

Abstract: *The power equation in the Asia-Pacific region is transforming due to the intense competition between the US and China. The US is trying to alter the traditional political order, while China intends to enhance its economic stature. Various developments are underway, including the formation of alliances, defense cooperation among allies, and muscle-flexing between rival states in the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean. These developments make the Asia-Pacific region the epicentre of this new Cold War competition between Washington and Beijing. However, in view of the US, power play in the region is impossible without forming alliances. This research study delves into the recognition of the competition between the US and China, tracing US attempts to form alliances in the region and putting China into a security dilemma. The study will also shed light on the reasons why the presence of China is perceived as a threat to US hegemony in the region. The consequence of the competition between the US and China in the Asia-Pacific will enormously exacerbate the strategic stability in South Asia due to the US's action in developing bloc politics. This research study also highlights challenges for Pakistan as India has become a key ally of the US in the quest for power drive in the region.*

Key Words: Asia Pacific, New Cold War, Bloc Politics, Emerging Alliances, Strategic Partnership

Introduction

National Security Strategy (NSS) 2017 of the US highlights the Chinese presence in Asia-Pacific, as a potential threat, formally recognizing the resurgence of the Great Power Competition (GPC) (National Security Strategy of United States, 2017:2-3). As a result of the emergence of these two powers, the world is witnessing the power transitions from unipolarity to multipolarity and the emergence of a new Cold War, primarily in the Asia-Pacific region.

The National Security Strategy concurrently recognized three other threats to US security: (i) transnational terrorist and criminal organizations, (ii) Iran, and (iii) North Korea. However, it became apparent that future prosperity and US security hinged on the country's capacity to contend with the two emerging Great Powers (Russia and China) (Annual Threat Assessment, 2023: 6-10).

The US and China are the primary actors in the region – the former being an established power and the latter an emerging great power. In this context, the US aims to expand and maintain its economic, diplomatic, political, and military presence in the region in line with its national security interests. China, on the other hand, is more focused on enhancing its economic influence both at regional and global levels (Johnson, 2022)

The US views China as the only competitor in Asia-Pacific with the intention to reshape global norms. This stance continues from Donald Trump's administration NSS (2017), which labelled China as a revisionist power and strategic competitor. Beijing policy is one area where there is a bipartisan agreement in Washington. Both Democrats and Republicans support a tough stance against China due to its growing economic, technological, and military influence in Asia Pacific. China perceives this as the US engaging in a "new Cold War" against it (China This Week, 2017). This indicates that the new Cold War has a broader

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global scope, which has engulfed an extended array of stakeholders. Players of the new Cold War will always keep on changing due to the prevalence of vested interests of many major and regional powers.

Comparing the current US-China competition with the Cold War rivalry between the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (1946-1991) reveals dissimilarities. Unlike China today, during the Cold War, the USSR was viewed as the principal adversary. However, the USSR posed a major military threat. It aimed to expand its military influence globally, while China does not pose any military threats to the US or its allies unless its territorial integrity is challenged. The US NSS (2022) and the US Defense Strategy (NDS) posit the emergence of China as a potential threat (National Defence Strategy of United States of America, 2022: 14-23). Hence, in the new Cold War era between the US and China, Biden aspired to maintain its hegemony and a competitive edge through diplomatic ventures, investments, and strategic alliances (Lopez, 2022). To keep its hegemony in the Asia Pacific, the US has been focusing on the formation of alliances. For instance, Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), the US (AUKUS) and Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) that encompasses strategic dialogue between Australia, Japan, India and the US. NDS states that China seeks to reshape the international order to suit its interests and undermine American coalitions in the Asia-Pacific region, whereas Russia is considered an acute threat where it wants to establish its influence in Eastern Europe (Lopez, 2022). The formation of a new political system, economies and, most importantly, changes in the world order emerge from transitions of powers. Resultantly, new relations and bilateral ties are established (Tammen et al., 2000). In the quest for great power, Asia will be the epicentre. Scholars and policymakers view that the quest for great power competition could directly have an impact on Asia-Pacific, undermining the strategic stability of South Asia.

US-China Competition in Asia Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region has always been a key area for global power competition, and this dynamic will likely continue into the 21st century. This region, which stretches from the Indian subcontinent to the west coast of the US, encompasses two major oceans—the Pacific and Indian Oceans—and is central to global maritime trade. It also hosts almost half of the world's population and numerous emerging economic centres. Critical maritime straits, including Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok, are located here, giving countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore significant control over global trade routes (Jarid, 2019: 8-26).

The Asia-Pacific's strategic importance has led to heightened geopolitical and geoeconomic competition involving mainly the US, China, Russia, Australia, the European Union (EU), and India. The legacies of World War II, the Cold War, and ongoing territorial disputes continue to shape the region's security landscape (Zhenmin, 2013). The US aims to counter China's growing influence through alliances and partnerships, especially in Southeast Asia.

American strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski highlighted that control over Eurasia's economic regions is crucial for global dominance (Brzezinski, 1997). The US intends to increase its power in Asia-Pacific as it perceives Chinese presence as a threat in the region. One potential outcome is a new bipolar order dominated by the US and China, reminiscent of the Cold War era. This scenario could lead to fixed alliances and increased tensions, possibly hindering regional cooperation. While the US continues to engage in the Asia-Pacific and expand into the Indo-Pacific, China's path to becoming a significant counterweight to US influence is challenging (Waltz, 1988).

If China collaborates closely with Russia to establish a "Pax Sinica", it could further reshape the Asia-Pacific calculus. This partnership, known as the Dragon Bear alliance, might intensify the prospects of a new cold war-like scenario in the region (Tchakarova & Johson, 2022). The emergence of a "Multiplex" cold war could redefine regional dynamics and global geopolitics (Doyle & Rumley, 2019).

US Pivot to Asia Pacific

US-China competition spans several areas and domains; however, tension and dispute are more intense in the Asia-Pacific. The US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) is the oldest and largest unified combatant command, and it is responsible for the entire Asia-Pacific region. The US Pacific Fleet has close to 200 ships. It has two aircraft groups and can muster up to five carrier groups. The US is working closely



with regional allies South Korea and Japan to augment military capabilities. The US Seventh Fleet is stationed in Yokosuko, while the 111 Marine Expeditionary Force is based in Okinawa. Japan compensates 75 percent of US basing costs. With regards to South Korea, the United States Force Korea (USFK) has been in place since July 1957. The major USFK components include the US Eighth Army, US Seventh Air Force, US Naval Forces Korea, US Marine Forces Korea, and US Special Operations Command Korea (SOCKOR). Similarly, Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the president of the Philippines is coordinating closely with the US to develop new military bases. The US military bases were established in the Philippines, based on a treaty signed after the conclusion of World War II and the recognition of Philippine independence by the US. The bases include, Antonio Bautista Air Base (Palawan), Basa Air Base (Pampanga), Benito Ebuena Air Base (Cebu), Fort Magsaysay (Nueva Ecija), Luambia Airport (Cagayan De Oro). In 2023, four additional bases were established under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). These were Balabac Island (Palawan), Camp Melchor Dela Cruz (Gamu, Isabela), Lal-lo Airport (Lal-lo, Cagayan), and Naval Base Camilo Osias (Santa Ana, Cagayan).

These sizeable US military presence in the three important countries, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, exacerbate the security anxieties of China and create tensions in the region. Thus, US Pivot to Asia-Pacific is no longer peaceful but aims to countervail the influence of China in the region. Similarly, the Taiwan Policy Act of 2022 promotes Taiwan's security against China's aggression. This act results in taking a new initiative to bolster Taiwan's defence capabilities, providing almost 4.5 billion dollars in security assistance over the next four years, and labelling Taiwan as a major non-NATO ally. (Han-Wu, 2022).

US Asserting Influence via Security Partnership

AUKUS

AUKUS is a technology-centered agreement aimed at national defence. It is intended to enable the three nations to collaborate closely on technology, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), and quantum computing, into a fourth-coming military advantage. AUKUS formation could play a valuable role in achieving the Western national interest. The development of these areas would be carried out by 17 technical working groups. Eight of them deal with advanced capabilities, while nine are concerned with the submarine programme. AUKUS is not intended to maintain peace by means of nuclear-armed submarine-delivered deterrence. Instead, as shown by the themes in the working groups on advanced capabilities, it appears that the main objective of the pact is to strengthen the intelligence and deterrence value of conventional assets. One of the most shocking theories regarding AUKUS in this regard is the notion that technology holds the key to maximising the capability of conventional undersea capabilities through enhanced early warning systems and, if necessary, unmatched targeting precision.

The leaders of the US, UK and Australia have also demonstrated through AUKUS how important they consider the maritime sector to the stability of the Asia-Pacific region and the international order. Therefore, it is crucial from a strategic standpoint to comprehend the purpose of AUKUS. It matters because it reveals a worldview in which technology that makes it possible to operate from this area more effectively is of utmost importance. This worldview holds that the sea is fundamental to world politics. AUKUS's guiding principle is based on the knowledge that state coercion endangers the maritime foundations of the global order.

Most of Chinese security analysts believe that AUKUS is primarily an anti-China military alliance. It is created as an essential component of US grand strategy in the context of its increasing rivalry with China. This alliance, as China believes, is a strategic step by the US to create an Asia-Pacific North Atlantic Treaty Organization (APNATO). In addition to the direct military threats posed by the nuclear submarine agreement, other significant military technology collaborations including AI and quantum technology will also have implications for China. Thus, the Chinese are concerned about the broader effects of the AUKUS partnership on China's external security environment.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

The origin of Quad goes back to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami when the US, Australia, India, and Japan joined hands to work on maritime matters. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Manila hosted the Quad's

initial formal gathering in 2007. At the onset, observers saw this as an “informal gathering” that solely dealt with specific issues such as humanitarian and disaster relief missions (Ambrogio, 2021). The Quad’s joint military exercise after the 2007 ARF was an augmentation of the ongoing Malabar series between the US and India in September of that same year. The four nations, along with the Singapore’s navy held military drills in the Bay of Bengal during the second Malabar exercise. These military exercises were strongly criticized by Beijing. In March 2020, the members of the Quad met with representatives from Vietnam, South Korea, and New Zealand to discuss how each nation is addressing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Delegates from New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam attended the meeting. It was seen as an additional effort to draw attention to the importance of the Quad and the growing perception of Chinese threat in the region. The US has also formed a new grouping of Asia-Pacific countries called “Quad Plus.” Brazil and Israel were also invited to the second Quad Plus-format meeting in May 2021 to discuss the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines (Envall, 2021).

Since 2021, the leaders of all four nations have been more receptive to establishing a meaningful cooperative agenda. Quad nations have also adopted a formal agreement with shared concerns regarding China’s enhanced activities in the region. In November 2020, the four states engaged in their first joint military exercises after a decade. Additionally, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd attended a virtual Quad meeting in March 2021, organized by the US President, to discuss health issues. The Asia-Pacific region is significant to American maritime interests since it links two oceans and multiple continents. 1.9 trillion dollars of US trade went through the region in 2019. According to a UN estimate, this year, 42 percent of global exports and 38 percent of global imports are anticipated to travel through (Deb & Wilson, 2021, p. 111-112).

Beijing openly rejects the designations of “AUKUS” and “Quad,” and frequently refers to it as an “Asian NATO” (US-Chian Economic & Security Commission, 2022, 350-362). Hence, Quad’s recent Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are designed against China. It is hurting China’s strategic interests in the region and beyond. Despite having serious concerns, Beijing is not responding to these threats with offensiveness.

Deepening and Broadening of US-India Strategic ties in Asia Pacific

The US has steadily strengthened strategic ties with India since President Bill Clinton’s years in office (IANs, 2022). The bilateral strategic partnership between the two states got impetus with the signing of the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal, four foundational strategic pacts, and the provision of an NSG waiver to India. During the Obama and Trump administrations, India assumed more importance for the US when it became a part of America’s Asia-Pacific strategy against China. I2U2 also known as West Asia Quad, a Middle Eastern bloc comprising India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the US was also formed during the Biden administration (IANs, 2022). India continues to stay an important strategic ally of the US. In this context, the US has pledged military cooperation with India and signed several agreements. A few important ones are briefly mentioned:

The General Security of Military Information Agreement (2002): The US had started strategically cooperating with India even before signing the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal in 2008. The US signed ‘The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with India in 2002. The agreement provides measures to establish security standards for protecting critical information shared by Washington with New Delhi. This information was only to be shared with the Indian government.

India-US Civil Nuclear Deal: The Indo-US strategic partnership strengthened with the signing of the civil nuclear deal that came into effect on October 1, 2008 (Siddiqi, 2015). The US extended its cooperation and support to India to help it deal with its energy crisis. The civil-nuclear cooperation, however, in essence, has led to more than a dozen other nuclear deals that allow New Delhi to import nuclear materials to fuel nuclear power plants and free its indigenous resources for building a large fissile material stockpile for developing the third-largest arsenal after the US and Russia. However, if this cooperation impinges on the security of other regional states, they will take necessary individual and collective countermeasures. The latter scenario shall only increase the odds for the US, something it should strategically avoid.



Logistic Exchange Memorandum of Agreement: Logistic Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), signed on August 26, 2016, in Washington DC, basically allows armies of both these states to use military facilities of each other for fueling and logistics purposes. This allows both states to use each other's military and naval facilities for specific activities. On the other hand, this agreement will also allow the US to enhance its reach in the Indian Ocean. The agreement is mainly designed to curtail China's rising influence in the region and can have profound implications for Pakistan (Iqbal et al., [2024](#)).

Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement: After LEMOA, India achieved another milestone in its strategic partnership with the US. On September 6, 2018, both partners signed the Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). The agreement enabled greater communication interoperability between both states' militaries. The COMCASA will facilitate the sale of high-end US defense technology to India. This will also help both militaries to share encrypted information through secure communication channels and defense systems.

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement: After GISMOA, LEMOA, and COMCASA, the US upgraded its strategic partnership with India to a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership (CGSP) and signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), which came into effect on October 27, 2020. The signing of BECA will strengthen bilateral military ties and enhance Indian defense. This agreement allows India to procure classified geospatial maps for getting critical military information from automated hardware systems and weapons, including cruise and ballistic missiles.

Special NSG Waiver to India: The 2008 Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) waiver granted to India marked a significant advancement in US-India relations, as it allowed India to participate in civilian nuclear trade despite its non-signatory status to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). For India, the waiver represented an opportunity to secure critical nuclear technology and fuel for its energy needs while strengthening its partnership with the US. However, this move also sparked debate regarding the integrity of non-proliferation norms, underscoring flexibility within the NSG framework for strategic considerations.

China's Soft Power Strategy and Regional Development Initiatives

China emphasises peace and advocates for a regional approach to resolving conflicts, preferring solutions that do not involve non-regional powers. In response to international concerns regarding its claims in the South China Sea, China has firmly defended its position, viewing such criticisms as not only diplomatic challenges but also as part of its broader vision for regional stability and cooperation. China's growing economic influence and cultural outreach have positioned it as a significant player in shaping the dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region. Contrary to the perspective that sees this area as a battleground for geopolitical rivalry, China envisions it as a space for collaboration and development. This stance contrasts sharply with the idea of forming alliances and blocs, which China believes only heightens tensions and fosters division. A key component of China's strategy to achieve great power status is its soft power approach. There are two main perspectives on what constitutes Chinese soft power. One view emphasizes the importance of Chinese culture as the foundation of its influence, while the other sees it as a combination of a nation's global image, strategic relationships, and a non-coercive approach.

China has made significant investments in the importance of Chinese culture as the foundation of its influence, while the other sees it as a combination of a nation's global image, strategic relationships, and a non-coercive approach. China has made significant investments in soft power, notably through the establishment of Confucius Institutes, cultural and language centers named after the ancient Chinese philosopher. These institutes represent one of China's most impactful efforts in promoting its culture abroad. Additionally, China's soft power is evident in its ambition for regional connectivity through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This initiative aims to export China's development model, which has successfully lifted millions out of poverty. Described by leaders as a vehicle for soft power, the BRI seeks to connect the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road through an extensive network of railways, roads, pipelines, ports, and telecommunications.

This infrastructure is designed to foster economic integration across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and into Europe. To support these international projects, China has invested heavily in various funds, contributing \$50 billion to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank at its inception, representing half of the bank's initial capital. Additionally, it has pledged \$40 billion for the Silk Road Fund, \$25 billion for the Maritime Silk Road, and \$41 billion to the New Development Bank, established by BRICS nations, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Through these initiatives, China aims to strengthen its influence and foster regional development.

China's Regional Integration Strategy in the Asia-Pacific

In October 2013, Chinese leaders Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang visited Southeast Asian nations to promote the new Maritime Silk Road, underscoring China's goal of fostering regional economic integration. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aims to connect the Pacific and Indian Oceans, establishing free trade zones along China's periphery. China presented the BRI as a key economic and trade strategy, advocating for multilateral regional infrastructure development to enhance economic prosperity.

To support these initiatives, China contributed \$100 million to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and created a Silk Road Fund with \$40 billion dedicated to regional infrastructure projects. Additionally, China has provided development funds to BRICS countries, with the BRICS Development Bank holding assets of \$100 billion (Sutter, 2006)

China has financed major infrastructure projects to strengthen connections with neighbouring countries, such as the Nanning Singapore Economic Corridor, which links China with Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore through roads and railways. The Mekong Project further connects China's Yunnan province with six nations along the Mekong River.

As part of its economic strategy, China established the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which includes 10 ASEAN countries, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, and India, with 15 Asia-Pacific nations. China aims to use RCEP to unify trade agreements between ASEAN members and their dialogue partners. It also promotes free trade agreements with South Korea and trilateral arrangements among Japan, South Korea, and China.

China's approach focuses on economic development and involvement of regional states in China-led forums, aiming to foster progress without threatening its interests. This soft diplomacy of China has proven effective since the 1990s, as China prioritized economic cooperation while managing political differences with regional countries amicably to secure its core interests.

Implications for Pakistan

The strategic environment of South Asia is disturbed by the never-ending conflict between the two nuclear powers states. The China tension is the second dominant factor, affecting the security calculus of the region. Interestingly though, China and India are involved in a border dispute, lingering for decades but they have not given up their economic relations despite territorial concerns. Even recently, China and India have signed a border management agreement that will facilitate resolving the decade-old border issues between them. Hence, trade between the US and India has greatly increased, and it has the potential to grow in the future. The vast number of Indians who have emigrated to the US is also a powerful economic tool for India. Pakistan, in the face of India's dominant regional and international posture, faces several challenges. The economic relationship between any two countries is crucial to their mutual links in the current geoeconomic period. The improved ties between the two will undoubtedly benefit India politically, allowing it to continue having a voice in world affairs to protect its interests and advance its hegemonic ambition. Indian growing expansionist policies can be delineated in the following elements of its contours.

- AUKUS and Quad have demonstrated a new paradigm of collaborations in the Asia-Pacific region through ad hoc agreements. While cladding with regional states is no longer a matter of policy, these unofficial agreements will be recognized as the new norm. Nations will collaborate on diplomatic and defence issues and share technologies even in the absence of formal treaty alliances. As a result, the maritime balance of power will continue to be an element that is dynamic and frequently changed by agreements between major powers and regional countries (Kazmi, 2024).



- Particularly, the provision of nuclear submarines to Australia under the AUKUS agreement might have a ripple effect in the region. It will encourage other regional actors to explore improvements to their submarine fleets. This could prompt India to boost the number of nuclear submarines in its fleet. The cumulative effect would be a concern for Pakistan because the Indian navy can exploit its number against Pakistan at any time. Therefore, if the Indian fleet begins an ambitious expansion and deployment strategy, it will likely affect strategic balance in South Asia. As the principal port of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Gwadar is regarded as a strategic security port. An Indian submarine has been thrice caught by the Pakistan Navy near the deep waters of Gwadar. With more advanced submarines, India will be able to conduct stealth operations to observe Pakistan's maritime activities, which could prove alarming for the so-called BRI and its associated projects.
- Simultaneously, platforms like AUKUS and Quad will be viewing South Asia through an Indian prism; India has presented the relationship between Pakistan and China as a danger to regional peace and stability. This will increase the lack of trust between Pakistan and the US, as well as the UK, Japan, and Australia. The failure of U.S.–Pakistan bilateral relations to advance has been largely attributed to the Indian perspective on Pakistan. The US reliance on India to oppose China will also have a bad effect on its relations with Pakistan, which has close ties to China and has ultimately caused the US to draw erroneous conclusions about the strategic stability of South Asia
- Being a maritime country, Pakistan's navy will certainly be under more stress. Indian and Pakistani fleets now have a significant asymmetry between them. If Indian navy capabilities continue to grow, Pakistan will be forced to increase its investment in air and maritime defensive capabilities. It is also simpler for the Indian Navy to have its fleet prepared for action because of having several ports in the area. The situation necessitates Pakistan stationing its air and naval forces there permanently (Ali, 2023)
- This competition has already compelled Pakistan to carefully balance its ties with both China and the US. Pakistan's close ties with China, particularly through the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), make alignment with Chinese interests necessary. Whereas, strong Pakistan–China relations are not welcomed by Washington. However, Islamabad also values its historical relationship with the US, particularly for economic and military support.
- Due to the US–China new Cold War, the global powers increasingly view the Asia–Pacific and South Asia through a polarized lens. It results in diplomatic isolation of Pakistan, particularly because Pakistan's close ties with China are not welcomed by the West. Thus, Islamabad has to strategically manoeuvre to keep intact its diplomatic channels.

Conclusion

The US policy towards Asia–Pacific is aimed at challenging China and reducing its political, economic, and military influence in the region. South Asia is closely associated with the Asia–Pacific region. This is equally affected by the developments taking place in this region. Nevertheless, in the long run, the military component of the American alliance cannot be disregarded, especially in maritime cooperation that may develop to change the geopolitical landscape and trade routes in the future.

America-backed alliances, in which India's involvement is growing rapidly, may further affect the idea of strategic security in South Asia. Due to New Delhi's growing influence within the framework of global security, any regional structure that might contribute to regional peace has been marginalized. The already precarious balance of threat may further deteriorate which somehow will adversely affect the South Asian strategic stability calculus, about conflict between India and Pakistan. There are two security scenarios developing out of these confrontation between US and China in the Asia pacific region.

First, the competition between US and China effects the strategic and political choices of the regional states. For instance, most of the southeast Asian countries are projecting neutrality toward US and China, but gradually these countries are looking with the alliance and bloc politics perpetrated by the US. The second scenario is a security dilemma among the regional countries. This would provoke an arms race in the Asia–Pacific region.

The future security dynamics of the Asia–Pacific region remain a critical and intriguing topic for many researchers. This issue not only impacts international relations but also significantly influences global

politics. Analyzing potential scenarios of strategic competition in the region contributes greatly to both academic research and practical applications. The ongoing rivalry between the US and China echoes historical events such as power transitions and the Cold War. Historical grievances related to sovereignty disputes persist even as countries focus on economic development. To avoid a lose-lose outcome in their strategic rivalry, the US should shift its perspective of China. Reducing hostility, overcoming ideological differences, and fostering competition in the economic rather than the military domain could offer a more peaceful resolution for the region.

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