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## What May Not Be in the President's Asia Briefing Book

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As President Trump departs for Asia, he will undoubtedly have briefing books filled with facts on the countries he's visiting, their leaders and the issues likely to arise. But more regional, subtle, and sometimes less comfortable aspects affecting US Asia policy are often hard to capture in such material. Let's consider this more general context.

First, the power balance has dramatically changed over the decades. The United States is still systemically the region's most important power, but no longer in the dominant position it once had. Americans now need Asian cooperation to achieve US goals (just as Asians need the US), and this puts a premium on listening, consulting, persuading and developing positions in partnership. In the past, the US has often been seen as demanding and failing to give due respect to the other countries and the complexity of their societies and politics. There is much less tolerance of this now.

Second, and related, successful US policies have been rooted in US national interests, but understand and work with positive regional trends. It is virtually impossible to force another government to do something it does not see in its own interests because its leadership is put in the untenable position of losing face or even office. It is more likely that government will win favor at home by rejecting US "demands."

The most effective US policies have been based on identifying and supporting favorable forces of change. For example, as developing economies acquire their own intellectual property, their business interests also want laws to protect it. Taiwan and Singapore, once notorious for intellectual property theft, now have strong rules, based on American models.

Third, effective US leadership requires a comprehensive set of tools – military, diplomatic, economic, and cultural-educational – and the political will to adequately and consistently resource these. The tendency to privilege the military and take other elements of power almost for granted fails to best use our many assets. US business, science, education and entertainment project influence in critically important and long-term ways.

Fourth, multilateralism matters. Asia-Pacific organizations, such as APEC, are voluntary and don't negotiate treaties. They are like clubs where leaders at different levels socialize, discuss significant issues and develop common values. APEC is the club for most socio-economic issues, and the East Asia Summit for politico-security issues. Leaders may bilaterally make deals on the side, but they are all expected to be committed club members in good standing and attendance. The president's challenge, as a new member, will be to learn the ropes. Later, he may want to suggest

changes.

Finally, in Asia even more than most regions strategic vision, gravitas, patience, respect for protocol and predictability are highly prized and expected in leadership. Historically, American leaders usually – though not always - projected these traits, and they remain expected today.

Building a coalition on North Korea, for example, requires a well-thought out and articulated strategy based on the damage North Korea is doing to the global non-proliferation regime. This needs to be presented not simply as an American security problem, but a regional and global one in which South Korea, China, Japan and others have equal or greater stakes.

President Trump has had successful meetings with many of the Asia-Pacific leaders he will see and telephone calls with others. More than in Europe, Asians have been giving the benefit of the doubt to the new president. They will be watching hopefully for new signs of affirmative US regional partnership and leadership.

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The president abruptly ended the press conference after some verbal sparring with CBS News reporter Weijia Jiang and CNN's Kaitlan Collins. 7. Trump abruptly walked out of the White House briefing after clashing with two female reportersCredit: AP:Associated Press. 7. CBS journalist Weijia Jiang looked stunned at Trump's comment about ChinaCredit: CNN. The President's Book of S has been added to your Cart. Add a gift receipt for easy returns. Buy usedÂ "Turns the potentially dour history of the president's daily intelligence briefing into a stimulating, if uncritical, account Readers accustomed to CIA skullduggery will be surprised to find it admiringly portrayed as an organization of experts devoted to delivering unbiased information to a grateful president." â€•Publisher's Weekly.Â This is a timely read, especially as President Trump was in the news regarding his transition, and now that he has taken office. More broadly, David identifies the difficulty in providing unique insight to senior leadership, both throughout their tenure, and as technology replaces and "trumps" many/most of the traditional intelligence agencies and disciplines. When the Democratic President finally gets down to his foreign policy agenda, it is not likely that the Russian portfolio will sit on top of it. The new US President is not obsessed with Moscow to the same extent as some Republicans were (e.g. late Senator John McCain). Joe Biden is more likely to focus on the transatlantic relations that were seriously damaged by his predecessor.Â In Bidenâ€™s view, to be anti-Putin does not mean to be anti-Russian; on the contrary, fighting against Putin in the end is the best assistance to the Russian people that the US could possibly offer. 4. Domestic Constraints. The good news for US-Russian relations is the fact that so far US authorities have detected no significant Russian involvement in the election of 2020. This press briefing, like many Trump press briefings, has a hard stop, and Sanders often runs late. The general suspicion is that sheâ€™s trying to keep the briefing as brief as possible. In here you are even more at the mercy of the presidentâ€™s impulses than the rest of the country. The vast majority of the time nothing much happens.Â And put a foot even slightly wrong in the White House press pool and the president of the United States might very well identify you as an enemy of the republic. Consider Zeke Miller, the excellent 20-something correspondent for the Associated Press. At the start of the Trump administration, then employed by Time magazine, heâ€™d been let into the Oval Office and noticed the bust of Martin Luther King wasnâ€™t where it had been when Obama was in office.