

U.S Hegemony In East Asia: Donald Trump Administration

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“America First”

- As Donald Trump’s administration comes to power in Washington, the postwar security policy of the US is undergoing a monumental transition. The new president’s campaign rhetoric strongly intimated that under his self-proclaimed ‘America First’ posture, traditional American strategy and alliance politics would undergo a major change



- **American foreign policy toward Asia was one of “Pivot” under Clinton. It has now been rebranded as a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” by the Trump administration**
- The Trump administration’s Asia Strategy at the moment is basically a North Korea Strategy and a Trade Escalation Strategy.



Trump’s Indo-Pacific dream focuses on reciprocity, as well as economic and military security.

Something clearly intended as an alternative to Xi Jinping’s “China dream” and Belt and Road Initiative

President Trump does not believe in an effort to build institutions in Asia that must lie at the core of any effective American policy. He doesn’t believe in multilateral trade deals like the TPP. He doesn’t believe in the usefulness of security and political institutions like the East Asia Summit. He doesn’t believe in the carrying forward of effective military alliances. So, the United States is acting as something of a free radical — occasionally rallying other countries to deal with issues like North Korea

(An interview with Jake Sullivan, former Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to Hillary Clinton)

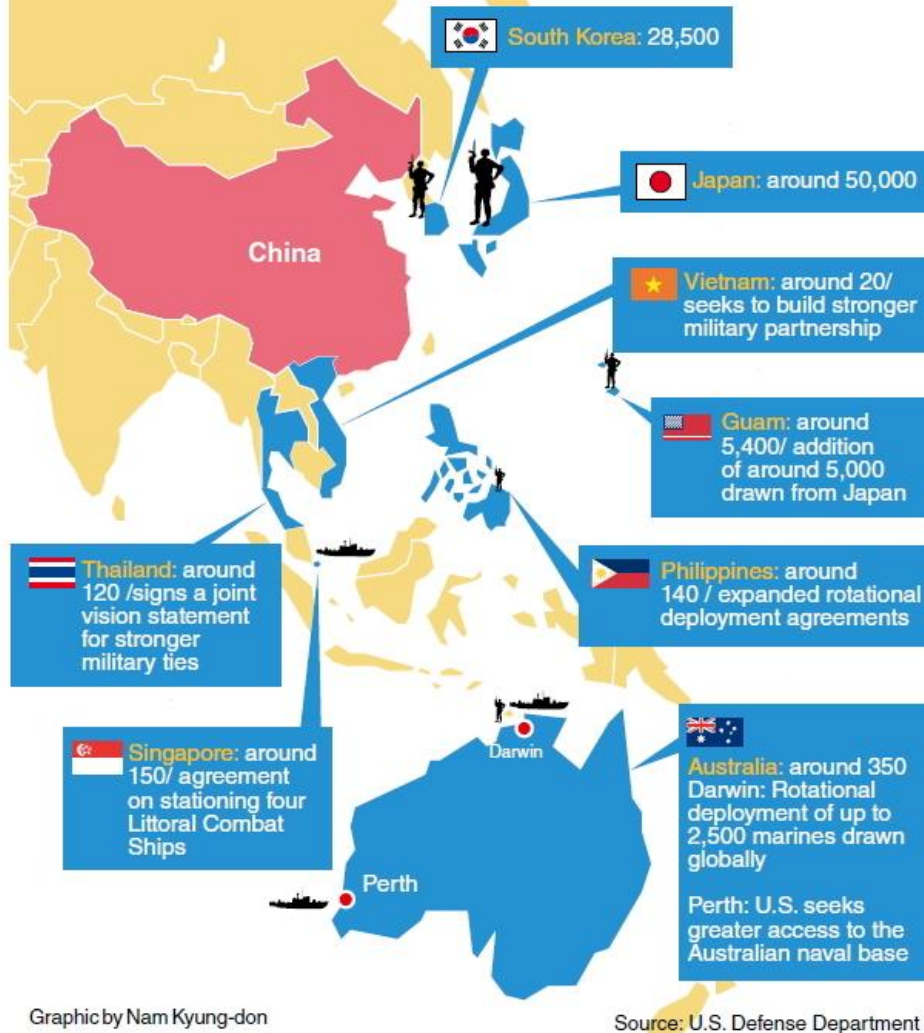
- The Trump administration's National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy respectively assert that "China seeks to displace the United States" in East Asia and thus achieve "Indo-Pacific regional hegemony."
- Avoiding this possibility has required Washington, also as a matter of policy, to maintain its own hegemony in the region.
- Trump administration's policy mantra "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."
- China is pursuing hegemony in East Asia, but not an exclusive hostile hegemony. In short, China wants to extend its power and influence within East Asia, but not as part of a "winner-take-all" contest.
- American primacy in East Asia has often been characterized in terms of the United States serving as the guarantor of regional security, protecting the "global commons" and providing "public goods"
- The U.S. alliance network in the region certainly extends an umbrella of protection to those countries with which Washington has defense pacts



- U.S. policies and strategies primacy in East Asia are likely to be counterproductive, because would reinforce Beijing's belief that the United States seeks to contain China by keeping it subordinate within its own region. This would increase the chances of Beijing feeling compelled to adopt a more confrontational and aggressive posture. Chinese pursuit of a more exclusive hostile hegemony could thus become a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- The United States can and should continue to exercise leadership in East Asia, but will need to share it with China. Washington should seek to deescalate the current trend in the regional competition with Beijing. it will always be preferable to an arms race or a cold war in East Asia.



U.S. troop deployment under rebalancing policy



- Donald Trump, promised an overhaul of the precedent administration's policy in Asia, known as the "pivot" or the "rebalance" to Asia. the "pivot to Asia" had entangled the US into unnecessary and costly commitments, and promised to implement a completely new policy, based on the reaffirmation of US military strength in the region
- It is natural for both East Asian allies and opponents to be concerned about the promise of a completely new American foreign policy approach to the Asia

- Global Major Powers :

The EU is a larger player than the United States in Asia, the EU has signed trade agreements with South Korea and ASEAN, and is in the process of negotiating a new deal with Japan. Through channels of interaction – such as the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), cooperation with ASEAN, and interaction with Asia-Pacific actors who are seeking a new approach to security and political issues – the EU has the opportunity to become a primary political actor.

China-led “One Belt One Road Initiative” (OBOR) is enhancing the connectivity between Europe and South-Southeast Asia through infrastructure and development programmes

Note : OBOR, Now is called BRI (Belt Road Initiative)



East Asia

- Japan : After the November elections, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe travelled immediately to the US, being the first leader to meet with the new US President. Abe afterward said their meeting at Trump Tower convinced him that Trump was a leader “whom I can have great confidence in.” A second Trump-Abe summit after inauguration and the visits of Secretary of Defence James Mattis, Secretary of State Tillerson, and Vice-President Mike Pence to Japan were meant to reassure Japan that Washington would maintain its commitments to the alliance with Tokyo.
- In reality, uncertainty about the new presidency remains present among Japanese policy elites. Japan is still uncertain about American commitment to Tokyo and to East Asia in general, but at the same time it fears that an impulsive American strategy – such as a pre-emptive strike on North Korea and its consequences – would drag Japan into an unwanted and disruptive confrontation.

- During U.S. electoral campaign is the lack of clear positions and proposals from both candidates on East Asia. Neither Trump nor Clinton (who ironically claims the legacy of the pivot strategy to Asia) have made East Asia a priority of their foreign policy program
- Trump has stressed that South Korea and Japan need to defend themselves. He also has complained that the US is paying too much to defend South Korea, including US armed forces in Korea.
- Let's be realistic ! : Withdrawing the U.S. forces in Japan and South Korea, a total of about 60 000 troops, cannot be decided abruptly and without a comprehensive dialogue with both Tokyo and Seoul, considering the strategic alliances