



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.

Publications

The Rebalance is Dead, Long Live the Rebalance

Hannah Suh, Harry Krejsa, Mira Rapp-Hooper

War on the Rocks, March 16, 2017

With the American withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership in the first days of the new administration, Secretary of State Tillerson's mid-March visits to Asia, and Secretary of Defense Mattis' February visit to Japan and South Korea, the Trump White House has shown a mixed level of involvement in international institutions and coalition building. While it is too soon to tell whether Trump holds hawkish inclinations towards China, the administration's call for a naval buildup to maintain and preserve access to the Western Pacific could be seen as an effort toward a defense rebalance.

Tillerson Bumbles Around Asia

Ely Ratner

Politico, March 20, 2017

Ratner describes Rex Tillerson's performance during his last trip to Beijing as "controversial and potentially damaging." Tillerson's unexpectedly mild tone, in Ratner's words, shows that the Trump administration is "ill-prepared" for the upcoming Trump-Xi meeting. It also indicates problems within the administration, such as a lack of Asia expertise, key posts remaining unfilled, and a failure to develop a consistent Asia strategy. Ratner suggests the Trump-Xi meeting should be held in Washington instead of Mar-a-Lago because the more personal environment could signal softness to President Xi.

China and America Need a One-Korea Policy

Michael Swaine

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 21, 2017

Swaine sees North Korea's deployment of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles as the first serious foreign policy crisis confronting the Trump administration. He believes collaboration between the United States and China is a crucial element in stabilizing the peninsula. While factors such as mutual suspicion in

strategic calculations complicate American and Chinese interests, there are potential opportunities for collaboration. Since Chinese leadership has recently become more wary of Pyongyang, the urgency for an international response may pave the way for Sino-American dialogue and eventual cooperation.

What Just Happened in Beijing?

Robert Daly

Foreign Policy, March 21, 2017

During Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's first official visit to Beijing, he repeated Chinese diplomatic rhetoric previously rejected by the Obama administration. These statements have met mixed receptions. Some moderates believe Tillerson's "reversal on 'New Model'" as an "overdue recognition of the need to avoid war with a rising China." Others see Tillerson's remarks to be a kow-tow to the Chinese leadership. Daly believes Tillerson's trip to Beijing should not be over-analyzed, and that the future between the two nations shows promise.

A Report Card on Tillerson's Trip to Asia

Michael Green

The Washington Post, March 21, 2017

Michael Green analyzes Secretary Rex Tillerson's March trip to Asia and concludes that while some of his statements were controversial, they mostly aligned with historic American foreign policy practices. For example, while Tillerson using Chinese diplomatic rhetoric such as "mutual respect" and "win-win" may have been a mistake, his statement did not place China in a privileged position over democratic US allies. Also, Tillerson's controversial statement that "all options are on the table" with North Korea is a reiteration of long-standing US policy toward North Korea.

Did Rex Tillerson Misspeak or Intentionally Kowtow to China?

Laura Rosenberger

Foreign Policy, March 22, 2017

Rosenberger believes by adopting Chinese diplomatic verbiage, Secretary Rex Tillerson has accepted the Chinese definition of the US-China relationship and subsequently, accommodated China's proposed "new model of major power relations." This article observes that while Trump has employed bellicose rhetoric on China, Tillerson's statements signify Trump administration's willingness to walk back on their stances. This pattern of empty rhetoric, should it continue, will make it more difficult to manage the bilateral relationship.

Chinese Perceptions of and Responses to US Conventional Military Power

Michael Chase

Asian Security, March 23, 2017

This piece examines the strategic context for Chinese efforts to learn from the leading defense systems of the US military. People's Liberation Army (PLA) experts observe the United States to be "the country most able and likely to challenge China's ambitions." As a result, the PLA is determined to close the gap with the United States in modernizing its military capabilities.

China's North Korea Debate

Hemant Adlakha

The Diplomat, March 25, 2017

Adlakha outlines the Chinese Foreign Policy community's debate on Beijing's stance towards North Korea. Adlakha observes that there are currently three predominant opinions on how China should respond to North Korea's recent nuclear tests. Some assert that North Korea remains a vital strategic asset. Others argue that North Korea has become too much of a liability and call for a severing of ties between Beijing and Pyongyang. A third group calls for the "elimination" of North Korea, claiming that Beijing cannot afford to remain between Washington and Pyongyang.

China Benefits From Nuclear Disorder

Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu

Brookings, March 27, 2017

The author argues that China's policy of "commission and omission" has led Pakistan and North Korea – "two weak and potentially failing states" – to develop their own nuclear weapons. More broadly, China's support of the nuclear programs in these two countries has posed threats not only to non-proliferation regime, but also to the Washington-led liberal world order. In Singh's words, "commission and omission" allows China to "present itself as a peacemaker and upholder of the new nuclear order."

Xi's Foreign-Policy Turn and Asian Perceptions of a Rising China

Yun-han Chu & Yu-tzung Chang

Global Asia, March 28, 2017

Chu and Chang look into the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) and argue that people in Asia-Pacific countries are in favor of a balance of power between China and the US. Their analysis shows that except the Philippines, people in the Asia-Pacific are becoming less optimistic about the influence of the US in the region. They prefer not to take sides in any strategic competition between the US and China or participate in any effort to contain China. Rather, they see China and the US are playing mutually irreplaceable roles in the region.

Democratic Distance and Asian Views of Chinese and American Influence

Min-Hua Huang & Mark Weatherall

Global Asia, March 28, 2017

In this paper, the authors argue that East Asia is a unique case where "a non-democratic power dominates the agenda of regional economic cooperation and perhaps the only region where newly democratic countries become economically integrated with and dependent on non-democratic countries." Based on their analysis of the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS), Huang and Weatherall confirm the steady role of the US in the region where people still view America as a model of democracy. Also, China's leadership in the region relies on whether it could uphold "a regional environment more conducive to inclusive growth."

Events and Discussions

The Pakistan-China-Russia Relationship: An Emerging Coalition?

The Wilson Center, March 20, 2017

This event focused on the evolving relationship between China, Pakistan, and Russia. After outlining the recent developments in the relationship between Beijing, Islamabad, and Moscow, the speakers examined each country's motivation for pursuing a stronger trilateral relationship, and analyzed the effectiveness of the emerging coalition. The speakers also considered the ramifications of the deeper ties between these nations for US policy in the region.

US-Asia Relations in the New Administration

Brookings, March 22, 2017

On March 22 to 23 the Brookings Center for East Asia Policy Studies and John L. Thornton China Center, in conjunction with the Japan Center for Economic Research, the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, and the East Asia Institute, hosted a variety of experts from China, Japan, Korea and South and Southeast Asia to discuss the future of US- Asia relations during the Trump administration. Experts considered a variety of issues in the economic and security relations between the US and Asia.

China Reality Check: The Trump-Xi Mar-a-Lago Meeting: Expectations and Implications

CSIS, March 31, 2017

Experts discussed the upcoming meeting at Mar-a-Lago. Former ambassador to China J. Stapleton Roy was wary of the summit in that the Trump administration is underprepared. However, he believed President Xi and President Trump should establish a close personal relationship and use that basis for further bilateral policy reviews. Kevin Nealer suggested this summit could be an opportunity in transformation in the bilateral trade relationship, even though Donald Trump has been persistently harsh on trade issues.

Book Launch: Gideon Rachman's Easternization: Asia's Rise and America's Decline

CSIS, April 5, 2017

Gideon Rachman discussed his book, *Easternization: Asia Rise and America's Decline*, providing an analysis on a new era of global instability and the flow of wealth and power from West to the East.



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