as well as an MA in Asia Pacific studies and a BA in international relations from Foreign Affairs College in Beijing.

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Philip Fei-Ling Wang, Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania), Professor at Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology. His research interests are comparative and international political economy, U.S.-East Asian relations, and East Asia and China studies. He has published seven books (two co-edited) in two languages including *Organization through Division and Exclusion: China's Hukou System* (Stanford University Press, 2005) and *The China Order: Centralia, World Empire, and the Nature of Chinese Power* (SUNY Press, 2017). He has also published dozens of book chapters and journal articles in four languages. He taught at the U.S. Military Academy (West Point) and held visiting and adjunct/honorary positions in institutions like European University Institute, Sciences Po, National University of Singapore, National Taiwan University, Renmin University of China and Anhui Normal University in China, University of Tokyo in Japan, U.S. Air Force Academy, and Sungkyunkwan University and Yonsei University in Korea. He has appeared in many national and international news media such as Al Jazeera, AP, BBC,

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## Ali Wyne

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Ali Wyne is a Washington, DC-based policy analyst at the RAND Corporation, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, and a nonresident fellow at the Modern War Institute. He serves as rapporteur for a U.S. National Intelligence Council working group that analyzes trends in world order. Wyne served as a junior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace from 2008 to 2009 and as a research assistant at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs from 2009 to 2012. From January to July 2013 he worked on a team that prepared Samantha Power for her confirmation hearing to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. From 2014 to 2015 he served on RAND's adjunct staff, working with the late Richard Solomon on RAND's *Strategic Rethink* series. Wyne received dual degrees in management science and political science from MIT (2008) and earned his Masters in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School (2017). While at the Kennedy School he served on a Hillary for America working group on U.S. policy toward Asia. Wyne is a coauthor of *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (2013) and a contributing author to *Power Relations in the Twenty-First Century: Mapping a Multipolar World?* (2017) and the *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (2008). Wyne is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a David Rockefeller fellow with the Trilateral Commission, and a security fellow with the Truman National Security Project.

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