

**CHINA-US RELATIONS: TRUMP'S
STATE VISIT AND IMPLICATIONS
FOR BILATERAL TIES**

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EAI Background Brief No. 1304

Executive Summary

1. Donald Trump's state visit to China in November 2017 has injected further stability and predictability to the US-China relationship. It builds on the foundation laid at the Mar-a-Lago retreat in April 2017 that stressed realistic and practical cooperation.
2. Chinese President Xi Jinping went all out to accord "state visit-plus" treatment to Trump. China made sure that Trump was the first head of state to visit the country after Xi's successful conclusion of the 19th Party Congress.
3. The visit was steep in symbolism and pomp. Trump and his wife Melania were the first foreign dignitaries to view an opera performance and dine in the Forbidden City hosted by Xi and his wife Peng.
4. Xi made sure that Trump did not go away empty-handed. A whopping US\$253 billion in deals was signed. Xi committed China to further reform and opening up. China also announced incremental liberalisation of its financial sector.
5. Generally, Trump had adopted a constructive and conciliatory tone during his visit. He even went to the extreme of absolving China for taking advantage of America in trade. Instead, he blamed previous US administrations for this.
6. Despite the mammoth business deals signed, it was obvious that minimal headway was made in terms of structural reforms such as fairer and reciprocal access for American firms in China and better protection of intellectual property rights.
7. On North Korea, China appears willing to work with the United States to apply greater pressure to thwart North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile ambitions. After Xi dispatched his special envoy Song Tao to North Korea, which apparently did not produce any notable results, the United States and China followed up with tougher measures against North Korea.

8. However, China and the United States still differ in their approach to North Korea. While China wants the issue resolved peacefully, the United States is open to all options including a military resolution.
9. The two countries further differ in their strategic vision for the region. Xi has reiterated the seemingly reassuring message that the Asia Pacific is big enough for both China and the United States. Trump has however revived the Indo-Pacific concept that seeks to strengthen America's ties with its Asian allies while roping in other partners like India to complicate the regional landscape for China.
10. China has so far not overly reacted to Trump's Indo-Pacific vision. China appears confident that its rise cannot be contained. It also knows that other countries will carefully weigh their options and not entirely jump on the US bandwagon against China.
11. Overall, while Trump's China visit has helped to put US-China relations on an even keel, there are issues that the two countries have to manage to prevent them from getting out of hand.