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The United States' Free and Open Indo-Pacific Policy and its Implications on China

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Abstract

Under the contemporary international political scenario, Indo pacific is considered as the most significant region in the world. The last three the US administrations have consecutively focused on this region in their national security policies. However, this article has particularly focused on the Joe Biden's new *Indo-Pacific Strategy* and with more focus on the implications of this strategy on China. Economic and military rise of China is attracting the US's concerns regarding its liberal order and hegemonic influence in the region. China has focused on Indo pacific region for trade and investments consequently getting the status of biggest trading partner of almost every state of this region. Through, Belt and Road initiatives China is changing the economic and diplomatic trajectories with its all-neighboring countries. The United State, through, its partnerships and alliances-based policy in Indo pacific region is attempting to counter balance the rising power of China. However, it is unclear whether this policy will lead towards further cooperation or competition in the region? And how would this policy affect China's foreign policy and sphere of influence in the region.

Keywords: Rcep, Ttp, Quad, Indo Pacific, Aukus, Bri, Power Transition.



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Introduction

Rise and fall of Hegemony is natural condition of international system. History is full of such example including Rome, Germany and Britain, where once-dominant powers were forced to surrender the fate of fading away. In the discipline of International relations, it has been maintained that position of hegemon in international system is the most unstable one. Threat of new emerging power can develop serious challenges for the preservation of hegemonic position. Recent relevant case is the USA's hegemonic position is being challenged by the fastest growing power China. However, this research article will address one central question: what are the implications of ongoing the United States' policies in Indo Pacific region on the security of China.

Only a decade later of Cold War, China became the world's second largest economy by 1990's. From diplomatic ties to massive economic investments, China is growing putting the US in challenging position. Overall power of China has allowed it to enhance its military power, enable it to act offensively e.g. SCS and Taiwan. China assertive position in South China Sea, and dissatisfaction China with minimum representation in international institutions, China's political interference to challenge democratic spirit of Taiwan to incorporate it into PRC and threat of China's growing influence over the US liberal international order are some major reasons the US is continuously shaping strategies against China in Indo Pacific region. Since then, the US is introducing its policies to counter challenging China, "Pivot to Asia policy" by Obama Administration and, then, "free and open Indo Pacific policy" by Trump Administration. However, this article has special focus on decoding new policy introduced by current president of the US Joe Biden and implications on China.

The Biden's new free and open Indo Pacific strategy which, released on 22 February 2022, is based on continuity of balancing China through maintaining its dominant naval military presence in Indo-Pacific region and security pacts with its network of alliance along with specific focus on regional connectivity and economic framework to counter balance China. Biden policy is based on bilateral and multilateral engagements as well as alliance makings. In order to develop closer relations with regional states, the US further narrowed down its relations to bilateral with countries: India, Japan, Australia, South Korea, and Taiwan, under the frameworks of Strategic Digital Economy Partnership and Energy Partnership. Multilateral initiative such Strategic

Dialogue of: the US, Australia, and Japan and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) are also popular. In strategic side, special focus on QUAD and its expansion was repeatedly mentioned in the policy. New Strategy in order to incorporate EU and NATO for *naval military presence* in Indo-Pacific region also mentioned AUKUS. (Carla Freeman, Daniel Markey, & Singh, 2022)

However, for two reasons Biden's policy differs from the previous one are: (1) Greater importance to regional partnerships and alliance i.e. more focus on QUAD than AUKUS, (2) reintroduce Trans-Pacific Partnership in newer version of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) under Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. The different thing about this initiative is that it was withdrawal under Trump administration and its new version has rejected the China's request to join it. Meanwhile Biden has ensured this new approach of trade with greater emphasis on high labor and environmental standards.

Despite some major differences, this policy following its predecessors Bush, Obama, and Trump, still focusing on the US's support for India's continues rise. Four military and security based agreements has been signed by the US for Empowering India: General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), Logistic Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), Basic Exchange of and Cooperation Agreements (BECA) and Communication Compatibility and

Security Agreements (CCSA). While, China is balancing the US's policy by developing economic power, establishing regional institutions, strengthening its currency and expanding a network of strategic partnerships in indo-pacific (Khan & Askari, 2023).

Lituratione Review

Geo-economically significant and geopolitically tense, Indo-Pacific region has achieved prominence across the globe by multi-stakeholder. Home of active seaports, fastest growing developing economies, and most populated markets of the world, busiest sea line of communication, highest fish diversity and center of trade is creating cooperative and competitive equations of power between great powers. With the main goal of strengthening the economic potential in the region and make a powerful link between South East and South Asia, Indo pacific policy was first introduced by Prime minister of Japan. All countries which are part of Indo pacific policy are aiming to ensure stability and security of region, by using this trading center to maximize their economic potential in the world. However, Japan, one of the allies of the United State introduced the policy to Counterbalance raising power of China in the region. Even though Indo pacific region possesses multiple opportunities for different stakeholders, it is also facing multi-dimensional uncertainties e.g. climate change, sea level raise, ocean acidification effects of extreme hot and extreme cold weather.(Pant & Mann, 2021).

The United State-China rivalry is not a fated or natural phenomenon. Not because of some natural error of international system, but constructed by domestic constituencies in both countries (Mahmood & Askari, 2025). The ending significance of the pro-cooperation coalitions in each country after the end of cold war and mutually perceived soviet threat of both countries resulted in the divergences of interests. Rivalry is the result of unsustainable accommodation of mutual self-interests by both countries in the initial period of the post-Cold war era. However, the rivalry became quite prominent after introduction of Indo pacific policy by 2010. In short, the reassessment of geostrategic goals by both countries has also contributed to the emergence of conflict. This security conflict is emerging into an ending rivalry and the competition of two great powers for security and power. (Scobell, 2021)

China as a rising power is playing a key role in shifting geopolitical dynamics of world following the shifted focus towards the Asia-pacific region from the Middle East. Due to its strategic significance, Asian-Pacific region has become the center of attention by the great powers, platform for China to pursue global leadership and home to alliances of the United States. The narrow outlook of regional dynamics based of the lens of Thucydides Trap has worried the US administration about China's intentions and resulted in 'Pivot to Asia policy' under the Obama administration as well as strategy of 'a Free and Open Indo-Pacific' by Trump. This lens provides the view that under binary stetting conflict is inevitable. However, under the complex interdependence along the force of globalization, one should not buy the oversimplified assumption of this bipolar narrative. The role of ignored small regional powers can provide a broader understanding of the region and can direct both competitors to find a middle ground for cooperation. (Zafar, 2022)

Both the United States and China are using diplomacy as well as military cooperation to gain the status and position of regional security order maintainer in the Asia Pacific. Ascending position of China in Asian pacific economic and security affairs and following the US's concern to preserve its predominant regional position, leading to hedging security based on predictions of uncertain intentions of each other. These realist-style hedging strategies including the security balancing in form of internal military modernization and external cooperation with cooperation with Asian

pacific states are not only causing potentially coercive policies against each other but also competitive strategic environment in the region. These hedging strategies are arguably driven from security dilemma, economic interdependencies within globalized world and need for multilateral security cooperation. However, these strategies, yet to become, the cause the U.S. and China conflict and regional instability due to the complexities of U.S.-China relations and the regional actor's responses towards their hedging policies. In fact, most regional states are also hedging while simultaneously keeping their good relations with the United States and China following their interdependencies on both. These complex hedging and reciprocal hedging in form of patterns of interaction, if not managed, could turn the region into adversarial competition between allies and security partners of both countries. (Medeiros, 2006)

Trump administration has transformed policy view of the US to see China as a strategic competitor instead of partner. Even though, the view was developed but unambiguous under both by Bush and Obama administrations due to economic engagements and prudent hedging strategies. However, after two decades of the suspicious status of relationship between both countries, Trump administration finally and boldly articulated China to be a major strategic rival instead of a partner of the US. 2017 National Security Strategy clearly declared China as a revisionist force to dislocate the US in the Indo-Pacific through the expansion of its state-driven economic model and to replace the regional order in its favor. The steady growth of China's economic power along with rising influence in the region is closing the parity gap with the US, regionally as well as globally. (Tellis, 2020)

Currently, Indo pacific is the center of attention of the world affairs. Almost half of the world's population is contained by this region. Any type of instability creates worse impacts on global trade as well as security. United State is the leading character of the Indo pacific policy. Specifically, under the administration of Donald Trump the United States increased its military presence in Indo pacific region to confront China. By seeing the situation and continuous raise of China at global level following its using of the indo pacific region as a trading platform, many analysts argued that the US is going to degenerated and in decline. To compensate this fear of insecurity the United State involves more defense and military presence in its policy regarding Indo pacific region. United State make strategic relationship with middle powers like Japan, Australia and India against China.(Abdollahpour, 2021)

Indo pacific is a center of global trade and wealthiest region in all over the world. This term though geographically existed for decades but strategic and politically used in foreign policies of many countries including Japan, India, Australia and the US for the first time in 2010. While, China entirely rejected the term indo-pacific and used the term 'Asia pacific' instead of 'Indo pacific' in its official paper to show its rejection. On the other hand, Trump during his first trip to Asia he repeated used the word Indo pacific almost 17 times and in 2018 United State Navy changed name of their Pacific command to Indo pacific command. United Sate sees China as its strategic competitor. As a realist United State feels the fear of insecurity and security dilemma so it wants to gain more and more power to preserve its security and sovereignty and to directly confront China.(HE & LI, 2020)

Three-dimensional dispute between China and the US is based on economic, political and military initiatives to pursue their national interests in South China Sea. South China Sea as the central political point of Asia Pacific has become the attention world powers as well as international politics. Under the hegemonic stability theory lens, the ongoing situation in the South China Sea is defined as hegemonic struggle between both countries to assertively to secure their national interests in the region. China claims its position of regional hegemon based on its historical edge

of having the region as a part of the ancient Chinese empire. On the other hand, non-regional power the US is providing defense to other claimer states of same territory while keeping in view grand strategic interests. All the following factors are leading towards growing military and political rivalry among superpower the US and an emerging superpower China. (Askari & Tahir, 2020)

With reference to Indo pacific policy, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, commonly called the Quad, can be seen as a new kind of twenty-first-century security alliance. While not denying the fact that China is the elephant in the room, Quad is opening the doors of fighting against nontraditional and traditional security risks in the region. However, complexity of the grouping of Australia, Japan and India with the United State to counter balance the China's raising power is increasing the polarization caused by the US–China rift. Polarization is increasing especially at regional level by India's critical role in Indo pacific policy and Indo pacific region. (JASH, 2021)

The US's uni-polar moments in post-Cold War era is now leading towards multi-polarity with several power centers most prominently China and India. This insight can be seen through the concepts of power transition theory and balance of theory concepts. What is most obvious feature of the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy is co-opting one rising power, India, to help restrain another rising power, China. Instruments of the US's Indo-Pacific strategy includes: presence i.e. the role of the US Indo-Pacific Command (IPCOM), rhetoric i.e. Obama and Trump administrations as well as advocacy of an Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor (IPEC) and diplomacy i.e. US bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral diplomacy with Australia, India, Japan and France that operate in both oceans. (Scott, 2018)

Research Gap

This study needs to know the actual security implications of Indo Pacific policy by the United State on China. Whether the United State is using the region Indo pacific to curtail the Chinese influence in the region or it is actually concerned with the betterment of region? Is the region turning into the battlefield of great powers? Since we have found no study on new free and open indo pacific policy under Biden administration, this is will address that gap. A very few and old studies have incorporated POWER TRANTION THEORY application on this subject. Unique set of theoretical work, methodology and timeframe to analyze China's position in the region after the consecutive introduction of Indo-Pacific Policy of the US's as its national agenda makes this study useful and helpful for a theoretical understanding of the ongoing competitive politics in indo pacific region.

Research question:

1. How has the US free and open Indo Pacific strategy shaped China's foreign especially in terms of security, trade, and diplomacy?
2. What measures has China taken to counter the U.S. free and open Indo-Pacific Strategy?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical lens used during this study is based on the power transition theory. This theory provides the basic understanding of the effects of power based structural changes on the world peace. (Organski, 1958) The power transition theory can be discussed in terms of its' three main components: structure, dynamic, and policy. According to Organski, unlike realist's anarchic structure theory, international system is hierarchical where single most powerful state is on the top and dominates international order. This structure changes in the result of dynamics of a new rising world power which is dissatisfied with the existing international status-quo. In the contrary of

balance of power assumption, the dissatisfied rising power creates power parity with dominant power, leads towards instability and conflict.

This hierarchical system and asymmetric distribution is stable due to the satisfaction of other states with status quo. Satisfied states are not most secure and powerful in system, but believe to be satisfied with existing rules of dominant state than the rules of challenging state. So to deal with the challenging dissatisfied power, the dominant power can win coalition, alliances and partnership with satisfied states by providing them assurance of security. Unlike realism, peace is preserved by the establishment of a preponderant satisfied coalition. (Tammen, 2008) So, the policy component of transition theory is to set coalition with satisfied states of system against the challenging dissatisfied state.

Motives, strategy and consequences of the Indo pacific policy of the US to counter balance the challenging influence of China's in region can be explained by all three components of Power transition theory.

Process of power transition, initially, starts with a rising challenger. China's growth as a rising challenger reflects the power transition in the region against the dominant power of the US.

China's economic and military power as well as assertive position in region is challenging preponderant position of the US. As mentioned in the original conceptual work (Organski, 1958), (Organski A. F., 1968) power is the intersection of both military and economic capabilities.

In the hierarchical system of region, the US is placed on top following its powerful economic, military and diplomatic position. However, satisfied dominant the US is getting threatened for its hegemonic position to be overtaken by a rising dissatisfied China in the region. Therefore, in the reaction the US has introduced counter balancing strategy in form of indo pacific strategy. This policy is employing both internal as well as external balancing. Through building up its own military strength (internal balancing) and through using its network of alliances and partnerships (external balancing) the US is trying to counter balancing rising Chinese influence in indo pacific region. While pursuing coalition with other satisfied regional actors including Australia, India, South Korea and Japan, the US is signing multiple agreements and forming alliance to rebalance its position in the region and to curtail Chinese influence. Dissatisfied rising China is experiencing unstable position in its own region due to encirclement around it by the US's alliances and partnership.

Methodology

As per the nature of study, qualitative research methodology with more focus on its method of document analysis is being employed in this research. Data collection is mostly done through secondary sources such journal articles, research papers and books. For the data analysis, we have used John Scot's model of document analysis.

Discussion

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 its 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, 2020)

For years, West has never suspect 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 non-western 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 playing 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. (James McBride, 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 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 its 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, 2022)

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 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 influence of the U.S. in relation to the influence 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 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 if TTP and in concluding the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement. for Trans-Pacific Partnership

(CPTPP). (Lee, 2022) Similarly, where Vietnam voiced for support the US' presence in the South China Sea, Malaysia prefer being quite 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 makes it's to independently contain China and increase its dependency on its strategic partners. (Munir, 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-WW 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 a 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 simply a 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 actor's competition is still getting intensified, reducing practicality hedging strategy of even in near future. Despite China's economic growth and strategy f 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)

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).

Conclusion

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 USA's government is consecutively introducing policies for indo pacific region to contain Chinese influence since 2012. However, new policy of Biden is 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, and the Philippines. Even Australia is interdependent on China economically. India's neutral position over Russia-Ukraine, despite India-US multifaceted engagement, is also affecting 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 policy of the US seems like presenting a practical example of power transition. Where, the US is continuously and consecutively introducing a policy to contain the influence and power of its challenger, who is not satisfied with its current international order, economic rules, liberal ideology and minimum representation of it in institutions. Since this challenger possess economic capability on the top, the most significant part of new policy is counter balance its economic influences following new frameworks of regional engagement and cooperation e.g. Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Economic power is the source of political and military power of the China. The US as a top leading state is aligning and making coalitions of satisfied states of the system to counter the economic power of China. In reaction, China is supposed to get align with Russia. However, overall situation represents that the conflict if not escalating, will continue to prolong due to continuing balancing from the US.

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