

Pompeo's "Indo-Pacific" Tour Is Aimed Against Iran and China

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Region: [Asia](#)

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The Secretary of State is on a tour of the Indo-Pacific region that will take him to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, India, Japan, and South Korea by the time it concludes next week, with the aim of this global voyage being to strengthen the US' "containment" alliances against Iran and China.

Rarely is a Secretary of State's schedule as significant as Pompeo's is this week, with the US' top diplomat on a tour of the "[Indo-Pacific](#)" region that will take him to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, India, Japan, and South Korea by the time it concludes next week. This global voyage isn't just for photo-ops and handshakes, but to strengthen the US' "containment" alliances against Iran and China, with India having a doubly strategic role to play given its de-facto membership in both "[Lead from Behind](#)" proxy groupings. The first part of Pompeo's trip has already finished after he visited the two GCC leaders and discussed their joint response to what the US claims was Iran's recent attack against two oil tankers, though as is the norm with the secretive Trump Administration, details were scant and the press was left speculating about the content of their talks.

Even so, it's a fair assumption to say that the [reports](#) about the US' assembling an international coalition to ensure the safety of oil tankers in the Gulf probably figured high on the agenda, which brings one around to discuss the role that India is poised to play in this plot. The South Asian state has been rapidly intensifying its [military-strategic alliance](#) with the US over the past two years and just recently dispatched naval and air assets to the region even before Trump [tweeted](#) that all countries should do so instead of relying on the US' free security services there. This was a [sign of fealty](#) towards its new American, Israeli, and Saudi allies if there ever was one, as was India's decision to [discontinue buying](#) Iranian oil after the lifting of the US' sanctions waiver in this respect in spite of [previously promising](#) last year to only abide by UNSC sanctions and not Washington's unilateral ones.

Seeing as how India's military mission to the Gulf preceded Pompeo's visit, it might have also been an effort to make him more flexible on their expected [trade](#) and [military](#) negotiations. In that sense, India's decision to tacitly side with the US and its allies against Iran might be a bargaining tactic to extract better benefits from its new military-strategic ally vis-a-vis their shared goal of "containing" China, thereby making India the indispensable player connecting these two otherwise separate "containment" coalitions. Foreign companies are [already re-offshoring](#) to India from China in response to the so-called "[trade war](#)", and it's imperative for American grand strategy that the US helps accelerate this trend and finds a way to directly profit from it as well, hence the interest in clinching a

free trade agreement with India sometime in the future. On the military front, the US wants to facilitate India's rise as a naval power that could keep Chinese submarines in check.

As for the East Asian countries that Pompeo will visit later this week, Japan is obviously the host of this year's G20 Summit, and it's here where the Secretary of State will meet up with his boss. The two will do their best to ensure that this global event somehow or another adds pressure to Iran and China, even if it's only symbolic and through the partial participation of some of the participants. [Japan](#) is much more important than just that, though, since the US envisions it playing the most prominent role in the region when it comes to "containing" China, both in the economic and military senses. Per the former, Japan is India's key partner in the US-backed "Asia-Africa Growth Corridor" (AAGC) that this new trilateral alliance believes [could one day compete](#) with China's Silk Road and even replace its role in some countries, while the latter involves Tokyo's revival as a naval power capable of challenging China in the global ocean.

South Korea, meanwhile, is proverbially the "toughest nut to crack" since it's on equally excellent terms with the US and China, therefore making it the most difficult to incorporate into an anti-Chinese "containment" coalition, let alone one regionally managed by Seoul's historic Japanese enemy. As such, that last leg of Pompeo's trip will probably just see him and Trump focusing more on the peninsular country's role in the North Korean denuclearization process during their joint visit to the South Korean capital after the G20 this weekend. The example being set by South Korea is that it's possible to "balance" between both "superpowers", which is obviously more applicable when it comes to countries' relations between the US and China than the US and Iran, of course, so there could be a lesson for others to learn from Seoul's example if they have the political will.

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