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# Befriending Asia: The International Implications and a Policy Recommendation for the Trump Administration

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*Befriending Asia:  
The International Implications and a Policy Recommendation for the Trump  
Administration*

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## **Preface**

In the wake of the results of the 2016 Presidential election, President Obama and his Administration decided to suspend efforts to ratify the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The first section, “The TPP, U.S., & China: The International Implications of the Most Expansive Trade deal in the World” is an analysis of what might have happened had Obama’s efforts continued. The second half of this paper, “The Fall of the TPP: How to Move Forward in International Trade” addresses the abandonment of the TPP and offers policy recommendation for how the Trump Administration should proceed in international trade.

### **The TPP, U.S., & China: The International Implications of the Most Expansive Trade Deal in the World**

## **Introduction**

As the rest of the world has historically looked towards the United States for modernization and prosperity, Asia has become a powerhouse of innovation and production of technology, thus challenging the current world order. As goods are being produced for much cheaper, and more efficiently in smaller export-oriented countries, the global economy is shifting and East Asian countries are developing at unprecedented rates. With the desire to maintain global order and reap the benefits of the growing economies in the region, the United States has targeted the Asian-Pacific for liberalizing trade and stimulating economic growth domestically, while ensuring that they will not be left behind in the era of rapid globalization. The United States’ trade alliance with 11 other nations along the Pacific Rim, that has evolved into the Trans-Pacific Partnership, is a massive attempt for the United States to guarantee a stake in what is becoming the fast growing and most lucrative region in the world.

In an attempt to better understand how the Trans-Pacific Partnership can affect global trade and foreign relations, especially between the United States and rising world power, China, this section of the paper will answer the question:

*What implications will the Trans-Pacific Partnership have on international trade, and how will this affect U.S.-China relations, specifically?*

I will demonstrate the implications that the TPP will have on both international trade and U.S.-China relations by outlining the evolution of the TPP, and how it has come to affect far more than just the 12 countries involved.

I will begin to craft my argument that the TPP illustrates a race for power in the Asia-Pacific region between the most powerful international actors, by first emphasizing what scholars have had to say regarding the TPP from each major actor's perspective. I will then outline the origin of the TPP, as well as the purpose and debate associated with it. Then, I will address the issues with the TPP in the U.S. and the struggles it has in moving forward, as well as the issues that arise when considering the role of the European Union. Finally, I will discuss the major issues that are raised in the exclusion of China, while keeping in mind the conditions needed for peace between the two leading powers.

### **Literature Review**

While, the Trans-Pacific Partnership is a rather contemporary subject there is hardly any data and statistics thus far to help assess the potential outcome of this massive trade deal. Regardless, it is still important to acknowledge what scholars have said in the discussion of the impending status of the TPP, as well as the economic benefits and political power that could result from it.

Bernard K. Gordon offers a relatively basic analysis and theorization of the aftermath of the negotiation of the TPP in “Trading Up in Asia: Why the United States Needs the Trans-Pacific Partnership (2012).” Gordon identifies the stagnation of the WTO’s Doha Round, as well as the several ineffective bilateral trade deals the United States has been attempting to make with several East Asian countries, as a setback for the U.S.’s economic and political growth in the Pacific. In claiming that the TPP is the United States’ only opportunity in accessing economic and political power in the Pacific, Gordon’s support is based entirely on the success for the U.S., such that the TPP, if inclusive of Japan, would add \$60 billion to the United States’ export market (Gordon, 2012).

Despite Gordon’s evaluation of the specifics of the agreement and the conclusions he reaches regarding why the TPP is necessary, his argument seems blinded by the conquest for the United States to gain power politically and economically, and is based on the assumption that what is beneficial to the United States is beneficial to international trade in general. Despite offering deep investigation into the role the TPP plays in developing trade for the United States, Gordon fails to acknowledge any external factors that the TPP would have internationally.

On the other hand, Jie Huang develops an understanding of the TPP from China’s perspective, and provides a more complex theory on the repercussions of the Trans-Pacific Partnership in “TPP versus ECFA: Similarities, Differences, and China’s Struggles” (2012). Huang recognizes the existing trade agreement between Mainland China and Taiwan, and analyzes the impact the TPP will have on both trade and relations among the East Asian countries and the United States. Huang uses data based on investment rates from Taiwan to China, the trends in the movement of cheap labor around East Asia, and highlights the different

demand of industries among different East Asian markets to support her claim that China can remain unscathed by the TPP.

While Huang presents a convincing case on how China and Taiwan's symbiotic relationship may be able to prevent any harmful effects of this exclusive agreement, she quickly discredits the idea of China joining the TPP. Additionally, Huang overlooks the overall impact China may have on international trade, by staying out of FTAs.

Perhaps, of the mentioned literature regarding the TPP, the best analysis of the potential significance this agreement may have on international trade comes from Patrick Messerlin in "The EU's Strategy for Trans-Pacific Partnership" (2013) as he tackles the broader effects the TPP will have on global trade and foreign relations, specifically discussing that of the European Union. Messerlin is quite persuasive in his prediction that the TPP will polarize the European Union from trade with East Asia and be detrimental to that economy and hinder their political power. This argument is supported by data which reflects the significance of Japan's market and the discriminatory effect it would have on the EU, as well as provides data on the projection of market access in 2030 as a basis to predict the magnitude of a trade deal like the TPP.

While Messerlin effectively challenges the economic impact the establishment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership has on the world, his shortcomings lie in the lack of analysis on the state of international relations, should the United States, China, and the EU continue to fight for hegemony over East Asian trade. Though Messerlin does offer substantial support for his insistence for the EU to quickly engage in trade relations in East Asia as a means of protection against trade isolation, he fails to consider the tense power relations that could result between some of the strongest nations and economies in the world.

Based upon what these three academic articles have presented on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, each has offered a different interpretation of its role, though none have extensively explored all aspects of the repercussions of the TPP. However, building off of these insights, I will further argue that the TPP will be detrimental to the EU by focusing on the tension and competition that will suffice between the major powers of the world, as they scramble to make deal with more powerful East Asian economies. I will also analyze the TPP's role in disrupting relations between Mainland China and Taiwan, which together will result in a fight for power between the European Union, China, and the United States in the Asia-Pacific region.

### **What is the TPP?**

The Trans-Pacific Partnership began as what was known in 2005 as the "Pacific 4". Starting out as a Free Trade Agreement between Brunei, Chile, Singapore, and New Zealand, the P-4 focused on slashing tariffs between these four small export-driven countries. By 2009, the United States, Australia, Malaysia, Peru and Vietnam joined the initiative to spark free trade along the Pacific Rim, and the effort became known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Since negotiations began in March of 2010, Mexico, Japan, and Canada have entered into negotiation. The TPP has evolved into a massive agreement that could flourish into a single market system, similar to that of the EU. Between the 12 participating nations, there is a population of approximately 800 million, and would make up 40% of the world's trade.

Most notably, the Trans-Pacific Partnership shot into public scrutiny after Senator Bernie Sanders shed light on the agreement throughout his campaign to become the 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee. A major criticism of the TPP by American politicians involves the lack of transparency from the Obama Administration throughout the process of negotiations. The trade

liberalization initiative has since been highly critiqued domestically, and the dispute over intellectual property rights has been hotly contested between the nations involved.

Despite the flaws in the construction of the agreement, one of the largest concerns is the role of China in this agreement. While the TPP is a part of the Obama Administration's initiative to liberalize trade and stimulate economic growth by slashing trade tariffs, it is also a strategic move by the United States to gain influence in the Pacific region, which is heavily dominated by Japan and China (Huang, 2012). One of the most curious aspects of the TPP is the exclusion of China from the trade negotiations. Considering that China's economy has grown roughly 10% annually since the Cultural Revolution in China (Chan, 2012), the size and impact of China's market is rapidly growing and therefore marking a huge shift in power.

The exclusion of China from the TPP reflects the insecurities the United States may have in regards to China's rapid development and growth into a leading world power. Consequently, the TPP represents much more than a multilateral trade agreement, but also signifies the search for a balance of power between the U.S. and China. As the U.S. moves into the Asian-Pacific region, it is important to understand the total implications the TPP may have, not only on U.S.-China relations, but on also on the larger scale of all international actors and global trade.

### **The TPP Debate in the United States**

The public debate over the ratification of the United States is relatively new, as trade negotiations took place completely in private and had not been released until the final negotiations had been reached. Notably, the TPP has not been a partisan issue considering both Democratic and Republican 2016 Presidential Nominees expressed opposition to the deal, while both their running mates support the TPP, in addition to Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan. The main issues with the TPP have been over the intellectual property rights that the TPP established

as well as the idea that the TPP will aid Asian countries in stealing manufacturing jobs from the U.S. through currency manipulation. Senator Bernie Sanders also highlighted the lack of environmental protections offered under the TPP in his campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination. Additionally, the Obama Administration was highly criticized for the lack of transparency during trade negotiations of this partnership, as details of the deal were not released until after negotiations were finalized later in 2016.

Although the TPP is projected to increase the United States' export gains by 1.9%, the global economy will also reap major benefits. According to the Peterson Institute for International Economics, the total benefits the TPP would have on the international economy would hit \$223 billion by 2025 (Liao, 2016). Despite the overall benefit to both the U.S. and global economy, the TPP is not congruent to the World Trade Organization's previous efforts to create a globally inclusive agreement to decrease trade barriers, and therefore international repercussions of this exclusive deal would be great.

### **The TPP versus the European Union**

Looking beyond the issues the TPP must overcome within the United States, the effect the TPP will have on an international scale must also be discussed. Similar to what Messerlin addresses in "The EU's strategy for Trans-Pacific Partnership," the expansion of the Pacific 4 to the TPP represents the U.S.'s desire to challenge China's influence in that region of the world, while strategically using it as an opportunity to surpass the EU. Regardless of whether the TPP is put into effect, this massive trade deal has initiated cooperation with major key economies in the region, while excluding the two other largest markets in the world- China and the EU. Focusing mostly on the outsider role of the EU in this section, there are no current initiatives to negotiate

any FTA's with East Asia, and therefore the EU will be a major actor affected by the policies revolving around the TPP.

It is no doubt that should the TPP go into effect, the European Union will face massive discriminatory effects on trade with that region of the world, and if Messerlin's predictions are true, then the value of the EU's economy will be cut in half over the next 20 years, as East Asia continues to rise. As the negotiations progress, the discussion alone of the United States making trade deals with East Asia portrays the active interest of the United States to gain power in that region both economically and politically. This interest of the U.S. in this region reflects the economic power that is rapidly growing in East Asian countries due to factors such as cheap labor, high amounts of agricultural exports from nations in the Pacific, and more.

The largest benefit to the U.S. in the TPP is the open market with Japan, which accounts for half of the GDP of all East Asian countries included in the agreement (Messerlin, 2013). With this kind of PFA between the U.S. and Japan, the European Union will take a huge hit in trade with this region, and in turn be at a disadvantage in terms of the shift in world power over the near future. Whether the EU's strategy in moving forward into Asia-Pacific is trying to establish a Free Trade Agreement with Japan before the TPP is ratified, or whether the EU attempts to initiate conversation with China and Taiwan who already participate in an incredibly powerful trade agreement, their next move will inevitably cause tension in the power conquest over this rapidly developing region.

In a fight for hegemony, the mere idea of the U.S. entering such sought after territory in the form of trade deals will put competing powers on edge. While Messerlin does imply there to be a power struggle between the EU and the U.S., he chooses to ignore the significance this tension could cause, especially with China continuing to grow and assert power in that region.

As it is apparent that the exclusion of China was a major political move, the position of the European Union is too often overlooked in this discussion.

The idea of the battle over power that is growing in the Asia-Pacific region between major national actors, and is reinforced by Andy Morimoto's "Should America Fear China's Alternative to the TPP?" (2016). Morimoto acknowledges the competition that has resulted from the U.S. interest in Asia, encouraging the idea that China's Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership could be combined with the TPP to sooth diplomatic relations. While the solution is faulty and is quite optimistic, the concern over the effect the TPP and this region holds on international relations is evident. The struggle over power in this region of the world will inevitably cause tensions to rise between these the EU, the U.S, and China, and be a major consequence of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

### **China & the TPP**

Through understanding the impact the TPP has outside of Asia-Pacific, it is now important to understand the implications it will have in growing tensions among Asian countries, especially China, considering the role China plays as a major power, as well as their role in being excluded from the TPP. As highlighted by Jie Huang in "TPP versus ECFA: Similarities, Differences, and China's Strategies" (2012), China already has in place a successful trade agreement with Taiwan which provides economic benefits as well as gives hope for China's reunification with Taiwan.

According to the WTO's Trade Profiles, "the TPP Impact in terms of market access, projection 2030" shows that China's GDP will be double that of the East Asian TPP (Messerlin, 2013). The impact of China's economy as well as political power over the region is not insignificant. China manages a huge stake in world trade, but the TPP could stimulate more

competition between China, Taiwan, and the neighboring TPP countries. With the United State's attempt to challenge their hegemony by negotiating deals with China's neighbors, this again contributes the main argument that the biggest implication of the TPP results in rising tensions between the world's most powerful actors. This is not to say that China would not be interested nor would not reap benefits from joining the TPP, however, this is unlikely.

Continuing with detrimental effects the TPP could produce in the Asia-Pacific region, with Taiwan's Democratic Party in power now, possibility of reunification between Mainland China and Taiwan is slim. Therefore Taiwan involvement with a trade deal that appears as an anyone-but-China pact could cause major conflict between the Mainland and Taiwan. The TPP has produced new competition between Taiwan's markets and countries such as Chile and New Zealand in the agricultural industry, and with Korea and Japan over electronic products. Thus, Taiwan may be more inclined to join the TPP and therefore impeding on the Mainland-Taiwan Economic Cooperative Framework Agreement. China heavily relies on the ECFA for Taiwanese capital for their imports and also has saved the Mainland US\$227.6 million in tariffs (Huang, 90).

Aside from the economic weight the EFCA holds over both China and Taiwan, breaking it would create enormous tension between the two governments in Asia, and China would be completely left out of some of the most lucrative markets in the world, power struggle. Shuaihua Cheng's publication, "TPP, China and the Future of Global Trade Order" (2014), argues that the TPP indeed reflects too much of being an "anyone but China club." Cheng also argues that the focus should return to the WTO's efforts in the Doha Round, which is much more inclusive of nations in order to slash barriers and stimulate a more equal international trade system. Considering the Doha Round negotiations have not come close to being finalized after 12 years,

a successful global trade deal is improbable. Again, this view, while well supported, neglects to consider the already existing power struggle China and the United States now face in that region, and does not recognize the need for not only a balance in power in Asia, but also around the rest of the world.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this section of this paper was to understand the overall international implications of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the major role China plays. While there are large economic benefits that would result from the TPP, the political consequences could be extensive. As the race to dominate Asia has commenced, the TPP offers major access to the Pacific Rim for the United States, both challenging China's dominance as well as threatening the European Union's future with international trade. U.S.-China relations will be widely affected and could result in major conflict, especially if the status of Taiwan's position with trade in Asia changes. The EU remains a complete outlier in the battle for power in Asia, and will without a doubt put pressure on their market to challenge the existing powers of the Pacific Rim. As major competitors will face repercussions of this agreement, the United States must act strategically with any trade agreement made in Asia, especially one to the caliber of the TPP. As markets are as competitive as ever, the United States has the responsibility as a major superpower to maintain peace between such powerful nations in avoiding a 21<sup>st</sup> century Cold War.

## **The Fall of the TPP: How to Move Forward in International Trade A Policy Recommendation for the Trump Administration**

### **Summary**

In the aftermath of the 2016 General Election, the White House quickly announced the abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The TPP was the Obama Administration's multilateral trade deal negotiated with 11 other countries located on the Pacific Rim. Despite

appealing to both Democrats and Republicans, the TPP has been highly criticized for sending American jobs overseas. The TPP faced backlash after the finalized negotiations, which highlighted the issues of currency manipulation, intellectual property rights, and environment issues. Though flawed, the TPP would have made up 40% of the world's GDP, and given the United States access to East Asian markets, which have seen accelerated development, while being a prime opportunity for the U.S. to move into Asia and challenge China as a super power in their own region. With the official death of the TPP, the Trump Administration must not take a protectionist approach, but initiate a new foreign trade policy to push for open markets and accelerate America forward in the era of globalization.

The purpose of this section is to offer policy recommendation to the Trump Administration regarding international trade and how to move forward since the abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. In accordance to the GOP's platform regarding international trade, I will recommend the Trump Administration to pursue a similar multilateral trade deal with countries in the Asian-Pacific region in order to ensure access to those markets, while also stimulating economic growth at home.

## **Background**

Prior to Obama's initiative in entering one of the most expansive trade deals in the world, the United States was involved in the World Trade Organization's latest attempt to facilitate trade around the world by lowering trade barriers through the Doha Round. After 12 years of failed negotiations with the Doha Round, the Obama Administration's pursuit of an alternative multilateral trade deal concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region, led to negotiations between 12 countries, including East Asian power house economies such as Japan, while strategically leaving out China.

Currently, the Trump Administration has not offered an official international trade policy proposal, but has spoken out about the ramifications regarding the TPP and any potential trade with China. President-elect Trump has taken a protectionist view on how the United States should interact with international markets, however, as the world is watching developing countries take over trade and fostering technological innovation, the U.S. must not abstain from negotiations with these countries in order to reap the benefits of this global advancement.

In recommending policy options for the Trump Administration, it is important to adhere to the GOP's current position on foreign trade. According to their website, the GOP's platform focuses on protecting U.S. interests by:

1. Protecting American intellectual property from foreign governments
2. Putting an end to China's rumored currency manipulation

Moving forward, the United States should keep in mind the wide range of benefits of a multilateral trade deal with countries in Asia that the TPP would have offered, while accounting for U.S. interests, rising loss of manufacturing jobs in America, as well as the role China plays in international trade.

### **Policy Issues**

While the United States remains the super power of the world, East Asian economies have been growing at unprecedented rates. It is the United States' best interest for the next Administration to push for an international trade policy that will not only stimulate economic growth within the U.S., but also ensure access to the Asian-Pacific region in the future. The overall GDP of the developing Asian countries within the TPP would have made up 40% of the world's GDP, with Japan contributing over ½ of the GDP of the East Asian countries in addition to the U.S.'s contribution. However, the U.S. needs to liberalize trade in Asia by not only

engaging with Japan, but by establishing a supply chain between several high export Asian markets, and in turn dominate the world economy as a whole. This in itself is a major motivation for the United States to continue to participate in trade negotiations within this region through an alternative multilateral trade agreement.

Despite President-elect Trump's outspoken preference for bilateral trade agreements, a multilateral trade agreement with developing nations would be most beneficial to the United States currently, as it would not only be more effective, but also much more inclusive of globalization. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 41 million American jobs depend on trade, and having U.S. markets exposed to wider range of developing economies, will benefit industries across the board. Proposing several bilateral trade deals will not create as large of an open market in Asia, and will prevent all trade between Asian countries and the U.S. to be equal, therefore hindering the potential for U.S. exports to increase exponentially.

In the quest to create an expansive deal to properly expose the United States to innovative and prosperous markets, the United States faces the domestic issue of the disappearance of lower skilled jobs. Developing export countries such as Malaysia, and Vietnam are attracting more and more capital to their cheaper local production facilities, hurting low skilled workers in the United States. While manufacturing jobs are indeed leaving the United States to developing countries, trade agreements are not to be blamed. In part, the speculation that several Asian governments are using some form of currency manipulation to keep labor cheap as their economies improve does play a role in manufacturing jobs escaping the United States. The only way to combat this issue is by creating a trade agreement with stricter regulations on currency with trading partners than any other trade policy ever before.

Though the U.S. can make attempts to rectify issues of currency manipulation abroad, low skilled jobs will inevitably continue to leave the U.S. because of the promise of cheaper and more efficient labor abroad. The Trump Administration's belief that trade deals are responsible must be rethought and attempts should be made to resolve the issue of under qualified workers in a job market requiring high skilled workers. On the contrary, the Trump Administration should use trade as a tactic to bring back manufacturing jobs by imposing tariffs and offering benefits to domestic companies who choose not to outsource their labor abroad. Completely neglecting the negotiation of a trade deal with Asia over the loss of manufacturing jobs at home will only continue to hurt the growing unskilled unemployment group within the U.S. Strategy should be made to resolve this as a domestic issue, instead of abstaining from international trade and hoping that these manufacturing jobs will reappear out of nowhere.

While the United States is up against China in the bid for power in Asia, entering Asian markets directly challenges China's dominance over the region. Despite U.S. interest in gaining traction against Chinese markets to stimulate healthy competition, the move to directly challenge China should be taken cautiously. Though President-elect Trump has addressed China's role in the world as responsible for major trade deficits, stealing jobs, and currency manipulating, going to battle with China by raising their tariffs on U.S. exports will hurt the economy but all also catalyze major disputes over trade and power in the future.

In addition, the Chinese economy is indeed thriving and this success is projected to continue. According to the World Trade Organization predicts that China's GDP will be twice that of the East Asian countries involved in the TPP by 2030. Based on this prediction alone, the Trump Administration should move past protectionist ideals and focus on creating policy with

the Asian Pacific region while keeping the door open for future U.S.-China economic ties to form.

## **Solution**

While the Trans-Pacific Partnership was unable to overcome the mass criticism it faced through the 2016 Presidential Campaign, and may have been a bit ambitious in the U.S.'s first steps into the Asian market, the Trump Administration should attempt to create a similar, but more limited multilateral agreement with major developing nations in the Asia-Pacific Region, by taking into account the setbacks of the previously negotiated TPP.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership was projected to increase the world's economy by billions, but also increase U.S. export gains to up to \$54.8 billion according to the Peterson Institute for International Economics. The economic benefits alone should persuade the Trump Administration to adopt a similar multilateral trade deal, and offer a more transparent negotiation process to ensure that the interests of the United States are preserved.

Aside from economic gains, it is in the best interest of the United States to negotiate a trade deal that can help foster global innovation, while maintaining rights to intellectual property such as brands and patents that are created in the U.S. As the Trans-Pacific Partnership was highly critiqued for not negotiating fair provisions in protecting intellectual property, the Trump Administration should include higher standards for the protection over intellectual property, while maintaining the goal of global innovation.

Additionally, as manufacturing jobs continue to escape the United States, instating a stricter provision on transparency on federal funds to better control currency, will resolve the issue of Asian countries manipulating currency, but also help save manufacturing jobs in America. While the disappearance of low skilled jobs is inevitable however, the Trump

Administration should combat this issue by instituting public programs that would provide education and qualifications for these workers to obtain higher skilled jobs that will be opening up in the U.S. as a result of international trade.

Finally, in addition to renegotiating a more limited multilateral trade deal in the Asian-Pacific region, the Trump Administration should seek out a partnership with China, not only to create a balance of power in Asia, but also because the United States needs to work along side China in order for the economy to thrive in the future.

While this policy proposal focuses on compensating on international trade along the Pacific Rim after the abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, it is important to consider international trade around the rest of the world as well. As the United States has been actively involved with trade negotiations in Asia, Europe has been marginally forgotten. Considering the European Union boasts a single market system allowing for free trade, they are behind on international trade regulations along the Pacific Rim. As the Asian markets continue to grow and the United States continues to pursue some type of alliance, Europe will in time see major trade set backs. As the Trump Administration proceeds in creating policy for the United States, all international implications resulting from any action taken by the U.S. must be contemplated and anticipated so as to maintain peace among all nations.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, although economic expansion is a major motivation for international trade, there are other benefits to creating trade agreements with other regions of the world. Trade Agreements not only offer economic benefits, but also act as a type of diplomacy between nations. Opening markets to Asia is extremely important right now for the United States as it provides an opportunity for the U.S. to set the standard for trade regulations among rapidly

developing nations. While globalization is spreading, and developing regions are contributing more to the world, the Trump Administration's policy on international trade must solidify the U.S.'s role as a superpower of the world, while also supporting developing nations in equally beneficial agreements. The proposed solution in renegotiating a limited version of the Trans-Pacific Partnership while opening up a discussion for trade with China is the best policy option for the future of the United States.

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