

Eagle vs Dragon: Geostrategic Rivalry and Political Ambitions of the United States and China in Asia

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<https://doi.org/10.62345/jads.2026.15.1.21>

Abstract

At the dawn of the 21st century, the United States of America focus was on the continent of Asia region. US-China geo-strategic rivalry or competition had a “buzz word” that propagated by the media, opinion makers and policy architects around the world. This research is titled Eagle vs. Dragon: Geostrategic Rivalry and Political Ambitions of the United States and China. It involves analysing the dynamics of the US-China competition and its broader repercussions across Asia. The research will further examine the great power competition in the Asia region, where the two great powers compete for geostrategic advantage and to achieve national goals and objectives. China has confidence in achieving success, and the USA believes in victory, which will bring new challenges and opportunities for Asian regional nations. This research paper is firmly rooted in the realist tradition of International Relations and argues that both powers act as the main actors because of their national interests, security concerns, and aspirations to power, though in different ways and with distinct strategic approaches. The obstacle of this study will be attempting to discover the research, how the US-China Geostrategic competition impacts and shifts the dynamics of the Asian surface, especially in the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and how both great powers secure the current challenges like (3ds) Debt, Data, and Dominance. Finally, the paper concludes that the US-China competition is altering regional balances and the world power structure, and that strategic rivalry is the hallmark of modern international politics, with dialogue, crisis management, and regional integration being the most effective measures to reduce the risks of conflict.

Keywords: Eagle vs Dragon, Geostrategic Rivalry, Political Ambition, USA and China.

Introduction

The United States and China have remained locked in significant geostrategic tensions that have influenced the global order, digital technological infrastructure, and trade and economic policies. Under the second term of US President Trump, economic policy has become harsh, with tariffs implemented, leading to tit-for-tat measures against China. In October 2025, President Trump and President Xi Jinping reached a temporary trade truce in South Korea (BBC News, 2025), which involved reducing the tariffs and suspending Chinese export restrictions on rare earths. China have become the economic might after the second world war like during the cold war period, on this time the world has polarized and divided into the bipolar system, because of the primarily root of conflict that's period was emerging a new nature of arms race and conflict among the super power states, which was on the shape of ideological controversy between USA

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and USSR. China did “keep its distance ” and stay out of all the proxy wars between the US and USSR. Over time, China has emerged as a rising power with a well-planned and well-executed developmental strategy, achieving many goals in global politics through soft diplomacy that has attained efficient, productive, goal-oriented, purposeful, and result-oriented objectives, and has achieved great success worldwide.

Therefore, during the Cold War period, China was also groomed as a disciplined society and goal-oriented civil culture with a high standard of education, technical skills, and work ethic in the global arena; it has emerged as an economic powerhouse and a military competitor of the United States of America. Policies and geo-strategies of the United States toward the Asia region have always sustained and dominated, and have also established Tit-for-Tat tactics toward communist-ideological adopted nations. On this scale of conflict and proxy wars between the great powers, which have increased internal and external conflict among Asian countries and worldwide, from these perspectives, the Asian region's existing sovereign nations have divided into two power blocs. A range of political and structural problems, including threats to sovereignty, rising economic rivalry, and the escalating technological arms race, among others, are affecting many Asian states, particularly the underdeveloped ones.

The cultures of some Asian countries are poorly aligned with the ideals of democracy and capitalism due to differences in civilization, ethnicity, and historical events. Trying to impose these values through power and sometimes illegitimate means, the United States has sought to enforce them. As a result, various Asian nations have also taken sides to safeguard themselves. As a result, a strategic rivalry has emerged and intensified between the United States and China. In the 2025, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC) Annual Report by U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2025) which also gave an integrative policy agenda which makes the U.S-China Geo -Strategic interaction manifest as the systemic tactic war in which economic statecraft, military upgrading, and high-tech contention act as complementary forces instead of sovereign fields of influence.

Since the last three decades, Continent Asia continent has similarly one of the cornerstones of the US foreign policy, and the US has formed a defense alliances and bilateral agreements with many countries of Asian region, only purpose to contain the Russian based communism ideology and competed with the China by means of technological race, exiting of world block politics dominance and economic trade war. For example, in Pacific Ocean littoral states, the United States remained dominant and an influential power even after the Cold War. In Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, China remained a dominant and influential power before and after 9/11. The United States has always faced complications from China when formulating policy towards the Asian region (in the NSS from 2012-2024, the US portrays China as a threat to the US). Repeated wars, interference in the internal political affairs, changing policies over time, and considerable efforts to change the cultural identity of states have harmed the United States, which has created a negative image of the USA in global politics. Many countries in the Asian region have automatically changed their policies and shifted to the China bloc to secure sovereignty.

Realist approach: the famous quote by John Lyly, "All is fair in love and war." In conditions of sweetheart or war, both superpower nations believe that ordinary rules of equality don't apply. China-USA may go to any lengths to achieve their desired outcome (Evans et al, 2023). As a result, Asian countries are seeking balancing policies in the realm of the increasing competition between the United States and China.”

The Arab Spring of 2011 brought substantial political and economic change in the Middle East, altering the region's political landscape. The Arab Spring revealed the opposite foreign policy orientations between the US's selective interventionism and China's adherence to the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention. The Arab Spring has revealed the US. position of power in the Middle East, where instability has tested its ability to influence outcomes and disrupted

economic interests, especially in oil and regional trade. Instead, China was fortunate to operate under a non-interventionist, cautious strategy, growing economically through trade and infrastructure development without becoming politically engaged. Tactically, the revolts demonstrated the difference between the U.S. projective power intervention and the Chinese practical, opportunity-based approach, shifting the regional influence away from economic bargaining chips.

Hameed Gul (former DG ISI, Pakistan) told me personally and referenced the World Order book, arguing that the Muslim world of Asia is geopolitically central and that Western powers rely on Muslim nations for geography, energy, and strategic depth. A US-led regime would decline in the absence of collaboration with Muslim countries in Asia; the Middle East is a strategically significant region to the United States, not only for its energy reserves and location but also for its contribution to American world dominance amid increasing rivalry among world powers. In an attempt to preserve its influence in the region and reduce direct military commitments, the United States has turned more to multilateral and diplomatic arrangements to encourage regional cooperation and stability. In this regard, projects like the Abraham Accords and the I2U2 (India, Israel, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates) grouping fulfil several American interests. To begin with, these frameworks facilitate the normalization of relations between key regional and non-regional partners, minimize old-time conflicts, and promote economic, technological, and security co-operation.

Second, the United States aims to promote regional interconnectedness and integration to project its image as a peace and development agent rather than a strictly military one. Moreover, I2U2 is a broader trend of alliances and burden-sharing that enables the United States to remain strategically relevant in the Middle East and to bridge the region to the Indo-Pacific. In the same manner, the Abraham Accords reinforce the U.S. alliance with Israel and Arab nations, neutralizing the role of its competitors, especially China and Russia, and ensuring a U.S.-established regional position. In this way, these initiatives demonstrate that the United States is seeking to maintain good relations with Middle Eastern states, enhance its soft power, restore its credibility, and adjust its regional strategy to the conditions of a multipolar international system. In 2012, the Obama administration introduced a “pivot to Asia” policy, focusing on Security Alliances, Economic Engagement, Promotion of Democracy, and Human Rights. The overall strategy, often called the “Indo-Pacific Policy,” aims for a free, open, and rules-based regional order. To rein in the emergence of China and contain challenges to the hegemonic international order dominated by the US. As regards strategic rivalry with China.” The USA affirms the word ‘Victory’ as a successful strategy against China. While China’s association’s victory strategy is to have the word Success against the USA.

The United States focused its containment policy on the Soviet Union during the Cold War (1945-1991) because of ideological differences rooted in communism. Although China was also communist, it had been a peripheral part of US strategic calculations. The Cold War gave way to China as the main threat to US hegemony, particularly in Asia, where it had already gained a positive image, undermining US power and prompting policy shifts. “Growing China’s power potential in Asia.” In the second regime, US President Obama declared that America would be the leader in the Asian Region and initiated various economic packages for the Region. As in the past, after the Second World War, the USA introduced the Marshall Plan in Europe.

The purpose of the Marshall Plan from the USA to the European region was to counter the USSR’s power politics and influence. On account of this regard and statements, the Barack Obama administration introduced the policy “Pivot to Asia” program, and later launched it in 2012. The “Asia Pivot” doctrine marked a dramatic shift in the US policy, focusing on the Asia region, which possesses significant value and prestige in global politics. As a strategic response to the growing influence of China, an institutionalized source of strategic power rivalry in the

region, the United States' Asia Pivot policy had an underlying geostrategic aim of regional balance, alliances, and the projection of United States power in the Asia-Pacific. From 2009 to 2013, former US President Bill Clinton's wife, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, was involved in designing and implementing the Asia Policy, referred to as the "Rebalance to Asia." Hillary Clinton's Asia Pivot policy aimed to address the complexity of US-China relations by engaging China on global issues and by addressing security and regional concerns. She discusses the geostrategic importance of the Asian region to US interests and the consequences of the US hegemonic order and foreign policy, and explains the US goal-oriented policy, also targeted at strengthening relationships with emerging powers in Asia and Southeast Asian nations (Ratner, 2013). That is why, while maintaining the status quo and competing with China, the US has promoted the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) to enhance economic ties with the Asia-Pacific region, aiming to boost trade, labour, and environmental practices, and to counter China across Asia. It was a series of significant contributions and ideas from the USA. The nature of power in world politics is dynamic and constantly redistributed. Several IR thinkers argue that America is experiencing a relative stagnation and China is becoming a dominant force. This transitional period creates a situation in which there is no obviously dominant world order; therefore, states face challenging decisions about alignment, balancing, or hedging. Economic and technological interests of the United States and China are at the centre of geostrategic competition, where both superpowers seek to shape the rules, standards, and norms across the Asia-Pacific. The fast pace of China's economic development, technological progress, and strategic plans, including the Belt and Road Initiative, has enhanced its regional power, and the United States is still trying to build trade networks, technological alliances, and security partnerships to ensure its presence. The implications of this competition for the Asian region are that neighbouring nations are increasingly forced to operate in a complex strategic landscape, balancing the economic opportunities China offers against the security and technological assistance the United States can provide. Consequently, Asia is also experiencing a rebalancing of alliances, the development of hedging policies, and the escalation of the technological, infrastructural, and military balance, indicative of the larger interests of this US-China geostrategic struggle.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research approach is used to collect data, and the study's methodology is grounded in an exploratory approach. A questionnaire was designed and will be used to collect primary data from professionals in related fields and academics with relevant backgrounds. A qualitative and quantitative research approach is used to collect data, and the study's methodology is grounded in an exploratory approach. A questionnaire was designed and will be used to collect primary data from professionals in related fields and academics with relevant backgrounds.

Theoretical Framework

This study will be conducted by applying one of the major variants of the Realist theory of international politics. The US seeks to maintain its global hegemony and balance China's rising power. As theories, concepts, ideas, and paradigms are generated and modified from time to time and place to place across different social-empirical environments, their significance and interpretation vary across philosophical perspectives. So, this study will be operational rather than engaging in the complexities of different philosophical discussions. Moreover, the study adopts a realist approach that, unlike the realist school of thought, also considers regional and domestic environments.

Realism sees international politics as a power struggle in an anarchic system. National security, national survival, and relative profits are the priorities of states, which emphasize the distribution and balance of power. In practical terms, the US pivot to Asia is a balancing measure in response

to China's ascendancy. The United States felt threatened by China's growing economic and military strength in the Asia-Pacific, believing it would undermine its hegemonic status in the region. Recent Alliances (Japan, South Korea, Australia), military redeployment to Asia, Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) in the South China Sea QUAD and AUKUS formation, all these are external balancing against China. Response by China (Realist Lens): China pivoted toward containment, resulting in rapid military modernization, aggression in the South China Sea, strengthening naval capacity, and strategic alliances with Russia and the Global South. It is also possible to view the BRI as a tool of geo-economic balancing, which could extend China's influence and reduce its reliance on systems dominated by the West.

Nature of US-China competition

Even though history does not always repeat itself, historical comparisons remain useful in analysis. To academic scholars, a rigorous study of the past may give a valuable insight into the complex and dynamic nature of current international affairs. The inauguration of President Trump marked a phase of heightened displacement in US-China relations, during which an unprecedented trade and technology tussle emerged between the US and China, including its assisting states. The prerequisite for an economic conflict between the two economic giants was the emergence of a neoliberal conflict between them by 2020, driven by rising economic tensions. There has also been a bitter struggle between the two states over Taiwan, the South China Sea, and Hong Kong. It is expected that the publication of the United States Strategic Perspective on China will have a significant impact on the United States' strategic positioning vis-à-vis China. The recent events in US-China relations have led to a rise in substantive scholarly and policy discourse.

Fender-Benders in Great Power Politics

The Fender-benders between the United States and China have occurred across a range of global issues. Both powers have used their vetoes at various stages in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and have critiqued the other's positions on numerous occasions. Historical survey indicates that US-China tensions have existed since the Second World War and have taken various forms in different parts of the world, including indirect participation in the Korean and Vietnam Wars and, most recently, military actions following 9/11. These repeated incidents reflect a history of strategic rivalry and ideological difference that have influenced bilateral and regional relations throughout the decades. China has exercised its UNSC veto authority in the Asian context, frequently framing Asian issues as internal affairs or preferring diplomatic approaches over sanctions. Such vetoes demonstrate the Chinese adherence to the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention.

By rejecting US drafts, China curtails Washington's role in regional security, and the geostrategic competition between the United States and China is currently at its peak in Asia. The development of the United States National Security Strategy (NSS) over the last forty years can be characterized by a shift from a Cold War approach of containment to a contemporary great-power rivalry, as the Asian region is gradually becoming the centre of strategic attention. The initial policies, such as the 1987 Reagan NSS, placed significant emphasis on ideological competition with the Soviet Union, whereas post-Cold War policies under Bush and Clinton focused on regional stability and international engagement. Only the Obama administration's 2010 NSS and the Asian Pivot have led Washington to recognize Asia as a major battlefield. Later policies by Trump (2017, 2025) and Biden (2022) positioned China as a strategic adversary with missions that included ensuring US military and technological dominance and securing alliances and economic power in the Indo-Pacific.

These records indicate that the US had a long-standing desire to maintain primacy in Asia and usually resorted to partnerships, multilateral institutions, and military presence to counter the

rising influence of China. China, in turn, does not produce periodic NSS documents but instead defines its approach in white papers and holistic security frameworks, culminating in the 2025 National Security in the New Era white paper. This strategy spans the political, economic, military, technological, and social spheres and focuses on sovereignty, the CCP's leadership, and its ability to survive under pressure from foreign forces. China does not focus on the US; its ambitions are pursued in the name of defense and development, aiming to consolidate its power in the region and export its concept of security and governance. Complementary texts, such as China's National Defense in the New Era (2019) and the Taiwan question White Paper (2022), emphasize Beijing's strategic goals in the Asia-Pacific, making it clear that Beijing has strategic aims but does not overtly proclaim its intent to attack. The difference in the structures of the US and China shows the geopolitical origins of the rivalry between these countries in Asia.

The US focuses on containment, a network of alliances, and technological military superiority, seeking to maintain an open regional order favourable to its interests. China is more concerned with sovereignty, domestic stability, and comprehensive regional influence, which it uses to counter external pressure and increase its economic and strategic presence. This is where the modern Asia-Pacific politics lie: the US wants to compensate China, whereas China wants to redefine the regional standards to mirror its growing strength. As a result, the Asia-Pacific is a master stage of competition, and the security strategies of both countries have collided and reinforced one another, creating the impression of an emergent bilateral order in the region. I believe that interpreting this set of strategies reveals that the US-China rivalry is not just a military battle but a multi-layered one that encompasses economic power, technological rivalry, and normative power. The states of Asia are entangled in this trap, as they are obligated to hedge, balance, or accommodate in line with their national interests. Such a rivalry will only increase moving forward, as the strategic ambitions of both powers, as expressed through their respective NSS frameworks, suggest it will unfold in the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and critical technologies, among others, defining the future of security within the region and the world.

Obama's National Security Strategy (2012)

U.S. security policy in 2012 was marked by a strategic reorientation towards the Asia-Pacific. US security policy was heavily influenced by the strategic shift known as the "Pivot to Asia" or "Rebalance to Asia" (United States White House, 2010), which was initiated by the Obama Administration. It marked a significant period in US foreign and defense policy, with several key elements shaping its security strategy. In this format, China was largely imagined as an up-and-coming power that had yet to take an adversarial stance, and US policy incorporated positive interactions with strategic hedging. Washington urged China to operate as a responsible stakeholder in the global system, while simultaneously checking its aggressive military modernization and surging assertiveness, especially in the Asia-Pacific arena. The two-pronged strategy represented a precursor to American-China rivalry, in which coexistence and competition coexisted. Instead of seeking open conflict, the Obama administration would manage the rise of China by including it in existing international bodies, and the Asia Pivot, or Rebalance, strategy quietly consolidated United States alliances and military presence in the region. In this respect, the 2012 National Security Strategy outlines a period of change in US-China relations, indicating a shift toward engagement-based policies and calibrated rivalry without surrendering the anti-appeasement aspects.

Donald Trump's National Security Strategy (2017)

The United States usually publishes its national security strategy every four to five years. Since 2012, China has been placed at the centre of American national strategy and is frequently cited as a key strategic opponent. China's growing power and policy actions have directly and significantly influenced the development and approach of U.S. foreign policy.

Donald Trump's National Security Strategy (NSS) promises to put "America first." However, it is only a partial departure from the norm and demonstrates a profound spirit of inconsistency in Trump's foreign policy. The National Security Strategy NSS tries to carve two irreconcilable worldviews into one: the America First nationalism of its president and the internationalist vision of the US foreign policy establishment that has been in place for seventy years. It is not only a betrayal of strategic dissonance but also augurs an unsustainable working relationship between Trumpian insurgent nationalism and the conservatism of the United States' foreign policy bureaucracy. This policy made the great-power competition a characteristic feature of foreign politics and required the strengthening of the US. military position, the alliances and partnerships in Asia to address China's growing economic, diplomatic, and military power. Others, such as enhanced engagement with Japan, India, Australia, and ASEAN nations, and the promotion of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), were direct measures to counteract China's rise in the region. Also, the NSS identified China's aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea, military affairs development, and the use of economic instruments, including the Belt and Road Initiative, to gain the strategic upper hand. The US has responded by seeking to bolster deterrence, safeguard freedom of navigation, and maintain an order in Asia founded on rules. In essence, the National Security Strategy (2017) institutionalized strategic competition with China and altered the US approach to Asia, moving away from careful engagement. It is now a competitive one and has underpinned the more aggressive Indo-Pacific approach, which remains influential in the US policy today.

National Security and Defense Strategy of the United States (2022)

This document outlines the US government's strategic priorities, including protecting American interests, strengthening alliances, and addressing emerging global threats. It focuses on strategic competition with major powers such as China and Russia and highlights cybersecurity, economic security, and climate change. According to the National Security Strategy (2022), the PRC and Russia are increasingly aligned, but the challenges they pose are, in important ways, distinct. It will prioritize maintaining an enduring competitive edge over the PRC while constraining a still profoundly dangerous Russia. The NDS provides a detailed approach to achieving national defense objectives, emphasizing the need to modernize the military, build readiness, and engage in strategic competition with near-peer adversaries. It also addresses the importance of integrating diplomacy and development with defense efforts. National Security Strategy (2022). The 2022 US According to the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy, China is the key strategic competitor, challenging U.S. influence in the Indo-Pacific in particular. The NSS reveals that China has placed great hope in the regional order and is deliberating how to consolidate alliances and relations in Asia to inhibit its influence. This is augmented by the NDS, which focuses on military modernization, deterrence, and preparedness to respond to potential attacks by China, especially in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. Combined, these plans will incorporate economic, technological, and military solutions to ensure the U.S. Strategic advantage, enhance regional security, and develop competitive balance in Asia.

U.S. National Security Strategy (2025) and China's Competition in Asia

The 2025 U.S. The National Security Strategy (NSS) makes the Indo-Pacific the centre of American Security and prosperity, designating the region as one of the key venues of power rivalry with China, which is regarded as a near-peer adversary that seeks to dominate the region. The plan centres on rebinding economic relations with China so they are reciprocal and fair, and on making the US economically independent through trade, technology, and supply chains as ways to compete. To ensure regional stability and prevent war, particularly in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, the NSS emphasizes a strong US military presence and close collaboration with allies. The augmented relationships and collaboration with Japan, South

Korea, Australia, India, the Philippines, and ASEAN states are positioned as the key to mutual resistance against China's impact. Lastly, the NSS highlights the technological and economic competition, such as semiconductors, AI, and supply chains, as the fundamental battlefields to ensure the U.S. Leadership and strategic advantage in Asia. The strategy will, in general, combine economic, military, and technological solutions to counter the increasing impacts of China and ensure the US. interests in the Indo - Pacific.

The transformation of U.S. national security policies between 2012 and 2025 can be seen as an obvious shift in the mode of involvement in the competition with China, from strategies to tactics. The 2012 strategy was characterized by an emphasis on the Pivot to Asia, which centres on diplomatic, economic, and military instruments to preserve US supremacy in the region. There was an explicit definition of China as a strategic competitor by 2017, signalling a transition toward great-power rivalry, trade conflicts, and freedom-of-navigation operations. The 2022 plan strengthened this competitive position and stimulated alliances, the security of technologies, and limited cooperation on issues of international significance. The 2025 proposed vision will likely remain focused on China as the key antagonist, emphasizing deterrence, alliances, technology investment, and greater Southeast Asian involvement. China's responses, especially through the Belt and Road Initiative, have aimed to increase its influence in the region and counter American strategies. In general, although the US pivot has sustained strategic pressure on China and reinforced alliances, the dynamic rivalry in the Asia-Pacific underscores the need to develop nuanced policies to reduce conflict and stabilize the new world order. At the national level, policy recommendations are aimed at the US, China, and Asian states to balance competition and dialogue, strengthen regional security cooperation, and promote economic and technological integration to discourage escalation. All in all, the US strategies have continued to pressure China and strengthen alliances, but the changing US-China contest also suggests the need to carefully tune policies. Suggestions to both nations and the Asian region at large are to balance competition and dialogue, to strengthen regional security cooperation, and to encourage economic and technological integration to reduce conflict and stabilize the new global order. Through knowledge of one another's views, both powers, as well as regional actors, would have navigated the strategic setting more efficiently.

Literature Review

Global Politicians, policymakers, and IR researchers have declared that the twentieth century was a China-Pacific Century. This literature review covers the topic of Eagle vs. Dragon: Geostrategic Rivalry and Political Ambitions of the United States and China in Asia.

Beitelman's article, "America's Pacific Pivot," observes the strategic shift in U.S. foreign policy that has been characterized by a renewed focus on the Asia region (Beitelman, 2012). US policy toward Asia has complicated and sputtered the Arab monarchy, while also criticizing China (over the Ukraine conflict) and rebalancing military, economic, and diplomatic efforts toward Asia in response to the rising challenges and opportunities posed by China. The US has shifted its strategic interests and attention away from Europe and toward the Asia-Pacific, recognizing the growing geopolitical influence of China, Japan, India, Turkey, and Gulf countries. There is a significant surge in US military deployments and collaborations in Asia, including strengthening alliances with QUAD/I2U2, expanded armed capabilities in Asian nations, and in the Philippines. So, the trade economic dealings with Asian States, plus sharing in regional Economic/trade treaties such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that enhanced the bloc politics events, remain aimed at beginning of regional concerns, territorial disputes in the South China Sea, have created extra regional non-cooperation and instability in Asia between the US and China.

Townshend investigates how regional actors responded to shifts in US policy. While some countries were concerned about the unpredictability of US policy and the potential erosion of the

US-led regional order, others adapted to the new reality by strengthening ties with other powers, including China. Ashley Townshend's report on his book, "America First: US Asia Policy under President Trump," provides a comprehensive analysis of the shifts in U.S. Asia policy under the Trump administration, especially in contrast to the Obama administration's pivot policy toward Asia. Ashley (2017) recognizes that Trump's "America First" approach was a dramatic departure from the previous administration's Asian strategy. Trump's approach was more unilateral, emphasizing renegotiating trade agreements, reducing military commitments overseas, and prioritizing US economic interests over broader strategic concerns. Harsh V. Pant and Kashish Parpiani's book, "US Engagement in the Indo-Pacific, An Assessment of the Trump Era," proposes a critical study of US foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific region during Donald Trump's administration (Pant, 2020). The book article evaluates the strategic goals, policy adjustments, and ramifications of the Trump administration's approach to the Indo-Pacific region and provides an in-depth analysis of how US participation changed throughout this period. Pant and Parpiani argue that the Trump administration marked a significant shift in US foreign policy towards a more confrontational and strategic approach in the Indo-Pacific. The article has expressed concerns about the long-term viability of the "America First" strategy and its tendency to alienate allies. David Lai's work on his Book, "Power Transition between the United States and China," analyses the complex dynamics of global politics as these two great powers negotiate transitions in their worldwide influence (David, 2011). He addresses the changing geopolitical landscape, the strategic engagements between the United States of America and China, power transition theory, and strategic rivalry. economic interdependence and regional dynamics, military competition and diplomatic strategies. David Lai's analysis also contributes significantly to understanding the dynamics of US-China relations and the broader implications for global stability, as well as to an in-depth investigation of the issue. Michal Kolmaš's article, "A 'Pivot' That Never Existed: America's Asian Strategy under Obama and Trump," critically examines the US strategic shift towards the Asia region, often referred to as the "Pivot to Asia," throughout both the President Obama and President Donald Trump administrations (Kolmaš et al., 2019). She argues that the pivot was more a rhetorical tool than a genuine adjustment in American foreign policy, and she critiques the effectiveness and consistency of US engagement in Asia during these two presidencies. Chan (2017) criticizes the effectiveness of US geostrategic policies in Asia, arguing that the pivot policy was more rhetoric than real change and that both governments failed to establish a coherent, consistent approach to addressing Asia's complexity, particularly the growing prominence of China. Azmi and Fachri's article, titled "The United States' Decision in Taking the Re- Pivot to Asia Policy in the Asia-Pacific Region for the 2021-2022 Period," investigates the decision-making process underlying the United States' renewed focus on the Asia-Pacific region (Azmi et al, 2024). It provides insights into the continuity and shift of US policy, underlining the difficulty of re-engaging with an area that has grown increasingly important in international politics, countering China, and wants to block China's rise and turn it into a responsible growing power by 2050, promoting collaboration and competition over hegemony.

Lai-Ha Chan's article "Soft Balancing against the US 'Pivot to Asia': China's Geostrategic Rationale for establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank" explores China's strategic motives behind the formation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in light of the US "Pivot to Asia (Chan, 2017). The AIIB serves as a geopolitical tool for China to counter US dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. It focuses on the convergence of economic and geopolitical tactics and provides insight into the broader consequences of China's economic expansion and the dynamics of regional power relations. Pablo Fajgelbaum, Pinelopi Goldberg, Patrick Kennedy, Amit Khandelwal, and Daria Taglioni wrote a research paper titled "The US-China Trade War and Global Reallocations". They explore the economic implications of the US-China trade war, specifically how it affects the worldwide financial markets. According to Fajgelbaum

(2024), the US-China trade conflict worsened in 2018, with both sides imposing tariffs on each other's products. The causes of the trade war and its consequences for the Asia-Pacific and global trade dynamics. Weifeng Zhou's article "beyond balancing: China's approach to the Belt and Road initiative" delves into China's strategic objectives and realistic approach to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Zhou, 2020). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is China's global development initiative aimed at improving connectivity between regions and establishing a global economic and commercial network spanning Asia, Europe, and Africa. Joseph S. Nye's book, "soft power and great-power competition: shifting sands in the balance of power between the United States and China," explores the role of soft power in the US-China great-power rivalry, analysing its impact on international relations, especially in the context of rising Sino-American competition (Nye et al., 2023). The significance of soft power in the US-China great-power conflict, highlighting on-military effects on global power structures, and comprehending the changing nature of international relations.

China's Strategic Response to U.S. Asia Policy

China introduced OBRI throughout the Asian region to maintain its balance and compete with the United States. China introduced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a comprehensive dream. "Pivot to Asia" set the framework for ongoing US involvement in the Asia region (Davidson, 2014). BRI is an initiative by the ruling Communist Party of China that links the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe through maritime and land connections, with the objective of boosting regional cooperation, increasing trade and commerce, and encouraging economic development (Huang, 2016). The BRI has established six international economic corridors, as follows.

1. The New Eurasia Land Bridge Economic Corridor through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and Central Asia / Europe.
2. The China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor through East Asia / Russia
3. China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor through Central Asia / Middle East
4. China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor through Southeast Asia / Australia
5. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor through South Asia/ Middle East
6. Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor through Southeast Asia

America has shown its global influence through initiatives such as the Marshall Plan in Europe, while China seeks to assert its dominance in Asia through the Belt and Road Initiative. China has developed advanced missile systems and submarines to restrict US military access to key areas of the Asia-Pacific, particularly the South China Sea. China's military presence in the South China Sea, including the construction of artificial islands and the deployment of infrastructure, is challenging US freedom-of-navigation operations (Kipgen, 2018).

China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is rapidly expanding and launching new aircraft carriers, destroyers, and other vessels to project power in the region and beyond. China supports trade accords and economic partnerships that exclude the United States, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which includes 15 Asia-Pacific nations (Tisdell, 2014). China is prioritizing the development of emerging technologies like 5G, AI, and semiconductors to decrease its reliance on US technology and enhance its global competitiveness. It has promoted its culture and values through Confucius Institutes, media outlets, and cultural exchanges, aiming to shape global perceptions and counter US influence. The dynamics of Sino-US competitiveness within the Indo-Pacific context, as well as how Asian middle powers have responded to this geopolitical competition (Gill et al, 2023). The Asian middle powers understand and negotiate the expanding US alliance network and the broader geopolitical conflict between the US and China in the region. This policy has shifted, which aimed to refocus US strategic attention and resources towards the Asia region. In his analysis, Ross offers a sceptical view of the policy's effectiveness and its potential consequences. This offers a critical perspective on the

Obama administration's policy toward Asia, challenging the premise that it was a necessary and effective shift in US strategy.

Counter-Alignment and Balancing

China has sought to strengthen its ties with countries that do not have contentious relationships with the US, such as Russia, Afghanistan, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Italy, and Iran, to counterbalance US influence. China has criticized US alliances in the Asian region, such as I2U2 and those with Japan, South Korea, and Australia, portraying them as relics of the Cold War that undermine regional stability (Liff & Adam, 2019). The regional countries in the Indo-Pacific respond to strategic efforts led by the US, and different nations in the area participate in or reject US initiatives aimed at changing the Indo-Pacific's geopolitical environment, providing a detailed look at the regional dynamics impacted by American foreign policy, particularly reactions to the US-led Indo-Pacific strategy.

Currently, numerous factors have contributed to tensions between China and the United States in recent years and have an impact on the Asian region. The United States and China have among on limited proxy war, political confrontations, technological competitiveness, security concerns, geopolitical challenges, theological dissatisfaction, block politics, and the US's fundamental competitiveness point versus China, but they additionally engage in a great deal of commerce/trade and cooperation on global issues such as climate change and nonproliferation (Chong et al, 2019). China and the USA, as the world's two largest economies, are competitors in trade, investment, and technological innovation. The conflict has sparked disputes over intellectual property rights, tariffs, and market access across Asia. According to Friedberg et al. (2020), both the US and China are striving for greater global influence, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, with the US countering China's assertiveness through its "pivot to Asia" policy (Schindler, 2022). The US has been concerned about China's military modernization and claims over disputed territories, while China perceives the US presence as a security threat in the Asian region. The President Barack Obama administration's pivot to Asia emphasizes multilateralism as regional stability and economic integration (Zhang, 2025). Through projects such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the US frequently criticizes China's human rights record and authoritarian political system, while China accuses the US of interfering in the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting the contrast in policies towards the Indo-Pacific (Glanz & Keyu, 2025). Another major concern for the Technology Competition: The Asian region is experiencing intense competition between two countries in areas like 5G, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing, each striving for technological superiority.

The pivot policy of the U.S. towards Asia was perceived by China as containment, and it responded by upgrading its military, asserting its claim to the South China Sea, and positioning bases abroad. Diplomatically, it advocated other regional economic blocs, such as the AIIB and RCEP, and, economically, pursued the Belt and Road Initiative to provide an alternative to the US-led order. These steps indicate that China is planning to enhance its regional and global status as the competition between the US and China intensifies.

The Return of “America First”: Trump’s 2024 Victory Rhetoric and Military Posturing in Asia

The victory speeches of Donald Trump were often pre-emptive, signalling a stronger stance toward China that had a spillover effect on the US-China relationship and opened the door to a more aggressive approach across numerous fronts. This is the effect of the rhetoric and victory promises made by Trump on US-China relations in the changing geopolitical and strategic landscape of the region, as it adjusts to the Indo-Pacific paradigm rather than the Asia-Pacific paradigm. This shift reflects broader shifts in global relations and regional dynamics, and it analyses the numerous ramifications of this transformation (Olsen & Rye, 2012). The Indo-

Pacific approach is a regional restructuring. Trump's America First strategy, which directly addressed protecting American jobs, directly addressed China in its trade policy. The focus on trade imbalances and criticism of Chinese economic behavior set the stage for tariffs and a more hostile economic relationship, which became known as the US-China Trade War. Trump's victory speech was delivered in a tone that emphasized a stronger, more independent American foreign policy (Shambaugh, 2018). This led to the growing support of Taiwan and closer Indo-Pacific relations, which the Chinese viewed as an effort to restrain its influence in the region. His approach established the template for operations, such as the Quad alliance, which consists of the United States, Japan, India, and Australia.

Trump's focus on the growth of the US military affected US-China relations, especially in the South China Sea, where the US became more assertive in freedom-of-navigation operations. China viewed this as a direct threat to its territory and regional supremacy.

The geopolitical context of the 21st century has been significantly shaped by the US-China geostrategic competition. Competition between the US and China within Asia is not most easily perceived in terms of individual areas of contention, but through the combined workings of debt-based economic leverage, information-centered technological strength, and military-strategic supremacy. The emergence of China is economic, technological, and military, and these spheres are interconnected, producing new patterns of dependency, vulnerability, and contestation in Asia (Schindler, 2025). It situates debt, data, and dominance within this broader strategic model to provide a policy-relevant framework for how China is redefining the geopolitical region and how America is responding. The ineffectiveness of the Obama administration's Pivot to Asia policy and its impact on the future of US global influence. Future plans will be efficient, and the US government should fix its flaws at home to sustain permanent foreign policy undertakings or provide a sound foundation for aggressive foreign policies like the pivot to Asia, which raises questions about the future of American global hegemony (Ross & Robert, 2012). The United States-China transfer of power yielded valuable insights into how shifts in global power could influence global relations. Highlights the vagaries of responding to the challenge posed by an up-and-coming power by an established hegemon, as well as the multifaceted nature of this ongoing geopolitical struggle. The US strategy is actively seeking to counterbalance China's growing influence by establishing alliances and fostering cooperation across the Indo-Pacific (Abbas et al., 2022). These strategies mark a shift toward a more aggressive, networked approach across the entire region and examine the status of Asian middle powers, including South Korea, Taiwan, and ASEAN nations, in the context of Sino-US geostrategic rivalry.

The United States has shifted its interests; previously, it believed they were everywhere in the world. However, they are now emerging from numerous regions and do not consider these areas as their centers of interest, as their historical orientations lie in Europe and other parts of Asia, which are their security and economic interests. According to Ross and Robert (2012), US trade economies have so much to be associated with Asia; hence, Russia has no major threats to the USA since they use conventional war, but so far has not affected the dominance of USA and hegemonic order, but now USA think of China have threatened their order of hegemony and will be their future rival. The rise of China poses challenges for the United States, including in deterrence and potential partnerships (Scott, David, 2018). The primary subject is the Trump administration's strategic rebalancing towards China, which focuses on trade disputes, military competition, and geopolitical rivalry. This approach included promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific policy to counter China's influence and assert the US's presence in the Asian region.

This period saw a departure from the previous administration's emphasis on multilateralism and diplomatic engagement, moving towards a strategy characterized by competitive realism and a focus on countering China's rising influence in the region. It also highlighted new

uncertainties and examined how President Trump's "America First" agenda deviated significantly from the strategic framework established by the Obama administration (Kuik, Cheng-Chwee, 2021). This era corresponds to the early years of Joe Biden's Administration, which tried to re-engage with the Asia-Pacific following the upheavals and disruptions in US foreign policy under the President Trump Administration. This article probably covers the policy initiatives implemented by the Joe Biden presidency as part of this re-pivot (Liff et al., 2014). This might include measures to strengthen alliances with Japan, South Korea, and Australia, as well as the establishment of new strategic partnerships similar to AUKUS (Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States).

The future of geopolitics will be decided in Asia; the United States should be at the heart of the action. The Asia-Pacific region is now a "top priority" of US security policy, and his comments are seen as a challenge to China, which is striving to become the region's main power. Vo (2023) says that we'll seek more opportunities for co-operation with Beijing, including greater communication between our militaries, to promote understanding and avoid miscalculation. Obama highlights strong commitment to Asia pivot despite challenges. The future of US-China relations depends on constructive engagement and managing rivalry alongside partnership, reflecting the complexities of international relations in a multipolar world. The adage "Everything is fair in love and war" aptly captures the logic of practical politics in the US-China strategic competition (Ramos, 2025). Both nations perceive this struggle as existential, central to their models of governance and their standing in the 21st century, prompting actions that they simultaneously condemn when undertaken by their rival. The Chinese government aims to boost economic growth, extend its influence, and strengthen international collaboration in the Asian Region. The effort aims to boost China's global standing while maximizing economic gains. The development of U.S. national security policies from 2012 to 2025 indicates a shift from engagement to strategic competition with China, grounded in alliances, technology, and regional influence. The pivot to Asia has been more diplomacy-based, trade-based, and military presence-centric, whereas subsequent plans (2017, 2022, and the proposed 2025 NSS) have focused more on China as the core strategic threat and on integrating deterrence, alliance-building, and technological investment with selective global challenges cooperation. China has responded by modernizing its military, asserting claims in the South China Sea, establishing overseas bases, pushing other regional organizations such as the AIIB and RCEP, and advancing the Belt and Road Initiative to extend its influence and provide an alternative to the US-led order. In this sense, Asian and Middle Eastern nations ought to strive for strategic autonomy by maintaining a delicate balance between the two powers without leaning towards either. In Southeast Asia, the ASEAN-led structures can be reinforced, and integration of connectivity programs of China with their development agenda and across South, Central, and Middle Asia, governments must take advantage of the offers of both giants and increase their collaborations on security, trade, and infrastructure to stay stable in the wake of the increasing US competition with China. All in all, the only approach to navigating this complicated landscape is to adopt subtle policies that can balance competition and dialogue, foster regional collaboration, and provide an inclusionary economic and security system to stabilize the new international system.

Research Core Issue and Its Scope

The main purpose of this research paper is to conduct an in-depth examination of the current "eagle vs. dragon: geostrategic rivalry and political ambitions of the United States and China in Asia" and investigate its impact on the global trade economy, Technological innovation, and dominance, as well as regional bloc politics, since it has serious consequences. As the competition between the two biggest economies and militaries in the world continues, political and diplomatic institutions around the globe have been forced to adjust their strategies in

response to the rising power competition. Such developments have contributed to the proliferation of multilateral geostrategic agreements, which have taken on critical significance as counteractions to the US-China conflict, as it has hypothetically resulted in geopolitical consequences. Some of the guiding questions in this research study seek answers to one of the major causes of the widespread effects of US-China competition in Asia. To begin with, what have been the changes to the economic/trade policies, artificial intelligence, and world order rating of the U.S and China to renegotiate the competition as it is presently in 2026-27? With the two countries putting in place a new regime of economic tariffs and adjustments to dominance models, the research paper examines the specific efforts they have made to ensure the effects of the remodeled geo-strategic policies in Asia. Moreover, how do the consequences of the US competition against China pertain to the sizes of technological war, global trade, the development of the new dominance world order, and the functioning of the hegemonic world order in the Asia region? The disruption of trade and economic flows, technological innovation in hubs, and the shifting balance of global power are central to understanding the broader impact of competition in Asia. In particular, this study analyzes how these disruptions have influenced global order in Asia.

Similarly important is the adaptation of the multipolar world system to these changes in the Asia-Pacific region's geostrategic landscape. How is the multipolar world system adjusting to the technological, political, and economic realities created by the US-China competition? This study examines the strategies these corporations employ to maintain their competitive advantage amid rising political, changing, and increasingly complex global competition in Asia. These adaptations may include shifting the bases of the new world order, forming new strategic alliances, and investing in technology to streamline operations. Finally, this study delves into the role of regional defensive and political agreements and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in mitigating the adverse effects of competition in Asia. In the face of rising protectionism, political and defense deals have become more prominent, offering nations an alternative framework for conducting competition in Asia. This study explores how these agreements and international institutions help cushion the global political environment and provide a counterbalance to the US-China geo-strategic competition. Through these questions, this paper seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of the US-China competition in Asia, its global ramifications, and the strategic responses of nations.

Future Study

The competition between the US and China has raised a range of essential research areas that illuminate emerging patterns in geostrategic power bloc politics, trade, and economic investment, as well as the new multipolar order. One of the main fields of inquiry concerns the long-term effects on global technological innovation and trade levels, as sanctions and tariffs disrupt international supply and trade chains. In this regard, multilateral trade agreements will play an important role in reducing these concerns and shaping the future of the international political/economic system, with the WTO, RCEP, and the CPTPP among the examples of such agreements.

The other major trend worth considering is the decoupling of the global economy from China and the development of new centers of belt and road investment in other states, including BRI, I2U2, and SMDA. This change merely touches on the volumes of geostrategic and geopolitical relations, making new political blocs and trade attributable. International political and economic policies are undergoing further redefinition through the role of emerging technologies, such as automation, AI, and blockchain, which will establish new channels of the international world order. This phenomenon of economic block de-dollarization, especially ideas such as the BRICS Pay initiative, threatens the U.S. hegemonic model and its position of authority in world politics. Analysis of the effects of alternative political systems and of

whether corporate diplomacy works will be crucial to understanding how multinational corporations respond to such changes. The evolving socio-political effects of changing trade relationships and the viability of regional power politics agreements will be critical in shaping how the global order is integrated over the next few years. Future studies can then establish a common ground for their interactions by cross-referencing political policies, supply chains, technology, de-dollarization, and corporate strategies to holistically understand the changes taking place in the new world order.

Finding the Balance: Allies

Managing fruitful relationships with both competitors, such as China and the US, is a crucial foreign policy challenge for most Asian regional powers. It is no longer possible to deal with these two competitors through separate bilateral relations; both the US and China understand that third-world sovereign states' bilateral relationships complete the lens through which they view their own mutual association. In a world of increasing complexity and globalization, South Asian powers have a real interest in managing effective relationships with both China and the US, without entangling them in bilateral disputes or forcing them to take sides. The new Trump administration in the US sought to alleviate fears that Asian countries might be forced to choose between the US and China. Even though Trump has been considerably less isolationist, there remains a concern that he will try to coalesce skeptical international partners into a new competition with China. That said, the US recognizes that a new transatlantic approach to Asia would benefit both Europe and the US. In managing relations with Asia, many European small and middle powers are likely to frequently seek US backing and share many of the US concerns about the commercial and political behavior of Asian countries. This kind of discussion is, of course, anathema to China, "strengthening the Five Eyes peddling the Quad piecing together AUKUS," as a "sinister move to disrupt regional peace and security of the Asian region.

China already has the ingredients to dominate the global economy: 1.4 billion people, one of the most disciplined and hardworking populations on Earth, a deep pool of engineers and scientists, and the world's largest manufacturing base. Yet this immense potential has been stifled by political control. Capital is restricted, information is filtered, innovation is guided, and political loyalty often outweighs merit. Imagine a China with free elections, independent courts, a free press, and true rule of law. Foreign investors will no longer fear arbitrary crackdowns. Chinese businessmen can succeed without risking political reprisals. Global companies would eagerly partner, invest, and build. The world's brightest Chinese students would rather stay at home than emigrate. Innovation will accelerate to unprecedented levels. China would not need to threaten Taiwan or any other country. It would simply take on the world. In areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology, energy, finance, and manufacturing, an independent China will combine scale, speed, and talent that no other nation can match. This is a paradox: the Chinese Communist Party claims to protect China from Western hostility, but in reality, it protects the West from China's full potential. A controlled China is predictable, tolerable, and politically isolated. A free China would be dynamic, trusted, fully integrated into global markets, and far more competitive than any rival. The biggest fear is not Chinese power. The biggest fear is China's independence.

In a Realist approach, the changing Asian position in the China-centric world is a manifestation of the historical association between the United States and Europe. Realism assumes that states are power-seeking, security-seeking, and survival-seeking in an anarchic international system. Given China's growing material capabilities, it would naturally seek to control its immediate strategic environment, as is the logic of regional hegemony. Just as the United States consolidated its power in Europe through NATO, the Marshall Plan, and a long-term military presence, China is also entrenching its power in Asia in a similar way through economic

integration, defense modernization, and strategic alliances. In a realistic perspective, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is not just an economic move but a strategic tool that aims to extend China's power, ensure supply chains, and reduce its susceptibility to foreign incursion, especially by the United States. This aligns with offensive realism, which holds that great powers seek regional hegemony to deter foreign intervention and increase strategic autonomy. According to the Gramscian approach, China's growing influence in Asia can be interpreted as an effort to establish a new hegemonic order based on ideological and institutional leadership rather than material power. Gramsci theorizes hegemony as a form of coercion and consent, in which domination is perpetuated by norms, notions, and institutions that justify authority (Peng, 2018). Here, China's economic involvement, development funds, and encouragement of alternative forms of governance for Asian states are intended to elicit consent rather than rely exclusively on coercion. The AIIB, regional trade agreements such as RCEP, and discourses that emphasize the merits of win-win cooperation and shared development are all indications of China's efforts to influence the region's standards and economic behavior. Similar to the liberal order in Europe, which institutionalized American values through institutions and economic dependence, China's approach aims to normalize its leadership position in Asia. Combined, the Realist and Gramscian schools of thought imply that Asia could become more like China than Europe, where material power, economic interdependence, and normative power combine to create a China-centered regional order. This two-fold theoretical prism emphasizes that China's hegemonic aspirations are not merely about military power and influence but about building a sustainable and legitimate area of influence in Asian territory.

Conclusion

The present century has been characterized by the escalation of the geostrategic rivalry between the United States and China, with the Asian region becoming the primary arena of contention. The proliferation of nuclearization, geostrategic significance, locations, and multi-level political culture in the Asia region has significantly impacted US and Chinese hegemony, reshaping the new world order. Rivalry among these great powers and their bloc politics relations poses a direct threat to the sovereignty of Asian nations. In the case between the United States and China, a wide range of other factors have been highly contributing to and escalating bilateral competition. The USA has vital interests and attention in the Asia region after 9/11, as a growing economy, Belt and Road bloc politics, and China's assertive defensive strategy have raised serious concerns and a hegemonic threat to the Washington administrations. China's diplomatic policies on international trade and economic politics (debt), artificial intelligence and technology (data), and its pursuit of a new world order through the Belt and Road Initiative (dominance) has been the offensive to the existing of US hegemonic order in Asia and prestige like the "regional status quo" Which have been lifeline of USA internal and external policy in Asia region. These findings indicate that the middle powers and smaller Asian states are increasingly hedging and engaging in strategic balancing as they negotiate between the competing economic incentives of China and the security guarantees of the United States.

The United States is the established global hegemon that seeks to maintain its strategic primacy through policies such as the Pivot to Asia (Rebalance) and the Indo-Pacific Strategy, as well as alliance models such as the Quad and AUKUS. Conversely, China wishes to expand its influence in the region and worldwide through its military modernization, aggressive territorial claims, geo-economic projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and trade programs such as RCEP. The competition spans military posture, economic rivalry, technological dominance, and normative power, with hot spots in Taiwan, the South China Sea, and semiconductors and artificial intelligence.

The United States frames its measures as defending a "rules-based order," even as it engages in economic coercion, cyber operations, and dominance posturing that China perceives as hegemonic containment. Conversely, China presents its policies as peaceful development and the reclaiming of its rightful place, while employing debt leverage, data control, and military coercion in ways that Washington labels revisionist and aggressive. The Asia Pivot policy crystallized this rivalry, positioning Asia as the primary theatre of competition. In this high-stakes contest for the future of the global order, the struggle over Debt, Data, and Dominance demonstrates that, for both Washington and Beijing, when the ultimate prize is regional and global leadership, the boundaries of "fair play" become increasingly blurred, leaving almost any tactic on the table. The National Security Strategy views China's rise in Asia as a three-layered challenge: debt undermines sovereignty, data enables technological and political control, and together they fuel China's bid for regional dominance. The U.S. response prioritizes economic rebalancing, technological protection, and alliance-based deterrence to prevent the emergence of a China-centric Asian order. Today's US-China relations are in a turbulent phase, with ongoing economic, military, political, and technological competition. These relations in the eye of the storm indicate that both countries are trying to avoid direct confrontation, but there are opportunities for cautious cooperation. These relationships are not just limited to the balance of power but are also important for perceptions, narratives, and global strategy. This has an impact on global security, trade, and the performance of global institutions. Understanding this tension between the United States and China is essential for current global politics, as it is a key factor shaping the global order of the 21st century. Asia has served as to China what Europe has served as to the United States, the center of its hegemonic dominance. By increasing economic dependency, fostering strategic interaction, and pursuing initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, China is laying the foundations for a China-centric regional order. This is the same way the US influence in Europe allowed Washington to consolidate and dominate political, economic, and security command following World War II.

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