

Returning to Course:

The United States and the Trans Pacific Partnership



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13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the curriculum. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.					
14. ABSTRACT The United States withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership was a major setback to historic US interests and a dramatic reversal of course that left our friends and allies reeling. It also opened the door for China to re-write international law and norms on its terms. The impact of this decision is being felt most directly in the Asia-Pacific, and it limited the options of the INDOPACOM Commander by damaging our relationship with nations across the region. To prevent an economic and security order in the Asia-Pacific based on Chinese Communist Party norms, the United States must join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership and continue its expansion. This would reset the trajectory of the Asia-Pacific by regaining trust and deepening ties with actors in the region, preventing the ascension of Chinese Communist Party norms, and providing win-win enticement for China that could push the Sino-American relationship further into cooperation instead of competition. Given the security cooperation impact that rejoining the agreement could deliver, the USINDOPACOM commander should champion the concept throughout the US government.					
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INTRODUCTION

The United States built itself as a nation by championing a system of rules-based free market access. From the early days of the republic, when the nascent US Navy and Marine Corps battled the Barbary States to the ascendancy of American interests in founding the post-WWII international monetary system, United States foreign policy has pursued this access under its auspices. In the modern era, those interests were expressed through multilateral free trade agreements and liberalization of trade policies to boost the American economy and build relationships that went beyond purely economic terms. Those interests are currently under threat in the Asia-Pacific, and acutely in the region surrounding the South China Sea.

At the end of the twentieth century, and accelerating through the twenty-first, American economic and strategic influence in the Asia-Pacific region waned as China flexed its economic muscle. Where China gained, the United States lost; 17 nations in the region shifted their trade balances from one to the other.¹ China used new economic initiatives, including the One Belt, One Road Initiative (BRI), and the formation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, alongside its growing military presence to exert further pressure on the region to fall into China's economic orbit. US attention returned to the region early in the 2010s with the Pivot to Asia. The centerpiece of that effort was pushing for a new free trade agreement known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and warning China that it needed to “play by the rules.”² In his 2015 “Remarks on the Next Phase of the U.S. Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific,” Defense Secretary

¹ Earl Anthony Wayne and Oliver Magnusson, “The Death of TPP: The Best Thing That Ever Happened to China.” *The National Interest*, January 29, 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/print/feature/the-death-tpp-the-best-thing-ever-happened-china-19232>

² David Nakamura, “President Obama’s Remarks at APEC Leaders’ Summit,” *Washington Post*, November 12, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/obama-at-apec-summit-china-must-play-by-the-rules/2011/11/12/gIQALRu2FN_story.html?tid=a_inl_manual.

Ashton Carter stated that “passing TPP is as important to me as another aircraft carrier.”³

However, the United States was about to reverse course.

On October 5th, 2015, trade ministers from 12 nations, representing approximately 40% of the world’s economic output, broke out in a minute of applause as the TPP was signed.⁴ However, before ratification, the United States suffered a self-inflicted wound that future historians may put on par with foreign policy disasters such as Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement of Hitler or the Athenian invasion of Sicily. In January 2017, the US formally withdrew from the TPP in a presidential memorandum signed by Donald Trump, stating that “it is the intention of my Administration to deal directly with individual countries on a one-on-one (or bilateral) basis in negotiating future trade deals.”⁵ Though the seeds had been laid in the 2016 presidential campaign when both nominees came out against ratification of the TPP, this abrupt reversal in policy left US allies reeling, undermined a sense of American commitment to the Asia-Pacific, and ceded initiative to China. The 11 remaining nations signed a revised agreement in 2018 known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which dropped provisions specific to American interests and lacked the scale to dramatically alter world trade or Chinese behavior.⁶ To prevent an economic and security order in the Asia-Pacific based on Chinese Communist Party norms, the United States must join the CPTPP and continue its expansion. This would reset the Asia-Pacific regional trajectory by regaining trust and deepening ties with actors in the region, preventing the ascension of Chinese

³ Ashton Carter, “SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SPEECH on the Next Phase of the U.S. Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific (McCain Institute, Arizona State University),” US Department of Defense. April 6, 2105

⁴ Michael J Green and Matthew P. Goodman, “After TPP: The Geopolitics of Asia and the Pacific,” *The Washington Quarterly* 38, (October 2015): 19–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2015.1125827>

⁵ Donald J. Trump, “Presidential Memorandum Regarding Withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Negotiations and Agreement,” Whitehouse.Gov, January 23, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-memorandum-regarding-withdrawal-united-states-trans-pacific-partnership-negotiations-agreement/>

⁶ Zachary Torrey, “TPP 2.0: The Deal Without the US.” *The Diplomat*, February 3, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/tpp-2-0-the-deal-without-the-us/>

Communist Party norms, and providing win-win enticement for China that could push the Sino-American relationship further into cooperation instead of competition. Given the security cooperation impact that rejoining the agreement could deliver, the USINDOPACOM commander should champion the CPTPP to the US government.

RESETTING US RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS THE ASIA-PACIFIC

The United States' reputation has been undermined recently by making contradictory statements or by statements not matching its actions. Compare the memo that withdrew the US from the TPP where it said the US would only pursue bilateral trade deals against the 2017 National Security Strategy, and repeated in DOD's 2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, where it hypocritically says that the US will "compete and lead in multilateral organizations" to protect American interests.⁷ However, many of the achievements trumpeted by the administration are about withdrawing from multilateral agreements such as the Paris Climate Accords and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear program.⁸ The withdrawal from the climate accords was particularly egregious to partners in Asia as they, particularly island nations, will be hardest hit by climate change over the next half-century.⁹ They feel that among nations, the United States "bears a special responsibility for the management of global issues that no other state yet possesses" and that "under the present government, it is clear that the United States has no intention of, or desire to, meet its responsibilities."¹⁰ This lack of trust leaves an opening for

⁷ Donald J. Trump, "Presidential Memorandum Regarding Withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Negotiations and Agreement," Whitehouse.Gov, January 23, 2017

⁸ US President, "Trump Administration Accomplishments," Whitehouse.Gov, September 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/trump-administration-accomplishments/>

⁹ Robin McKie, "Global Warming to Hit Asia Hardest, Warns New Report on Climate Change." *Guardian*, March 22, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/mar/22/global-warming-hit-asia-hardest>.

¹⁰ Shaun Narine, "US Domestic Politics and America's Withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership: Implications for Southeast Asia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 40, (April 2018): 50–76

China to step in and take advantage of the situation by drawing countries under the umbrella of its regional hegemony.

The Indian Foreign Affairs Journal summed up the problem stating that “America’s turning back on globalisation under Trump has led to the growing belief in the possibility of weakening, or even an end, of America’s security alliances across the world, especially in Asia” and went on to describe the “strategic myopia...in its attempt to decouple trade and security rationales in Asia.”¹¹ With the US security umbrella having protected much of the Pacific following World War II, the US economic course reversal led to understandable fears that it may do the same in the security environment. A top priority for INDOPACOM and the nation should be regaining trust and cooperation with US allies and non-aligned nation-states in the Asia-Pacific region; a critical step to constructively engaging China. This vision requires a renewed engagement with US treaty allies (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the Philippines), nations with no formal alignment, and multilateral organizations such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations.¹²

Signing, and more importantly ratifying, the CPTPP, even if some provisions dropped from the original TPP need to be renegotiated, would go a long way to rebuilding the trust that has been lost and would provide the opportunity for the aircraft carrier level security engagement referred to by Secretary Carter. It would build rapport with the eleven signatory nations and bind us closer together. It could also restart engagement with the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, and other regional nations plus the post-Brexit UK, who have all declared an interest in joining.¹³ Multilateral economic cooperation could revitalize trust in collective security

¹¹ Vivek Mishra, “Looming US Retreat under Trump: Implications for Asian Security,” *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 14, No. 1, (January–March 2019): 58–69

¹² US Department of State, “U.S. Collective Defense Arrangements,” State.gov, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/l/treaty/collectivedefense//index.htm>.

¹³ Yukari Easton, “The UK Wants to Join CPTPP. That’s Good News for Japan,” *The Diplomat*, June 24, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/the-uk-wants-to-join-cptpp-thats-good-news-for-japan/>

arrangements beyond bilateral agreements currently pursued by the United States. That collectivism would wield the clout necessary to draw China in as a potential partner. Without the trust, rebuilt relationships, and multilateral agreements, INDOPACOM and the United States will be playing China's game on its home terrain, a dangerous combination.

COMMUNITY OF SHARED FUTURE FOR MANKIND

In 2017 Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke to the UN General Assembly about his vision for building “a community of shared future for mankind, which is the call of our time.”¹⁴ Xi's speech laid out five goals and four public positions that would sound pleasing to most American ears. However, interpretations of the ‘game’ that China is playing see underlying themes pushing the international community to operate on Chinese norms of behavior.¹⁵ A Chinese scholar wrote that the shared future is where “China presents a ‘China solution’ for global governance which meets the needs of human-kind by embracing ancient oriental wisdoms.”¹⁶ This vision is a reorientation of international law and normative behavior where China sets the standard. To get there, China uses its economic and diplomatic clout worldwide, and military power closer to home, to act in a manner inconsistent with Xi's public-facing statements and to undermine US interests. Without US cooperative and competitive engagement, the Asia-Pacific will be the region most under China's thumb, a potentially disastrous outcome for maritime sovereignty around the South China Sea.

¹⁴ Jinping Xi, “Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind,” *Xinhua News*, January 18, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-01/19/c_135994707.htm.

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Zhimin Chen and Zhang Xueying “Chinese Conception of the World Order in a Turbulent Trump Era,” *Pacific Review* 33, (February 2020): 438–68.

Many nations would be unlikely to move in the direction of Chinese norms without incentive or inducement. The United States' withdrawal from the TPP took away much of the counterbalance and left those nations questioning if the US could or would counteract a Chinese inducement strategy. One key area of difference between China and the US is how they negotiate trade deals. The US historically negotiated all conditions upfront, resulting in long but rarely revised agreements.¹⁷ China, realizing that its influence grows annually, incentivizes or induces its partners to sign a deal that may be advantageous up front, but is constantly revised with the terms moving more and more in China's favor.¹⁸ US retreat from engagement leaves countries spiraling into China's economic gravity well and getting closer to the point of no return to economic, and potentially political, independence.

China enhances its strategy to pull nations into its orbit over time through bilateral relationships, and the Chinese recently changed their approach to cultivating those relationships. Following Mao's reign, China did not create bilateral trading relationships until 2003, but as of 2019 had 14.¹⁹ The BRI is the exemplar of this Chinese strategy. While global in scope and not exclusively trade deals, it is not a multilateral relationship, but a series of bilateral relationships with China at the hub. Economist Marshall Meyer described how the relationships skew to China:

Unlike US foreign aid or the Marshall Plan... the BRI is "Chinese investment that expects a return." Chinese financial institutions lend money for BRI projects in partner countries, and the construction contracts are awarded to mostly Chinese firms, he said.

"A Chinese company [thus] receives much of the proceeds of the loan, but the host

¹⁷ Michael Sampson, "The Evolution of China's Regional Trade Agreements: Power Dynamics and the Future of the Asia-Pacific," *Pacific Review*, (September 2019): 3-5

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ *ibid*

country has got the debt. If the [return on investment] isn't sufficient to pay off the debt, China will repossess [the project, and it] becomes a debt-for-equity swap."²⁰

In late 2017 Sri Lanka was the first to go through this entire cycle and signed over a port to China on a 99-year lease after it became unable to pay its debt.²¹ Meyer pointed to Europe as a counter, where he expects collective action to reduce Chinese influence or get better terms.²² Small nations without the multilateral strength that Europe can bring to bear do not have that option, particularly without US backing.

The US, along with partners and allies, must provide a better approach because more than economic interests are at stake as Chinese investment can also be a security risk. The BRI investment in the Israeli port of Haifa motivated the US Navy to end port calls due to increased risk.²³ In a speech in Haifa, Admiral Roughead said, "Significantly, the information systems and new infrastructure integral to the ports and the likelihood of information and electronic surveillance systems jeopardize US information and cybersecurity."²⁴ Similar actions are occurring in the Asia-Pacific, such as Sri Lanka's port, and may increase in frequency. Those actions threaten the US Navy's ability to stage assets within China's second island chain line and would further reduce trust in the United States' ability to provide regional security. As the Chinese economic push bleeds into the security sphere, unless the United States returns to a multilateral approach, starting with the CPTPP, it may find itself on the outside looking in on market access, security agreements, and even international law that has shifted to reflect China's vision for humanity's shared future.

²⁰ "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Why the Price Is Too High," Knowledge@Wharton, April 30, 2019, <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-why-the-price-is-too-high/>

²¹ *ibid*

²² *ibid*

²³ Michael Wilner, "U.S. Navy May Stop Docking in Haifa after Chinese Take over Port." *Jerusalem Post*, December 15, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/us-navy-may-stop-docking-in-haifa-after-chinese-take-over-port-574414>

²⁴ *ibid*

AVOIDING ZERO SUM COMPETITION

For the US vision of rules-based free market access to remain a reality despite Chinese goals, the United States must strengthen bonds with other nations through shared values and win-win economic ties. Joining the CPTPP should be the first step for the United States to encourage win-win solutions instead of competition mechanisms that make states into losers or winners. We must ensure equitable distribution of expected economic opportunities instead of one-sided deals. Economic inducements should draw China in, not exclude it, to encourage positive economic, security, and political change.

The original TPP went beyond economic access and rulemaking. TPP directly contributed to the United States' diplomatic and security strategies. It was there to "reassure friends and foes of the staying power of the United States in Asia" and to provide "unprecedented traction in [the United States'] Asia diplomacy."²⁵ Additionally, "it aimed to gather a critical mass of like-minded countries to create incentives for others to join to reap the gains from trade and avoid the costs of exclusion."²⁶ The agreement included growth provisions, and many countries expressed interest in joining. Catching China as 'the big fish,' lured by win-win possibilities, becomes possible with those like-minded nations on the same team.

China's view of TPP evolved from initial dismissal, even seeing it as sinister, to tentative interest by 2015.²⁷ Signing TPP led to "lively debate in Beijing, with the weight of elite opinion seeming to tilt toward eventual membership."²⁸ However, US withdrawal led China to focus on its competing vision, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). RCEP, still

²⁵ Mireya Solís and Jeffrey D Wilson, "From APEC to Mega-Regionals: The Evolution of the Asia-Pacific Trade Architecture," *Pacific Review* 30, (March 2017): 931.

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ Michael J Green and Matthew P. Goodman, "After TPP: The Geopolitics of Asia and the Pacific," *The Washington Quarterly* 38, (October 2015): 19-34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2015.1125827>

²⁸ *ibid*

under negotiation with 15 nations, is a narrower agreement that leaves out what made TPP a model for twenty-first-century agreements.²⁹ Without US involvement in CPTPP, China can continue pulling others to its position, including through separate bilateral deals, and damage US opportunities for win-win scenarios.

TPP was not a zero-sum agreement; all nations expected to benefit. GDP growth per signatory was expected to rise from 0.4 to ten percent by 2030, with developed economies at the lower end of that range.³⁰ Trade liberalization, understood as reducing barriers to the free flow of goods, after being the focus of many Asian economies for decades, stalled in the 2000s. Many countries turned to bilateral relationships, particularly with China, to advance liberalization despite creating rules that increased compliance costs.³¹ TPP would have ended the stalled multilateral liberalization, reduced competing rule sets for trade, and moved away from stopgap bilateral agreements.

Liberalization of trade policies, impactful security arrangements, and incentivizing China to constructively engage must be replicated in future US strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. Asia-Pacific economies greatly benefitted from liberalization; the International Monetary Fund reported that in the last two decades of the twentieth century, the average tariff in East Asia fell 20% and drove economic gains, particularly among the poorer nations.³² Long term, this is win-win as the United States gains access to markets and consumers while the other nations drive growth and reduce poverty. From a security standpoint, we should ensure nations in the Asia-Pacific remain free to choose how they engage diplomatically and politically instead of falling

²⁹ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, “Joint Media Statement of the 8th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Ministerial Meeting.” August 27, 2020, <https://asean.org/storage/2020/08/RCEP-MM-8-JMS.pdf>.

³⁰ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, “Potential Macroeconomic Implications of the Trans-Pacific Partnership,” January 2016, https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-0675-9_ch4

³¹ Mireya Solís and Jeffrey D Wilson, “From APEC to Mega-Regionals: The Evolution of the Asia-Pacific Trade Architecture,” *Pacific Review* 30, (March 2017): 924-931

³² International Monetary Fund Staff, “Global Trade Liberalization and the Developing Countries,” November 2001, <https://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2001/110801.htm>

into a closed system that orbits around China.³³ INDOPACOM can also play a role in strengthening ties by expanding exercises and security cooperation in the region to deepen ties and show nations that the United States remains interested in their future. All of these actions must occur with incentives to bring China in or get them to play on the same field. TPP “set high-standard, science-based norms, rules and procedures” and by collectivizing those standards would “have influenced the practices of nonmembers, including China.”³⁴ The clout of CPTPP with the United States would hit most of these objectives from the start and allow for evolution in how it engages China, depending on Chinese reaction. The United States must seize the initiative and shoot for win-win solutions without forgetting that the Chinese get a vote.

AMERICA FIRST

Electing Donald Trump ushered in an America First policy that believed Americans were getting taken advantage of in trade deals, particularly multilateral deals, and that the United States should protect American jobs through a reversal of trade liberalization. The president explicitly stated his policy was “to begin pursuing, wherever possible, bilateral trade negotiations to promote American industry, protect American workers, and raise American wages.”³⁵ Attacks on free trade in general, and TPP specifically, came from the left as an “agreement designed to protect the interests of the largest multi-national corporations.”³⁶ They came from the right by

³³ Michael J Green and Matthew P. Goodman, “After TPP: The Geopolitics of Asia and the Pacific,” *The Washington Quarterly* 38, (October 2015): 19–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2015.1125827>

³⁴ Earl Anthony Wayne and Oliver Magnusson, “The Death of TPP: The Best Thing That Ever Happened to China.” *The National Interest*, January 29, 2017

³⁵ Donald J. Trump, “Presidential Memorandum Regarding Withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Negotiations and Agreement,” *Whitehouse.Gov*, January 23, 2017

³⁶ Bernie Sanders, “Petition: Stop Another Trade Deal ‘Disaster,’” *US Senate*, <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/stop-the-tpp>.

Trump as “a deal that was designed for China to come in, as they always do, through the back door and totally take advantage of everyone” even without China being party to the agreement.³⁷

This approach views trade as a zero-sum game, where one side wins and one side loses, not the traditional conception of a rising tide lifting all boats. Nor does it come with a conception that trade can influence security and diplomacy. In its 2019 Trade Policy Agenda, the Trump Administration outlined the situation:

For many years after World War II, the United States benefited from a global trading system that generally encouraged more efficient markets here and around the world. By the time President Trump took office, however, significant flaws in that system were hurting American workers and businesses. Existing trade agreements were imbalanced and outdated, and efforts to negotiate new rules within the multilateral trading system had failed. American workers and businesses were suffering. In fact, the global trading system appeared to be tilted in favor of non-market economies like China. Furthermore, the United States was considering whether to join the TPP – a deal that would have made these trends even worse.³⁸

Based on this conception, there is no consideration of losing in one area to gain in another or for any selfless acts. In many ways, the security blanket provided by INDOPACOM is a selfless act by the United States, something that brings economic and security rewards to more than just the United States. The Trump administration could change this to a transactional agreement where it expects others to foot the bill as it is threatening in South Korea, a move that would further

³⁷ “Transcript: Republican Presidential Debate,” *The New York Times*. November 11, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/11/us/politics/transcript-republican-presidential-debate.html>

³⁸ Robert E. Lighthizer, “2019 Trade Policy Agenda and 2018 Annual Report of the President of the U.S. on the Trade Agreements Program,” United States Trade Representative, https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2019_Trade_Policy_Agenda_and_2018_Annual_Report.pdf

damage relations in the region.³⁹ Additionally, by viewing the international system as unfairly against American interests, there is little incentive within the administration to propagate and refine that order, but instead to go it alone with America First.

For economic, diplomatic, and security reasons, the administration's view is misguided. Economically, Center for Strategic and International Studies analysts Green and Goodman write that "Competitive trade liberalization incentivizes all economies to lower barriers and fuse into a larger, wealth-creating, rules-based order. The opponents of TPP have offered no better pathway to that beneficial future."⁴⁰ Including diplomatic and security efforts, by pulling out of the TPP, "[Trump] fed regional fears that America's commitment to the prosperity and security of the Asia-Pacific region was wavering."⁴¹ The United States' friends and allies in the region deserve better and must be engaged as equals or America First will represent the beginning of American decline.

CONCLUSION

When Secretary of Defense Carter referred to the value of TPP as more important than an aircraft carrier, he was not being hyperbolic.⁴² As much as the US has valued carriers as a symbol of our maritime dominance, it is the international interlocking economic and security arrangements that provided the backing to create those symbols of national power.

INDOPACOM would not exist with nearly the globe-spanning scope, 14 time-zones where the

³⁹ Nicole Gaouette, "Trump Hikes Price Tag for US Forces in Korea Almost 400% as Seoul Questions Alliance," CNN, November 15, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/14/politics/trump-south-korea-troops-price-hike/>

⁴⁰ Michael J Green and Matthew P. Goodman, "After TPP: The Geopolitics of Asia and the Pacific," *The Washington Quarterly* 38, (October 2015): 19–34

⁴¹ Shaun Narine, "US Domestic Politics and America's Withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership: Implications for Southeast Asia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 40, (April 2018): 50–76

⁴² Ashton Carter, "SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SPEECH on the Next Phase of the U.S. Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific (McCain Institute, Arizona State University)," US Department of Defense. April 6, 2105

sun never sets, without the United States having built, and greatly benefitted from, the modern international order. Abandoning support of the international order and pursuing a transactional policy of America First leads to an American withdrawal where the US may be unable to field the carriers it has today, let alone build new carriers in the future as it retreats into the American fortress.

Continued global engagement, built on the foundation of international order laid by the United States, is a future success strategy. Doing so requires constructive, cooperative engagement with China on win-win topics such as environmental issues, disaster relief, and economic security. For areas where the United States and China will compete, as is inevitable, having trusted allies and partners worldwide, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, will give the United States the leverage it needs to pursue its aims and ensure free and open access for American economic interests. Strategists Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper point out that if the United States does not pursue the strategy of openness, the “gravest danger is the rise of alternative forms of order that may not be consistent with American security and prosperity, or those of other states.”⁴³

With China “actively constructing new forms of order both globally and regionally through vigorous norm entrepreneurship and energetic institution building, (and) writing new rules where few exist,” only the United States has the international gravitas to stand as an alternative.⁴⁴ However, since 2017, the United States has forsaken its role as champion of the international order and has lost critical trust and respect from friends and allies. Joining the CPTPP would signify the United States is again ready to take the wheel as a global steward of the international order, pursue openness, and be willing to act in ways that are not explicitly

⁴³ Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper, *An Open World*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 118

⁴⁴ Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper, *An Open World*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 63

nationalistic or narrow. As the commander most impacted by Chinese strategy and the TPP withdrawal, the INDOPACOM commander should vigorously push US leadership to sign and ratify the CPTPP.

