

# The Trump National Security Doctrine in a Regional Context

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*The last section of the new [US National Security Strategy](#) (NSS) describes the envisaged application of the Trump Doctrine in a regional context all across the world, and it's worthwhile to examine what storylines will most likely be advanced by the policy document's [intrinsic infowar component](#). This analysis is divided according to the geographic categories contained in the NSS and proceeds along that order, after which a brief summary will be presented in highlighting the most discernable global trends.*

## Indo-Pacific

The US says that “a geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region” as China employs multifaceted influence strategies in a concerted effort to get regional states to follow its economic and political models. Although presented by China as being mutually beneficial, the NSS describes Beijing’s Silk Road relationships as being detrimental to its partners’ sovereignty. In response, Washington claims that “states throughout the region are calling for sustained U.S. leadership in a collective response that upholds a regional order respectful of sovereignty and independence”, which implies the creation of what the author has previously described as a ‘[China Containment Coalition](#)’ (CCC) to preserve the existing US-led unipolar system. The suggested outcome of this initiative is the US’ “quadrilateral cooperation with Japan, Australia, and India”, with the latter once again being referred to as a “Major Defense Partner” whose “growing relationships throughout the region” will be supported by the US.



Elsewhere in the area, North Korea is identified as “a global threat that requires a global response”, later revealed in this section as being missile defense cooperation between the US, Japan, and South Korea towards the eventual aim of “an area defense capability”, one which was previously described in the document as “not intended to undermine strategic stability or disrupt longstanding strategic relationships with Russia or China.” Looking southwards, the US wants to “reenergize [its] alliances with the Philippines and Thailand and strengthen [its] partnerships with Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and others to help them become cooperative maritime partners”, with it being inferred that “reenergizing” is a euphemism for “winning back” Manila and Bangkok. Altogether, the US plans to use ASEAN and APEC as regional institutions for advancing its geopolitical and economic interests, with the former probably seeing some of the ASEAN states become the US’ “[Lead From Behind](#)” partners in “containing China” while the latter will result in more bilateral trade deals.

## EU

Russia is fear mongered as engaging in “subversive measures to weaken the credibility of America’s commitment to Europe, undermine transatlantic unity, and weaken European institutions and governments”, suggesting that any objective developments that even remotely hint at either of these three conclusions will be dismissed as ‘Russian propaganda’ and their messengers discredited as ‘Russian agents/trolls’. China is also mentioned in this section as having “gain[ed] a strategic foothold in Europe by expanding its unfair trade practices and investing in key industries, sensitive technologies, and infrastructure”, showing that the US is now paying attention to the progress that its 16+1 framework has made in the “[Three Seas](#)” region of Central and Eastern Europe and will likely go on the information offensive against it in the coming future.

Daesh and the [Migrant Crisis](#) are also listed as posing serious threats to the EU as well.



In reassuring the continent, the US says that its “European allies and partners increase [its] strategic reach and provide access to forward basing and overflight rights for global operations”, which explains the self-interested reason why Washington will evidently abide by its Article 5 commitment to NATO. It believes that deepening transatlantic collaboration is necessary to protect Europe from the aforementioned threats that were described, with military spending increases geared towards modernizing capacities and building a ‘missile defense shield’ to ‘protect’ against Russia, Iran, and even supposedly North Korea too, while US efforts to “contest China’s unfair trade and economic practices and restrict its acquisition of sensitive technologies” in the EU will probably mean that Juncker’s September 2017 proposal for a “[European Enabling Framework](#)” ‘screening process’ will become a [roadblock](#) to Beijing’s plans.

Furthermore, the US wants to expand its energy exports to Europe, which might see it getting more involved in the activities of LNG terminal-hosting “Three Seas” states such as Croatia and thus setting the stage for a “[Balkan Pivot](#)” to more directly counter China there.

## Middle East

Right off the bat, the US blames Iran for all of the region’s woes by stating that “the interconnected problems of Iranian expansion, state collapse, jihadist ideology, socio-economic stagnation, and regional rivalries have convulsed the Middle East”, accusing what it labels as “the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism” of “tak[ing] advantage of instability to expand its influence through partners and proxies, weapon proliferation, and funding” that oftentimes takes the form of Iran “develop[ing] more capable ballistic missiles and intelligence capabilities, and [undertaking in] malicious cyber activities.” Iran is painted as the ultimate evil in order to whitewash [Israel](#), which the US attempts to unabashedly do in the passage where the authors write that “the threats from jihadist terrorist organizations and the threat from Iran are creating the realization that Israel is not the cause of the region’s problems.”



In fact, the NSS notes, “states have increasingly found common interests with Israel in confronting common threats”, in a nod to the de-facto alliance between the GCC and Israel against Iran. The US lists its chief objectives as strengthening cooperation with the GCC and

what it describes as the “independent state” of Iraq, with the latter phrase hinting that Washington will work behind the scenes to counter Tehran’s influence in Baghdad. This presumption is apparently confirmed by the next passage where the US commits to “work[ing] with partners to...neutralize Iranian malign influence”, which again implies a similar “Lead From Behind” strategy just like it wants to employ in the Indo-Pacific.

Moreover, the US says that it will “seek a settlement to the Syrian civil war that sets the conditions for refugees to return home and rebuild their lives in safety”, signaling a step back from its previous regime change obsession and possibly opening the doors for a pragmatic ‘[New Détente](#)’ deal with Russia over this issue. In addition, the expected US commitment “to helping facilitate a comprehensive peace agreement that is acceptable to both Israelis and Palestinians” is reiterated in the text, though this is nothing more than rhetoric for distracting from the US’ [determinedly](#) pro-Israeli policies. Most interestingly, however, is the penultimate policy prescription that the US will “help (its) partners procure interoperable missile defense and other capabilities to better defend against active missile threats”, which demonstrates that its missile defense plans are indeed Eurasian-wide and stretch all across the EU-Mideast-Northeast Asian Rimland.

### South And Central Asia

The US draws significant attention what it describes as Pakistan-based threats on multiple occasions, slyly speaking tongue-in-cheek when talking about the Pakistan that it’s supposedly seeking in order to indirectly accuse the Pakistan of today of embodying these said threats. For example, when the authors write that their country “seeks a Pakistan that is not engaged in destabilizing behavior...will press Pakistan to intensify its counterterrorism efforts, since no partnership can survive a country’s support for militants and terrorists who target a partner’s own service members and officials...(and) will also encourage Pakistan to continue demonstrating that it is a responsible steward of its nuclear assets”, it’s essentially saying that Pakistan is destabilizing the region, supporting anti-American militants and terrorists who target US forces in Afghanistan, and irresponsibly wielding nuclear weapons which might one day fall into the hands of the same terrorists that it’s accused of backing.



### India, US, Japan annual Malabar naval drills

All of these hostile narratives against Pakistan explain why the US wants the world to think that “the prospect for an Indo-Pakistani military conflict [which] could lead to a nuclear exchange remains a key concern requiring consistent diplomatic attention”, as the thinly veiled inference is that Islamabad is solely responsible for this dangerous state of affairs. It’s [predictable](#) that Washington would weave such a one-sided storyline because it envisions New Delhi as its [21<sup>st</sup> century partner](#) for ‘containing China’, with its strategists writing that the US “will deepen [its] strategic partnership with India and support its leadership role in Indian Ocean security and throughout the broader region”.

Concerning Central Asia, the NSS says that the US “will encourage the economic integration of Central and South Asia to promote prosperity and economic linkages that will bolster connectivity and trade”, and since it’s improbable that this is an oblique statement of support for [CPEC](#), the only realistic conclusion is that it’s an American endorsement for the [Central Asian component](#) of India’s [Chabahar](#) project. As even the most inexperienced

observer would know, this port is based in Iran, so the US will have to work overtime in crafting a semi-cohesive explanation for why it doesn't mind India working with Washington's hated nemesis in Tehran, though the answer could probably be simplistically summed up as 'realpolitik' for 'containing China'.

Another point to mention is that the US says that it "seeks Central Asian states that are resilient against domination by rival powers, are resistant to becoming jihadist safe havens, and prioritize reforms", and that it "will work with the Central Asian states to guarantee access to the region to support [its] counterterrorism efforts." Evidently, the US is aiming to exploit the new Daesh threat to the region that it helped transfer from "Syraq" to Afghanistan as an excuse for reestablishing the military partnerships that it used to have with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, possibly up to the point of once again basing its troops on their territory. While pretending that this is only in the interests of "counterterrorism efforts", the real motivation would be to boost their "resilien[cy] against domination by rival powers", or in other words, try to dislodge them from the joint Russian-Chinese multipolar orbit of the SCO.

## Western Hemisphere

The US claims that "democratic states connected by shared values and economic interests will reduce the violence, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration that threaten [their] common security", but in reality it's only concerned about leveraging its economic connectivity with Latin American states to counter the three mentioned threats and doesn't actually care too much about "democratic states" or "shared values". After all, the US supports the Honduran government of Juan Orlando Hernandez despite the OAS [requesting](#) an electoral redo after the incumbent was suspected of stealing the election and then openly resorting to deadly force to suppress opposition protests against him. The Trump Administration's visceral hatred of anything socialist is also on full display in condemning Cuba and Venezuela, which it believes have served as magnets for inviting Chinese and Russian influence into the region via economic and military means, respectively.

The NSS emphasizes the US' "regional efforts to build security and prosperity through strong diplomatic engagement" and its desire to "isolate governments that refuse to act as responsible partners in advancing hemispheric peace and prosperity", suggesting that the incipient anti-Venezuelan coalition model that's forming could be replicated against the similarly multipolar-aligned ALBA states of [Bolivia](#) and [Nicaragua](#) due to their socialist ideals and in the event that they forcibly react against any forthcoming [Hybrid War](#) provocations against them. The declaration that the US "will encourage further market-based economic reforms and encourage transparency to create conditions for sustained prosperity" adds credence to the claims that it will probably expand its "[Operation Condor 2.0](#)" unconventional campaign of restoring its hegemonic hemispheric influence against those states and possibly other ones as well.



US President Donald Trump attends a working dinner with Latin American leaders in New York

On the economic front, the document says that the US "will modernize [its] trade agreements and deepen [its] economic ties with the region and ensure that trade is fair and reciprocal", which is just a reaffirmation of Trump's well-known intent to [renegotiate NAFTA](#),

but which could also extend to the US' other hemispheric multilateral trade deal of CAFTA-DR and the bilateral ones that it has with Chile, Colombia, and Peru (the latter three of which plus NAFTA-member Mexico constitute the four states of the Pacific Alliance trading bloc). The phrasing about "deepening economic ties with the region" might indicate the US' plans to reach bilateral trade deals with the Mercosur members, probably beginning with Brazil and then having the rest of the bloc fall in line afterwards. Altogether, the interweaving of bilateral trade deals all throughout the hemisphere would represent the de-facto fulfillment of the long-sought "Free Trade Area of the Americas" (FTAA).

## Africa

The final section of the NSS' regional context review is the most direct about the US' intentions to "contain China" and obstruct its Silk Road strategy. The authors confidently write that [Africa](#) "represent[s] potential new markets for U.S. goods and services", the demand of which "is high and will likely grow" because of what it hints as being the desire of many countries to replicate its political and economic models. This is obviously the infowar narrative that will be spun in serving as the 'carrot' for attracting African partners (subordinates), while the 'stick' is the equally weaponized storyline that "some Chinese practices undermine Africa's long-term development by corrupting elites, dominating extractive industries, and locking countries into unsustainable and opaque debts and commitments."



### US President Donald Trump congratulates African leaders

In case there was any doubt that the US wants to challenge China's dominance in Africa, the document unambiguously announces that the US "will offer American goods and services, both because it is profitable for [it] and because it serves as an alternative to China's often extractive economic footprint on the continent."

To this end, the US "seeks sovereign African states that are integrated into the world economy", which is a just another way of saying that it wants its partners to abandon the Chinese model of state-driven development and open up their economies to Western businessmen and their [Indo-Japanese partners](#) instead. "Support[ing] economic integration among African states" could be seen as developing an anti-Chinese trading bloc in the future, though this is unlikely since all existing economic organizations on the continent are closely aligned with the People's Republic, as are most of the countries that are party to the massive 2015 [Tripartite Free Trade Area](#) in China's most active "sphere of Silk Road influence".

However, where the US is most capable of making African inroads is through military-security relations in "partner[ing] with governments, civil society, and regional organizations to end long-running, violent conflicts", which carries with it a whiff of "Lead From Behind" "nation-building" that America is much more experienced with (for better or for worse) than China. By using the existing anti-terrorist pretext present throughout most of Africa to degree or another and especially in the [transregional Sahel](#), the US will probably seek to leverage its military advantages to "stabilize" these states in exchange for them disengaging from China and/or clinching profitable trade deals with the US afterwards, since it will otherwise be exceptionally difficult for the US to economically counterbalance China any other way.

## Global Trends

After examining the Trump Doctrine in all of its regional contexts, it's possible to detect several interconnected global trends that are present in the US' National Security Strategy:

### *Demonization Of Strategic Rivals:*

The US is hell-bent on framing its strategic multipolar rivals of Russia, China, and Iran as responsible for global destabilization in order to deflect attention from it and its partners' responsibility for this state of affairs, with the distinct possibility that Pakistan will soon be added to this list of adversaries as America moves towards making India its top international ally in the future.

### *Assembling "Lead From Behind" Coalitions:*

The demonization of the US' strategic rivals provides it with the 'plausible pretext' for assembling regional coalitions against them all throughout the Eurasian supercontinent and potentially even in Latin America too if it gets its way against Venezuela, thus formalizing a new model of unipolar proxy control that has flexibly adapted to multipolar challenges.

### *Building "Missile Defense Shields":*

One of the most prominent state-to-state manifestations of "Lead From Behind" cooperation between the US and its subordinates is the construction of "missile defense shields" on trumped-up pretexts in order to undermine Russia and China's nuclear second-strike capabilities, with the possibility existing that the same model can one day be implemented in South Asia to support India against Pakistan.

### *Exploiting Non-State Threats:*

Another way in which the US plans to utilize its "Lead From Behind" coalitions is to exploit the prevalence of threatening non-state actors such as jihadists and transnational criminal organizations by using them as a 'plausible pretense' for setting up a range of differently sized regional bases in its partnered countries to support special forces raids against these shared menaces.

### *Stopping The Silk Road:*

The combination of demonizing infowars, "Lead From Behind" coalitions, and multidimensional partnerships with its allies naturally leads one to the conclusion that the US plans to employ all instruments of its power (Hybrid War) in stopping China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity so as to counter multipolarity and indefinitely preserve the declining unipolar system.

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