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“The Indo-Pacific and Belt and Road 2.0”

By

Andrew Small

Senior Transatlantic Fellow,
German Marshall Fund, USA



Mr. Andrew Small

Andrew Small is a senior transatlantic fellow with GMF's Asia Program, which he established in 2006. His research focuses on U.S.–China relations, Europe–China relations, Chinese policy in South Asia, and broader developments in China's foreign and economic policy. He was based in GMF's Brussels office for five years, and worked before that as the director of the Foreign Policy Centre's Beijing office, as a visiting fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and an ESU scholar in the office of Senator Edward M. Kennedy. His articles and papers have been published in *The New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, the *Washington Quarterly*, as well as many other journals, magazines, and newspapers. He is the author of the book *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics* published with Hurst / Oxford University Press in 2015. Small was educated at Balliol College, University of Oxford.

In recent years the US has adjusted its policy from a re-balance from Asia to the “free and open Indo-Pacific Strategy,” while also adopting a very explicitly competitive China policy under the Trump administration. This will obviously have an impact not only on the US-China relationship but also have a ripple effect in the broader security and economic environment.

Furthermore, while this policy has a lot of continuity with existing US foreign policy, it is still very unusual given the Trump administration’s insistence (or so it seems) to overturn or go against the policies set in place by the Obama administration. Even then, however, there is a lot of critique from within the Trump administration about falling severely short of expectations. Even though the Trump administration is trying actively to learn from the mistakes made by its predecessor about how to design a strategy specifically to cater to the diverse (and yet common culture) of South and East Asia — it is still true that Asia is essentially a region of US policy that maintains a tradition of being relatively bipartisan.

Furthermore, if we look at the language of the Indo-Pacific Strategy two things are immediately obvious – it indicates a more integrated view of East and South Asia whereas the oceanic terminology indicates an interest more towards maritime Asia rather than continental Asia. The first point is a recent development that perfectly reflects reality with the US calling India its “true strategic partner” while also vying for the virtual control of its economy rather than have it ally with China. The US has already renamed the “US Pacific Command” to the “Indo-Pacific Strategy” without any shift in the area of responsibility. This automatically relates to the second point talked about above – the US is more interested in securing and safeguarding its sea lanes of communication rather than land areas. The more competitive elements of this policy place more emphasis on the maritime realm than on continental Asia.

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