

3 THINGS TO WATCH IN 2021: ASIA



1

A Region Changed: Alliances Revitalized

Over the past four years, China has grown more assertive in the pursuit of its interests and has demonstrated a greater willingness to openly intimidate its neighbors. The entire region – allies and adversaries alike – will watch to see if and how the United States seeks to restore its position as regional leader.

A Pivotal Year in Afghanistan

Above all, the administration will need to decide how, amid all this uncertainty, it will pursue its core interest in Afghanistan—maintaining a robust counterterrorism capacity—in the face of diminished public support for continued operations and justifiable questions about the security and human rights implications of the potential return to power by the Taliban.

2



3

A Difficult Decoupling

As of late 2020, Asia is the locus of the world's two largest trade agreements, yet the U.S. is party to neither the CPTPP nor the RCEP. The sustainability of decoupling trade interests from security concerns will come under increasing pressure in 2021.

