

South Asian Studies

A Research Journal of South Asian Studies

Vol. 38, No. 2, July – December, 2023, pp. 207 – 216

Strategic Competition between USA and China in Asia Pacific Region

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Received:
Dec 20, 2023

Published:
Dec 29, 2023

ABSTRACT

The USA is increasingly engaged in the Asia Pacific region to secure its interest in maintaining its status quo over the globe. As China becomes an economic giant within two decades and poses a threat to the hegemony of the USA, the USA is engaging with its partners and allies in the region. For this purpose, the USA initiated multiple alliances like AUKUS & QUAD shifted its perspective towards Asia, and Introduced an Asia-Pacific policy for containing China. In contrast to the USA, China is sucking the countries in its economic system to build infrastructure, ports, roads, and railways and by providing loans to developing countries by introducing projects like BRI, OBOR & BRICS. China is using the strategy of Sun Tzu by maneuvering opponents into such a place from which escape is impossible. Both countries are in Thucydides' trap from which escape is impossible. The USA & and China confronted each other through a Trade War. Now achieving geo-economics interest is important in the contemporary century. The perspective of war on the battlefield shifted toward confronting geo-economic interests due to nuclear doctrine. According to realists, conflict is inevitable in human interactions.

Key Words: Cold War, Critical Discourse Analysis, Magazine Discourse, Discursive Practices, Interdisurcivity.

Introduction

After a long civil war between the Nationalists led by Chiang Kai Shek and the Communists led by Mao Zedong, the Communists took over mainland China in 1949. The defeated Nationalists fled to Taiwan and established their government there. From 1949 onward Chinese allied with the USSR and always supported the

Eastern Block led by the USSR. China always opposed the US in the Cold War era in the Korean War 1950-1953 China fought against the USA and supported North Korea. (Marshall, 2015)

American policymakers worked wisely to integrate China into the Western world order after its split from the USSR in the 1960S for its economic growth. Economically strong China could better contain the USSR as compared to economically fragile China. Diplomatic relations between the USA and China started in 1979. The US wants to increase its influence in Asia, especially in the world during the Cold War era. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the US emerged as a superpower, and the era of Uni-polarity started. According to Francis Fukuyama, the success of capitalism and liberal democracy signifies that the ideological evolution of humanity was ended and the world saw a universalization in the Western style of democracy (Fukuyama, 1992). In response to this, Samuel Huntington wrote a book “Clash of Civilization” where he mentioned that emerging conflict would fall along cultural lines or different blocks of civilization. At the end of the Cold War, US policymakers thought about China and how they could engage with it because they no longer needed China as a watchdog for the USSR. At that time, the Chinese per capita GDP was 75th as the size of the USA. However, its great population might help it to grow rapidly which would jeopardize US hegemony.

In 1980 the GDP of China was less than \$300 billion; however, it was \$ 11 trillion making it the second-largest economy in the world in 2015. It is noteworthy that Chinese observers informed that US-China relations were strained a decade ago which became true in 2018 when the Trump government imposed harsh economic policies toward the import of Chinese products. This significant increase in the economy of China poses a threat to the hegemony of the US. However, according to Napoleon “Let China sleep; when she wakes, she shakes the world”. However, according to the IMF Economist Intelligence Unit, China will surpass the USA in GDP in 2024 as the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of China is increasing continuously. In 2004, the GDP of China in terms of PPP was \$5760 billion while the US was \$12275 billion. It increased to \$18228 billion in 2014 and will surpass to US in 2024 which will be \$35596 billion while the US GDP will be \$25093 billion in 2024. The USA signed a quadrilateral security alliance with India, Japan, and Australia in 2007. The main aim of this alliance was to collaborate on disaster relief efforts. But its policies were redrafted and its main aim became to contain China in the region. Moreover, Chinese analysts understand the shift in US-China relations when President Obama introduced the ‘Pivot to Asia strategy’. China's economic growth started posing a threat to the US when it surpassed Japan in 2010 and became the second-largest economy in the world. The Trump Administration unveiled the US Strategic Security Policy in 2017 and mentioned that we are entering into an era of major power competition. (Allison, 2017)

Strategic Competition between USA and China in Asia Pacific Region

In October 2022, the White House published the US national security strategy for 2023. It describes how the Biden administration will pursue America's essential goals, gain an edge over its global rivals, address common problems, and lead the world to a better and more optimistic future. This strategy recognizes China as "the most significant geopolitical threat to America" and sets three main goals of US policy towards China: invest, cooperate, and contend. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of rebuilding alliances and partnerships with allies and partners who share the US vision for a free, open, prosperous, and secure world. Some of the key issues that the strategy addresses about China include: Enhancing cybersecurity and countering China's attempts to degrade or steal US technology advances deterring China's military expansion and aggression in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. Supporting democracy and human rights in Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and other parts of China where they are threatened or violated. Promoting a rules-based international order that respects international law and norms, including those related to trade, investment, intellectual property rights, human rights, labor standards, environmental protection, and nuclear non-proliferation Addressing global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, terrorism, cyberattacks, nuclear proliferation, and space security that require collective action and cooperation with China where possible.

Containment of China

The US is trying to contain China in the region by allying with regional powers like India, Japan, and Australia through QUAD and AUKUS. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) originated as an informal alliance between the US, India, Japan, and Australia aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to collaborate on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe formalized it in 2007. The group was rejuvenated in 2017 and raised apprehension regarding China's growing attitude in the region. The QUAD leaders held their first formal summit in 2021 and met again virtually in March. China has complained that the US is trying to form an "Asian NATO" however, there is no military pact signed between them. South Korea has shown concerns about joining the Quad Alliance. The group has held "Quad Plus" meetings which would include France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, and New Zealand for future expansion of the partnership. Its members have established cooperation based on Naval Exercises and the Sharing of intelligence and military logistics. (Basrur, 2021)

During the Quad summit in Melbourne, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian remarked, "The QUAD, which includes India, Japan, Australia, and the US, serves as an instrument for containing China and intentionally incites conflict." He suggested that the Quad functions as a means to encircle China and maintain American dominance. (Patranobis, 2022)

AUKUS represents a trilateral strategic alliance among the US, UK, and Australia, enhancing a longstanding security collaboration through two main initiatives. The first initiative focuses on the Royal Australian Navy acquiring and developing armed nuclear submarines. The second initiative emphasizes joint efforts in advanced capabilities, encompassing technology and intelligence sharing. The overarching goal of AUKUS is to strengthen the collective deterrence and defense postures of the allies within the Indo-Pacific region. Australia is committed to expanding its naval workforce and infrastructure to support an independent nuclear-powered submarine (SSN) program. The SSN-AUKUS submarines, which will feature a fusion of British design and American technology, are slated for deployment in the late 2030s and are anticipated to be produced domestically in Australia by the early 2040s. AUKUS is yet another strategic initiative by the US in the Indo-Pacific to address the escalating power and influence of China in that area. (Kahn, 2023)

During the border disputes with China concerning the Galwan Valley, India is reinforcing its alliance with the United States. The skirmishes in the Galwan Valley between India and China in June 2020 have led India to voice concerns over a potential two-front war and the prospect of coordinated efforts by Pakistan and China to simultaneously confront India on two fronts. The US and India have ratified the strategic communication agreement known as the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA). Beyond BECA, three additional military agreements have been established between the US and India, including the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016, and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018. In 2017, US Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis recorded his objections to Xi Jinping's One Belt One Road initiative, emphasizing that in a globalized world, there are numerous paths and initiatives, and no single nation should impose a "One Belt, One Road" policy. He also pointed out that the One Belt One Road initiative traverses through territories that are under dispute. (Ali, 2023)

During the G20 Summit in India on September 9, 2023, US President Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an agreement involving India, the European Union, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and other Middle Eastern nations to construct a comprehensive rail and maritime network known as the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor. The primary objective of this corridor is to balance China's expanding influence in the region. Following the G20 Summit, Biden, while addressing reporters in Hanoi, Vietnam, stated, "I want to see China succeed economically, but I want to see them play by the rules." (Westall, 2023)

The US has made India its strategic partner in the South Asian region to contain China. The relations between both these countries are not good enough which gives the US a strategic advantage. The US has signed multiple agreements that ensure the economic security and foreign direct investment (FDI) of India and

Strategic Competition between USA and China in Asia Pacific Region

give an edge to India to challenge China's leadership in the region. The US is using India as a proxy to counter China as the US had used Pakistan in the Cold War era to counter the spread of Communism and against the USSR.

CPEC and Regional Connectivity

China started its regional connectivity plan in 2013 during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visits to Kazakhstan and in his speech he announced his plan known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

According to the Development Research Center, BRI aimed to cover 65+ countries in its project. The main aim of this route is to boost China's trade with Eurasia and Europe through the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st century Maritime Silk Road. (Nouwens, 2023)

BRI consists of six International Economic Corridors which are as follows:

1. Eurasia Land Bridge
2. China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor
3. China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor
4. China Indochina Peninsular Economic Corridor
5. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
6. Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor

These are six economic corridors that ensure the regional integration of the world. These trade routes play a very important role in the transportation of goods from one state to another. It enables the swift transportation of goods which will boost the economy of China as well as the other state. Within the six corridors, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is situated in the South Asian region. It spans approximately 3000 kilometers, extending from Kashgar in China to Gwadar in Pakistan. The Gwadar port plays a pivotal role in CPEC, acting as an alternative trade route for oil imports. It is anticipated to evolve into a state-of-the-art deep-sea port and eventually become an oil city, complete with petroleum refining areas linked to the Kashgar oil pipeline, which is projected to handle nearly 17% of China's oil imports. (Ali A. , 2020)

CPEC Gwadar, recognized as the most expansive deep water haven on the Arabian Sea near the Strait of Hormuz, functions as a critical entry point for oil imports and energy resources, establishing a connection between China and the broader region. The construction of the Gwadar port was finalized in 2007 during President Musharraf's tenure. Initially, the Port of Singapore Authority secured the management rights through a bidding process. However, they withdrew their contract in 2013, leading to the Chinese Overseas Port Holding Company taking over the responsibilities for the port's construction and management. In the same year, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz assumed governance, and on May 24, 2013, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to Pakistan resulted in a joint declaration that emphasized intensifying the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations, thereby establishing the groundwork for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). (Ali G. , 2023)

China has invested 62 billion US dollars in the socio-economic activity of Pakistan and CPEC is regarded as the most important development project in Pakistan. It is likely to produce 1 million job opportunities in Pakistan. CPEC is a long-term project and includes investment until the end of 2030. Human Resource (HR) is the key resource in any economy that is trained and skilled and attracts the attention of Foreign Investors. Pakistan lacks such a type of workforce that is skilled and trained. It is evident from the fact that several employees are being brought from China to work in Pakistan and are trained in using modern tools. Pakistan needs to develop a strategy that aligns with the goals and projects of the Planning Commission including CPEC that helps to curb unemployment to a larger extent. Human Resource Development (HRD) includes training, career planning, development, and career development. In today's competitive world, Organizations and Economies need strong HRD systems. It is an active factor that contributes to socio-economic development. Pakistan's region is struggling with many problems, such as a shortage of trained workers, limited chances for business owners, low attention to stopping the brain drain, poor facilities (institutions) for delivering skill education, and terror threats in the CPEC's core area, i.e. Gawadar, Baluchistan from Baloch Liberation Army. (Kashif Rathore, 2020)

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor provides the opportunity for the landlocked Central Asian Region to access warm waters by building infrastructure and railroads. Through Gawadar Port, Central Asia can trade throughout the world. It will benefit both Pakistan and Central Asia as Central Asia gets access to warm waters and benefit Pakistan economically. As Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Pakistan explained during his interview we need to be focused on developing two International Transport Corridor. The first one is called Trans Caspian International Corridor which connects China with Europe and the other one is the North-South Transport Corridor by provides connectivity to South Asia with the help of CPEC, we (The Central Asian Region) are going to transform a landlocked country into a land-linked country. (Kistafin, 2023)

Eurasian Land Bridge follows the Trans-Siberian Railway and splits into three options: one goes to Vladivostok and connects to East China, another goes to Kazakhstan and enters West China at Khorgos and Druzhba, and then passes through the Lanzhou rail center and reaches the Chinese coast, and the last one goes to Mongolia and enters China at Erenhot and then joins the main Beijing network. The Eurasian Land Bridge has all the required facilities to support its

Strategic Competition between USA and China in Asia Pacific Region

establishment and functioning, especially along the Trans-Siberian, which has two tracks and is powered by electricity. (Rodrigue, 2020)

China Mongolia Russia Economic Corridor was signed on December 08, 2016, by Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj in the Uzbekistan capital of Tashkent. The initiative follows China's leader Xi Jinping's announcement that Chinese firms increased their investment in countries involved in Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative by 20% in 2023, reaching \$15 billion. Xi urged the three nations to develop the economic corridor and enhance collaboration in transport infrastructure, port building, industrial development, investment, trade and economy, cultural exchange, and environmental protection to speed up outcomes. (Holmes, 2016)

Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM) Forum for the Regional Cooperation project, also known as the Kunming Initiative, was launched in 1999 as a Track II dialogue to link the underdeveloped regions of Southwest China, Eastern India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Northeast India. The project aimed to activate a Track I intergovernmental level to foster trade and connectivity from Kunming to Kolkata. The project aimed to improve economic, trade, and people-to-people contacts and strengthen regional connectivity. The project was conceived as a forum for regional integration, based on its "three Ts" proposition: Trade, Transport, and Tourism. (Islam, 2018)

The US has made India its strategic alliance in the South Asian region to counter the influence of China. In the same way, China built its strategic ties with Pakistan to contain India, and China is taking full advantage of the Indo-Pak rivalry for its strategic purposes and to contain the US.

The term BRIC, which originally did not encompass South Africa, refers to the informal association of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Established in 2009, this alliance was created to offer its members a platform to challenge the global dominance of the USA and its Western allies. The acronym was first introduced by Goldman Sachs in a 2001 research paper highlighting these nations' potential for economic growth. In 2010, South Africa joined the group, leading to the updated acronym BRICS. Collectively, these countries represent 40% of the world's population and now serve as a counterbalance to the influence of the G7 nations on the international stage. (Acharya, 2023)

Conclusion and Recommendations

The United States and China are both actively seeking to expand their global influence. While China utilizes economic diplomacy and investments in emerging nations to bolster its presence, the United States champions human rights and democracy, supplying cutting-edge technology to its allies and exerting its influence and counter China's reach. Both nations are vying for global dominance. They must adopt a policy of peaceful coexistence to prevent the world from descending into another cold war. Ryan Hass explained in his article "What America Wants from China," that U.S. officials have expressed a preference for competition over conflict with China. The U.S. should strive to uphold an operational international system that encompasses China and encourages collaboration within the framework of established rules and norms. This approach marks a departure from the Cold War's isolationist tactics and aims to safeguard U.S. security and prosperity by sustaining military strength and a technological advantage. This strategy not only avoids the pitfalls of a confrontational stance but also fosters a stable environment where both superpowers can thrive without undermining each other's interests. By doing so, the U.S. can maintain its leadership role while ensuring a balanced power dynamic that accommodates China's rise.

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Strategic Competition between USA and China in Asia Pacific Region

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Muhammad Soban Arif, Syeda Lubna Shah & Muhammad Talha

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