
China and the US Indo-Pacific Strategy: A Prologue

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Abstract

The strategic competition between China and the United States has become a defining feature of contemporary international relations, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. This study examines the evolving Asia-Pacific strategies of both powers and analyzes their implications for regional security, economic integration, and geopolitical stability. The United States seeks to maintain its influence through alliances, security partnerships, and the promotion of a rules-based international order, while China advances its regional presence through economic initiatives, military modernization, and diplomatic engagement. The research explores key areas of rivalry, including the South China Sea, Taiwan, trade relations, and regional institutions. It further evaluates how smaller Asia-Pacific states respond to the growing competition between the two powers. The study argues that the interaction between U.S. strategic objectives and China's regional ambitions is reshaping the balance of power and influencing the future political and economic architecture of the Asia-Pacific region.

Keywords: China; United States; Asia-Pacific Strategy; Geopolitical Competition; Regional Security.

Introduction

Unlike, past world wars and cold war, contemporary competition between China and the US, is multi-dimensional and complex. Involvement of multiple strategies under the new free and open indo pacific policy competition include: economic, technological, political, and military sectors. With rapid rise of China, the US's government is consecutively introducing strategies and policies for indo pacific region to contain Chinese influence since 2012. However, new strategy of Biden is more like an adaptive policy to keep up with new changing international environment and to regain the USA's control in the Indo-pacific after the era of isolationistic policies of Trump. After the US's withdrawal from TTP under Trump era, USA lost its influence and engagement in the region, while China through Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership RCEP continued in growing its influence and regional interdependency in ASEAN through BRI. Economic power of China is not only boosting its military capability but also provide it leverage on regulating behaviors of some regional actors despite their perception of threat e.g. Japan, Malaysia, or the Phillipines. Even Australia is interdependent on China economically.

India's neutral position over Russia-Ukraine, despite India-US multifaceted engagement, also effecting pro-active position of the US towards India for a while. All these factors show some technical level deficiencies for the effectiveness of QUAD. On the other hand, AUKUS has also getting relatively less importance as compared to regional partnerships of the US. Despite all these factors, the new strategy of the US seems like presenting a practical example of power balancing. Where, the US is persistently introducing a strategy to

counter balance the influence and power of its growing competitor. Economic power is the source of political and military power of the China. The US is making alliances and following other balancing strategies to counter the economic power of China. Therefore, the most significant part of new strategy is to counter balance its economic influences following new frameworks of regional engagement and cooperation e.g., Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). In reaction, China is supposedly aligning with Russia to counter balancing the US's balancing efforts against it. China is not only focusing on internal balancing strategies but also emphasizing balancing in form of regional level initiatives e.g., RCEP. However, overall situation represents that the conflict if not escalating, will continue to prolong due to continuing balancing from the US.

China's Rise: a main driver for the US Policy

At the end of the cold war, China was completely impoverished, by the late 1970's it gradually leads to open its economy to the West. In 1990's China's economy reached sudden boom, attracted the foreign investment from all around the world. Total GDP of China in 1980 was under \$90 billion in current dollars currency, while currently it has reached to \$ 15 trillion. Such an enormous and rapid economic transformation has never seen by the world in such a short time. West got its victory over the USSR due to its liberal ideology and technological advantage. China didn't abandon Communism, in fact, now by Xi, it named as Socialism. A system with mere adaptations was rebranded. A totalitarian, hierarchical structure with rigid rules and restrictions, based system is now flourishing with western introduced economic system: capitalistic economy. When the West and the US initiated their engagement in early 2000s and allowed it into the WTO, they never expected this much success of China. But now they are complaining that to hardwire their economies with as an autocratic regime that has zero interest in their values and ideology. Now to disengage to China is not simple as legal and economic ties are involved. However, the fear looming around the West and the US is if the current growth of China will continue, it will lead to loss of their liberal ideology. (Mauldin, 2019; Mauldin, 2020)

For years, West has never suspected any reasons for that China would ever seek to transform a system based on values, norms and institutions, it has gained so much especially after its appointment in WTO in 2001. Since after assuming power in 2012, president Xi j Jinping in his speech has been giving clear indications of China's vision to enjoying a leading position on global stage corresponding to its economic and military power as well as to reshape the existing international system go well with its interests and values. Although, China has not yet indicated its explicit vision regarding the new version of world order, but hinted its preference of a subsystem with China at top on hierarchy. China-led order is not supposed to be global but regional as well which would include mostly nonwestern and developing states. With an aim to suppress liberal democratic values, and develop deep interdependencies, will make it extremely difficult for other countries to challenge China's position in the system. The Belt and Road Initiative is the most crucial strategic move towards long term influence of China in the emergence of new order. However, Chinese vision is under observation and discussion, and intermediary objective of partial order could transcend to full hegemony. (Rolland, 2020)

The US has played a crucial role in assisting China to build a rapid economic growth, developing its technological and military capabilities and taking to it on an international position. Although China's rise has benefited the US with cooperation, trade and diplomacy, but, suspicions around "China Dream" to replace the US are still there. Just like American replaced the British Empire following a peaceful and silent transition. Based on forty-year career of China watching, several interviews of Chinese defectors, and combination analysis of Chinese journals, books, history and undisclosed national security documents by a senior US official, Michael Pillsbury, on US-China national security issues, affiliated with American intelligence has revealed China's secret strategy to replace the US as the dominant power, by the one hundredth anniversary of the People's Republic of China on 2049. This strategy has documented and published in Chinese literature and supported by the People's Liberation Army of China for over fifty years. Central thesis of his book, "The

Hundred-Year Marathon”1949-2049, is that the “hawks” in Chinese military and intelligence agencies have molded the view of Chinese leadership to see the U.S. as a dangerous hegemon to be replaced as based on the teachings of traditional Chinese statecraft.

Many Chinese watchers in the US also believed that engagement with China was supposed to bring cooperation and convergence of Western and Chinese vision regarding regional and global prospects. In spite of getting prosperity based on Western economic system, contrarily, China still failed to meet any westerns expectations e.g., its support to North Korea and anti-Western organizations in Afghanistan, Sudan, and Iran. Based on these evidences and ongoing situation resilience of authoritarian regime, there are no democratic hopes in China. Chinese literature and writings provide no evidences of any aspirations of China to be like the US, in fact, it aspires to revise a world order without American supremacy in economic and geopolitical order which established at Bretton Woods by the end of the World War two. China wants the order which would be fair to China and wipe out American dominance. (Pillsbury, 2016)

Biden’s policy step to revisit The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement it signed under the framework of Pivot to Asia policy of Obama and withdrew by Trump administration. As originally for its geostrategic value, and with an aim to strengthen the U.S.’ leadership position and alliances in Asia, Obama administration joined TTP. According to analysts, main objective of TTP was also ensured that the US led the system on international trade norms and rules against Chinese led ones. Which was withdrew by Trump in 2017 following his agenda to confront Chinese trade distorting policies. This, however, ironically made it even harder for the US to counter China’s influence and policies as this step reduced the US’s sphere of influence and control over overall international trade. In response, China signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership RCEP a separate trade agreement with 15 Asia-Pacific countries while not having the US into that. RCEP is still one of the largest trade blocs of the world which is functioning by regional countries without the US’s leadership.

To balance out this leading position of China, to reestablish its credibility and influence, the US has restored TTP by renaming it Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership on 2018. As the US cannot afford to lose its position in establishing its favored rules that shape future international economic system. For that reason the US has not accepted China’s request to join the agreement. However, it is also a point to be noted that the move of China’s request to join CPTPP, was right after a day of announcement of trilateral defense agreement of the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. (McBride, Chatzky, & Siripurapu, 2021)

According numerous spectators, an intense shift in the international balance of military power is close. President Xi Jinping vision of China to become world class military power with abilities to fight and win wars by 2049 following its order to modernize China's armed forces by 2035, are some indicators to China’s global vision. Currently, China is, if not world most powerful but largest navy. The US has strong lead in many naval capabilities including aircraft carriers, more nuclear-powered submarines, cruisers and larger warships. China is likely to expand its navy much further. According to the US navy prediction, total number of Chinese navy ships is likely to increase by forty percent in between 2020-40. June 2022, The Fujian, a type 003 aircraft carrier, was launched is the most advanced warship of China so far. According to analysts, number of ships cannot only determine the overall capabilities. Since, The Fujian after entering into service can overtook the US’ position as the world largest navy. Three aircraft carriers including most modernize Fujian will soon become showpiece of the PLA’s navy and symbol modernity of Chinese military. China is placed on second largest in its defense spending, yet criticized various international experts, for its lack of transparency about its total defense budget. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s experts have speculated boosting of China’s nuclear stockpile over the recent years. By the US Department of Defense, China has intended to quadruple its nuclear stockpile, at least 1,000 warheads by 2030. Experts are questioning China’s win without fight approach following it’s fully modernization of naval power. However, most of them are agreeing on China has no intention to change its approach towards world even after becoming stronger,

unlike the US. (Brown D. , 2022)

China's Perception on the FOIP Strategy

According Chinese perception, the FOIP strategy is simply a policy to contain China. its Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China has specifically condemned the phraseology of the 'Indo-Pacific', and claimed that the United States is trying to gang up against China under the banner of freedom and openness through this strategy. Yi has accused the US to use Asia-Pacific countries as puppets of U.S. Hegemony, to contain China and influence its relations with regional countries. According to Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the U.S. is playing the 'Taiwan card' and 'South China Sea card', to provoke tensions in between Asian Pacific countries. Indo-Pacific Strategy is in essence a strategy that creates divisions incites confrontation and undermines peace. China believes that the people of this region should warn the United States to not repeat its outdated Cold War script in Asia. (Yi, 2022) According to statements of Chinese officials, China is shifting its foreign policy approach to what analysts call "wolf warrior diplomacy." (Mann, 2020) Wang Yi has also described addition of the Quad in the US's strategy, both in 2007 and after 2017, as a "foam in the Ocean, destined to dissipate soon." (Yi, 2019) Yi commented on Biden's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) as the US's attempt to isolate China by making up some rules to exclude China. (Yi, 2022)

The US-China Competition in the Indo Pacific region: Implications for China

Stretching from the west coast of the US to India, the Indo-Pacific is the main stage of Sino-U.S. competition. However, Southeast Asian region is placed as the most significant in this competition. Region of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries is ranked as third most populous region and the fifth largest economy in the world. Its diverse social, cultural, economic and political systems create more complexities in the U.S.-China competition. Diversities especially in form of mix democracies and other political systems make it more challenging for the US to work with its partners and allies. However, despite the differences, similar potential interests of all leading to the cooperation with the US. According to the 2018 report of the U.S. Department of Defense, the US in its long-term and strategic competition with China is said to have unique advantage in the region in form of strong potential partnerships and alliances. It also shows the US is not competing on its own, instead, employing resources, strengths and capabilities of its partners in the region against China. (Bonny Lin, 2020)

Difference of vision and goals in the region are the driving factors of the U.S.-China competition in the Indo-Pacific. The US with the vision of regional openness and China with vision of regional integration, making the competition really intense particularly in six Southeast Asian countries including Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. While the U.S. is employing other three countries: India, Australia, and Japan that surround the Southeast Asia as its key allies and partners. Competition for regional leadership is based on the potential and type of influence of both countries on regional actors. Since, the view of regional countries regarding their influence is the most important factor to understand current as well as future behavior of the countries towards the United States and China.

Southeast Asian countries see the influence of the U.S. mainly in terms of diplomacy and military, and the influence of China in terms of economy. Secondly, the relative influence of the U.S. is considered as more important than its absolute influence. Since countries prefer economic progress over security, are more concerned with economic influence of China than its security threats. On the other hand, there are no definite evidences that ASEAN have any confidence on the military influence of the United States as the protection against the economic influence of China. These facts provide the ineffectiveness of the U.S. influence and policy in the region and strengths of China in form of economic influence to achieve a variety of goals. Based on three components: a Maritime, a Digital and a land-based Silk Road, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is the central piece for the manifestation of China's global vision. Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) is an attempt for closer relations and cooperation with ASEAN for Chinese vision of community of shared future.

Through developing economic dependency of ASEAN countries, especially which are not the part of the South China Sea dispute, China is seeking greater regional influence. China's effort for the expansion of BRICS under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement is another step China to grow its global influence. Despite more shared interest with the U.S, China has more tools of influence over regional countries. Given the projection of fastest rising Chinese economy as compared to the U.S, regional countries are getting more future economic dependency on China. Hence, countries alignment with the U.S. is likely to be weak, as they would not prefer to pick any side, if forced to choose. (Bonny Lin, 2020)

The new Indo-Pacific strategy was passed by bipartisan support to officially recommend US-China competition over security, technological and economic areas. New policy is an adaptation of requirements of present environment. By President Biden's visit to East Asia in ASEAN-US summit, US launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework through existing Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation platform and announced new US embassies in Tonga and Kiribati, US is reestablishing its engagement policy in the region. This was immediately supported by Japan and South Korea. Right after Biden's trip, China in response also sent its Foreign Minister Wang Yi to eight island nations in the Indo-Pacific for engagement campaign draft communique on security and economic cooperation e.g. China-Pacific Islands Free Trade Area, was presented. However, China failed to get consensus over the proposal with island states. Following these engagement campaigns, leadership competition is continuing to be intensified in the region. (Strub, 2022)

Following the intensity and complexities of the competition, many countries are using the institutional balancing strategy in between the US and China. For example Japan who is the member of RCEP, ironically, has also played leading role in preserving the spirit of TPP and in concluding the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). (Lee, 2022) Similarly, where Vietnam voiced for support of the US' presence in the South China Sea, Malaysia prefer being quiet over SCS conflict due to its dependency on China as its export market. Where the Philippines is pivoting towards China to balance out the US dependency, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Thailand are getting million project investments from the US. (Niebel, 2020) In fact many members of QUAD, are also dependent on China. Australia does not have any territorial conflict with China. On the other hand, where only seven percent of Australia's GDP accounts for Chinese exports, thirty six percent largest share of Australian exports are with China, since the biggest market of Australian coal, gas, and iron is in China. All these combined factors make Australia reluctant to take military actions against China. Japan and Philippines also got banned by China over certain important imports. South Korea over its military deployments got imposed economic sanctioned by China. Including, all The US's personal geographical limitations also limits it to independently contain China and increase its dependency on its strategic partners. (Munir & Safdar, 2022)

The US policy experts are recognizing the Asian dragon's increasing capabilities, due to the rapidly decreasing in power gaps. Unlike Germany and Japan in the post-World War 2 era, China is experiencing growth not only in economic but in military realm as well. Although there is no direct confrontation by the US against growing influence of China, but its network of liberal democracies composed of multiple coalitions in Asia, is practical evidence of its resistance against sharing leadership in the region. Based on shared interests, values and advance technology, a complex multilateral network of liberal states instead of a simple multilateral security coalition has been adopted as a policy by President Joe Biden. With an aim to repair the damage of relations with European and Asian allies, have been destroyed under America's first policy of Trump administration along with the aim to maintain global leadership position challenging by China, America has reintroduced the policy for the Indo-Pacific region. However, when it comes to Asian states, they are putting in the difficult position for choosing in between the declining hegemon, and rising power. Dilemma regarding supporting either the US or China in regional issues like the human rights violation of Uighurs, protests in Hong Kong, or South China Sea's territorial disputes while keeping in mind the economic, political and security preferences. Under this dilemma, states often adopt hedging strategy to their balance relationship with both which cause further complexities of competition. Despite all efforts of regional actors' competition

is still getting intensified, reducing practicality hedging strategy of even in near future. Despite China's economic growth and strategy of interdependence through initiatives, Biden's policy based on liberal coalition of satisfied states of its international order e.g. AUKUS, QUAD, is pausing immediate threat to China's influence on rules of economic system as well as restore confidence of democracies on leading position in liberal international order. On the political and diplomatic level, China has also been under challenges. As under the survey of Pew Research Center studies, China has increased on an average 28.6 percentage points to be as the most unfavorable view by sixteen liberal democracies from 2007 to 2022. Japan, Canada, South Korea and Sweden are countries with most unfavorable view of China. This view of China is basically because of its policies especially in terms of human right violations.

Alliances at three sectors including (1) security and intelligence e.g. the Five Eyes (2) economy and technology e.g. the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and the Chip Alliance (3) ideology and values e.g. the Summit for Democracy. Fully spectrum and multifaceted policy is posing security challenges to China's economic, military and political influence in the region. (Lee, 2022)

China's Response to the US's Indo-Pacific Strategy

Heightened the US' attention, along with its persistent anti-China rhetoric throughout the Trump and Biden administrations has led, to a huge shift in China's strategic policies. (Meng, 2020)

The possible response of China according to experts could be the simultaneous opposition of the concept of the Indo-Pacific Region and criticism over the US strategies towards region by China and Russia. As during Russia-Ukraine war, both released joint statement on February 2022 that NATO further enlargement is the US's Cold War approaches and regional security cannot be achieved through expanding military blocs. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated Indo-Pacific strategy as a bloc politics and warned that NATO approaches in Eastern Europe could be replicated in the Indo-Pacific, with similar devastating consequences as seen in Ukraine, e.g. Taiwan. (LUTHRA, 2022)

Economic Response

To counter balance the US' competitive behavior, China is continuing its strategy of regional economic integration. The establishment of the new Maritime Silk Road and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are official evidence of China's the regional economic and trade strategy. Along with this, China has invested \$100 million worth funding to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and establishment of Silk Road Fund with \$40 billion worth for regional infrastructural development. Providing development funds to the BRICS, initiating Mekong Project with six countries of the Mekong River Basin, and forming Nanning-Singapore Economic Corridor with Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Malaysia are some major moves of China pursue connectivity with the regional countries.

In the "Nay Pyi Taw" Declaration issued by 4th virtual meeting held in December 2023, six Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) leaders agreed to advance the Lancang-Mekong Economic Development Belt (LMEDB) and to promote regional cooperation for industrial development, economic modernization, and green technology. (CGTN, 2023) Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, Ma Zhaoxu, confirmed that China is actively supporting Russia's BRICS presidency in 2024. Zhaoxu also expressed China's willingness to coordinate with Russia for a more just and equal multipolar system. (FMPRC, 2024) To connect with ASEAN countries, China has also formed a forum of trade agreements, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). To balance against the US' existing influence in the region, China is also deepening its connection and partnerships with regional countries. Besides creating and investing in multilateral regional forums, China is also signing bilateral and trilateral free trade agreement with its neighboring countries e.g. South Korea and Japan. In February 2024, President Xi Jinping on phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed his willingness towards further deepening their bilateral cooperation for stable industrial supply chains. (mk.China-embassy, 2024) Along with external counter balancing in response to the US's

strategy, China is also introducing national economic reforms. In response to China's first deficit in foreign direct investment in 2023, recorded by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, of about eight percent from 2022, China has issued 24-point policy framework. In order to attract more foreign investments, policy is emphasizing on opening more sectors for foreign businesses and to easing restrictions on foreign investments. (Lapehn, 2023; Reuters, 2023) These steps of economic cooperation are serving many strategic interest of China and helping it to fix its differences with its regional countries. (Glaser, 2014; Lydia Murr, 2019)

Diplomatic Response

To effectively counter balance the US' strong diplomatic influence in the region, China is actively participating in various diplomatic activities and increasing its diplomatic missions regionally as well as globally. (CNBC, 2019) According to the 2019 Global Diplomacy Index report, China has surpassed the U.S. for maintaining the world's largest diplomatic network, with 276 diplomatic posts around the world. (Bley, 2019) China is also coordinating with Russia to pursue multipolar global governance by supporting multilateral forum such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which are consistent with its values and norms. (FMPRC, 2024; CFR, 2024) According to the report of **Mekong Institute**, in **January 2024**, China has funded a long term project of **the sixth Lancang-Mekong Business Forum to develop mutual trust and to deepen cooperation with regional countries by introducing sustainable economic strategy aligned with the UN 2030 agendas and the ASEAN Charter**. (MI, 2024; CFR, 2024)

However, despite its growing diplomatic efforts, China still has experienced largest decline in its foreign direct investment FDI of \$33 billion in 2023, since 1993, possibly due to the US' sanctions. (Reuters, 2023) Therefore, other than its economic diplomatic efforts, China has also established several new Confucius Institutes in recent years as a cultural soft power strategy. (Sun, 2023) Along with rebranding its Confucius ideology, China has also invested an enormous amount of USD 3.9 billion in Olympic infrastructure of Beijing 2022 as an effort to restore its falling soft image amid its political system and human rights violation. (Peirce, 2022)

Military Response

China sees the US' naval presence in its near seas as an interventionist strategy. Therefore, China is prioritizing to modernize its military along with its economic progress. To ensure protection against foreign interventions in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the Yellow Sea, China is supporting a counter-interventionist strategy of conducting regional military operations and enhancing its defense capabilities. (Glaser B. S., 2014) To enhance its military power and to contain the US's intervention in its near seas and Taiwan Strait, China has built up weapons: short and medium-range ballistic missiles, anti-ship ballistic, ground and air-launched cruise missiles, missiles, advanced fighter aircraft and Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) weapon technology. To take control over its near seas, China is also investing in its submarine technology i.e. fifty eight Chinese submarines are currently operating in the Indian Ocean. (Den, 2018) In fact, "string of pearls" is also perceived to be China's strategy to increase its naval presence. Many western analysts, China is expanding its Indian Ocean through getting access to straits. For example, Logistic facility of China in Djibouti is said to be the first naval base of China in overseas, providing it access to the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb. Similarly, Ream Naval Base, agreed between China and Cambodia, is creating access towards the western part of the South China Sea. Another example is agreement with the Tanzanian government over "Dar es Salaam" port. This port is also help China to expand its sphere of influence in the west of Indian Ocean. (Jochheim, 2023)

To further strengthen itself against security influence in the region, China is adopting external balancing strategies by deepening its defense partnership with Pakistan and developing military coalition with Russia and the North Korea. In exchange of defense capabilities, more sophisticated military technology, and

communication networks, China is using the Western coast of Pakistan to increase its military influence in the Indian Ocean against India. Through Joint naval and military exercise and staff exchange, both countries are engaging in military diplomacy. China is also actively expanding its military cooperation with Russia and the North Korea on common grounds of challenging the US-led regional order. In April 2023, on his first overseas visit as China's defense minister, Sergei Shoigu met Russian president Vladimir Putin to reaffirm their bilateral military cooperation. Shoigu declared that political-military partnership between both countries has no limits. While Putin promised to continue emphasizing strategic importance of bilateral ties with China through joint exercises, active exchange of information and military-technical cooperation (MTC). (Guardian, 2023) On July 2023, Russia and China conducted a large scale joint military and naval exercise in the Sea of Japan, with an aim to secure strategic waterways, as claimed by Defense minister of China. (Tian, 2023) In August 2022 and April 2023, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) joined Russia in military exercises around Taiwan Strait under intense scrutiny of the U.S. military aircraft. These joint drills and exercises are the symbol of growing Sino-Russian military cooperation since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. (Lin, 2023)

Conclusion:

As compare to past world wars and cold war, where there were well-defined spheres of influence, the contemporary competition between China and the US, is multi-dimensional and complex. Unlike the USSR, China is an economic power, which is a part of nearly every supply chain due to its integrated policies into the global economy. Owing to complexities of Chinese power, the Biden administration has tried to contain China's growing power in more logical and sophisticated manner as compared to Trump's isolationistic policies, by offering more multi-dimensional approach. The new strategy is based on four major pillars: cooperation, collaboration, competition and confrontation. Multiple strategies under the new free and open indo pacific FOIP involve: enhancement of diplomatic relations in the region, collaboration through a network of alliances, competition in terms of economic influence and military deterrence. On the one hand, China is dismissing the US's characterization of China as its competitor and consistent in emphasizing cooperation, the US is continuing in its approach, given strong bipartisan consensus regarding China's capabilities and intentions.

With growing economic dependency on China and military dependency on the U.S., a unique model of dual leadership has been emerged in the Indo-Pacific over the past three decades. This model reflects the balance of power system within the region which assures stability through distribution of powers, deterrence and prevention of hegemony. Meanwhile, Indo-Pacific countries are taking advantage from both China's economic security and the U.S' defense protection. Where China, being the largest trading partner, is providing a stable trade market to many regional countries, the U.S, being the biggest military ally, is providing security and military support to its Indo-Pacific allies. Although, many regional countries are satisfied with this emerging balance of power dynamic in the region, the U.S. is showing frustration and anxiety over growing influence of China in the region. The U.S' continues countering balancing efforts against China in the region reflect nostalgic behavior from times of Cold War bipolarity. The U.S. doubts around the intent of China's rise along with the strategic threat to its regional leadership are the key drivers behind the Obama administration's "Pivot to Asia" strategy, the Trump administration's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" strategy and the Biden administration's "Indo-Pacific Strategy." Although, the Strategy of Biden administration is apparently proposed to promote free and open Indo Pacific, is pursuing to form a regional order inclined to American values and interest. Even though this strategy claims to protect regional allies against emerging challenges, it basically revolves around the U.S. strategic interest. Instead of ensuring regional stability, it is bound by a great power competition between the U.S. and China. Despite being a regional strategy, it is basically centered on realistic zero-sum thinking, which is impacting the economic, political and security dynamic in the Indo-Pacific.

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