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Abstract

The United States is increasingly active in the Asia-Pacific region to safeguard its global interests. As China's economic power grows, it is posing challenges to U.S. hegemony. In response, the U.S. has formed alliances like AUKUS and the QUAD, emphasizing its Asia-Pacific policy to counter China. In contrast, China is expanding its economic influence by investing in infrastructure projects and the BRICS bank. China's strategic approach, akin to Sun Tzu's principles, aims to position opponents in situations with no escape. Both countries find themselves in Thucydides' trap, where conflict seems inevitable. Geoeconomic interests now play a crucial role, shifting the focus away from traditional battlefield warfare due to nuclear deterrence.

Keywords: Asia-Pacific, United States, Strategic Implications, Diplomatic Relations

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Abstract

The United States is increasingly active in the Asia-Pacific region to safeguard its global interests. As China's economic power grows, it is posing challenges to U.S. hegemony. In response, the U.S. has formed alliances like AUKUS and the QUAD, emphasizing its Asia-Pacific policy to counter China. In contrast, China is expanding its economic influence by investing in infrastructure projects and the BRICS bank. China's strategic approach, akin to Sun Tzu's principles, aims to position opponents in situations with no escape. Both countries find themselves in Thucydides' trap, where conflict seems inevitable. Geoeconomic interests now play a crucial role, shifting the focus away from traditional battlefield warfare due to nuclear deterrence.

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Introduction

Asia-Pacific region is an extremely important place as it is inhabited by the world's most important countries especially countries that are strategically aligned toward the US. The US has maintained its influence in this region by supporting its allies. This region plays an important role during the Cold War era to contain the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). The US also fought many wars to maintain its hegemony in this region as well as around the

globe. The US supported South Korea during the Korean War 1950-1953 against the USSR and China. The US also contained the aggression of the USSR on Afghanistan in 1979. However, initially, relations between China and the US were not friendly. However, due to the rifts in the relations between China and the USSR, the US tried to boast about its relations with China so that it would be easy for the US to contain the USSR. The US wanted an economically strong China for the containment of



the USSR. US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made his secret visit to China to pave friendly relations between both countries. Due to the diplomatic efforts of Henry Kissinger, US President Richard Nixon visited China. The only shared factors between China and the US were the practicality of their leaders and their mutual enemy, the Soviet Union. Nixon spent a week in China, where he saw Mao and joined Zhou Enlai in signing the Shanghai Communiqué. This document was the foundation of future US-China relations and a way for them to deal with difficult problems, like Taiwan. They also established contact offices in each other's countries, which led to formal diplomatic ties. This is how US policymakers wisely integrated China from the USSR at that time and tried to help China boost its economy. Economically strong China could easily tackle the USSR as compared to the economically weak China. Moreover, China opened its trade with other countries which helped China to grow economically.

China's economy rises rapidly in the first decade of the 21st century. China's GDP grew by 8% to 9.5% annually even during the financial crisis of 2007 (Li, Willet, & Zhang, 2011). Economically giant China posed a threat to the hegemony of US interests not only in the Asia Pacific region but across the world. All these factors led US policymakers to strengthen their alliances in this region so that they could contain China. That is why the Asia Pacific region has become strategically important for the US. The important countries for the US in this region include Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, India, Vietnam, and Australia. This research aims to delve deeply into the alliances of the US.

It also includes the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project initiated by China so that it can increase its influence. China always promoted its soft image by making economic agreements which will be a win-win game for China as well as for its aligned country.

Literature Review

Graham Allison's book *"Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?"* provides an overview of Thucydides's Trap and how it is connected to the recent conflict between China and the US. The central thesis for this is that when a rising power challenges the established power, this will lead to war unless intended steps are taken to avoid it. The writer draws attention to the

Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, where the rising Athenians posed a threat to the status quo of Sparta that initiated a destructive conflict to protect its supremacy. Analyzing 16 historical case studies over 500 years, Allison notes that in 12 cases, such rivalries ended in war. Allison draws on historical examples, theory, and evidence to compellingly argue the urgency of addressing the Thucydides Trap, warning failure could have catastrophic global consequences. The book has garnered significant attention for its rigorous analysis and timely warning on managing the U.S.-China rivalry peacefully. The book's three parts lay out the Thucydides Trap theory through 16 historical cases, analyze the current U.S.-China competition across economic, military, and technological realms, including flashpoints like Taiwan and the South China Sea, and explore potential pathways through policy recommendations and strategies for the two nations to escape conflict (Allison, 2017).

"When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order" authored by Martin Jacques examines how China emerged as a significant player in the global economy during the reign of Xuanzong (712-756) but its golden age the Tang and Song periods (618-1279 AD) did not lead to world domination. While the Tang Dynasty achieved economic prosperity and territorial expansion, the Song dynasty excelled in commerce and technology. However, unlike Europe, China's cultural and institutional breakthroughs did not persist. The economic and geopolitical divergence between China and Europe likely began as late as 1800, with Europe's transition to modernity marked by conflicts, colonialism, and industrialization. Despite this, China's recent achievements in innovation and education including a comparable number of science and engineering degrees granted by Chinese universities demonstrate its growing influence. China's historical trajectory has been complex, and its current rise in innovation and education suggests continued global significance. However, whether it will rule the world again remains an open question (Jacques, 2012).

"The End of the West: The Once and Future Europe" written by David Marquand examines that amidst headlines suggesting Western decline, it's tempting to believe that the 'rise of the rest' from radical youth in the Muslim world to Asian industrialists—is overshadowing the West. The

post-9/11 crisis and the 2008 global economic downturn reinforce this perception. However, David Marquand's analysis challenges this narrative. While acknowledging that relative decline can be disorienting, Marquand invites us to consider Europe's cyclical history. As late as 1700, India and China's combined GDP exceeded Europe's. Yet, transformative periods like the Renaissance and Enlightenment shifted the balance placing the West at the front. President Barack Obama is an American president whose personal story represents the resurgence of the economic and cultural prominence of the East and the decline of a post-modern Europe. It is appropriate to consider David Marquand's insightful, concise, and historically comprehensive analysis of why Europe has been experiencing political and economic challenges at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Marquand, 2011).

Economic Diplomacy: China's Bri And Asia Pacific Cooperation

President Xi Jinping inaugurated the idea of a new model for regional collaboration during his visit to Kazakhstan in autumn 2013. Subsequently, he underscored the importance of establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and

constructing the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in Indonesia. Together, these initiatives are known as the One Belt & One Road Initiative (OBOR), or the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). By November 2013, this strategy was officially integrated into China's inclusive improvement initiative, becoming a key policy focus through 2020. In March 2015, the State Council sanctioned a detailed blueprint for the BRI. Globally, this initiative has been likened to the post-WWII Marshall Plan by the US for rebuilding Western Europe. However, some scholars view it as a strategic economic expansion tool that could potentially shift the world economic balance by promoting the Chinese economic framework (Huang, 2016).

BRI Contains Six International Corridors which are

- Eurasia Land Bridge
- China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor
- China, Central Asia, and West Asia Economic Corridor
- China-Indochina Peninsular Economic Corridor
- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
- Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor

Figure 1



(Source: <https://beltandroad.ventures/about-bri>)

Eurasia Land Bridge

The New Eurasian Land Bridges (NELB) consist of a network of railway lines connecting Asia to Europe. These rail routes serve as vital transportation corridors, facilitating the transportation of goods and people across vast distances. The Northern Corridor comprises several key arteries:

Trans-Siberian Railway: This extensive railway system spans approximately 10,000 kilometers and offers transit times ranging from 12 to 18 days. It plays a crucial role in connecting the two continents (Liliopoulou, Roe, & Pasukeviciute, 2005).

Trans-Manchurian Railway: Another significant route, it links China to Russia.

Trans-Mongolian Railway: This railway line passes through Mongolia, connecting China and Russia.

Baikal Amur Mainline (BAM): Opened in 1991, the BAM runs parallel to the Trans-Siberian Railway and contributes to the overall connectivity. Notably, the Trans-Siberian Railway is expected to handle 180 million tons of cargo in 2023, which is 1.5 times more than its capacity in 2018 (Notteboom, Pallis, & Rodrigue, 2020).

NELB is a vital railway corridor that connects the European market with China's commercial sectors. It spans about 7,500 miles from Yiwu in Eastern China to key European hubs such as Duisburg, Madrid, and London. In 2018, there was a proposal to launch 4,000 trains heading to Europe, which was a significant increase from the 3,271 trains dispatched in the first 11 months of 2017, representing a roughly 10% annual expansion (Sarwar, 2018). However, more than half of the trains return without cargo, indicating a one-sided flow of goods from China. The NELB is a significant part of China's determined OBOR strategy, which will enhance continental transport connectivity, extending the New Silk Road Economic Belt across Eurasia. Furthermore, this Century Maritime Silk Road complements the terrestrial network by offering maritime routes connecting China with Africa and the Mediterranean region. The NELB's operations involve trains hauling between 40 to 50 containers and, in some cases, over 200 containers. With an estimated average of 100 containers per

train, the annual volume on this route is projected to be around 400,000 containers. To provide context, a mid-sized container vessel can carry approximately 4,000 forty-foot containers, equivalent to 8,000 TEUs. Therefore, the NELB's annual freight capacity is comparable to that of about 100 maritime vessels. Although official figures for the NELB's container traffic are not disclosed by China, data from German and Russian sources indicate annual shipments of fewer than 100,000 containers. In comparison, Shanghai's busy port processes close to 100,000 containers daily (Babones, 2017).

China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC)

President of China Xi Jinping also discussed with Mongolian and Russian counterparts the idea of a joint venture to promote the economic integration referred to as the Silk Road Economic Belt during the summit of SCO in September 2014 in Dushanbe. It aimed at integrating various trade corridors such as the Trans-Eurasian Development Belt and the Prairie Road of Mongolia for the purpose of promoting cooperation and development in the region. This led to the development of a framework termed the CMREC, which was deemed to be a critical part of this broad strategy. Starting from Tianjin in China, it runs northwestwards through Mongolia by passing through the Erlianhoate border. After that, at the Tashkent SCO Summit on 24 June 2016, the Chinese, Mongolian, and Russian leaders signed the CMREC agreement, thus including it in a larger framework of the Chinese BRI (Taldybayeva, 2020). At the core of the CMREC are its main goals, namely the promotion and coordination of intersectoral projects; improvement of trade procedures; increase in marketability of products and services; security of transport; and development of infrastructure. As a regional economic community that encourages cooperation and integration of the participating countries, the CMREC aims to stimulate economic development, enhance stability, and realize the full potential for cross-border commerce and investment & opportunities (Li & Yaguang, 2019).

Figure 2



Source: (Judge, 2018)

Tavan Tolgoi Rail Project

The core objective of the initiative is to establish a direct link between the Chinese border and Mongolia's expansive Tavan Tolgoi coal mine. To date, an investment totaling \$200 million has been allocated for this purpose. However, the total funding required for the route far exceeds this amount, with a shortfall of \$800 million (Otgonsuren, 2015). Notably, contributions from entities such as the Shenhua Group and Sumitomo Corporation have been instrumental in financing this endeavor. During the Transport and Logistics in Eurasia conference held in Moscow in December 2017, Mongolian Transport Minister, Jadamba, emphasized Mongolia's strategic significance in order to link Asia with Europe as quickly as possible. Moreover, he expressed Mongolia's willingness to work with other parties to build the CMREC and ease financing for resource exports. Traveling from a city in Eastern Siberia to a border town within Inner Mongolia, China, via Mongolia's capital, is an international highway that China finished building in 2018. The trade between China and Mongolia relies heavily on this route. Despite Russia's early concerns over Chinese expenditures in Mongolia, which is the three countries have recently agreed to electrify the Tianjin-Ulaanbaatar-Ulan Ude Grand Route with two tracks by 2030. In order to accomplish this massive undertaking, it is essential

to use Russian locomotives, and there are also intentions to borrow more money from Russian bankers (Kumar, 2022).

During the Mongolia-Russia Economic Forum in June 2018, President Khaltmaagiin Battulga advocated for the development of the Altanbulag Free Trade Zone (FTZ) situated at the northern terminus of the central route. Additionally, the President emphasized initiatives aimed at bolstering trade turnover with Russia by 2020 and the establishment of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union. Despite encountering obstacles, Mongolia's economic ties with China continue to strengthen. The Mongolian government showcases a robust dedication to the CMREC, a stance anticipated to persist. For Mongolia, the CMREC embodies aspirations for sustainable regional cooperation and development (Judge, 2018).

China, Central Asia and West Asia Economic Corridor (CCAWEAC)

Starting in northwest China and continuing across Central Asia, the CCAWEAC eventually reaches the Mediterranean coast, the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Peninsula. Participating nations are located in North Africa, West Asia, and Central Asia. China now relies on oil and gas mostly from West Asia, particularly the Gulf

states of the Middle East. Simultaneously, the Gulf states' biggest customer for exported oil is China. Improved connectivity and infrastructure for supply chain integration are two outcomes of the built environment integration along this corridor, which also opens up new channels of cooperation between China and Central Asia, among other regions, & West Asia. It is also a major producer of industrial products like textiles, tools, chemicals, electronics, accurate instruments, and energy and resources from Central and West Asia, and it has emerged as a major market for these commodities. (Jinbo, 2019).

The CCWAEC is the most extensive economic corridor, involving numerous countries and intricate geopolitical dynamics. Many of these countries possess abundant resources such as oil and natural gas, which significantly influence their fiscal revenues. Consequently, fluctuations in commodity prices directly impact their economic growth. Central Asian countries have grappled with common challenges for over three decades, including irrational economic structures, high dependence on foreign nations, and susceptibility to external factors. In response, there is growing interest in a development model driven by scientific and technological innovation within Central Asia and West Asian countries (Lei, 2023).

China-Indochina Peninsular Economic Corridor

The China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor starts at two different places. The Eastern Route starts from Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and the Western Route starts from Kunming, Yunnan Province, and the two meet in Singapore. This corridor extends across the Indochina Peninsula and covers Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, and Malaysia which are six of the ASEAN member countries. It provides an important foundation for further development of enhanced cooperation between these ASEAN countries and China. It also plays a crucial role in bridging the southern part of China to the Maritime Silk Road through the overland corridors passing through Southeast Asia. The corridor's value is further enhanced by the fact that it intersects with key transit points of the Maritime Silk Road, including the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea. One such corridor is the Lancang-Mekong International Waterway, which is centered on the Lancang-Mekong River that passes through six

countries. These countries need water management agreements since changes in the upstream result in impacts on the downstream especially in periods of droughts. There is also the potential for disputes with dam construction (Zhu & Zhu, 2016).

Established in 2016, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation focuses on water resources cooperation based on the consensus, and the Water Resources Cooperation Center was set up in Beijing in 2017. The Lancang-Mekong River is an important channel for cross-border transportation including transport of oil and gas. This Economic Corridor is not only about finance, but also trade, infrastructure construction, energy cooperation, and logistics. In the context of BRI, actions are taken to ensure that the trade between participating countries is as smooth as possible, which is supported by the China-ASEAN FTA that provides a solid base for subsequent cooperation. Sustainable economic liberalization in this corridor is believed to offer a model of economic integration involving mainly industrial cooperation such as the development of cross-border industrial zones and industrial parks. Pivotal to these plans is the question of infrastructure advancement (Jimbo, 2019).

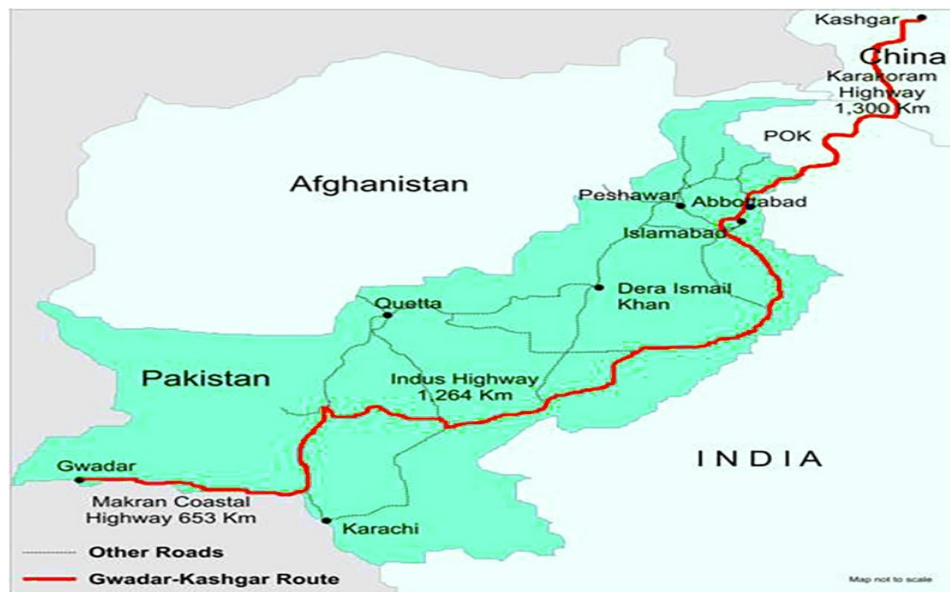
Thus, it is projected that by the year 2030, the ASEAN nations of the peninsula may be witnessing an increase in GDP by between 30% to 40%. This growth is expected to be occasioned by various infrastructure projects such as the Southern Malaysia Railway, the Malaysian Singapore Railway, the China - Laos Railway, and the China - Thailand Railway among others that began construction in 2017. These railway projects have the potential to reduce traveling time from China to the Indochina area. The liberalization of trade and investment between Beijing and the six nations of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreements has been progressing. These we have seen accompanied by cost efficiencies through tax incentives as well as improved access. The trade relations between China and the peninsula's countries have recently been developed with trade turnover growing from approximately 30 billion USD in 2001 to 370 billion USD in 2017. It constitutes 9. indicates that it accounts for 2% of China's total foreign trade and has been growing at an average annual rate of 16%. 9%.(Gulyás, 2019).

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) emerges as a forward-looking concept, rooted in the belief that socio-economic development across a broader region is not only conceivable but also achievable through enhanced people-to-people connections. As the leading project of the multilateral BRI, CPEC introduces a revolutionary framework for regional connectivity, aiming at economic regionalization in our globalized world. By fostering win-win partnerships and developing geographical linkages, CPEC creates an integrated region characterized by shared destiny, harmony, and progress. The active participation of regional states in the CPEC project is a positive sign, as it bolsters the stakes of regional economies by mitigating conflicts and maximizing common benefits. Strategic disparities among states, influenced by geographical factors, administrative policies, and infrastructure limitations, often hinder socio-economic progress. CPEC offers numerous opportunities for user-states to enhance regional connectivity through integrated infrastructure. It encourages overcoming existing divisions by

promoting the integration of goods, services, and markets, facilitating an uninterrupted flow of trade, capital, people, and ideas. Additionally, CPEC fosters cooperation between states by providing physical and institutional infrastructure, including railway-road networks and maritime transportation systems, thereby stimulating higher volumes of trade and business activity. China's aspiring BRI has gathered remarkable global attention. Over sixty-five countries, representing nearly 66% of the peoples worldwide, approximately 35% of global trade, and about a significant portion of the globe's GDP, have enthusiastically embraced this venture (Rauf, Iftikhar, & Shujahi, 2018). The CPEC is a standout project within the BRI which links China to Pakistan's Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea, adjacent to the Persian Gulf. China's motivation behind CPEC is to enhance economic ties with its western and southwestern regions, historically overlooked. By addressing infrastructure needs, CPEC aims to boost regional development, facilitate increased exports, create employment opportunities, and foster stable growth. The BRI focuses on five main objectives: aligning policies, enhancing infrastructure links, facilitating seamless trade, merging financial systems, and strengthening interpersonal ties.

Figure 3



Source: (Dobson, 2023)

The CPEC in South Asia extends over 3000 kilometers from Gwadar in Pakistan to Kashgar in China. This corridor links the Northern and

Southern Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century. The pivotal Gwadar seaport, a modern deep-sea facility, is poised to transform into an oil city with

petroleum refining zones. The Gwadar-Kashgar oil pipeline covering a minor yet significant portion of oil imports complements a comprehensive network of railways, roads, telecommunications, energy infrastructure, shipping, and maritime services. CPEC projects encompass industrial cooperation, digital acceleration, and the creation of a high-quality community for common development. By linking China to the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, CPEC promises to expand economic activities across the region, directly benefiting billions of people residing in the Middle East, China, Southwest Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia (Ali, 2020).

Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor

The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM), also known as the Kunming Initiative, was initiated in 1999 as a Parallel Diplomacy. Its purpose was to connect the underdeveloped regions of Southwest China, Eastern India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Northeast India. The project aimed to elevate this dialogue to a Track I intergovernmental level, fostering trade and connectivity from Kunming to Kolkata. A Joint Study Group, comprising representatives from the four countries, conducted further assessments. While Bangladesh and Myanmar proposed several initiatives to enhance regional cooperation, unresolved issues persisted—particularly India's reluctance to participate in multilateral regional forums with China. In 2013, the project organized the K2K rally, a car rally from Kunming to Kolkata, demonstrating the corridor's feasibility. Additionally, the project envisioned a 2,800-kilometer-long economic corridor connecting Kolkata, Dhaka, Sylhet, Silchar, Imphal, Ruili, Longling, Dali, Tamu, Kalewa, Mandalay, and Lashio. Its overarching goal was to enhance economic, trade, and people-to-people interactions, strengthening regional connectivity. The BCIM project was conceived as a forum for regional integration, emphasizing the three Ts: Trade, Transport, and Tourism (Karim & Aminul, 2018).

China is making strong efforts to include Sri Lanka in the Sino-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC). The talks between a special envoy and President Ranil Wickremesinghe of Sri Lanka provided evidence of this. This new venture further demonstrates China's aim to strengthen the BRI in

South Asia. Meeting with Sri Lankan officials, State Councillor Shen Yiqin, speaking on behalf of the Chinese president, emphasized the need to expand the economic corridor. The president's office issued a statement confirming the two countries' desire to expedite the China-Sri Lanka free trade Pact. In contrast to the now-stalled BCIM corridor, the CMEC—an important BRI land corridor—has grown in importance. Only Bhutan and India are not taking part in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's International Development Initiative; Sri Lanka, on the other hand, has been an outspoken proponent of both. Sri Lanka and other BRI nations are ready to launch the project's second phase, which would provide substantial economic advantages, according to President Wickremesinghe. After attending President Mohamed Muizzu's inauguration in the Maldives and President Wickremesinghe's interaction with Chinese Leader Xi Jinping at the third Road and Beltways Dialogue for International Cooperation in Beijing, Shen traveled to Sri Lanka a month later. As part of a joint statement, Sri Lanka once again expressed its commitment to the BRI (Srinivasan, 2023).

Strategic Alliances In The Contemporary Geopolitics In The Asia Pacific Region

Through programs like the Quadrilateral Dialogue on Security (QUAD) and the AUKUS treaty, a military alliance including the US, the UK, and Australia, the US strategically corresponds with regional powers like Japan, Australia, and India. The QUAD was initially an informal coalition that came together in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean to address the difficulties and dangers caused by the disaster. Concerns over China's aggressiveness in the area prompted its revitalization in 2017, and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe formally established it in 2007. The leaders of the QUAD countries met in person for their formal first meeting in 2021 and then met virtually in March of the same year. There is no official military treaty between the members of QUAD, however, China has criticized the US for trying to establish an Asian NATO. Joining the QUAD Allies is something that South Korea is hesitant to do. The organization has also held Quad Plus meetings to discuss possible growth into other nations, such as Canada, New Zealand, Vietnam, the UK, and France. The members of QUAD have encouraged collaboration via exchanging

information and participating in naval exercises, all without becoming a formal physical alliance. At the Quad meeting in Melbourne, Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for China's foreign ministry, said that the US, Australia, India, and Japan formed the QUAD to intentionally provoke tensions and limit China's influence. By implying that the Quad intends to surround China and maintain American supremacy (Arif, Shah, & Talha, [2023](#)).

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

Initially formed as an informal coalition in the wake of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the QUAD is committed to collaborating on humanitarian aid and disaster response initiatives. Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe formalized it in 2007, and it was revitalized in 2017 due to China's growing assertiveness in the region. Collaborating closely with Japan, India, and Australia comes naturally for the United States. During Donald Trump's leadership, close cooperation with these nations was established, and now under the Biden authority, the Quad's agenda is expanding. The Indo-Pacific region stretches across two oceans and multiple continents, significantly impacting U.S. maritime interests. In 2019, U.S. trade worth \$1.9 trillion flowed through this area (Heiduk & Wirth, [2023](#)).

This year, it is anticipated that the Indo-Pacific will be the route for 42 percent of the world's exports and 38 percent of imports, as per the United Nations report. The escalating assertive stance of China in the region has sparked concern in Washington. Moreover, Beijing's recent actions, perceived as contrary to democratic principles, have heightened worries among the Quad alliance members. Despite the ongoing pandemic, China has not wavered in its pursuit of regional ambitions, including the imposition of restrictions on Hong Kong and rebukes towards countries that challenge its policies. Nonetheless, the Quad's focus is not solely on China. The leaders from these four countries acknowledge the urgency of addressing the humanitarian and economic repercussions brought about by the pandemic. Relations between China and each Quad nation have become increasingly strained during this period (Smith, [2021](#)).

During the Tokyo Summit on May 24, 2022, the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)

initiative launched state-of-the-art satellite-based radio frequency (RF) data to empower allies across the region. This enhanced capability bolsters their maritime domain awareness, enabling more effective monitoring of their waters. The Quad partners actively support three pilot programs spanning Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Indian Ocean Region. Furthermore, ongoing debates aim to extend the advanced capability to additional allies shortly (Chawla & Suri, [2023](#)).

Through increased transparency, IPMDA plays a crucial role in assisting our regional partners. It equips them to safeguard a free and open Indo-Pacific by enhancing their ability to:

- **Combat the global issues of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing:** By leveraging cutting-edge technology, IPMDA helps combat illicit fishing practices, ensuring sustainable marine resources.
- **Address the Challenges Posed by Climate Change:** The initiative facilitates timely responses to environmental challenges, such as climate-related events and natural calamities.
- **Enforce Maritime Law Near Their Shores:** IPMDA strengthens law enforcement efforts, promoting security and stability in the region. On May 20, 2023, the leaders of the Quad, including U.S. President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, gathered in Hiroshima for their fifth summit. This diplomatic partnership commits to elevating resilience, prosperity, and stability in the Indo-Pacific (Chawla & Suri, [2023](#)).

The Quad leaders are actively involved in various strategic initiatives, including improving infrastructure, strengthening maritime security, promoting public-private partnerships, addressing climate issues, enhancing health systems, advancing critical technologies, and exploring space. Their commitment is focused on delivering tangible benefits for the region. The development of infrastructure, which includes transportation networks, power grids, and digital connectivity, is crucial for meeting the diverse needs of the Indo-Pacific population. The leaders enthusiastically embrace three major infrastructure programs aimed at enhancing ongoing and future projects. These

initiatives focus on providing training, capacity-building, and essential resources to improve infrastructure development and resilience. Specifically:

- Quad Infrastructure Fellowship: This program will offer scholarships, work exchanges, and executive programs to government officials, enhancing their expertise in designing, delivering, and managing high-standard infrastructure projects. Legal certificate programs will also empower government attorneys involved in drafting and negotiating complex infrastructure agreements.
- Quad Partnership for Cable Connectivity and Resilience: Acknowledging the essential function of undersea cables in global communications, the collaboration aims to address current shortcomings and coordinate future cable installations. Australia is set to launch the Indo-Pacific Cable Connectivity and Resilience Program, with support from the United States in providing expertise and resources to enhance the security of these underwater communication lines (Hiroshima, [2023](#)).

Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)

It is at the moment, promoting the deployment of the IPMDA initiative at the Tokyo Summit on May 24, 2022, with state-of-the-art satellite-based RF data to its regional partners. This advancement enhances their maritime activity awareness which helps in closely monitoring the territorial waters. It is backed by Quad partners and currently consists of three pilot projects in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region. Such discussions are planned to develop such capabilities with other partners in the near future. Transparency across IPMDA's platform also supports its regional partners in preserving an open and free Indo-Pacific, increasing their capacity to respond to IUU fishing, climate, and natural catastrophes, and fortifying coastal security, ultimately improving the general well-being of the maritime environment. security (Hiroshima, [2023](#)).

Quad Indo-Pacific Ocean Research Alliance (QIPORA)

Participants in the Four Indo-Pacific Regions In comparison to the member nations, the inquiry alliance (QIPORA) includes esteemed institutions such as the National Oceanography Contributions Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the US, INCOIS of India, JAMSTEC of Japan for repairs, and CSIRO of Australia, among others. Gathering data on ocean areas, especially the Indian and Pacific, can help us understand the climate of the region and the planet. The Quad countries' marine ecosystems and resources are vulnerable to the impacts of rising seas and climate change; the alliance should look into this. (Hiroshima, [2023](#)).

AUKUS Alliance

In September 2021, the governments of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia introduced the formation of a new security partnership called AUKUS. AUKUS objectives include the enhancement of the defense and security capabilities of the participating nations by leveraging their existing bilateral relationships. The alliance will improve information sharing, and technological collaboration, and integrate scientific, technological, and industrial aspects of security and defense. This announcement marks the beginning of 18 months of trilateral consultations, focusing on two main efforts. One significant initiative of AUKUS is the commitment to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines for its naval forces (Austin & Llyod, [2023](#)).

Australia's shift to the AUKUS pact came after abruptly canceling a significant \$90 billion submarine contract with France's Naval Group, which caused a diplomatic dispute with Paris. The AUKUS formation was mainly driven by concerns that the French submarines would not be delivered in time to address the urgent strategic challenges similar to those of the volatile 1930s. The decision to upgrade the aging Collins-class fleet and the prolonged two-decade-long submarine replacement program were considered inadequate to meet Australia's defense requirements. With the realization that a new conventional submarine fleet would not be operational until the 2050s, Australia has shifted its strategies back to building its

submarine forces to close this existing gap (Zaman & Yasmin, 2021). As it is considered to be a timely and more cost-effective defense solution the AUKUS agreement is also consistent with the United States' obligation of protecting its allies in the vital Indo-Pacific region.

The purpose of this strategy is to lessen the impact of exporting resources to China and at the same time increase the Australian economy and guarantee its security. This alliance has helped Australia to obtain some of the most advanced military technologies including hypersonic missile systems, and automatic aerial vehicles from the United States. The formation of AUKUS enhances the partnership of defense of Australia, the US, and the UK. The Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has not taken time in replying to the French announcement by immediately coming up with another new deal with nuclear submarines for South Australia in support of the shipbuilding as this creates many jobs. However, this apparent strategy of moving towards a more friendly position towards the US appears to be pushing Australia further away from its Asian and European counterparts. In a region where nations are generally given a favorable disposition towards the attainment of peace and stability, Australia's current position could be seen as being regressive in terms of perception, thereby aggravating the tension in the region. Instead of fostering harmony, such actions may cause tension instead.

The trilateral alliance rests on two foundations, the first of which is the long history of security cooperation between the three nations. One concerns the significant expansion of Australia's navy, which is now seeking to purchase nuclear-powered submarines with armaments. Given the dynamic nature of security in the Indo-Pacific region, Canberra's goal of enhancing its undersea capabilities with the help of AUKUS is very commendable. The overall attitude of the cooperation is one of great openness to sharing knowledge and investing in cutting-edge tools for teamwork. As the defense situation becomes more intense, one part of Pillar II is finding a balance between developing and opening up essential capabilities. The shifting global power dynamics have prompted Australia to reassess its military plans, which may include the swap out of diesel-electric submarines for nuclear-powered ones. Increased range, lifespan, and invisibility are only a

few of nuclear propulsion's key advantages that fulfill or surpass the region's present security needs. As Australia begins to construct its own nuclear-powered submarines, the next five to seven years will be pivotal for the navy's supply chain and human resources. Efforts like this demonstrate a commitment to autonomy and strategic flexibility. Australian shipyards are aiming to produce SSN-AUKUS submarines, which are a hybrid of British and American designs and technologies, by the middle of the next century. The localization drive ensures the profitability of the project in the long run and also strengthens national security capabilities. At the start of the next decade, the US will provide three or five US Virginia tier social security numbers to Australia to speed up the country's transition, according to the US government. This temporary step reinforces the commitment to enhancing Australia's underwater defense capabilities as local manufacturing ramps up. On top of that, starting in 2027, the Submarine Striking Force West initiative will station nuclear-powered vessels from the United States and the United Kingdom in the region. The second cornerstone of the partnership is bolstering capabilities by boosting the interchange of information and technical know-how, with a focus on China, to counter the escalating wave of geopolitical competition (Zarrar & Gichki, 2022). Interoperability across a broad variety of cutting-edge technologies is the goal of this pillar, which includes quantum computing, artificial intelligence, increased cyber skills, hypersonic mechanisms, electronic warfare, and autonomous underwater vehicles. The goal is to improve development. In terms of R&D, the program addresses every stage, from initial ideation to actual execution. Despite bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles, Pillar II has made significant progress. Military and civilian personnel from all three nations recently participated in a demonstration that showed collaboration efforts via the use of ground and aerial vehicles. Swarming together to locate and track targets, AI-enabled assets were able to effectively exchange models across nations in this experiment. Recently, the Obama team has promised to facilitate the transfer of defensive equipment for AUKUS partners via executive branch actions and expected changes to legislation. Taking these measures will help the collaboration move forward more quickly and improve collective defense capabilities. When it

comes to the Asia-Pacific region, China views AUKUS as a competitor to its regional dominance and has been vocal in its opposition. (Kahn, 2023).

Navigating Taiwan Strait and Geopolitical Implication

After separating from mainland China across the Taiwan Strait in 1949, Taiwan, formally known the the Republic of China (ROC), has governed itself autonomously ever since. The PRC views Taiwan as an independent province that has shown signs of disobedience and hopes to unite the two sides in the future. Its democratically elected government, however, reflects a range of views on Taiwan's position and ties with the mainland, and the island's 23 million inhabitants reflect this. Different interpretations of Beijing's One China policy towards Taiwan originate from the 1991 Consensus, a deal struck between the Republican Chinese Communist Administration (CCP) - and the Kuomintang (KMT), Taiwan's ruling party, which had previously controlled Taiwan. With the government of China (ROC) representing unity, the KMT pushes for "one China, various interpretations," in contrast to the PRC's emphasis on national reunification. By recognizing Taiwan, China, Mongolia, the Southwest China Sea, and Tibet as components of the ROC, the KMT established the constitution of Taiwan. The KMT is against Taiwan's independence and advocates for tighter relations with Beijing. The main opposition party in Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party, which was (DPP), on the other hand, has never accepted the 1992 Consensus. In her search for a different wording that would satisfy Beijing, the former president of the administration of Tsai avoided publicly embracing the consensus. During her 2016 inauguration address, Tsai emphasized that the ROC Constitution, which is based on the One China concept, was the instrument that elected her, and she vowed to protect the independence and territory of the ROC. But Beijing ignored this position and severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Despite skepticism about China's readiness to engage, Tsai's successor, Lai Ching-te, who is also the current head of the Democratic Progressive Party and the vice president of Taiwan, intends to preserve the status quo across the Taiwan Strait and promote dialogue over conflict (Maizland, 2024).

In the mid-fifties, the relations between PRC and ROC deteriorated leading to clashes over some strategic islands around the Taiwan Strait. During this period, the PRC launched two bombing adventures on islands occupied by the ROC, and there ensued active American support for the ROC. These islands such as Jinmen (Quemoy) and Mazu situated in the western part of Taiwan which was about one hundred miles distant, were of immense value since they lay close to both China and Taiwan. In the Civil War, the ROC deployed troops there and used them as possible platforms to launch an assault to regain mainland China. Moreover, during the early Cold War years in East Asia, U. S. policy exacerbated the tensions as the Korean War began and the U. S. deployed the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait. By the end of the 1950s, the US pulled out of this Strait after the Korean War in a bid to de-escalate the military tensions. At this time, the US Government solidified its partnership with the ROC in Taiwan by establishing the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, and the debate over whether to ratify a Mutual Defense Treaty with Chiang Kai-shek alarmed the PRC. In return, the PRC started shelling Jinmen Island, Dachen Island, and Mazu Island. The U. S. policymakers contemplated the idea of deploying a part of the fleet to the strait and ensure ROC control. While the Mutual Defense Treaty with the ROC showed continued American support, it did not guarantee the US's defense of the offshore islands. The tensions across the Taiwan Strait increased in the late 1950s and that compelled the U. S. Government to act. While the territorial extent of the area protected by the United States remained vague, in January 1955 the 'Formosa Resolution' vested President Eisenhower with all the power necessary to protect Taiwan and its offshore islands. To make this deal, Chiang Kai-shek promised secretly to defend Jinmen and Mazu in return for withdrawal from tactically ambiguous Dachen. The Eisenhower Administration actually considered different strategies ranging from pressuring Chiang into giving up control of the islands to even using atomic weapons against the PRC. But before deciding on such radical actions, an unforeseen circumstance appeared. In April 1955, during the Afro-Asian Conference, the head of the PRC, Zhou Enlai stated that he was ready to talk to the United States. The causes for this sudden change—be it Soviet, war, or internal political dynamics—remain uncertain. The conversation between the PRC and

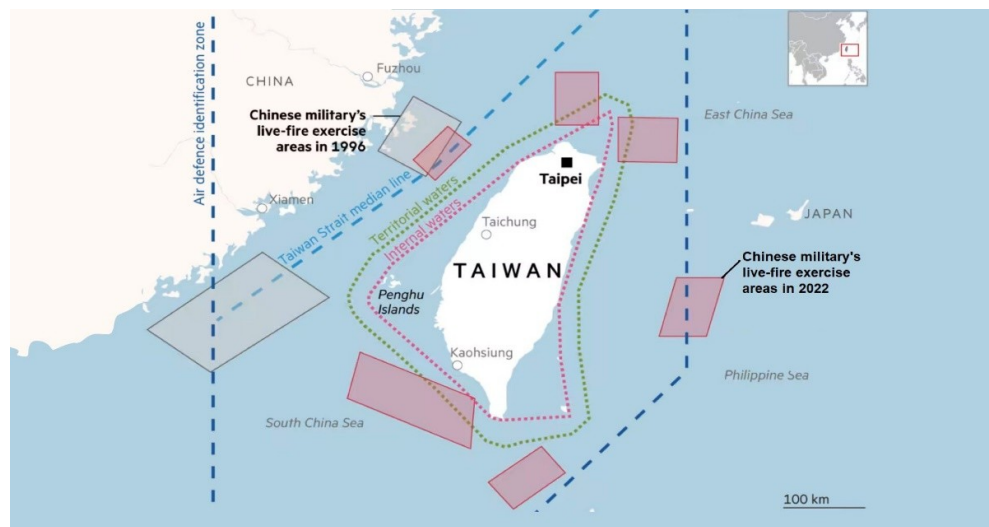
the United States began in September 1955 in Geneva discussing issues to do with repatriation and averting of conflicts. (Department of State, 2020).

Positioned within the first island chain, Taiwan assumes a crucial role in US foreign policy due to its strategic location. The South China Sea tensions exacerbated by China have further underscored Taiwan's importance. Particularly noteworthy is Taiwan's dynamic economy, which serves as a cornerstone in global electronics manufacturing, including the production of essential computer chips. Control over the island by China could significantly bolster its ability to project power in the western Pacific, potentially posing a challenge to US interests. Nevertheless, China consistently professes peaceful intentions and alleges that the US is encircling it by establishing military bases spanning from Australia to Japan (BBC, 2024).

The United States' effective strategy of indirectly confronting and containing the Soviet Union remained pivotal for its future strategic orientation. As the predominant global power, the US prioritized preserving its hegemonic status and preventing the ascent of potential rivals. In March 1992, the US unveiled its initial draft of Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), pledging to counter and deter the emergence of major power competitors while denying them a global role. To realize this objective, the US employed a combination of containment,

economic and military strength, and the promotion of democracy worldwide. Presently, China's rapid economic expansion as a formidable market economy, alongside advancements in military capabilities and technological sophistication, poses a significant challenge to US supremacy, potentially undermining it by 2030. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, China consistently outpaced the US in annual growth rates, solidifying its economic progress and pursuing regional integration through initiatives such as BRI. Collaboration between China and Russia, rooted in shared strategic interests, has further contested US influence. US engagement in regional affairs waned as the Asia-Pacific region emerged as a vital economic and military arena, where the power dynamics between the US and China dictate regional geopolitics and stability. China's expanding military and economic influence in the region jeopardizes US interests and the security of its allies. To sustain regional influence and counter the China-Russia partnership, the US devised engagement and containment strategies, acknowledging China's ascent as a major power. Initially, the US aimed to enhance bilateral relations with China through diplomatic and trade channels, but eventually shifted towards a containment strategy encompassing hybrid warfare tactics, disinformation campaigns, trade disputes, alignment with allied nations, and military measures.

Figure 4



Source: (<https://www.riskintelligence.eu/analyst-briefings/east-asia-impact-of-china-and-taiwan-conflict>)

The US consistently leverages China's vulnerabilities to impede its economic and military advancements. Positioned strategically within the "first island chain," Taiwan assumes a crucial role in US strategic calculus. Despite unofficial relations, the US maintains economic, diplomatic, and security ties with Taiwan and aids its defense through arms sales. The clash of strategic interests between the US and China has evolved their interaction into a multifaceted competition, spanning trade, economics, and strategic positioning. Taiwan has emerged as a focal point in this dynamic, with both sides engaging in various actions and reactions, including the propagation of disinformation. The US aims to pressure China into acquiescing to its terms and influencing its relationships with neighboring nations. The Taiwan issue occupies a central position in US strategy aimed at curtailing China's economic expansion, potentially pushing China towards a military confrontation. Functioning as a proxy for the US, Taiwan serves as a means to deter China and constrain its growth, thereby enabling the US to uphold its dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. The current deadlock in the Taiwan Strait represents a critical flashpoint for future peace, encapsulating the most delicate issue in US-China relations (Farooq, 2023).

Geopolitical Implications of the South-China Sea

Since the end of World War II up to the present time, the United States remained vigilant and actively involved in the South China Sea area. The main strategy of the US has been to ensure that it fulfills its defense commitments but does not have to get bogged down in sovereignty questions of allies in the region. It thus becomes a resident power through its networks of allies and territorial properties, thereby contributing to the stability of Asia. They claim that having sizeable military forces several thousand miles from the United States helps to deter aggression and keep the capability to effectively counter security threats in a particular part of the globe at any one time. The US has been involved in the South China Sea issue for historical relations between the Philippines and America. The Security Treaty in the Pacific for Military Bases Agreement was signed in 1947 and the Mutual Defense Treaty was signed in 1951. It is for this reason that this alliance system has endured as the geopolitics of the world has evolved. a

cornerstone of Asian security. Filipino officials have raised concerns about the one-sided nature of their alliance with the United States. Hosting US military bases without a firm commitment to support in South China Sea disputes has led to apprehensions about vulnerability to potential aggression. This has prompted ongoing negotiations regarding the value of the alliance, a process that continues today. In recent years, Washington has made it clear that the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty covers any assault on Philippine forces in the South China Sea, all while remaining impartial regarding territorial conflicts. The US has actively engaged in these disputes at times defending American interests proactively, but often navigating through complex circumstances. These disputes periodically resurface in US policy discussions, resulting in varied outcomes (Poling, 2022).

The South China Sea, spanning 1.3 million square miles, holds immense importance for global trade. Annually, approximately one-third of the world's shipping, valued in trillions of dollars, traverses through this vital maritime corridor. Asia contributes 60% of this volume, with a significant portion passing through the South China Sea. Any trade disruptions would have significant global repercussions, particularly affecting China, the world's second-largest economy, which relies on this sea route for 64% of its trade, while the United States accounts for 14%. Beyond trade, the region boasts fertile fishing grounds, vast economic potential, and abundant natural resources, including 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Given the diverse wildlife and uninhabited islands at risk from climate change and pollution, responsible resource management is imperative for environmental preservation (Munawar, 2023).

US Vietnam Defense Pact

The security cooperation between the US and Vietnam has improved over the years and the two countries are in harmony concerning the vision of the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy. 12 Political Security and Defense Dialogue sessions have helped them enhance defense relations, discuss Asia's security issues, and fortify the partnership. More importantly, the recent visit of the USS Carl Vinson in 2018 marked the first time a US aircraft carrier to the country in more than four decades, followed by the visit of the USS Theodore Roosevelt in the year

2020. Such exchanges have incurred cultural and professional interactions, including partnerships in disease control and prevention. The approval for the export of defense articles through Direct Commercial Sales between fiscal year 2016 to 2021 was \$29. 8 million to Vietnam. The main categories were Electronics – \$1. 8m, Firearms & Accessories – \$777,592, and Fire Control/Night Vision – \$25. 5m. Besides that, the Department has established productive Foreign Military Sales with Vietnam with a value of more than 118 million dollars. Between FY 2017 and FY 2023, Vietnam was provided with \$104 million in security assistance under the State Department's Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. Another \$81. 5 million of FMF was devoted to the Indo-Pacific Strategy in FY 2018. Thus, FMF mainly supports Vietnam's maritime security and domain awareness capacity-building and compliance with the International Law of the Sea (Shoji, 2018). Vietnam Coast Guard's main activities include procurement of used former USCG cutters, upgrades, and sustainment of T-6 trainers aircraft and Metal Shark patrol boats. These cutters are a prime example of a significant defense transfer between the United States and Vietnam. Moreover, it is worth noting that today, the United States cooperates with Vietnam to highlight and deal with the consequences of the war, such as the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO). For the UXO since 1993, over \$230 million has been provided by the U. S. government to search and destroy UXO, providing education on risks, support to the survivors, and increasing the capacity of the VNMAR. The help with UXOs continues to be an important part of the relations between the USA and Vietnam. (State, 2023).

Following the current escalation of diplomatic ties between Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong and United States President Joe Biden to the highest level, Chinese authorities worried about a new cold war in Southeast Asia. China's foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning has appealed to Washington to leave a 'hegemonic and Cold War mentality' while dealing with Asian countries and stressed their need and desire for peace, cooperation, and development. Even though critics have accused the U. S. of partnering with Vietnam against China, the American Authorities defended such cooperation as merely being in common interests and vision for the new Indo-Pacific as well

as for the South China Sea. China's territorial demands in the South China Sea have led to interferences of the Chinese Coast Guard with ships from Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia. As Vietnam seeks to balance itself between China and America, the new partnership becomes a good opportunity for the latter to manifest its influence in the former. Vietnam's geographical position makes it difficult for it to openly side with the U.S., but there could be positive implications for deepening Vietnam's economic relations with the U. S., particularly for Vietnam's banking industry as it faces domestic internal issues, as well as slowing global trade. Although Vietnam has some concerns over President Biden, the country expects that a comprehensive strategic partnership will offer benefits in dealing with the conflict over the South China Sea, preserving the middle position, and relying on Vietnam's strength (Le, 2023).

Conclusion

The quote by Henry Kissinger, the former Secretary of State of the United States is very fitting here: 'Alliances and enemies do not last forever, but interests do. 'It is the permanent and eternal interests that should be achieved and remain relevant till the present days within the framework of the subject called International Relations. It mirrors the ever-shifting nature of international relations and the fact that national interests take precedence over friendships in this field. Thus, from a historical perspective, there have been sixteen shifts in world order since the end of the 15th century. For example, it is worth noting that there have been only three historical examples of shifts in power between the supreme world leaders who did not fight a war (Allison, 2017). In addition, both states are pursuing their alliances and are spending a large budget on the arms race to bolster their army. Such alliances as QUAD, AUKUS, and the US-Vietnam agreement not only fuel the arms race between the US and China but throughout the entire Asia-Pacific region. This observation points to the fact that leadership transition in the world is not a very common occurrence especially when it is peaceful and among all the peaceful transitions that have ever happened in the world, two of them happened in the twentieth century meaning that technology and the nuclear weapon stock pliers were instrumental in achieving a peaceful transition

of leadership in the world. The policy of containment which formed the basis of US foreign policy in the past is seen as a model which has become outdated and requires rethinking. The modern society is faced with a number of challenges that require collective effort for a common cause to be solved. Of these, climate change can be said to be a primary focal area mainly due to its impact on the stability and existence of countries globally. When it comes to relations between China and America, Beijing serves as an ally rather than an enemy to Washington, promoting the course of symbiosis rather than confrontation and retaliation. This approach was well illustrated when in November 2023, U. S. President Joe Biden sought the help of China's President Xi Jinping on the fentanyl issue blamed for many drug-related deaths in the U. S In

reply, President Xi affirmed stern measures to curb any exports of fentanyl precursors to the US. The belief that the world should be in a harmonious state corresponds with China's economic agenda. As for the analyzed country, it is possible to note China's apparent desire to solve conflicts without resorting to violence. This was evident in China's diplomacy dealing with the process of easing tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia. This paper will also show that both China and the US have major economic interdependencies and are very interested in maintaining and developing their bilateral trade relations. The quest for economic alliance is therefore an affirmation of a general trend towards co-ordinate conflict solving in the contemporary world.

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