

**US-China Strategic Competition in Indo-Pacific: Challenges for
ASEAN**

By

Sajid Nawaz Khan

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER IN PHILOSOPHY

In International Relation

To

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE



National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad

January 2024

Sajid Nawaz Khan (2024)



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

THESIS/DISSERTATION AND DEFENCE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Faculty of Social Sciences for acceptance.

Thesis/ Dissertation Title: **US-China Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific: Challenges for ASEAN**

Submitted by: Sajid Nawaz Khan

Registration #: 19 MPhil/IR/S21

Master of Philosophy

International Relations

Prof.Dr. Tatheer Zahra Sherazi

Research Supervisor

Signature of Supervisor

Dr. Sarwat Rauf

HOD (IR)

Signature of HOD (IR)

Prof.Dr.Muhammad Riaz Shad

Dean (FSS)

Signature of Dean (FSS)

Candidate Declaration Form

I, Sajid Nawaz Khan s/o Ainullah Khan, Registration # 22 MPhil/IR/S21, Discipline International Relations Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis: **US-China Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific: Challenges for ASEAN** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of M Phil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism found in my thesis dissertation at any stage, even after the award of degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

Dated

Signature of Candidate

Sajid Nawaz Khan

Name of Candidate

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVA FORM..... | i |
| CONDIDATE DECLARATION..... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT..... | vii |
| DEDICATION..... | viii |
| ABBREVIATIONS..... | ix |
| ABSTRACT..... | x |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Statement of the Problem..... | 3 |
| Significance of the study..... | 3 |
| Objective of the Study..... | 4 |
| Research Questions..... | 4 |
| Hypothesis..... | 4 |
| Literature review | 5 |
| Research Gap..... | 9 |
| Theoretical framework..... | 9 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Application of Theory..... | 12 |
| Research Methodology..... | 13 |
| Research, Design..... | 13 |
| Organization of the Study..... | 14 |
| Delimitation..... | 15 |
| CHAPTER 1..... | 16 |
| CONCEPTUALIZATION AND RETITLING OF INDO-PACIFIC..... | 16 |
| 1.1 Background..... | 16 |
| 1.2 Importance of Indo-Pacific..... | 17 |
| 1.3 Evolution of the Indo-Pacific Concept..... | 20 |
| 1.4 Japan Conceptualization of Indo-Pacific..... | 20 |
| 1.5 India Conceptualization of Indo-Pacific..... | 22 |
| 1.6 Australia Conceptualization of Indo-Pacific..... | 23 |
| 1.7 US Conceptualization of Indo-Pacific..... | 24 |
| 1.8 China Approach about Indo-Pacific..... | 28 |
| 1.9 ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific..... | 29 |
| CHAPTER 2 | 30 |
| EVOLVING US-CHINA STRATEGIC COMPETITION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION | 31 |
| 2.1 U.S-China Ideological Competition..... | 32 |
| 2.2 Competition in the Political Domain | 34 |
| 2.3 Rise of China and Strategic Competition | 39 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 2.3.1 Belt & Road Initiative and the Strategic Competition..... | 42 |
| 2.4 Pivot to Asia and the U.S-China Security Competition..... | 45 |
| 2.4.1 Free and Open Indo-Pacific | 45 |
| 2.5 Avenues of Competition | 46 |
| 2.5.1 South China Sea and Taiwan Issue..... | 46 |
| 2.3.2 Taiwan Issue | 47 |
| 2.6. US-China Trade War and the Economic Competition..... | 47 |
| 2.6.1 Indo-Pacific Economic Forum (IPEF)..... | 48 |
| 2.6.2 Build Back Better World (B3W)..... | 48 |
| 2.7 Technological competition between U.S and China..... | 49 |
| 2.8. Indo-Pacific Strategy and U.S-China Security Competition | 50 |
| 2.8.1 The alliance system and the U.S china Strategic Competition..... | 52 |
| 2.8.7 The Strategic Competition and the Maritime Sector | 52 |
| CHAPTER 3 | 57 |
| Historical Significance of ASEAN/ASEAN as Regional Player..... | 57 |
| 3.1 Background..... | 57 |
| 3.2 ASEAN Charter | 59 |
| 3.3 Objectives of ASEAN..... | 61 |
| 3.4 From an Organization to a Regional Community..... | 62 |
| 3.4.1 ASEAN Security Community..... | 63 |
| 3.4.2 ASEAN Economic Community..... | 64 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 3.4.3 ASEAN Socio-Culture Community..... | 64 |
| CHAPTER 4..... | 66 |
| IMPACT OF STRATEGIC COMPETITION BETWEEN US AND CHINA ON ASEAN Implications for ASEAN..... | 66 |
| 5.1 ASEAN Centrality and the Evolving Security order..... | 66 |
| 5.2 China Aggressiveness in the SCS..... | 73 |
| 5.3 Pressure on ASEAN to Choose Sides | 77 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 82 |
| FINDINGS..... | 83 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 85 |

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Undoubtedly, the accomplishment of my thesis is a great work of my life. It is a major milestone in the journey of my life. I am grateful to Almighty Allah who helped me by his invisible hands. I am also thankful to my supervisor Dr.Tatheer Zahra who provided me invaluable support during my research and to all the teachers especially Mam Pashmina who helped me to navigate the difficult terrain of my thinking.

Sajid Nawaz Khan

DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my family who have been, and indeed will be, a prime source of mental peace and stability, and to those who firmly believe in hard work and to my Supervisor Dr.Tatheer Zahra.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|---|
| ASEAN | Association of South East Asia Nations |
| SCS | South China Sea |
| IPS | Indo-Pacific Strategy |
| USINDOPACOM | N U.S. Indo-Pacific Command |
| RCEP | Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership |
| FONOPs | Freedom of Navigation Operations |
| SLOs | Sea Lanes of Communication |
| SMIC | Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation |
| UNSCR | United Nation Security Council Resolution |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |
| IPEF | Indo-Pacific Economic Forum |
| ARF | ASEAN Regional Forum |
| EAS | East Asia Summit |
| QUAD | Quadrilateral Security Dialogue |
| AUKUS | Australia UK United States Security Alliance |
| SEATO | South East Asia Treaty Organization |
| CENTO | Central Treaty Organization |

US-China Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific: Implications for ASEAN

Abstract

Over the past few years, the Indo-Pacific region has undergone drastic changes. The changes largely stem from the ongoing strategic competition between U.S and China. The region where ASEAN has traditionally played an important role has become the epicenter of the ongoing Strategic competition between U.S and China. Undoubtedly, Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) is located at the heart of this strategic competition. Therefore, the competition has entailed novel challenges for ASEAN. This research has profoundly studied the Strategic competition among the great powers to find out the implications for ASEAN. Some have found that the competition can have economic implications for the organization. While others have found that the ongoing Strategic competition can cause a severe blow to the central role of the organization. However, this research has found that the ongoing Strategic competition has far reaching implications beyond political and economic realms. The competition is going to highly overshadow the traditional role of ASEAN in the regional politics. One of the evolving challenges for ASEAN is to maintain strategic balance amid the evolving security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region where US has totally changed its strategic approach toward the region

KEY TERMS

Strategic Competition, Indo-Pacific Strategy, Security Dynamics, Strategic Approach, Power Contenders.

Introduction

The world is going through a transition period. The old political, economic and strategic orders in various regions have been invariably undergoing certain changes and shifts since the onset of the 21st century, or, to be more precisely, since the emergence of Xi Jinping on the political landscape of China. Like other regions, the Indo-Pacific has also undergone political, economic and strategic shifts over the past one decade¹. Whatever change we see in the region can be fundamentally associated or linked with the unprecedented rise of China in the geopolitical landscape of the region. The rise of China has challenged the US position and influence in the entire region. The phenomenal rise of China inevitably gave birth to strategic competition between US-the incumbent hegemony and China. In the wake of the strategic competition both the contending powers have come up with different strategies to navigate the geopolitical hot water of the region. The most dominant strategy is Indo-Pacific strategy which was officially introduced by Japan and then gradually became the integral part of US defense discourse and policy. Basically, the Indo-Pacific strategy is using the Indo-Pacific strategy as a tool chiefly designed to contain China in the region².

The Strategic Competition has evolved since the initiation of Belt and Road (BRI) by Xi Jinping in 2013. It has gradually spread into various fields ranging from diplomacy to strategic, from economy to social. The strategic competition can also be easily discerned in various initiatives and policy decisions of both the countries. The competition can be observed in the maritime row between both the contending powers. The South China Sea is arguably the epicenter of the ongoing competition between the two countries. The renewed strategic efforts in the form of QUAD revival and AUKUS are the sheer manifestation of a strategic competition between US and China in the region³. Similarly, China has taken many initiatives over the past one decade that has troublingly exacerbated and aggravated the geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific region.

¹ Timothy R. Heath, "U.S. Strategic Competition with China," Rand Corporation, August, 2021, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA290-3.html>

² Rushali Saha, "The Pitfalls of Great Power Competition in the Indo-Pacific," South Asia Voices, April 2022, <https://southasianvoices.org/the-pitfalls-of-great-power-competition-in-the-indo-pacific>

³ Marianne Schneider-Petsinger, Jue Wang, Yu Jie and James Crabtree, "US-China Strategic Competition and Quest for Global Technological Leadership, Chatham House, November 2019, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/11/us-china-strategic-competition>

ASEAN as geographical region occupies a unique place in the ongoing strategic competition between U.S and China. The region sits at the confluence of two important oceans- the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region has thrown ASEAN into quandary⁴. The competition has resulted in re-configuration of power in the south East Asia region where ASEAN has been aspiring and striving to play constructive political role since the end of cold war era. The ongoing strategic competition and subsequently evolving strategic order has created strategic challenges for ASEAN. The strategic competition has caught ASEAN in a dilemma. The potential strategic policy options for US and China bear immense impact on the overall performance of the ASEAN. The competition has virtually narrowed political and strategic landscapes for ASEAN to navigate independently⁵.

As the Strategic competition became more intensified the ASEAN member countries deemed it important to tailor its own approach to navigate the hot water of the regional politics. South East Asia countries announced-albeit belatedly, its policy response in the form of “ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook” in June 2019⁶. The Indo-Pacific outlook is the manifestation of the organization highly likely approach in the face of US-China strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region. All the countries have demonstrated it clearly that no country of the bloc will choose either side. What the member countries of ASEAN want is the centrality of the organization. They view ASEAN as benchmark for shaping the group relation with other powers and international bodies.

The ASEAN member countries are trying hard to maintain balance in the ongoing competition in the Indo-Pacific Region. In 2018 China held maritime exercise Zhanjiang with ASEAN countries that was preceded by US in 2019 in Sattahip Naval Base in Thailand⁷. It shows that the organization member countries want the centrality of the organization to be a benchmark for regional politics. The member countries want great powers to value ASEAN relevancy in the regional evolving political and strategic order. However, the strategic Competition will

⁴ Broto Wardoyo, “ ASEAN in the United States-China Strategic Competition : An Indonesian Perspective,” http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/joint_research/series18/pdf/chapter03.pdf

⁵ Michael Raska, “Strategic Competition and Future Conflicts in the Indo-Pacific Region,” *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, November 2021, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/JIPA/journals/Volume-02>

⁶ Aristyo Rizka Darmawan , “ ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook under Indonesia Chairmanship: How far it can go,” *The Diplomat*, December 2022, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/idss/ip22073-asean-indo-pacific-outlook-under-indonesias-chairmanship-how-far-can-it-go/>

⁷ Wen-Qing Ngoei, “Looking Back on ASEAN and Sino-US Rivalry in the Cold War, *E-International Relation* , May, 2021, <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/03/09/looking-back-on-asean-and-sino-us-rivalry-in-the-cold-war/>

inevitably influence ASEAN. US -China don't want ASEAN to take decisive role in managing the regional affairs. Both the US and China strategic interest does not essentially lie in maintaining the centrality of the ASEAN, rather they will navigate the geopolitics of the region on the basis of their own national interest. They are likely to be trying to strategically maneuver against each other that will have political and strategic implications for ASEAN.

Problem Statement

The Indo-Pacific region has apparently undergone drastic changes over the past one decade. Unarguably China's unprecedented rise is chiefly responsible for all sort of changes in the region. The phenomenal rise of China has given birth to strategic competition between US and China in the entire Indo-Pacific region in special and the ASEAN in particular. Consequently, the strategic competition has created unviable situation for the entire Indo-Pacific region in special and for the ASEAN region in particular. Traditionally the ASEAN has virtually played a key role in the regional politics. However, in the wake of the ongoing strategic competition, ASEAN member countries are caught in a dilemma: how to navigate the newly emerged strategic landscape in the region. The situation has given birth to a puzzle and the present research revolves around it. The questions arise what sorts of implications have been brought by strategic competition between US and China for ASEAN and ASEAN is navigating the ongoing strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region.

Significance of the Study

This research is highly important as its analysis the evolving strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region in special and the ASEAN region in particular. The study is highly important as it comprehensively outlines the ongoing strategic competition between US and China in the Indo-Pacific region. The study explores that how the ongoing strategic competition got intensified over the past one decade and how the ASEAN member countries maneuver and navigate amid the ongoing strategic competition in the region. The research is highly important as it critically evaluate the approaches and strategies adopted by US, China and ASEAN. The study will also examine the broad implications and challenges of the ongoing strategic competition and the evolving security order for ASEAN. Moreover, the research is an endeavor to critically evaluate the response of ASEAN countries to the strategic competition on their doors. For decades

ASEAN has enjoyed central position in the regional affairs but the recently emerged competition in the region have created strategic challenges for the bloc. The study will cover how the bloc addresses such challenges. Furthermore, an effort has been made to fill the gap in existing literature that can help scholars and policy makers.

Objective of the Study:

- To investigate the emergence of strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific Region
- To analyze the implications of the competition on ASEAN and how the ASEAN member countries are navigating the competition.

Research Questions:

- How the Strategic Competition between US and China got intensified in the Indo-Pacific region?
- How the major strategic stakeholders are navigating the hot water of newly emerged strategic landscape of the region?
- How does the U.S-China Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific impacts ASEAN?

Core Argument

The Indo-Pacific region has been turning into a power theater where great powers have started showing their political, economic and strategic power over the past few years. ASEAN has been a key political and economic player since the end of cold war. However, the ongoing strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region has created multiple strategic challenges for the bloc. The Competition is going to impact the centrality of the ASEAN which it has been enjoying over the past many decades. Being the epicenter of the U.S-China Strategic competition, the Indo-Pacific region is likely to become a hot water to be navigated by ASEAN. The Association may not

withstand the presser of the fierce strategic competition between the hegemon and the contending power.

Literature Review

Rushali Saha in her article “The Pitfalls of Great Power Competition in the Indo-Pacific” shades light on the geographical construct of the Indo-Pacific region. He gives complete accounts of the evolution of the Indo-Pacific concept as geographical entity. He also comprehensively outlines the challenges being faced by the Indo-Pacific strategy. She has elaborated on the pros and cons of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. Moreover the article explores the US preferences in the region and Vis a Vis ASEAN

Felix Heiduk and Gudrun Wacker in their detailed work “From Asia Pacific to Indo-Pacific, have comprehensively drawn the gradual emergence of the concept of Indo-Pacific strategy in international relation discourse over the past more than one decade. The work is the simple analysis of how and why some of the key stakeholders of the region embraced the Indo-Pacific concept. Most importantly they have excellently outlined the different connotation of the term Indo-Pacific strategy.

Rory Medcalf in his book “Indo-Pacific Empire: China, America and the Contest for the World’s Pivotal Region” takes us through a journey of the construction of the concept of Indo-Pacific. The book provides us nuance understanding of the rich history and the future challenges of the vast of Indo-Pacific region. Clearly and precisely, the book is an excellent account of the region past, present and future development. Rory Medcalf, who is a professor and former diplomat of Australia, enriches the book with his immense knowledge and experience in the field of diplomacy and security policy.

Michael Raska in his article “Strategic Competition and Future Conflicts in the Indo-Pacific Region” deliberates on the importance of the Indo-Pacific region and its security dynamics. The article underscores the complex security system that has undergone changes from time to time. According to the writer new strategies have been taking place since China started making inroads in the regional political, strategic and economic landscapes. He has meticulously drawn the bench mark of China Foreign policy goal in the region and beyond the region. For him all the

new strategies are primarily the response of the regional and extra regional countries to contain China in the region. Whatever change we see is the result of China emergence in the region.

Wen-Qing Ngoei in his article “Looking Back on ASEAN and Sino-US Rivalry in the Cold War” gives comprehensive account of US-China hostile relation. He comprehensively underscores the challenges that have been historically faced by the region. He diligently traces back the long and arduous journey of ASEAN under the shadow of great power politics in the region. According to him the strategic landscape of the region has undergone drastic changes since the onset of the 21st century. Resultantly, new challenges have made their way into the geopolitics and strategic arenas of the region. He assertively states that the ASEAN region is an important region in the world⁸. The seismic geopolitical and geostrategic shift in the Indo-Pacific region can have serious implications for the bloc.

Asma Sana, in her book “Foreign Policy of major powers” diligently sheds light on the history of US-China relation. She has given a detailed account of how US started moving toward the East Asia region. She traces back the early contact of US with the Indo-Pacific region. According to her China was the first country whom US contacted first in the region after its independence. She further gives the details of why Washington preferred the region and wanted to have close cooperation with it.

Paul Haenle in his article “Why US-China relation is locked into a stalemate” gives comprehensive analysis of the history of US-China relation. He has tried to find out the major causes behind the deteriorated and hostile relation between both the US and China. He argues that China unilateral and confidential maneuvering in global affairs have sent an alarming bells into the power corridor of Washington.

Shoukat Ali in his article “US-China strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region” outlines the origin of the ongoing US-China strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region. According to him the phenomenal rise and its subsequent assertiveness in the region has alarmed Washington. He logically argues that the strategic competition entered a new phase during the Trump era. Since then it has been intensified tremendously. Moreover, he underscores the various components of the strategic competition.

⁸ Wen-Qing Ngoei in his article “Looking Back on ASEAN and Sino-US Rivalry in the Cold War” E International Relation, March 2021, <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/03/09/looking-back-on-asean-and-sino-us-rivalry-in-the-cold-war/>

Broto Wardoyo in his research paper “ASEAN in the United States-China Strategic Competition: An Indonesian Perspective” gives a complete account of the major implications of the ongoing strategic competition for ASEAN. The study also focuses on the emerging geopolitical and geostrategic trends in the evolving security order in the Indo-Pacific region especially in the ASEAN region.

Prashant Parameswaran in his article “ASEAN Role in the Indo-Pacific strategy” argues that the Indo-Pacific started appearing the sign of strategic competition between U.S and China in 2017. For him this is not an auspicious sign for the overall development of the region⁹. He logically argues that the ASEAN region has gradually drifted and transformed into a power theater where both China and US are wooing the regional countries in order to get leverage against each other’s. He puts ASEAN at the center of the ongoing strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region. He thinks and believes that ASEAN can play a meaningful role in the ongoing strategic competition between US and China in the region.

Tan See Seng in his article “IP21001/ America, ASEAN and the question of ASEAN centrality” focuses the newly emerging position and role of ASEAN in the wake of the Strategic competition between US and China in the region. He excellently examines some visible strategic, political and economic shifts in the region and their broader impact on the political performance of ASEAN. He also underlines some fundamental changes in US security policy toward the ASEAN region since the Obama administration. He also gives clear and concise analyses of ASEAN cumulative distrust in US.

Avery D.H Poole in article “cooperation in contention, the evolution of ASEAN norms” describes the ASEAN member countries collective aspiration and vision of the region. The countries consider ASEAN as a vehicle for an effective economic cooperation. The author takes us into a journey of ASEAN struggle in the establishment of ASEAN security community and the challenges it has confronted with over the decades. He has also audaciously pointed out some issues within ASEAN which hamper it from becoming a more robust organization.

Graeme Dobell in his article “ASEAN frets about rules and order” examines the US newly carved approached toward the Indo-Pacific region. The article outlines the urgency behind

⁹ Prashant Parameswaran in his article “ASEAN Role in the Indo-Pacific strategy, “ASEAN Role in the Indo-Pacific strategy,” Wilson Center, September 2018, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/aseans-role-us-indo-pacific-strategy>

adoption of the strategy by Washington. The article highly focuses on the reservations of the newly emerging security order in the region which does not spell well for the ASEAN member countries.

Prashant Parames Waron, in his article “Assessing ASEAN New Indo-Pacific Outlook,” thoroughly examines the ASEAN position amid the hot strategic and political debate on the Indo-Pacific strategy. He has found out myriad reasons that why ASEAN has not come up with immediate response toward the Indo-Pacific strategy. The article succinctly summarizes the steady development of the strategy. Most importantly he has extensively discussed the challenges ASEAN can possibly confront with regarding a unifying approach toward the Indo-Pacific strategy.

Capt. Aaron S. Wood in his article “Historical Mine: The Legal Basis for China Server Claims to Lands in South China Sea” underscores the importance of the South China Sea. He extensively discusses the legal basis of China claims in the South China Sea. He has extensively elaborated on the legality of the Beijing claims in the South China Sea. He has analyzed the current dispute through the existing disagreement and differences between US approach and China sovereign claims in the SCS.

Banyan Global in his article “Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, has described the new US approach which is in the form of Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, as a potential opportunity for the regional countries. He profoundly analyzes that the project is likely to change the fate of the region and will foster economic growth.

Mingjiang LI in his article “ASEAN’s responses to AUKUS: implications for strategic realignments in the Indo-Pacific” comprehensively analysis the potential of the AUKUS deal to belittle the strategic and security importance of ASEAN. The article chiefly revolves around the intensification of strategic realignment over the past many years, which does not bode well for the ASEAN. According to Mingjiang, the deal has the potential to relegate ASEAN to a secondary level in managing the regional security issues.

Justin Au Yeung in his article “The “Indo-Pacification” of Asia: Implications for the Regional Order” draws the geopolitics of the region on the canvass of ongoing strategic competition in the

region. He profoundly analysis the US FOIP and China BRI approaches as the propeller of the ongoing strategic competition in the region. He also outlines the geographical importance of the entire Indo-Pacific region.

Thu Nguyen in his research paper “The QUAD, AUKUS and the Future of Alliance in the Indo-Pacific” has given detailed account of the reconfiguration of power in the Indo-Pacific region. According to Nguyen both QUAD and AKUS have tremendous role in the newly emerged security architecture in the region amid the ongoing strategic competition between US and China. He has elaborated on the rapidly shifting dynamics in the regional alliance system to the changing strategic landscape of the region.

Research Gape

Literature reviewed above show focuses on the emergence of strategic competition between US and China in the Indo-Pacific region. The new phenomena have brought significant changes in the regional political and strategic landscape. The literature review shows that the strategic competition does not augur well for ASEAN. Some authors examine that the visible shift in the US foreign policy toward the region has rendered ASEAN centrality into question. Some scholars have briefly touched upon the implications of the ongoing competition for ASEAN countries. However, there is no writer who has explained the strategic challenges being faced by ASEAN. This study has meticulously explained all the implications and challenges posed by the ongoing strategic competition. The competition in the Indo-Pacific region and its consequences for ASEAN has been discussed in the light of ASEAN traditional role in the region.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frame work provides us frame of references for describing international phenomenon. There are good numbers of theories of International Relation that provides nuance understanding of international phenomena. However, the Power Transition Theory best explains the US-China Strategic competition going on in the Indo-Pacific region¹⁰. The Power Transition Theory was developed by A.F.K Organsky in his renowned work “*Power Politics*” published in 1958. The Power Transition Theory fundamentally explains the global power politics that how

¹⁰ Serafettin Yilmaz and WaKim Woosang, “Power Transition Theory Revisited, When Rising China Meets Dissatisfied United States”, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies, (2022)

states interact with each other's within the system. Initially the scope of the theory was narrow: it only dealt with the dominant and the rising power in the system. Later on, the scope of the theory was broadened by the works of Erich Weede and Douglass Lemke. They contributed to the theory by incorporating middle and small states in to the system.

There is no exaggeration to say that that the real foundation of the Power Transition Theory was laid down by Thucydides in his ground breaking work "The Peloponnesian Wars". Actually he extensively provided scientific explanation for the war between Sparta and Athens. According to him the growth of the power of Athens caused fear in Sparta that eventually culminated in a war between both the powers. The hegemonic war theory presented by him has been enduring and lasting in the realm of international relation.

Since the time of Thucydides many scholars have attempted to expend the horizon of the theory. The work of Robert Gilpin, Zodelski, Rosler and Thompson has advanced the concept of hegemonic war. More recently American Scholar Graham Allison in his book "Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?" further used the theory and applied to the power transition that has taken place since the rise of China. He has elaborated on the concept and nature of the power transition between the rising and the incumbent hegemon. He has comprehensive explained the condition that could lead either lead to peaceful or conflictual transition.

The Power Transition Theory was initially developed as an alternative and response to the Balance of Power Theory which postulates that for world peace and stability power equilibrium among major powers is imperative. Conversely, Power Transition Theory challenged the fundamental tenet of the BOP theory. Power Transition Theory presented new model to provide nuanced explanation of how the global political system functions. According to the Power Transition Theory the global political system is hierarchical. In this global political system every state is defined by power¹¹.

According to this theory the world order has been divided into four categories of states. At the top of this hierarchical global political system perched a dominant power. The power of this

¹¹ A.F.K Organsky, "World Politics" Knopf 1968 ,
https://books.google.com.pk/books/about/World_Politics.html?id=zrwzAAAAIAAJ&redir_esc=y

dominant state is supreme. It has no challenger. The world order is based on the institutions designed by this dominant power at the top. It is responsible for formulating formal and informal rules and regulations to run the global affairs¹². This state has largest proportion of power in the system¹³. The second type of state is the great powers. Great power may be one or more than one state. They are the potential rivals to the dominant state at the top. These states have large strategic stakes in the system. The third ones are the middle powers. They are important regional players. They have relatively little contribution in the global political system. They are dependent on the system and not the system. They are unable to challenge the dominant state. The fourth types of states are small power. They are at the bottom of the pyramids of the global political system. They don't have meaningful contribution in the overall system.

Furthermore, the Power Transition Theory comprehensively analyzes the power relation within the global political system. According to the theory the dominant state, after ascending or assuming the driving seat of the global affairs, frame and establish new institutions and rules for the entire world¹⁴. The theory argues that two situations occur when the second most powerful state in the global political system achieves parity or enters in to the approximate parity with the dominant state. First the power equilibrium between the dominant and the rising power can result in a war. If the rising power is dissatisfied with the existing world order, then the transition may be peaceful¹⁵. However, when the rising power is not content with the existing institutions and rule then the transition will fraught with danger or violent clashes between both the powers.

The power transition theory best explains the ongoing strategic competition between both the contending powers-namely U.S and China in the Indo-Pacific region. Both the U.S and China are locked in a fierce competition in which both the countries are trying to obliterate each other's. For decades, U.S has been a dominant power in the Indo-Pacific region. It has been enjoying hegemonic position in the region since the end of World War II. However, the region has undergone drastic changes over the past one decade. These changes have mainly occurred in the

¹² Ibid p 29-30

¹³ Charles J. Koch, "Testing the Power Transition Theory with Relative Military Power" *Journal of Strategic Security*, (1984) <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol14/iss3/5>

¹⁴ Carsten Rauch, "Realism and Power Transition Theory: Different Branches of the Power Tree," *JSTOR*, Feb 2023, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/03/realism-and-power-transition-theory-different-branches-of-the-power-tree/>

¹⁵ Ronald L. Tammen, Jacek Kugler, Doug Lemke, "Power Transition Theory", *Oxford Bibliography* (2017) <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0038.xml>

realm of power transition between the existing power and the rising power. As we know that China has gained unprecedented economic growth political clout over the past more than one decade. In 2008, China replaced Tokyo as second world economic power in the world¹⁶. These changes have ushered a new era- an era of fierce Strategic Competition between both the countries. The changes have created ripples in the existing status quo in the region.

In the following years we have seen more power shifting and distribution between both the contending powers. After the arrival of Xi Jinping in the power corridor of Beijing, China has continuously become powerful in the region. Through its serious efforts and initiatives especially the BRI, China has outwitted U.S in the region. On account of its massive investment, China has succeeded in acquiring political, strategic, economic and diplomatic clout in the region which noticeably underscores power transition in the region. More simply, over the past one decade China's defense and economic postures have undergone radical changes.

The Power Transition Theory revolves around the possible outcome of the power equilibrium between the rising and revisionist state and the incumbent hegemon. The theory postulates the potential impact of the horizontal march and ascension of the rising power and the anticipated response of the hegemon on a state, group of state and other entities. It is a fact that China has undoubtedly made unprecedented progress in almost all walks of life over the past more than one decade. It has ascended from middle power to a great power over the recent past. China has risen from a middle power to a great power in a region where the regional countries are bound together by well-established political, social and economic norms and traditions. China is intractably marching with sheer disregard to the possibly potential outcome and consequences for ASEAN. After gaining relative economic and strategic power China changed its defense posture and became belligerent. The only thing the rising power sees, while moving horizontally, is strategic benchmark it sets to achieve. Unarguably, China has set its eyes on its own sphere of influence. On the other hand U.S has responded to the intractable march of China in the region. It has become well aware of the transition in the power in the region in special and the world in particular. U.S comes up with explicit strategic approach to stop China from moving further horizontally in the hierarchical structure. It will never allow Beijing to establish forward strategic

¹⁶ Ibid. P. 3-5

basis beyond the South China Sea or first island chain. It will never leave any stone unturned to contain China within the SCS.

As we know that power transition is a gradual and steady process, it is still heading toward its destination in the Indo-Pacific region and can take a bit time. But Beijing seems to somberly decide to become a regional hegemon. China has started a start and is solemnly moving and making its own ways to reach its destination. On the other hand Washington is not oblivious to Beijing strategic ambition. The shift in power distribution has had impact on the ASEAN. The strategic competition has taken central position in the regional politics. As we know that regional politics always function under the shadow of great power thus ASEAN has become under the shadow of great power politics. Realistically speaking, great powers always priorities and pursue their own interests. Therefore, the transition does not bode well for the position and role of ASEAN in the region.

Application of the Theory

Theory of Power Transition had been applied to analyze the ongoing strategic competition between US and China in the Indo-Pacific region and its implications for ASEAN. The ongoing strategic competition has unarguably posed serious strategic challenges to the ASEAN. Since the strategic competition between US and China has become more palpable, the impact has also become discernable. Since the emergence of the strategic competition its impact on ASEAN can be easily and conveniently discerned.

Unsurprisingly, the ongoing strategic competition between US and China chiefly revolves around a struggle to assume the driving seat of the global affairs. The ASEAN region is the epicenter of the strategic competition between both the countries. As we know that the strategic competition is between the dominant and rising powers. The core interest of both the power contenders lies in the ASEAN region. Undoubtedly, they will pursue their strategic interest at the cost of any national or institutional interest of the regional countries. They will have scanty regard for the ASEAN when it comes to their core interests. On one hand US is striving to maintain its hegemonic status in the region by balancing China power through new security architecture in the region. On the other hand, China massive investment in ASEAN regional countries has helped it secure huge diplomatic clout among the ASEAN member countries.

Research Methodology

The research follows qualitative approach. Qualitative methods will be used for data collection and analysis. Primary and secondary data has been used. The primary data would include interviews, speeches, statements and documentaries. The secondary data would consist of research articles, research papers, books, magazines and newspapers etc. The research has used both analytical and explanatory approach.

Research Design

The research design used in this research is explanatory design. Explanatory research design helps us explore the existing phenomenon. It helps the researchers to solve the puzzle in the face of scarce and meager sources and information. Explanatory research is a method through which researchers investigates a phenomenon that has not been studied previously or not studied properly. Explanatory research is central to international relations. The data which is gathered in this study helps evaluates the ongoing situation in the Indo-Pacific region. It also analyzes the broad implications for ASEAN. Explanatory research involves in-depth analysis of data.

Organization of the Study

The study begins with an introduction which is an overview of the whole thesis. Chapter one introduces the incremental and gradual construction of the Indo-Pacific concept. The chapter shades describe and elaborates the emergence of Indo-Pacific concept in different countries policy papers and statements. It also comprehensively discusses the China and ASEAN approach about the Indo-Pacific concept

Chapter 2 is about the emergence of the ongoing strategic competition between US and China in the Indo-Pacific region. The chapter discusses the ongoing strategic competition in the light of the historical relation between both the countries. The chapter encompasses all the fundamental factors that have inevitably unleashed the ongoing strategic competition between both the super powers. Moreover, the chapter shades light on various facets of the strategic completion between US and China.

Chapter 3 shade light on the constituting components of the ongoing strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region. The chapter comprehensively discusses all the elements of the ongoing strategic competition

Chapter 4 exclusively focuses on the causal effect relation between ASEAN and the ongoing strategic completion on the door step of the organization. The chapter tells that the organization is navigating the strategic challenges being posed by competition. It also discusses the historical evolution of the organization and its historical role in shaping the region politics.

Chapter 5 comprises of the in-depth analysis of the broader implications of the ongoing strategic competition for the organization central role in the region politics.

The study ends up with final findings. The conclusion and final finding have many facets. It focuses on one of the major implications of the ongoing strategic competition for ASEAN. It forestalls that more the ongoing strategic competition is intensified the graver are the consequences for the central role ASEAN. Unarguably the ongoing strategic competition will sooner or later split the organization.

Delimitation

Although, the ongoing strategic competition between US and China has immense implications for the both Asia pacific and Indian Ocean regions, but the focus of the study is limited to the ASEAN region-the South East Asia region. Furthermore, the study will analyze the emergence of the ongoing strategic competition between the two major powers namely US and China from 2017 to date. The date is a crucial in the ongoing US-China strategic competition. Since 2017, the mere competition came to be morphed or transformed into a strategic competition. It will focus on cumulative impact of the competition on ASEAN as regional political, socioeconomic and strategic bloc.

Chapter 1

From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific – Conceptualization of Retitling of the Region

1 Background

The Indo Pacific concept is a recent phenomenon in international relation. Over the past few years, the Indo-Pacific concept has made visible inroads in international discourse. Though previously the concept was only confined to academic discourse, now it has been incrementally embedded in the official documents and political rhetoric. Over the past one decade, the Indo-Pacific region has undergone seismic political, strategic and economic shift. Nothing can be more responsible than the unprecedented rise of China behind these seismic shifts. The rise of China as a new power in the region has questioned the legitimacy of the existing order. Beijing

has come out with its own ideas and order that is likely to gradually change the order underpinned by U.S longstanding interest in the region.

Now almost all the countries seem to have, implicitly and explicitly, incorporated the concept of Indo-Pacific in their respective political discourse. One and half decade ago, or, more precisely, before 2007, the idea could be rarely found in academic domain. However, since 2007, the concept has made remarkable inroads in international political discourse¹⁷. The origin of the concept in political discourse can rightly be traced or associated with Japan's PM Shinzo Abe. During his visit to India in 2007, Shinzo Abe for the first time used "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" in a speech- Confluence of the Two Seas¹⁸. Japan connectivity concept was largely motivated by its economic potential of both the countries. The then U.S secretary of state Henry Clinton article, written in the Foreign Affairs magazine in 2011 also further highlighted the region in international political discourse. She exclusively spoke in the context of U.S "Pivot to Asia" policy toward the region¹⁹.

It was Australia who officially embraced the idea of Indo-Pacific region. In 2012, Australia introduced the concept of Indo-Pacific region for the first time in its white paper with the title "Australia in the Asia Century"²⁰. The contribution of Australia in the construction of the concept has been enormous. Since 2012, the idea has been part and parcel of Australia white paper continuously referring to the Indian and Pacific Ocean region as a single region. It was only in 2017, when the U.S for the first time officially came up with the Indo-Pacific concept. In 2017, during the APEC summit in Da Nang U.S president Donald Trump publicly spoke of Indo-Pacific region²¹. The idea was primarily based on the concept of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific". Just one month after the Trump speech the concept was incorporated in the U.S defense papers. Since then, it has been continuously used in all the defense and security papers of Washington.

¹⁷ Felix Heiduk and Gudrun Wacker, "From Asia Pacific to Indo-Pacific," Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute (July 2020) <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020RP09/>

¹⁸ Rory Medcalf, "Contest for the Indo-Pacific why China Won't Map the Future" (2020) La Trobe University Press

²⁰ Cleo Paskal, "Indo-Pacific Strategies, Perceptions and Partnership," Chatham House(2021) <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/03/indo-pacific-strategies-perceptions-and-partnerships>

²¹ Michael Pillsbury, "The Trump Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy," The Aspen Institute, (January 2020) <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Pillsbury.pdf>

The explicit embrace of the strategy by US entailed strategic challenges for ASEAN. For couple of years ASEAN was in ambivalent and did not know how to respond to the strategy. It was only in 2019, that ASEAN came out with its approach in the form of “ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook” in 2019²². ASEAN views the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions not as contiguous territorial spaces but as a closely integrated and interconnected region, with ASEAN playing a central and strategic role.

1.2 Importance of the Indo-Pacific Region

Indo Pacific region is one of the world dynamic regions. It has been an important region in global politics. The Indo-Pacific region spans over 52 percent of the earth surface²³. The region is the inhabitant of more than half of the world population. Taking from any point of view, the region will undoubtedly appear one of the world important regions. Seeing from economic lens the Indo-Pacific region seems to be the hub of world economic activities. The region is highly rich in natural resources that have brought it on the radar of global politics. The region has the potential to boast for having some of the world strategically and economically important straits such as Hormuz, Babu Ul Mandib and Strait of Malacca²⁴. These straits are the arteries of global trade.

The Indo-Pacific region has been one of the most strategically important parts of the world. Geographically the region is located in a position that makes it strategically relevant to the great powers. Unarguably, the region anchors strategic interests of the great powers. For decades the regional strategic order remained underpinned by US. The region has had enormous importance for U.S. the Indo-Pacific region has complementary role for U.S in maintaining its global influence. The region is hosting a large number of U.S force.

The rise of China has posed direct threat to the old strategic order in the region. The power shift in the region has returned back great power politics to the Indo-Pacific region²⁵. Both U.S and

²³ Power shifts in the Indo-Pacific, 2017, Foreign Policy White Paper, Australian Government, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/minisite/static/4ca0813c-585e-4fe1-86eb-de665e65001a/fpwhitepaper/foreign-policy-white-paper/chapter-two-contested-world/power-shifts-indo-pacific.html>

²⁴ Kai He And Li Mingjiang, “Four reasons why the Indo-Pacific matters in 2020,” Oxford University Press, <https://blog.oup.com/2020/02/four-reasons-why-the-indo-pacific-matters-in-2020/>

²⁵ Gautam Sen, Strategic Relevance of the Indo-Pacific: an Assessment”(2018) <https://www.neliti.com/publications/327347/strategic-relevance-of-the-indo-pacific-an-assessment>

China are the major contenders for power in the region. Both the countries are trying to obliterate each other in this region. Unarguably, this fierce competition has rendered the region as a one of strategically important regions of the world. Moreover, U.S has seven military treaties with its allies and five out of them are in Indo-Pacific region. It has substantial military stakes in the region.

Since the emergence of the strategic competition the region has become strategically important for the US and China. U.S wants to contain China within the first island chain in the region. US has firm belief that once China started projecting power beyond the first and second island chain it will be difficult to contain it in the region. On the other hand China is hauling itself to project its power beyond the Taiwan Strait. Such divergent and conflicting strategic interest has rendered the region to be one the most important region of the world.

Apart from its strategic importance, the Indo-Pacific region is one of the significant regions of the world in term of economy. In term of trade, approximately 44 percent of world trade is conducted in this part of the world. The region is rich in natural resources. The abundant natural resources have always allured great powers to this region. The region hosts some of the world important strait. On account of its abundant natural resources and the important trade routes, the region the region offers potential opportunities for the regional and beyond regional countries for economic prosperity. The region accounts for 63 percent of global GDP and holds 60 percent of the global wealth²⁶.The region contributes 2/3 growth in global GDP²⁷. The Indo-Pacific region hosts some of the world largest economies and fastest growing economies²⁸.

But what has made the region to be the pivot of global politics is the changing dynamic in the geopolitics of the region. Over the past one decade the region has become major concern for major powers. The unprecedented rise of China has increased the stakes of some regional and extra regional countries. Beijing has emerged as a potent threat to the other stakeholders in the region. It has compelled other countries to pivot their resources to the region.

Over the past few years China has emerged as powerful state in the region. Like U.S, the region is also vital for China. Realistically speaking, Indo-Pacific is a region from where China is well

²⁶ Kawaljit Sing, “ The What, How and Why Indo-Pacific Economic Framework,” Wires English, February 2022, <https://thewire.in/economy/the-what-how-and-why-of-the-indo-pacific-economic-framework>

²⁷ Ibid P 3

²⁸ Ibid P 7

poised to project its global power. Since the inception of BRI, China has established a number of naval projects around the Indo-Pacific region such as Djibouti, Gawadar, Myanmar, Maldives, Malaysia and Brunei²⁹. China is heavily reliant on the region in term of energy import. Beijing imports 60 percent of its energy resources from Middle East through the Indo-Pacific region.

Historically the India ocean part of Indo-Pacific region has been of paramount importance for India. The growing economy, which almost streams from sea, has increased the importance of Indo-Pacific region for India. It has healthy trade relation with Pacific countries. Due the extensive trade, India has become a major stakeholder in the region³⁰. Similarly the Indo-Pacific region is important for other major stakeholders in the region such as Australia, Japan and ASEAN countries³¹.

1.3 Evolution of the Indo-Pacific Concept

As a concept, the Indo-Pacific terminology has its roots in academic domain. The origin of the terminology can be exclusively found in the works of 20th century German geopolitical scholar Karl Haushofer and Indian historian Kalidas Nag³². Both the scholars referred to the region purely as geographical region. Till the end of the 20th century the concept has rarely been used in academic circle. Due to the new dynamics in international relation the concept made gradual and steady inroads in global political discourse. Interestingly within a short span of time the Indo-Pacific concept has been morphed into a well calculated strategy. Many countries of the region and beyond the region have contributed to the evolution of the Indo-Pacific terminology.

1.4 Japan Concept of Indo-Pacific

Japan has been one of the ardent advocates of Indo Pacific concept. Tokyo is considered to be the originator of Indo Pacific strategy. Japan was the first country who officially introduced the concept. During his visit to India in 2007, Shinzo Abe for the first time spoke of the Indo Pacific

²⁹ Craig Singleton, “ Foreign Policy “July 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/07/China-pla-military-bases-kiribati-uae-cambodia-tanzania-djibouti-indo-pacific-ports-airfields/>

³⁰ Girish Luthra, “ The Indo-Pacific Maritime Focus and Ocean Governance” Observer Research Foundation” December 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-indo-pacific-region-maritime-focus-and-ocean-governance/>

³¹ Ibid P 9-11

³² T.C.A, “ The changing Seas: antecedents of the Indo-Pacific,” The Telegraph (July 17,2019) <https://www.orfonline.org/research/in-defence-of-the-indo-pacific-concept/>

strategy³³. Since then, Tokyo has been using the terminology as a framework for political and strategic engagement in the region. Japan conceptualization and vision of Indo-Pacific is chiefly geographic and economic oriented. Unlike India and Australia, Japan vision is broader that stretches from Eastern coast of Africa to the Western coast of America. Japan is one of the biggest economic powers in the Indo Pacific region. Its economic outreaches are splintered all around the Indo-Pacific region. Its economic power predominantly stems from the sea. Therefore, Japan overarching aim is to wade and scramble freely in the Indo Pacific region. Arguably there will be no exaggeration to say that the Indo Pacific region is Tokyo area of high sensitivity. Japan national security emanates from the maritime security of the region. Tokyo is predominantly concerned with its maritime activities in the region. Most of Japan trade is sea bound. Unarguably Japan national security lies within the Indo-Pacific region. It imports 90 percent of its oil from Middle East and all of them are transported through the Indo Pacific region³⁴.

There is no wonder that why Japan is heavily concerned with any sort of threat especially maritime threat which is lurking in the Indo-Pacific region. No doubt China steady march in the maritime domain of the Indo-Pacific region has posed genuine threat to Japan in the region. Beijing aggressive posture in the South China SEA is another source of consternation for Tokyo as it has been in maritime row with Beijing in East China Sea. The overall Changing dynamics in the geopolitics and geostrategic domain don't portend and augur well for Tokyo national security. Initial Japans' perceptions of Indo-Pacific region were purely built around economic engagement with other countries. However, later on the China aggressive military posture became more alarming for Tokyo. Later on, it started to see the region through the prism of balancing. But Tokyo means of balancing is economic. It wants to contain China through economic means and tools. Tokyo is wading cautiously in the region: it doesn't want to harm its economic interest in the region; while simultaneously cherish a desire to contain China in the region. It has always called on soft vision of Indo Pacific strategy. Japan Indo Pacific vision is based on two pillars: to enhance regional infrastructure and to act as a main supply chain in the

³³ Chen Dingdin, "the Indo-Pacific Strategy: A Background Analysis "Italian Institute for International Political Studies ,(September 9,2021) <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/indo-pacific-strategy-background-analysis-20714>

³⁴ Jeffrey B. Kucharski, "Japan, FOIP, And The Geopolitics Of Energy In The Indo-Pacific."School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, April30, 2020, https://sppga.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/07/Kucharski_Japan-FOIP-Geopolitics-Indo-Pacific.pdf

region³⁵. Japan shares “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” vision with U.S. But it gives greater priority to economic development in the region.

The strategy is not naturally evolved; rather it is a hasty response of US and some other countries to contain China inexorable march in the region³⁶. U.S wants its allies and strategic partners to rally behind it and forge a united front against the rising China. The US version of Indo Pacific strategy quite resembles a tool to woo the regional countries. On the other hand Japan-the originator of Indo-Pacific, sees the Indo-Pacific strategy purely through geo-economic prism. Since from the very beginning, Japan has had economic vision of the Indo-Pacific that is based on integration of the Indian and Pacific Ocean.

Throughout the past history the Indian Ocean has been vital for India. The Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOs) in the Indian Ocean is no less than the arteries to the country. Through the ages the Indian Ocean region has played significant economic and strategic role for India. New Delhi has had the desire to play a dominant role in the Indian Ocean region. But the unprecedented rise and March of China in the Indian Ocean region has generated fear and created alarming situations for India. New Delhi is gravely concerned with the unfolding situation in the region. It is very much worried about the China dual use of South Asia projects³⁷. Like other countries, New Delhi was compelled to profoundly assess the changing geopolitical dynamics of the region. The staggering stakes of India in the Indian Ocean region highly demanded fresh look and vision from New Delhi. Timely address of the challenges in the Indian Ocean was highly prioritized in New Delhi strategic and policy circle.

1.5 India Conceptualization of Indo-Pacific Strategy

Although India has not produced or published any policy paper that clearly outlines its position in the Indo Pacific region, however its increasing political, economic and strategic maneuvers clearly indicate New Delhi perceptions of the region. New Delhi conceives the Indo Pacific region to be the arena of maritime engagement. It constructs the Indo-Pacific concept on the

³⁵ Capt., Aaron S. Wood, “Historical Mine: The Legal Basis for China Sever Claims to Lands in South China Sean,” *Journal of Indo-Pacific*, (2021) <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2528218/historically-mine-the-potentially-legal-basis-for-Chinas-sovereignty-claims-to/>

³⁶ Igor Denisov, Oleg Paramonov, Ekaterina Arapova, “Russia, China and the Concept of Indo-Pacific,” *SAGE JOURNAL* (2021) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1879366521999899>

³⁷ Banyan Global, “Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor.” Chemonics International Inc. (2015) <https://banyanglobal.com/project/indo-pacific-economic-corridor-ipecc-coordinated-regional-trade-analysis/>

premises of maritime security³⁸. The growing naval activities of and presence of China through the Indo Pacific region is a grave concern for New Delhi. The ground realities seem to have impelled New Delhi to embrace the Indo-Pacific strategy. India uses the Indo-Pacific strategy as a tool to safeguard the boundaries of its maritime security.

India Indo-Pacific vision highly rests on focusing on deepening economic and security cooperation with the littoral states³⁹. It sees the region through the prism of inclusivity. Its vision is constructed on the concept of SAGAR (Security, Growth for all in the region). India officially unveiled its Indo-Pacific strategy during Narendra Modi's speech at Shangri La Dialogue in 2018. India is well interested in multilateral collaboration with US and other countries under the Indo-Pacific strategy. It shares some fundamental principles of US Indo-Pacific vision. India wants to contain China in Indo Pacific region through multilateral cooperation in maritime security. But its military strategic collaboration with US will always confine and limited within the Indian Ocean region.

India vision somehow resembles Japan vision of Indo-Pacific⁴⁰. Both the countries have staggering economic stakes in the Indo-Pacific region. Most of their trade is conducted through the Indo-Pacific region. And both the countries have sane reservation Vis a Vis the China rise as they want smooth and unhindered flow of their goods throughout the length and breadth of the Indo Pacific region. New Delhi considers open, integrated and balanced Indo Pacific region vital for their national security.

The construction and conceptualization of Indo-Pacific- strategy in the mind of India seems to have chiefly come from its maritime strategic concerns in the Indian Ocean. India has a good number of strategic objectives in the Indian Ocean. Its prime objective is to safeguard the maritime Sea Lanes of Communication in Indian Ocean and its surrounding water. The ongoing strategic shift in the geopolitics of the region has impelled Delhi to have unequivocal position in in the maritime domain of the ongoing strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region. Delhi wants to work with US and its allies under the framework of Indo-Pacific strategy in order to maintain smooth movement of its goods across the region.

³⁸ Chander Shekar, "India as a rising power in the Indo-Pacific," Asia & Pacific Policy Society, May 2022, <https://www.policyforum.net/india-as-a-rising-power-in-the-indo-pacific/>

³⁹ Commodore Lulit Kapur, "China Response to Indo-Pacific" Delhi Policy Group, (February 2022) <https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/publication/policy-briefs/the-new-us-indo-pacific-strategy.html>

⁴⁰ Ambar Kumar Gosh, " Security, Economic and Ecological settings priorities in the Indo-Pacific" Observer Research Foundation, (February 2022) <https://www.orfonline.org/research/security-economy-and-ecology/>

1.6 Australia Conceptualization of the Indo-Pacific Strategy

Australia is one of the first countries who officially conceptualized the Indo Pacific strategy.

Australia first outlined its vision of Indo-Pacific strategy in its 2013 defense white paper⁴¹. Australia vision of Indo-Pacific was initially woven around long term Australia strategic, security, prosperity and rule based order. Australia is the US ally in the Pacific Ocean. Its Indo-Pacific vision quite resembles U.S vision. It shares some of principles of Indo-Pacific strategy with Washington. Australia is predominantly Pacific nation. Like Japan, India and America, Canberra strategic perceptions arguably don't stretch beyond the Pacific islands. Australia is firmly committed along with its partners to maintain democratic values and international law that underpins regional and global security⁴².

Initially Canberra vision of Indo-Pacific was ambiguous. The vision was not giving clear strategic position of Canberra in the region. But later on, the country Indo-Pacific vision became dilated and clear. In its 2017 Foreign Policy White paper confirmed Canberra strategic position in the region. In the wake of changing regional political and strategic dynamics, Australia has come to realize that its strategic interest can only be advanced by building strategic partnership with other likeminded maritime powers across the region⁴³.

Canberra vision is relatively narrow as its strategic outlook of Indo-Pacific is confined within the Pacific islands. Canberra deems the area of strategic interest. Canberra vision more or less geographical oriented. Its overarching focus is primarily on south Pacific. Canberra overwhelming strategic concerns chiefly stem from the China growing influence in South China Sea and Pacific Islands. It wants to contain China by creating strategic deterrence by increasing its military capability through strategic partnership with US. U.S also seems to have assigned Canberra with a certain strategic task to prevent China further march in Pacific. U.S has recently signed AUKUS with Australia. Under the deal US will buildup nuclear submarines in Australia. Australia think that the growing [power of China is a potent threat for the regional order. The country politicians have already shown grave concern over the China strategic wading in the

⁴¹ Australia Defense White Paper 2013, https://www.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-08/WP_2013_web.pdf

⁴² Igor Denisov, Oleg Paramonov, Ekaterina Arapova, "Russia, China and the Concept of Indo-Pacific," SAGE Journal (2021) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1879366521999899>

⁴³ Rory Medcalf, "Indo-Pacific Visions: Giving Solidarity a Chance," National Bureau of Asian Research (July 2019) <https://www.nbr.org/publication/indo-pacific-visions-giving-solidarity-a-chance/>

region. Over the past few years Australia suspicious has grown tremendously. The more tension is brew the more Canberra vision will broaden.

1.7 U. S Conceptualization of Indo-Pacific

Currently U.S is the vanguard of Indo-Pacific strategy. Since 2017 Washington has been the torch bearer of the Indo-Pacific concept. US is the only country whose vision of Indo-Pacific strategy is unambiguous and crystal clear. We find its mention in the US policy for the first time by Donald Trump during his official visit to Vietnam in May 2017⁴⁴. Since then, the concept has been the part and parcel of Washington defense papers such as National Security and National Defense Strategy. There is no exaggeration to say that the concept has been guiding US engagement in the region. It is the conceptual corner stone of Washington US approach toward the region.

The Washington Indo-Pacific vision is not evolved. The development of Indo-Pacific in the mind of Washington is chiefly based on Washington strategic perceptions about the region⁴⁵. Over the past few years, the world has seen drastic changes in the U.S perceptions Vis a Vis the Indo Pacific region. For decades US has enjoyed hegemonic position in the Indo Pacific region. Since WWII, the region has been prime concern for US policy makers⁴⁶. It has major allies and strategic partners in the region.

But over the past one-decade China has emerged as a major power in the region. Within a short span of time Beijing made great political, economic and strategic strides in the region. Its unprecedented economic power has enabled it to wade in to the global politics in special and in the Indo-Pacific regional politics in particular. It is for the first time over the past more than seventy years that US has confronted with a peer competitor in the region. China has surpassed U.S in many walks of life in the region. The BRI has brought tremendous changes in the regional politics and has helped China secure major economic and strategic clout in the region. In economic domain China has become the greatest investor in the region under BRI; China has

⁴⁴ Felix Heiduk and Gudrun Wacker, "From Asia Pacific to Indo-Pacific" Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute (July 2020) ://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020RP09

⁴⁵ Harsh V Pant and Anant Singh Mann, "Understanding America's Enduring Interest in the Indo-Pacific," February 2023, Observer Research Foundation, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/understanding-americas-enduring-interest-in-the-indo-pacific/>

⁴⁶ Ipid p 3-5

invested billions of dollars in various economic development projects. Similarly, Beijing has reshuffled its military power. Over the past few years China has remarkably increased its defense budget.

The changing geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics of the region did not portend well for US. In the wake Beijing intractable march, Washington found itself in a direct strategic confrontation with China. US perceived all the development chiefly propelled by China is well intended to dilute Washington hegemonic influence in the region. US policy makers timely realized the urgency of having a comprehensive strategy to handle the strategic challenges mainly posed by China growing power in the region⁴⁷. Since the official introduction of Indo-Pacific strategy in the US official documents, Washington overarching goal is to contain and handle the menace of China through a strategic partnership with the regional countries.

Initially the U.S Indo Pacific vision was geographical and security oriented. In term of geography Indo-Pacific concept stretches from the western coast of America to the Eastern coast of Africa⁴⁸. Initial goal of U.S was to generate structural fear among the regional by depicting China as an aggressor and revisionist state that is well poised to alter the geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic order of the region⁴⁹. But later on, U.S policy makers came to be driven by the realization of economic importance. The success of Indo-Pacific strategy is highly contingent on ASEAN unconditional acceptability of it. ASEAN countries are relatively economic hunger. Their primary concern is economic development. Seeing the ASEAN less interest, visible from its lack of forging a coherent approach toward it, in the Indo-Pacific strategy, Washington vision came to be dilated. Later on an economic component was added to it in order to make it more appealing for the ASEAN countries.

For U.S the Indo-Pacific region is not more than a strategic arena. Its economic engagement and other political and economic endeavors are complementary tools. U.S is trying to create

⁴⁷ Pooja Bhatt, "Evolving dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, Deliberating India Position, Journal of Indo-p Affairs (Fall 2018) https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/JIPA/journals/Volume-01_Issue-1/06-F-Bhatt.pdf

⁴⁸ The Department of Defense, "Indo-Pacific Strategic Report (2019) <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/Department-Of-Defense-Indo-Pacific-Strategy-Report-2019.Pdf>

⁴⁹ National Security Strategy of United States, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

systematic strategic pressure on the region⁵⁰ by vilifying China in its official documents⁵¹. Since the Donald Trump era U.S has been making coordinated efforts to forge a united front against China. Japan, India and Australia are the Washington key strategic players in the Indo-Pacific region. They have revived QUAD which forms the lynchpin of the Indo-Pacific new security architecture. These countries have a major role in the Indo-Pacific strategic theater. For U.S they are strategic asset and have potential to counter China in the region. Washington wants to secure a big room for India under the Indo-Pacific strategy. In May 30.2018, US Pacific Command was changed in to INDO PACIFIC COMMAND. Canberra and Tokyo are already U.S allies in the region. U.S is trying to arm Canberra in order to make it a great deterrence power in the region against China⁵².

U.S deems ASEAN countries, at least in its official documents, major players in the Indo-Pacific region. But in reality, they fall short of US strategic expectations and calculations. Washington perceives them relative less capable and willing to play with it on the strategic chessboard of the region as they are more concerned with economic engagement. To assuage their concerns U.S is engaged with the region in multilateral development projects and forums. In 2019, America Overseas Private Investment Corporation in conjunction with Australia Department for Foreign Affair and Trade and Japan Bank for International Cooperation established “Blue Dot Network”⁵³. The main objective of the initiative is to provide assistance to high quality infrastructure in the region. All the efforts made by Washington clearly demonstrate that China has posed a genuine threat to U.S in the region. Beijing has posed strategic challenges for Washington in the region.

The development made by China seems to have diluted US influence in the region. Therefore U.S has seen and is seeing and will see the region through the lens of strategic competition. We have observed incremental changes in Tokyo perception and vision of the Indo Pacific region. It has gradually changed its posture toward the region. no doubt its vision has been economic oriented, but its strategic cozying up with US and other countries clearly manifest its perceptions that are mostly build up around threat chiefly emanating from the rise of China. It is highly likely

⁵⁰ Haruko, Wada, “The Indo-Pacific Concept Geographical Adjustments: their implications,” S.Rajaratnam School of international studies (March 2020) <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/10356/143604/2/WP326.pdf>

⁵¹ Ibid, 8-9.

⁵² Idrees Ali , Reuter , May 30, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/authors/idrees-ali/>

⁵³ Ibid P 9-10

that Tokyo vision will further undergo changes. And sooner or later Japan will start seeing the region through military strategic lens.

In Oct 2022 United States released a new “National Security strategy”. The new strategy clearly delineates US approach toward the world⁵⁴. Like the previous few strategies, the new strategy National Security strategy unambiguously outlines China as a greatest threat to US interest in the world in special and the world in particular. In this new strategy Washington has resolved to maintain competitive edge over PRC which has the intent and capacity to alter the international order⁵⁵. US’s fears and apprehension chiefly stems from Beijing military prowess, economic power and diplomatic maneuvering across the world. In the strategy US has made it clear that it wants and will not spare any opportunity to contain China. The strategy vehemently speaks of US-China competition in the Indo-Pacific region. Washington has also released its approach Vis a Vis Taiwan Strait issue. It has made it clear that it will not accept or compromise any sort of change in the status quo in the strait. It has firmly reiterated to defend its allies and partners across the region.

1.8 China’s approach about Indo-Pacific

China has so far officially avoided using the Indo Pacific as framework for regional politics.

Beijing doesn’t deem itself to be belonged to the Indo Pacific region. It has preferred not to use the America term in its official documents⁵⁶. China is well aware of the strategic objectives and contours of Indo-Pacific strategy. For China the Indo-Pacific is not a mere narrative but s structural mechanism headed by Washington.⁵⁷ According to China US approach underpinned by Indo-Pacific is well based on coordinating effort of major powers. In contrast to the China vision of creating strong regional order.

⁵⁴National Security Strategy (Oct 2022) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

⁵⁵Antony H. Cordesman, “U.S National Defense Strategy for 2022,” Center for Strategic & International Studies, October 28, 2022.
https://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/U.S%20National%20Defense%20Strategy%20%E2%80%93%202022_%20Old%20Wine%20in%20New%20Bottle_%20_%20Vivekananda%20International%20Foundation.pdf

⁵⁶ , Ibid, p, 3-5

⁵⁷ William Choong, “ The Return of Indo-Pacific Strategy: an Assessment” Australia Journal of International Affairs(2019) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357718.2019.1639134>

China knows it very well that Indo-Pacific implicit goal is to drift the region into a strategic arena. Therefore Beijing is responding adequately and cautiously. China sees the region, may be for a time being, the area full of potentials for cooperation. China doesn't give even the impression of being in a strategic rivalry with Washington⁵⁸. It is avoiding making alliance and blocks, be it economic or military. It does not want to shoulder any sort of liability. China considers the Indo-Pacific strategy as a tool being used primarily by U.S to divide the region into strategic blocks. Beijing has blamed U.S of reinvigorating cold war mentality in the region. China vision of Indo-Pacific can be well gauged by its response to its which is based on soft system. China wants the region to be defined by soft competition with each other's as defined competitors but not in open hostility and confrontation similar to that of cold war⁵⁹. China thinks that U.S is trying to generate structural fear in the region by smearing and vilifying China. China may concede to some of the principles of Indo-Pacific strategy but not the all especially the freedom of navigation.

1.9 ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific

Arguably, the success of Indo-Pacific strategy highly hinges on the support of South East countries commonly known as ASEAN. It is the geographical heart of Indo-Pacific strategy⁶⁰. The ASEAN region seems to have played a dynamic and vital role in the conceptualization and development of each proponent's Indo-Pacific vision⁶¹. Except India, the ASEAN region has gradually become an area where the strategic interest of US, Australia and Japan highly converge. ASEAN is the region which has become of paramount importance for Washington, Canberra and Tokyo and to some extent India also. But India will possibly deny strategic wading beyond the Strait of Malacca as it doesn't want risk escalation boundary conflict with Beijing.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 8-9.

⁵⁹ Haruko, Wada, , "The Indo-Pacific Concept: Geographical Adjustments and their implications," S.Rajaratnam School of international studies (March 6, 2020) <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/10356/143604/2/WP326.pdf>

⁶⁰ Angel Damaynfi, "Indo-Pacific Maritime Cooperation: ASEAN Mechanism on Security toward Global Maritime Governance," Universitas Kristen Indonesia (2017) <http://repository.uki.ac.id/741/1/Indo-Pacific%20Maritime%20Cooperation.pdf>

⁶¹ Pongphisoot Busbarat|Richard Javad Heydarian|Hoang Thi Ha, "ASEAN's Engagement in the Indo-Pacific," Fulcrum Analysis of South East Asia, September 2022, <https://fulcrum.sg/aseanfocus/aseans-engagement-in-the-indo-pacific/>

Like the other major stakeholders, the changing strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region seem to have brought shift in the perceptions of ASEAN countries. Over the past few decades, the south East Asia countries have used the organization as a framework for the regional politics. They member countries foreign policies have been following certain bench marks set by the organization. Realistically speaking the strategic competition has created enormous problems for the block. The regional countries had long declared their vision toward the Indo Pacific region, but it was only in 2019 that ASEAN came up with its vision. During the ASEAN summit in Bangkok in 2019, the organization introduced “ASEAN Outlook “toward the Indo-Pacific strategy. The belated response was the manifestation of the group reservation Vis a Vis Indo-Pacific strategy.

Most of the ASEAN countries are skeptic of the Indo-Pacific strategy especially of the US vision of it. Amid the ongoing changing security dynamics in the region, the organization is much concerned with its centrality and is likely to snub any initiative that is well poised to divide the region into blocs. Some of the ASEAN countries have already shown the individual position toward the Indo-Pacific strategy. No country of the bloc perceives the Indo-Pacific strategy through Washington lens. In 2018 Singapore foreign minister declared that his country would not participate in any activity related to QUAD, which is the lynchpin of Indo-Pacific strategy⁶². Similarly, in Aug2018, representative of some ASEAN countries unequivocally said that that it would be difficult to support any strategy that is most likely aimed against China.

ASEAN vision of Indo-Pacific strategy can be well understood through the bloc outlook on the Indo-Pacific strategy⁶³. Realistically speaking, the ASEAN countries seem to be more inclined toward China than US. They are well aware of both China and U.S strategic interests in the region. The China development projects have so far allured the ASEAN countries. BRI has brought tangible benefit to the countries in the Pacific⁶⁴. ASEAN sees the region through the prism of their issues and challenges. They expect the regional and extra regional powers to see the region as a potential area of cooperation. They can cooperate in the drug trafficking, piracy,

⁶² Prashant Parames Waron, “ Assessing ASEAN New Indo-Pacific Outlook,” The Diplomat (2019) <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/assessing-aseans-new-indo-pacific-outlook/>

⁶³ Kei Koga,” Japan South East Relation, the Emergence of Indo-Pacific,” Comparative connection Pacific Forum(2019) <https://cc.pacforum.org/2019/05/the-emerging-indo-pacific-era/>

⁶⁴ General.gov/2021/Feb/07/2002577686 CQ Brown,” Demystifying the Indo-Pacific Theater,” Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs, https://media.defense.gov/-/1/1/JIPA_VOLUME_03_ISSUE_1_SPRING_2020.PDF

energy and most importantly in environmental sphere. But the underlying objective of Indo-Pacific is maritime security that dominates all others aspects of state relation. Interestingly, what makes the Indo-Pacific strategy less palatable for ASEAN is its inability to solve the maritime issues of the regional countries. ASEAN shares some of US principles of Indo-Pacific strategy. But its conceptualization of the Indo-Pacific is not utterly based or woven around China threat. It shares the principle of international laws, good governance of Indo-Pacific strategy with U.S, but its vision doesn't exclude China.

Chapter 2

Evolving US-China Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific Region

The rise of China is undoubtedly a new development in the global politics in the 21st century. Realistically speaking the rise has completely shaken the traditional political, economic and strategic foundation of the world. One of the immediate impacts of the new development is the strategic rivalry between US and China. This rivalry is a recent phenomenon in international relation. It can be observed in almost all the regions of the world. However, the epicenter of the competition is the Indo-Pacific region. Realistically speaking the core and vital interests of both the countries lies in the water of Indo-Pacific region⁶⁵. China has been trying hard to push itself away from the South China Sea over the past many years, or, to be more precisely, since the Inauguration of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Beijing is trying to project its power far beyond its territorial water or mainland. Driving away Washington from the region has become an overarching concern and strategic goal of Beijing. It will not let any stone unturned in driving away Washington from the approximate regions of mainland China.

On the other hand, Washington is also apprehensive of Beijing intractable march in the region and its belligerent posture. U.S has been a dominant power in the Indo-Pacific region since the end of cold war. In past US has never confronted a peer competitor in the region. The China rise has undoubtedly posed an existential challenge to Washington in the region. The China rise has completely shaken the strategic calculation of Washington toward the region.

The strategic competition is manifested or can be found in multiple ways and directions. Most notably, the major strategic stakeholders have out rightly changed their strategic approach toward the region. This new approach is the sheer deviation from the previous approaches. The competition has been intensifying day by day since over the past many years. However, it has taken completely a new turn since Trump entered in to the power corridor of Washington.

⁶⁵ Felix Heiduk and Gudrun Wacker, “From Asia Pacific to Indo-Pacific,” Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute (July 2020) <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020RP09/>

2.1 US-China Ideological Differences and the Strategic Competition

The Indo-Pacific region constitutes the central pillar of U.S-China over all strategic competition and rivalry around the world. The Indo-Pacific region has become of a paramount importance for both U.S and China. There is no exaggeration to say that the region has become an area where the strategic interest of both the major power intersects. The region has become a power theater where the two great powers are ostentatiously displaying their strategic muscles against each other. The strategic interest of both Washington and Beijing highly diverge in this part of the world. The unfolding development in the region is conducive for better understanding of the intensity of strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region.

US-China strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific has based on two fundamental pillars: ideological and economic. The ideological differences between both the US and China appeared soon after the PRC took over the mainland China⁶⁶. According to US, Chinese government is based on the ideology of totalitarianism which is synonymous with complete control of state machinery while US is striving for democracy across the world⁶⁷. For many the ideological driver of the ongoing strategic competition may seem of lesser account but only a profound study of the competition will reveal its potential and capacity. Unarguably ideological differences between both the power contenders in the region have and are motivating the overall competition between them. It is the ideological differences that accord them distinctive political and economic feature in the region.

The Ideological differences are one of the overarching reasons behind the ongoing strategic competition. The economic ambition that Beijing is assiduously pursuing may have evoked Washington apprehension, but the divergent ideological political orientation has brought US into a direct confrontation in the region. Since the takeover of China by PRC, U.S has had grave concern Vis a Vis the country political ideology. Such concerns chiefly emanate from the divergent ideological orientation of the PRC. According to US there is two divergent systems in the region one is based on freedom and democratic values and the other one is repressive and

⁶⁶ Jackson Skinner, "On the "New Cold War" Commentary in US-China Strategic Competition," Australian Institute of International Affairs, January 2023, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/on-the-new-cold-war-commentary-in-us-china-strategic-competition/>

⁶⁷ Andrei Lungu, "The U.S.-China Clash Is About Ideology After All", Foreign Policy (2022) <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/06/us-china-ideology-communism-capitalism/>

coercive⁶⁸. The concerns have steadily got aggravated since the Obama administration. However, it was during the Trump administration that open confrontation took place and Beijing came to be considered genuine threat from Washington fundamental interest in the region. For the first time, U.S felt that its fundamental interest has become under existential threat. In the 2017 National Security and Strategic papers China and Russia were explicitly declared as actors competing with U.S in the region. The growing and steady rise of China is undoubtedly a huge threat to U.S interest in the region. The fledgling economic and muscle of Beijing in the region through its BRI is a grave concern for US in the region. Washington thinks that China in the region will ultimately gain political and strategic clout in the region. There is no exaggeration that Washington red line of its global preeminence and dominance lies in this part of the world. The strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region is largely driven by Washington Perceptions about Beijing increasing role in the region. Washington is well aware of the fact that Beijing strategic ambition is to secure a big strategic room in the region from where it could potentially project its power across the globe. Therefore U.S has started to pivot away its resources toward the region to contain China within the region⁶⁹. Washington overarching goal is to blunt Beijing economic, political and strategic influence through offshore balancing

It is not only the ideological difference that can be chiefly responsible for the ongoing strategic competition between both the countries. The economic factor is also equally responsible for fueling and intensifying the strategic competition between both the countries. Since 1949, both China and U.S have been on colliding and divergent course. Since then, they have been navigating the regional and international political landscapes with two opposing ideologies⁷⁰. The nature of their relation had never been confrontational. It doesn't mean that there was no competition. The takeover of China by Chinese Communist party had laid down the seed of competition between both the countries. But it was not a strategic competition at all.

⁶⁸ National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

⁶⁹ Jessica Chen Weiss, "Are the United States and China in an Ideological Competition?," Center For Strategic & International Studies, December 2019, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/freeman-chair-blog/are-united-states-and-china-ideological-competition>

⁷⁰ Paul Heer, "Understanding US-China strategic competition," MIT Studies for International Studies, October 2020, <https://cis.mit.edu/publications/analysis-opinion/2020/understanding-us-china-strategic-competition>

2.1 Competition in the Political Domain

Both U.S and China have a long history of political and diplomatic relation spanning more than a century. The relations have come a long way since the establishment of their political relation experiencing both ups and down. For most of the time their relations have been good and friendly and remained intact from the shadow of competition.

The history of U.S engagement in the region goes back to the revolution period⁷¹. In 1784, U.S sent a trading ship “the Empress of China” to inaugurate commercial ties with China⁷². Since then, U.S enhanced its engagement in the region with each passing decade. At the end of the century U.S adopted “Open door Policy” toward China. The policy was primarily based on enhancing trade relation with China.⁷³ During the 20st century U.S increased its role manifold. In Aug 1951, U.S signed “Mutual Defense” treaty with Republic of Philippine. The very next month, In Sep 1951, U. S signed another “Security Treaty” with Australia and New Zealand⁷⁴. During the followed periods, U.S started building up strategic and economic partners

After World War II, U.S embarked on leadership role in the Indo-Pacific region⁷⁵. Washington increased its military and diplomatic presence in the region tremendously. During the Cold War period, the Indo-Pacific region remained one of the key regions in U.S policy and strategic calculations. It paid special attention and focus toward the region. During the Cold war era, U.S engagement in the region revolved around ideological clashes with the communism. The U.S policy makers were obsessed with the spread of communism. During the initial phase of the cold war U.S signed a series of milestone agreements with the regional countries hip with Japan and

⁷¹ US-China relation, “ Council of Foreign Affairs,
<https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-China-relations>

⁷² Dominic Fitzsimmons, “File: Hyungwon Kang/Reuters(2022)
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/25/timeline-major-events-in-us-China-relations-since-1949>

⁷³ Ipid, p, 3-5

⁷⁴ United State Department of State, “ Chronology of U.S-China Relation 1784-2000,
<https://history.state.gov/countries/issues/China-us-relations>

⁷⁵ Department of State United State of America, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-China/>

South Korea. The alliance system established after the WWII has been fruitful and benefiting for the regional countries. U.S let lent extensive aid and economic development to the region⁷⁶.

But since the onset of the 21st century, the global and regional politics have compelled the regional and extra regional countries to change the course of their strategic and foreign policy outlook toward the region. Over the past one decade the region has undergone and experienced unprecedented transformation mainly due to the rise of China. Since the second decade of the 21st century, Beijing has made giant strides diplomatic, economic and strategic realms. The BRI seems to have brought seismic changes in the perception of the regional and extra regional countries. It has emerged an existential threat to the regional order underpinned by U.S centric model. U.S is the only country who perceives China rise to be a genuine threat to U.S interest in the region.

Seeing the changing dynamics in the regional political and strategic landscape, U.S also changed its course of approach toward the region. It out rightly embraced the Indo-Pacific strategy. Washington wants to interact with the regional countries under the framework of Indo-Pacific strategy. In the of the changing security dynamics of the region, the new U.S approach is primarily motivated by containment of China with the help of regional countries. U.S wants the regional countries to collectively wade in the strategic arena of the Indo-Pacific region to contain China. U.S sees the region through balancing lens. The Indo-Pacific strategy is now providing strategic guideline for Washington engagement in the region.

During the first half of the 20th century no visible change was experienced in the US-China relation. During the same period, Europe had become the epicenter of the global politics. China had relatively become irrelevant for United States. The real change came to be witnessed in the wake of World War II. During the World War II, both the United States and China fought against the imperialist Japan. Up to World War II, the relation had not been many fold and dynamics. Indeed, it was the World War II that brought and set new stages for the relation of both the countries. It was only after World War II that relation between both the countries became perplexed and complex. The development in the region and at global level immensely impacted the subsequent course of the relation.

⁷⁶ Ibid P 7-8

At the end of World War II, civil war in China was going on. United States lent out latent support to the nationalist leader Chiang Kai Sheik who was fighting against Mao Ze Dung⁷⁷. United States did not want to lose a country and sweep by a new ideology in this part of the world. Although U.S blatantly denied any sort of involvement in the civil war between the nationalist and communist forces. The takeover of the country by a communist leader was a great source of discontent for U.S in the region. The ideology was not acceptable for Washington at all as it was already grappling with conflicting ideology in other part of the world⁷⁸. The change of government in the China was chiefly responsible for the rocky relation in the coming decades. After the communist party had taken complete control of the country, the nationalist government fled to Formosa- now known as Taiwan. Instead of recognizing the mainland China, US recognized Taiwan and accorded veto power in the UNSC. The recognition of Kai Sheik government in Taiwan was not a welcoming and auspicious sign for the future relation of both the countries. There is no exaggeration to say that the recognition of Taiwan by US was a prelude for the rocky relation for both the countries in the decades. This unprecedented development rendered Chinese leadership skeptic and cynical of US role in the region. Mao knew that his ideological cleavage with US was something that could not be tolerated by Washington. The recognition was undoubtedly something on which Chinese leadership can construct its perceptions about the intention of Washington.

The already fragile relation was further deteriorated by the Korean War. It aggravated the relation of both the countries. Arguably the Korean War was the product of the World War II, the war was the actual clash between the two divergent ideologies namely communism and capitalism. It lasted for about three years beginning in June 1950 and ended up in 1953. In June, 1950 the North Korean People army started marching to invade South Korea who immediately solicited Washington support. U.S intervened in the war under the UNSCR. Gen, Mach Arthur led the US army. Later on that year China jumped in to the fray as the US army reached on China-south Korea border. Chinese army successfully expelled the fifth US army from its border.

⁷⁷ Asia Fro Educator, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/China_1950_us_China.htm

⁷⁸ Peter Harris, Iren Marinova, "America Primacy and US-China Relation: The Cold War Analogy Reversed," *The Chinese Journal of I International Politics*, (September 2022) <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poac016>

The war ended in the 1953, but it left bitter legacy on the overall relation between both United States and China⁷⁹.

The Korean War may have disturbed the U.S-China relation, but the Taiwan Strait crisis undoubtedly antagonized the relation. U.S had declared that it would not interfere in the Taiwan Strait issue. But later on, the Korean War and the capture of Hainan Island by mainland China in 1950 compelled U.S president Harry Truman in Taiwan Strait crisis to take a decisive position. In 1950, he declared that U.S will abstain from the crisis. It will remain neutral in the crisis. U.S will potentially prevent any side from claiming the Strait. But confrontation between mainland China and the nationalist government in Taiwan aggravated. Amid the growing tension US started blockading the strait and sent its troops to the Strait⁸⁰. The blockade lasted nearly three years. The crisis put the relation to the lowest ebb. The crisis transformed the rocky relation in to confrontational one. During the crisis, both the countries had come to the point of brinkmanship. The US chief of navy had recommended even nuclear weapon⁸¹. During the entire 1950s decade, the relation remained confrontational.

In the end of 1969, signs of rapprochement came to be witnessed in the Sino-U.S relations. The 1969 was a marking and a watershed year in the relationship between both the countries. During the same period USSR relation with China got deteriorated. In 1969, border clashes erupted between Beijing and Moscow. The USSR-China border clashes started peeping up. It gradually melted down the frozen relation between Washington and Beijing. To capitalize on the difference between Moscow and Beijing, Washington extended its arms of cooperation toward Beijing. Coincidentally, the Ping-Pong diplomacy also paved the way for further development of the two countries. All the developments culminated in the secret visit of Henry Kissinger and Nixon in 1971 and 1972 respectively. Now Moscow replaced Washington as a biggest enemy. President Nixon spent seven days in China. During his visit he met with Mao and Zhou Enlai. Both the leaders signed the “Shanghai Communiqué” which laid down backdrop for the future

⁷⁹ Robert s Ross , Jiang Chengbin, “ Re-Examining the Cold War: US-China Diplomacy,1954- 1973, (2010) <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1tg5nbnr>

⁸⁰ Lung Chu Chen, “ US-Taiwan Relation,” <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190601126.003.0006>

⁸¹ Strained US-China Relation and the Growing Threat to Taiwan , Asia Pacific Regional Security” 2023, <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/strategic-dossiers/asia-pacific-regional-security-assessment-2023/aprsa-chapter-2/>

relation of both the countries⁸². The document provided a mechanism for both sides to handle the thorny issues which had been hampering the relation. The “Shanghai Communiqué” helped both the countries established a liaison office in each other countries, which later on led to the establishment of full-fledged diplomatic relation. After the Nixon visit U.S adopted “one China Policy

The formal relation was established during the Jimmy Carter era by a joint communiqué. After the establishment of formal relation US adopted “One China Policy. The US recognition of Taiwan transferred from Taiwan to China. The development was a milestone achievement for both Washing and Beijing. The rapprochement successfully fulfilled the interest of both the countries. US succeeded in keeping away Beijing from Moscow. Similarly, the relation helped Beijing made headways in global politics

But the relation received severe blow after China violently crushed the student protest in Tianman square in 1989⁸³. China openly associated the protest with Washington. Beijing blamed U.S for orchestrating the protest. The incident severely affected the budding relation between the two countries. In the wake of the episode US stopped selling weapons to China. The overall relations were put on to hold. During the preceding years the relation remained almost frozen, though less confrontational.

The down of the 21st century brought some sort of normalization in the relation of both the countries. US still pinned hopes to Beijing potentially possible political liberalization. In 2000 both the countries normalized their relation through “US-China Relation Act”. Under the act China was granted permanent trade relation with U.S. The development was a prelude to the China joining of world Trade Organization. No doubt it was a welcome sign the relation of both the countries. But Washington soon jumped into the war against terrorism which relegated the relation to secondary position.

⁸² Ryan Hass , “ Are Worsening US-China relation in the Taiwan interest” Brooking Institute, October 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/are-worsening-us-China-relations-in-taiwans-interest/>

⁸³ How the Crisis over Taiwan will Change US-China Relation, The Economist, https://www.economist.com/China/2022/08/11/how-the-crisis-over-taiwan-will-change-us-China-relations?ppccampaignID=&ppcadID=&ppcgclid=&utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=17210591673&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gclid=Cj0KCQjw0IGnBhDUARIsAMwFDLl6iWhVDeWl_H73RklahJcLrryeKYZribhpR92sADOc5t84g9b-_BIaAiVNEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds

Rise of China and the Strategic Competition

Undoubtedly the rise of China is a phenomenal development of our time. The Beijing unprecedented economic growth and adroit diplomacy seem to have shaken the foundations of world order that was laid down by U.S in the wake of World War II. It is the Beijing economic power which is making the Indo-Pacific countries especially the ASEAN member countries are rally behind him⁸⁴. The unprecedented economic rise helped China to project its economic power across the globe. Once it became financially strong it set out a new economic benchmark in the world. The economic power made set new priorities in the global and regional politics. Such economic power is the result of Beijing economic reforms and their vigorous implementation over the past many decades.

The rise of China is one of the greatest phenomena of the modern time. It is worth investigating that how China successfully emerged as a global power just within three decades. Few decade ago it was seemingly unimaginable that China would become a global power in the following two or three decades. The unpredictable rise of Beijing can be well traced back to the economic reform introduced by Deng-Xiaoping in 1979. He was shrewd politician and had profoundly observed the dismal economic situation the country had been reeling under since from the very beginning. Soon after coming into power in 1979, Deng-Xiaoping embarked on a series of economic reforms. He started steering the country on new economic path. He deviated from the from the core tenet of the political ideology of communism. He allowed small private businesses. In 1985 he put an end to the commune system that was prevalent in the country since the PRC had taken power. Within short span of time the economic openness had positive impact on the country economy.

By 1980s the GDP increased significantly. Prior to Deng-Xiaoping economic reforms, China was one of the poorest countries of the world. After coming into power in 1978 Den Xiaoping opened Chinese market for foreign investment. The policy had positive implications on Chinese economy. Prior to him the country GDP was about \$156 billion, but over the course time⁸⁵, chiefly owing to the Deng-Xiaoping reforms, the country GDP gradually increased. By 2008

⁸⁴ Mathew Burrows and Josef Brami, "U.S-China Economic Competition is Headed Down a Dangerous Path," The National Interest, May 2024,

⁸⁵ Shigeo Kobayashi, Jia Baobo and Junya Sano, "The "Three Reforms" in China: Progress and Outlook," Japan Research Institute, September 1999, <https://www.jri.co.jp/english/periodical/rim/1999/RIME199904threereforms/>

China's GDP reached up to \$ 8830 billion. Since then, the country GDP has doubled and now it is about \$19373.59 billion⁸⁶.

The economic strength of China has led China to exert its influence directly and indirectly in global politics. There is no such domain in which China has not shown remarkable and astounding development: be it economic, social, military or military. Few decades ago, China was one the impoverished country in the world. It was stood at the bottom of the most international rankings of countries such as in education, technology, science and military. But today it has occupied a significant position in global politics. Due to the unprecedented rise China has emerged as a key player in global politics. Before 1980 China GDP was less than \$300 billion, but today it stands around \$14 trillion⁵⁵. According to World Bank report China is contributing 37% to the global GDP. Before 1980s, China trade with external world was \$40 billion, but now it is stood around \$4 trillion⁸⁷.

There is no exaggeration to say that China rise is an unprecedented rise is underpinned by massive economic growth. But there is one fundamental question that how China achieved such massive economic development. Till the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, China was one of the impoverished countries in the world. The communist regime and its corollaries the “Great Leap Forward policy” introduced in 1956 and the Cultural Revolution of 1966 had drastically failed to wriggle out China from the web of poverty and misery. The Mao communist ideology had failed to address the economic woes of the masses. Till the death of Mao, millions of Chinese died due to the famine- chiefly inflicted by the great leap forward policy.

The genesis of the Chinese rise can be intrinsically associated with era of Deng Xiaoping. He out rightly reversed the economic policy of Mao Zedong. He opened up Chinese economy for domestic and external players. His overarching goal was to utilize the huge bulk of Chinese labor force. He immediately started equipping the labor force especially that of the agriculture sector⁸⁸. Soon the agriculture sector proved to be a boon for the Chinese textile sector. The west was

⁸⁶<https://www.unicef.org/media/116226/file/China-2021-COAR.pdf>

⁸⁷ Congressional Research service, “China Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges and Implications for the United States,” January 2019, <https://sgp.fas.org>row>

⁸⁸ Congressional Research service, “China Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges and Implications for the United States,” January 2019, <https://sgp.fas.org>row>

hoodwinked by the Chinese opened up policy. And let it to be integrated into the global economic system. The west believed that once China starts ripping up benefit from the liberal economic system, it would ultimately lead toward political liberalization.

Now China seems to be well intended to become a dominant power in both Pacific and Indian Ocean. Its rise has posed serious and existential threat to U.S and its allies in the region. The relation between China and U.S has never been good and friendly since the People Republic of China (PRC) has entered into the power corridor of Beijing. But the rise of China has ushered a new era of confrontation between both the countries. Over the past many years, the tense and rocky relation has been morphed into a strategic competition. The real strategic competition begins with the trump era. For the first time US explicitly raised strategic concerns over China efforts and strategies in the Indo-Pacific region. The National Security Strategy for the first time alarmed the regional countries of the potential danger of the China ambition. US contended that China is pursuing coercive economic and security strategies in the region that don't essentially augur well for the regional peace and stability. Washington detected Beijing effort and ambition of bringing new system in the region. Washington unequivocally declared that China infrastructure investment is not devoid of danger as it will use it as coercive tool against the regional countries.

All these US apprehension stemmed out from the Chinese initiatives chiefly the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which was established in by China in 2016⁸⁹. In the wake of this development US adopted trade war or decoupling policy toward China. The trade war was yet another dimension of US-China strategic competition at global level. Both the countries came to be locked in to a fierce trade war in early 2018. Since the Trump era, U.S has come out with firm commitment to weaken China influence at global level. The trade war initiated by Donald Trump, is the most conspicuous aspect of the U.S-China rivalry at global. U.S thinks that the threat posed by China to its global preeminence can be neutralized by weakening China economic power. The trade war is the major component of the US-China rivalry as it directly impacts the global governance system. Till 2022, Beijing has almost entered the approximate parity with Washington.

⁸⁹ Shigeo Kobayashi, Jia Baobo and Junya Sano, "The "Three Reforms" in China: Progress and Outlook," Japan Research Institute, September 1999, <https://www.jri.co.jp/english/periodical/rim/1999/RIMe199904threereforms/>

During these years U.S massively got engaged in Middle East and Afghanistan that rendered U.S-China relation of secondary importance. During the same period Beijing made giant strides in economic realm. The relation had not yet occupied central theme of international relation. It was only in 2011, when Washington sensed some sort of threat emanating from China. It was for the first time that China was mentioned as an explicit threat in the U.S policy and defense paper⁹⁰.

China's Economic Strategies of Growth

The political competition is manifested in the political approaches of both the countries in the world in special and the Indo-Pacific region in particular. In essence the policies and approaches of both contending powers are aimed at gaining and securing political clout in the region. They are wooing the region countries to get political leverage against each other's in the region. Both countries are vigorously pursuing divergent political agendas both at global and regional levels.

Belt & Road Initiative and the Strategic Competition

Arguably, The Belt & Road Initiative-BRI laid down the foundation of the ongoing strategic competition. The project was a breaking point in the U.S understanding of Beijing implicit strategic objectives. There is no exaggeration to say that the project has had seismic impact on the global politics. The project has far reached impact on the U.S. China competition: it morphed the competition into a strategic competition. The project has posed genuine threat to the U.S enduring and core interest in the region.

Under BRI China aim is to give new economic vision to the world in special and the developing ones in particular. Xi Jinping initiated this landmark initiative in 2013. The project is the manifestation of China intractable economic rise. China allocated approximately \$ 900 trillion to the said project⁹¹. Since then with each passing year the competition incrementally morphed into a strategic competition. The BRI heralded a new era in the Chinese economic history. It was to open a new chapter in the economic history of China. The BRI laid down the foundation of China rise at the regional and global scale. The BRI was a regional and global economic

⁹⁰ U.S-China Relation , Council on Foreign Relation 1949-2022, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-China-relations>

⁹¹ Christophe Nedopil Wang, "China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Investment Report 2022," Green Financial & Development Center , Feb 2023, <https://greenfdc.org/china-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-investment-report-2022/#:~:text=Chinese%20engagement%20through%20financial%20investments,7%20billion.>

encirclement of Washington. The BRI is a new development in the global politics⁹². It alarmed a bell for Washington hegemony across the globe. Therefore, it will not be an exaggeration to say that the BRI and the ensuing unprecedented Chinese economic rise completely changed the nature of the competition. Unarguably, the subsequent transformation and development in the Chinese foreign policy owed much to its economic rise. On the dint of its economic power and capacity China incrementally became a genuine threat to the US core interest in the world in special and the Indo-Pacific in particular.

It is the economic power on the basis which China is getting leverage against its arch rival and thereby eroding US credibility in the region in special and world in particular. China economic maneuver has seemingly worked in its favor. China is fundamentally navigating the economic landscape of the region through BRI. China has so far invested billions of dollars mostly infrastructure projects in south East Asia countries. The regional countries have found the investment comparatively promising for their infrastructure hungry economy. There is no exaggeration to say that the Chinese economic approach toward the regional countries is more appealing and welcoming than the US one which chiefly revolves around strategic and military partnership.

The economic penetration of China in the region, which has been traditionally US sphere of influence, has posed a genuine strategic threat for US in the region. The economic leverage Beijing is getting in the region doesn't bode well for the US strategic engagement in the region. Undoubtedly, the BRI is likely to play a pivotal role for China power projection in the region in special and the world in particular⁹³. The massive investment in more than seventy countries under the BRI will help it secure diplomatic, political and strategic clouts around the world. Seemingly, on account of BRI Beijing is pushing itself into the approximate parity with the US. This new development has put US interest in jeopardy and peril. US think and believe that China will in inevitably use its economic power as a tool to coax and coerce the region countries in to its own sphere of influence. The China economic power projection in the region and the US apprehension has put both the countries on a colliding course that resulted in to a strategic competition in the region.

⁹²

⁹³

China Global Development Initiatives

Over the past many years China has taken many initiatives at global and regional levels in political domains. China Global Development Initiative (GDI) is one of the key initiatives that can potentially help Beijing secure enough political clout global levels. The GDI is a developmental plane presented by Xi-Jinping in November 2022 in the UN general assembly. Economic Initiative (GDI). GDI is the Chinese modality for the global development. It is a holistic approach toward development. China seems to have taken and assumed global responsibility. It deems itself as responsible member and stakeholder of the global community. GDI is basically is a developmental plan which is aimed to implement and execute the UN SDGs agenda. Through GDI China wants renewed engagement with the global community especially the developing world. The framework has broader parameters and goals. For China the concept of development is inclusive as it incorporates entire global community in it. For China the realization of SDGs and any other developmental framework the participation of global community is essential.

GDI essentially seeks to eliminate poverty, green development, climate change, food security, digital economy, industrialization, good governance and connectivity. GDI is based on certain fundamental pillars such as inclusivity, people centered approach, equal benefit and action-oriented approach. China overarching desire is to pitch its own tent in global community. It has created its own group of friends under the umbrella of GDI⁹⁴. The group consists of over more than fifty countries.

⁹⁴ Lu Yonglong, "Global Development Initiative Promotes the Delivery of Sustainable Development Goals," Global Times, June 2023, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page>

Inception of Competition

2.4. Pivot to Asia and the US-China Security Competition

It is a fundamental question that why US abruptly shifted its attention or pivoting away for the Middle East, which had been the at the core of US foreign policy decisions for decades, to the Asia pacific in special and the East Asia in particular. Assuming something of immense importance might have happened in the region that had brought paradigm shift in Washington perception visa a Vis the region. It the exact time that China began making inroads in the regional economic and political realms. In the wake of these initial developments US felt dire need to tailor out systematic approaches to deal with the situation. Perhaps there will be no exaggeration to assume that the exact origin of the US-China strategic competition began in during the first tenure of Barak Obama.

In 2011, the Obama administration came up with a systematic approach in the form of “Pivot to Asia”. Realistically speaking the Pivot to Asia was a strategy chiefly designed to rebalance China in East Asia region⁹⁵. It was the first systematic approach of US to deal with the emerging China. To bolster diplomatic and political engagement with the regional countries was one of the core tenets of the policy. Under the policy US wanted to expand its economic engagement with pacific countries. On security from US wanted to boost and ramping up its military presence in the region. This was the most contentious pillar of the strategy⁹⁶. The grand strategy was tailored to rebalance the South East Asia region where China had become relatively powerful and had posed some sort of threat to the US position and influence in the region. The aim of the policy was to bolster US political, economic and strategic engagement with the Pacific countries. Unfortunately, due to some reasons the policy fell short of its desired objectives.

2.4.1 Free and Open Indo Pacific

In the ensuing years China became powerful. Its power emboldened it to project itself in the region. In the wake of this new projection of power by China the competition between both the countries assumed new dimension in the following years. The Chinese assertive posture impelled US to reorient its approach to navigate the regional strategic landscape. Later on, Washington

⁹⁵ Keneth G.Lieberthal, “The Ameriacan Pivot to Asia,” Brooking Institute, December 2011, www.brookings.edu

⁹⁶ Ibid, P 3-5

ascribed to a new approach “Free and Open Indo Pacific”. Initially the approach was adopted by Japanese Prime minister Shinzo Abe in 2016, but later on US also embraced it⁹⁷. Intrinsically the concept of FOIP is based on the principles of freedom and establishing rule of Law Sea in the region. The policy seeks to promote connectivity and trade in the Indo-Pacific region. This approach was quite divergent from that of the previous “Rebalancing” one. In this approach US adopted more hostile posture toward Beijing. For the first time China came to be viewed as an existential threat to the US in the region.

In the Obama administration Washington adopted “pivot to Asia “policy. The policy put the relation on confrontational track. The policy was a well calculated move designed to control China growing rise in the region. The pivot to Asia was a double pronged strategy: on one hand Washington wanted to cooperate with Beijing; on the other hand, it wanted to increase its presence across the region.

Another major development took place in 2013 in the form of Sunny Land meeting between Obama and Xi Jinping. The meeting did not yield any tangible result as the relation had already been put on confrontational course. Since then both the countries’ national and foreign policy benchmark have come to be intersecting with each other. During the meeting both the countries agreed on the way forward. They agreed on some issues but the most outstanding issues such as cyber security and weapon sell to Taiwan remained unresolved.

2.5 Avenues of Competition

These are the avenues for US China rivalry.

2.5.1 South China Sea

The South China Sea issue has exacerbated the relation between the two countries. The SCS issue has become a strategic irritant between the two countries⁹⁸. Arguably, the SCS has been fueling the strategic competition between both the countries.

Since 2015, the political relation has morphed into a strategic competition between the two countries. Beijing militarization in the SCS has impelled Washington to pivot away its resources to the region. US is blaming China for the construction of artificial islands in the SCS.

⁹⁷ Mark J. Valencia, “What does a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Actually Mean,”? The Diplomat, March 2018, thediplomate.com

⁹⁸ US Relation with China 1949-2022, <https://www.bunkhistory.org/resources/timeline-us-relations-with-China-1949-2022>

Washington contends that the SCS is a disputed territory between China and the littoral states. During the trump era the strategic competition between both the countries got intensified. Both the countries came to be locked in a trade war in 2018. And the Biden administration came harder on Beijing.

Washington seems to be well poised to eliminate or potentially reduced the countries capacity to an extent it may not pose any sort of threat to Washington. In past we saw thaw in the relation between the countries. But such incident cannot be seen in the foreseeable future. There seems to be no sign of retreat. There are many outstanding issues that will always haunt the relation and will never let it be on a right and peaceful track.

2.5.2 Taiwan Issue

On Nov 14, 2022 US president Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in Bali on the side line of G20 summit⁹⁹. It was the first high level meeting between both the sides after the Nancy Pelosi controversial visit to Taiwan. In the wake of her visit, Beijing had cut off all the dialogue channels with Washington. Immense expectations were pinned to the meeting. It was speculated that the meeting will ease the simmering tension between both the countries. It was expected that the meeting will eventually lead to the resumption of talks over many issues such as climate change and trade war. But immediately after the meeting Chinese state media declared that Taiwan is a Red Line for Beijing¹⁰⁰. US also reiterated its strategic support to Taiwan. One can easily infer that the Taiwan issue is a contentious issue that can't be resolved diplomatically or through any other channel. It is a red line for both the countries. It will, as it has been, determine the nature of the US-China relation in the foreseeable future.

2.3.2 US Economic Approaches amid the Strategic Competition in the Region

Traditionally, there have been two fundamental approaches to contain any country anywhere in the world. One is the strategic approach and the other one is the economic approach. Since the end of World War II, U.S has been relatively using strategic approach to navigate the global politics. First, US approached the rise of China with the strategy of offshore balancing during the

⁹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People Republic of China, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202211/t20221114_10974686.html#:~:text=On%20the%20afternoon%20of%2014,major%20global%20and%20regional%20issues.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. P.3-5

Obama administration. To palliate and listen to the grave concerns of the regional countries, Washington also added economic pillar to its containment strategy in the form of Trans Pacific Partnership. The deal was trade agreement among the twelve Pacific Rim countries including Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam. The deal was officially signed in August 2016. The deal was supposed to lower tariff on manufacturing goods. However, In Jan 2017, just few months ago of US official announcement of the Indo-Pacific strategy, U.S withdrew from the Trans Pacific Partnership. Unfortunately, the agreement did not yield to what the signatories of the treaty had anticipated and expected.

2.3.3 Indo-Pacific Economic Forum (IPEF)

Seeing the BRI consistent success, US added an economic pillar in the form of “Indo Pacific Economic Forum” to its Indo-Pacific strategy in May 2022 during the sideline of QUAD meeting¹⁰¹. The Indo-Pacific Economic Forum seems to be no more than a complementary tool of the US strategic vision of the Indo-Pacific region. Its sole objective is to facilitate trade and supply chain, to help the regional countries in clean energy, focus on infrastructure development, anti-corruption and good governance. But the member countries have still reservations Vis a Vis the initiative as it has no match to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)¹⁰². For US the Indo-Pacific Economic Form is no less than a complementary tool. And for the regional countries it is no more than a platform for negotiating variety of economic issues such as unfair trade, ensure supply chain and clean energy.

2.3.4 Build Back Better World (B3W)

As of June 2021, US came up with a new economic framework in the form of B3W to work with regional countries. The Build Back Better World (B3W) is a new approach undertaken by G7 countries¹⁰³. The aim of the B3W framework is to address infrastructure gap in the developing world. The framework is the stark reflection of the power competition between US and China,

¹⁰¹ Erin Murphy “The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework Uncertain Future,” Center for Strategic and International Order, March 2024,

¹⁰² Ibid. P 4-5

¹⁰³ Ian Noy, Benno and Ferrarini, “Build Back Better, What is it and what should it be,” ADB Economic Working Paper Series, December 2019, <http://dx.doi.org/10.22617/WPS190583-2>

though US has categorically denied that the project was not a counter initiative to BRI. The overarching goal of B3W is to mobilize bilateral and multilateral capital for investment in health, climate change, infrastructure, technology and gender equality

Although the Chinese economic engagement with the regional countries especially the ASEAN member countries have overshadowed US economic engagement, but it doesn't mean the US has become irrelevant to the regional countries in term of economic engagement. US is the important trading partner of the South East Asia countries especially ASEAN. As recently as May 2023, US signed another important agreement with South East Asia Countries. China issue; rather it had potential and far-reaching consequences for the rest of the world

2.7 Technological competition between U.S and China

As we know that the U.S-China Strategic Competition has become multifaceted. It has encompassed almost all walks of life. The rivalry between U.S and China has gone deeper in to the sphere of technology. U.S has been a dominant power in the field of technology. Since the end of World War II, technological advancement has been an underlying factor behind U.S supremacy in the world. There is no exaggeration to say that technology has been a factor that underpins Washington preeminence across the globe. It is natural that any threat to such technological superiority would trigger and unleash an era of rivalry between the competitors.

China has made unprecedented development in the field of technology over the past few years. It has made many remarkable inroads in the domain of technology. Beijing has nearly outsmarted Washington in sphere of technologies. Beijing is likely to surpass U.S technological advancement. Such dramatic and exponential development has set alarm bells in Washington. Washington is well aware of the fact that technological advancement directly bears on the security of the state. Washington knows it that it is the technology that exposes state vulnerability and secures it against potential enemy¹⁰⁴.

The Chinese tech giants like Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC), Tianjin Zhonghuan Semi Corporation, Anigroup Ghuxin, Micro Electric Corporation and Huawei

¹⁰⁴ Haiyong Sun, "US-China tech war Impacts and Prospects" China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies vol.05,No.02,pp.197-212(2019) <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/S237774001950012X>

have posed serious challenges to U.S. hold in Technology¹⁰⁵. Till 2005 U.S. companies such as Apple, IBM, Alphabet and Microsoft enjoyed dominant position in the world of technology¹⁰⁶. But since then, the dominance has been challenged by Chinese giant tech companies. U.S. doesn't want to cede a fraction of its dominance to China in the field of technology¹⁰⁷. Undoubtedly technology has direct bearing on national security and there is rational that why U.S. is much concerned with Chinese technological advancement.

2.8 Indo-Pacific Strategy and the US-China Security Competition

The ongoing Strategic Competition between U.S. and China has become multifaceted. The security competition or dimension is the major pillar and constituent of the ongoing competition. The security competition is clear indication that both the countries are locked in a real strategic competition. There is no exaggeration to say that it is the security dimension which has morphed the competition into a strategic competition in which both the contending powers are trying to wipe out each other's. It also shows that the core and vital interest of both the countries have intersected each other's in the water of the Indo-Pacific in special and the South China Sea in particular. The security competition has explicitly been manifested in the divergent approaches of both the countries.

The Indo-Pacific region- especially the Pacific region has been a vital region for U.S. From security point of view Washington has always prioritized this region. In the past, U.S. played a leadership role in the security architecture of the region. It has enjoyed massive security engagement with regional countries through mutual security treaty. During the cold war the regional countries rallied behind U. S¹⁰⁸. During the same period U.S. provided security umbrella to the regional countries against communism.

In the wake of China rise and the subsequent competition the regional security architecture underwent fundamental changes. The unfolding political, economic and strategic events

¹⁰⁵ Muhamad Umar Farooq, "US-China Tech Rivalry: Impact and Way forward," Global Village Space, (January, 2023) <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/us-China-tech-rivalry-impacts-and-way-forward/>

¹⁰⁶ Haiyong Sun, "US-China tech war Impacts and Prospects" China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies vol.05, No.02, pp.197-212(2019)) <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/S237774001950012X>

¹⁰⁷ Miles M. Evers, "Why the United States is losing the Tech War with China," The Lawfare Institute January 2024, www.lawfaremedia.org

¹⁰⁸ John Hemmings, "The Evolution of U.S. Alliance system in the Indo-Pacific since the end of Cold war end," Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, August 2023, <https://dkiapecss.edu/uploads>

compelled both the U.S and China to design new approaches to navigate the regional strategic landscape. U.S seems to be quite proactive in this regard. Since China adopted assertive posture U.S has come up with new approaches to deal with, which further complicated the security dynamics of the region. U.S has completely departed from its past strategic approach toward the region. As we have already mentioned that in past U.S was at the center of the regional security architecture, but in the new security system Washington is trying to outwit and compete China through off Shore balancing. The most explicit form of this new strategy is the Revival of QUAD and AUKUS¹⁰⁹. U.S has realized that the regional countries especially ASEAN are neither capable nor willing to stand against China. In the following paragraphs the research will shed light on the U.S approaches to deal with China threat.

By 2017 US had realized that China had outweighed its influence and capability in the Indo-Pacific region. US felt dire need for a renewed strategy to cope with the intractable march of China in the region. It needed a systematic approach to navigate the strategic development in the region. It officially embraced the Indo-Pacific strategy in 2017 during Trump administration. Since then the concept has been the part and parcel of Washington defense papers such as National Security and National Defense Strategy. There is no exaggeration to say that the concept has been guiding US engagement in the region. It is the conceptual corner stone of Washington US approach toward the region. Since its official announcement in 2017, the Indo-Pacific Strategy has undergone changes but its stated objective has been the same¹¹⁰. Under this strategy U.S overarching goal was to make the region a strategic arena where the regional countries will start strategic muscling against each other's. Washington wanted to expand its influence by strategic means and weaken BRI by strategic balancing

For U.S the Indo-Pacific region is not more than a strategic arena. Its economic engagement and other political and economic endeavors are complementary tools. U.S is trying to create systematic strategic pressure on the region by vilifying China in its official documents. Since the Donald Trump era U.S has been making coordinated efforts to forge a united front against China. Japan, India and Australia are the Washington key strategic players in the Indo-Pacific

¹⁰⁹ Tomohiko Satake , “ The Rise of Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific: the QUAD & AUKUS,” JEF, Nov 2022, <https://www.jef.or.jp>pdf>

¹¹⁰ Kizuna, New Plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” Policy Speech by PM Kishida, March 2023, the Government of Japan, <https://www.japan.go.jp>2023/05>

region. They have revived QUAD which forms the lynchpin of the Indo-Pacific new security architecture. These countries have a major role in the Indo-Pacific strategic theater. For U.S they are strategic asset and have potential to counter China in the region. Washington wants to secure a big room for India.

2.8.1 The Alliance System and the Indo-Pacific Strategy

Alliance system and bilateral strategic partnership has been the traditional approaches of US toward the Indo-Pacific region. Washington has been following this approach since almost the end of World War II. U.S has been enjoying massive military presence in the Indo-Pacific region through decades. In the wake of China rise and its subsequent subversive activities and assertive posture in the region, U.S has reshuffled its strategic alliance system in the region¹¹¹. Washington wants to contain Beijing through offshore balancing and strategic deterrence. Partnership between U.S and its strategic partners and allies are indispensable for U.S to uphold its primacy in the region. It attaches great importance to the strategic partners in the region. Under the Indo-Pacific strategy, U.S has shown keen desire to work closely with its partners to maintain the regional order that has come under sheer threat chiefly emanating from Beijing.

As we have already discussed that the strategic alliance system has underwent drastic changes since China has assumed adversarial posture toward US in the region. The lynchpin of this strategic alliance is QUAD and AUKUS¹¹². Both of them make the primary pillar of the new strategic alliance system in the region. US has been putting enormous emphasize on the importance of QUAD and AUKUS. In 2018 US started the revival of QAUD- a quadrilateral Security agreement among four likeminded countries of the region. The revival of QUAD was the practical manifestation of US intention toward the region and the manifestation of the strategic competition between US and China in the region.

QUAD was initially kicked off by Japan, India, US and Australia in 2017. It was a security dialogue mechanism among the four likeminded countries. For many it was a strategic response to the growing and intractable march of China in the region. Since then, the mechanism has

¹¹¹ Ibid. P 2-3

¹¹² Maj Ashok Kumar, “Quad, Aukus, and now squad: How Multiple Grouping are Dissipating U.S effort against China,” Firstpost, May 2024, <https://www.firstpost.com>opinion>

undergone many changes as the cooperation among the member countries have grown tremendously. In 2017, during the ASEAN summit the member countries formally declared to counter China in the Indo-Pacific region in special and the South China SEA in particular. Another important development occurred in 2021 when the QUAD member countries announced and presented a shared vision for the Indo-Pacific region based on Free and Open Indo-Pacific. The articulated a strong desire about the South China Sea and East China Sea based on rule based maritime order's wants to make QUAD a strong strategic block. U.S believes that the combined strength of the QUAD member countries can create credible deterrence to contain China within the region.

Another most important pillar of the new alliance system is AUKUS which was signed among U.S, Australia and UK in Sep 2021¹¹³. According the content of the deal, US will build up nuclear capable submarines in Canberra. All these new strategic development in the form of new alliance system is the clear manifestation of the ongoing fierce strategic competition in the region. As far as China is concerned, it has potentially avoided making strategic alliance with any country of the country. For Beijing strategic alliance will unleash cold war like mentality in the region which will inevitably divide the region into two opposing blocs.

Since 2017, U.S has increased its defense and strategic cooperation with its partners. U.S wants to enhance interoperability of its partner's forces. U.S deems the strategic partnership pre requisite to contain China as the later one seems to have outweighed the former in more ways than one in the region¹¹⁴. Washington thinks that strategic partnership can generate effective and credible deterrence to China. The joint forces of America and its allies will be able to face any sort of strategic challenge. To broaden and strengthen its partnership, Washington changed its Pacific Command into USINDOPACOM in 2018 that manifests US commitment to strengthen its partnership and tight rope against Beijing¹¹⁵.

On the other hand, China has refrained from open security competition. However, it has taken certain steps in security realm which have directly put him into a security competition with U.S

¹¹³ Carl Baker and Brade Glosserman, "Doing more and Expecting less: the Future of U.S alliance in the Asia Pacific," Pacific Forum CSIS, January 2023, <https://www.files.ethz.ch>isn>

¹¹⁴ Thomas S. Wilkins, "Evolving Security Alignment of the Indo-Pacific: the U.S alliance , the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and ASEAN," ETH Zurich, March 2013, <https://www.jiia-jic.jp>pdf>

¹¹⁵ Ibid. P 4-6

in the Indo-Pacific region. China defense modernization may be a major concern for U.S in the region. It cannot tolerate a security competitor in the Indo-Pacific water. China territorial assertive claims in the region are a genuine threat to U.S more than the regional countries. U.S maritime assertion directly challenges U.S hegemony in the region which he has been enjoying since the end of World War II.

2.8.2 The Strategic Competition and the Maritime Sector

When a mere competition between two states gets morphed into a strategic competition then it permeates into various domains. The strategic competition between U.S and China can be easily discerned in various fields. It has become palpable in many ways and foreign policy decisions. It has become all-encompassing in the recent past. The competition has also permeated in maritime sector also. Arguably, it is the maritime sector where the core and fundamental interests of both the countries highly intersects with each other's. The competition primarily revolves around China nine-dash claim and the U.S persistent approach to uphold the right of freedom and lawful use of the sea which has been recognized by international law¹¹⁶. China wants to restrict Washington maritime behaviors in the region, while US perennial desire is to treat SCS as a body of international water¹¹⁷. The ongoing strategic competition between US and China can be easily observed in maritime sector. The South China Sea and East China Sea are the potential grounds where both China US and China are locked in to maritime row. Since China has started assertion in both the seas. Since the rise of China as an economic power the South China Sea has become a flash point between the US and China. Undoubtedly the South China Sea can be called the epicenter of the strategic competition between both the countries. Over the past one-decade South China Sea has emerged as an arena for potential conflict between both the power contenders

The South China Sea occupies a unique strategic position and significance for both US and China. U.S is well aware of the significance of the South China Sea for China. Washington firmly believes that if Beijing succeeds in establishing hegemonic influence in the South China Sea than it will be easy for it to assert its influence in the entire region. Such development is and

¹¹⁶

¹¹⁷ U.S Naval Institute Staff , “ Report on U.S-China Competition in East, South China Sea ,” February 2024, news.usni.org

indeed will be an existential threat to US national core interest which revolves around hegemonic behaviors in the region.

The strategic competition in maritime sector especially the SCS can be traced back to the China nine-dash claim coupled with the initiation of the ambitious BRI project. The BRI was followed by China contested construction of Spratly and Paracel islands in the South China Sea. China explicit aim is to strengthen its territorial claims in the South China Sea¹¹⁸. The construction of these islands along with some other developments such as the declaration of air identification zones in most part of the South China Sea aggravated US and its allies' apprehension of a US China ambition¹¹⁹. Apart from its assertive stance in the South China Sea, its maritime actions in the East China Sea have stimulated the ongoing strategic competition in the region. Over the recent past China is also locked into a maritime row with Japan over Senkaku islands in East China Sea.

China maritime activities region seem unstoppable. Beijing is embarked on an ambitious plan to have full control of the entire South China Sea. China deems the surrounding of the SCS vital to project its regional power. China primary goal is to break the first island chain that extends from Japan to the East of Taiwan. For this purpose, China has upgraded and modernized its naval forces. Beijing has drastically increased its defense budget which has further sparked serious concerns in Washington. US believes that such unilateral actions and developments is a real and genuine threat to its long standing political, strategic and economic interest in the region- a region where it has held its sway for decades.

U.S doesn't have any geographical claim in the SCS and East China Sea, but it sees and treats both the seas as body of international water. The US stance is the sheer negation of Beijing nine-dash claim in the SCS. Since the emergence of China belligerent postures in the SCS and ECS, U.S has been proactively pursuing "Freedom of Navigation and Freedom of Operation (FONOP) in the SCS especially in the Spratly and Paracel islands¹²⁰. The US has been sailing both the islands on routine basis. The USS Nimitz Carrier Strike group and Marine Amphibious Group

¹¹⁸ Andrew S Ericson, "U.S-China Strategic Competition in South & East China Seas: Background & Issues for Congress," November 2023, www.andrewerickson.com

¹¹⁹ Ip, p 2-3

¹²⁰ NC Cardenas, "Military Competition between U.S and China in the South China Sea," Project Muse, April 2020, <https://muse.jhu.edu>article>

conduct routine operations in the South China Sea. China deems such activities illegal trespass in its territorial water while Washington contends that that its conduct of “Freedom of Navigation and freedom of Operation” is in exclusive economic zone not in the Chinese territorial zone.

Chapter 3

Historical Significance of ASEAN

3.1 Background

Having a united organization centered on the pillar of common good and prosperity of the people has been the overarching desire of the people of the South East Asia region. But such desire could only be materialized through concerted and bold steps. In case of South East Asia region, the regional countries succeeded only in carving out an independent and autonomous organization after the end of World War II¹²¹. The idea of the creation of regional organization had already existed in the minds of prominent leaders of the region. These prominent leaders wanted to create an umbrella type organization¹²². They knew that the region had split on various lines and only a regional organization can bind them together. They had firm belief political, social and economic threads can potentially bind them together. Some of the notable leaders made praise worthy endeavors to give practical shape to their sublime ideas. But the hurdles and obstacles were formidable to surmount.

It was only in 1967, that their desires and dreams came to be materialized. The 1967 year was a fateful year when Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore Philippine eventually laid down the foundation of ASEAN in Bangkok Declaration.¹²³ The establishment of ASEAN was a new development in the modern political history of the South East Asia region.

The establishment of ASEAN owes much to the unflinching effort made by some of the prominent political figures. These leaders wanted from the very beginning to insulate the region against external and foreign influence. But the time was not yet propitious. Most of the countries were still at loggerhead with each other over domestic and intra-regional issues. The removal of Sukarno by a military Coup in 1967 ultimately paved the way for the establishment of ASEAN.

¹²¹ Koh Kheng-Liang, Nicholas A, Robinson and Lye Lin-Heng, "Appendix B - Founding of ASEAN – a short history", Published online by Cambridge University Press: 05 April 2016

¹²² Frank Frost, "Introduction: ASEAN since 1967 — Origins, Evolution and Recent Developments," World View, 198 . <https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-349-20886>

¹²³Thanat Khoman, " ASEAN Conception and Evolution," Association of South East Asia Nations,

Sukarno had pro-China stance. But the new president of Indonesia Suharto had anticommunist stance. He wanted to have a common front against communist insurgencies in the region. Tonka-Abdul Razak-a prominent political figure from Malaysia contributed tremendously in the establishment of ASEAN¹²⁴.

The overarching objective of the organization was to foster and forge political, economic and social bond among the South East Asia region Countries. In the wake of World War II the pioneers of the organization wanted to keep the region away from the influence of major power politics¹²⁵. They believed that the region could have its own say in global politics by carving out its own political and socio-economic platform. They had firm belief that economic cooperation among the member countries could potentially solve all the intra-regional issues and disputes. The member countries knew that economically prosperous region is the only way to end foreign. In simple words the organization is underpinned by the notion of common prosperity. As the success of the organization is concerned, it made impressive strides in the early phase.

Prior to the Vietnam War the organization was a tenuous association of the South East Asia region. But the war left undeniable imprint on the development of the organization. The war impacted the organization immensely. The war helped the organization set up new parameters and bench marks for its agendas. Up until the Vietnam War was a loose combination of the founding member. The organization was underpinned by some superfluous ideas. But the war helped the member countries realize and understand the ground realities of global politics. Undoubtedly, the war brought the much needed cohesion to the organization. In the wake of the war the member countries started looking the region with broader lens.

The 1970s decade was a fateful decade for the organization as some fundamental developments took place. During the first summit of the ASEAN head in February 1976, the treaty of Amity and Cooperation and Declaration of Concord was laid down¹²⁶. Unarguably the treaty was a major milestone in the development of the organization. The treaty paved the way for the

¹²⁴ CFR.org Editors, “ Council on Foreign Relation,” April 2022, <https://www.CFR.org/Editors/cfr.org/backgrounder/what-asean>

¹²⁵Koh Kheng-Lian,Nichola A. Robinson and Lye Lin-Heng, “Appendix B- Founding of ASEAN –Short History, Published online by Cambridge University Press: 05 April 2016

¹²⁶Ja Ian Chong, “ASEAN and the challenge of a multipolar world” East Asia Forum, (2018)

inclusion of some other countries of the region. Brunei was the first country who joined the organization in 1984. The Brunei inclusion was rapidly followed by other countries of the region. Vietnam made its way to the organization in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997 respectively. Cambodia joined the organization in 1999¹²⁷.

Like the previous decades, the 1990s was also a pivotal decade as the member countries unanimously agreed to resolve the contentious issues of the region especially the South China Sea issue. During the same period, the organization adopted an out ward looking approach. The shift from inward looking to out ward looking was a new development in the history of the organization. During the 1990s decade some new mechanisms were added to the organization that enhanced the significance of the organization in the regional politics. To ensure further economic growth and

Regional prosperity, the member countries agree to reduce intra-regional tariff and to ease restriction in the way of foreign investment. For this purpose, the member countries created Free Trade Area (FTA) in 1992 during the ASEAN summit in Singapore. ASEAN Regional Forum created in 1994 was a significant development in the organization. Since its establishment in 1994 it has become one of the important regional political platforms to discuss the regional security issues. In addition, the organization is succeeded in creating some other important political and economic platforms such as ASEAN +3 that includes ASEAN heads and China, Japan and South Korea, ASEAN+6 that includes ASEAN+3+ Australia, New Zealand, India and East Asia Summit that include ASEAN +6+U.S AND Russia.¹²⁸

3.2 ASEAN Charter

Since from the very beginning, ASEAN is centered on some fundamental principles: economic cooperation and exclusion of military dimension from the ASEAN regional politics. At the time of its establishment, almost all the regional countries were newly independent. They wanted to create an organization which could help them protect against foreign aggression. The smaller countries had also genuine fear that the powerful countries in the region especially Indonesia will

¹²⁷ Council on Foreign Relation, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-asean>

¹²⁸ Jayant Menon and Casey Lee, "An Evolving ASEAN Vision and Reality," Asian Development Bank, (September 2019)

overwhelm the organization. Therefore, the organization was laid on the central tenet of noninterference and non-use of force.

The objectives and agendas of ASEAN are unequivocally outlined in the ASEAN charter. The ASEAN charter is a comprehensive document. The charter was officially adopted during the 13th ASEAN Summit in 2007. The charter sets broad parameters and benchmarks for the engagement of the member countries. The current charter has taken place after an evolutionary process. Up until 2007, the organization had no formal charter that could provide a formal and pragmatic guideline for the engagement of the regional countries¹²⁹. With the onset of the 21st century, the member countries felt a dire need of having a unified charted to effectively represent the wellbeing of the people of the region. The idea of a comprehensive charter had already been in the mind of people but the decision to craft a formal ASEAN charter only took place in 2007. The real march toward having the ASEAN own formal charter began in 2005. During the 11th summit in Dec 2005, the ASEAN heads signed, Kaulalampur Declaration, on the establishment of ASEAN charter¹³⁰. The driving force behind the ASEAN charter was the member countries desire for the establishment of ASEAN community¹³¹. The member countries believed that a formal and well-defined ASEAN charter would provide momentum for the establishment of ASEAN community. Further development on the ASEAN charter took place during the 12th ASEAN summit held in

2006. During the summit the heads of the organization signed “Cebu Declaration” on the Blue print of ASEAN charter. The charter was officially signed during the 13th summit of the organization in 2007.

The ASEAN charter consists of 13 chapters and 55 articles. These chapters comprehensively deal with functions and objectives of the organization. They outline the corresponding duties of the member countries. The first chapter has been dedicated to the objectives and agendas of the organization. The second chapter has conferred legal personality on the organization. Chapter III and IV outline the member countries and delineate the function of various sub-organizations

¹²⁹ Daniel Seah. “The ASEAN Charter,” Cambridge University Press,” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i20488270>

¹³⁰ Kazushi Shimizu, “the ASEAN charter and the ASEAN economic community,” journal of Hokkaido uni, (2011)

¹³¹ K Shimizu, “ The ASEAN charter and the ASEAN economic Community, Huscap 2010, <https://eprints.lib.hokudai.ac.jp/dspace/handle/2115/47731>

working in ASEAN. Chapter V sets forth the major pillars of the organization. Some of them are the following: ASEAN Summit comprised of the heads of the government, ASEAN Coordinating Council that consists of ASEAN foreign ministers, ASEAN Community Councils that further divided in to the ASEAN political and Security Community Council, ASEAN /economic Community Council and ASEAN Socio-cultural Community Council. Chapter VI and VII outlines immunities and privileges and decision making process. Chapter IX and X talk about identity and symbols and also promote common identity of the region. Chapter XI provides guidelines for the member countries to engage with external world¹³².

3.3 Objectives of ASEAN

Political stability, peace, security and common economic prosperity are the core objectives of the ASEAN charter. The member countries have unequivocally pledged to strive together to maintain and preserve peace and stability in the region. At the time of its creation, the ASEAN member countries were, except Thailand, had inherited colonial legacy. They were torn apart by discursive colonial legacies. In spite of the seemingly irreconcilable differences, the member countries had firm belief that greater cooperation in political, economic and socio-cultural domains can potentially lead toward a stable and secure region.

In the past the ASEAN organization has virtually succeeded in almost all its objectives and agendas. Its success has been chiefly witnessed in economic domain. The member countries have equally benefited from the cooperation under the umbrella of the organization. Moreover, the organization has also succeeded in keeping away the region from arm race and, to some extent, from the influence of major powers. The member countries declared the south East Asia region free from nuclear weapon under the Bangkok Treaty signed in December, 1995.

But with the onset of the 21st, the organization, due to the changing security dynamics in global politics, has also changed its agendas and objectives. To respond adequately to the undergoing shifts in the regional politics, ASEAN has started setting up new parameters and benchmarks in its objectives under the “ASEAN Vision 2020”¹³³. Under the vision the member countries solemnly pledged to reinvigorate the organization. They decided to morph the organization into a

¹³²The ASEAN Charter, “ Jakarta ASEAN Secretariat” Jan 2008

¹³³ Prashant Parameswaran, “ASEAN Sub regional Cooperation in the Spotlight with BIMP-EAGA,” December 5, 2017.

robust community. Since then, the member countries have been tirelessly and diligently working on ASEAN Community. They have vowed to fulfill this agenda by 2020. It is now 2022, but the agenda is still far from reality. It will only be seen in the foreseeable future that how ASEAN member countries remain clings to the new objectives and agenda of the organization.

3.4 From an organization to a Regional Community

The organization of AEAN was established in 1967 by five countries of South East Asia region. The establishment of the organization was motivated by the notion of common prosperity⁷⁶. The member countries wanted to accelerate the economic growth and enhance regional identity in global politics. The two notions and objectives-common prosperity and cultural development have provided foundation or firm ground to the success of the organization. In spite of various political and socio-economic achievements, the organization remained a tenuous coalition of the South East Asia countries up until the end of 20th¹³⁴.

But since the onset of the 21st century the organization has been stirred on a new course- the course of transformation. The new century ushered drastic changes in the organization structure and objectives. Just a couple of years ago, the organization had come to be guided by a new vision ASEAN Vision 2020.⁷⁷ The vision was adopted by the member countries to adapt the organization to the changing dynamics in the global politics and to help the region remain relevant in global politics. Under the “ASEAN Vision 2020”, the member countries pledged to diversify the existing partnership. For the first time the organization member countries envisioned a community based on common goals of economic prosperity and security of the region.

The member countries the South East Asia region as a concert of countries bounded by common and equal economic development of the member countries. Since then the organization has been and is on the course of a single community. The actual decision to establish an ASEAN community was taken in 2003. For the first time the ASEAN took concerted and bold step to delineate an ASEAN community. The ASEAN community is based on three pillars. First one is

¹³⁴ Rosemary Foot, “The Role of East Asian Regional Organizations in Regional Governance: Constraints and Contributions,” Carnegie Endowment Fund for International Peace, June 2011, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2011/06/07/role-of-east-asian-regional-organizations-in-regional-governance-constraints-and-contributions-pub-44420>

the ASEAN Economic Community, second one is ASEAN Security Community and the third one is ASEAN Socio-Culture Community.⁷⁸

3.4.1 SEAN Security Community

It was the overarching objective of the ASEAN member countries to preserve peace and stability of the South East Asia region. There are certain mechanisms to defuse tension in the region and to ensure that no tension is escalated in to an armed conflict¹³⁵. Over the course of time the ASEAN countries felt the urgency and dire need for having a security community in order to effectively navigate the strategic challenges in the region. The prime objective of the security community is to insulate the region from the vicious influence of the major power politics. The regional countries have had firm belief that once the ASEAN member countries succeed in establishing security community the intra-regional issue will automatically get vanished¹³⁶. The member countries have had the desire to establish a process that could potentially help them reconcile their intra-regional differences. They want a security umbrella under which all the member countries regard their security fundamentally linked to each other.

Currently ASEAN has various mechanisms that are exclusively working to promote regional security and stability. ASEAN Regional Forum established in 1994,¹³⁷ is the prime organ of ASEAN. The mechanism exclusively deals with security issue of the region. Currently it is providing political platform for the regional and extra regional countries including Malaysia, Philippine, Vietnam, Singapore, Cambodia, Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Australia, Japan, China, Russia, EU, Canada, Papua New Guinea, Mongolia, New Zealand and South Korea to discuss a wide range of security related issues. ASEAN Regional Forum discusses all the major issues especially security related ones such as transnational crimes, Terrorism, issues in the South China Sea and Korean Peninsula¹³⁸.

¹³⁵Mie Oba, " ASEAN and the Creation of a Regional Community ,"Asia-Pacific Review(2014)
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13439006.2014.925200>

¹³⁶ Naufal Zayan, "Challenges of the ASEAN Political-Security Community," Modern Diplomacy July 2023,

¹³⁷Rosemary Foot, " The Role of East Asian Regional Organizations in Regional Governance: Constraints and Contributions,"(JUNE 07, 2011)

¹³⁸ ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Learning Center

Department of Local Administartion,

<http://asean.dla.go.th/public/article.do?lv2Index=82&lang=en&random=1475222592096>

3.4.2 ASEAN Economic Community

Apart from Security Community ASEAN Economic Community is also a major pillar of ASEAN Community that was envisioned in the ASEAN Vision 2022. The major goal of ASEAN Economic Community is to ensure free flow of goods, capital, and equitable economic growth, to reduce poverty and to pave way for international investment. The ultimate goal of ASEAN Economic Community is to transform the organization in to a single market. The organization member countries believe that the establishment of ASEAN Community will help the regional countries transform their diversity into a single region full of potential opportunities. This community will render the region more dynamic for business and will make a strong segment of global supply chain.

But the creation of a single community is not an easy job as the region political and economic landscape is characterized by seemingly insurmountable and irreconcilable differences.

Nevertheless, they have taken many bold steps in this regard¹³⁹. The creation of ASEAN Free Trade Area- established in 1993, ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) and ASEAN Investment Area are the praise worthy endeavors made by the member countries of the organization.

3.4.3 ASEAN Socio-Culture Community

ASEAN Socio-Culture Community was envisaged in the “ASEAN Vision 2020”¹⁴⁰. The community is based on common regional identity and the regional countries are linked by common partnership in cultural domain. The prime objective of the community is to ensure social development that revolves around raising standard of living of people and to bring disadvantageous groups of people at par with the standard of living of those people who are more privileged. Moreover, the ASEAN Socio-Culture Community will foster a common bond among all the communities of the region. The community will seek proactive involvement of all

¹³⁹Koichi Ishikawa, “ the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Economic Integration” (Mar 02, 2021)

¹⁴⁰ ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community blueprint 2025, Jakarta : ASEAN Secretariat, 2011,

segments of the society. The organization has so far taken many initiatives in this regard such as ASEAN Work Program for Social Welfare and ASEAN Work Program on HIV/AIDS¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Julio S. Amador, “ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community: An Assessment of its Institutional Prospects,” Social Science Research Network, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1803830

Chapter 4

Implications of the U.S-China Strategic Competition for ASEAN

4.1 ASEAN Centrality and the Evolving Security Order

ASEAN has had a key role in the regional politics over the past many decades. It has played a proactive role in the solving the regional issue. Undoubtedly, it was under the umbrella of ASEAN that the regional countries prospered and achieved a relatively stable economic position. Realistically speaking ASEAN provided a congenial and alluvial ground for the regional countries to navigate new avenues of cooperation's and collaborations in various walks of life. Pressingly, in the absence of such Organization the regional countries would have remained fragmented and divided. In the recent past ASEAN has become more active through the establishment various sub mechanism under its umbrella. In 1994, it succeeded in establishing ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Since then it is providing a platform for the regional and extra regional countries to discuss security and political issues¹⁴². In addition to ARF, the organization has provided another important platform in the form of East Asia Summit which was initiated in 2005. The EAS comprised 18 countries including all the regional and extra regional major and great powers. The EAS annually provides a platform for its member countries to discuss a wide range of topics such as peace, stability, economic prosperity, education, environment, global health issues, food security, energy and maritime security¹⁴³. Apart from these two important mechanisms, there are a number of mechanisms through which ASEAN enjoys bilateral relation with regional and extra regional players including China, Australia, US and India etc. All these mechanisms have arguably enabled ASEAN to navigate the regional politically, economically, socially and institutionally.

However, the current decade is experiencing and witnessing the return of great power competition. The competition does not bode well for the achievements ASEAN has made in

¹⁴² ASEAN Regional Forum, Australian Mission to ASEAN August 2022

¹⁴³ East Asia Summit, Australian Government, Department of Foreign affairs and Trade, Oct 2023

various walks of life over the past many decades. U.S is trying hard to maintain its dominant and hegemonic position in the region. It will never leave any stone unturned to halt the intractable march of Beijing in the region. Washington overarching objective in the region is not to allow Beijing cross the first island chain or regional hegemon. Seemingly, China has already crossed many benchmarks and has drastically increased its political, economic, social and strategic power in the region. This power transition does not augur well for the incumbent power of the region-namely Washington. The incremental increase in Beijing means the decrease in Washington power. The ASEAN member countries have almost gone from the traditional orbit of U.S influence in the region. They no longer want to rally behind U.S especially in opposing China in the regional issues. U.S has well understood that it cannot deal and cope with Beijing with its traditional approach as most of the regional countries do not see China necessarily enemy or hostile to them. Unsurprisingly, in the wake of this power shift, Washington has adopted new security approach to cope with China.

Since the end of cold war, U-S has been a major security guarantor to the Asia Pacific region. In the wake of WWII, U-S entered into several military and strategic treaties with the South East Asia regional countries. In 1951, United State signed “Mutual Defense Treaty” with Philippine¹⁴⁴. The overarching objective of the treaty was to guarantee mutual defense against external aggression. The treaty is still in force. The treaty ensured long lasted defense and strategic cooperation between both Manila and Washington. In the same year U.S signed another security treaty with Australia and New Zealand. The treaty was motivated by the objective of collective security of the countries. It was split in 1989¹⁴⁵. But it exists bilaterally between Australia and U.S and New Zealand and Australia. Another milestone agreement was signed in 1953 in the form of “Mutual Defense Treaty” between U.S and South Korea¹⁴⁶. Like other treaties, the prime objective of the treaty was mutual security against external attack. The external treaty has still underpinned the strategic cooperation between both the countries. The next strategic important agreement was signed between Thailand and U.S in the form of “U.S-Thailand Defense Alliance”. The defense cooperation between both the countries is based on this treaty-signed in 1954, Rusk Thanat Communiqué of 1962 and the Joint Vision Statement

¹⁴⁴Lynn Kuok, “An Introduction to Asia Pacific Security,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, (June 8, 2021)

¹⁴⁵ Office of the Historian, Department of State United States of America.

¹⁴⁶ Joseph Clark, We Go Together : US, South Korea Mark 70 years Alliance, US department of Defense, July 2023

announced in 2020¹⁴⁷. During the same year one of the important treaty in the regional security architecture came in to being which is commonly known as SEATO- South East Asia Treaty. The primary objective of the treaty was to provide collective defense against communism. The treaty was disbanded in 1977.

Japan has had key role in the strategic and security order of the region. It is the Washington reliable strategic partner in the region. Both Japan and U.S cooperation is the major pillar of the security order in the region. This enduring security and strategic cooperation underpinned by “Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security” signed in 1960. Under the treaty Washington has obtained military presence in Japan. The treaty is still in force¹⁴⁸. In 1977 U.S entered in to a mutual Defense Agreement with Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and UK. The agreement is commonly known as the “Five Power Defense Arrangement”. The aim of the agreement is to take consultation when there is a threat of an armed attack. The treaty is still in force. Since then, these treaties have successfully under guarded and underpinned the security system of the region. This security system, chiefly based on security treaties, has provided relative stability and prosperity to the region¹⁴⁹. The regional countries largely benefited from it: their economic gains have undoubtedly been ensured under the U.S’s security umbrella. Throughout the cold war period this security system proved to be successful and effective. The regional countries largely benefited from this order. Since its establishment the region did not confront and experience any potential conflict except that of Vietnam and Korea war. Under this security system the region remained relatively stable and peaceful. This security system also helped the region evolve and expand its own regional organization in the form of ASEAN.

In this security system U.S remained as a key player. The entire security system was anchored on U.S credibility and assurances. U.S was at the center of this security system. The other important component of this security system was the U.S allies and strategic partners such as Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Australia, Taiwan, Philippine and Singapore. In simple word this system is also

¹⁴⁷ Anadolu Staff, “ Geopolitical games: The US and its military pacts in Asia-Pacific,” September 2023,

¹⁴⁸ Felix Heiduk, “ Security in the Indo-Pacific,” Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute of International and Security Affairs, November 2022

¹⁴⁹ G.V.C Naidu, “Asia Pacific Security: an anlysis of Trends,” A monthly Journal of the IDSA, December 2000

called the Hub and Spoke System¹⁵⁰. Throughout the past the security system highly and excessively remained dependent upon U.S. it always assured security to its spokes through military and security treaties. In this system the spokes doesn't make any military treaty among themselves. Rather they remain dependent on the central power or a hegemon for their security¹⁵¹.

As for as Beijing is concerned, it has so far potentially avoided making any sort of explicitly military alliance with any country of the region. The only country which has explicit and close strategic relation, though not based on any strategic treaty, with Beijing is North Korea. There will be no exaggeration to say that North Korea is the only military ally of Beijing in the region. Beijing has also very close strategic relation with some ASEAN member countries¹⁵². China is very much apprehensive of any sort of strategic military alliance with the regional countries. It knows it very well that any sort of military alliance with regional countries will inevitably create cold war like mentality in the region.

The intractable rise of China and its aggressive posture seem to have disturbed the decade's long security system. Since 2010, or, to be more precise, since the beginning of Xi Jinping era, China has unprecedentedly increased its political, military and strategic clout across the world in special and the South East Asia region in particular. This unprecedented increase doesn't seem to have augured well for the old security system underpinned by U.S hegemonic role in the region and unquestionable influence that spans for decades. The major stakeholder in the region seems quite apprehensive about the seemingly unstoppable march of Beijing. They are virtually failed to stop China through the existing security order. They have felt a dire need to renew and rearrange the security system of the region enough capable of containing China.

To address the security issue chiefly emanating from the rise of China, the major stakeholders of the regional security have contrived a new security system. This new security system is somehow different from the old one¹⁵³. This newly emerged security is more networked and coordinated one. All the major stakeholders in the region are connecting themselves through a network of

¹⁵⁰ Jin-Hyun Paik, "Regional Security System in the Asia Pacific," Institute of Foreign Affairs and National mSecurity Republic of Korea

¹⁵¹ Ron Huiskens, "The Architecture of Security in the Asia-Pacific," Anu Press, 2009

¹⁵² Ipid, p 21-25

¹⁵³ DR Lynn Kuok and DR Tim Huxley, "Asia Pacific Region Security Assessment" ISSS, June 2021

security. In more simple words, this new security system is characterized and defined by bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral security and strategic cooperation among themselves. The new system can also be called Minilateral security system. All the stakeholders are pushed or motivated by a major power which led or provide umbrella to the security order¹⁵⁴. In this system state enhances and augments its individual defense capabilities. In this system strategic interest of major powers highly converge with each other's.

U.S and India are the part and parcel of the new security system. Apart from U.S and India, Australia has entered in to a nuclear submarine deal with U.S and U.K in Sep 2021 in the form of AUKUS. The overarching objective of the deal is to strengthen defense cooperation between both the countries to contain China. The systemic pressure and the new security arrangement is also likely to force Japan to focus on its own defense which has been traditionally ensured by U.S. the incumbent PM of Japan has already signaled the increase of defense budget up to 2% which is currently 1%. ¹⁵⁵.

In this new security arrangement, the onerous of security seems to have been taken over by Australia, Japan, US and to some extent by India. The ASEAN member countries are likely to play relatively secondary or complimentary role in this new security system at least from US perspective. Basically, ASEAN as an organization survived partially due to the absent of fundamental challenges to the organization¹⁵⁶. The success of the organization can also owed to security assurances given by U.S through its military and security treaties. During the entire cold war period and the following era U.S provided security umbrella to the organization. The organization successfully withstood many obstacles and hardships. It made its way through conflict and foreign intervention.

The evolving security order has potentially unleashed strategic challenges for the region in special and ASEAN in particular¹⁵⁷. Since from the very beginning, the organization has not experienced power competition as it is now experiencing and most surprisingly at its doorstep. It

¹⁵⁵Nikkei Staff Writers, "Nikkei Asia", Nov 28, 2022.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Daniel and Puteri Nor Ariane Yasmin, The Indo-Pacific Strategy and ASEAN, IN-Focus-2020-ASEAN-web

¹⁵⁷ Jie Zhang, "Rebuilding Strategic Autonomy: ASEAN Response to US-China Strategic Competition," The Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IISS) February 2023

is the first time that ASEAN has found itself at the crossroad of great power rivalry. The epicenter of this rivalry lies within the South East Asia region. Since the end of cold war ASEAN has virtually played key role in the regional political and strategic affairs. There will be no exaggeration to say that ASEAN played central role in the regional politics. But the newly emerging security order, chiefly unleashed by the strategic competition between U.S and China, has put ASEAN centrality into question. Realistically speaking the strategic competition has created many strategic challenges for the Organization. It has put it in to quandary. The ground realities clearly speak and herald a new era of political arrangement in which ASEAN potentially may not have substantial role in the regional security and strategic affairs. The competition is highly likely to reduce strategic options for the organization. The more the competition is intensified, the more the organization will split.

The strategic competition and the reduced strategic options can potentially put into question ASEAN traditional relevancy. The outsiders especially the strategic and security stakeholders will look the region from the lens and prism of containment of China that is not auguring well for the centrality of ASEAN¹⁵⁸. It is in question that whether the organization will be able to maintain its relevancy amid the ongoing strategic competition. Moreover the competition will also mar the organization traditional key role. The new security arrangement will undoubtedly intensify the ongoing strategic completion. Both the major powers namely U.S and China are now claiming to lend support to the organization. They have and will, at least explicitly, try to strengthen the organization. But their strategic interest doesn't lie in the preservation of ASEAN normative framework¹⁵⁹. Both the contenders of power will always pursue their strategic interest beyond the traditional role of ASEAN. The competition has already gone beyond the reach and comprehension of ASEAN.

The region politics has already been overshadowed by the great power politics- namely US and China. Unarguably, first the competition will blunt the organization relevancy and then, with high possibility, it will leave the organization with nominal role in the newly emerging strategic order in the region. U.S has already started pivoting its diplomatic and strategic resources toward

¹⁵⁸ Cuiping Zhu, "Strategic Competition and Multilateral Relation in Indo-Pacific –Region, *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, September 2015.

¹⁵⁹ Tomohiko Satake, "Japan Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and its implications for ASEAN ," *South East Asia Affairs*, 2019.

the South East Asia region. The more the ongoing strategic competition gets near to its ultimate destination, the more the organization will feel irrelevance in the regional politics.

It was under Washington auspice that ASEAN became one of the central pillars of the regional politics. In past, the regional countries rallied behind America who helped them project the regional separate political identity. Arguably, they remained unified in political, economic and social arenas. There will be no exaggeration to say that it was Washington essential support which helped the regional countries develop various ASEAN led mechanism to deal with the regional political, security, economic and social issues.

The competition is highly likely to impact the various ASEAN led mechanisms especially ASEAN Regional (ARF) and the East Asia Summit. Both the entities have seemingly proactive role in various issues and challenges of the region. Traditionally these two mechanisms have been providing platforms for the regional and extra regional major stakeholders to discuss issues related to economy, environment, food security, energy, health etc. Through these platforms and along with some others ASEAN has been able to play a key role in the regional politics¹⁶⁰. However, the emergence of a new phenomenon in the shape of ongoing Strategic Competition between US-China will bear tremendous impact on ARF, EAS and the other important platforms. Both the contending powers namely US and China pin great expectations to the middle powers of the ASEAN member countries.

U.S wants ASEAN member countries to rally behind or at least explicitly support its Indo-Pacific strategy underpinned by its Free and Open Indo-Pacific. However, ASEAN as collective entity has refrained from explicitly rallying behind US belligerent approach toward the region. Even the primary claimant states are refrained from explicitly pursuing US rhetoric in the South China Sea. Seeing the collective inability and reluctance to follow FOIP, US has come up with new security arrangement in the form of QUAD revival and AUKUS¹⁶¹. Unarguably, this new strategic arrangement will impact the ASEAN led mechanism. The strategic interest of US and its allies lies above the collective capacity and willingness of ASEAN. They will pursue their strategic interest in a way they deem suitable and effective. It does not mean that the new

¹⁶⁰

¹⁶¹Strategic Annual Report, Intensifying US-China Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific and ASEAN faced with Challenges, 2021.

strategic arrangement will completely render ASEAN and its mechanism irrelevant. However, the core interest of U.S and its allies, which is to contain China through strategic offshore balancing, will impact the ASEAN and its led mechanism.

4.2 China Aggressive claims in the SCS and the ASEAN Centrality

As we have already mentioned that China has become a great power over the recent past. This shift has created ripples in the political, economic and strategic water of the Indo-Pacific water in special and the Pacific water in particular. Beijing has already crossed many layers of power in its region. These layers and dimension of power was previously occupied by Washington. Beijing seems well determined to gain more and more power in the region. Simply, Beijing overarching goal is to become hegemon in the region. Unarguably, Beijing will not become complaisant with it has achieved. Surely, it will be trying to gain more and more power in the region in special and the SCS in particular.

In all this strategic competition between U.S and China the South China Sea has become fulcrum. The SCS has become of a paramount importance for both US and China. There will be no exaggeration to say that the SCS is the epicenter or flashpoint of the strategic rivalry which can be found almost in all parts of the world. For China, the SCS is a region from which it can effectively project its power beyond the region. The SCS region is vital for China. Therefore, it wants to have full control over the entire SCS and leaving a fraction to the littoral and claimant states. On the other hand, unsurprisingly, the vested and core interest of US also lies in the disputed water of SCS. US hegemony in the region highly hinges on the water of SCS. China assertive and aggressive claims are an existential threat to the influence in the SCS¹⁶². These conflicting strategic interests have given birth to a strategic competition between both the contending powers.

China claims almost the entire SCS. Beijing Nine Dash claim in the SCS is the sheer denial of territorial claims of other littoral states that include Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippine, Taiwan, Brunei. China prime objective is to project power beyond the first island chain for which robust military presence is imperative. The next level of power for China is to gain maximum power in

¹⁶² Weifeng Zhou, “China Growing Assertiveness in the SCS,” Real Institute Elcano, Nov 2021, <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/chinas-growing-assertiveness-in-the-south-china-sea/>

the SCS. China has a concerted plan for the SCS. It has already constructed artificial islands in the SCS.

Such shift in power does not augur well for ASEAN, which has had key political, economic and social role in the region. The Chinese aggressive claims and the ensuing Strategic Competition in the SCS is a great test for ASEAN. The aggressive claims made by China are likely to create grave and serious implication for ASEAN. It will create great problems and poses serious challenges for ASEAN to effectively navigate the newly strategic landscape.

The SCS is not only a flashpoint between US and China, ASEAN has locked into maritime dispute with China as well. The aggressive nine dash claim in the SCS has put ASEAN credibility and centrality into question. Four member countries of ASEAN- namely Brunei, Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia are primary claimants in the SCS. Their sovereign rights- the right of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) are overlapped with China Nine Dash claim in the SCS. China claims almost the entire SCS. Its claims in the SCS exceed legal claims established by UNCLOS. Under its nine dash claims China has 80% to 90% control over the SCS¹⁶³. The most contested area in the SCS is the Spratly islands in which China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Philippines have intersecting claims.

China aggressive claims are intensified over the past one decade, or, to be more precise, since the emergence of the Strategic competition between US and China. Since then China has come up with ever increasing and belligerent postures in the SCS. Even Beijing has started bullying and harassing the most vocal claimants namely Vietnam and Philippines in the South China Sea.

Realistically speaking, such unprecedented development may not augur well for the overall regional security and prosperity, its implications for ASEAN is exceedingly enormous. The aggressive claims of China are serious issue for ASEAN. How ASEAN has been addressing and addresses the issue of the SCS determines the credibility and centrality of ASEAN. Realistically

¹⁶³ Leticia Simoes, “ The Role of ASEAN in SCS Disputes,” E-International Relations, June 2023, <https://www.e-ir.info/2022/06/23/the-role-of-asean-in-the-south-china-sea-disputes/>

speaking, ASEAN has so far failed to address the issue adequately. Seemingly it has fallen short of its expectations and desired role Vis a vis the SCS issue¹⁶⁴.

What ASEAN has achieved so far Vis a vis SCS is equal to nothingness. In 2002 China and ASEAN, after protracted and prolonged discussion, signed a Declaration on the Conduct of SCS. It is a toothless mechanism. The DoC is a non-binding document¹⁶⁵. It is not a dispute resolution mechanism. It leaves the signatories to resolve their disagreement voluntarily. The DoC has no mechanism to take the issue to international institution. Overall ASEAN is out rightly failed in forging a common position among the member states against China territorial claims in the SCS. In 2017, similar efforts were made to bring or supplement the moribund DoC with another mechanism. The member states chalked out a new mechanism in the form of Code of Conduct¹⁶⁶. This document is not different from its predecessor. It is also failed in addressing the strategic issue of its member states.

We know that the Chinese aggressive claims are a strategic challenge for ASEAN. The primary claimants especially Philippine and Vietnam never ever compromise on their sovereign rights. ASEAN got failed to adequately respond to the strategic expectations and demands of the member claimant states in the SCS. The SCS issue has been lingering for more than two decades but ASEAN has not come up with a unified position toward China¹⁶⁷. Realistically speaking China is well poised to become more belligerent and assertive amid the ongoing strategic competition. Certainly, such strategic maneuvering will directly impact the centrality of ASEAN.

Any organization which fails in addressing the strategic issue of its member states is doomed to failure. Undoubtedly, the SCS issue is a strategic issue of the primary claimant states of ASEAN which has so far failed in forging a common position to address the issue vigorously neither at its own institutional level nor international level. It is highly likely that the claimant states will strive to balance China with the help of external powers whose strategic interests converge with

¹⁶⁴ Jennifer Jie, "ASEAN and the SCS: Approaches to Resolving Conflict," SIT Graduate Institute, 2017, https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3777&context=isp_collection

¹⁶⁵ IP, P &-8

¹⁶⁶ Saidul Madia & Aziz, "South China SEA: AASEAN Mechanism on Maritime Disputes and the Rise of Indo-Pacific Region, December 2022, <https://pesquisa.bvsalud.org/global-literature-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/resource/pt/covidwho-1993712>

¹⁶⁷ Aristugo Rizka Darmawa, "ASEAN Dilemma in SCS," Asia Pacific Policy Society, June 2021, <https://www.policyforum.net/aseans-dilemma-in-the-south-china-sea/>

them¹⁶⁸. The claimant states, especially Vietnam and Philippine will try to align themselves with U.S and its allies to address their strategic issues in the SCS. Philippine has already resumed its military engagement with Philippine¹⁶⁹. The inability of ASEAN is providing ample room for China to maneuver with its ambition in the SCS. China is basically using, and indeed will be using, its political and economic clout to woo and seek the support of some of the poverty stricken members of ASEAN such as Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

It seems that China on its dint of economic prowess will be trying to make more inroads in the region on the expense of the strategic interest of the claimant states. Resultantly, the claimant states will seek to boost up their strategic engagement with US and its allies. Philippine and Vietnam are highly likely to make strategic alliance with south Korea, Japan, Australia and India as they share strategic concerns with each other's vis a vis China. Joint military drills in the Asia Pacific region may also take place among Vietnam, Philippine and any of the US allies in the region to balance the strategic threat posed by China. Such development can potentially divide ASEAN into factions or bloc politics. Amid such possible scenario Beijing may also respond with more assertiveness and belligerence. Beijing is well cognizant of the potential extant and parameters of the claimant states strategic engagement with other strategic stakeholders. Ultimate impact of such development can be observed on ASEAN.

The ongoing Strategic Competition in the region is likely to truncate the prospect of solving intra ASEAN maritime disputes in the SCS. It is not only China with whom ASEAN member states have maritime disputes, most of the bloc member states are locked into maritime disputes also. Both Taiwan and Vietnam have maritime dispute in the Paracel islands of SCS. Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Philippine has overlapping claims in the SCS¹⁷⁰. Vietnam Claims complete control of Sprately islands. There has been much uproar or talks in ASEAN for setting a mechanism to solve all the maritime disputes among its member states. Once the member countries succeed in laying out a framework or settle down the disputes, they can forge a unified position against China vis a vis the SCS. The ongoing Strategic Competition can have tremendous impact on the intra ASEAN maritime dispute.

¹⁶⁸ IP , P 3-4

¹⁶⁹ Thompson Chau, "Sever Stress: Myanmar, South China Sea Push ASEAN to Breaking Point," Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/4/severe-stress-myanmar-south-china-sea-push-asean-to-breaking-point>

¹⁷⁰ Ji –Zhang, Rebuilding Strategic Autonomy: ASEAN Response to US-China Strategic Competition," China International Strategic Review 2023, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10148977/>

5.3 Pressure on ASEAN to Choose Sides

The ongoing strategic competition between U.S and China, primarily unleashed by the unprecedented rise of China, has seemingly created multiple challenges for the ASEAN member countries. There is undeniable fact that the region has been transformed into an arena of strategic competition between the two big power contenders- U.S and China. Both the powers are trying, and indeed would be trying, to get political, economic and strategic leverage against each other's in the world in special and the Indo-Pacific region in particular. Both the countries attach tremendous importance on the region. Unarguably the region has imperative for both US and China. Therefore, they highly prioritize the ASEAN member countries¹⁷¹. The organization member countries have the potentials to play vital role in the ongoing strategic competition. Both the U.S and China attach great importance and expectations to the organization member countries.

Amid the ongoing rivalry between both the major powers have unsurprisingly increased Washington expectations. Like in the past, Washington wants to use the ASEAN member countries-especially those of its military and strategic partners, as an instrument to contain China. Since the Trump administration US has started putting significance importance on ASEAN member countries¹⁷². Since 2017 U.S consistently made emphatic mention of the organization member countries in all its defense and white papers. It has been the Washington overarching objective to make them rally behind it to traverse the regional political, strategic and economic landscape. Basically, U.S is trying to create strategic pressure for the regional countries by provoking and vilifying China.

Undoubtedly, the competition has posed many strategic and political challenges for the ASEAN member countries, but it has not yet reached the point where the member countries will have, though willingly or unwillingly, to choose and pick up sides¹⁷³. The competition has not yet completely constrained strategic and political options for the organization member countries.

¹⁷¹ Maria Siow, "US-China Rivalry: is Pressure on ASEAN to Choose sides," South China Morning Post, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3128986/us-china-rivalry-pressure-asean-countries-choose-sides>

¹⁷² IP, P 2-3

¹⁷³ NG Eng Hen, Asean nations take comfort from not being forced by US and China to choose sides," The Strait Times, June 2022,

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/asean-nations-take-comfort-from-not-being-forced-by-us-and-china-to-choose-sides-ng-eng-hen>

They have still options to navigate individually and collectively the regional political, economic and strategic landscape. The organization member countries still have some sort of potential to approach both US and China independently. They don't see the region either through the prism of Washington or Beijing. On one hand almost all of the ASEAN member countries deem Washington to be the ultimate guarantor of security of the region. Some of them have also landed their strategic support to Washington. For instance, Singapore and Thailand and Philippine have assured Washington of their implicit and explicit strategic support. During US Vice President Kamala Harris visit to Singapore in August 2022, PM Lee Hsein Loong lauded US efforts toward the region. He assured Washington of his support¹⁷⁴. On the other hand, the massive economic investment of Beijing in the regional countries has made it an integral political, economic and strategic partner of the ASEAN member countries. They don't see Beijing through the lens of Washington as the former doesn't pose existential threat to them. The ASEAN member countries have also joined the ambitious plan of China – BRI. They have warmly welcomed the initiative.

Singapore is one of ASEAN active participator of BRI. Singapore became the part and parcel of BRI under Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI). Under this initiative China has massively invested in infrastructure development in the country. Singapore is a progressive and well-developed country in South East Asia region. It will not, at least for the time being, become a sandwich between the two contending powers. The other regional important countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Philippine have traditionally had good political and strategic relation with Washington. Thailand and Philippine are the strategic partners of Washington. They are visibly tilted toward Washington. But they will never ever dare to antagonize their relation with Beijing by overtly sitting in the US camp. They are enjoying good friendly political and economic relation with Beijing. Thailand is also the part of BRI¹⁷⁵. It has participated in the central route of pan-Asia Railway Network that will, after its completion, will nearly link the entire South East Asia region. China is also currently constructing China- Thailand high speed railway under BRI. Apart from Thailand, China has emerged a new investor in Philippine. Beijing has surpassed US investment in the country. Since the Duterte regime China has improve

¹⁷⁴ Hong Yong Hong, "China-US Competition: Why small countries will not choose sides". Think China (Aug 2022) <https://www.thinkchina.sg/china-us-competition-why-small-countries-will-not-choose-sides?page=282>

¹⁷⁵ Editorial Board ANU, "ASEAN stress-tested by big power rivalry," East Asia Forum ,October 2020, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/10/05/asean-stress-tested-by-big-power-rivalry/>

its relation with Manila. Both the US strategic partners are keen and eager for China investment¹⁷⁶. Beijing massive investment in these countries has helped them assuage their concerns about the former. They will never see China through the prism of Washington. Similarly, China has become the largest investor in Malaysia and Indonesia.

On account of its economic leverage in the organization member countries, Beijing has secured enormous political and strategic clout in the region. The BRI has so far proved fruitful for them and is being expected to bring comparatively more prosperity for the region. Apparently over the past many years the ASEAN member countries have virtually become doubtful of the US approach toward the region. They don't essentially deem China as an existential threat to the regional peace and security. Amid the ongoing strategic competition in the both U.S and China have certain expectations from the ASEAN member countries. These expectations are likely to lead both the power contenders to start pressurizing the regional countries in the coming years. The overriding objective of the ASEAN member countries is to maintain good and friendly relation with both Washington and Beijing. They are potentially avoid being in any camp.

The competition has not yet reached a point where both U.S and China will start directly pressurizing the regional countries to pick up either side. The China massive investment in the ASEAN member countries may sooner or later lead it to come up with certain strategic demands that will certainly constrain the strategic options for the ASEAN member countries¹⁷⁷. On the other hand, U.S has had also profound historical and strategic bond with many ASEAN member countries. The more China become near to the red line of Washington the more likely is Washington to pressurize the regional countries to side with it. The only reservation the ASEAN have about China is the later claim in the South China Sea. Most of them have disputes with China in the South China Sea, but they want peaceful and diplomatic solution of these issue.¹⁷⁸ To solve this issue amicably, both China and ASEAN have signed a Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. The China Nine Dash Claim in SCS has never been a strategic

¹⁷⁶ Ibid P 3-5

¹⁷⁷ Otto Kreisher, "Southeast Asian Nations Wary of Choosing Sides in Rift Between U.S., China," <https://seapowermagazine.org/southeast-asian-nations-wary-of-choosing-sides-in-rift-between-u-s-china/>

¹⁷⁸ Thitinan Pongsathirak, "Geopolitical Upheavals divide South East Asia" GIS Report (Oct 2022), <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/e/pongsathirak-thitinan/>

irritant in the China-ASEAN relation. The ASEAN member countries want to reap benefit from the unprecedented development of China

ASEAN as a political, strategic and economic organization wants to get benefit from both the US and China. They don't want to be buffer zone between both the power contenders. Currently they are very cautiously maneuvering the geopolitical arena of the region. For this purpose, the ASEAN member countries as an organization and individual member states are following hedging strategy¹⁷⁹. The ASEAN member countries are trying not to become a strategic tool for either US or China in the region. It is through the hedging strategy that the ASEAN member countries are trying to get benefit from the incentives being offered by the ongoing strategic competition in the region. The organization is proactively following the hedging approach to possibly thwart the escalation of the ongoing fierce strategic competition which is knocking on the door of the region. The organization is trying hard to keep and maintain the precarious strategic balance in the region. The ultimate goal of the organization is to act as a buffer zone, at least for a time being, between both US and China Competition knocking on the door of the region. The organization is trying hard to keep and maintain the precarious strategic balance in the region. The ultimate goal of the organization is to act as a buffer zone, at least for a time being, between both US and China. Since 1990s the organization has successfully coaxed Beijing in to the organization outreach and since then it has incrementally incorporated Beijing in almost all of its mechanisms.

The organization led mechanisms have the presence of various countries of almost all the continents. For instance, the ARF- ASEAN Regional Forum, established in 1994, has the presence of 27 leading countries of the world¹⁸⁰. The platform is an active mechanism and is well committed for working toward the regional political stability and security. The organization has profoundly engaged the regional and extra-regional organization through some its other mechanisms such as East Asia summit, ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+6. All these mechanisms provide viable platforms for the world to voice their genuine concerns about any issue. The

¹⁷⁹ Editorial Page, "ASEAN strives to stay neutral as US-China tension rises," August 2022, <https://www.eiu.com/n/asean-strives-to-stay-neutral-as-us-china-tension-rises/>

¹⁸⁰ Jonathan Stromseth, "Don't Make us Choose: South East Asia In the Throes of US-China Rivalry," Brookings Institute, Oct 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/dont-make-us-choose-southeast-asia-in-the-throes-of-us-china-rivalry/>

organization has also developed a common stance Vis a Vis the South China Sea dispute. The organization is fervently seeking Beijing pragmatic and durable solution the SCS dispute.

At individual level, the organization member countries are also following hedging strategy Vis a Vis both the US and China. For strategic purpose the ASEAN member countries have close cooperation with Washington. But for economic gains they are enjoying good and friendly relationship with Beijing. In term of economy Beijing has become the top trading partner of ASEAN. The members are cautiously maneuvering and navigating the emerging strategic landscape. They are maintaining and preserving a thin strategic line to maintain the strategic balance of the region and to enjoy the incentives being provided by the strategic competition. Each and every member of the organization, except Vietnam, has invariably good trade and economic relation with Beijing. Their individual approach starkly resembles hedging strategy. The member countries don't want to out rightly side with any power center in the region. Unarguably they will follow the same strategy toward both the power contenders in the foreseeable future as it is ensuring strategic stability.

Conclusion

The prime objective of the study is to delve into the evolving strategic shifts in the Indo-Pacific region where the US-China strategic Competition has taken place and has been intensified since the Trump era. Moreover, it will focus on the Implications of the ongoing Strategic Competition between US and China on ASEAN which has been playing a key role in the regional politics. Over the past many years ASEAN assumed much political, social and economic role by establishing various sub mechanism under its umbrella.

With the onset of the 21st century the world security architecture has undergone many changes and the Indo-Pacific region is no exception. The two dominant powers namely US and China have propelled a new sort of strategic challenges to the region. Their core interests highly intersect with each other's in this part of the world. The ongoing strategic competition really began since the Trump era. Since then, the competition has been crossing new point. Unarguably, the Indo-Pacific region is the epicenter of the US-China global rivalry. Resultantly, the strategic competition has given birth to a dominant strategy known as Indo-Pacific Strategy. The strategy has been designed by U.S to achieve its core strategic interest in the region. However, the strategy has various connotation and orientation. Every country, depending on its interest, has adopted and embraced the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

The strategic competition in the region does not bode well for the entire region especially for ASEAN. The competition directly and indirectly impacts ASEAN. Undoubtedly, the competition which is underpinned by eliminating each other can potentially create strategic challenges for the organization. It is highly likely that ASEAN may found it difficult to navigate the strategic challenges which will be further complicated with much anticipated intensification of the competition. It is highly likely that the strategic competition will further overshadow and curtail the role it has been playing in various walks of life over the past many decades.

As we have already mentioned that the ongoing strategic competition has far reaching consequences for ASEAN. The competition has the potential to split association into factions especially on the issues related to South China Sea. There will be no exaggeration to say that the real test of ASEAN lies in the hot water of South China Sea. It is likely that Beijing will refrain from pursuing or resolving issues of South China Sea with ASEAN on Multilateral form rather

its overarching objective is to negotiate them with the claimant states bilaterally. Unarguably, Beijing will also utilize some of the ASEAN members from preventing the association from adopting firm and decisive posture on the SCS. On the other hand Washington has also expectations from ASEAN. Washington wants the organization to rally behind it.

The Following are overall finding of the Research

1. The global power politics has undergone some drastic changes since the onset of the 21st century. One of the striking changes is the phenomenal rise of China at global stage. This rise has had seismic influence over the strategic landscape of the many regions. The rise has seemingly changed the face of the global system in special and the interaction among the south East Asia countries in particular
2. China is highly responsible for the changing landscape of global strategic landscape in special and the South East Asia region in particular. The Indo-Pacific region has become the significant region of global politics. The initiative like BRI helped Beijing assert its influence in the region especially in the South China Sea which has become a battle ground where both the hegemon and the rising power are displaying their military and strategic prowess. The strategic interest of both the contending powers highly intersect in the water of SCS
3. The official inauguration of BRI added another dimension to the strategic competition between both the contending powers. The strategic competition took new turn when Donald Trump entered into the power corridor of Washington. It was during the Trump administration when Washington started pivoting away its strategic resources toward the Indo-Pacific region.
4. In the wake of the US-China Strategic Competition U.S felt dire need to amend its strategic approach. Therefore it incorporated economic aspect to the Indo-Pacific strategy. During the Trump administration U.S was out rightly focusing on off shore

balancing through strategic means. However later on Washington deemed the approach inadequate to deal with china as it could harm its relation with ASEAN. In 2022 Washington incorporated Indo-Pacific Economic Cooperation (IPEF) to get economic leverage against Beijing.

5. The ongoing strategic competition between US and China has enormous political, strategic and economic implications for the world in special and the South East Asia region in particular. On one hand the ongoing strategic competition has created incentives for the member countries of ASEAN, but on the other hand it has, and indeed will, made the strategic landscape murky and challenging. It has highly likely that the competition will reduce strategic options for ASEAN. Sooner or later the competition will compel the member's countries of ASEAN to choose side either with Washington or Beijing.
6. The strategic competition has virtually driven ASEAN in to quandary. Throughout the past many decades ASEAN has played essential and central role in the regional politics, but now the competition has entailed serious implications for it. The competition has the potential to reduce strategic options for ASEAN.

Recommendations

1. As the US-China Strategic Competition is heading toward its destination, the ASEAN member countries need to be cautious about the strategic objectives of both the contending powers. They need to evaluate assess its past and as well as recent past achievements especially strategic ones while keeping in minds the emerging strategic landscape of the region.
2. The ASEAN member countries have all the essential potentials to transform the organization into a more robust organization. Therefore the member countries need to realize those potential-be it economic, political and strategic.

3. The organization need to think about boosting up collective defensive capabilities in order to insulate the organization from the influence of both the contending powers.
4. The leading countries especially Indonesia highly needs to lead the way in bringing more reconciliation by addressing key issues including the one related to SCS on its multilateral forms.
5. The ongoing Strategic Competition offers economic incentives but they are on the expense of the ASEAN credibility. Therefore the organization needs to bring some reforms in its organizational and policy structure as it is no more than a loose coalition and political association of the member countries.

Bibliography

Australia, “*Defense White Paper*” (2013)

https://www.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-08/WP_2013_web.pdf

Anant, Singh and Mann Harsh V Pant, “*Understanding America’s Enduring Interest in the*

Indo-Pacific,” (2023) Obsever Research Foundation ,
<https://www.orfonline.org/research/understanding-americas-enduring-interest-in-the-indo-pacific/>

Angel, Damaynfi, “*Indo-Pacific Maritime Cooperation: ASEAN Mechanism on Security*
towrd

Global Maritime Governance” Universitas Kristen Indonesia (2017)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357718.2019.1639134>

Angel, Damaynfi, “*Indo-Pacific Maritime Cooperation: ASEAN Mechanism on Security*
towrd

Global Maritime Governance” Universitas Kristen Indonesia (2017)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357718.2019.1639134>

Angel, Damaynfi, “*Indo-Pacific Maritime Cooperation: ASEAN Mechanism on Security*
towrd

Global Maritime Governance” Universitas Kristen Indonesia (2017)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357718.2019.1639134>Sana,

Asma “*Foreign Policy of Major Powers*” Advanced AP Publishers (2013)

A. Robinson, and Lye Lin-Heng Koh Kheng-Lian,Nichola, “Appendix B- Founding of
ASEAN

–Short *History*, Published online by Cambridge University Press: (2016)

<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/09/12/asean-and-the-challenge-of-a-multipolar-world/>

Amado, Julio S “*ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community blueprint 2025, Jakarta*” ASEAN

Secretariat,(2011) <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/8.-March-2016-ASCC-Blueprint-2025.pdf>

Amador, JS “*ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community: An Assessment of its Institutional Prospects,*”

(2020) Social Science Research Network,
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1803830

Acharya, Amitav, “ASEAN and the new geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific,” East Asia Forum

(2021)

<https://eastasiaforum.org/2021/12/29/asean-and-the-new-geopolitics-of-the-indo-pacific/>

Acharya, Amitav “*ASEAN and the new geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific*,” East Asia Forum, (2021) <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/12/29/asean-and-the-new-geopolitics-of-the-indo-pacific/>

ASEAN, Regional Forum, “Australian Mission to ASEAN August” (2022) East Asia Summit, <https://asean.mission.gov.au/aesn/eastasiasummit.html>

Ariane, Yasmin Thomas Daniel and Puteri Nor, “*The Indo-Pacific Strategy and ASEAN*” in Focus ASEAN (2020) https://issuu.com/antalljozseftudaskozpont/docs/in_focus_2020_02_asean_web/s/11377142

Aziz, & Saidul Madia “*South China SEA: AASEAN Mechanism on Maritime Disputes and the Rise of Indo-Pacific Region*” (2022) <https://pesquisa.bvsalud.org/global-literature-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/resource/pt/covidwho-1993712>

Aziz, Sana “*South China SEA: AASEAN Mechanism on Maritime Disputes and the Rise of Indo-Pacific Region*,” (2022) <https://pesquisa.bvsalud.org/global-literature-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/resource/pt/covidwho-1993712>

Berglund, Patrik “*Territorial Disputes In The South China Sea: What You Need To Know*,” Xeneta, (2017) <https://www.xeneta.com/blog/south-china-sea-dispute>

Baobo, Junya Sano and Shigeo Kobayashi, Jia “*Three Reforms in China: Progress and Outlook*,” Japan Research Institute, (1999)

<https://www.jri.co.jp/english/periodical/rim/1999/RIMe199904threereforms/>

Cordesman, H Antony “*U.S National Defense Strategy for 2022*” Center for Strategic

&International Studies, (2022)

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-us-national-defense-strategy-2022>

Choong, William “ *The Return of Indo-Pacific Strategy: an Assessment*” Australia Journal of International Affairs(2019)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357718.2019.1639134>

China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States,2019, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL33534.html#Content>

Cannon, Brendon J. Cannon & Ash Rossiter, “*The Indo-Pacific*” – *Regional Dynamics in the 21st Century’s New Geopolitical Center of Gravity*,” Rising Power Quarterly, (2018)

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3289005

Council, on Foreign Relation, <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-asean>

Clark, Joseph , “*We Go Together : US, South Korea Mark 70 years Alliance*” US department of

Defence, (2023) <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3425351/we-go-together-us-south-korea-mark-70-year-alliance/>

Chau, Thompson “ *Sever Stress: Myanmar, South China Sea Push ASEAN to Breaking Point*,”

Al Jazeera (2023) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/4/severe-stress-myanmar-south-china-sea-push-asean-to-breaking-point>

Darmawan, Rizko Aristyo “ *ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook under Indonesia Chairmanship, How*

far it can go” Rand Corporation, August <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/idss/ip22073-asean-indo-pacific-outlook-under-indonesias-chairmanship-how-far-can-it-go/>

Dingdin, Chen “ *the Indo-Pacific Strategy: A Background Analysis* ”Italian Institute for

International Political Studies ,(2021)

<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/indo-pacific-strategy-background-analysis-20714>

Department, of Defense “ *National Security Strategy of United States*”(2017)

<https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/Department-Of-Defense-Indo-Pacific-Strategy-Report-2019.Pdf>

Dollar D “ *China Rise as a Regional and Global Power*,” Brooking Institute, August, (2020)

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-rise-as-a-regional-and-global-power-the-aiib-and-the-one-belt-one-road/>

De Castr, Renato Cruz “*The Obama Administration’s Strategic Pivot to Asia: From a Diplomatic to a Strategic Constraintment of an Emergent China*,” The Korean Journal

of Defense Analysis,(2013)
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290514382_The_Obama_Administration's_Strategic_Pivot_to_Asia_From_a_Diplomatic_to_a_Strategic_Constraintment_of_an_Emergent_China

DR, Tim Huxley and DR Lynn Kuok, “ *Asia Pacific Region Security Asseement* ” ISSS , (2021)

<https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-dossiers/asia-pacific-regional-security-assessment-2021>

Darmawa, Rizko Aristugo “ *ASEAN Dilemma in SCS*,” *Asia Pacific Policy Society*, (2021)

<https://www.policyforum.net/aseans-dilemma-in-the-south-china-sea/>

Ekaterina, Arapov Oleg Paramono Igor Denisov, “*Russia, China and the Concept of Indo-Pacific* SAGE JOURNAL (2021)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1879366521999899>

Editorial, Board ANU, “*ASEAN stress-tested by big power rivalry*,” East Asia Forum (2020)

<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/10/05/asean-stress-tested-by-big-power-rivalry/>

EAF, Editor “*ASEAN stress-tested by big power rivalry*,” East Asia Forum , (2020)

<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/10/05/asean-stress-tested-by-big-power-rivalry/>

Editorial, Page, “*ASEAN strives to stay neutral as US-China tension rises*,” (2022)

<https://www.eiu.com/n/asean-strives-to-stay-neutral-as-us-china-tension-rises/>

Ekaterina, Arapov Oleg Paramono Igor Denisov, “*Russia, China and the Concept of Indo-Pacific*”

SAGE JOURNAL (2021)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1879366521999899>

Frost, Frank “*Introduction: ASEAN since 1967 — Origins, Evolution and Recent*

Developments,” World View, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/asean-environmental-legal-integration/founding-of-asean-a-short-history/E759E9552633D5AC5064912D89296450>

Foot, Rosemary “*The Role of East Asian Regional Organizations in Regional Governance:*

Constraints and Contributions,” (2011) <https://carnegieendowment.org/2011/06/07/role-of-east-asian-regional-organizations-in-regional-governance-constraints-and-contributions-pub-44420>

Globa, Banyan “*Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor*” Chemonics International Inc. (2015)

<https://banyanglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Indo-Pacific-Economic-Economic-Corridor.pdf>

Ghaziza, Mordechai “*The Global Security Initiative: China new Security architecture for Gulf*,”

The Diplomat’ (2023) <https://thediplomat.com/2023/05/the-global-security-initiative-chinas-new-security-architecture-for-the-gulf/>

Hen, Eng NG Dr, “*Asean nations take comfort from not being forced by US and China to choose*

sides,” The Strait Times, (2022) <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/asean-nations-take-comfort-from-not-being-forced-by-us-and-china-to-choose-sides-ng-eng-hen>

Hon, Yang Han “*China-US Competition: Why small countries will not choose sides*” Think

China (2022) <https://www.thinkchina.sg/china-us-competition-why-small-countries-will-not-choose-sides?page=282>

Heiduk, Felix and Wacker Gudrun “ *From Asia Pacific to Indo-Pacific*,” Stiftung Wissenschaft

und Politik German Institute (2020) <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020RP09/>

Heiduk, Felix and Wacker Gudrun “ *From Asia Pacific to Indo-Pacific*,” Stiftung Wissenschaft

und Politik German Institute (2020) <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020RP09/>

Haruko, Wada” “*The Indo-Pacific Concept Geographical Adjustments: their implications*”

S.Rajaratnam School of international studies (2020)

<https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/10356/143604/2/WP326.pdf>

Hoang Thi Ha, Javad Heydarian,, Pongphisoot Busbarat|“*ASEAN’s Engagement in the Indo-Pacific*” Fulcrum Analysis of South East Asia, (2022)

<https://fulcrum.sg/aseanfocus/aseans-engagement-in-the-indo-pacific/>

Huang, Yukon “ *The U.S.-China Trade War Has Become a Cold War*,” Carnegie Endowment

for International Peace,(2021) <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/09/16/u.s.-China-trade-war-has-become-cold-war-pub-85352>

Hee, Paul “*Understanding US-China strategic competition*,” MIT Studies for International

Studies, (2020)<https://cis.mit.edu/publications/analysis-opinion/2020/understanding-us-china-strategic-competition>

Harucks, Warda “*The Indo-Pacific Concept Geographical Adjustments: their implications*,”

S.Rajaratnam School of international studies, (2020) <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/the-indo-pacific-concept/>

Development Bank, (2019)

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/528626/evolving-asean-vision-reality.pdf>

Harding, Brian” *Southeast Asia’s Role in Geopolitics*,” School of Public Policy and Global

Affairs, (2017)

<https://sppga.ubc.ca/wpcontent/uploads/sites/5/2017/10/8-Brian-Harding.pdf>

Heiduk, Felix “ *Security in the Indo-Pacific*,” Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute

of International and Security Affairs, (2022) https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research_papers/2022RP11_Security_Indo-Pacific.pdf

Hen, NG Eng “ *Asean nations take comfort from not being forced by US and China to choose sides*,” The Strait Times, (2022) <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/asean-nations-take-comfort-from-not-being-forced-by-us-and-china-to-choose-sides-ng-eng-hen>

Hong, Hong Yong “ *China-US Competition: Why small countries will not choose sides*”. Think

China (2022) <https://www.thinkchina.sg/china-us-competition-why-small-countries-will-not-choose-sides?ref=neican.org&page=52>

Huisken, Ron “ *The Architecture of Security in the Asia-Pacific*,” Anu Press, (2009)

<https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/sdsc/architecture-security-asia-pacific>

Ishikaw, Koichi “ *the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Economic I integration*” (2021) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/24761028.2021.1891702>

Iren, Marinov Peter Harris “ *America Primacy and US-China Relation: The Cold War Analogy Reversed*” The Chinese Journal of International Politics, (2022)

http://www.tuiir.tsinghua.edu.cn/zzqk/The_Chinese_Journal_of_International_Politics.htm

Jiang, Chengbin Robert s Ross “ *Re-Examining the Cold War: US-China*

Diplomacy, 1954- 1973, (2010) <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1tg5nbnr>

Japan, Ministry of Defense’s Approach “ *Achieving the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Vision*” Japan Ministry of Defense’s Approach

https://www.mod.go.jp/en/d_act/exc/india_pacific/india_pacific-en.html

Jie, Jennifer “ *ASEAN and the SCS: Approaches to Resolving Conflict*,” SIT Graduate

- Institute, (2017)
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3777&context=isp_collection
- J Koch, Charles, “*Testing the Power Transition Theory with Relative Military Power*” Journal of Strategic Security,(1984)
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232848516_Power_Transition_Theory_and_the_Rise_of_China
- Koh, Kheng-Liang, Nicholas A, Robinson and Lye Lin-Heng “*Founding of ASEAN – a short history*”, Published online by Cambridge University Press, (2016)
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/asean-environmental-legal-integration/founding-of-asean-a-short-history/E759E9552633D5AC5064912D89296450>
- K Shimizu, “ *The ASEAN charter and the ASEAN economic Community*” Huscap 2010,
<https://eprints.lib.hokudai.ac.jp/dspace/handle/2115/47731>
- Kazushi, Shimizu, “*ASEAN Political-Security Community*”, ASEAN Learning Center
 Department of Local Administartion, (2019)
<http://asean.dla.go.th/public/article.do?lv2Index=82&lang=en&random=1475222592096>
- Kazushi, Shimizu, “*ASEAN Political-Security Community*”, ASEAN Learning Center
 Department of Local Administartion, (2019)
<http://asean.dla.go.th/public/article.do?lv2Index=82&lang=en&random=1475222592096>
- Kreisher, Otto “*Southeast Asian Nations Wary of Choosing Sides in Rift Between U.S., China Sea Power* (2018)
<https://seapowermagazine.org/southeast-asian-nations-wary-of-choosing-sides-in-rift-between-u-s-china/>
- Kumar, Gosh Ambar “*Security, Economic and Ecological settings priorities in the Indo-Pacific*” Observer Research Foundation(2022)
<https://www.orfonline.org/research/security-economy-and-ecology/>
<https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/sdsc/architecture-security-asia-pacific>
- Koga, Kei “*Japan South East Relation, the Emergence of Indo-Pacific,*” Comparative

connection Pacific Forum(2019) <https://cc.pacforum.org/2019/05/the-emerging-indo-pacific-era/>

Kucharski, Jeffrey B., “Japan, FOIP, And The Geopolitics Of Energy In The Indo-Pacific.” School

of Public Policy and Global Affairs, (2020) <https://sppga.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Kucharski-Japan-FOIP-Geopolitics-Indo-Pacific.pdf> c Kenton, Will “Trans-Pacific Partnership: Meaning, Overview, Alternatives,” Investopedia,

(2022) <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/t/transpacific-partnership-tpp.asp/content/uploads/sites/5/2020/07/Kucharski-Japan-FOIP-Geopolitics-Indo-Pacific.pdf>

Kouk, Lynn “An Introduction to Asia Pacific Security,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, (2021) <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2021/06/rsa-2021-introduction>

Kuok, Lynn “An Introduction to Asia Pacific Security,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, (2021) <https://www.joannewallis.com/publications>

Lung, Chu Chen “US-Taiwan Relation” The Diplomat, (2016)

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190601126.003.0006>

Lunkster, Nigel “Strained US-China Relation and the Growing Threat to Taiwan , Asia Pacific

Regional Security” (2023) <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/strategic-dossiers/asia-pacific-regional-security-assessment-2023/aprsa-chapter-2/>

Latham, Andrew “Offshore Balancing: A Grand Strategy for the China Dream,” The Diplomat, (2020)

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/offshore-balancing-a-grand-strategy-for-the-china-dream/>

Luthra, Girish “The Indo-Pacific Maritime Focus and Ocean Governance” Observer Research

Foundation(2021) , <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-indo-pacific-region-maritime-focus-and-ocean-governance/>

Lulit, Kapur Commodore “China Response to Indo-Pacific” Delhi Policy Group, (2022)

<https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/publication/policy-briefs/the-indo-pacific-maritime-in-2022.html>

Lee, Cassey, Menon, Jayant “An Evolving ASEAN: Vision and Reality)

(2019) <https://www.adb.org/publications/evolving-asean-vision-reality>

Medcalf, Rory “*Contest for the Indo-Pacific why China Won’t Map the Future*” La Trobe

University Press,(2022) <https://www.blackincbooks.com.au/books/contest-indo-pacific-0>

Medcalf, Rory, “*Indo-Pacific Visions: Giving Solidarity a Chance,*” National Bureau of Asian Research (2019)

<https://www.nbr.org/publication/indo-pacific-visions-giving-solidarity-a-chance/>

Mingjian, Li and He Kai “*Four reasons why the Indo-Pacific matters*” Oxford University Press,

(2020) <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Pillsbury.pdf>

National, “*Security Strategy of United States*” (2018)

<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

National, “*Security Strategy*” (2022)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

National, “*Security Strategy*” (2022) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

National, “*Security Strategy of the United States of America,*” (2017) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

Naoh, Berman and Anshu Siripirapu, “*the Contentious US-China Trade Realationship*”

Council of Foreign Relation(2023)

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/contentious-us-china-trade-relationship>

Naidu, G.V.C “*Asia Pacific Security: an anlysis of Trends,*” A monthly Journal of the IDSA,

- (2000) https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/sa/sa_dec00nag01.html
- Naveed, Jamali Tom O'Conner "US, China's Geopolitical Battle for Asia Shapes New Power Dynamic for Region," New Week, (2022) <https://www.newsweek.com/us-china-geopolitical-battle-asia-shapes-power-dynamics-region-1541509>
- Nedopil, Wang Christoph "China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Investment Report" Green Financial & Development Center (2023) <https://greenfdc.org/china-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-investment-report-2022/#:~:text=Chinese%20engagement%20through%20financial%20investments,7%20billion>
- National, Security Strategy of the United States of America, (2017) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>
- Nagy, Stephen "Drivers of U.S.-China Strategic Competition: Understanding the Chinese Perspective," Institute for Security& Developmental Study, (2023) <https://isdpeu.org/content/uploads/2023/06/Brief-June-7-2023-NAGY-FINAL.pdf>
- Oba, Mie " ASEAN and the Creation of a Regional Community ," Asia-Pacific Review(2014) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13439006.2014.925200>
- Organsky, A.F.K, "World Politics" A.Knopf (1968) <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/world-politics-by-a-f-k-organski-new-york-alfred-a-knopf-1958-pp-xii-461-750-text-575/47B35E2DDFF6D93ADAB9C892F16F81D7>
- Paskal, Cleo " Indo-Pacific Strategies, Perceptions and Partnership," Chatham House (2021) <http://www.cries.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/017-Comentario-Jaiswal-ok.pdf>
- Pillsbury, Michael "The Trump Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy" The Aspen Institute, (2020) <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Pillsbury.pdf>
- Paramasawaran, Prashant "ASEAN Role in the Indo Pacific Strategy" Wilson Center (2028) <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/aseans-role-us-indo-pacific-strategy>
- Pooja, Bhatt, "Evolving dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, Deliberating India Position, Journal of

Indo-Pacific Affairs (2018)

https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/JIPA/journals/Volume-01_Issue-1/06-F-Bhatt.pdf

Pail, Jin-Hyun “ *Regional Security System in the Asia Pacific*, ” Institute of Foreign Affairs

and National security Republic of Korea
https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/yearbookofworldlaw1986/1997/16/1997_16_84/pdf/-char/ja

Pongsdhirak, Thitinan “ *Geopolitical Upheavals divide South East Asia*” GIS Report (2022)

<https://www.gisreportsonline.com/e/pongsudhirak-thitinan/>

Power, shifts in the Indo–Pacific, *Foreign Policy White Paper*, Australian Government, (2017)

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf>

Qing , Ngoei Wen “*Looking Back on ASEAN-Sino Rivalry in the Cold War*”

E International Relation (2012) <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/03/09/looking-back-on-asean-and-sino-us-rivalry-in-the-cold-war/>

Qing, Ngoei Wen, “*Looking Back on ASEAN-Sino Rivalry in the Cold War*”

E International Relation (2012) <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/03/09/looking-back-on-asean-and-sino-us-rivalry-in-the-cold-war/>

Raska, Michel “*ASEAN in the United States-China Strategic Competition : An Indonesian Perspective*”. IJP (2021)

https://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/joint_research/series18/pdf/chapter03.pdf

R. Heath, Timothy “*U.S. Strategic Competition with China*, ” Rand Corporation, (2021)

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA290-3.html>

Rauch, Carston “*Realism and Power Transition Theory: Different Branches of the Power Tree*, ”

JSTOR, (2022) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/174421>

Rossite, Ash & Brendon J. Cannon “*The “Indo-Pacific” – Regional Dynamics in the 21st Century’s New Geopolitical Center of Gravity*, ” Rising Power Quarterly, (2018)

<https://rpquarterly.kureselcalismalar.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Rising-Powers-Quarterly-Volume-3-Issue-2.pdf>

Richard, Heydarian, “ *QUAD summit next step toward Asia NATO*,” Asia Times (2021)

<https://asiatimes.com/2021/03/quad-summit-next-step-towards-an-asian-nato/>

Ryan, Hass , “ *Are Worsening US-China relation in the Taiwan interest*” Brooking Institute,

(2022) <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/are-worsening-us-China-relations-in-taiwans-interest/>

Serafettin Yilmaz and WaKim Woosang, “Power Transition Theory Revisited, When Rising China Meets Dissatisfied United States”, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies, (2022)

<https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/pdf/10.1142/S2377740019500192?srsid=AfmBOopa9Z1CqIaABwGWfhnTS7mILH1zKnW9lUJhffX7MVeCPx-L3lQT>

Saha, Rushali “ *The Pitfalls of Great Power Competition in the Indo-Pacific* ,” South Asia Voices, (2022) <https://southasianvoices.org/the-pitfalls-of-great-power->

Shneider, Marianne, “ *US–China Strategic Competition and Quest for Global Technological Leadership*” Chatham House, (2019)

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/11/us-china-strategic-competition>

Sen, Gautum “ *Strategic Relevance of the Indo-Pacific: an Assessment*” CLAWS Journal

(2018) <https://www.neliti.com/publications/327347/strategic-relevance-of-the-indo-pacific-an-assessment>

Sing, Kawaljit “ *The What, How and Why Indo-Pacific Economic Framework*,” Wires English,

(2022) <https://thewire.in/economy/the-what-how-and-why-of-the-indo-pacific-economic-framework>

Singleton Craig “ *Foreign Policy*” (2021) <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/07/china-pla-military-bases-kiribati-uae-cambodia-tanzania-djibouti-indo-pacific-ports-airfields/>

- Sheikar, Chandar “*India as a rising power in the Indo-Pacific*,” Asia & Pacific Policy Society, (2022) <https://www.policyforum.net/india-as-a-rising-power-in-the-indo-pacific/>
- Shoukat, Ali, “*US-China strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region*” Pakistan Observer, (2023) <https://pakobserver.net/us-China-strategic-competition-in-indo-pacific-region-by-shoukat-ali/>
- Sun, Haiyong “*US-China tech war Impacts and Prospects*” China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies (2019) <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/S237774001950012X>
- Saha, Premesha “*The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF): An ASEAN perspective*,” Observer Research Foundation, (2022), <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-indo-pacific-economic-framework>
- Szechenyi, Nicholas “*Working Toward Free and Open Indo-Pacific*,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2022) <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/10/working-toward-free-and-open-indo-pacific-pub-80023>
- Sun, Haiyong “*US-China tech war Impacts and Prospects*” China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies (2019) <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/S237774001950012X>
- Seah, Daniel “*The ASEAN charter and the ASEAN economic Community*’ Huscap (2010) <https://eprints.lib.hokudai.ac.jp/dspace/handle/2115/47731>
- Shimizu, Kazushi “*the ASEAN charter and the ASEAN economic community*,” journal of Hokkaido uni, (2011) <https://eprints.lib.hokudai.ac.jp/dspace/handle/2115/47731>
- Sebok, Filip “*The U.S. Pivot to Asia: A Tool to Contain China*” Masaryk University Faculty of https://is.muni.cz/th/yrz73/?zoomy_is=1
- Staff, Anadolu “*Geopolitical games: The US and its military pacts in Asia-Pacific*,” (2023)

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/-geopolitical-games-the-us-and-its-military-pacts-in-asia-pacific/3007664>

Sotake, Tomohiko “*Japan Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and its implications for ASEAN*” South East Asia Affairs, (2019) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26939688>

Strategic, Annual Report, “*Intensifying US-China Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific*

and ASEAN faced by Challenges” (2021)

https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/strategic_comment/2022/02/18/StrategicAnnualReport2021en04.pdf

Simos, Leticia “*The Role of ASEAN in SCS Disputes*” E-International Relation, (2023)

<https://www.e-ir.info/2022/06/23/the-role-of-asean-in-the-south-china-sea-disputes/>

Siow, Maria “*US-China Rivalry: is Pressure on ASEAN to Choose sides,*” South China Morning

Post, (2021), <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3128986/us-china-rivalry-pressure-asean-countries-choose-sides>

Stromseth, Jonathan Stromseth , “*Don’t Make us Choose: South East Asia In the Throes of US-*

China Rivalry,” Brooking Institute, (2019) <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/dont-make-us-choose-southeast-asia-in-the-throes-of-us-china-rivalry/>

T.C.A, “*The changing Seas: antecedents of the Indo-Pacific,*” The Telegraph (2019)

<https://www.orfonline.org/research/in-defence-of-the-indo-pacific-concept/>

The Editor, “*How China Rising has Remade Global Politics*” World Political Review, (2022)

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/how-a-rising-china-has-remade-global-politics/>

The, “*U.S.-China Trade War Has Become a Cold War,*” Carnegie Endowment for International

Peace,(2021)

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/09/16/u.s.-china-trade-war-has-become-cold-war-pub-85352>

Thayer, Carlyle “*United State and China Assertiveness in the SCS*”. Institute for Regional

- Security,(2017) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26459938>
- Thanat, Khoman, “ *ASEAN Conception and Evolution*,” Association of South East Asia Nations, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1355/9789814620628-002/html?lang=en>
- U.S, “ *National Defense Strategy for 2022*,” Center for Strategic & International Studies, (2022) <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-us-national-defense-strategy-2022>
- U.S-China, Relation , “ *Council on Foreign Relation*” 1949-2022, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-china-relations>
- Umar Farooq, Muhamad, “ *US-China Tech Rivalry: Imappct and Way froward*” Global Viillage Space, (2023) <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/us-China-tech-rivalry-impacts-and-way-forward/>
- Wardoyo, Broto “ *From Asia Pacific to Indo-Pacific*” Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute (2020) , <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020RP09/>
- Wood, S Aaron Capt “ *Historical Mine: The Legal Basis for China Sever Claims to Lands in South China Sean*,” Journal of Indo-pacific , (2021) <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2528218/historically-mine-the-potentially-legal-basis-for-Chinas-sovereignty-claims-to/>
- Wada, Haruku “ *The Indo-Pacific Concept Geographical Adjustments: their implications*” S.Rajaratnam School of international studies (2020) <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/10356/143604/2/WP326.pdf>
- Waron, Parames Prashant “ *Assessing ASEAN New Indo-Pacific Outlook*,” The Diplomat (2019) <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/assessing-aseans-new-indo-pacific-outlook/>
- Wang, Amber “ *The new rules China hopes will Build more Professional Soldiers*,” China Morning Post, (2022)

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3176096/new-rules-china-hopes-will-build-more-professional-soldiers>

Wu, Lunting “*China’s Transition From the Belt and Road to the Global Development*

Initiative,” The Diplomat (2013) <https://thediplomat.com/2023/07/chinas-switch-from-the-belt-and-road-to-the-global-development-initiative/>

Xiaoliang, Fei Su “*Ten-Years Review of China Defense Budget Steady toward Modernization*,”

South Asia Voices (2023) , <https://southasianvoices.org/ten-year-review-of-chinas-defense-budget-steadily-toward-mo>

Yu Au Loong, “*China Rise as a World Power*” International Social Review,(2021)

<https://isreview.org/issue/112/Chinas-rise-world-power/index.html>

Yu Au Loong “*China Rise: Strength and Fragility*” ,Merlin Press in Association with

Resistance Books, <https://resistancebooks.org/product/Chinas-rise-strength-and-fragility/>

Zhao, Minghao, “*The Belt and Road Initiative and China–US strategic competition*,” National

Library of Medicine, November 2021, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8576310/>

Zayan, Naufal “*Challenges of the ASEAN Political-Security Community*,” Modern Diplomacy

(2023) <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/07/04/challenges-of-the-asean-political-security-community/>

Zhang, Jie “*Rebuilding Strategic Autonomy: ASEAN Response to US-China Strategic*

Competiton,” IISS (2023) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42533-023-00128-3>

Zhu, Cuiping “*Strategic Competition and Multilateral Relation in Indo-Pacific –Region*”

Journal Of Indo-Pacific Affairs,

(2015)[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/300890271 Strategic Competition and Multilateral Relations in Indo-Pacific Region](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/300890271_Strategic_Competition_and_Multilateral_Relations_in_Indo-Pacific_Region)

Zhou, Weifeng “*China Growing Asssertiveness in the SCS*” Real Institute Elcano, (2021)

<https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/chinas-growing-assertiveness-in-the-south-china-sea/>

Zhang, Ji “ *Rebuilding Strategic Autonomy: ASEAN Response to US-China Strategic Competiton,*” IISS (2023) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42533-023-00128-3>