



The Trans-Pacific Partnership for Peace

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We need to add a third "P" to the TPP.

As the American military is stretched by repeated deployments to hot wars in the Middle East and to preventing a new cold war in Eastern Europe, it is critically important that the Asia-Pacific region remains a region of peace. That is exactly what a new trade agreement, called the Trans-Pacific Partnership, will do. In fact, this agreement will be so powerful in buttressing America's national security that we should call it the "Trans-Pacific Partnership for Peace."

There are few places in the world where the peace is more threatened than the Asia-Pacific. We see nuclear blackmail by an unstable dictator on the Korean peninsula, boundary disputes in the South and East China Sea, tensions over the political status of Taiwan, and a legacy of historical grievances dating back to the Second World War. These tensions are driving a rapid growth in military spending: In the last decade, **military spending in Asia and Oceania** increased by 62 percent between 2005 and 2014.

But there are also seeds of peace. In just two decades, Vietnam has evolved from a closed country still defined as an enemy of the United States to one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with a tightening relationship with the United States that could bring American warships back to Cam Ranh Bay.

The opening of China to trade and investment unleashed unprecedented economic growth and created a powerful incentive for regional peace, as **conflict would interrupt the trade** flows that are the basis for multinational supply chains. In the last two decades throughout Asia, corrupt dictatorships have been replaced by emerging (if flawed) multiparty democracies: Part of the credit for that can go to trade, as businesses **would rather invest in countries that respect the rule of law**.

The TPP, if approved by Congress, would cement these gains and build an expanding zone of peace and prosperity, underscored by shared values and bonds that would grow tighter. On the other hand, failure to pass TPP could undermine the fragile peace built over recent decades.

The TPP would build peace through shared values by encouraging free exchange. Trade is not only an engine of economic growth, it also encourages a people to share ideas, business practices, and culture. The TPP will enshrine these advances by providing assurances about property rights and business practices. As trade and investment increase, so too will travel and

direct engagement. It is far harder to demonize a people as an enemy when you're doing business with them.

The TPP would build peace through prosperity. The **World Bank estimates** that the TPP will increase economic output by as much as to 8-10 percent in some Asian countries. When countries become rich through business and trade (as opposed to through resource exploitation), they are less likely to go to war. On the other hand, should economic growth fail, evidence shows that governments **emphasize nationalist disputes**, compromising regional security.

The TPP would build peace through strength. The National Academies of Sciences has found that increased trade actually helps to build a more stable network **of military and strategic alliances**. Coalitions of like-minded countries that come together on trade will also work together on defense and security issues. These alliances will help regional powers stand up to the bullies that try to use military might to assert their will — like the Chinese are doing in maritime border disputes in the South and East China seas. This strength has regional nations like Indonesia, South Korea, and the Philippines considering joining. Those who would retreat from trade are signaling American weakness, not strength.

But we should not see the TPP as targeting China. Instead, it will help enshrine a rules-based system of trade where countries like China cannot "race to the bottom" and flout the rules at the expense of American workers. By establishing strong labor and environmental standards in the region, TPP will reward countries that play by the rules. If China can raise its standards, there is no reason to believe that they would not be able to join TPP down the road.

During President Obama's trip to Asia, he visited Vietnam and Hiroshima, which reminds us of the horrors of war. If the TPP fails to pass Congress, it will show our allies that the benefits of trade, liberalization, and engagement with the U.S. are fleeting. It would give support to those that argue interdependence is just another world for vulnerability. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter has **said that the TPP** "is as important to me as another aircraft carrier." But that's not quite accurate: The TPP's real value is that it will build a region of peace, where warships are no longer needed.

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