

**THE NEW GREAT POWERS COMPETITION: A STRATEGIC  
ANALYSIS**

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**Abstract**

*Competition and adversarial relations among great powers on international stage is not a new Phenomenon. Every state wants to dominate other and established their hegemony over the rest of the world. It is Political, Economic, Technological and Geo-Strategic capabilities and Cultural Identity of State, which determine the rise or the resurgence of new Competitor in global arena. It is arguing that, Competition among states started, when a particular state Challenges the status-quo. However, the term ‘Great Power Competition’ was mainly associated with the Power struggle between USA and USSR after the end of World War II. The rivalry ended with the disintegration of USSR and the rise of USA as a unilateral world power in 1991. In the recent past, the rise of China in International Politics and the relative decline of US Supremacy instigated ‘New Great Power Competition.’ The researcher uses qualitative techniques to explain the ongoing Power Struggle between China and USA. The authors of this paper analysis the policies of both competitors they adopted to respond each other through the lenses of ‘Offensive Realism’. The aim of the researchers is to highlight that, how China is influencing international Politics through its ‘Belt Road Initiative’ (BRI)?*

**Key Words:** *Supremacy, Competition, Great Power, Political, Economic, Technological, Geo-Strategy, Asia-Pacific, Indo-Pacific, BRI.*

**Introduction: -**

In the context of international relations, Great Powers Competition denotes a state of the adversarial relationships lacking direct armed conflict among geo-strategic players. Competition in the global arena entails the endeavor to gain a relative edge over challengers for geopolitical goals such as security, power, wealth, influence and status. Great Powers also pursue geo-economic ends such as material goods, economic influence and prosperity. In recent years, it seems that China is indomitable to reassert contending values and cultural systems. Great powers compete to influence the established global order all the way through influence over its norms, values, rules, and institutions. Currently, the New Great Powers Competition gives the impression that it is extensively focused on status grievance, technological advantage, economic prosperity and regional influence (Mazarr, 2018). The principal aim of the contemporary struggle pledged by the great powers is.

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influenced by identity-driven ultra-nationalism to retake their fair place in global political affairs

Historically, after a half-century of great powers competition, the Cold War ended with the collapse of USSR, the US arrived in an age that for the first time in centuries didn't feature atrocious great-powers competitions. It was the inception of the American uni-polarity. The entire world became de-facto American sphere of influence. And the rest of the world was compelled to play largely by American rules. As John Kerry once stated that "The era of Monroe Doctrine is over", US claims of its sphere of influence in the western hemisphere. But the reality is that the geopolitics is not been changed. The Spheres of influence not gone away, but they had been collapsed into one, by the devastating fact of US hegemony (Allison, 2020). As the passing 20th century provides a path into the 21st century, 9/11 happened. Islamists toppled the twin towers, symbols of the global capitalism. They then hit a section of the Pentagon, emblem of American military-might (Walts, 2002, p. 348). It was the first dent in American hegemony. Anxieties about the reversal of the great powers rivalries were covered-up by the Islamic insurgents'9/11 attacks. In 2006, US president Obama pronounced in his book "The Audacity of Hope" that the great-power rivalry and threats of the interventionists States no longer exists and endorsed terrorism and religious extremism, climate change, pandemics and proliferation of WMD's are the new century's threats. These are trans-national and hence, could be fixed only with a concert of great powers (Obama, 2006, p. 178).

Though, the shell of great powers conflict was there, hidden in the sand, detected when the surge of terrorism waned (Friedman, 2019). In 2012, ascendance started in full swing, the Chinese President Xi Jinping obtained power and started chasing chauvinistic ambitious agenda both at home and beyond, plus the irredentist claim of disputed territory in the South China Sea (Miracola B. a., 2019, p. 105). And in 2013, he initiated the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to reorder Eurasian super-continent economically promising to China's interest (Xing, 2019, p. 93). The territorial claims and the upward propensity of authoritarian regimes to prolong their reach and grasp beyond their borders are the two clear flashpoints of the evolving new great powers competition (Mazarr, 2018). Therefore, the post-Cold War era began to an end, after Chinese military modernization, economic ascendance, Cabbage Strategy and salami-slicing in the Eastern and South China Seas and the reordering the Eurasian region into its favor. That shifted the international strategic environment into a complex situation. This condition is characterized by the new great power competition between the US and China. The cold war era's two-block realm was replaced by globalization. Currently, the globalization is jeopardized by the re-emergence of a two-bloc world (Rachman, 2019). Currently, China is posing a challenge to the US-sponsored post-World War II global order. US Post-World War II global role contains four essential components, i.e. the global leadership, the

elevation of liberal world order, the advancement of democracy, freedom, and human rights and to prevent the resurgence of regional hegemon on the Eurasian chessboard.

Although, the US global position was mostly stable over the last 70 years, the US worked-hard throughout that period to sustain its global position by retaining balances of power in the most strategically important areas i.e., Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific. US demonstrated its capability to project hard-power abroad and outmatch its contestants to implement strategic order based on the uninterrupted quest of military supremacy. American power has defeated and deterred armed aggression by aspiring regional hegemons. It made the United States able to sustain an immense system of allies and partners that further intensified its reach and grasp on the global (Townshend, 2019, p. 9). But this time the global strategic environment has transformed. The US values and its Global leadership have been questioned. China is the emerging hegemon on Eurasian Chessboard. American military domination and its deterrent edge in the Indo-Pacific are eroding. It has become frequently apparent that the era of uncontested US strategic primacy is over. Its hegemony is fading. The era of uni-polarity is gone. Global politics is entering a new era of strategic competition.

### **Sino-US Geo-Political Chessboard**

As the 21st century unfolds, the global balance of power is altering. The pendulum swings in favor of non-western nations. The center of gravity is shifting from the Euro-Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific, and the six hundred years-long dominance of the Atlantic nations in global politics is subsiding (Brzezinski, 2008, p. 219). Owing to the shift of power from Euro-Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific, the traditional role of the West is on the decline and the Asia-Pacific global role is mounting. Due to this transition, the Asia-Pacific is mounting-up its capabilities to lead the future world and to develop rules and principles that will replace the rules of the Atlantic order. The fate of the 21st century global politics will be decided in the western Pacific Ocean (Bratersky, 2018). The most swiftly developing states located in Asia are littoral to the Indo-pacific region. The five key players i.e. the US, Russia, China, Japan, and India, will shape the 21st-century Indo-Pacific geopolitical landscape. The development of Asia, and by extension the rise of China, will be completed in the next decades, brings significant changes to the international order (Doyle, 2009, p. 142). The East China Sea, The South China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait are all potential flashpoints on the new geo-political chessboard (Yao, 2021).

The Asia-Pacific includes Asia, Indian Ocean, and Western Pacific Ocean, Starts from the seashores of Africa, passing over South and South East Asia to the South China Sea. Currently, the Asia-pacific region is the center of gravity in the geopolitical, economic and maritime strategic Competition, which is determining the 21<sup>st</sup>-century global geopolitical landscape. As The US naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan believed that, "National greatness was associated with the seas, The protection of commerce in peacetime, and the protection of sea lines of communication in

wartime, both remain a basic purpose of states in seeking to exercise military power at sea (Bull, 1976, pp. 1-9). Therefore this time the oceans are playing a crucial part in global politics. And the destiny of the global politics will be decided in waters. Owing to the rising role of the Indian and the Pacific Ocean, it has become the epicenter of geopolitics, because the sea has always been viewed as a repository of resources, most notably seafood, energy resources, industrial raw materials, exploiting off-shore oil and gas, or gathering nodules from the deep sea-bed (Bull, 1976, pp. 1-9). Moreover, the economic development of Asian countries and their trade partnerships playing a critical role in the world's geopolitical and geo-economic landscape.

Currently, all the Great Power and Middle powers are present in the Asia-Pacific geo-political chessboard. The first meeting point of China, India, Russia, UK, and the US—The Great Powers and the geo-strategic players, And Australia, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia— the Middle Powers and the geo-political pivots (Odgaard, 2007, p. 21). Post-WWII, Americans perceived the Pacific Ocean as their “lake”. But the situation has changed. The Pacific is no longer a US naval lake. China emerges as a challenger (Kaplan, 2019). The balance of power in the Western Pacific is going to start to tilt sharply in China's favor (Friedberg, 2011, p. 20). And the reality is that today suave Chinese missiles deny American naval reach to the South China Sea i.e., A2/AD capability backed by hardware (Kotani, 2019). China's first Hypersonic Glide Vehicle DF-17 became operational in 2020 and it has the potential to operate as a very efficient anti-access/area-denial weapon in the Western Pacific. The Chinese arms purchase and military build-up changed the strategic geography of the Western Pacific (Kaplan, 2012, p. 130). China wants to expand its maritime facilities to secure its oil import and trade, notably in the Indian Ocean. Gwadar is an important step to that aim. It is the indicator of geo-political and geo-strategic rationale too. The establishment of PLA Base in Djibouti is another indicator of the involved geopolitical and geostrategic viewpoints of its Maritime Silk Route (Wolf, 2020, p. 66). In nutshell, it is China's naval power expansion.

Therefore there are two competing grand strategies and strategic architectures that prevail on the Asia-pacific geo-political chessboard i.e. The Chinese initiated Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as opposed to the American led US Indo-Pacific Command and by extension with other democracies “Quad” i.e. India, Japan, and Australia. The BRI is primarily a geo-economic initiative. That demands form regional countries to conduct economic cooperation. Whereas the Initiative has some geo-political and geo-strategic dimensions too, The American perception is that China does not respect international law, But the unsaid reason is, that which architecture prevails in the chessboard will have a large and big share in the geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economics in the whole Asia-Pacific rim-land. That's why American policymakers believe that the BRI maintains geopolitical and geo-economical ends (Zongyi, 2019). Hence the Chinese re-organization of the Eurasian

super-continent through BRI in a way worthwhile to Chinese interest and promotion of a new type of globalization movement arise anxieties and uncertainties in American policymakers. To stop that, the American decision-makers propose that the US must exert a multi-literal approach. Notwithstanding, the “Indo-Pacific” strategy is intended to deal with the BRI and principally to contain China.

### **China’s Grand Strategy for Great Powers Competition**

Grand strategy denotes the state’s overall strategy for protecting its national interests by means of all the tools of national power, including political, economic diplomatic, leadership, national cohesion, information and military tools (Gady, 2019). There are different grand strategies that states use in competition against each others, includes military primacy, alliances, collations, the balance of power, economic advantage, spoiler role, and using asymmetric means to harass rivals. The Chinese grand strategic approach to new great powers competition is the Belt and Road initiative. China’s grand strategy is the result of its *real-politik* in the international anarchic system. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping launched China’s enormously-praised Belt and Road Initiative (earlier identified as the One Belt One Road initiative). It is Xi’s super highway to world power and a masterstroke that will safeguard China’s strategic interests for the coming generation. The BRI incorporates both land and maritime routes of transportation. On land, it comprises the landmass of Central Asia into the heart of Europe, and in the sea, it encompassing Southeast Asia incorporates portions of Africa and the Indian Ocean. The BRI can be perceived as the Chinese grand strategy to defend its land and sea lines of communication, energy supplies, and broaden its economic resources, commercial activities and extend its power and influence in the major parts of the Afro-Eurasian Chessboard (Wey, 2019). Over a century ago, strategists started to highlight the importance of the control of the Eurasian “Heartland” and the domination of the ocean. In the 21st century, Mackinder’s and Mahan’s theories became integrated into the context of the Belt and Road initiative. The theatre of this Chinese engagement involves the Eurasian heartland and the Indo-pacific (Rao, 2018). If China controls the both, it will command the world.

### **Silk Road Economic Belt:**

In Sept 2013, on a visited Kazakhstan Xi proposed his grand foreign policy strategy to revitalize the new version of the ancient Silk Road as an economic development initiative, presently called the Silk Road Economic Belt (Xing, 2019, p. 92). It is overland revival or the 2000-year-old Silk Road, and the revitalization of Mackinder’s thoughts. Because Mackinder’s predicted that the main pivot in global power and influence would come from the Eurasian Heartland, and said that the land with its vast natural resources having a huge network of modern railway lines would become strategically more important than the seas (Wey, 2019).

### **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):**

In Oct 2013, President Xi visits Indonesia, where he announced his plans for the maritime Silk Road, currently called the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (Xing, 2019, p. 92). Because the seas have been and remain, despite the continuing revolution in air transportation, the great highway upon which, in peace and war, vast quantities of goods must travel (Bull, 1976). Collectively both the initiatives are known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Chinese leadership has entitled the BRI project as “the project of the century”. It is an ambitious approach designed to accomplish diverse economic connectivity among states adjacent to the routes. The principal aim is to integrate all nations on the Eurasian chessboard. And to connect Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia with the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. The BRI comprises funding institutions, for instance, the Asian infrastructure investment bank, BRICS Development Bank, the Silk Road Fund, and additional infrastructure projects. These institutions fund the infrastructure projects and invest in additional BRI projects (Wolf, 2020, p. 184). It is estimated that the project will cost more than \$1 trillion in More than 70 states throughout the world. the Chinese government issued a document In 2015, entitled “Vision and actions on jointly building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, which formalized five priority areas for the BRI project: first, policy cooperation among like-minded nations, second, connectivity of facilities, third, financial integration, fourth, free trade, and lastly, the interaction of civil societies (Mayer, 2018, p. 3).

The BRI is twofold, i.e. The Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR). The Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) stresses on the Eurasian chessboard and proposes economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and connectivity plans to connect Asia and Europe. Particularly, China is seeking to build a coherent Eurasian organization, in which China will be the core. To achieve this objective, the Silk Road Economic Belt includes various trade corridors, i.e. the Northern Corridor, which will link China and Europe overland via Russia. The Central Corridor, which will link China and Europe through Turkey and Iran over land and sea both. The Southern Corridor, which links Kashgar with Gwadar seaports (CPEC). It is a significant connection linking mainland western China with the Arabian Sea. Besides, there are three more corridors, i.e. the China-Myanmar-Bangladesh corridor, the China-Mongolia-Russia corridor, and China-South East Asia mainland corridor. The BRI is expected to enlarge and connect numerous transportation routes and markets, Rise Eurasian capacity building, improve goods transportation, raw materials, energy resources, money, and passably people, information, ideas, and cultures through huge finances in projects, involve roads, airports, railways, sea-ports, economic zones, oil and gas pipelines, power stations, dams, industrial parks, fiber optic cables, educational centers, healthcare facilities, and assistance for business and finance (Wolf, 2020, p. 7).

**Maritime Silk Road: -**

The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road connects China with Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean on the one hand and from the South China Sea to the South Pacific on the other. It is an indispensable element of Chinese Maritime Diplomacy. Besides, 2013 onwards, the regional security architecture is altering. The situation is worsening due to the shifting balance of power in the East and South China Sea. Nevertheless, the MSR is launched towards Southeast Asia to commence the maritime collaboration within Chinese and Southeast Asian Nations. The idea got shape by focusing on connectivity and infrastructure (Ouyang, 2018, p. 155). Hence, China is shifting the balance of power in the Eastern Hemisphere by its advantageous location. China's influence originating from the Russian Far East to Central Asia and from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, As Napoleon famously predicted that the policies of such states are fixed by their geography (Kaplan, 2012, p. 122). It will essentially discomfort the United States.

### **Digital Silk Road: -**

In addition to the infrastructure, there is another aspect of the Belt and Road initiative, and that is the "Digital Silk Road", which was incorporated in 2015 to BRI. It has both domestic and foreign policy objectives involve creating digital infrastructure, exporting Chinese industrial products, extending technology corporations, and reaching data. However, there are four components of the Digital Silk Road. First, China is advancing digital infrastructure abroad, including 5G, fiber-optics, submarine cables, and data stations. Second, China is emphasizing on advancing innovative technologies critical for military and economic power. That involves artificial intelligence (AI), satellite navigation systems, and quantum computing. Third, the Digital Silk Road advances e-commerce via digital trade zones, which enhance e-commerce worldwide by reducing trans-border trade barriers. Fourth, China is going to build a positive digital climate through digital diplomacy and multilateral order (Cheney, 2019). In short, China and the US are facing off in the fourth industrial revolution i.e. artificial intelligence.

A multi-dimensional development initiative 'BRI' brings sound effects on both the state and society as well as plays a critical role in regional geopolitics. According to experts, China has durable reasons to accomplish vast investments notwithstanding the number of threats that confront the structure and stable functioning of the initiative. Generally, Chinese objectives are determined by geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic interests. Despite the economical and developmental objectives, The BRI is the most advanced approach through which China wants to translate its economic success into strategic and geopolitical spheres on the global stage. These objectives are to maintain national unity and to safeguard its Territorial Integrity, to establish a New World Order as opposed to the current US-led order, and into that context, China wants to create multilateral financial Institutions to re-directed prevailing financial institutions. The BRI and by extension, other Chinese-led financial institutions are a Chinese response to the 'Western-led

Britton Woods system of global financial order, i.e. AIIB, and SRF (Wolf, 2020, p. 58). It establishes an international protocol for financial management and commercial affairs, and China and other developing states will be playing a key role in future policymaking.

China is intensely involved in the Asia-pacific region through the BRI is now thinking, how to react to longstanding US indo-pacific strategy and by extension Quad at a strategic level. The First Chinese response to it, is its “ports expansion” Tangled in the BRI, China established its presence in the ports of Djibouti, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Gwadar in Pakistan, Maldives, and Tanzania (Xing, 2019, p. 156). Because nations exercise sea power in order to deploy strategic weapons systems at sea or to take counter-measures against the strategic weapons systems of their opponents and to maintain their seaborne deterrent forces or to undermine those of their opponents (Bull, 1976). The strategic rationale behind the Chinese ports expansion is twofold. First, China wants to defend the sea lines of communications (SLOC) vital for Chinese economic prosperity. To that end, China is building its naval forces to empower PLAN, capable of performing military as well as humanitarian operations beyond the Chinese coasts and to defend its trade interests, especially in light of growing regional tensions with the United States and India. However, 80% of Chinese oil imports cross the Malacca Strait, it is a checkpoint. Hence, it is a vital corridor for its energy survival. It is critical to defend it against opponents. That’s why States seek to exert military power at sea to acquire or enlarge their share of the sea’s resources or protect it against threats from others as well as a means of transport (Bull, 1976). For instance, Malacca Strait naval blockade would stop the supply of crude oil to China, which would negatively impact the Middle Kingdom's domestic stability. This geopolitical concern highlights Chinese historical vulnerabilities to defend the land and maritime borders from invaders. China also wants to shorten the distance of supply routes. Thus, China is too seeking to establish its presence in the Indian Ocean. And it also highlights another important approach, the so-called dual-use strategy, namely the use of ports for both civilian and military purposes. It is the reversal of the Mahanist idea of commercial ships followed by the warships. Second, China wants to extend its sphere of influence all over the region to accomplish its soft and hard power goals. E.g. China is establishing its military facility in the Republic of Vanuatu, situated in the Pacific Ocean (Miracola S. , 2019, p. 51). This potential Chinese military base would be advantageous for checking Australian activities, especially its involvement in the Quad. Simultaneously, it will advance Beijing’s capabilities to observe US actions in Guam.

The second rejoinder to the US Indo-Pacific strategy is Beijing's strategy to develop a blue-water navy fleet to accomplish operations for offshore protection. Naval warfare was a contest for supremacy, and the objective was to drive the enemy's naval and merchant vessels off the oceans to keep the great highway open for oneself and deny it to one's opponent. The way to accomplish this objective was through the



maintenance of a great navy, and especially a superior fleet of capital ships, able to crush the adversary (Bull, 1976). The Chinese Military Strategy White Paper 2015 considered offshore protection as the frontier defense. I.e., the defense of China's overseas frontiers directly associated with its economic and strategic interests. According to the national defense report, the establishment of a blue-water navy is essential, from the time when it is moving from one maritime juncture to two .i.e., From the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. Furthermore, this shift involves the alleged "1.5 war doctrine" too, which demands the improvement of Chinese naval competencies able to fight two-front wars. For instance, China is trying to find a solution to fight in the South or East China Sea against the United States, while having the risk of an Indian attack on its borders. The creation of a high seas fleet also assists the Chinese military presence at the regional and global stages and helps them to counter the US and India's containment strategies. It will take India into China's strategic calculation. Therefore, the critical aspects of Beijing's evolving Indo-Pacific strategy i.e., ports expansion and the creation of blue-water navy are two effects that will be closely checked by opponents for the impending strategic interaction within the region. Indeed, the ports are considered strategic support points, to defend the maritime routes vital for Beijing's economic growth and to extend the Chinese sphere influence at the global and regional levels. The Chinese influence that might also be the product of the Chinese assertive foreign policy, which tries to deter other states from what Beijing identifies as "Containment Strategies" against it.

### **The US Indo-Pacific Strategy**

The US grand strategy and competing security architectures for the Asia-Pacific are the US Indo-Pacific Command and by extension with other democracies "Quad" i.e. Australia, India, and Japan. Because the US believes that the Asia-Pacific region has become the center of gravity and a principal driver of international politics (Smith J. M., 2018). Asia will decide the fate of global politics. The US will be the Orchestra-Master of that theater. And the stage is being set for a great maritime game in the Indo-Pacific (Clinton, 2011, pp. 56-63). The Indo-Pacific is a geopolitical construct, Proposed by Japanese Prime Minister Abe. Currently, the US, Australia, India, Japan, and other Southeast Asian states maintain their own strategies for the Indo-Pacific region. The arrival of the Indo-Pacific on the scene as a geostrategic construct is a rejoinder to China's rise. The regional states such as Japan, Australia, and India think that the US will be playing the most important role to check China's actions in the region (Zongyi, 2019). It indicates that the Indo-Pacific region has become the center of gravity in the latest great powers competition. To contain China, the US is trying to implement a combined strategy with regional allies to reintegrate the regional order.

The US "pivot to Asia" and "rebalancing to Asia" were principally Indo-Pacific strategies unfolded in 2011, comprised of three pillars: military, economic and

diplomatic initiatives. First, in security terms, The US shifted significant security capacities from the Middle East into the Asia-Pacific region, bringing about the 60 % of the assets of the US Air Force and US Navy for the US-Pacific Command (presently the INDOPACCOM) along with eminent military deployments in the Philippines, Australia, and Guam. And extended comprehensive Security provisions with Japan, Australia, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines, and prolonged security arrangements with other regional states beyond traditional treaty allies to include Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, and India. Second, the economic dimension of the rebalancing strategy focuses on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a free trade agreement, which involves bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation among the US and its regional allies to increase capacity building, access to markets, and development aids. Lastly, to strengthen diplomatic engagements with regional actors, like Singapore, Indonesia, and India and to play an active role in regional organizations like APEC, ASEAN, etc. (Huang, 2016, p. 50). Finally, in January 2017, the trump administration pulls out from the TPP (Solís, 2017).

#### **USA Indo-Pacific Strategy: -**

In contrast to Obama's "Rebalancing to Asia" strategy, The Trump administration begins to modify the strategic logic of the US engagement in the region. That shifted the US focus from the Asia-Pacific toward the Indo-Pacific. At the strategic level, it is an American endeavor to block the rise of China and its geopolitical expansion. The logic of both strategies remains the same: to contain China (Miracola B. a., 2019, p. 33). However, the shift of focus from Asia-pacific towards the Indo-Pacific altered the course and applied methods to attain the objective. The Pentagon engaged in an aspiring stratagem to establish "strategically sound, politically sustainable, and operationally resilient" footprints in the Indo-Pacific region (Medcalf, 2018). However the objectives of Asia-Pacific's was to contain China only by depending on the use of the sea-power and US allies, but the Indo-Pacific strategic framework seeks to contain and encircle China by using sophisticated means, i.e. including new states such as Australia and India, as well as creating infrastructure and development (Miracola S. , 2019, p. 34). Simultaneously, the Indo-Pacific, as it seems, would form a strategic alliance capable to contain the rise of China overland and at sea both.

In June 2018, during a speech to Shangri-La dialogue, the US Defense Secretary James Mattis first time publicly announced the themes of the "Indo-Pacific" strategy, which involves four key dimensions, first, the establishment of maritime forces, second, interoperability, and the reinforcement of military alliances, third, promoting international law, rules, and transparency and fourth, to encourage market-led economic growth. In January 2019, The Defense Department published the "Indo-Pacific Strategy Report" which fully explained the US's "Indo-Pacific" strategy. And they acknowledged that the first year was consumed in articulating the strategy. But now, they will work to implement it, and reduce the gap amid rhetoric

and practice. As the US works to execute its strategy, the policies seemed clearer. Meanwhile, the two key elements are oceans. Surely the continuous strategy is Maritime in nature. That requires collaboration between coastal states and preferences those plans that incorporate their maritime forces. As a result, the security-oriented collaborative body that developed after the announcement of the idea is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) as the US “National Defense Strategy” calls for retooling the military to better counter big powers (Glosserman, 2019, p. 59). To that context, the DOD interpreted it into three fold objectives i.e. Military Preparedness to increase lethality, reinforce Partnerships with like-minded nations, and Encouraging a Networked Region to increase the competitive space (Medcalf, 2020). Today, it is a contest of ideas in the mental maps of Asia being simplified down to the big two i.e. China’s BRI vs. the US Indo-Pacific. In statecraft, mental maps matter, because Relationships among states involve a landscape of the mind. It describes the state natural region and its sphere of influence. The importance of mental maps is as old as map-making itself.

The DOD is operationalizing its vision through the implementation of three main Pillars, i.e., preparedness, partnership and promoting a Networked Region. *Preparedness* means, that to be competent and to contain a right capability to respond the crisis and to compete and deter the near peer competitors. It is the larger part of the military modernization. The US is adopting various masseurs to advance its armed forces to meet the demands of new geostrategic contest. It includes the development of Multi-Domain Task Force, the new Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine, acquisition of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft, procurement of Advanced Medium-Range Air to Air Missiles, acquiring Joint Air Surface Missiles, Investing in Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles, unmanned surface vehicles and Maritime Strike Tactical Tomahawks, to increase its capability in Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD), Anti-Submarine Warfare, and Anti Surface Warfare by obtaining more destroying weapons in the FY 2020-2024 (Cancian, 2019). The US also raised its investments in other contested area, like cyber and space while maintaining advantageous position in under-sea warfare, command and control and missile defense and tactical aircraft to protect the free and open Indo-Pacific and to deter conflicts. The US wants to insure that no challenger can successfully accomplish its geopolitical goals through the use of armed forces.

The second pillar of the indo-pacific strategy is *Partnership*. US involvement in the region is entrenched in its enduring defense alliances through which its strategy depends. It provides a long-lasting, asymmetric strategic influence that no rival or competitor can meet. It expands interoperability with partners and allies to assure that particular defense forces work together efficiently throughout the continuing crisis by security collaboration, information-sharing, and routine military exercises. US is combining means and ends to forge closer links connecting military and economics. Enhancing interoperability includes assuring US military hardware and software

available to partners and allies, military aids, and arms sales of defense tools to allies, and availability of the US military training to more regional military leaders. To that end, the US established strategic partnerships with India, Australia, and Japan, i.e. QUAD (Smith J. M., 2018). Moreover, the US extended its alignment with Taiwan, Singapore, New Zealand, South Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand (Vaughn, 2017). Within Southeast Asia, the US is strengthening its security partnerships with Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam (Saha, 2020), and preferring partnerships with Laos, Cambodia, and Brunei. In the Pacific, the US intensifying its promise to maintain free and open Indo-Pacific, sustain its reach and grasp and strengthen its status as a security provider to the region (Kapur, 2019). Attempting to keep the Indo-Pacific free and open made the US closer to its allies, involves Canada, France, and the United Kingdom (Saha, 2020), all keeping their own connections and interests, plus their own Indo-Pacific strategies.

Finally, the DOD is taking steps to strengthen and evolve the US alliances and partnerships into networked security architecture to collectively uphold the international rule base order. "Promoting a Networked Region" is the last pillar of the US Indo-Pacific Strategy. Due to The ever-changing strategic environment, The US has altered employed methods and the course of bilateral engagements to trilateral and multilateral measures and strengthening intra-Asian security ties. Form the US trilateral partnership with Australia, Japan and the Republic Of Korea to work with Thailand, and co-organized the ASEAN-US maritime exercise. The US, Japan, and India too have a muscular trilateral partnership. The US is building an interconnected Indo-Pacific crucial to regional peace and security (Schriver, 2019). The US too focuses on building partners maritime capacities and authorizes the provision of training, equipment's supplies, and small scale construction through the Maritime Capacity Initiative to the US partners, such as the Philippine, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. The US want to improve peace and security in the region and deepen interoperability by military training, exercises, information sharing, and building capacities (Tatsumi, 2015, p. 37). ASEAN also plays a key role and ASEAN centrality is the key to the future Asia's strategic stability. It is important, that ASEAN speaks with one voice to promote a rule base order and international law norms.

### **The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the Concert of Democracies**

The QUAD or so-called 'Diamond Alliance' comprising the US, Japan, India, and Australia, intended to contain China and to prevent the emergence of a uni-polar Asia. China looks it as a step towards an Asian NATO and a part of 'Trump's New Cold War' (Huang 2018). The idea first proposed by Japanese Prime Minister Abe in 2006, Chinese oppositions to QUAD, removed it from the global agenda (Davies and Lang 2015). In 2008, as the Australian Government felt, that the QUAD is intended to contain China, they decided not to participate. However, in 2012, Prime Minister Abe reinitiated the debate and yet again in 2015, Indian Prime Minister Modi acknowledged the idea (Davies and Lang 2015). In late 2017, during a speech in

Washington, DC, former US secretary of state Rex Tillerson make an effort to revive the QUAD and his opinion got backing of the current Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison. Finally, In November 2017, the Quad was reborn, a “coalition of deterrence” against China. Significant geopolitical changes in the Asia-Pacific commanded the restoration of the Quad. It is a shared grand strategy to cope with muscular China and to put checks on the Chinese exercise of power by establishing counter-balancing geostrategic coalitions around its periphery. China’s growing maritime strategy and irredentist territorial claims is the key driver of a strengthening alliance between the Quad members (Shearer, 2018).

The QUAD considered as an alliance of regional ‘maritime democracies’ (Brewster 2010: 6) intended to uphold the prevailing world order based on global values and principles of international law’ (Basu 2018). The QUAD has also been described as ‘three plus one i.e., US, Japan, Australia plus India. Meanwhile the Japan and Australia have alliances with the US, whereas India emerged on the scene to offer a ‘strategic handshake’ (Carter 2016). Because, China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) offers unprecedented anxieties to each member of the Quad i.e. India worries intrusion in its sphere of interest and influence as well as feels encircled by China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Smith, 2018, p. 158). Japan too is cautious about China’s capability to influence the energy supply chains on which East Asia depends. Australia also is concerned that China’s project aid could render weak states more unsafe to oppression. The US too is exploring a method to prevent Chinese power and influence, especially in the vacuum left by US withdrawal from the TPP. The Trump administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy is an orientation of Abe’s doctrine on the emerging global order, with Asia is epicenter, and wisecrack to China’s intention to reorder the maritime heartland of Asia.

Meanwhile, in November 2017, an official meeting of the Quad incorporated key issues like freedom of navigation, maritime security, and respect for international law. Notwithstanding these challenges, the interests of the Quad nations are converging. It underlies structural dynamics, which provides a strong base for member states to build an agenda for regional cooperation (Shearer, 2018, p. 2). The Indo-Pacific is truly coded for geopolitical purposes. US gambits to impede China, India’s play for primacy, Japan intends to retrieve influence, Australia’s alliance-building, Europe’s excuse to gatecrash the Asian century. Certainly, China perceives uncertainty and discomfort in the *term*. It perceives Indo-Pacific as a rationale for a strategy to contain its power by a ‘quadrilateral’ alliance of democracies (Medcalf, 2020). The QUAD Opponents argued that it is a flawed idea, because it is a non-regional and an exclusive arrangement. More precisely, it will upsurge perceptions in Chinese leadership that the US is leading a containment effort, that leads to trust deficit, and it will fortify the influence of warmongers in the PLA, and leading to an increase in Chinese defense expenditure and the new arms race. It well not reverses

the Chinese territorial irredentism and the construction of artificial islands in South China Sea (Raymond 2017).

### **Build Back Better World (B3W)**

Xi Jinping's super highway to world power, The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is about to face its biggest challenge yet. After realizing that, there can't be an individual project, the G7 member nations have joined forces to counter the BRI. They have launched the Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative; a global infrastructure plan and the centerpiece of G7 fight back (Ghiretti, 2021). According to the White House, the B3W will collectively invest up to \$40 trillion for infrastructure development in low and middle income states from Latin America and Carrabin's to Africa and the Indo-Pacific (White House, 2021). The plan will be global in scope and will have different orientations. But the collective forces will be on mobilizing the capital in four key areas, such as climate change, health security, digital technology and gender equality. The plan also promises to uphold the labor rights, transparency and anti-corruption policies (White House, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

The Trump administration initiated a new great power competition against China. Currently China is America's primary rival in terms of geo-political, geo-economic and geo-strategy. The US believes that China did not converge to the American led world order, and China is more assertive about its own political model. On the other hand, China's increasing its ability to challenge American hegemony. China has significantly narrowed its economic and technological gaps with the US and trying to alter the global balance of power to its favor. For that matter, the two competing security architecture are emerging on the Asia-Pacific geo-political chessboard. One is led by the US and another by China. The western pacific is the flashpoint between the two. Both the states are recalibrating their strategies and building-up their militaries to fight and win the future wars. This new great power competition initiated intense security competitions among them, and both the US and China is increased their military expenditure manifold. It has been greatly impacted the military expenses and innovation's. The new Biden administration will probably change its way of dealing with China, but he will continue to see China as a geopolitical and geo-strategic rival.

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