



RESEARCH PAPER

The Implications of Expanding China-US Political and Strategic Influence in the Asia Pacific

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the key elements shaping China-US expanding political and strategic influence in the Asia Pacific region and to understand the role and contributions of China in Asia Pacific. It is in the human nature and most anticipated human instinct to desire for accumulating, retaining and demonstrating power. Similar is the history of the nations and empires and now the states that there exists an environment of competition and struggle for power in the international arena. It is in the nature of the superpowers to resist any power that challenges its might. US and China, the two mighty major powers are engaged in a similar balance of power. Most of the theatre of their competition has been the Asia Pacific, where China enjoys significant influence and demonstrates considerable power. In order to understand the interests of China and US in the Asia Pacific and the impact of the given interests on the other countries as well as on the institutions, the given research is designed in a descriptive and explorative manner focusing specially on the deductive method of reasoning. The assessment of the United States long-term strategic rivalry and competition with China involves tactics of making alliances with its partners alongside their resources, strength, and capabilities to counter the rise of China. The AUKUS, a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, provides nuclear-powered submarines to Australia and collaboration in multiple military capabilities which includes quantum technologies, information sharing, artificial intelligence, innovation electric warfare domain, and hypersonic and counter hypersonic.

KEYWORDS AUKUS, Nuclear-Powered Submarines, The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue QUAD

Introduction

Without any modicum of doubt, the great power rivalry between China and US, for many reasons, has implications beyond imagination where the weaker states are neither totally helpless nor completely without leverage. Countries of the Asia Pacific, starting from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, have to face the direct and indirect consequences of the US-China strategic competition where they have a challenging balancing act to play. These states are confronted with multiple options to manage the opportunities and risks. (Nawab, et. al 2021; Cheung, 2013).

Besides that, China-US strategic rivalry and new divides motivates China to push back US away from the region. Similarly, the US promotes a decoupling strategy that aspires to isolate China (Muzaffar, etl. 2018; Lieberthal, 2012). There is no denying the veracity that even the allies of the given countries in other regions beyond the Asia Pacific would face the consequences of the fierce strategic rivalry. Those who allied with the US are now worried as the rise and expansion of China has forced them to regime change and restructure alliances (Elms, 2016). The success of the United States depends upon the effectiveness of its partnership and alliances with in the given region in particular. To enable cooperation between allies, the United States would need to recognize the rapidly changing power dynamics of allies and partners towards the United States and China. Consequently, US can enhance its capability to work with allies to promote the advantages in the long-term competition with China.

Literature Review

The literature review highlights some of the important studies of the past to understand the research gap in the existing academic discourse. Based upon the research gap, the study would focus to fill in that gap and analyze new perspectives of this research area.

Analyzing the competition between China and the US, the Asia Pacific region revolves around many issues ranging from geo-political to geo-strategic. There is no denying the fact that US Asia policy poses challenges to China's supremacy in Asia. These challenges are discussed by Mohammad Tehseen (2017), who elaborates that China has adopted a versatile economic approach to counter exacerbation of maritime disputes, terrorism and expanding US influence in Asia. To counter China's rise, the former Obama administration decided to initiate a policy of "Pivot to Asia". This policy became a central component of US foreign policy aimed at countering growing Chinese influence in the region (Shah et. al., 2020).

The meteoric rise of China gives impetus to new geo-political alignments and power asymmetries. Under such scenario, peace can be promoted through a multilateral posture with a multipolar world order. (Yaseen et. al., 2023). Despite several indicators of growing Sino-US competition, China's economic interdependence with United States is important to understand. The US economic stakes with China are certainly much higher than the other powers and on number of global and economic issues, including climate change, nuclear proliferation and terrorism, China often stands opposite to US stance. Thus, from the lens of Mohan Malik (2012), the Asia Pacific region is too big for any country to dominate without repercussions at the global and regional level.

Derek McDougall (2016), focus on the involvement of India, Australia and Russia in the Asia Pacific region where India is not of central focus as such but indirectly it has been influenced by the political interactions between different core concerned states. From the perspective of Australia and Russia, both states are at the edge of the region with their respective economic conditioned. Felix Heiduk demonstrates the challenges posed on military and economic perspectives by Sino-US strategic competition. The author also illustrates the practices through which states can address these challenges by smaller states in the region.

To monitor South China Sea in Asia Pacific, the US established a monitoring strategy supported by multilateral coalition and navigation program. The aim of the navigation program is to preserve strategic interests by US navy in the artificial islands of South China Sea. This stance by US has been warned by the Chinese army with a cautious strategy driven by maritime capabilities. The strategic interstation between US and China articulated by Iraj Roudgar (2017), underpins major economic and political competition in Asia Pacific. The grand strategy of China focuses on military modernization with an emphasis on information and maritime security.

Material and Methods

This research has employed the qualitative method using secondary data. Analytical literature (books and journal articles) for descriptive and historical research methods have been used to provide fresh information on the debate of Sino-US Strategic Competition in Asia Pacific, which is for sure in transition. This research uses policy analysis as useful tool in understanding the dynamics of Sino-US strategic competition and its influence of the Asia Pacific region.

US-China rivalry; the so-called G-2 and its implications

US long term competition with China encompasses many interrelated dimensions. The primary theater for this competition is the control over the Indo-Pacific region stretching from the United States west coast to India. Southeast Asia is one of the most critical regions for their competition (Bitzinger & Raska, 2015). Southeast Asia borders China and connects the Indian Ocean, East China, and the South China Sea. After East Asia and South Asia, the third most populous region in the world is Southeast Asia (Layne, 2018).

If these regions are combined as a whole, then that makes the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) the world's fifth-largest economy. In addition, Southeast Asia's political, cultural, economic, and social diversity challenges the US to have allies and partners despite having several potential differences (Zhao, 2008).

The long-term strategic competition between the US and China is complex and has many interrelated domains. In five main areas, the United States is challenging China. According to one study: control over the economy and trade, control of the Indo-Pacific rimland, dominance in technology over China, alternative technical standards quest of China, and Chinese advancement in the military (Muzaffar, et. al 2021). Bitzinger & Raska, 2015).

According to another study, some significant factors that reinforces the competition between the US and China are status, the pursuit of power and security, prestige, standing, economic prosperity and power, access and control over resources, sovereign or territorial claims, ideology, and value; and to have the capability of shaping the international order through norms, rules, and institutions (Raska, 2019). The competition between China and the US has a spectrum of issues to diverge on, similar to know that how military conflicts have several battlegrounds, so it will be more beneficial to construct a competition into other dimensions, recognizing the fact that in each area, there are different actors involved (Zhao, 2008).

There are three broad ways to divide the rivalry between China and the US: the functional versus geographic rivalry, global and regional rivalry, and the rivalry during peacetime, crisis, or conflict time:

- Functional versus geographic rivalry: Besides isolating rivalry by geography, China and US rivalry could also involve military-technical rivalry on various weapon systems and rivalry within particular zones, such as cyber, space, and nuclear (Evans, 2016).
- Global and regional rivalry: Extra factors such as international agreements and global institutions may affect the global rivalry. The regional and global rivalry between China and the USA may have different values and ideologies, including different ways, whether that would be economic, diplomatic, or military means to achieve more regional or international power or leadership (Qi, 2019).
- Meanwhile, some aspects of rivalry, such as technological rivalry, may be assessed from a bilateral or global perspective. The US-China rivalry varies by region according to the history, countries involved, and dynamics. The different areas have important factors for China and the United States, and avenues exist for Chinese and US influence (Qi, 2019).
- Rivalry during peacetime, crisis, or conflict time: The bilateral relations of both countries may also vary depending on the intensity of China-US rivalry. The rivalry and competition could become less intense while China and the United States are in normal relations compared to when they are locked in a conflict or crisis (Emmers, 2001).

US-China rivalry over influencing other partners

To align with their respective interests, the US and China utilize the different available ways of influence to shape their partner's behaviors. The allied partners weigh the benefits of the partnership offered by China and the United States and the costs of going against their desires.

However, the United States and China both have to consider what they can offer better opportunities to their allies so that they can counter or deter potential threats from each other. In the Indo-Pacific, the likely Chinese or US partners may have some wishes to align with either China or the United States across the board. Many countries faced existential security or acute external threats during the Cold War, at the time when Washington had sought its vision of world divided between democratic and authoritarian ones. They needed alignment with China, the US, and the Soviet Union to protect their country, but now, countries do not face hostile external and internal environments. As a result, this situation gives the partners the freedom to choose when and how they choose one side, China or the United States. If US aims to seek its role as a global hegemon, it should be judicious in searching for proper strategies to counter China's influence in the Asia Pacific. During the campaign trail of US, President Joe Biden promised to revive the liberal international order in his foreign policy. In this direction, Biden has taken steps to bring the US back into the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, Biden has restored the membership of US in the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Human Rights Council (Zhu, 2006).

Conversely, Biden has also made some critical decisions to establish closer relations with European and Asian allies. On its terms, the US wants to wage an inevitable hegemonic struggle with China (Lee & Pempel, 2012). Thus, the US seeks to counter China's rise before it becomes a great challenge and triggers a hot/cold conflict. Consequently, the US has come to recognize that key to prosperity depends upon the willingness to pursue short- and long-term goals in security politics and trade. The QUAD and AUKUS are the visible signs of turning these goals into a more serious platform.

Quest for military power and domination

AUKUS

AUKUS is the pact of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This pact was made official on 15th September 2021. Under this pact, the US and the UK will provide nuclear-powered submarines to Australia (Madzrib, 2023) alongside other avenues of cooperation. In addition, the pacts include cooperation on artificial intelligence, advanced cyber, autonomy, quantum technologies, hypersonic and counter-hypersonic, innovative electronic warfare, and information sharing. The focus of the pact will also be on military capabilities, splitting it from the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance that includes Canada and New Zealand.

This deal was subjected to praise as well as disapproval at the same time. However, China has vocal contempt regarding this deal and has accused the members of AUKUS of having the mentality of a cold war political policy. The deal is widely seen as a response to China's increasing status and influence in the region towards being an emerging superpower. France was one of the important allies of the AUKUS countries. It soon recalled its ambassadors from the US and Australia as the French foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian called this pact a "stab in the back," which was followed by the cancellation of the French-Australian submarine deal worth €56 billion (A\$90 billion) without giving any prior notification. Furthermore, this pact was criticized for not giving any room to New Zealand as it is an essential strategic partner in the Pacific region (Sumadinata, 2022).

AUKUS and China

According to the Foreign Affairs Department spokesperson Zho Lijian, the cooperation between the US, UK, and Australia over nuclear submarines pose severe threats to the peace and stability of the Pacific region and also intensifies the arms race by undermining the international nonproliferation efforts. He believed that the Cold War zero-sum mentality should be set aside. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, said, "China is fully opposed to the malicious exploitation of loopholes created by AUKUS members in the Nuclear nonproliferation treaty and also on the safeguards

mechanism of (IAEA) International Atomic Energy Agency (Cheng, 2022). He warned that if Australia did not avoid the provocation. China would undoubtedly observe with stern actions and also concluded that the Australian troops in the South China Sea would be the first to lose their lives.

The former interpreter of Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Communist Party official, Victor Gao, considered this move of Australia to be a violation of international law and also warned Australia to stop its moves towards nuclear-powered submarines or be prepared to become a target of Chinese nuclear weapons in the future nuclear war.

Lu Shaye, the PRC ambassador to France, urged for a new alliance to carry out their obligations over nuclear nonproliferation. He suggested to end the arms race in the Asia-Pacific region. He also encouraged France to boost cooperation with the states to create jobs, not submarine arms (Julienne, 2021).

Undoubtedly, the defense and intelligence ties with the UK and Australia have been enhanced after the agreement of AUKUS amid several existing multilateral security arrangements still augmenting. Moreover, the Biden administration seeks to address the questions regarding America's commitment and staying power in the Indo-Pacific region from the regional partners to strengthen the critical alliances of the US in the area through the agreement of AUKUS. In 1951, the United States and Australia were treaty allies, and the United States and the UK were members of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance (Swanström & Panda, 2021).

Meanwhile, these countries are also part of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing group 1949. The United States with Japan, Australia and India, joined in 2007 and again in 2017 to ally with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).

The focus of AUKUS is mainly on enhancing and developing Australia's military capabilities and how to pave the way for building a nuclear-powered submarine. Initially, Australia plans to establish a new base of submarines on its east coast, and for that purpose, the country requires approximately eight such submarines in Adelaide (Clarke & Sussex, 2022). Currently, six countries can operate nuclear-powered submarines, and Australia and the UK are the only countries that share nuclear propulsion technology with the United States. Nuclear-powered submarines have more limitations than conventional submarines and can stay submerged for months. These steps taken by Australia are part of a more comprehensive and broader effort to boost its national security capabilities (Tertrais, 2021).

The government of Australia has deep concerns about China's actions, including the trade restrictions by China in response to Australian calls over the issues of COVID-19 origins. In response, the Australian government has embarked on enhancing its military budget and defense capabilities and planning to boost its military size. According to Prime Minister Scott Morrison, the "arc of autocracy" has started to challenge the world order, and the recent geopolitical situation was compared with the 1930s' strategic uncertainty.

The Regional reactions to AUKUS

There has been mixed reaction about AUKUS as, in 2022, Japan signed a Reciprocal Access Agreement with Australia. Japan welcomed the AUKUS with open arms to strengthen its regional engagement. The former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, also welcomed the presence of the UK and United States in the region.

On the other hand, France described Australia's decision to scrap the previously signed A\$90 billion and instead acquire the UK's and US nuclear-propelled submarine technology, which France termed a stab in the back. The officials of the PRC said that the AUKUS agreement undermines the stability and peace of the region and further intensifies the arms race.

The growing arms race and power projection in the Asia-Pacific region have also increased Indonesia's concerns. According to some analysts, India welcomes AUKUS to deter China, whereas other countries think the AUKUS will provide benefits or may hurt India's interests (Tertrais, 2021).

QUAD

The Quad, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, is a group that contains four countries: The United States, India, Australia, and Japan. The Maritime cooperation among these countries began after the tsunami of 2004 in the Indian Ocean, and today, this group of democracies and vibrant economies has become one of the finest groups that work on a broader agenda, including economy, security, and health issues in the region (Heginbotham, 2021).

The diplomacy of Quad over the years has waxed and waned. It is not a formal alliance. Instead, it is a loose grouping; as seen in the initial stages of this group, Japan thoroughly emphasized the democratic identity of Quad members, whereas India emphasized its functional cooperation. On the other hand, the Australian leaders have the impression to create a formal alliance (Lee & Pempel, 2012).

At the beginning of 2021, the Quad members have become more active and aligned to share their concerns regarding the assertive behavior of China that has been increasing in the region and are willing to create a constructive cooperation agenda. In November 2020, the navies of all these countries jointly participated in the first-ever exercise in a decade.

Moreover, US President Joe Biden assembled a virtual Quad meeting that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga attended. The working groups on COVID-19, vaccines, technological innovations, climate change, and supply-chain resilience were formed in this meeting.

The US interests in the Asia Pacific

The interest of the US in the Asia Pacific is reflected through its strong presence in the shape of various alliances like Quad and AUKUS. In Quad, India and the US are strategic partners, and Australia and Japan are the treaty allies of the United States. Before, the Donald Trump administration worked closely with Quad members, and now President Biden is working on expanding Quad's agenda (D'AMBROGIO, 2021).

The Indo-Pacific region is essential for US maritime interests as it contains two oceans and several continents. In 2019, the USA passed \$1.9 trillion in trade through this region. According to a UN report, it is expected to pass through almost 42 percent of the world's exports and 38 percent of imports.

The growing willingness of China to challenge the status quo in the region has created problems for Washington and Beijing and also created other challenges for the democratic values of Quad members over the past year. Meanwhile, China's crackdown on Hong Kong did not slow down a little during the COVID-19 era and faced criticism from other nations.

In addition, the Japanese former Prime Minister strongly believed in the power of Quad to ensure a "free and open Indo-Pacific" region. Japan heavily depends on open sea lanes for its trade with the world. The militaries of the US and Japan are already working closely across the region, and Japan's self-defense forces have gradually built relationships with their Indian and Australian counterparts. Similarly, Japan plays a vital role through its support and investment in trade, manufacturing, and infrastructure development in the region.

The Quad members and Japan share concerns regarding the role of China in the region and the challenge of Beijing to the rule of law. The declaration of Beijing's sovereignty in the South China Sea, the provocations of China towards the Islands of Japan, China's claim in the East China Sea, and the Chinese military buildup in the region have created more problems and concerns for Tokyo. Therefore, building strategic consultations with other members of Quad has become vital for Tokyo to contain China's ambitions in the region (Panda, 2019).

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue among the US, India, Japan, and Australia, after a break of several years, has finally been revived recently. With time, it is gaining significant importance as the coordinated effort of democracies to respond to the growing assertiveness of the authoritarian role of China in the Indo-Pacific region.

The senior foreign ministry officials of these QUAD members, in November 2017, met at the summit of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) in Manila. During this meeting, the critical points regarding the Indo-Pacific region were discussed to make it an open and unrestricted market by taking action against terrorism and promoting the rules-based system jointly. Precisely, the monthly meetings convened with an incrementally widening scope.

Recently, US President Joe Biden visited Asia to strengthen the relationships with the Quad members in the region. Moreover, the Quad members represent the diplomatic mechanism of the 21st century that has been growing to become an Asian NATO (Panda, 2018).

The US president and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi to Fiji met to bring the states of the Pacific Island together and make a coalition, but unfortunately, that went in vain. China has been attempting to expand its diplomatic reach in the region for some time. Precisely, the Chinese military presence in the Solomon Islands might open a new opportunity for making a security deal (Sarkar, 2020). These efforts illustrate and reshape a new global order for the future. The security pacts between some states may constitute powerful security alliances focusing on deterring the great powers in the region.

The Quad initiated cooperation during times of disasters, but now it has evolved to become more about security. The process at various points has stuttered. However, it returned to relevance, especially as a powerful unit to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Furthermore, to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), this country has started to build its influence across Africa and Eurasia by using international investment (Paik & Park, 2021).

Failing Asia Pivot policy and containment policy

The 21st century is often regarded as the century of China or the Chinese century, similar to the 20th century, and was synonymous with the rise of the USA. Built and Road Initiative has threatened the post-war hegemony of the USA not only in Asia but in the entire Middle Earth.

China has also come into open confrontation and conflict with the US and the West by pioneering the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and New Development Bank to counter the World Bank and IMF. The Made in China 2025 vision has further intimidated US firms worldwide with the fear of being overshadowed by the cheap product markets of the former (Sarkar, 2020).

This vision has openly targeted the manufacturing sector of US firms. Though there have been debates over the effectiveness and practicality of the Chinese visions and programs, its larger working population promotes its global status as a rising hub of economic power. Some US experts also hint at the swiftly aging population of China as non-

lethal to the US status as the economic hub of the world as the substantially debt-driven economy can face imbalance due to debt default risks with an imminent financial crisis of substantial nature.

China overtook the US in purchasing power parity in 2013, and with this pace of growth and progress, it is likely to overtake it on a foreign exchange rate basis in 2028. Nevertheless, the US economic pundits have also declared that the Chinese economy has already reached its zenith, and the peak is likely to bounce downward with stagnation and decline.

Thus, a cold war-like situation has persisted between the US and China for decades since China began to register itself as a new potential threat to the US after the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. The Asian giant has since then seen various attempts at the behest of the US for containment, and as a result, China has also come forward with some initiatives of its own. SCO, BRICS, and RCEP are the countervailing blocs that institutionally have weakened the US influence.

China's doctrine of maintaining non-hostile behavior in world politics

China has adopted an independent foreign policy to establish peace. The primary objectives of the policy are to safeguard the national independence and the sovereignty of the state to create a favorable international environment for reforms, open up modernization efforts, and promote joint development by maintaining world peace too (Cheung, 2013).

Furthermore, the Chinese doctrine circulates the principles of international affairs that determine the position and policies according to the merits of every case, and neither it will never yield to any pressure from any significant power, nor will it enter into any alliance or bloc with a significant power (Ikenberry, & Lim 2017). In addition, China has no intention to participate in any arms race or seek any interest to expand its military expansion. On the other hand, China completely opposes power politics, hegemonism, expansion, and aggression in any form. It will never promote any violation of any territorial integrity by another country and also opposes the interference of any country in the eternal affairs of any country under religious or ethnic pretexts or any human rights issues.

China hopes to maintain and support friendly ties with all countries based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The relations with other countries will never rely on social systems or ideologies. China's primary foreign policy is promoting and enhancing friendly relationships with neighboring countries. It has worked diligently for the peace and stability of the region and also to promote the economic cooperation of the region (Zhu, 2006). Immediate negotiations and consultations should resolve the dispute. Meanwhile, disputes should never be allowed to disturb the development of state relations (Xinbo, 2016).

The unity and cooperation with developing countries should be enhanced, and it has always been the cornerstone of China's foreign policy. Moreover, China has an open policy to developed and developing countries and has extensive international cooperation based on mutual benefit and equality to promote joint development.

Being a permanent member of the UN and one of the world's largest developing countries, China has always stood side by side to make efforts for world peace and development and establish a new fair and international political and economic order based on stability and peace.

Failing US policy of garrison states; China's countervailing naval expansion and its impact

China is investing more in developing and expanding its Navy, as seen by increased budgets and improved shipbuilding at domestic levels. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is making outstanding progress in modernizing its naval capabilities. Furthermore, it has included some of the seven modern destroyers and frigates, five submarines, two of which are nuclear powered, and other enhancements such as three types of maritime interdiction aircraft, amphibious warfare ships, and fast missile boats. The General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Hu Jintao, and the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) have proclaimed to modernize military diplomacy and to achieve new historic missions based on PLAN (Milhiet, 2017).

Additionally, China's ambition is to expand and modernize the capabilities and scale of its Navy, which has never been seen in any country before. China has been increasing the size of one of its most essential shipyards. The shipyard Jiangnan on the river Yangtze in Shanghai is one of the most essential shipyards for the Navy (PLAN).

It is building destroyers, cruisers, aircraft carriers, and submarines. Meanwhile, it is over 7.3 square kilometers large, and a new yard associated with the Hudong-Zhonghua yard will have an area of around 50% (Bitzinger & Raska, 2015). The Chinese Navy has been growing incredibly, as seen by the expansions of several shipyards in China. The Jiangnan shipyard has been expanding massively recently. Moreover, to develop many submarines, a new site was set up near Wuhan (Blackwell & Tellis, 2015).

Navigating US-China power management in Asia Pacific

Since the Cold War ended, several vital factors have continuously troubled Sino-US power management in the Asia-Pacific region. Due to their primary differences in worldviews, capabilities, and historical experiences, China and the US have opposite conceptions and perceptions regarding power management in the Asia-Pacific region, which has turned them into different and various security practices. China and the US have vested diverged and converged interests in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States wants to contemplate China as a latent adversary, and this divergence will be more conspicuous.

However, both sides will continue their security interests in the Asia-Pacific region. China and the United States have to adapt according to this region's changing economic, political, and security landscape. To enable the duration of peaceful coexistence, both China and the US will have to make several shifts in their recent security policies.

According to one popular perception in the US about China's long-term policy objectives in the Asia-Pacific region, Beijing desires to be the regional power and would like to restore the Chinese hegemony order in this part of the world.

However, this perception needs to be revised. Firstly, Beijing believes in the multi-polarization trend, does not believe in unionization at regional and global levels, and hopes for continued economic development and the growing process of intra-regional political consultation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Secondly, though China expects to increase its influence in the region, it understands the limits of its hard power and also soft power, so China can never be able to achieve any comparable position according to its role in the past or to the role of the US in the region at present.

US Trade War with China

According to the US narrative, China is not rising, but it has already risen, so it means what was the behavior of the US during the process of China's rise. The United States failed to prevent or slow down the process of China's rise or made no deliberate efforts. It has instead facilitated the same.

It is unnatural in world politics to give space and allow the other rising powers to become more economically powerful and seek military power to safeguard their rising economic empire. However, after becoming economically more robust, the great powers jump into the fence of rivalry for any conflict. The Biden administration continued what Donald Trump had started, so he began a trade war against China and opened up the engagement policy to replace it with the realist approach of containing China. Through WTO membership, the previous administration has facilitated China by giving access to its domestic market and the MFN status conferred to the country.

A US diplomat and historian, George Kennan, in 1945 advised the policymakers of the US about their World War II partner and ally, the Soviet Union, and what they had to do with the Soviet Union. George Kennan had served in the US embassy in Moscow and wrote a letter sent to the US. In that letter, he questioned the nature of Soviet politics. The perception was that the US treated the Soviets as rivals, not allies and prepared for their future expansionist attitude (Lieberthal & Jisi, 2012). Hence, he provided the political insight for the US to initiate the vigilant containment of the Soviet Union. However, why was China not contained when the US could contain the Soviet Union?

According to John Joseph Mearsheimer, the US should never have engaged with China. Instead, it should have given China space and opportunity to rise. He also considers that we are gifted the flexibility and trouble caused abroad by China.

Conclusion

In summary, the Chinese economy is growing more rapidly in the region than in other countries. In the Indo-Pacific, potential partners of China or the US intend to align with either of the states across the board. The United States has changed its focus towards the Asia-Pacific region, which has become very important due to various flashpoints. The balance of power in the region is shifting towards China's favor.

Therefore, the core objective of QUAD and AUKUS was to counter China by all means, but with the advent of the coronavirus pandemic, the objectives underwent subsequent changes. The agenda now is about more than just China, as the leaders of the Quad members need a more proactive approach to solving the economic challenges and humanitarian problems that COVID-19 causes. On the other side, regardless of the challenges posed by COVID-19, China has been building its influence steadily in the Asia-Pacific region and global economy. The steady growth rate has allowed China to ascend to the global markets and dominate trade.

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