

America's 2016 Election Debate on Asia Policy and Asian Reactions

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EAST-WEST CENTER
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Acronyms

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party (Taiwan)
EDCA	Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FONOPS	Freedom-of-Navigation Operations
KORUS	Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement
OBOR	One Belt One Road Initiative
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
TPA	Trade Promotion Authority
TPP	Trans Pacific Partnership
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

America's 2016 Election Debate on Asia Policy and Asian Reactions

Summary Findings: Rebalance and China Overshadowed by Debates Regarding Trade, Allies, Nuclear Weapons, North Korea

The 2015-2016 presidential election campaign has had major effects on recent debates regarding U.S. Asia policy. Going into the campaign, the debates focused heavily on the efficacy of the Obama Administration's signature "Asia Rebalance" and as a corollary the perceived U.S. weaknesses in the face of growing challenges from China. As the campaign has progressed, the broad concern with the rebalance and China remains active but secondary. Two sets of issues now overshadow the earlier focus: international trade and the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) accord, and candidate Donald Trump's controversial proposals on allied burden-sharing, nuclear weapons proliferation and North Korea.

Bipartisan criticism of the TPP poses serious obstacles to U.S. government approval of the pact. Candidate Trump's controversial proposals on alliances, nuclear proliferation and North Korea were singular, provoking widespread opposition including from senior Republicans in Congress and other candidates and therefore unlikely to be easily implemented even if he were elected.

Uncertainty over U.S. approval of the TPP and surprise over Donald Trump's controversial proposals upset, to varying degrees, U.S. allies Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Australia, as well as Taiwan, India and other Asian partners. Commentators in Beijing welcomed circumstances that lowered China's profile in the U.S. election rhetoric; they saw clear advantages along with some possible disadvantages in recent uncertainty over the TPP and U.S. relations with Asian allies.

U.S. Policy Implications: Sidelined Republicans, Mixed Asian Reactions

Flowing from the 2016 election debate on U.S. Asia policy, special concern in the United States focused on Mr. Trump making decisions on Asia policy without the counsel of Republican Party practitioners and specialists and their affiliated think tanks and organizations that have long fostered strong American military, economic and diplomatic engagement with the Asia-Pacific region. Throughout the changing course of U.S. foreign policy since the Cold War, leading Republican international strategists like Richard Armitage, Paul Wolfowitz and Robert Zoellick favored a strong American military presence in support of Asian allies and partners and promotion of free trade and investment in the interests of the United States. Mr. Trump's controversial policies alienated many leading Republican policy experts and organizations. Marginalizing this "pro-Asia" Republican cohort in American decision-making is widely seen to risk tilting U.S. policy toward more parochial viewpoints stressing domestic issues and giving inadequate consideration to Asia-Pacific interests of the United States.

Both American and Asian observers also express concern that the election debates have made it more difficult for the future president to define and implement coherent American policy in the context of recently growing tensions in U.S.-Chinese relations and varying responses by regional governments to China's assertiveness. The challenges are widely seen as formidable and the path America will take is now seen as significantly more uncertain as a result of the election campaign. Consultations in Asia revealed a range of reactions.

China, with its increasing military, economic and diplomatic power and influence, seeks to avoid confrontation and support constructive and cooperative relations with the United States and most neighbors. But China demands respect for a widening array of core interests that involve extraordinary territorial claims; egregious, self-serving, state-directed interventions in international economics; massive military buildups targeting the United States and its allies and partners; and coercive and intimidating diplomacy. These demands come at the expense of neighbors and the interests of the United States and other powers in regional stability, peaceful development and non-coercive norms in the prevailing regional order. They have met with increasing disapproval and firmness from the U.S. government, which strengthens U.S. regional security, economic and political ties in line with the Obama government's rebalance to Asia policy that China has strongly opposed.

Japan, the most important U.S. ally in Asia, is reacting most clearly. Led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the politically most powerful and forecast to be the longest-lasting Japanese government since the Cold War, already sees a fundamental threat in Chinese coercion against Japan by security forces, economic pressure and diplomatic threats that fall short of direct use of military force. Within the limits of the Japanese constitution and Japan's politically restricted

military spending, the Abe government is engaging in a military buildup and redeployments and a range of regional and international initiatives, all with an eye to balancing China. It presses for firmer U.S. support for Japan and stronger American actions against China's regional advances.

Other Asia-Pacific reactions run the gamut:

- Australia is increasingly concerned with China's military buildup and coercive expansion at its neighbors' expense. Canberra gives priority support to its alliance with the United States, but interests—notably large-scale Australian exports to China—and to some degree public and elite opinion constrain the government's ability to directly confront Beijing.
- South Korea, a very important U.S. ally, also seeks to avoid choosing between its alliance with the United States and its strong strategic and economic interests with China. Domestic dissonance between South Korean conservative and progressive views is especially powerful in tilting the debate towards “alliance primacy” versus “alliance equilibrium.”
- Taiwan is China's “corest core interest” and the most directly threatened target of Chinese military intimidation. Thus, Taipei always seeks stronger support from the United States but also recognizes that serious friction in U.S.-Chinese relations is more likely than not to have serious negative consequences for Taiwan.
- India pursues constructive relations with China while preparing military power and developing strategic relations with the United States, Japan, Australia and other Asia-Pacific powers to balance against perceived Chinese ambitions along the disputed Sino-Indian border, in the Indian Ocean and with Pakistan and other South Asian states.
- The Philippines government of President Benigno Aquino (2010-2016) was closest to Japan in its negative view of China's regional ambitions; Aquino repeatedly called for greater support from his American ally to deal with Chinese coercion. His successor Rodrigo Duterte has pursued a less rigid stance, more in line with the organization the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that seeks cooperative relations with Beijing and Washington and avoids choosing between the two.

Adding to this complicated mix for future U.S. policy is the increasingly dire situation in North Korea, which underlines a failure of internationally backed sanctions and other pressures to stop the steady development of nuclear weapons and related delivery systems that pose enormous security concerns, especially in Northeastern Asia.¹

Background of the 2016 American Election Asia Debates

U.S. leadership faced enormous dangers, struggles and debates over American policies in Asia during the Cold War. Neither of the massive military engagements in Korea or Vietnam ended in American victory. The successful U.S. opening to China came against a background of American weakness, not strength.²

One benefit of the Cold War was U.S. foreign and defense policy had a clear focus—dealing with the challenges posed by a powerful and expanding Soviet Union. Also, for much of the period, the U.S. president, aided by senior advisors and a few congressional leaders, controlled foreign policy decision-making without facing a great deal of pressure for foreign policy change from domestic American groups. An exception to this pattern came with the failure of the war in Vietnam and temporary rise in congressional, media and popular assertiveness in foreign affairs during the 1970s and early 1980s.

The end of the Cold War and demise of the Soviet Union left the United States as Asia's unchallenged dominant power, at least for a time. However, the end of the struggle with the USSR also unleashed various domestic American pressures that moved U.S. foreign policy in different directions, prompting substantial disagreement and confusion in the making of U.S. foreign policy. There was protracted and acrimonious debate over how to deal with China and for several years Americans sharply criticized Japan's trade practices and its risk-adverse security policies.³

Following the terrorist attack on America in September 2001, criticism of China and Japan declined given the overriding need for international cooperation to deal with terrorism. U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq deepened American support for closer cooperation with allies and with China, a trend strengthened by the global economic crisis beginning in 2008.⁴ The financial crisis exposed deep American public discontent about trade and globalization that has been a marked feature of the current election campaign.

In the past decade, the general foreign policy debate has focused on perceived American weaknesses throughout the world, including Asia. Republican leaders in Congress and supporting think tanks and interest groups joined media and other commentators in depicting major shortcomings in the Obama administration's policies in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. One target was the so-called Obama Doctrine laid out in the president's speech to graduating West Point cadets in 2014 that expressed wariness regarding security engagements abroad. The president's cautious approach seemed in line with prevailing American public opinion, even though the Republican-led critics in Congress and various media stressed the president's approach reflected weakness.⁵

The Obama administration approach to Asia was defined by its "pivot" or "rebalance" to Asia policy publicly laid out in late 2011. The United States accompanied military pullbacks from Iraq

and Afghanistan with greater attention to a broad range of countries in Asia, from India in the west to Japan in the northeast and the Pacific Island states in the southeast. U.S. diplomatic activism increased—including through joining regional multilateral groupings; existing substantial military deployments were maintained and strengthened in some areas; trade and investment remained open and were poised to increase, notably on the basis of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade arrangement.⁶

The new U.S. activism was widely welcomed by governments in the region, with the notable exception of China. Under the new leadership of Communist Party Chief and President Xi Jinping (2012-), China used economic enticements on the one hand and coercive and intimidating means short of direct military force on the other to compel neighbors to accept Chinese claims to disputed territories and to side with China against American foreign policy initiatives. American critics of the Obama rebalance claimed that the U.S. government was not resolute enough in defending the U.S. role as regional security guarantor and not active enough in promoting greater American trade, investment and diplomatic engagement in competition with China's state-directed efforts. For example, the Republican-leaning Heritage Foundation summed up the critics' concerns by offering far-reaching political-security recommendations for Asia that added to the Foundation's longstanding support for greater free trade and investment there. The recommendations included more robust military spending to allow for a long-term goal of 350 naval ships (there are now about 280 ships in the Navy); increased support for allies and partners; expanded involvement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other regional groups; and greater firmness in dealing with Chinese challenges to regional and American interests.⁷

Overview of the 2016 U.S. Election Debates about Asia

Most candidates talked about eroding or challenged U.S. international power and influence, and the need to re-affirm America's role in the world. Candidates Hillary Clinton, Ted Cruz, John Kasich, Marco Rubio and Donald Trump in varying ways favored strengthening U.S. power and leadership. Bernie Sanders favored less muscular approaches than the other candidates, emphasizing negotiations over military means and pressure. Most affirmed strengthened relations with allies without much emphasis on greater burden or cost-sharing on the part of the allies.

On specific issues involving U.S. leadership that are discussed in more detail below, John Kasich joined free trade advocates in Congress such as House Speaker Paul Ryan to support the TPP. Clinton, Cruz, Sanders, and Trump voiced varying degrees and specifics of opposition to the trade pact. Donald Trump was alone in insisting that allies do more to reciprocate American costs in maintaining their security and overall regional stability or face American withdrawal. And he accepted the possibility that allies without U.S. support like Japan and South Korea might be compelled to develop nuclear weapons to protect themselves. All the candidates emphasized applying pressure to get the North Korean leader to denuclearize, but Mr. Trump was alone in also calling for direct talks with the North Korea's Kim Jong Un.

China remained the main country of concern regarding challenging U.S. leadership in Asia. Relevant election discourse focused on how China was an unfair partner, and how the United States needed to counter negative features of China's rise. China generally was not seen as an adversary; rather, it was depicted as neither an enemy nor a friend. Candidates Clinton, Cruz and Rubio argued for greater firmness against China; Sanders urged negotiations as did Trump, who also favored military buildup and trade sanctions if needed.

- Hillary Clinton's priorities included holding China accountable.⁸ She spoke highly of Obama's policies, played up her part in the rebalance, and called (with the notable exception of the TPP) for continuity of the rebalance policies.⁹
- Ted Cruz said that Presidents Obama and Clinton had weakened America and jeopardized its global interests.¹⁰
- Bernie Sanders believed in resolving international conflicts in a peaceful manner. Sanders said, "...we must move away from policies that favor unilateral military action... and that make the United States the de facto policeman of the world." Sanders, like Trump, blamed current economic problems in the United States on "disastrous trade policies" involving China and other countries.¹¹
- Donald Trump said, "... we have to rebuild our military and our economy." He held that international trade agreements were not beneficial; he preferred bilateral trade deals and opposed the TPP.¹² Trump also fixed on currency manipulation, citing China and Japan.

He usually did not find fault in China and others for taking advantage of perceived maladroit U.S. trade policies. He promised swift and dramatic retaliation against Chinese and other unfair economic practices.¹³

IMPLICATIONS

Broad American concern with China remained active but secondary in the campaign debates. It was overshadowed by strong debate on international trade and the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) accord, and on candidate Donald Trump's controversial proposals on allied burden-sharing, nuclear weapons proliferation and North Korea.

Mr. Trump's strong opposition to the TPP and other U.S. trade efforts was at odds with the free trade policies favored by Republican congressional leaders, but the Trump position had a strong appeal among both Republican and Democratic voters. He and Sanders reinforced each other's arguments; Clinton, Cruz and others reversed or modified their positions to accord with the changed politics surrounding the TPP.

Candidate Trump's unique emphasis on getting Japan, South Korea and other allies to compensate America for its role as regional security guarantor prompted serious negative reactions that promised significant complications for U.S. alliance relations if Trump were elected president and attempted to follow through on his demands. His calls for Japan and South Korea to compensate the United States for American security support were at odds with proposals by Speaker Ryan, Senator John McCain (AZ) and other Republican congressional leaders as well as many Republican-leaning think tanks and media. Some of these Republicans publicly opposed such policies.

Trump's acceptance of Japan or South Korea developing nuclear weapons for self-defense following a U.S. pullback was a major departure from longstanding policies of Republican and Democratic U.S. governments, and was widely seen to add to the danger of war in northeastern Asia.

Trump's abrupt announcement that he would seek direct talks with North Korea's leader undermined existing U.S., South Korean and Japanese policy and deviated sharply from the tough U.S. posture on this issue favored by the Obama government and by Republican congressional leaders and Republican-leaning think tanks and media.

At bottom, these three sets of controversial proposals by Mr. Trump garnered little support in the United States and prompted opposition, including from prominent congressional Republicans.

There was consensus among American and Asian observers consulted for this project that the election discussion politicized American foreign policy and weakened the American leadership position in Asia. The style of the campaign featured repeated personal attacks, gross language, and salacious accusations which degraded America's image and provided fodder for Chinese and other opinions stressing the weaknesses of U.S. democracy.

On policy issues, the success of the Sanders and Trump campaign attacks on the TPP surprised American and Asian commentators, notably by underlining seemingly weak popular American support for this important component of U.S. policy in the region. The fact that the Republican Party—widely seen in the region as strongly committed to U.S. defense ties with Asia—selected Mr. Trump despite his controversial views on military disengagement from Asia

and Europe, and his acceptance of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, raised serious doubts about America's future regional role. Among Asian countries depending on military support from the United States, Japanese non-government commentators seemed the most concerned. On the other side of the spectrum of Asian views were Chinese commentators who saw opportunities for Chinese gains in competition with the United States for leadership in Asia as a result of the election's negative impact on the credibility of American commitments to Asian allies and friends.

For the most part, the Asian observers balanced the above developments with evidence that strong engagement with Asia in the U.S. rebalance policy would likely continue. The result was a muddled picture of U.S. leadership sustainability. In particular, even if Hillary Clinton, an avowed supporter of the rebalance policy (with the exception of the TPP) were elected president, the election debates over Asia meant trouble ahead for U.S. leaders. The debates notably added to disturbing developments at home (e.g., terrorist attacks and racially motivated killings) and abroad (e.g., a weakened European Union and major crises involving the Middle East and Russia) seen as likely to preoccupy the new American president and complicate steady American engagement with the region.

Priority Election Debates over U.S. Policy in Asia

The following discussion further explains specific issues in Asia during the 2015-2016 election campaign in order of their priority and prominence in the campaign. It addresses salient implications of these issues. In dealing with the relevant remarks of each of the candidates, the report generally treats their comments in alphabetical order.

As seen in the above discussion, the debates about Asia come as part of a broader debate in the election campaign over priorities in American foreign policy. For the most part, the debates about Asia are second to concerns about more pressing international concerns, notably international terrorism.

Another finding of this analysis is that the previous American preoccupation with China's challenges to U.S. interests in Asia has less prominence than other issues in Asia in the 2015-2016 election campaign. It is important to add here that experienced Republican and Democratic Asian specialists and several commentators in Asia consulted for this report judged that the American concern with China remained strong and could rise to the top of U.S. Asian policy concerns, notably in the event of a crisis caused by one or more of the many serious security, economic and other differences that divide the two governments.¹⁴

THE TRANS PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (TPP) IN THE 2016 ELECTION

The Obama administration and its supporters say opportunities for American investment and exports are advanced through the TPP.¹⁵ The agreement also offsets China's unfair economic measures because China will want to join in order not to be economically marginalized, and joining will force Beijing to bring its economic practices into line with those of the United States.¹⁶ The economic agreement also is seen to have a significant strategic importance. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter told Congress that passing the TPP will do more in support of regional stability than another aircraft carrier for U.S. forces in the Pacific.¹⁷

U.S. agreements promoting freer trade feature periodically and intensely in election campaigns during the post-Cold War period. Great controversy surrounded congressional consideration and approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993; congressional consideration and approval of granting Permanent Normal Trade Status for China in 2000; and congressional approval and passage of the bilateral Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in 2011. Controversy also emerged when President Obama sought congressional commitment to so-called "fast track" consideration of the TPP through what is known as Trade Promotion Authority (TPA). After months of intense debate, which saw Democrats like Senator Bernie Sanders voting "no" along with a heretofore avowed free trader, Republican Senator Ted Cruz, TPA was authorized by the Congress in June 2015.¹⁸

Candidates Sanders and Trump improved their performances in the primaries by focusing on what turned out to be widespread voter angst over American economic vulnerabilities being

exploited by the unfair trading and investment practices of China and other countries. They charged that the Obama government and several of the other candidates were mistakenly seeking advantage in the TPP and other free trade agreements that were said to actually handicap U.S. ability to retaliate against unfair foreign practices. Sanders took aim at American big business leaders who were said to have few concerns for American workers as they relocated plants abroad in seeking “a few more bucks” of profit.¹⁹ Trump seemed out of place in attacking the privileged business elites but he successfully won over voters with rhetoric on how he would right the wrongs and retaliate strongly against unfair trading countries and the American business leaders who collaborate with them. Observers saw Cruz’s vote on TPA and Clinton’s turn against TPP as emblematic of a continuing shift in the election campaign period against the free trade agenda of the Obama government.

Hillary Clinton’s rhetoric regarding trade had a prevailing sense of injustice, that the U.S. has been “wronged” and that global trading partners haven’t been “fair.” She specifically named China as an unfair trading partner. She said, “We need a president who knows how to compete against the rest of the world and win for America and for American workers. And that means, first and foremost, standing up to China which is the biggest abuser of global trade.”²⁰ Clinton explained her opposition to the TPP based on questions over its impact on U.S. jobs and effectiveness in dealing with unfair economic practices by other countries.²¹

Ted Cruz explained his vote against TPA in June 2015 this way: “As a general matter, I agree (as did Ronald Reagan) that free trade is good for America” but he went on to condemn “corrupt Washington backroom deal-making” involved in the trade deal.²²

John Kasich was one of the few candidates who spoke in strong support of free trade and the TPP. He said, “...the TPP, it’s critical to us, not only for economic reasons and for jobs, because there are so many people who are connected to getting jobs because of trade, but it allows us to create not only economy alliances, but also potentially strategic alliances against the Chinese. They are not our enemy, but they are certainly not our friend.”²³

Bernie Sanders summed up his view saying, “I believe in trade, but I do not believe in unfettered free trade. I believe in fair trade which works for the middle class and working families of this country and not just large multinational corporations.”²⁴

According to Donald Trump, an avowed free trader, “The TPP is a horrible deal...It’s a deal that was designed for China to come in, as they always do, through the back door and totally take advantage of everyone. It’s 5,600 pages long, so complex that nobody’s read it...I’d rather make individual deals with individual countries....we need smart people making the deals, and we don’t have smart people making the deals.”²⁵

Implications and Asian Reactions to the 2016 Election Debate on the TPP

The election campaign discussion of trade and the TPP has seriously challenged efforts by the Obama government to seek congressional approval of the pact. American presidential candidates and other politicians from Hillary Clinton and Republican Speaker Ryan on down have been forced to face the popularity of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump, who made opposition to such trade deals central elements in their campaigns. If Donald Trump is elected, the prospects for U.S. approval of the TPP are seen as poor. If Hillary Clinton is elected, she may privately urge the

Obama government and the current Congress to approve the pact, risking strongly negative reactions. Or once in office, she may publicly move to approve the pact with amendments, promising a difficult and perhaps contentious process in gaining needed international and congressional approvals. Other options include continued opposition to or protracted delay in considering what to do with the TPP.

Recent history shows that popular American sentiment against trade deals has waxed and waned. Supporters of free trade and the TPP are somewhat reassured by recent public opinion polls showing the American people remain ambivalent about withdrawing from specific trade deals, while a clear majority of Americans views trade much more as an economic opportunity than as a threat.²⁶ In a related development, polling in February 2016 showed that American angst over China's economy as a danger to the United States declined over the previous year and was lower than a host of other concerns, including even climate change and infectious diseases.²⁷

Japan and other Asia-Pacific governments that are members of the TPP are actively making policy changes and taking other steps to bring their practices into line with the pact. As a result, they view negatively the recent uncertainty over U.S. congressional approval of the pact in light of the prominent anti-TPP election rhetoric. The Abe government in Tokyo is said to be determined to use its strengthened position in the Diet to approve the deal despite an anticipated U.S. stall. South Korea and Taiwan are not now members of the group, but their governments are actively planning and preparing for membership through internal government studies and task forces. South Korean disappointment with an anticipated U.S. stall in approval is offset to some degree by Seoul's existing Korea-U.S. (KORUS) Free Trade Agreement with Washington, its reported confidence that the TPP will eventually be approved, and the view that public opinion in South Korea is not paying much attention to this issue. Seoul is said by some observers to welcome the delay so it can better prepare for entry into the pact. And, observers in South Korea said the United States and other TPP members should endeavor to facilitate China's entry so as to reduce regional tensions over the economic pact.

Taipei is very trade dependent—the value of its trade is more than 100% of its GDP. Because of Chinese pressure, it is very isolated from international economic pacts and unlikely to have the option to join a concurrent Asia-Pacific Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiation which includes China. Hence, U.S. leadership is seen in Taipei as key in gaining entry to the TPP, whose members account for 35% of Taiwan's trade. The government also uses the incentive of joining TPP as leverage to drive reform, efficiency and competitiveness in Taiwan's economy, especially under the new Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)-led government.

Australia, a TPP signatory, continues to support the agreement overall even as trade declines with the United States for structural reasons and domestic sentiment has qualms about the agreement. The impact of a TPP failure on Australia's bilateral trade with the United States is expected to be less dire given the existing Australia-U.S. free trade agreement, though Australia runs a trade deficit with the United States. India is not in any rush to join the TPP and is therefore less concerned by a TPP stall. India has more pressing commercial issues with the United States, including outsourcing and worker visas. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Vietnam are already

TPP signatories and both are concerned about a TPP stall. Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines have expressed varying degrees of interest in eventual TPP membership, but as non-signatories there is little urgency to their watchfulness. Most American allies and partners appear to view America's TPP debate less through immediate economic concerns and more through worry about U.S. inability to sustain regional commitments beyond the military dimensions of policy. Many also worry that a TPP stall or failure will favor China.

Chinese observers are concerned that a failure of the TPP would reflect protectionist and anti-globalization sentiment throughout developed countries that will negatively impact China's economic growth. At the same time, a failure of the United States to approve the TPP is seen in Beijing and elsewhere in Asia as playing to China's advantage and undercutting a key element in U.S. engagement with Asia. As President Obama warns, the consequences would allow China a greater role to set the norms on regional economic relationships using such China-led mechanisms as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), as well as Chinese efforts such as the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative and China's Silk Road Fund.²⁸ The consequences also would reduce incentives by regional countries to align closely with an overall U.S. approach to the region that, without the TPP, would depend even more on the often controversial military dimension of American engagement with Asia.

ALLIANCE RELATIONS IN THE 2016 ELECTION

A major plank in the Obama government's rebalance policy in Asia has been to strengthen relations with American treaty allies—Australia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand—and with other regional powers, notably Singapore as well as India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam that are interested in closer strategic alignment with the United States. Such efforts expand and strengthen overall U.S. regional influence to insure that American goals of security, stability, prosperity and political freedom are met. An underlining theme in the rebalance is that allies and partners cooperating closely with the United States will undertake some of the responsibility borne by the United States for sustaining regional peace and development. Specific burden and cost-sharing obligations by host governments in support of U.S. military presence in Japan and South Korea have long been features of American alliance relationships in Asia; they have not been emphasized in the rebalance policy.²⁹

The Obama administration's approach to allies and partners, like much of the rebalance policy, was generally supported in Congress, with Republican critics often arguing that even more needed to be done. Typically, Speaker Ryan said, "It's not that America might go it alone. It's that our allies might go their own way—because they're losing faith in us. Saudi Arabia speaks openly of building nuclear weapons. South Korea and Japan harbor similar thoughts...Our allies...are calling for help, and nobody's picking up the phone."³⁰

Relations with allies was not a significant issue for Bernie Sanders, while candidates Clinton, Cruz, and Kasich underscored that U.S. allies in Asia needed reassurance and greater American attention. They generally eschewed specific recommendations involving Japan and South Korea. In contrast, Donald Trump had an impact in trying to turn the tables in the campaign discourse to

a discussion of what the allies, notably Japan and South Korea, were doing to support America rather than the other way around. He also lumped U.S. ally Japan together with China over what he saw as Japan's long record of currency manipulation that disadvantaged U.S. exports.³¹

Hillary Clinton talked about her work as secretary of state to rebuild the confidence of allies. Clinton said, "Our best allies and friends in Europe and Asia were really put out with us because of the way they'd been treated by the Bush administration and were very skeptical that the United States was a good ally any longer and wanted to lead the world toward peace, prosperity and security. I spent so much of my time getting back the confidence and the trust of our friends and allies around the world."³²

Ted Cruz advised that the United States should do better to keep our Asian allies under our influence so that they don't move toward China. He said, "What should concern us, though, is to the extent that China is building alliances, regional alliances throughout the Pacific that are coming at the expense of other nations that had been standing with America... And to the extent this represents other countries in Asia moving more into the orbit of China and away from the West, that is a disturbing development."³³

John Kasich averred that "...our allies feel neglected and abused. We must rebuild these critical relationships in order to better advance our national interests... this includes ... supporting our Pacific allies in the face of Chinese belligerence."³⁴

Bernie Sander's limited commentary on relations with allies in Asia included this remark on the South China Sea disputes, "In my view, we have to work with our partners ... to get countries in the region to find diplomatic solutions to their disputes. [...] We have to continue to reassure our allies in the region, including the Philippines, that we are committed to work with them to prevent instability."³⁵

In stark contrast to the other candidates, Donald Trump argued that the cost of the American military commitments to defend Japan and South Korea is a major drain on limited U.S. resources that weakens America's economic and overall national power and needs to be reversed, either by Japan and South Korea compensating the United States or by American pull back. Trump played down the possible adverse consequences of such a withdrawal, at times arguing that South Korea and Japan are strong enough to deal with aggressive North Korea and that Japanese and South Korean pursuit of nuclear weapons in order to support their security following U.S. withdrawal need not alarm the United States.

Trump said, "We have 28,000 soldiers on the line in South Korea between the mad-man [Kim Jong Un] and them. We get practically nothing compared to the cost for this." He added, "Our military is depleted. But we take care of Japan, we take care of South Korea... every time this maniac from North Korea does anything, we immediately send our ships. We get virtually nothing."³⁶

On proposed U.S. withdrawal, he said, "Yes, I would. I would not do so happily, but I would be willing to [withdraw U.S. troops from Japan and South Korea]. Not happily. [...] We cannot afford to be losing vast amounts of billions of dollars on all of this. We just can't do it anymore."³⁷

On Japan and South Korea seeking nuclear weapons for defense after U.S. withdrawal, the

candidate declared that proliferation is “going to happen anyway.” And he said that, “If Japan had that nuclear threat, I’m not sure that would be a bad thing for us.” Nor would it be so bad, he has said, if South Korea and Saudi Arabia had nuclear weapons, too.³⁸

Implications and Asian Reactions to the 2016 Election Debate on Alliances

Donald Trump’s line of argument on allies and related issues of burden-sharing, arms expansion and nuclear weapons proliferation are widely seen in the United States and in Asia as having potentially profound implications for American interests in stability and development. That the United States would support a candidate with such views raises significant concerns for American allies like Japan and South Korea that benefit greatly from expensive U.S. military presence, as well as others like Australia, which has a record of sharing the military burden with well-trained troops prepared to engage whenever the United States confronts an adversary. China seeks U.S. military pullback from along its strategic eastern rim, but it would face enormous uncertainties in how to deal with nuclear North Korea and with governments in Tokyo and Seoul seeking armaments, including nuclear weapons for self-defense in a new and uncertain security environment in Northeast Asia.

If elected, Mr. Trump will have difficulty implementing his proposed policies toward Asian allies. Overall, the view in Washington toward these initiatives has been negative. The depth of opposition was seen notably when leading Republican senators, accompanied by some leading Democratic senators with strong involvement in Asian affairs, traveled to Asia in May and June 2016 with a clear message of resolve to sustain and strengthen U.S. relations with Asian allies during stops in Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan. Speaker Ryan and the Republican committee chairmen underlined their resolve to continue strong support for allies in a major foreign policy document in June 2016.³⁹

Against that background, commentators in Japan registered a range of views on alliance relations under a new U.S. president. They generally were prepared to work closely with Hillary Clinton who adhered, with the exception of the TPP, to the framework of the rebalance policy which Japan supported. They sought increased support for Japan in its firm stance against China, viewing positively Clinton’s promised greater American resolve on its many differences with China.

Japanese government officials were wary of, but prepared to work with Donald Trump.

Non-government Japanese commentators consulted for this report showed greater concern. Some acknowledged the difficulty a Trump administration would have in carrying out controversial proposals, notably withdrawal of U.S. forces from Japan in the event Japan did not meet U.S. demands on cost-sharing. Congressional opposition, concern from U.S. military leaders responsible for Japan’s defense, adverse media treatment and other possible checks on such drastic foreign policy moves were duly noted. Nonetheless, the anticipated result would be serious disruption and uncertainty in the U.S. commitment at a time when Japan faces a growing nuclear weapons threat from North Korea and a tense stand-off in its relations with a rising China and its growing power and influence. Candidate Trump’s stance also is seen as possibly prompting new U.S. pressure on Japan to do more regarding its own defense efforts and share more of the costs and burden in maintaining stability in Northeast Asia and other regions

important to Japanese stability.

Some non-government commentators added a sense of deep resentment for Mr. Trump's accusations of Japan "free riding" on security matters. His public charges against Japan ran against Japanese views of generous Japanese monetary burden-sharing for U.S. forces in Japan and Japan's cooperative and increasing role as a loyal ally supporting American security and foreign policy initiatives in Asia and throughout the world.

South Korean commentators registered similar albeit less intense concerns over Mr. Trump's cost-sharing demands and possible U.S. withdrawal. They averred that Mr. Trump's proposal was based on ignorance and likely would be adjusted if he came to power. Most acknowledged such plans would meet strong U.S. domestic resistance. Nonetheless, the resulting controversy would weaken American resolve in supporting South Korea. Like several of their Japanese counterparts, many South Korean commentators linked the proposal with the growing American opposition to the TPP as indicators of American international "retrenchment" and "isolationism." And, they also forecast greater U.S. pressure on South Korean allies to share more of the costs of U.S.-led allied operations through monetary payments or building expanded South Korean military capacity. Several South Korean commentators associated with opposition progressive parties were ambivalent about such troubles in the U.S. alliance relationship. They looked forward to an end of conservative party rule in the 2017 South Korean presidential elections and judged that difficulties in U.S. alliance relations would allow for adoption of policies of greater South Korean flexibility to North Korea and China. Some of these progressives also were wary of Hillary Clinton's avowed efforts to strengthen the U.S. alliance, judging that one result would be more spending and expensive military requirements for South Korea.

South Korea's more moderate approach to China saw the nation's commentators differ from Japanese counterparts on a possible Clinton presidency for future alliance relations regarding China. They viewed warily candidate Clinton's promise of greater firmness in America's stand against China on various issues ranging from trade to defense. They referred to the pressure South Korea received from China as South Korea agreed with the United States to deploy the advanced Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile system as the latest episode of having to choose between its American ally and its increasing important and powerful Chinese neighbor. They advised that managing such conflicting pressures was easier when U.S.-China relations were cooperative and more difficult when they were tense, as they have become in recent years.

Commentators in Taiwan focused their concern on possible American pull back from Japan and its negative implications for American defense for Taiwan in a possible conflict with China. Some expressed confidence based on exchanges with U.S. officials that the American security posture in Asia important to Taiwan's security would not be changed. They also referred to contacts with Trump campaign representatives in the United States and in Taiwan reassuring Taiwan of strong Republican Party support, which indeed was registered in the party platform released during the July convention.⁴⁰ They judged that Taiwan is prepared to meet American expectations of greater burden-sharing through purchases of advanced U.S. weapons systems and increases in Taiwan's defense budget. Some even wondered if the U.S. would be willing to

accept offers for a greater American military role in Taiwan. And they echoed the concern voiced in Japan and South Korea that the election campaign rhetoric showed a tendency of greater American domestic preoccupation that forecast less resolve in supporting U.S. commitments in Asia.

Australia remains committed to its alliance with the U.S., but worries that candidate Trump's comments about alliances, even if they have little resonance across the American establishment, suggest a "divided" America in which international crises have not had a galvanizing effect on American commitment to leadership. The Philippines continues to value its alliance and overall commercial and people-to-people relationship with the U.S. There remain questions in the Philippines about U.S. commitment to defending the country's sovereignty in the South China Sea despite strong signals from U.S. actions and officials. Some Indians, while recognizing the significant improvement in bilateral partnership with the United States, wonder whether they are moving in that direction at a time when the United States itself may be less committed to alliances and partnerships and even a leading international role. An Indonesian commentator noted the improvement in bilateral relations with Washington but cautioned that in Indonesia's case it was "just a friend," not an ally. Malaysia has seen significant improvement in relations with Washington and worries that if allies are treated badly, partners such as Kuala Lumpur might not be well-treated in the future. This worry is especially prevalent because under the Obama administration, Malaysia has seen important advances in the bilateral partnership, including an invitation to join the TPP.

MANAGING NORTH KOREA IN THE 2016 ELECTION

The Obama administration has isolated and pressured the North Korean regime with an ever stronger array of U.S.-backed international and bilateral sanctions because Pyongyang continues to pursue development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile delivery systems in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. The U.S. government with few exceptions has avoided bilateral and multilateral negotiations with North Korea until Pyongyang shows willingness to carry out denuclearization. In defiance, the Kim Jong Un regime has moved ahead vigorously with nuclear weapons and ballistic missile tests, along with rhetoric threatening South Korea, Japan and the United States.⁴¹

The North's progress in weapons development clearly showed the failure of the United States and its allies and other powers, notably China, to curb the nuclear weapons threat posed by North Korea. Against this background, some American specialists joined some advocates in South Korea and government representatives in China in calling for renewed negotiations and other outreach to North Korea. Some of these American specialists judged that unlike in the case of economic sanctions prompting Iran to agree to curb nuclear weapons development, North Korea has become so isolated from the international economy that further U.S.-backed sanctions have little of the impact sought by the United States. They added that the sanctions regime makes North Korea ever more dependent on China, which is widely suspected to be less than vigorous in applying sanctions, thereby allowing trade and access to foreign goods sought by North Korea.⁴²

The calls for renewed U.S. engagement in negotiations with North Korea had little impact on Obama government policy, which focused on stronger sanctions and stronger pressure on China to implement the sanctions. The Republican-led Congress went further in passing with almost uniform support in both houses of Congress legislation that sought to remedy what Republicans saw as the “failure” of the Obama government’s policy with an array of even tougher American sanctions against North Korea.⁴³

North Korea’s nuclear weapons test of January 2016 ensured that the issue would be treated prominently in the debates. Republican candidates tended to characterize Kim Jong Un as irrational, avoiding comment of any strategy North Korea might have in seeking nuclear weapons and other strategic goals; and they blamed the alleged incompetence of the current and past U.S. Democratic administrations for the failure to stop North Korea’s nuclear weapons development. Their recommendations focused on tightening sanctions on North Korea and pressing China to do more to support the sanctions. Strong sanctions also were favored by Hillary Clinton while Bernie Sanders had little to say about North Korea.⁴⁴

Donald Trump followed the consensus on isolating and sanctioning North Korea until he broke dramatically with it in an exclusive interview with *Reuters* in May, saying that as president he would be willing to meet with the North Korean leader in order to try to stop North Korea’s nuclear program.⁴⁵ Prior to his proposal for presidential talks with North Korea’s leader, Donald Trump expressed both admiration and condemnation for Kim Jong Un. Trump claimed that China has total control over North Korea and that the United States should leverage its power over China to make them control North Korea better. He said, “You gotta give him [Kim Jong Un] credit, how many young guys [...] take over these tough generals [...] he takes over and he’s the boss, it’s incredible. He wiped out the uncle, he wiped out this one that one, this guy doesn’t play games and we can’t play games with him because he really does have missiles and he really does have nukes.” He added, “China says they don’t have that good of control over North Korea. They have tremendous control. I deal with the Chinese all of the time. [...] I deal with them. They tell me. They have total, absolute control, practically, of North Korea.”⁴⁶

As secretary of state in the first term of the Obama administration, Hillary Clinton avoided blaming American policy and focused instead on using China to influence North Korea and on being firm with North Korea that its provocations won’t be tolerated. She said, “North Korea’s goal is to blackmail the world into easing the pressure on its rogue regime. We can’t give in to or in any way encourage this kind of bullying. Instead, we should increase pressure and send Pyongyang an unmistakable message that its nuclear brinksmanship won’t succeed.” She added, “The Chinese government, which wields influence with the North Koreans, must be more assertive in deterring the North’s irresponsible actions, and it should take actions to halt prohibited activities transpiring across its borders or its firms that participate in illicit trade or proliferation will have to face sanctions.”⁴⁷

Ted Cruz blamed the Obama and Clinton administrations for failing to prevent North Korea from obtaining nuclear weapons. He said, “Why does Kim Jong Un in North Korea, a crazy nutcase, and that’s a technical term, have nuclear weapons? Because of the failures of the Clinton administration.”⁴⁸

John Kasich supported multilateral diplomacy to resolve issues with North Korea, increasing security and sanctions, and he mentioned using China to apply pressure.⁴⁹

Bernie Sanders mentioned North Korea as a dangerous anomaly and said that the United States should work with China to influence North Korea. He advised, “China is one of the few major countries in the world that has significant support for North Korea, and I think we got to do everything we can to put pressure on China. I worry very much about an isolated, paranoid country with atomic bombs.”⁵⁰

Implications and Asian Reactions to the 2016 Election Debate on North Korea

Donald Trump’s departure from the general American consensus on how to deal with nuclear North Korea on the one hand undermines the credibility of the Obama government’s policy of sanctions and isolation. It also raises uncertainties and questions on the part of U.S. allies and partners that have worked together with the United States in imposing tougher sanctions on North Korea, as well as on the part of China and the North Korean regime. Trump’s raising presidential-level talks with North Korea disrupts the current hard-line approaches to North Korea of the South Korean and Japanese governments. China has called for negotiations, though Beijing remains wary of direct U.S.-North Korea talks that exclude China for fear of agreements adverse to Chinese interests. North Korea has a record of using high-level talks with American leaders for its own purposes that have not benefitted the United States. On the other hand, Trump’s departure does not yet show much appeal in the United States. North Korean commentary supporting the Republican candidate is used by his opponents to discredit Trump in the U.S. election race.⁵¹

There were only a few specific comments by those consulted in Asia for this report about candidate Trump’s proposal for talks with Kim Jong Un. There was skepticism that the proposal would be implemented successfully, especially given the strong opposition in Congress and the Obama government. Some in Seoul said it reflected Trump’s impatience and ignorance of Korean affairs. Reluctant to choose in conflicts between the United States and China, observers in South Korea were wary of a possible increased U.S. push on South Korea to join it in applying pressure on China to carry out strong sanctions against North Korea. Progressives now in the political opposition in South Korea were open to Trump’s call for renewed high-level talks with Pyongyang. Some in Tokyo observed that Japan is used to such abrupt shifts in U.S. tactics toward North Korea, witnessed notably in the sharp U.S. move toward bilateral talks with North Korea following its first nuclear test in 2006. In Beijing, observers were glad that criticism of China’s role in North Korea remained secondary in the U.S. election campaign. The salience of the North Korean issue is less prominent elsewhere in Asia and U.S. policy tends to be interpreted through the lens of impacts of U.S. North Korea policy changes on alliance relations and ties to China.

CHINA IN THE 2016 ELECTION

That often sharp criticism of China remains in the 2016 election debates over Asia is consistent with an overall hardening of American policy toward the Chinese government and its policies. Specialists detected a broad sense of American disappointment at the apparent failure in

longstanding U.S. efforts to constructively interact with China's leaders in expectation that those leaders would conform more to international norms in line with American interests. Instead, they found an ever more powerful Chinese state under the often bold leadership of President Xi Jinping seeking unfair advantage at America's expense and posing ever larger challenges to important U.S. interests. In particular, Xi's China:

- Uses coercive means generally short of direct military force to advance Chinese control in the East and South China Seas at the expense of neighbors and American interests in the regional order.
- Uses foreign exchange reserves and excess industrial capacity to launch self-serving international economic development programs and institutions that seek to undermine U.S. leadership and/or exclude the United States.
- Advances China's military buildup targeted at the United States in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Continues cyber-theft of U.S. economic assets and intellectual property, conducts unfair market access and currency practices, and intensified repression and political control—all with serious adverse consequences for U.S. interests.⁵²

For many years, President Obama refused to join the bipartisan chorus of critics of Chinese behavior in the Congress and media and among a wide range of interest groups. He remained focused on pragmatic cooperation and managing differences constructively with Chinese leaders. Nevertheless, China's egregious behavior reached a point in 2014 where the president became outspoken in repeatedly criticizing Chinese actions on the important issues noted above. The Chinese president seemed to ignore the complaints, leaving it to lower-level officials to rebut. Over time, the Obama administration exerted pressure and took other steps to counter cyber-theft of American intellectual property and economic know how, coercive expansion in the South China Sea, undermining sanctions against North Korea and Iran, economic controls adverse to American companies and growing repression of Chinese civil society and human rights. President Obama has particularly singled out China in an effort to garner support for the TPP. At the same time, President Obama and President Xi continued to pursue greater cooperation in areas where interests overlapped; they appeared determined not to allow their disputes to undermine efforts to move the overall relationship in a positive direction.⁵³

Though most presidential candidates voiced harsh criticism of Chinese policies and behavior, the mix of strong differences and positive engagement seen in the Obama administration's policy toward China was reflected in the candidates similarly mixed policy recommendations. The contenders' views also were in line with American public opinion that on balance was disapproving of the Chinese government, but ranked China lower than in the recent past as an economic threat and viewed China's military as less threatening to U.S. interests than terrorism, nuclear weapons development in North Korea and Iran, various conflicts in the Middle East, climate change, refugee flows and infectious diseases.⁵⁴

Hillary Clinton's discourse on China showed a general theme of injustice. China was seen as manipulative as it maneuvers for selfish gains at the expense of U.S. international interests and American workers. Clinton underlined her past record and continued resolve to rectify various

wrongs, abuses, unfair practices, and China's threatening of allies. Key themes in her campaign include:

- Holding China accountable. "As secretary of state, Clinton reasserted America's role as a Pacific power and called out China's aggressive actions in the region. As president, she'll work with friends and allies to promote strong rules of the road and institutions in Asia, and encourage China to be a responsible stakeholder—including on cyberspace, human rights, trade, territorial disputes, and climate change—and hold it accountable if it does not."⁵⁵
- China's rise. "How we handle that, how we respond to it will determine our future and the world's future. I want to see a peaceful rise for China...but we also have to be fully vigilant. China's military is growing very quickly, they're establishing military installations that again threaten countries we have treaties with... They're also trying to hack into everything that doesn't move in America. Stealing commercial secrets...from defense contractors, stealing huge amounts of government information, all looking for an advantage."⁵⁶
- Chinese abuses. "I've gone toe-to-toe with China's top leaders on some of the toughest issues we face, from cyber-attacks to human rights to climate change to trade and more. I know how they operate and they know if I'm your president they are going to have to toe the line because we are going to once and for all get fair treatment or they're not going to get access to our markets. When you know how somebody operates and you know they're always trying to game the system and you know that they really don't care about the rules of the road, you have to get tough and you have to be ready to really draw the line. And I think we are at that point."⁵⁷

Clinton's Democratic opponent Bernie Sanders focused primarily on trade and how China's development has come at the cost of American workers. He opposed international trade treaties in general and with China in particular because he said it led to job losses in the United States and the weakening of labor unions. "I voted against [permanent normal trade relations] with China, that was the right vote, and if elected president I will radically transform trade policies." Sanders also advocated working with China to curb fossil fuel consumption and address global climate change.⁵⁸

Marco Rubio's well-developed approach to China was much tougher than what he saw as the "disaster" of Clinton's tenure as secretary of state and the failed engagement policy of President Obama. He favored major increases in defense spending and strengthened relations with allies and partners in the Asia-Pacific; strong retaliation against Chinese economic misconduct and use of the Trans Pacific Partnership and other free trade agreements to strengthen strategic ties with regional partners; and use of U.S. leadership statements, visa bans, asset freezes and other means against Chinese officials involved with human rights abuses and internal repression in China.⁵⁹

Ted Cruz said the best way to approach China is to emphasize U.S. military and economic might. He cited former President Ronald Reagan's "peace through strength" approach toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War as a model for contemporary U.S.-China relations. Cruz also declared that China had committed acts of "cyberwar" against the United States, and later he

recommended “counter attacks” to emphasize that there “will be a price to be paid.” On human rights, Cruz joined other senators in petitioning for a plaza outside the Chinese embassy in Washington to be named after Liu Xiaobo, a human rights activist and 2010 Nobel Laureate who is imprisoned in China.⁶⁰

According to Donald Trump, the main problem the United States has with China is that we’ve lost China’s respect and we aren’t using our power to influence them. The source of our power over China, according to Trump, is our economic strength and he proposed tariffs of 45 % on Chinese imports to counter unfair Chinese economic practices. Overall, Trump was not hostile to or confrontational with China. “We desire to live peacefully and in friendship with Russia and China. We have serious differences with these two nations, and must regard them with open eyes, but we are not bound to be adversaries. We should seek common ground based on shared interests.” Trump saw the blame for the massive U.S. trade deficit and negative impact on American manufacturing and job losses resting with maladroitness American policies. Trump favored a strong military with “maximum firepower,” but tended to avoid discussing China as a national security threat.⁶¹ He averred that issues with China can be dealt with through negotiations using American strengths as leverage.⁶²

John Kasich was moderate about China. Kasich listed four major issues with China: North Korea, the South China Sea, cyber-attacks, and currency manipulation. He advised that “We don’t seek confrontation with China. But then why would we? Just as we have worked with China since President Nixon’s historic initiative of 45 years ago, together we should forge innovative solutions and institutions that respect and accommodate the national security interests of every Pacific nation.”⁶³

Implications and Asian Reactions to China in the 2016 Election

U.S. policies dealing with China are seen as not working in several important areas. However, China is not seen as an enemy by the candidates or American public opinion. Most of the candidates, including nominees Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, favored tougher policies, with Trump focused on seeking leverage in negotiations centered on economic issues, while Clinton’s broader scope of concern included salient national security and human rights problems. The overall upshot of all the discussion of China in the campaign was moderate controversy over proposed remedies, with the possible exception of sometimes strident warnings against Donald Trump’s threat to impose 45% tariffs on Chinese imports to the United States.

Observers in Beijing saw negatives with both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Like many Americans, they were frustrated with the downward trend in U.S.-China relations and judged that trend would worsen at least to some degree if Clinton were elected. Some in Beijing nonetheless voiced confidence that mutual interests and highly integrated U.S.-China government relationships would guard against relations going seriously off track. Chinese derision of Donald Trump earlier this year shifted to seeking advantage given the candidate’s disruption of U.S. alliances along China’s rim and emphasis on seeking common ground with China through negotiations. Overall, a common view was that China could “shape” President Trump to behave in line with its interests as Mr. Trump was seen as less ideological and more pragmatic than Ms. Clinton.

Commentators in Japan urged tougher U.S. policy toward China and South Koreans stressed avoiding increased U.S.-China tensions. In Taiwan, the new government under President Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) sought to avoid confrontation with China over China's demand that the government accept the so-called "1992 Consensus" used by Beijing and the previous Taiwan government of President Ma Ying-jeou of the Kuomintang Party to vaguely acknowledge that Taiwan and the People's Republic of China are part of one China—a demand the Tsai government sees as undermining its sovereignty. Taiwanese supporters of the DPP judged that some increase in U.S.-China tensions on other issues might lead to more U.S. support for the Tsai government. Taiwan supporters of the now opposition Kuomintang Party judged that U.S.-China tensions would "squeeze" Taiwan between China and the U.S., providing no good options. Some observers in Taiwan cautioned that Donald Trump's proposed negotiations with China could lead Beijing, as in the past, to demand U.S. concessions on Taiwan as "a price to be paid" for better U.S. relations with China.

Elsewhere in Asia the ongoing calibration between China and the United States continues. Public opinion in Australia is roughly evenly split in favorability ratings toward the U.S. and China, even though support for the U.S. alliance is high. Australia's commitment to the U.S. alliance remains constrained by economic ties with China. India remains very wary of China but bilateral trade ties have boomed—including a huge trade deficit—and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sought increased Chinese investment in India. But China's cooperation with Pakistan, increased role among Indian Ocean states and the unresolved border dispute burden bilateral ties. Indians regard a tough U.S. posture on China to be ultimately useful as a basis for improving relations with the United States while maintaining strategic autonomy through select cooperation with China. Indonesia and Malaysia also do not want to choose between the United States and China and want Beijing-Washington bilateral relations to be neither too cooperative nor too conflictual. The Philippines has recently moved from tougher to more uncertain postures vis-à-vis China in the context of steadily upgraded cooperation with the United States through the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

DISPUTES WITH CHINA OVER THE SOUTH CHINA SEA IN THE 2016 ELECTION

Heading the list of disagreements in the troubled Sino-American relationship entering the U.S. election year of 2016 was the disagreement over Chinese expansion using coercive means short of direct military force to advance its control at the expense of other claimants to wide swaths of disputed territory in the South China Sea.

President Obama's responses to this and other Chinese challenges have been measured. President Obama became more publicly vocal against Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea in 2014 and 2015 and over time he followed his vocal complaints with actions. In this period, China's continued massive dredging and construction of military and other installations on newly created South China Sea islands. In tandem came much more active U.S. military deployments in the disputed South China Sea, along with blunt warnings by U.S. military leaders of China's ambitions. Meanwhile, more prominent U.S. cooperation with allies Japan, the Philippines and Australia along with India and concerned Southeast Asian powers strengthened regional states

and complicated Chinese expansion.

Rising tensions over the South China Sea saw U.S. armed combat aircraft repeatedly patrol with Philippine forces over Scarborough Shoal beginning in April. This large Chinese-claimed maritime feature near the main islands of the Philippines was long used by Philippine fishermen and patrolled by Philippine security forces until stronger Chinese coast guard forces expelled the fishermen, took control and occupied it in 2012. Other episodes of tension over the past year included Chinese armed fighter jets harassing U.S. surveillance planes by flying dangerously close to those planes, and U.S. naval forces disregarding Chinese military warnings and shadowing Chinese warships and aircraft in carrying out so-called freedom of navigation exercises near land features occupied by China in the disputed South China Sea. A highpoint of China-U.S. disagreement came when the Arbitral Tribunal affiliated with the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled in July against China's vague claims to much of the South China Sea in a case brought by the Philippines and strongly backed by the United States, Japan and Australia. Beijing had prepared for a possible adverse ruling with a large-scale propaganda campaign to discredit the Tribunal and the Philippines case and repeatedly warned against U.S. and other "outside" infringements on China's claimed territorial sovereignty.

Some American specialists and media commentary questioned the wisdom of the tough American stance. However, the Republican-led Congress held hearings, passed legislation and worked with the administration to fund a maritime security capacity-building initiative for regional countries, and issued letters and statements arguing for more forthright American opposition to China's expansionist behavior that came at the expense of U.S. treaty ally the Philippines, as well as Vietnam, a partner of rising importance for the United States.⁶⁴

The candidates have not added much to the ongoing discussion on the South China Sea dispute. The debate over what the United States should do remains active, but the presidential candidates at best have had a secondary influence on the discussion. Thus, for example, the Clinton and Trump campaigns responded to the Arbitral Tribunal ruling in July with brief statements of support.⁶⁵

Earlier, Hillary Clinton supported the Philippines saying, "We've got challenges in the South China Sea because of what China is doing in building up these military installations. [...]" She added, "I have been very strongly in support with the Philippines in this dispute and I am proud of the Philippines for taking their dispute to the international court ... I thought that was a very wise decision, because there should not be a seizure of any territory until there's some kind of resolution that is legal."⁶⁶

John Kasich recommended the United States increase its presence in the South China Sea and other nearby waters to signal to China that its actions won't be tolerated.⁶⁷

Bernie Sanders mentioned the need to keep peace in the South China Sea in this way: "With China, the United States has to continue to work with our allies and partners in the region to maintain peace and prosperity. That means ensuring freedom of navigation in the South China Sea—which is critical to global commerce. It also means preventing tensions having to do with overlapping maritime claims from spiraling out of control between China, which claims much of the South China Sea, and other countries with overlapping claims of their own."⁶⁸

Donald Trump mentioned China in the South China Sea as a threat but without much evidence or explanation. He said, “[China is] building a military island in the middle of the South China Sea—a military island. [...] They built it in about one year, this massive military port. They’re building up their military to a point that is very scary. You have a problem with ISIS. You have a bigger problem with China.”⁶⁹

Implications and Asian Reactions to China and the South China Sea in the 2016 Election

The South China Sea dispute could easily rise in importance for the presidential candidates in the event of such setbacks as a shooting incident or face-off of armed forces in the contested territory. For now, it appears that the ongoing debate will continue along recent lines without resolution or serious worsening, passing from this U.S. administration to the next.

Observers in Beijing generally supported China’s truculent response to the PCA-announced ruling. They advised the United States to react to the ruling in a low-key way in order to avoid further worsening in U.S.-China relations over the South China Sea disputes.

Interlocutors in Tokyo and Seoul had little to add to prevailing patterns of Japan supporting a tougher U.S. stand on differences with China and South Korea, seeing such tensions as working against its interests to avoid having to choose between Washington and Beijing.

Observers in Taipei said that the Taiwan government was working closely with the U.S. government in preparing to respond in measured terms to the PCA-announced ruling. Taiwan sought to keep on good terms with Washington while avoiding major retreat from its traditional expansive claims to the South China Sea, which mirror Beijing’s. To do the latter could cause problems with Beijing at this delicate time in Taiwan-China relations by signaling that Taiwan was moving away from its support of territorial claims associated with one China. However, the ruling had a negative impact on elite and public opinion in Taiwan. In particular, the ruling used a phrase very offensive to people in Taiwan in referring to the Taiwan government. And to the reported surprise of Taipei and Washington, the Arbitral Tribunal made a ruling that Taiping Island, the largest natural land feature in the Spratly Islands of the South China Sea which is controlled by Taipei, does not qualify as an island under terms of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Thus, it was not eligible to the large Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) given to islands as opposed to “rocks” permanently above sea level or above sea level at low tide. This development came as a significant setback to Taiwan’s claims of fishing and other territorial rights in the South China Sea and prompted strong negative reaction in Taiwan that had to be accommodated by the government, according to observers in Taipei. The result was a strong statement from the Taiwan government criticizing the U.S.-backed ruling and affirming Taiwan’s territorial claims.

Australia has called for the PCA ruling to be followed, but in general as a non-claimant has supported the U.S. position and avoided becoming directly involved. It has resisted conducting freedom-of-navigation operations (FONOPS) with the United States. Indonesia’s position vis-à-vis China has hardened given China’s apparent claims to sea resources near Natuna, but so far Indonesia officially maintains that it does not have a territorial dispute with China. Malaysia, too, has evinced greater concerns about China’s actions, but has not publicly hailed the PCA ruling.

The new government in the Philippines has indicated that it sees the PCA ruling as the basis of discussions with China and it is not clear if China will accept such an approach for bilateral discussions.

TAIWAN IN THE 2016 ELECTION

As discussed above, the Xi Jinping government's territorial expansion, cyber-theft, unfair economic practices and internal repression drew strong rebukes from President Obama and hardened the administration's overall policy toward China. The president's wide-ranging and often sharp criticism notably did not include China's policy toward Taiwan. Rather, the president and his administration continued to adhere to an approach inherited from the George W. Bush administration that Taiwan issues should be handled in ways that avoid serious negative consequences for American policy toward China. For example, the president's rebalance policy in the Asia-Pacific region was repeatedly and sometimes harshly criticized by China. The Obama government nonetheless went ahead with a wide range of initiatives with Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam and other countries around Taiwan, but initial administration statements about the policy failed to even mention Taiwan. The administration later began stating routinely that Taiwan was included in the rebalance policy, though it generally avoided discussing any details of what the United States and Taiwan were doing in the context of the rebalance, presumably to avoid offending China in ways seen adverse to administration interests.

Thus, the hardening of the Obama government's stance on various aspects of China policy has not been accompanied by hardening in its policy toward China over Taiwan. U.S. officials highlighted progress in relations with Taiwan involving cooperation on global issues, increased official interchanges at levels somewhat higher than in the recent past, assisting Taiwan membership in international bodies and other matters that were deemed less likely to prompt frictions with China. They avoided taking sides against presidential candidate and now President Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which refuses to endorse a view of "one China" demanded by Beijing.⁷⁰ This behavior contrasted with the Obama administration use of a prominent news leak to voice concerns with her cross-strait policy during Tsai's unsuccessful run for the presidency in 2012. The delicate cross-strait situation following the January 2016 election caused the U.S. government to double down on efforts to encourage both Beijing and Taipei to avoid provocations, seek constructive communications, and reach compromise formulas or understandings that will avoid a break in cross-strait interchange detrimental to peace and stability.⁷¹

American critics of the administration's policy toward Taiwan included Republican leaders in Congress, Republican-leaning think tanks, media and interest groups, along with many Democrats and progressive think tanks, media and interest groups advocating change in existing U.S. Taiwan policy to be less deferential to China.⁷² They were encouraged by the end of the government of the long-ruling Kuomintang Party of President Ma Ying-jeou (2008-2016) and its strong accommodation of Beijing.⁷³

There has been limited attention to Taiwan during the 2016 election debates. A few Republican candidates, and more prominently the Republican Party platform, and extensive

media commentary by a Trump campaign adviser have called for major changes in policy toward Taiwan to make it less deferential to Beijing.⁷⁴ Regarding specific statements by the presidential candidates, Senator Marco Rubio has been active in congressional measures to support Taiwan in opposition to Beijing. He notably backed a strong U.S. military buildup to insure Taiwan's protection in the face of China's military power. He advised that U.S. policy should be guided by historic American reassurances of support for Taiwan and not by a reputed need to avoid exacerbating tensions with China over the issue.⁷⁵

Senator Cruz released a statement on the results of Taiwan's January 2016 presidential elections lauding Taiwan on ideological grounds as a beacon for Democracy inspiring those in China and Hong Kong seeking freedom against the oppressive Communist government.⁷⁶

Senator McCain and other senators visited Asia in May-June 2016 to reassure U.S. allies and partners of continued strong American regional engagement despite Donald Trump's call for allies depending on U.S. military protection to do more to offset the U.S. costs or face American withdrawal. McCain and six of the visiting senators stopped in Taiwan to affirm support for recently installed President Tsai Ing-wen. The visit marked the first by the chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee in 26 years and the largest group of U.S. senators to visit Taiwan in 10 years.⁷⁷

Implications and Asian Reactions to Taiwan in the 2016 Election

The U.S. election debates on Taiwan show little deviation from the arguments seen in the Congress and the media prior to and during the American campaign. How Hillary Clinton's promised hardening of policy on disputes with China would impact her approach to Taiwan remains undefined. Donald Trump also has not devoted special attention to the issue.

Observers in Taipei are concerned that Taiwan will suffer if Donald Trump follows through with pledges to negotiate major agreements with China as the Taiwan issue will likely be raised by the Chinese side in those negotiations. Taipei also worries that candidate Trump's approach to U.S. ally Japan will seriously weaken the U.S. ability to support Taiwan in the face of China's military intimidation. Observers in Taiwan appreciated the resolve shown by McCain and his Senate colleagues to continue support for U.S. allies and partners in Asia regardless of the results of the American presidential election. They were encouraged by interactions with Trump campaign Asia expert Peter Navarro during a recent visit to Taiwan and strong support for Taiwan registered in the Republican Party platform.⁷⁸ The PCA decision led observers to Taiwan to complain that its interests in the South China Sea have less priority than other concerns in current U.S. policy. There was broad concern among Taiwan observers on how they could advance Taiwan's importance in the U.S. administration's policy deliberations. The Taiwan government is preparing actively for future entry into the TPP and hopes the agreement will be approved by Congress, allowing Taiwan to be supported for entry by the United States in the next round of membership for the body.

Taiwan issues did not figure prominently in comments by interlocutors in China or elsewhere in Asia. High-level interlocutors in Beijing judged that Hillary Clinton's tougher approach would not involve major moves on Taiwan.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE 2016 ELECTION

The Obama government's rebalance policy followed through with much greater American diplomatic activism throughout the region, with the president leading a variety of U.S. efforts in promoting values involving rule of law, human rights and democracy. In practice, such concern over American values often got in the way of supporting or advancing smoother U.S. relations with several Asian countries in recent years. Relations with defense treaty ally Thailand declined because U.S. legislation disapproves and restricts American relations with any government like the current Thai government that came to power by means of a military coup. Strong Obama government interest to move forward in developing closer relations with Myanmar was slowed by that government's still incomplete transition from strict military rule and by such human rights issues as the poor treatment of the Muslim minority Rohingya people. The Communist Party-led governments of China and Vietnam suppress dissent, control media, restrict non-government organizations and allow police excesses and compromised judicial judgments in the interest of sustaining one-party rule. These practices led to American complaints and actions that both powers, important to America's overall relationship with Asia, viewed very negatively as interference in their internal affairs. Concern over the abysmal record on human rights of the North Korean regime added to the justifications of American policy makers to sanction the Pyongyang regime.⁷⁹

Hillary Clinton has emphasized women's rights, especially in China. She said Xi Jinping was "shameless" in hosting a meeting on women's rights at the UN while persecuting feminists in China.⁸⁰ She sided with the persecuted Chinese feminists adding, "Well, you know, I went to Beijing in 1995 and said women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights. And I believe that with all my heart. [...] Human rights always have to be at the center of who we are as a nation, and what I will do as president. You can count on that."⁸¹

Clinton was one of the few candidates to mention Myanmar, noting that she had a hand in its liberalization. Clinton noted that a single successful election is not the end of the process. She said that after the November 2015 election in Myanmar, "[W]e cannot forget that one election does not constitute true democracy—that takes a commitment to human rights, strong institutions, and a thriving civil society."⁸²

A highlight of Ted Cruz's concerns with human rights and democracy were released statements expressing concern about Obama's threat to veto Cruz's bill to rename the plaza in front of the Chinese embassy "Liu Xiaobo Plaza" in recognition of a prominent jailed Chinese dissident.⁸³ John Kasich paid attention to human rights in general terms.⁸⁴

Bernie Sanders' strong concern for social justice issue was not complemented with many statements about human rights and democracy. His campaign supported freedom in Tibet and political and religious rights in China.⁸⁵

Donald Trump ignored or rebuffed criticism by various international human rights bodies for his comments on Muslims, torture, and proposed treatment of undocumented migrants. He also was on record as supporting political rights in China. He said, "Why am I concerned with political rights? I'm a good businessman and I can be amazingly unsentimental when I need to be. I also recognize that when it comes down to it, we can't do much to change a nation's internal

policies. But I'm unwilling to shrug off the mistreatment of China's citizens by their own government. My reason is simple: These oppressive policies make it clear that China's current government has contempt for our way of life."⁸⁶

Implications and Asian Reactions to Human Rights and Democracy in the 2016 Election

The election debates over human rights and democracy have reflected the secondary position of these issues in overall U.S. policy toward Asia. Observers in Taipei and Tokyo saw their governments' support for common values with the United States as grounds for continued strong American support for them. Observers in China registered concern that Hillary Clinton's stand on values may be more "ideological" and troublesome for China. Donald Trump promises less attention to these issues in their view. In Southeast Asia, where democracy and human rights protections are mixed, there is an ongoing worry about how much the U.S. will focus and act on these issues. Most Southeast Asian governments face a variety of congressional and administration restrictions due to human rights and democracy considerations. A Filipino commentator expressed the view that the policies of the new administration in Manila are likely to increase U.S. attention to human rights conditions there.

Notes

¹ This report uses campaign statements and other materials made available in the East-West Center Washington 2016 Presidential Candidates on Asia, <http://www.asiamattersforamerica.org/asia/2016-presidential-candidates-on-asia>; other news and commentary; and interviews and discussions with senior Republican and Democratic Asian specialists conducted in Washington, DC during June 2016 and with Asian specialists, commentators and officials in Beijing, Seoul, Taipei, Tokyo and Washington during July 2016. The principal findings and implications of the report were discussed with and validated by those interviewed, many of whom requested anonymity. The report benefitted greatly from the expert research assistance of Melissa Newcomb and Sarah Wang.

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⁷² The critics generally used three lines of argument in advocating for change in U.S. policy less deferential to Beijing over the Taiwan issue. (1.) One group strongly urges U.S. policy to deal with Taiwan for its own sake and thus argues for more forthright American government support for Taiwan's entry into the TPP, more frequent U.S. cabinet-level visits to Taiwan, and the sale of more advanced U.S. military equipment to Taiwan; they also advise that Taiwan should be at the center of recently strong American leadership complaints about Chinese bullying and intimidation of neighbors. (2.) A second group strives to counter Chinese expansionism at American expense with a clear strategy working with China's neighbors involving maritime control, and interdiction if necessary. Taiwan is at the center of the so-called first island chain and looms large in such plans. They involve gaining Taiwan's cooperation in setting and monitoring sensors and other means of surveillance, preparing to deploy mobile anti-ship missile units to various locations in the first island chain, and readiness to use mines and other means to deny access to Chinese ships and submarines. (3.) A third group argues that America should take actions showing greater support for Taiwan as part of a cost imposition strategy to counter Xi Jinping's anti-American practices. In their view, the kinds of steps advocated by the previous two groups should be considered and used as the United States endeavors to show Beijing that its various challenges to U.S. interests will not be cost-free and actually will be counterproductive for Chinese concerns on the all-important Taiwan issue.

⁷³ For differing approaches on how to handle the Taiwan issue, see among others: Richard C. Bush III, "Cross-Strait relations: Not a one-way street," *Brookings Institution*, April 22, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/04/22/cross-strait-relations-not-a-one-way-street/>; Mark Stokes and Sabrina Tsai, "The United States and Future Policy Options in the Taiwan Strait," *Project 2049*, http://www.project2049.net/documents/Future_US%20Policy%20Options%20in%20the%20Taiwan%20Strait_Project%202049.pdf (February 1, 2016); T.X. Hammes, "Strategy for an Unthinkable Conflict," *The Diplomat*, July 27, 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/07/military-strategy-for-an-unthinkable-conflict/>; John Bolton, "China-Taiwan tensions are rising," *John Bolton PAC*, April 25, 2016, <http://www.boltonpac.com/2016/04/bolton-china-taiwan-tensions-rising-obama-responds-critical/>.

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⁷⁵ William Lowther, "US presidential candidate pledges to defend Taiwan," *The Taipei Times*, January 9, 2016, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/01/09/2003636798>.

⁷⁶ Ted Cruz, "Sen. Cruz: Taiwan Is Exemplar of Liberty and Best Hope for Peace in East Asia," *Senate Office of Ted Cruz*, January 16, 2016, https://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=2576.

⁷⁷ William Lowther, "Tsai has 'very successful' US meetings," *The Taipei Times*, June 4, 2015, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2015/06/04/2003619870>.

⁷⁸ "The 2016 Republican Party Platform," July 18, 2016, <https://www.gop.com/the-2016-republican-party-platform/> (accessed July 25, 2016); see Appendix for side-by-side comparison with the Democratic Party platform, July 21, 2016, <https://www.demconvention.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Democratic-Party-Platform-7.21.16-no-lines.pdf> (accessed July 25, 2016).

⁷⁹ See review of these and other human rights issues in Asia in “Asia: Human Rights Watch,” *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/asia>; Department of State, “2015 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” April 13, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/04/255799.htm>.

⁸⁰ Hillary Clinton, *Twitter* (as reported by *The Sydney Morning Herald*), September 7, 2016, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/chinese-president-xi-jinping-shameless-for-hosting-summit-on-womens-rights-says-hillary-clinton-20150927-gjw67c.html#ixzz3wtfkiAVb%20>.

⁸¹ Hillary Clinton, “Democratic Presidential Debate in Las Vegas, Nevada” Televised Broadcast, *MSNBC*, February 18, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/transcript-msnbc-telemundo-clinton-sanders-town-hall-n520781>.

⁸² Hillary Clinton, “The Briefing: Statement from Hillary Clinton on the Burmese Election,” *Hillary for America*, <https://www.hillaryclinton.com/briefing/statements/2015/11/11/statement-from-hillary-clinton-on-the-burmese-election/>.

⁸³ Ted Cruz, “Sen. Cruz Responds to Obama Administration Threat to Veto Bill Honoring Chinese Dissidents,” *Senate Office of Ted Cruz*, February 16, 2016, https://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=2596.

⁸⁴ John Kasich, “A Conversation With John Kasich,” (Council of Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., December 9, 2015) <http://www.cfr.org/united-states/conversation-john-kasich/p37304>.

⁸⁵ “Bernie Sanders on China,” *Feel the Bern*, <http://feelthebern.org/bernie-sanders-on-china/>.

⁸⁶ “Donald Trump on China,” *On the Issues*, http://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Donald_Trump_China.htm.

Appendix: Comparison of 2016 Democratic and Republican Party Platforms' Asia Policies

Policy Topic	2016 Democratic Party Platform	2016 Republican Party Platform
<p>On Allies and Partners in the Asia-Pacific:</p>	<p>"From the Asia Pacific to the Indian Ocean, we will deepen our relationships in the region with Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand. We will honor our historic commitment to Japan. We will continue to invest in a long-term strategic partnership with India—the world's largest democracy, a nation of great diversity, and an important Pacific power. We will build on the historic opening with Burma and advocate for greater human rights protections and national reconciliation among Burma's many different ethnic groups." (p 49)</p>	<p>"We are a Pacific nation with economic, military, and cultural ties to all the countries of the oceanic rim and treaty alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand." (p 48)</p> <p>"India is our geopolitical ally and a strategic trading partner. The dynamism of its people and the endurance of their democratic institutions are earning their country a position of leadership not only in Asia but throughout the world. We encourage the Indian government to permit expanded foreign investment and trade, the key to rising living standards for those left out of their country's energetic economy. For all of India's religious communities, we urge protection against violence and discrimination. Republicans note with pride the contributions to our country that are made by our fellow citizens of Indian ancestry." (p 49)</p>
<p>On North Korea:</p>	<p>"North Korea is perhaps the most repressive regime on the planet, run by a sadistic dictator. It has conducted several nuclear tests and is attempting to develop the capability to put a nuclear warhead on a long-range missile that could directly threaten the United States. The regime is also responsible for grave human rights abuses against the North Korean people. Yet Donald Trump praises North Korea's dictator; threatens to abandon our treaty allies, Japan and South Korea; and encourages the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region. This approach is incoherent and rather than solving a global crisis, would create a new one. Democrats will protect America and our allies, press China to restrain North Korea, and sharpen the choices for Pyongyang to compel it to abandon its illegal nuclear and missile programs." (p 43)</p> <p>"Democrats will push back against North Korean aggression and press China to play by the rules." (p 49)</p>	<p>"With them, we look toward the establishment of human rights for the people of North Korea. We urge the government of China to recognize the inevitability of change in the Kim family's slave state and, for everyone's safety against nuclear disaster, to hasten positive change on the Korean peninsula." (p 48)</p> <p>"The United States will continue to demand the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons program with full accounting of its proliferation activities. We also pledge to counter any threats from the North Korean regime." (p 48)</p>

<p>On China:</p>	<p>"China and other countries are using unfair trade practices to tilt the playing field against American workers and businesses. When they dump cheap products into our markets, subsidize state-owned enterprises, devalue currencies, and discriminate against American companies, our middle class pays the price. That has to stop. Democrats will use all our trade enforcement tools to hold China and other trading partners accountable—because no country should be able to manipulate their currencies to gain a competitive advantage." (p 13)</p> <p>"We will stand up to Beijing on unfair trade practices, currency manipulation, censorship of the internet, piracy, and cyberattacks. And we will look for areas of cooperation, including on combatting climate change and nuclear proliferation." (p 49)</p>	<p>"We cannot allow China to continue its currency manipulation, exclusion of U.S. products from government purchases, and subsidization of Chinese companies to thwart American imports. The current Administration's way of dealing with these violations of world trade standards has been a virtual surrender." (p 2)</p> <p>"Today, the worst offenses against intellectual property rights come from abroad, especially in China. We call for strong action by Congress and a new Republican president to enforce intellectual property laws against all infringers, whether foreign or domestic." (p 15)</p> <p>"China's behavior has negated the optimistic language of our last platform concerning our future relations with China. The liberalizing policies of recent decades have been abruptly reversed, dissent brutally crushed, religious persecution heightened, the internet crippled, a barbaric population control two-child policy of forced abortions and forced sterilizations continued, and the cult of Mao revived." (p 48)</p>
<p>On Taiwan:</p>	<p>"We are committed to a 'One China' policy and the Taiwan Relations Act and will continue to support a peaceful resolution of Cross-Strait issues that is consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan." (p 49)</p>	<p>"We salute the people of Taiwan, with whom we share the values of democracy, human rights, a free market economy, and the rule of law. Our relations will continue to be based upon the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act, and we affirm the Six Assurances given to Taiwan in 1982 by President Reagan." (p 48)</p> <p>"We oppose any unilateral steps by either side to alter the status quo in the Taiwan Straits on the principle that all issues regarding the island's future must be resolved peacefully, through dialogue, and be agreeable to the people of Taiwan. If China were to violate those principles, the United States, in accord with the Taiwan Relations Act, will help Taiwan defend itself." (p 48)</p> <p>"We praise efforts by the new government in Taipei to continue constructive relations across the Taiwan Strait and call on China to reciprocate. As a loyal friend of America, Taiwan has merited our strong support, including free trade agreement status, the timely sale of defensive arms including technology to build diesel submarines, and full participation in the World Health Organization,</p>

		International Civil Aviation Organization, and other multilateral institutions." (p 48)
<p>On the South China Sea:</p>	<p>"We will also work with our allies and partners to fortify regional institutions and norms as well as protect freedom of the seas in the South China Sea." (p 49)</p>	<p>"To distract the populace from its increasing economic problems and, more importantly, to expand its military might, the government asserts a preposterous claim to the entire South China Sea and continues to dredge ports and create landing fields in contested waters where none have existed before, ever nearer to U.S. territories and our allies, while building a navy far out of proportion to defensive purposes." (p 48)</p> <p>"The complacency of the Obama regime has emboldened the Chinese government and military to issue threats of intimidation throughout the South China Sea, not to mention parading their new missile, 'the Guam Killer,' down the main streets of Beijing, a direct shot at Guam as America's first line of defense." (p 48)</p>
<p>On Human Rights and Democracy in China:</p>	<p>"We will promote greater respect for human rights, including the rights of Tibetans." (p 49)</p>	<p>"Meanwhile, cultural genocide continues in Tibet and Xinjiang, the promised autonomy of Hong Kong is eroded, the currency is manipulated, our technology is stolen, and intellectual property and copyrights are mocked in an economy based on piracy. In business terms, this is not competition; it is a hostile takeover. For any American company to abet those offenses, especially governmental censorship and tracking of dissenters, is a disgrace." (p 48)</p> <p>"The return to Maoism by China's current rulers is not reason to disengage with the Chinese people or their institutions. We welcome students, tourists, and investors, who can see for themselves our vibrant American democracy and how real democracy works. We caution, however, against academic or cultural operations under the control of the Chinese government and call upon American colleges to dissociate themselves from this increasing threat to academic freedom and honest research." (p 48)</p>

<p>On Human Rights and Democracy in Southeast Asia:</p>	<p>"We will build on the historic opening with Burma and advocate for greater human rights protections and national reconciliation among Burma's many different ethnic groups." (p 49)</p>	<p>"Most of the nations of Southeast Asia have set aside crippling ideologies and sought material progress in free enterprise and democracy. We congratulate the people of Burma on their emergence from authoritarian rule and urge their respect for the rights of their country's minority populations. Our improved relations with Vietnam — including arms sales — must advance efforts to obtain an accounting for, and repatriation of the remains of, Americans who gave their lives in the cause of Vietnamese freedom. We cannot overlook the continued repression of fundamental rights and religious freedom, as well as retribution against ethnic minorities and others who assisted U.S. forces during the conflict there." (p 48)</p>
<p>On Trade and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP):</p>	<p>"China and other countries are using unfair trade practices to tilt the playing field against American workers and businesses. When they dump 14 cheap products into our markets, subsidize state-owned enterprises, devalue currencies, and discriminate against American companies, our middle class pays the price. That has to stop. Democrats will use all our trade enforcement tools to hold China and other trading partners accountable—because no country should be able to manipulate their currencies to gain a competitive advantage." (p 13)</p> <p>"While we believe that openness to the world economy is an important source of American leadership and dynamism, we will oppose trade agreements that do not support good American jobs, raise wages, and improve our national security. We believe any new trade agreements must include strong and enforceable labor and environmental standards in their core text with streamlined and effective enforcement mechanisms. Trade agreements should crack down on the unfair and illegal subsidies other countries grant their businesses at the expense of ours. It should promote innovation of and access to lifesaving medicines. And it should protect a free and open internet. We should never enter into a trade agreement that prevents our government, or other governments, from putting in place rules that protect</p>	<p>"International trade is crucial for all sectors of America's economy. Massive trade deficits are not. We envision a worldwide multilateral agreement among nations committed to the principles of open markets, what has been called a 'Reagan Economic Zone,' in which free trade will truly be fair trade for all concerned." (p 2)</p> <p>"We cannot allow China to continue its currency manipulation, exclusion of U.S. products from government purchases, and subsidization of Chinese companies to thwart American imports. The current Administration's way of dealing with these violations of world trade standards has been a virtual surrender." (p 2)</p> <p>"At the same time, we look to broaden our trade agreements with countries which share our values and commitment to fairness, along with transparency in our commercial and business practices. In pursuing that objective, the American people demand transparency, full disclosure, protection of our national sovereignty, and tough negotiation on the part of those who are supposed to advance the interests of U.S. workers. Significant trade agreements should not be rushed or undertaken in a Lame Duck Congress." (p 3)</p> <p>"Today, the worst offenses against intellectual property rights come from abroad, especially in China. We call for strong action by Congress and a new Republican president to enforce intellectual property laws against all</p>

	<p>the environment, food safety, or the health of American citizens or others around the world. These are the standards Democrats believe must be applied to all trade agreements, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)." (p 14)</p>	<p>infringers, whether foreign or domestic." (p 15)</p>
<p>On U.S. Territories in the Pacific:</p>	<p>(No mention of this issue)</p>	<p>"Throughout the history of our nation, the patriotism exhibited by our brothers and sisters in the territories of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico has often gone unacknowledged. Year after year, the citizens quietly, without fanfare, send their sons and daughters into the U.S. Armed Services. [...] We call for the appointment of a commonwealth and territories advisory committee consisting of representatives from all five U.S. territories. The committee will be integrated into the president's transition team and be tasked with performing a holistic review of all federal regulations affecting the territories and commonwealths." (p 30)</p> <p>"The complacency of the Obama regime has emboldened the Chinese government and military to issue threats of intimidation throughout the South China Sea, not to mention parading their new missile, 'the Guam Killer,' down the main streets of Beijing, a direct shot at Guam as America's first line of defense." (p 48)</p>

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America's 2016 Election Debate on Asia Policy and Asian Reactions

Robert Sutter and Satu P. Limaye

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The 2015-2016 presidential election campaign has had major effects on recent debates regarding U.S. Asia policy. Going into the campaign, the debates focused heavily on the efficacy of the Obama Administration's signature "Asia Rebalance" and as a corollary the perceived U.S. weaknesses in the face of growing challenges from China. As the campaign has progressed, the broad concern with the rebalance and China remains active but secondary. Two sets of issues now overshadow the earlier focus: international trade and the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) accord, and candidate Donald Trump's controversial proposals on allied burden-sharing, nuclear weapons proliferation and North Korea.

Bipartisan criticism of the TPP poses serious obstacles to U.S. government approval of the pact. Candidate Trump's controversial proposals on alliances, nuclear proliferation and North Korea were singular, provoking widespread opposition including from senior Republicans in Congress and other candidates and therefore unlikely to be easily implemented even if he were elected.

Uncertainty over U.S. approval of the TPP and surprise over Donald Trump's controversial proposals upset, to varying degrees, U.S. allies Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Australia, as well as Taiwan, India and other Asian partners. Commentators in Beijing welcomed circumstances that lowered China's profile in the U.S. election rhetoric; they saw clear advantages along with some possible disadvantages in recent uncertainty over the TPP and U.S. relations with Asian allies.

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