



ICAS BULLETIN

Institute for China-America Studies

A Survey of Scholarship on US-China Relations

Twice a month, the ICAS Bulletin updates a global audience on American perspectives regarding the world's most important bilateral relationship. Research papers, journal articles, and other prominent work published in the US are listed here alongside information about events at US-based institutions.

Commentary: Nong Hong on "Trumpism," p. 4

Publications

US-China Economic and Security Review Commission 2016 Report to Congress

United States Congress, November 2016

This annual report addresses several questions asked by Congress regarding the connections between economic and security matters in the bilateral relationship. The report makes recommendations regarding investments in the US by Chinese SOEs, intellectual property theft and espionage activities, military-military cooperation and several other bilateral issues.

The PLA and China's Rejuvenation: National Security and Military Strategies, Deterrence Concepts, and Combat Capabilities

Timothy Heath, Kristen Gunnes, Cortez Cooper
RAND, December 2016

The authors attempt to provide the strategic context for the PLA's recent modernization. The study describes Chinese national security strategies, its approach to war and escalation control, and deterrence capabilities. It also considers the perceptions of China's leaders on security issues and their approaches to crisis management. This report concludes that China's capabilities and perceptions change as China grows, and therefore continuous monitoring of these factors are crucial to understanding Chinese military strength.

China, Economic Development, And Global Security

Matt Ferchen
Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, December 2016

Ferchen criticizes the two paradigms that characterize China's rise – the peaceful development paradigm that paints China as a stable security guarantor, and the geo-economics paradigm that considers China's mercantilism as a challenge to the liberal international world order. Ferchen argues

that these paradigms are oversimplifications that prevent us from engaging meaningfully with China's rise.

Asymmetric Parity: US–China Relations in a Multimodal World

Brantly Womack

International Affairs, Volume 92, Issue 6, 2016

Womack describes the world order as transitioning from the post-Cold War era of American unipolarity to an asymmetric parity between the US and China. He argues that neither the US nor China (nor the two together) can exercise the kind of hegemonic control the US has held since the Cold War due to globalization. Therefore, the US and China must continue collaborating and discussing geopolitical concerns until both countries can accept each other as different players in a multimodal world that neither controls.

China and the World: Dealing with a Reluctant Power

Evan Feigenbaum

Foreign Affairs, January/February 2017

Feigenbaum argues that China's size and wealth make it disruptive to world order, but its commitment to international institutions mean it is not trying to revolutionize the system. However, despite China's involvement in institutions, it has expressed dissatisfaction and has complicated the process of reforming the current system. Feigenbaum thus suggests that our current institutions have been unable to include rising powers, and urges the US to shift its focus from reacting to China's moves to boosting US strengths and interests.

Chinese Strategy and Military Modernization in 2016

Anthony Cordesman with Joseph Kendall

CSIS, December 5, 2016

Cordesman and Kendall provide a full annual assessment of evolving Chinese military strategy and technology, changes in China's armed forces, estimates of Chinese military spending and resources, and Chinese weapons and nuclear capabilities.

Playing Responsible Hardball on China's Trade and Investment

David Dollar

Brookings, December 7, 2016

Dollar suggests that if Donald Trump wishes to address economic imbalances between the US and China, he should first take on the issue of asymmetry in their regulations on one another's foreign direct investment. He rejects the president-elect's allegations about China's currency manipulation, but notes that the White House can introduce restrictions on Chinese state-owned enterprises investing in the United States.

The WTO in Wonderland: China's Awkward 15th Anniversary

Scott Kennedy

CSIS, December 11, 2016

Kennedy reflects on China's past fifteen years since entering the WTO, noting how China has greatly benefitted from the WTO and now leads most negotiations. However, there have been concerns that China has been undermining the WTO and the liberal order with its state-owned enterprises and protectionist exemptions. Kennedy thus looks at the WTO data, suggesting that the WTO is still a useful tool and should be reformed by strengthening its dispute settlement mechanisms.

The Trump Transition and Asia: The Need for Policies and Plans

Anthony Cordesman

CSIS, December 12, 2016

Cordesman clarifies the difference between being a candidate and being a statesman, and warns the Trump administration that it needs to take seriously the US' competition for influence in Asia. He urges the future administration to lay achievable goals, make it clear that US demands are practical and negotiable, and ensure that the US treats other countries with suitable respect.

An Open Letter to Donald Trump on the One-China Policy

Richard Bush

Brookings, December 13, 2016

Bush writes an open letter to President-elect Trump clarifying the nuances of the United States' view of the One-China policy. He further reminds him that diplomatic discourse on this kind of issue can negatively affect the bilateral relationship more generally.

Counterbalance: Red Teaming the Rebalance in the Asia-Pacific

Mira Rapp-Hooper, Patrick Cronin, Harry Krejsa, and Hannah Suh

Center for New American Security, December 14, 2016

The Asia-Pacific team at CNAS looks at how the Pentagon might strengthen its initiatives in the Asian Pivot. It considers US force posture and security alliances to identify key areas of American influence, and suggests that the US should invest in new operational concepts such as the Air-Sea battle, clarify security alliances and consider potential Chinese reactions to any security measures taken in the region.

Not Since Nixon has a US President Faced Such a Tough China Challenge

Evan Feigenbaum

The National Interest, December 18, 2016

Feigenbaum argues that the Washington consensus on how to deal with Beijing faces serious challenges. Old assumptions that economic integration would mitigate security competition, or that engagement would necessarily bring the US and China closer together seem to be challenged by new realities. Against this background, the author recommends a more focused American strategy in Asia that is cognizant of the United States' longstanding interests in maintaining open economies and inclusive international governance regimes.

Events

China's 15th WTO Anniversary: Assessing the Record and Charting the Path Forward

CSIS, December 12, 2016

CSIS hosted a half-day event featuring assessments of China's entry into the World Trade Organization 15 years ago. Participants included CSIS and Chinese scholars and Deputy Director-General of the WTO Yi Xiaozhun delivered a keynote address.

Asia 2017: The Experts Forecast

Asia Society, December 13 2016

Evan Medeiros joined Ruchir Sharma and Josette Sheeran to discuss the future of US policy in Asia under the Trump administration. Medeiros discussed upcoming issues facing China's domestic politics that could affect regional dynamics.

Commentary

Trumpism: Shifting the Spotlight Away Might Help

Nong Hong

On December 13, 2016, Newt Gingrich, the 50th Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, talked about the principles of Trumpism at the Heritage Foundation. Gingrich was once reported to be on Donald Trump's three-person shortlist to be the presumptive Republican nominee's running mate in the 2016 presidential election. On November 17, Gingrich announced he would not be serving in Trump's cabinet but will instead be focusing on strategic planning for the Republican party to expand their victories ahead of the 2018 mid-term elections. Nevertheless, Gingrich is no doubt the best spokesman when it comes to defending Trump's policy as what he called Trumpism.

During Trump's election campaign, the American media such as The New York Times on May 24, think tanks such as Hoover Institution in March and later the Chinese media, academia and netizens widely used the term "Trump phenomenon" to explain the unexpected high rate of support for him. After November 9, though faced with demonstrations and protests against his victory, Trump seemed to have wiped off this implicitly satirical "sticker" on him. Alternatively, another term, Trumpism, seemed to have appeared as a trend that stood apart from traditional American conservatism. Trumpism gained ground with pundits and commentators who used it to describe Trump's manners, behaviors and ways of thinking and conducting himself. David Tabachnick described Trumpism in four characteristics: celebrity, nativism, the outsider phenomenon and populism.

Trumpism was reflected in several controversial issues lately. In response to the heated criticism in the US of his phone call with Tsai Ing-wen, in which Trump called Tsai "President of

Taiwan,” he defended himself by saying he was taking a congratulatory call and that “the US sells Taiwan billions of dollars of military equipment.” China’s response to the Trump-Tsai phone call was mild, calling it “a small trick by Taiwan”; this created room for shaping and consolidating the future China-US relations. Compared with the US media and analysts, the response of the Chinese state media and social media was low key. Trump’s provocative comments on the One China Policy in his interview with Fox News one week later generated comparatively stronger response from China. The Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed “serious concern” and one state media described him to be “as ignorant as a child.” The comments also triggered off a slew of remarks by Chinese academics who considered Trump to be lacking experience and knowledge in cross strait relations and the role the US has been playing since the 1970s. There have since been a flurry of commentaries, analyses and coverage stories, most of which called on China to be alerted to Trumpism, which is a departure from the US’ traditional Asia and China policies.

Trumpism was again observed in Trump’s response to the US’ investigation into alleged Russian hacking of the 2016 presidential election. Central Intelligence Agency officials concluded recently that Russia had intervened with the primary aim of helping Trump become president. Trump rejected any suggestions of Russian influence in the US election. Trump even explicitly said that he was not interested in daily security briefings by intelligence officials. This raises concerns, even among some Republicans, that the briefings will be filtered by his policy team, who might represent various interest groups, before reaching Trump and will eventually affect the shaping of policies. However, when asked to comment on this issue during his speech at the Heritage Foundation, Gingrich repeatedly used “liar” to describe the US media whose coverage has been overwhelmingly in disfavor of Trump’s reaction.

Trump is also known as anti-climate change, which he said was a “hoax” being pushed by China. He picked Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, a climate change doubter, as his choice for leading the Environmental Protection Agency, showing his strong negativism on climate change. The Department of Energy (DOE) recently refused to give the names of individual workers associated with climate change work when requested by Trump’s transition team, fearing a “witch hunt” of DOE employees.

One of Trump’s most effective slogans during the presidential campaign was “America First.” In his bid for the White House, Trump promised to give a big tax cut to corporations to bring manufacturing back to the US. If and when this policy is implemented, a new round of debate on Trumpism will surely emerge.

From now till Trump’s inauguration on January 20, 2017, we will see endless debates whenever a controversy arises over Trump’s “careless,” “thoughtless” statements, announcements, and interview talks, be it on “trade war with China,” “Taiwan issue,” “anti-globalization,” “the South China Sea,” “pivot to Asia” or “relationships with its allies.” Gingrich, in his speech, termed everything controversial that Trump said before the election, would say prior to the

inauguration, and might say in the coming administration, with a banner called “need for renovation”, meaning that “If you don’t like it, we will run over you and move on...”

We have witnessed the evolution from the Trump phenomenon to the so-called Trumpism. When asked about Trump’s future foreign policy, the most common and frequent wordings used by Asian and China policy analysts in the US are “unpredictable,” “uncertain,” and “personality associated.” Trumpism is now shaping events around the world, like the One-China Policy and the Russian intervention of the election. The best approach is to devalue Trumpism and treat US President-Elect Donald Trump as an ordinary US president. When far from the spotlight given to him by the media, analysts and academia, which he enjoys, Trump may be expected to express himself carefully, with a full understanding of policy shaping.

Nong Hong is Executive Director and Senior Fellow at ICAS. This commentary first appeared at IPP Review.



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