

RESEARCH ARTICLE

US-China Relationship in the Asia-Pacific Region and its Impact on Pakistan

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Abstract: The region of the Asia-Pacific is still the arena of competition between two leading world superpowers – the United States and China. This specifically concerns economic rivalry, military deployment, and political schemes whose goal is to produce hegemony. This rivalry does not only affect the two superpowers; it has powerful consequences for regional allies such as Pakistan. Pak lies in the middle of China and the US; it has, therefore, a direct impact on the changing dynamics of China and the United States. The United States has formed alliances and military deployments and offered economic programs such as the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific." On the other hand, China is expanding the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of investment in regional infrastructure based on an example of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The paper highlights the fact that Pakistan requires a purposeful and multifaceted foreign policy with both superpowers without getting trapped in the rivalries of the superpowers. It is by diversifying the economic relations, deepening and strengthening the cooperation with the neighboring countries, and participating in the multilateral formats, including SCO, that Pakistan wants to minimize threats as well as maximize the benefits of over-reliance.

Keywords: US-China Relationship, Asia-Pacific Region, Pakistan, Rivalry, Politics

Introduction

The Asia-Pacific is one of the most strategic areas of confrontation between two leading global powers – the United States and China. This contest is an economic struggle, military positioning, and, mainly, diplomacy, with each of them attempting to assume its prerogatives and maintain dominance. The consequences of this rivalry encompass not only the main parties involved but also regional participants, such as Pakistan. Being a country with a massive stake in both the US and China, Pakistan is in a position to experience the dynamics of the relations between the US and China in the Asia-Pacific region (Amin, [2015](#)). This region has always been among the priorities of American foreign policy, with the United States keeping a rather large number of military bases and encouraging rather close relationships with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and other countries. It seeks to achieve these goals by contesting China's influence, defending its sovereignty, and protecting the free flow of commodities and the affluence of natural resources across the seas of Asia. Today, the United States has upgraded its relations with India, considering it a strategic partner in the Indo-Pacific region. A work of this kind included defense treaties, military drills, and commercial engagements aimed at containing China's aggression in the area (Iftikhar, [2024](#)). China, on the other hand, has had an aggressive foreign policy approach to try and spread its influence in the Asia Pacific region. Including the development of the BRI project, China has put significant capital into improving the region's infrastructure, thereby improving its economic power. On the military fronts, China's forces have now been renovated and expanded in the disputed geographic region of the South China Sea, asserting territorial claims over some of them and overpowering the United States. It appears that this has given rise to cooperation and rivalry that has seen-sawed the two powers in a battle for dominance of regional and international organizations and multilateral institutions, trade routes, and security alliances in the East, as well as for the military and political control of the Gulf in the West or Southwest Asia (AKHTAR [2024](#)).

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Historical Background

The US-China relations in the Asia-Pacific began after World War II when America became the world's strongest nation. The US expanded its power in the Asia-Pacific by establishing military bases and economic partnerships with nations across the region, including Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. Through these agreements, the US protected its interests across Asia by fighting communist influence. China spent years restoring its country from multiple internal chaos events like the Chinese Civil War and the Cultural Revolution. When pursuing foreign policy goals in Asia-Pacific, the US fought Soviet influence and maintained a defensive stance against Moscow-linked China. President Nixon's 1972 China visit started the shift toward cooperation and diplomatic ties between the US and China. Their agreement emerged from a shared need to confront Soviet power and develop business relations.

During the 1980s and 1990s, China introduced economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping, which started their fast economic development while deepening their connections to world markets. The Belt and Road Initiative, which China started in 2013, helped China grow economically and politically worldwide by focusing on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project.

Pakistan's future is determined largely by the current developments between the US and China. During the Cold War years and the War on Terror period, Pakistan established a firm connection with the United States. Recent US-India strategic ties have made this relationship more difficult to manage. Pakistan chooses China as its primary partner because CPEC provides both economic development and military support. Pakistan needs to carefully balance its diplomatic ties with the United States and China for its national development and security.

Research Questions

- ▶ What is the impact of changing the US-China relationship in Asia-Pacific on Pakistan's geopolitical and economic orientation?
- ▶ Discuss Pakistan's foreign policy and security dynamics in the context of US-China tensions in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Theoretical Framework

Realism is one of the most influential paradigms that aim to explain state actions and even more refer to the state's power and conflict. Born from the Thucydidean tradition and Trading with Hobbes, Machiavelli's 20th-century Realism has been elaborated upon by Morgenthau and Waltz; essential themes include power, interest, and anarchy. For the realists, nations conduct their policies as a result of their national self-interests, most especially their security status, and the international community is without a central authority that can regulate its affairs. In this context, Realism serves as a theory to understand the cutthroat competition between the United States and China in the Asia Pacific and its effect on Pakistan (Morgenthau, [1948](#)).

Realism: Key Principles

Before applying Realism to the US-China relationship, it is essential to understand its foundational principles: **Human Nature and Power:** Realists promise that power is inherent in human nature and, by extension, in the states. This drive defines how they address international system affairs where actors work to enhance their power so as to 'survive' and achieve their priorities within the system.

Anarchy and the State System: Realism also holds the international system and structure as being anarchical to the effect that there is no superior power to dictate the policies to be followed or to adjudicate in the event of a disagreement. As such, the states are in their own capacities and have to protect and ensure their own interests.

Security Dilemma: In an international structure characterized by anarchy, one state attempts to enhance its security in a way that will be inimical to the security of other states. This results in a self-defeating prophecy whereby states undertake an arms race, thereby creating more insecurity.

National Interest and Rationality: Within the context of Realist theory, it is put forward that states are rational and act in ways that are in their own best interest, in this case, the interest of their country in terms of security and power. These decisions are Georgia political leaders' rational decisions rather than moral/ideological positions.

Balance of Power: Realists are particularly convinced that the international order requires placing states in a relationship of power in a system that no state or alliance can dominate. Change in the balance of power results in tensions, which are expressed in diplomatic, economic, or military rivalry (Political Realism in International Relations, 2023).

Moving Away from Realism: The United States and China in the Asia-Pacific

That is why the interpretation of the US-China relations in the Asia-Pacific region is best explained by Realism as two belong to the competition for the power preeminence in the region. The Asia-Pacific region possesses a sea line of communication, newly industrialized countries, and some issues of security concern to both the players. They all strive to achieve their political might, thereby establishing security and achieving their goals common to all, including economic growth, military power formation, and regional security (Mearsheimer, 2003).

Power Relations and Rivalry

From the Realist standpoint, an increase in hostility between the US and China is inevitable because of the struggle for power. While the US tries to remain a superpower of the world, China, as a rising power, is trying to dethrone the former. The US, as an actor, militarily located close to the region, allied with Japan, South Korea, and Australia, and advocating and ensuring freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, attempts to derail China's attempt to change the balance of power in the region. While China becomes the second largest economy, actively modernizing its military and challenging territorial claims like the South China Sea, it seeks to become a hegemon in the Asia-Pacific region to at least weaken the US presence and influence.

Actually, the US-China relationship is a capture of the security dilemma. Based on that, as China enhances its military in the South China Sea and Taiwan, the US feels threatened within the region and, therefore, the military and alliances are similarly enhanced. The arms race and military rivalry that grew out of the rivalry are typical of Realist ideas about how states operate to protect themselves at the cost of provoking insecurity in other states (Carver, 2021).

National Interest

The United States and China are not driven mad by geopolitics and are consistently acting in their own best interests. From the perspective of the United States, maintaining stability within a region, protecting sea lanes, and the exclusion of a potential peer competitor illustrates the power priorities of a country. On the other hand, China's national interest is in projecting power and defending its sovereignty, including its territorial integrity and economic prosperity, which are perceived by the Chinese as fundamental to the stability of their country.

They, in fact, act to determine the policies of both countries through these national interests. Nations within the Asia Pacific region have become strategic allies of the US with measures associated with checking China's growth, including the quadrilateral security dialogue (Quad), which comprises the US, Japan, India, and Australia, and the revival of the Indo-Pacific strategy. China has also been implementing policies to unseat America, such as One Belt One Road (OBR), which offers infrastructure finance to nations across Asia

and beyond, thus enhancing its soft power as well as creating an almost dependable economic market in those nations (Christopher, 2024).

Impact on Pakistan

Pakistan continues to be an important country for the US as well as for China due to its geopolitical location. As in the previous years, Pakistan has supported China economically and in matters of defense and military. It has enhanced trade relations and raised military integration with military-industrial partnerships and technology exchanges (Khalid, [2021](#)).

At the same time, Pakistan has had an ambivalent partnership with the United States: cooperation and distrust. The relationship between the US, as the superpower of the world, and Pakistan, as a strategically sited country geographically is, however, not very rosy in the recent past despite support in militaries and aid during the Cold War and even during the War on Terror. This change has, to an extent, forced Pakistan to redefine its foreign policy strategy, which is caught up between a long-time ally, China, and a pragmatic necessity to continue to stay on the good side of the US (Hassan, [2022](#)).

The escalating tensions between Pakistan's strategic partners, the US and China, have their prospects for the former. On the one hand, continued and strengthened relations with China provide commercial gain and security, enhancing Pakistan's position in the region. Pakistan's strategy is to try and balance between the two powers to ensure that it benefits from both without getting caught in the draw between these two (Ali, [2020](#)).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

The most notable confrontation between the two powers for Pakistan is in the CPEC, which is a \$46 billion infrastructure and energy project connecting China's Xinjiang with Gwadar port in Pakistan. CPEC has become one of the main pillars of Pakistan's developmental approach as it provides the sorely needed lift to a multitude of areas of Pakistan, including infrastructure, energy, and trade. From a Realist theoretical vantage point, Pakistan perceives China as a strategic partner for economic and military cooperation with which it has sought stability and development in part because of regional conflicts with regional neighbors and India in particular.

Thus, for China, CPEC is quite valuable. Firstly, it can reach the Arabian Sea by bypassing the region of the Malacca Strait, which is under the control of the USA and its allies. Therefore, it is not only an economic bridge but also an act of Power politics where China has clearly targeted to threaten the US-dominated trade corridors (Shayan, [2025](#)).

Strategic Considerations

Pakistan's approach to the US-China rivalry is informed by several strategic considerations:

Economic Development: CPEC is seen as part of Pakistan's economic planning, which promises infrastructure, energy, and employment. However, due to the issues of debt sustainability and management and balancing the benefits of this relationship, there is a need to manage this partnership keenly.

Security Dynamics: Due to its geopolitical location and relations with both the US and China, Pakistan's security has received much importance. Although Chinese military assistance improves Pakistan-related security arrangements, counter-terrorism cooperation and regional security with America are essential only.

Regional Relations: The rivalry between the United States of America and China influences Pakistani neighborly relations with states such as India and Afghanistan. Managing these relationships calls for strategic knowledge of the geopolitical and polarity system and international politics with particular reference to the key powers.

Diplomatic Balance: It is, therefore, imperative to strike a harmonized diplomatic line in order to sustain friendly ties with both America as well as China, and also crucial for Pakistan's diplomatic position and operation flexibility in the world (Khan, [2023](#)).

Defense and Military Collaboration

Realism also justifies military cooperation between Pakistan and China because it enhances Pakistan's capabilities of deterring India. Pakistani's seeking of China for military assistance and equipment such as missiles and other defense systems is a perfectly reasonable apparatus of Pakistan given the constantly fluctuating tension between Pakistan and India and the US alliance with India.

However, the alliance between Pakistan and China also poses some dynamics to Pakistan's relationship with the US. Another way in which Pakistan is believed to reflect the security interest of the US is by seeking help in military assistance and the fight against terrorism. Today, Pakistan finds itself walking a tightrope, and it must try to preserve its relations with China (Chan, [2015](#)).

What's at Stake in the Region and the Balance of Power?

Indeed, the relations between Pakistan, the United States, and China are not limited to bilateral relations. However, Pakistani relations with other actors in the region also changed its position in the rivalry. Bilateral cooperation with the United States in the fields of defense and commerce is problematic for Pakistan because New Delhi is viewed as the major security threat in the region. Pakistan views the American trend towards India as a strategic emergence of gluing together to balance China, which is threatening and changes Pakistan's security considerations.

For the Realist approach, Pakistan cannot remain oblivious of capacities in South Asian region and the impacts that may ensue due to actions by either the United States or China. As both powers have agency through the use of force and their economic and diplomatic might, Pakistan will have its sovereignty challenged, and the extent of its strategic independence will be challenged.

Realism can explain the nature of the US-China relationship in the Asia-Pacific and, therefore, the effects on Pakistan. The US and China have juxtaposed strategic interests in the South Asian region; hence, power politics within the region mainly pit Pakistan in this confrontation. As a Realist actor, Pakistan needs to perform this competition with apprehensive measures, self-interest, economic stability, and military cooperation, including CPEC. The competition between the US and China is expected to impact Pakistan more in the future because it seeks to transform its role in a new world order that is becoming more multipolar (Hassan, [2022](#)).

Sources and Nature of US-China Relations in the Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region has been strategic in geopolitical conflict and the reallocation of economic influence for a long time, with the United States and China the main actors despite differing loyalties. As America attempts to exercise hegemony in the region in order to maintain its unipolar world, China has had to look for ways in which she can also assume the mantle within the region and internationally, especially through militarization and economic power. The relations between these two powers are also of importance not only to the region but even to other countries like Pakistan, which is in the middle of two growing giants. In this paper, the following questions will be examined to find the qualitative analysis of the nature of relations between the US and China in the Asia-Pacific, the strategic goals of their actions, and the effects in the context of Pakistan's foreign policy and its national security (Bremmer, [2019](#)).

The relationship between the US and China in the Asia-Pacific can be dated back to the period after the second world war when the US became the world's superpower. Because of its military bases in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, and as an important trading partner with other countries within the region,

the US aimed at ensuring stability in the region and free flow of commerce while at the same time ensuring that none of the countries in the region were able to dominate the rest. On the same note, China remained relatively closed until the end of the twentieth century; most of the attention was oriented towards building the nation up and recovering from the hoax of the Chinese Civil War and the extremely disastrous Cultural Revolution.

The current relationship between the US and China in the Asia-Pacific region is characterized by competition and contestation over leadership over vital institutions, security, and economic networks in the region. The US prefers to have allies like Japan, South Korea, Australia, and India in terms of military and economic may, while China has adopted methods like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and aggressive claims of sovereignty over the South China Sea.

US Strategy: Containment and Engagement

Generally, the United States' policy towards China in the Asia-Pacific region is mostly a blend of containment and engagement policy. The latter is a double-edged sword that has developed over time, especially due to the existence of China as a global competitor. The United States has, through the use of alliances and force deployments aimed at containing China, especially during the Cold War through Taiwan, and is to date committed to ensuring stability in the region through the freedom of commerce in crucial sea lanes.

The US also wants to localize the rise of China's power through enhancing strategic partnerships and multilateralism. The "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" concept developed by the USA in recent years was intended to contain Chinese supremacy in the South China Sea and Taiwan. Under it, the US has also sought to deepen its military partnerships with Japan, Australia, and India and diplomacy with the help of Quad: a security dialogue between the US, Japan, India, and Australia (Christopher S 2024).

China's Strategy: Accommodation and Imperialism

China has a foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region to dominate the region economically and protect its interest in the region. The definition of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as one of the major instruments presenting China as a regional leader in terms of economy and, to some extent, military power could be attributed to the vision of President Xi Jinping, who initiated the concept in 2013. Through investing in the construction of infrastructures, offering loans, and developing more complex and significant interconnections within the countries, China has ensured she has a bind with many a country in Asia, Africa, and even Europe.

Thus, in terms of military power and political capability, China has been increasingly reforming its military and has been more aggressive in defending the territories it believes to be its own, especially over the South China Sea region. China asserts ownership of about 90% of the South China Sea, which is open for great hydrocarbons, gas, and oil deposits, as well as important sea routes for world economies. China's activities surrounding Taiwan and as well its military expansion in the Indian Ocean have rallied further tensions with the US.

Regional Consequences and Economic Rivalry

It is well appreciated that the rise of China has potential benefits and security risks for other countries in the Asia-Pacific community. Despite the fact that the current economic growth has offered China trade and investment opportunities through BRI, the escalation of its military prowess and its aggression is worrisome. It is identified that most countries like Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines are concerned about China's aggressive stance and are seeking support from America.

The struggle of the USA and China to dominate the Asia-Pacific region is also reflected in regional economic cooperation. The United States proposed the seemingly dominant multilateral organizations like the APEC and the TPP; however, China has more recently sought to redefine these through its own constructed

mechanisms like AIIB and RCEP. Such endeavors are the manifestation of China's intentions to develop an economic region that can be compared to the one headed by the United States.

Pakistan's Strategic Role in the U.S-China Relations

Pakistan's Geopolitical Significance

In view of its strategic location in South Asia and its neighbors – India and Afghanistan – Pakistan is an indispensable element of the regional power. The position of the country embracing the sphere of confrontation between the United States and China makes it the link of the Asia-Pacific scale. This paper will analyze Pakistan's foreign policy decisions as they have been influenced by its regional security threat perceptions, primarily from India, and the economic and military support it has received in the past and currently seeks from China and the United States.

On the other hand, the relationship between Pakistan and China has been improving moving towards economic and military cooperation. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is part of the BRI, has been a source of infrastructure and energy projects for Pakistan, as well as playing an essential role in China's aim at regional hegemony (Kreft, n.d.).

Economic and Military Partnerships with China

There is no better example of this new alliance than the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor CPEC, which is one of the largest investment projects in the world aimed at linking China's troubled Xinjiang province to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan's Gwadar port. It gives the scale of CPEC more than \$ 60 bln; in fact, it is a complex of infrastructure projects: roads, railways, power plants, ports, and others. It is projected as an integral part of the Belt and Road initiative to build and develop a new Silk economic corridor for China, central Asia, the middle East, and Africa.

That is why Pakistan's military relations with China are also significant. China has thus far been one of Pakistan's most willing suppliers of military equipment, such as fighter aircraft, missiles, and naval vessels. It enhances Pakistan's military power and acts as a counter peace to India, Pakistan's closest neighbor and rival (Hassan, [2020](#)).

Maintaining Relations with the United States

While Pakistan has improved its relations with China, it has also tried to balance its relationship with the United States, especially in military affairs and the fight against terrorism. Pakistan has hosted the second largest number of US troops and has proved to be a strategic US ally in the war on terrorism, particularly in Afghanistan and along the Afghanistan- Pakistan border.

Nonetheless, Pakistan realized in recent years that its relationship with the US has started declining, especially due to the improved relationship between the US and India, which Pakistan considers a strategic rival for them. The US has accused Pakistan of assisting militant groups and provided military aid at some times temporarily. However, Pakistan continues to adopt diplomatic relations with the US in order to retain its strategic value and attain more economic and military help (Iqbal, [2016](#)).

The Nature of the Relationship: The Emerging Rivalry between the USA, China, and Pakistan

While analyzing the new dynamics in US-China relations, Pakistan has prospects and peculiarities in terms of the global business environment. On the one hand, the country that can potentially gain enormously from this uplifting economic cooperation and its increasing connection with China, especially on CPEC, is Pakistan. Over the past few years, Pakistan has attracted a lot of Chinese investment and infrastructure development that is likely to transform its economy. Besides, Pakistan and China's military relations are vital to India's emerging military power and closeness with the United States.

On the same note, the increasing bond between Pakistan and China puts their relationship with the US and other counterparts to the test. The US has had concerns about the close relationship between Pakistan and China, especially when China is seen to have stakes in the region. Pakistan's efforts to balance its commitment to powers will be vital for the independence of its foreign policy and free from the conflict between the US and China (Defence, [2023](#)).

Pakistan's Foreign Policy and Security Environment: Changing Perspective with Emerging US-China 'Strategic Competition' in the Asia Pacific Region

The current conflict between the superpowers of the United States of America and China in the Asia Pacific has a deep impact on Pakistan's foreign policy and security situation. While the global power competition sustains, it has become a core concern and a determinant of Pakistan's strategic outlooks to manage its relationship with two superpowers of the world responsibly and protect its national security and regional order.

Foreign Policy Dynamics

Pakistan's foreign policy can be traced back to the two most important allies that have significantly influenced its foreign policy: the United States and China. The USA has been a major strategic partner during the Cold War and after September 11, 2001, contributing in terms of equipment, finances, and manpower. However, the new shift of American foreign policy towards the Indo-Pacific between the US and India has forced Pakistan to reassess its foreign policy strategies.

Since the US has shifted its favor towards India, Pakistan has sought Chinese friendship for its military support. This partnership not only brings economic advantage in connectivity but also serves as a check and balance to US-India alignment in the region.

However, Pakistan's foreign policy is still a subject of multilayered interaction, given that it is trying to avoid conflict between the United States and China. Pakistani foreign policy objectives of enhancing relations with other regional states, including Russia, and membership to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization SCO are also indicative of a policy to diversify from over-reliance on a single power (Iftikhar Ali, 2024).

Security Dynamics

The managerial issues and threat of US-China security are equally threatening to Pak. Due to the strategic rivalry, there has been militarization, and the rivalry in the Asia-Pacific has culminated in an arms race within the region, as well as the development of power projection capabilities by both the US and China. For Pakistan, this translates into high security risks focusing on its weak, yet highly sensitive relations with India.

Extending help on arms procurement to not only being supply partners of arms and ammunition but also cooperating in conducting joint military exercises and alignment of strategies are stern threats to Pakistan's strategic security. In return, Pakistan has been busy looking at improving military relations with China by importing and exporting arms, conducting military exercises, and sharing technology.

The influence of security dynamics also impacts Pakistan's counter-terrorism and internal security planning. The problems that emerged after the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan have posed new threats to Pakistan's national security in terms of the resurfacing of the Taliban and other similar groups, resulting in militancy erupting and cross-border terrorism. In this regard, Pakistan's support for China in confronting such threats has become significant, especially in light of the BRI (Hutto, [2020](#)).

Transforming US-China Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region and Its Impacts on Pakistan's Geopolitical and Economic Paradigm

The constantly shifting dynamics of the US and China in the Asia-Pacific region trigger a regional realignment of the international polarity with special reference to Pakistan's reorientation. From these two world systems, Pakistan is now at a crossroads of international politics when strategic friendships and economic affiliations are under tremendous pressure. This changed relationship holds both benefits and dangers for Pakistan in terms of its political role in the region, economic growth, and strategic concerns.

Geopolitical Orientation

Geopolitically, Pakistan has traditionally enjoyed bilateral relations with both the United States of America and China and managed to use the two relationships to bolster its strategic position in the South Asian region. However, the increasing tension between the United States and China forced Pakistan to reconsider its strategy in the new world order. These initiatives, including Quad (comprising the US, India, Japan, and Australia), put pressure on Pakistan's regional ambition and raise security issues specific to India. Pakistan, in particular, has shifted its reliance toward China, thus completely enhancing its geopolitical realignment. The capital-intensive China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) embodies this emerging cooperation proposition of the China BRI. Ref, however, this as a strategic partnership with China means that Pakistan must tread carefully, for it cannot fully depend on one country while dealing with the US (Ali, [2020](#)).

Economic Orientation

On the economic aspect, the competition between the USA and China has put Pakistan in a dilemma or on the edge of a double sword. On the other hand, China's investments through CPEC helped Pakistan get what it lacks today, such as infrastructure development, energy setup, and economic integration.

While the economic rivalry has been healthy, it has created a volatile trade relationship between the USA and China. Through its strategic economic policy, the Indo-Pacific economic framework, which is primarily intended to target China's domination, Pakistan might be locked out of the American markets for investment.

In this regard, Pakistan needs to adopt a balanced approach towards emerging economic environment complexities. A country can urgently lessen dependency by diversifying economic relations, participating in regional integration, and enhancing domestic capability. Furthermore, Pakistan's operation in multilateral forums like the SCO membership and AIIB will have the added advantage of diminishing the threats posed by the China-US rivalry (Shauket, [2025](#)).

Conclusion

The nature of the American-Chinese partnership in the Asia-Pacific area has become a comprehensive strategic competition, which has an exceptional impact on the configuration of the region. This paper aims to determine the ways that influence the existence of relations between two countries, taking into consideration their historical animosities, economic rivalries, military positioning, and political systems. This conflict is not limited to the companies and players involved only; it affects countries such as Pakistan, which has to swim in the sea of such international dominance. The 21st century has seen the Asia-Pacific region as the main battleground between the US and China, with each power trying to ensure its own gains. The US remains keen on its mission to maintain a balance of power, protect the freedom of navigation, and build relations with regional actors, including Japan, South Korea, and Australia. However, China, on the other hand, has embarked on recreating a new order in the region through its globalization project, the BRI, economic power, and aggression in the SCS.

So far, Pakistan aims itself strategically between the two poles while balancing in-between the power of the United States and China. For many years, the US and China represented two of Pakistan's key strategic partners, and each country was useful in its own respect. America has been instrumental in military and counter-terrorism cooperation, providing both financial and military support. However, these investments have also given rise to issues of economic risk as generated by over-dependency, debt burden, and even possible geopolitical adversities. This includes strengthening its ability to engage in diplomacy, strengthen multilateral processes on the regional level, and carry out an economic policy that is based on principles of autonomy and sustainability. The relations between the US and China are complex, and by cultivating its strategic and diplomatic cordial relations with both, it can effectively minimize the emerging threats that the rivalry between the two superpowers carries and can fully harness the proffered benefits for commercial development and enhance stability in the region.

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