

China emerges as master dealmaker

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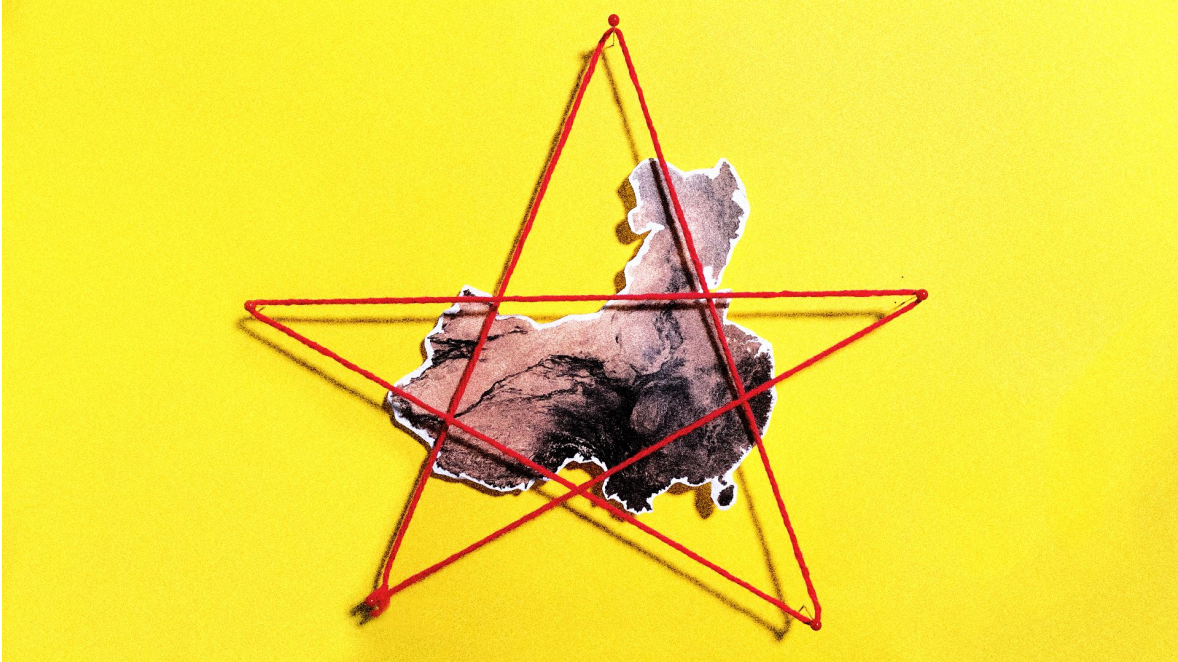


Illustration: Rebecca Zisser, Sarah Grillo/Axios

While the U.S. is consumed by its own political chaos, China is filling the global power vacuum.

The big picture: When the U.S. touts America First, China ends up being the defender of globalization, and Beijing uses that message to try to pick off U.S. allies for itself.

China is recruiting U.S. allies in Europe to side with Beijing over Washington in the trade fight.

Trump's trade moves are [pushing Japan closer to China](#) as well.

With its trillion-dollar Belt and Road initiative, China is buying friends in developing countries all over the world with the promise of free trade relationships and infrastructure — which the West isn't offering.

The U.S. is just waking up.

Be smart: Despite China's market restrictions against foreign companies and [track record of intellectual property theft](#), Xi has made it a point to lobby for an open global economy in speeches and meetings with world leaders. Lewis says the message is

clear: "The Chinese are now much franker than they ever were before about, "We will be the ones guiding the world."