

**The Geopolitical Significance of Pakistan  
In light of the Rivalry between China-USA**

**MS THESIS**



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**A Thesis submitted in fulfillment for the award of the degree of MS in  
International Relations.**

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## **DEDICATION**

Life deals with us in mysterious ways, takes us to places we never thought of, and ultimately we always end up where we are meant to be.

My life journey has been good so far and without the continuous support of my parents and especially my Grandmother, I would not be here holding this thesis in my hands. Therefore, I would Like to dedicate this thesis to

### ***MY BELOVED GRANDMOTHER***

***Praveen Akhtar***

For her tremendous support and encouragement and for having faith in me while I was in doubt. Without her constant push throughout my life to dream and eventually achieve bigger things, I wouldn't be the person I am today.

## ABSTRACT

*This research explores the profound geopolitical significance of Pakistan within the complex Phenomenon of contemporary rivalry between the United States and China. The intensifying correspondence between China and USA exhibited the Change in the international dynamics faced by nations worldwide. Pakistan is engaged with the multifaceted aspects of this great strategic power play between China and US. The study delves into historical, strategic, and economic dimensions that position Pakistan as a pivotal player in shaping upcoming dynamics. Analyzing Pakistan's strategic alliances, particularly its historical ties with the United States and evolving partnership with China. The central idea of this research posits that by examining the impact of geopolitical shifts on Pakistan's foreign policy choices, security concerns, and economic strategies, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Pakistan's geopolitical position influences and is influenced by the broader US-China rivalry. The competition between US and China is analyzed through the Power transition theory and the role of Pakistan under structural realism. This dissertation predicts a peaceful power transition while addressing the gaps. It has also examined how US and China rivalry will be manifested as an opportunity for Pakistan and pave the way for Pakistan to align with China for a better future. A deductive approach has been applied in this research. Further, a qualitative method has been used in this study. Data collection has been done through secondary sources. For data analysis, discourse analysis techniques have been used to conduct this study.*

**Keywords:** Geo-politics, US-China rivalry, Pakistan, power transition theory, structural realism

## **Acronyms**

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>AIIB</b>	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
<b>BRI</b>	Belt and Road initiative
<b>BLA</b>	Baluchistan Liberation Army
<b>CARs</b>	Central Asia Republics
<b>CASA</b>	Central Asia-South Asia power project
<b>CPEC</b>	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>IOR</b>	Indian Ocean Region
<b>PLA</b>	People Liberation Army
<b>PLAN</b>	People Liberation Army Navy
<b>TTP</b>	Tehrik-e-Taliban
<b>TAPI</b>	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline



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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is strategically an important piece of land on the globe located in South Asia. Pakistan has good relations with the global community, especially global powers and immediate neighbors like the rising Asian giant- China. Pakistan has considerable potential to become a transit economy because it is located on the way out to the oil-rich states of Central Asia and the Middle East. Pakistan must accomplish the privilege of its location in the region of South Asia and beyond.

China's and USA's strategic competition emerged as a defining feature of the 21st century. China and the US, the world's greatest and most influential nations, have engaged in a multi-faceted struggle for dominance that spans multiple domains including military, economy, and technology. China's economic rise is deeply upsetting the US and making it apprehensive to the US policymakers. China's rapid growth and expanding power challenged the US's dominant status. The USA postulated China as a strategic competitor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because of the changing international order, the signification of up-and-coming geo-economics and geo-politics has deteriorated in South Asia.<sup>1</sup>

However, the People's Republic of China views the USA as a hegemonic nation emphasizing the fundamental equality of status and China has no intentions to dominate the world. The competitive spiral between the USA and China could excessively impact both nations and the rest of the world.<sup>2</sup> The tussle between the two is gradually shaping the international order and their rivalry may be the defining moment for the world's future.

Additionally, the once-neglected region of Asia has emerged as the central playing field in awake of this strategic contest for the China and USA equally. China and USA are two countries that are same way engaged in strategies of coalition, incorporation, and consensus in Pakistan as well. To maintain the security balance in the region of South Asia, amusingly neither China nor US

<sup>1</sup> Schneider-Pet singer, M., Wang, J., Yu, J., & Crabtree, J. (2019). US–China Strategic Competition: The Quest for Global Technological Leadership. *Royal Institute of International Affairs*.

<sup>2</sup> Robert D, (2023) “policy perceptions for US-China relations”

is chasing such hedging tactics which is choking the outlook of peace and stability. Countries lying in the South Asian region are alarmed about the unfolding situation, if rivalry escalates they may be under great stress to opt for China or the US bloc but at the same time want to keep their options open to achieve their long-term interest. It will be a miserable situation for smaller countries that are facing multiple challenges in the form of economic meltdown, domestic instability, environmental crisis, and security challenges.

Pakistan is a key player in the geopolitics of the South Asian region, its relationship with the US and China has undergone numerous transformations over the years. The US has been one of Pakistan's traditional allies and has provided significant military and economic aid. In the post-9/11 period, the US started looking at the South Asian region through security lens engagement in Afghanistan in the global war on terror. Shortly, the US sought to augment its strategic partnership with the rising South Asian giant, India, to contain the more assertive rise of China, consent was made among the two which was formulated based on shared interests.

Dealing with the formidable and confident rising China is the real challenge for the US in the realm of international politics – whose peaceful rise is disadvantageous to the US interests. China has become a major economic investor in Pakistan in recent years, and the two countries have been engaged in several joint economic and infrastructure projects. China's relations with Pakistan were based on mutual benefits and had long provided support but CPEC was different which involved several initiatives like energy, infrastructure, economic zones, and the strategic port Gwadar which is worth \$ 62 billion.<sup>3</sup>

Over the last decade, Pakistan has had a significant impact due to the competitiveness between China and USA. The USA and China's competition has created an inflexible situation for Pakistan which has multi-dimensional implications for political, diplomatic, economic, and security Pakistan. The push and pull between the two great powers are deeply impacting Pakistan owing to historical linkage with both of them. Pakistan has been going through several difficulties Despite this fact, there is hope to overcome the hurdles with strong policies considering development and progress for a better future.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, M. C. (2022, October 2). How China and Pakistan forged close ties. *Hindustan Times*.

This research aims to deliberate Pakistan's perspective regarding the unwinding China and USA rivalry and evaluate Pakistan's geopolitical significance in great power competition. The increasing rigidity between China and USA can interweave Pakistan's struggle to protect its ties among these two states, by engrossing Pakistan to pick between maintaining enhanced security and economic partnership with China and agreeing on these problems with the US. The evolving political, diplomatic, and strategic dynamics in the region have pushed Pakistan into an alignment position.

In such a state of affairs, it is challenging for Pakistan to formulate a neutral foreign policy. Pakistan strives to nurture viable ties with the Western and Eastern powers. However, the problem comes with its sinking economic position that allows the global actors to exert influence on Pakistan<sup>4</sup>. The relations between the USA and Pakistan have remained like a roller coaster and bilateral ties stand at the Afghan factor, the economic and defense assistance declined in the present scenario.<sup>5</sup>

On the contrary, China has increasingly become the viable option for Pakistan - both in economic and military domains. In addition, Pakistan's strategic thinkers in the case of Kashmir account for China's moral support and relentless assistance against India which the US does not offer.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, India always remained a hurdle for Pakistan's relations with great powers throughout history - the Cold War period. The post-Cold War era is mainly characterized by the heightened competition between US and China, India once again happens to be the main factor in relations between Pakistan towards the great powers.

The USA has always strived to maintain ties with India to accomplish its geostrategic goals in the region and took advantage of Pakistan; however, the rapidly rising China set back that balance.

<sup>4</sup> DailyTimes.Pk, & DailyTimes.Pk. (2018, September 26). *Global power dynamics and Pakistan's foreign policy*.

<sup>5</sup> G, C. (2022). *The U.S.-China Strategic Rivalry and its Implications for Pakistan*. *Stimson Center*.

<sup>6</sup> US-Pakistan Relations at Another Fork in the Road – A Conversation with South Asia Scholar Shuja Nawaz (2020, August 20) *Near East South Asia Center*. (n.d.-b).

Pakistan in the South Asian region has significant ramifications due to the escalating tensions between the PRC and USA. In light of the historical relationship between the US and China and the impact of their rivalry on Pakistan, it is clear that aligning with China in the long term may serve Pakistan's interests.

However, there are challenges that Pakistan must take into account, such as the US foreign policy objectives towards Pakistan and the prioritization of its relationship with India. Ultimately, the decision to opt for the Chinese camp requires a thorough evaluation of all relevant factors and a clear understanding of the potential benefits. By prioritizing its relationship with China, Pakistan can strengthen its economic and political ties, and position itself as a key player in the rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape of Asia.

### **1.1 : Research gap:**

Pakistan's role may be decisive in shaping the future of the world. Pakistan's role is detrimental in the awakening of the USA-China rivalry and Pakistan's tilt toward that one camp would have significant benefits. This perspective has not been widely explored in academic circles, and a thorough investigation into the potential advantages and drawbacks of this approach is needed. The current academic consensus on Pakistan's relationship with the US and China emphasizes the need for balance and the avoidance of subscribing to any particular bloc or pole.

### **1.2 : Statement of the problem:**

The current reality, as demonstrated by the US declaration of China as a strategic Rival in its National Security Strategy NSS-22, suggests that this rivalry will escalate in the coming years or decades. In light of this, Pakistan is facing increasing challenges in maintaining a rational relationship between the twain, US, and China. The problem being addressed is that in times of need, both will want to prioritize their relationship with Pakistan, given its strategic relationship with both countries and its status. Furthermore, the research aims to consider the fact that US power is declining and China is rising as a super economic power, and to explore the potential benefits of aligning with an emerging power like China. The major indicators of the American decline in the

21<sup>st</sup> century include the post 9/11 hegemony challenge, the 2008 financial crisis, the global war on terror, the pivot to Asia strategy, trump policies, economic competition, slow GDP growth rates, and domestic polarization has influenced its ability toward falling. The global perception of the US decline involves various indicators like economic decline trade deficits and debt level, ineffective governance, political polarization, social unrest within the state, weak alliances, changes in military strength, isolating policies, response to the global crisis, social cohesion, reflects the decline in influence on the world stage.

### **1.3: Hypothesis:**

Pakistan's tilt toward China in the ongoing rivalry between the USA and China may provide better opportunities for Pakistan in the future.

### **1.4: Research questions:**

Q1: Why is it important for Pakistan to be in China's camp for a better future?

Q:2 How does the China-US rivalry affect Pakistan's policy options?

Q:3 What strategies has Pakistan adopted to balance its relationship with China and the US?

### **1.5: Objective:**

To critically analyze Pakistan's positioning vis-à-vis China-US rivalry and its impact on Pakistan's foreign policy.

### **1.6: Significance of study:**

American supremacy felt a serious challenge in the twenty-first century which was bothered by the economic, military, and external influence of the Chinese rise and hailed as the Asian century. The rapid economic growth of China has the potential to become the globe's largest

economy soon. People's Republic of China in regional and international standing contributed exceptionally to world peace and stability with its economic development. Consistently during past years' china's played the part as one of the main drivers of the global economy.

By aligning with China, Pakistan could benefit from the progressive development and deep economic growth of China and could receive significant investment and infrastructure development. This could help Pakistan's ailing economy to grow and become more competitive in the global marketplace. In addition to that, Pakistan could benefit from China's military and security capabilities. This could help Pakistan to address its internal challenges and protect its borders from potential threats.

This study also explains how China has been a strong advocate for Pakistan's territorial integrity and has been a reliable ally in international forums. Firmly standing with China could provide Pakistan with additional support and diplomatic leverage in resolving its long-pending dispute over Kashmir. This will open further avenues of research While this alignment would likely have significant implications for Pakistan's relationship with China, it could provide Pakistan with new opportunities and advantages amid the US-China strategic competition. It may also help policymakers in devising.



## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW/ THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the disclosure of USA pivot to Asia strategy, the competition between the USA and China does not remain a contemporary phenomenon but it has become an inmost debate among scholars, researchers, academicians, and experts. It has also found a huge field in many international forums, international literature, various policy papers, and media both printed and electronic. The rivalry between the USA and China has developed to such an extent that its intensity become a hot topic recently which almost appears every month in the form of headlines, debates, and articles by scholars. Thereby, considering the intensity of competition and its impact on the most valuable state of South Asia Pakistan has been reviewed considering some of the existing literature, books, and articles.

China's rise is certain, Paul Kennedy in his well-known book "The Rise and Falls of Great Powers" disclosed that when great powers enhanced their military capability frequently empire fell due to their ambitions of domination. In the current scenario, the rivalry of superpowers following the post-Cold War era is feasibly responsible for an economic collapse, a significant example of the disintegration of the USSR can be viewed.

The present and future circumstances of the USA can be analyzed in that over the past few decades, the American share of world power has relatively declining faster than the USSR even though its potential is still greater than that of the Soviet Union and the very unstructured, *laissez-faire* nature of the American society.<sup>7</sup> that China has persistently fastened remarkable significance to the peaceful rise and considering the importance of its ambitious ascents acknowledges her Chinese dream of peaceful rise. This significant open-door framework can be successfully utilized since it replaced the USA in its overall potential.

<sup>7</sup> Kennedy, P. M. (1987). *The rise and fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* Random House (NY).

However, Feng Zhang in his book *Chinese Hegemony* explained the Chinese power's impact on regional and international order where China may enhance its material capabilities against balancing the US because the role of China in the international arena has been gradually shifting toward becoming a superpower.<sup>8</sup>

According to Filippo, in his article "The US-China rivalry and Pakistan's hedging dilemma" Pakistan forged closer ties with China from the beginning of its bilateral relations.<sup>9</sup> China was apprehensive of Pakistan joining American Alliances in the 1950s and participating in any war during the Cold War era China at also that time. Later, despite being in the American bloc, in the Cold War Pakistan also received military aid from China. Filippo explained the phenomena of competition discussing the dilemmas of Pakistan.

However, the situation between the PRC and USA was not as polarized as it is today. Therefore, the implications can be severe for Pakistan if the country maintains its tilt toward China. The article has quoted this as a strategic blunder. The article also maintains that Pakistan may not be able to benefit from it as it did during the Cold War primarily because of polarization, lack of American interest, apparent tilt towards China, and alienation from the USA since 2011. The article built on historical information and analyzed it based on it. However, there is a need to analyze the shift in policy from geo-politics to geo-economy and its implications for Pakistan.

When *China Rules the World* (2009) written by Martin J. argued that for the last two centuries, we have been living and surviving under the first world countries where the notion of modernity is only resembled by being Western. The decline of the West did not happen overnight but gradually the start of that understanding during the year 1979, three very distinct events set off chain reactions that may still be heard on a global scale today.

<sup>8</sup> Zhang, F. (2015). *Chinese hegemony: Grand Strategy and International Institutions in East Asian History*. Stanford

<sup>9</sup> Boni, F. (2021/60) *The US-China rivalry in South Asia and Pakistan's Hedging Dilemma, Policy Briefs*. Global Governance Programme, EU-Asia Project.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the US will not remain a hegemonic power, and with the powerful rise of non-western nations, it will be noteworthy and in the new era China will be the key player.<sup>10</sup> In a journal article, *How China Sees the World* written by Andrew J. Nathan indicated the fear of Chinese people that the USA is a revisionist power and intended to shrink and harm China's interests and influence in all domains believed the Chinese.<sup>11</sup> China believes in multi-polarity, building economic ties, and construction of a harmonious world and implicit USA policies.

Further, John G. Ikenberry American liberal scholar in his article *The Rise of China and the Future of the West* predicted the result of this ongoing competition that the term Asia century indicates this harmonious world that will be full of cooperation, sustainability, development, and innovation. The rise of China will inevitably eliminate the US power by surpassing the economy of the USA but the system is deep-rooted and will be led by China and the rest. China will have an advantage in the power struggle with the USA because the international system is difficult to eliminate or change but easy to join in.<sup>12</sup>

Andrew Small in his book "The China-Pakistan Axis" briefly explains major historical events and bilateral relations and talks about Pak-China friendship in the index of geopolitics as the title signifies. It outlines why the relationship has remained so flexible despite stress enraged by India's rise to the development of extremism in the area. He argued that Pakistan's uncertainty represented a noteworthy hazard to the general financial relationships but anyway, China sees Gwadar port as a possible significant maritime office and Pakistan is vital for China.<sup>13</sup>

In the article *US-CHINA Strategic Rivalry, implications for Pakistan* by Sultan M Hali he asks a clear question still how long will Pakistan try to sustain a balanced approach? because not picked bloc between China and USA. Pakistan is attempting and being one of them is running with hares as well as hunting with the hounds. Pakistan must leave behind the ways that were taken in the past and must pursue the national interest that is an obligation for Pakistan.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jacques, M. (2009). *When China rules the world: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order: Second Edition*. Penguin.

<sup>11</sup> Scobell, A. J. N. a. A. (2023, July 13). How China sees America: The sum of Beijing's fears. *Foreign Affairs*.

<sup>12</sup> Ikenberry, G. J. (2023, October 4). The rise of China and the future of the West: Can the liberal system survive? *Foreign Affairs*.

<sup>13</sup> Small, A. (2020). *The China-Pakistan axis: Asia's New Geopolitics*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Hali, M.S. (Nov 2022). *US-China strategic rivalry, implications for Pakistan, New Desks*.

Fozia Amin and Kurshid Khan concluded their article US-China Strategic Competition: implications for Pakistan, by posing an argument that it will be difficult for Pakistan to stay outside or balance the great power game if India decides to join the camp of the USA in case of extreme heat against China that would create a more hazard for Pakistan to stay neutral or align with China. It will be a disadvantageous position for Pakistan in the great power politics.<sup>15</sup>

In the report ASIA N 297 China and Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risk Analysis the current relations mainly focused on CPEC for all the opportunities and Risks Pakistan should adopt policies that would be in favor of their nationals at their core. CPEC Provides a way to revive the toppling economy and dysfunctional and aging infrastructure. Pakistan and China need to implement their promises more sensitively and meetings that have been done so far. China is also threatened by the ways and policies of Pakistan due to rising pressure from the USA in terms of economy and diplomacy. Pakistan stakeholders and policymakers must understand this as a beneficial mega-development or take this as a strategic interest rather than neglecting and running away.<sup>16</sup>

Abdul Saboor in his written article US and China Strategic Rivalry in South Asia: New Challenges for Pakistan concentrated on the escalating rivalry that examines the South Asian security environment and the similarly precarious position of Pakistan. He emphasizes that Pakistan's decision-makers should be careful regarding bilateral relations with both powers. He argued that Pakistan should play the role of a bridge to transform into a melting pot. He also discussed Imran Khan's foreign policy which was based on its relationship with China that was completely reliant on the Chinese government. Pakistan is dependent on both states one side looks for China to drive the Kashmir issue internationally and support confronting India and the other hand is under the pressure of the US against CPEC and strong economic relations with the USA.<sup>17</sup>

China Rising: Peace Power and Order in East Asia written by David C. Kang in his book argues that the rising China provides a future for economic growth to the surrounding nations that

<sup>15</sup> Amin, F. (2017). *Increasing U.S.–China strategic competition: Implications for Pakistan*. Kci.Gov.

<sup>16</sup> *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks*. (2018, October 25). | Crisis Group.

<sup>17</sup> Saboor, A. (2022). *US-China strategic rivalry in South Asia: New challenges for Pakistan*, *Pak journal International affairs*. vol.5.

can utilize by them. The rise of China was peaceful with the facts clarified that the regional nations were more consistent during China's rise and argued that countries in the region acknowledged rather than balanced its power.<sup>18</sup>

Further, “The Indo-US strategic partnership post 9/11: implications for Pakistan” written by M. Ashfaq indicated that the Indo-US strategic partnership poses a direct threat to Pakistan’s security and provides leverage to India over Pakistan. He also discussed the US approach toward the countries including in South Asia to attain its power in the domain of politics and strategic opportunities fulfilling US interests. This strategic partnership and US attention enhance the challenges for Pakistan and its clear manifestation.<sup>19</sup>

China-Pakistan Relations: the “all-weather” partnership navigates stormy times which Syed Fazl-e-Hider briefly discussed in the past year 2022 relations between the two nations. He analyzes the joint statement during the visit of Shabazz Sharif to Beijing where the Chinese president delivered that China’s relations with Pakistan will always be given top priority, in all domains including security, and territorial integrity, and reaffirmed its support for Pakistan’s sovereignty.

He further showed that Pakistan has gone through tremendous instability in the political arena but China remained committed to the non-interference policy rather than Chinese media portrayed Pakistan as a victim of Washington, as part of efforts by the US to stop China’s global rise. However, considering all international, regional, and domestic hurdles both China and Pakistan have sorted to keep positive relations in the past year. He concluded that this partnership between China and Pakistan looks set to grow deeper and will continue further in 2023 and beyond.<sup>20</sup>

China’s message to the US: ties with Pakistan “none of your business” In November 2022 Chinese foreign policy expert Yun Sun said that the US should not bad mouth Pakistan-China relations because China has a lot of belief in Pakistan regardless of the modality of Pakistan-US relations. China cleared that this Pakistan and US cooperation does not affect China at all because

<sup>18</sup> Kang, D. C. (2010) *China rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia*. Columbia University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Fani, M.I. (2009). *The Indo-US strategic partnership in post 9/11: Implications for Pakistan*. *Pakistan vision*, vol. 10, No.2.

<sup>20</sup> Haider, F. S. (2022 December). *China-Pakistan Relations: the “all-weather” partnership navigates stormy times*. *Jamestown*.

CPEC is there, India and US strategic partnership, and Pakistan and China partnership all factors including the nuclear issue which is central to Pakistan's security.<sup>21</sup>

So in this two-day seminar on US and Pakistan relations, a lot of arguments were held between members of both powers and Pakistan. Significantly, in the region of South Asia, Pakistan is the only state lying at a pivotal point on the global map. Its geopolitical significance makes it a major state but this factor is plagued by the turbulent relations of Pakistan with its neighboring state of India. Even from a historical perspective, Pakistan and India are entangled in a war-like scenario due to their harsh rivalry since the independence of both of these countries.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, the new model of great power relations represented by President Xi' provides hurdles to the US in the Asia Pacific region to the policies and strategies of US containment which is based on China as an emerging power. This new model can be developed only if both countries PRC and US maintain a strategic balance of power to stop their competition from growing into a new cold war. because in the region neither China nor the US can be the single dominant power.<sup>23</sup>

The article "Pakistan's Foreign Minister: We're Not a 'Geopolitical Football'" by Ravi Agrawal (2021)<sup>24</sup> offers valuable insights providing its stance on the US-China great power competition under the Foreign policy of Pakistan. The article highlights the statements made by Pakistan's Foreign Minister, who emphasized that the country seeks to maintain a balanced relationship with both major powers and does not wish to be caught in the middle of their geopolitical interests. This position is noteworthy as it sheds light on Pakistan's effort to maintain its independence and autonomy in its foreign policy decisions.

From Pakistan's perspective, the article highlights the challenges of navigating the great power competition and balancing relationships with major powers while also protecting its national interests. The foreign minister's statements suggest that Pakistan recognizes the importance of avoiding being drawn into the geopolitical interests of others, and instead seeks to assert its agency in its foreign policy decisions. This is a crucial lesson for Pakistan, as it highlights the need for the

<sup>21</sup> Iqbal, A. (2022, November 4). China's message to US: Ties with Pakistan 'none of your business. *DAWN.COM*.

<sup>22</sup> Khattak, M. (2019). Indian Military Modernization: Implications for Pakistan. *Strategic Studies* 39, no. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Zhao, S. (2014). A New Model of Big Power Relations? China-US strategic rivalry and balance of power in the Asia Pacific. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 24(93), 377-397.

<sup>24</sup> Ground News. (2022, September 28). Pakistan's Foreign Minister: Were Not a Geopolitical Football. *foreignpolicy.com*.

country to adopt a rational policy keeping its strategic interest and proactive approach to its foreign policy to protect its national interests. The article provides important insights into the nature of Pakistan's relationships with both nations PRC and US to the extent of how the country can maintain a balanced and independent approach in the enhancement of great power competition

## **2.1 Theoretical framework:**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many scholars analyzed and defined the nature of US and China rivalry under multiple theories of international relations. The theoretical model that helps to understand the geopolitical rivalry between China and the USA and impact on Pakistan is of prime significance in the study. In this Research, the contemporary essence of the current US and China relationship is demonstrated using the prism of Power transition theory which holds a structural and dynamic model for exploring fundamental shifts in global power. the power transition theory has been assimilated into the research to comprehend the difficulties and possible options in this scenario. International politics visualize the power transition theory as composed of a hierarchy of states with varying competition and collaboration.

This theory rests on two basic assumptions first that internal development stems from the State's power capabilities and second observation of the power transition theory that the dominant nations shape the international system. The significant aspect of this theory is the nature of system stability. In international dynamics, this power transition theory views differential growth rates among nations. So, in the system, some countries are enhancing and gaining their power where others are decreasing and losing power and some stand still so that relative change in power defines new relationships among nations.

When the rising power is dissatisfied with the dominant power then chances of war occur but when the rising is satisfied with the status quo, the peaceful shift of power takes place. For example, the transition of power between Great Britain and the USA was peaceful, and the USA versus the Soviet Union underwent the stage of the Cold War. hegemonic dominance through power preponderance posts the maintenance and stability of the international system as the power transition theory like hegemonic stability theory postulates. A hierarchy of power exists in the globe

that sets the rules of the system and no war between the great powers but a power transition theory provides both options of cooperation and conflict in history.

The Race for power and growing competition between the PRC and the USA has put Pakistan in a complicated position, and either party will have apprehension and consequences if Pakistan tilts towards any particular country. Kenneth Waltz argued that anarchy is the world system's fundamental "ordering principle" and that Self-help is unavoidably the principle of action in an anarchic order<sup>25</sup>. Structural Realism states that anarchy is the main feature of international politics.

The absence of any greater power or entity compels the states to protect themselves, survive in the competitive world, and thrive. These states do not have any other choice. Therefore, structural realists have always maintained that structure dictates the command of the states. The structure of international politics makes states do whatever they do. The security of one becomes the insecurity of the other, and such a structure emphasizes the need to form more and more ties with different states and groups. Thus, it is "The anarchic structure".

Structural realists' key assumptions explain why states (great powers) compete with each other for power in the international system. The first assumption forwarded by structural realists is that Superpowers are the main actors in international politics and function in a system based on anarchy. The other assumption of structural realism is that states remain uncertain about each other's intentions. In other words, states are uncertain whether they are dealing with a revisionist or status quo state. Revisionist states are those who are dissatisfied with the present balance of power equation and are determined to shift and transform the balance of power by warfare or using force. On the other hand, some stable and status-quo states are happy with the balance of power but are not willing to change it by any means.

According to structural realism, survival is the main goal of states. They attempt to sustain the freedom of their internal political order and geographical integrity States can pursue some other important agendas such as prosperity and human rights protection, but above all survival is the main priority of states, because without survival states will not be able to pursue other goals. The

<sup>25</sup> Waltz, K. N. (1980). Theory of International Politics. *Political Science Quarterly*, 95(1), 136–137.



fifth assumption of structural realism theory describes states as rational actors. It means that states formulate strategies to ensure survival in the international system. There are also chances that states may also make serious mistakes in their strategies due to misinformation.

## **2.2 Application of theory:**

The rising Power of China and the declining hegemony of USA pose a serious question is war inevitable? This research states that the power transition theory does not predict a war between the USA and the PRC. To understand this history must be reminded that for the last seven decades, there has not been a full-fledged global war because the international system has the potential to restrain that. The growth of the international market has become economically independent in the current global arena. The existing alliances among the states are also Changing into interest-based alliances with acceptance of hedging tactics around the globe. World economic shift is the main challenge in the present US-China relations. In divergence, the power transition theory indicates room for action by the statesmen of the falling power and its allies to run off from a disastrous war.

China's rise is peaceful, evolving in the domain of economy and supporting the world, and giving a pathway toward becoming more prosperous and developed which is not intended to overthrow the hegemonic power but to maintain the peace in the world. China in the last few decades emerged as a strong sustained economy and appeared as a compelling force in the world's economy with the ability to change the present world order. The fact is that China has become a regional power. In the region, three neighboring states (China, India, and Pakistan) having nuclear capabilities and two of the world's fastest and leading economies (China and India) enhanced the importance of Asia. In the International environment, these great powers' politics have created uncertainty. According to the Power transition theory, international politics is dominated by Unipolarity which wants to maintain its power and rising power will challenge the established one who will respond with war. power transition gives way to war but there are different factors like the political will of statesmen and international and domestic restrictions on both sides.

The rise and fall of nations is traditional and competition is natural and auto. Historically, we see this is the harsh reality that power shifts have come through disasters and deadly war, and world orders are changed in the ending era of War, and then after the Cold War world order becomes

Unipolar. I believe that the International political circumstances have changed a lot and in this nuclear era, war can be avoided. Wars happen because of competition over land, religious conflicts, nationalism and political reasons, and lust for power are major reasons for any deadly war. In this globalized era, power is not justified by only military capabilities including economic, soft, and latent power. The relations among states are now interlinked in the form of trade and economy.

China is a peaceful country that is more focused on its economic prosperity and development. She behaves like a responsible state and approaches soft power and diplomacy to increase its positive representation. China has become the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economy and certainly in the future become a stakeholder in the system. There is a relative decline in the power of the USA, their economy has been shaken due to their intervention policies. The economic potential of the USA which affected its hegemonic status has diminished during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The USA and China have provided a toxic environment, but economic interdependence and systemic factors will try to avoid war and maintain peace. China would like to accommodate the system. In this century, China is composed to become a superpower in international politics, and its ongoing rise would be a significant, if not exhibiting, strand in shaping the global system.

Structural realism will help in discussing the security dilemma and its economic consequences. Traditional security dilemmas and non-traditional both can be discussed through structural realism. In the case of Pakistan if rivalry escalates Pakistan will be in the same position as it was in the cold war so according to the global changing order Pakistan may join the Chinese camp.

## Chapter 3.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology relates to the certain techniques that are applied to select and analyze information about any phenomena of research. It includes an explanation of the data collection methods and analysis processes. This chapter on research methodology has four sections. Section one of this chapter discusses research philosophies ontology and epistemology. Ontologically, objectivism is applied in this research while epistemologically, the Interpretivism position is used. In Section Two of this research strategies, designs, and approaches are explained. Furthermore, the third section explains the data collection and analysis techniques involved in this research. The last part of this chapter sheds light on the ethics of research.

#### 3.1 Ontology

Ontology is a phenomenon that tells about the nature of existence and reality. It can be advertised as the study of being. Ontology explains the details of why and how multiple elements exist. Ontology helps the researcher to analyze objects in terms of their nature and existence in the research. While conducting the research, we make suppositions about how and what we will investigate and where it will fit in the world. In social sciences, ontology states society is the only unit that consists of people with similar traits<sup>26</sup>

ontology finds out the nature of reality at its most fundamental level. Ontology being a subject is divided into two types. These types are objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism's first component focused on the concept that reality is independent of our beliefs which can be directly perceived. On the other hand, subjectivism states that reality is subjective. It involves the perceptions and impacts of social actors which are changing continuously.

The objectivist approach is used in this study. The escalating tension between the two world powerful nations has caused a serious impact on the world not only affecting these countries but

<sup>26</sup> Mkansi, M. (2012, December 1). *Research Philosophy Debates and Classifications: Students. dilemma.*

also leaving a devastating impact on the world economy including Pakistan. Ontology examines a specific issue and puts up with ways to find its solution. In this research, the US-China war if it further escalates will cause a serious challenging situation for Pakistan. Furthermore, the study proposed the possible political and economic measures that can be taken by Pakistan in the future by closing its support to neighboring country China for its interest.

### **3.2 Research Epistemology**

Research epistemology is another component of research philosophy. It deals with the analysis of knowledge to investigate whether our assumptions about knowledge are true or false. It involves inspection of what and how we know. It tells how the capturing of reality is done. Epistemology can be referred to as the link between reality and knowledge. It involves a detailed analysis of the nature of the provided facts. It includes three thoughts on research philosophy. First, techniques and research tools can be used to prove the knowledge whether is true or false. Secondly, proper interpretation and reasoning of knowledge are required. Thirdly, accurate justification of knowledge can be done using the appropriate reliable tools. Epistemology deals with finding how knowledge is created, acquired, and communicated.<sup>27</sup>

Two positions are included in epistemological components of research philosophy namely positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is based on the assumption that society is shaped by individuals, possible inquiry can be done objectively, knowledge can be gained by using senses, its nature is tangible and hard, and it can be obtained by gathering facts and analyzing human behavior. On the other hand, interpretivism assumptions are that knowledge is based on subjective inquiry, society, and researcher are independent factors and qualitative research methods are used. Epistemology involves different types of knowledge; intuitive knowledge is based on intuition rather than facts, authoritative knowledge is based on primary resources, logical knowledge is based on gathering knowledge and empirical knowledge is based on scientific methods.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Don-Solomon, A, & Eke, G. J. (2019, April). ontological and Epistemological philosophies underlying Theory Building: A Scholarly Dilemma or Axiomatic illumination... *research gate*.

<sup>28</sup> Halleck, T. (2015). Robert K. Yin. (2014). Case Study Research Design and Methods (5th ed.). *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 30(1), 108–110.

In this study, interpretivism is applied as it involves the interpretation of the elements of the study by human researchers. It also involves subjective factors not only involves hard facts. In the domains of the economic and political sectors, the consequences of the US-China rivalry cannot be understood objectively. The subjective approach involves the forward way Pakistan and other nations tried to deal with the ongoing crisis of tension among both nations and how they reacted, which policies, and necessary measures or steps they took.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

This relates to the guidelines that can be applied by the researcher to collect and analyze data. Two kinds of approaches can be applied in the research methodology which include the inductive approach and the deductive approach. Both types of research approaches have their benefits and limitations.

#### **3.3.1. Inductive approach**

The inductive research approach involves observation. Theories are developed based on these observations. In this approach, no hypotheses or theories are found relating to the subject. The researcher cannot ignore important ideas while making objectives and questions of the study. It helps researchers to find a link among the gathered facts to develop a sound hypothesis. Nonetheless, a researcher can make objectives based on already existing theories.<sup>29</sup> A researcher must start his research by first making observations then empirical generalizations are made entailing the detection of preliminary correlation during the research process. An inductive approach is used to analyze quantitative data.

#### **3.3.2 Deductive approach**

Under this approach, where the researcher uses when the investigation is done using already existing theory rather than creating a new research strategy or theory.<sup>30</sup> While using the deductive

<sup>29</sup> Saunders, Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., & Bristow, A. (2019). "Research Methods for Business Students" Chapter Understanding research philosophy and approaches to. . . *Research Gate*.

<sup>30</sup> Sondhi, N. (2011). Jonathan Wilson, Essentials of Business Research—A Guide to Doing Your Research Project. New Delhi: SAGE Publications

approach, a researcher is required to make a hypothesis and formulate expected results based on the already existing theory. It involves deductive reasoning; this approach aims to exclude conclusions from premises. An expected pattern should be devised by a researcher at the initial stage of research. This will then be compared to the data. The only difference among the approaches (Inductive and deductive) is evident. This approach is relatively used in qualitative research.

Deductive approach
Theory applied
Formulation of hypothesis
Observation
Conclusion

The above diagram explains the process of the deductive approach.

In this study, a deductive research approach is used. This approach involves the formulation of a general hypothesis and observation on which certain conclusions are drawn. The reasoning process is followed in this approach which transforms abstract and theory into defined and empirical propositions.<sup>31</sup> The deductive approach is applied as an existing theory of power transition theory which is used to explain a particular topic of US-China rivalry and structural realism in the context of geopolitical significance of Pakistan.

Deductive reasoning is done which helps the researcher to form a hypothesis and test it through data collection and analysis techniques. In this study hypothesis was formulated, “Pakistan’s tilt toward China in the ongoing rivalry between the USA and China may provide better opportunities for Pakistan in the future.” Was tested through observation and data was analyzed by using different sources. Finally, we can say that broader perspectives are deducted to formulate a theoretical framework which is later on tested and confirms or rejects the hypothesis statement.

### 3.4 Research Strategy

This is the process that is used to conduct research that guides the researcher in the direction of research. Research strategy enables researchers to conduct research systematically and to give

<sup>31</sup> Malhotra, G. (2017). *Strategies in research*. IJARnD.

defined conclusions.<sup>32</sup> This research strategy is kind of a plan which provides the basic information to the researchers about their research topics. Analytical methods and data collection are based on the research strategy used in the research. Research strategy can also be referred to as the approach that guides researchers in finding sets of methodologies to give answers to the questions of research and to obtain the objectives of the research.<sup>33</sup> There are two clusters of research strategies qualitative and quantitative research.

Aspect of research	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Philosophical approach	Objectivism	constructivism
Research design	Descriptive, explanatory, And predictive	Descriptive, exploratory, and prescriptive
Data collection	Quantitative data	Qualitative data
Sampling	Large samples involved	Small samples involved
Findings	Results are general	Results are particular/specific
Conclusion	Based on the statistical account	Based on the narrative account

This research work is based on a qualitative approach regarding the escalating tension between China and the USA and how Pakistan can secure its future interests. It involves understanding the experiences of people. Data collection is done through open-ended means. Qualitative research is of different types. This research includes a case study, phenomenological analysis, and content analysis. Qualitative research includes reasoning based on inductive assumptions. In addition to the qualitative approach, the work is conducted to combine the expanding ideas and thoughts into a rational whole. The study's main aim is to explain how Pakistan by allying with China can be safer in the future.

<sup>32</sup> Jenny. (2023, April 20). *Phase #2: Clearly define your research strategy*. MacKenzie Corporation.

<sup>33</sup> Mark N. S. (2019 March). "Research methods for business students" chapter 4: understanding research philosophy and approached to theory development. *Research gate*.

### **3.5. Research Design**

The framework of techniques that are used to collect, analyze, and interpret data in the research process refers to research design. Research design creates a link between empirical research and conceptual research. This helps the researchers answer the research questions and analyze data.<sup>34</sup> Research designs are of different types descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory. Novel and unexplored areas of research use descriptive research design. It gives a comprehensive view of an event or situation.

As the name indicates exploratory research aims to explore the areas of research where little work is done previously which helps in sampling and data collection techniques. On the other hand, explanatory research aims to tell the effects of causes of certain situations or events to support or reject the projection. Prescriptive research is a kind of evaluative research that provides solutions to problems or provides ideas for change. This kind of research addresses questions like how policy measures can be improved or changed, how the country can attain its goals, or which solutions can be given to emerging or existing issues.

In this research, exploratory and prescriptive methods of research are used as they help in exploring the impacts of rivalry between US-CHINA on the world and aim to determine the best options for Pakistan in such a crisis in the future.

### **3.7 Data collection and Data analysis**

Data collection provides some guidelines for gathering and collecting the information and storing it for research purposes. Data is a source that gives information to validate the research question. It is a very important element of any research. There are two kinds of data that a researcher can opt-in for his research: primary data and secondary data.<sup>35</sup> Primary data is collected

<sup>34</sup> Boru, T. (2018 December) "Chapter five: Research design and methodology, PHD thesis, University of South Africa", *Research Gate*.

<sup>35</sup> Business Bliss FZE. (2018, January 6) "Research Paradigms and concepts of Ontology and Epistemology", *Uk Essays*.



through first-hand resources which include data from interviews, surveys, questionnaires, observations, or experiments. A long time is required for primary data collection. On the other hand, secondary data is the type which is obtained from secondary resources which includes articles, newspapers, journals, books, official documents, websites, and publications. Secondary data collection requires a short period.

The study includes secondary sources i.e., online data, articles, books, and published research papers are used to explain the results and data collection. For data analysis, the discourse analysis technique has been used to conduct this study which is used to evaluate and analyze data in any research. In this process, facts and figures are used to solve research problems. It aims to answer research questions.<sup>36</sup>

Independent variable	Dependent variable
US-China rivalry	Pakistan chose to join the bloc

### **3.8 Research ethics:**

The set of norms and rules that a person doing research shall obey while doing the research is called research ethics. They aim to protect research from any mental, or physiological harm. Research ethics aims to take special care of confidentiality and anonymity of responses.<sup>37</sup> They also ensure the legitimacy of research. The ethical considerations involved in this research are as follows:

- I have followed the Bahria University guidelines in my research.
- No help is taken from any writer to complete my research.
- Sources involved in this research are reviewed independently of another person's interpretation.
- Proper references are given to the sources used in this research.

## Chapter 4. Findings and Data Analysis

### 4.1 Geopolitics: Its Ethos and Development as a Concept

In International Relations, Geopolitics is one of the factors and major significance in the provision of a sound explanation of the events that happen in world politics. Geopolitics is all about examining, evaluating, and exploring, world politics and international relations in the geographical context of a region.<sup>38</sup> Geopolitics development as a concept is not a new thought, it has evolved.

Understanding the development of geopolitics as a concept and its affiliation with the struggle for power and competition between states in the international arena entails taking a moment to look into its historical background.<sup>39</sup> On the subject of geopolitics, academic work areas have commonly hard-to-understand, complex, contracting, and conflicting views in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to multiple methods carried to the modern examination of the global politics and historical investigation of this domain.<sup>40</sup>

There is no single definition of geopolitics; thus, it emerged as a buzzword. Rudolf Kellen, who invented the word geopolitics, outlined it as “the theory of the state as a geographical organism or phenomenon in space.”<sup>41</sup> Richard Hartshorne described geopolitics as “geography utilized for particular purposes that lie beyond the pursuit of knowledge.” Yet with a variety of definitions, descriptions, and explanations, Gearoid O Tuathail, a critical advocate of geopolitics, found it a byzantine concept as he argued “geopolitics does not have a singular, all-encompassing meaning or identity. Its discourse posits politically and culturally diverse methods of writing, communicating, and representing geography and world politics”.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Scholvin, S. (2016) “Geopolitics an overview of concepts and empirical examples from international relations”, *FIIA Working paper*.

<sup>39</sup> Granieri, R. J. (2015). What is Geopolitics and Why Does It Matter? *Orbis*, 59(4), 491–504.

<sup>40</sup> Dodd's, K. (1999). *Geopolitics in a changing world*.

<sup>41</sup> Agnew, J. (1998) “Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics”, *London: Routledge*.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen and Bernard, S. (2014) “*Geopolitics: The geography of international relations*”, Row man & Littlefield.

Furthermore, geographical vicinity is the main decisive factor that plays a prominent position in the foreign policy and Strategy of a nation. Geo-strategy refers to a strategy or plan of a state influenced by geographical factors about political and military domains. There is a plethora of instances of how geography influences state behavior in the realm of international politics but there is no more prominent example than the geographical proximity of the US with the two oceans, Pacific and Atlantic, that made it a world superpower. In the same manner, China struggles to dominate the two oceans, the Pacific and the Indian, in its proximity to fulfill its ambition of becoming an Asian power.<sup>43</sup>

In the present study, geopolitics has been taken in the same context: geographical patterns and political interactions. However, the scope of the study is regional as it is confined to the US and China geopolitical interplay in the world. In this context, the geographical patterns are the geographical features and importance of Pakistan and the political interactions are the engagement between the US and China in the region.

## **4.2 The Geopolitical Significance of Pakistan:**

In terms of geopolitics, Pakistan is highly significant due to its strategic position, Pakistan's geographical location grasps strategic significance on the world map. The state owns an undeviating ingress to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. Not only did Pakistan bid a focal geo-strategic location, but also regional connectivity, a gigantic consumer market which expands in the middle-class sector and nonetheless a great fragment of skilled, energetic, and youthful population to its treasured stockholders. Pakistan has a population exceeding 231,531,645 as of 2022, which is equivalent to 2.83% of the total world population as per the World Meters amplification of the latest United Nations data.<sup>44</sup>

Both to the US and China, Pakistan holds an enormous strategic treasure. Within the region of South Asia, the geo-strategic positioning of Pakistan has delivered its required support on various occasions for the US and PRC in attaining their crucial and critical interests. The geographical

<sup>43</sup> Marshall, T. (2016). *"Prisoners of geography: ten maps that explain everything about the world"*.

<sup>44</sup> Gaba, M. J. (n.d.). *population crisis in Pakistan*. Scribd.

location holds the interest of both China and USA. The feasibility of Pakistan as a latent platform enhances and balances its significance for the great powers as Lying at the junction of important three regions, which include South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

The US's major interests in the South Asia region include containing China's growth, eliminating the Nuclear power of Iran, fighting against Afghanistan to constrain terrorism, and enhancing relations with India. In contrast, China is a reliable partner to Pakistan because of its transit trade route toward the central Asian region, and CPEC routes linking with the Indian Ocean, Gwadar's port, enhance the strategic value of the Pakistan and China relations. The ongoing rivalry between China and US extends deeply into the region of South Asia because of China's continuous rise as a super economic power and potential challenger to the United States.

Pakistan's untapped potency to broaden its economic well-being and become more amalgamated with the world economy is very much prominent today with a clear understanding. A relationship built on the practicalities of economic cooperation and integration is crucial for robust bilateral engagement. Consequently, Pakistan should emphasize its economic potential rather than solely relying on its geostrategic location. Nevertheless, for this new strand of thought the country will be required to give a tangible direction for the world to view it from a new lens. This will require an engaging profile for the world to draw attention from investors to upsurge trade volume. The utmost importance is domestic economic strength which demands a solid economy and trading influence are essential traits.<sup>45</sup>

Pakistan is located at a crossroads between Central Asian Republic countries which are Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, and South Asian countries and Pakistan is a doorway between these countries. Due to the landlocked topography of Central Asian states, they need Pakistan for the transit of trade in the region of South Asia, and trade relations with CARs are very important for regional stability. South Asian states like Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh are energy-deficient but labour-rich countries but central Asian states are energy-rich. This initiates a Give and Take policy between South Asian states and Central Asian states.

<sup>45</sup> Amna, M. (2021, September 5). "Pakistan's Geo-Economic Vision," *ISSI.org.pk*.

#### 4.2.2 Pakistan, A transit state:

Pakistan has the potential as a transit trade passageway progressing into a transit economic trade hub. Pakistan is located at the heart of Asia contributing the most economic strategic connection across central Asia, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and South Asia. Pakistan also provides a short and fast way and routes to Turkey, china, and central Asian republican states. Pakistan offers access to the landlocked state of Afghanistan into warm water. A worldwide trade network is given through Gwadar port via highways which is beneficial to these states. becoming a robust transit economy by developing relations with other littoral states will help in its advancement as Pakistan is a littoral state.<sup>46</sup>

The project CASA1000 is a sustainable energy project getting 1300 MW of surplus energy from CARs to own market with a new energy framework. The benefits of this project CASA 1000 will not only help a single particular electricity buyer but also regional power grids. all governments with mutual talks, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan can come along as joint electrical regional markets and, handle climate change problems by clean energy, and enhance the devastating standard of living for their people.<sup>47</sup>

Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) a 1,814kms trans country natural gas pipeline will be going across these four states. This peace pipeline will boost an exceptional level of cooperation and trade within the region with maintain a feeling of peace and security that will initiate in Turkmenistan ranging from Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. The TAPI project has been funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).<sup>48</sup>

In South Asia, the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline is another ongoing project to repress the present energy deficit of the state, in Pakistan the coalition government is implementing and finding different solutions to restart the project. The American government has contradicted the pipeline agreement, and the implemented sanctions on Iran hindered the construction. In 1995 Pak-Iran initiated a project, where Iran is said to have completed the project construction over 900km

<sup>46</sup> Masood, M. (2016 April) "Pakistan potential as a Transit Trade Corridor and Transportation challenges" *Core.ac.uk*.

<sup>47</sup> "CASA-1000 – CASA 1000 Power Transmission and Trade Project," (2022) *JRC pub.org*.

<sup>48</sup> *Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline*. (2020, August 5). Hydrocarbons Technology.

Pakistan's segment distance to be covered is 781km. both state's dream is to stabilize and boost the energy, trade, connectivity, economy, culture, and people-to-people link.<sup>49</sup>

### **4.3 Sino-PAK relations: An enduring alliance:**

Pakistan was the first Muslim country that admitted and developed diplomatic relations in May 1951, with China. Both countries have maintained a close, strong, and friendly relationship. Over time, the relationship has evolved into an “all-weather strategic cooperative partnership” beyond diplomatic and economic cooperation. China considers Pakistan as its Iron brothers and Pakistan sees China as a close friend and partner. Over the past several decades, both countries have supported each other on multiple international forums, and bilateral relations among both nations are characterized by respect, mutual trust, and goodwill which have played a significant role in shaping the geopolitics with each other. Historically, Pakistan and China's relationship has been one of the most essential to Asia's geopolitics.

In regional politics, China and India had sustained bilateral ties at the initial stage they raised and promoted the slogan of ‘Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai’. Later that relationship got bitter over territorial issues which derailed their ties and culminated in the brief war of 1962. The US has directed ammunition and weapons to India to enhance its capabilities against neighboring China. India factor united both China and Pakistan against a common enemy. Post-1962 war, Pakistan and China realized the importance of aligning their policies to achieve their interest vis-vis India. China to strengthen Pakistan's military capabilities started sending arms and ammunition it was a win-win situation for both countries to achieve their core national interest. They have maintained their strategic partnership in security and defense affairs till today.<sup>50</sup>

In 1963, both nations concluded the boundary agreements with peaceful negotiation and the next year first Pakistan international airlines flight landed in Beijing and then Pakistan and China signed a cultural cooperation agreement in 1965. In 1971, Pakistan played a role in the rapprochement by facilitating the first visit by US President Nixon to China, the way for the first-ever formal and official contact between today's superpowers. Pakistan assisted in an undisclosed

<sup>49</sup> Ahmad, A. (2002, October 19) “Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project Is Back on the Table,” *Profit by Pakistan Today*.

<sup>50</sup> Kroonstad, K Alan (2012, May 24). “*Pakistan-US relations*” *CRS*.

meeting between China and the US where President Nixon decided to get the benefit of the China and Soviet Union split, where Henry Kissinger arrived to normalize relations between both states.

Further, China objected to the involvement of India in internal matters of Pakistan in the 1971 Indo-Pak war. Almost 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war in India were released with the help of China, which played a significant role by threatening to veto Bangladesh's entrance into the United Nations. In 1976, Pakistan and China signed a scientific and cultural cooperation agreement.<sup>51</sup> As collaboration increased in the mid-1980s the United States declined to obstruct atomic participation among Pakistan and China because both were partners against the Soviet Union. Pakistan has profited the most from the relationship, to be specific the security-ensured atomic weapons.

Since the nuclearization of South Asia in the late 1990s, Washington and Beijing have been bound together in their endeavors to avoid a full-scale war in the region. But the Kargil War in 1999, between India and Pakistan happened. During that clash, China declined to help Pakistan, and Beijing composed with Washington to guarantee the de-heightening of the emergency. Regardless of coordination with the US in times of emergency, China has proceeded with atomic collaboration with Pakistan over US and global resistance as an appearance of China's technique of utilizing Pakistan to adjust against India. However, in the 1990s, China became progressively awkward with developing fanaticism in the region.

However, in the mid-2000s two important factors drove China toward Pakistan. First was the USA and India relationship which increased to counterbalance the Chinese power which was a military and economic partnership. The essential feature of China's approach towards Pakistan is to cooperate for the fulfillment of joint interests by maintaining a low profile paralleled to US overvalued backing for India and second was China's ambitious project BRI regarding the international order.

Over the years, the relationship between China and Pakistan has extended many milestones. the collaboration between China and Pakistan was signified by diplomatic coherence and symbolic resoluteness which is frequently represented in the domains of security and defense. Since, the last many decades, Pakistan and China have had a strong and friendly relationship, with constant

<sup>51</sup> Institute for Political and International Studies. (n.d.). *Pakistan-China Relations, Evolution towards Strategic Partnership*.

growth and progress, and visions for future cooperation between the two are bright of which China is fully aware. Under no circumstances does China desire to hurl South Asia into a state of war. because this situation would risk its economic desires and hinder its aims to reach the superpower position.

China and Pakistan both want a resolution to the disputes with India by peaceful means against the Indo-US nexus. Both neighboring states have common and congruent interests that put a bright spot in their foreign policies and characterize the China-Pakistan relationship and views in common. Both states don't use their friendship as a tool in power games but seek regional stability and peace by playing constructive roles. Pakistan looks for friendly relations with both China and the US and doesn't wish to be caught in this rivalry. So considering the history of both nations clarifies the answer that in the future if war escalates Pakistan may join the Chinese camp for a better future.

#### **4.3.1 CPEC: Economic Dividends for Pakistan:**

Chinese Premier Li, Keqiang in May 2013, during his official visit to Pakistan for the first time, proposed the CPEC project that would link Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea coastline to Baluchistan with Kashgar in northwest China. In July 2013, both nations signed a memorandum of understanding in Beijing to enhance their Geo-economics relationship via investment in trade, energy, and infrastructure under the framework of the China-Pakistan economic corridor. Chinese President XI Jinping visited Pakistan in April 2015, where both signed a formal covenant to continue work on the \$46 billion mega project which was the 15-year plan. CPEC is a multibillion-cost project not only imitating China's economic evolution but also aiming to amplify its neighbors and beyond.

A term coined as "GAME CHANGER" for CPEC-related projects for Pakistan, connecting Gwadar port by road, air, and optical fiber with Kashgar city of China and its links to China, central, west and south Asia, north Africa, and the middle east through energy and economic cooperation. This will allow the zone to be a channel for new domestic, regional, and international ventures which would empower Pakistan to become a midpoint of regional trade, shipping, and economic interests. Here, the Gwadar port will impel industrial production on a vast scale. Amidst pocket of challenges, many industrialized developed areas in Baluchistan's cities for example Quetta,



Khuzdar, Hub, Gwadar, Uthal, and Dera Murad Jamali have been graphed for further phase one development.<sup>52</sup>

The utmost strategic edge of CPEC to Pakistan would be further enhancement of the existing friendship with China on a future-term basis and increasing its strategic significance as a bridge between Asian, European, and African continents. The economic benefit of CPEC to Pakistan will be because of heavy Chinese investment which will lead to jobs, production of power, and national income. Pakistan's trade will increase by passing through CPEC. The macroeconomic benefit of CPEC to Pakistan would be in terms of GDP, a rise in foreign and domestic direct investment, higher growth of trade and foreign reserves, increased revenues and the economic condition of Pakistan will become strong. CPEC will also help in reducing poverty, and inflation and many positive outcomes for the economy of Pakistan. The impact of this long-term and multidimensional project has the potential to affect regional and global dynamics of trade and economy.

#### **4.3.2 China's Military Dynamics:**

China is deeply concentrated on its aim to modernize its military capabilities to face the consequences that pose a threat to its national interest. The Chinese military has been relentlessly enhancing its operational capacities. Defensive realists emphasize when military capability is upgraded by a country so it reaches the point of correspondence with its direct opponent. The People's Liberation Army has clarified some of its powers, enhanced its charge and control, and started executing combined actions. It has also heightened from being fixated principally on ground operations to increasing its air and, progressively, its maritime powers. The PLA Army is made out of versatile functioning units, fringe and waterfront safeguard divisions, and watch units, and fundamentally in charge of military operations ashore.<sup>53</sup>

The PLA Navy (PLAN) is China's backbone for operations at sea and is in charge of defending its sea security and keeping up its sway over its regional seas alongside its sea privileges and benefits. The Chinese Navy is made up of submarines, surface vessels, maritime avionics, Maritime Corps, and waterfront resistance arms.

<sup>52</sup> Tehzeeb, H. (2022, June 15). "CPEC to Be a Game-Changer for Pakistan's Economy," *China Pakistan Economic Corridor*.

<sup>53</sup> Kaplan, R.D (2009). "Center stage for the twenty-first century: power plays in the Indian Ocean." *Foreign Affairs: 16-32*.

The PLA Second Artillery Force (PLA-SAF) is a center power for China's key prevention. It is for the most part made out of atomic and ordinary rocket strengths and operational bolster units, primarily playing a role in deterring other states from operating atomic weapons against China and completing atomic counterattacks and accuracy hits with routine rockets.<sup>54</sup>

Chinese declarations in regards to its military use stay predictable with its in general "peaceful rise" outside approach principle. the Chinese navy has participated in the AMAN-07 or "Peace-07," "Peace-09" and "Peace-11" multinational sea activities facilitated by Pakistan on the Arabian Sea in 2007. Since 2010, PLA therapeutic offer gatherings some assistance with having been sent three times to Haiti as well as Pakistan to finish worldwide magnanimous remedial rescue operations, and the helicopter rescue gathering of the outfitted power flying has been sent to Pakistan to help flood-mitigation operations there.<sup>55</sup>

The national security interests of the PRC include access to sea assets, countering "hegemonic" impedance in Chinese undertakings, security of the sea paths, potential for military clash emerging from clashing claims over oceanic boondocks or islands, and the Taiwan issue. Thirdly, a need to fabricate a "congruous society" at sea that perceives the inescapability of expanded worldwide rivalry for the seas.<sup>56</sup> The PLAN's available impediments won't keep China from eventually turning into a noteworthy sea power; nor do they imply that it doesn't plan to manufacture a generous navy. For sure, even before the Shi Lang dispatches, it is progressively clear that the People's Liberation Army Navy will join the positions of major sea powers in the several major maritime warriors, as well as in missions it can embrace.

#### **4.3.3 China's prominence and influence:**

China has risen to turn into a worldwide power second just to the United States. China's expanding economy has turned into a key driver of global monetary development, particularly as the worldwide financial retreat toward the end of the first decade lessened development in the West. China's development remains intensely asset concentrated. This implies that it has a vital

<sup>54</sup> Kaplan, R. D. (2010). "The geography of Chinese power: how far can Beijing reach on land and at sea?" *Foreign Affairs*: 22-41.

<sup>55</sup> *The complete Peter Dutton bookshelf: China's Maritime Legal Approaches, Sovereignty Claims, Activities & Geostrategy* Andrew S. Erickson. (n.d.).

<sup>56</sup> Bates, G. & Yanzhong, H. (2006). "Sources and limits of Chinese 'soft power', *Survival*, 48:2, 17-36,

effect on the costs of worldwide items, prompting great development and benefits for asset exporters around the world. China has turned into the biggest exchange accomplice of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the nations of Southeast Asia, and India, the biggest exchange accomplice of Africa.

Beijing pushes for changes in global money-related establishments that would give China a considerably more noticeable part in setting their approaches. China once in a while communicates disappointment with the US-drove administration of the worldwide economy. China contributes effectively to new universal groupings, strikingly the G-20, for more noteworthy accentuation to the benefits and requirements of extensive creating nations than did past driving worldwide financial alliances like the G-7 or G-8. Beijing has developed a global coordinated effort in the mixture of Asian territorial groupings that have risen in the previous two decades.<sup>57</sup>

#### **4.3.4 CPEC Advantages for Pakistan: Economic opportunities:**

CPEC will not only enhance the GDP but also act as a catalyst for Pakistan GDP's growth. CPEC will signal that Pakistan is open for business and safe investment with a consistent inflow of large-scale economic benefits to other investors. Geostrategic security interests will become directly aligned and Pakistan may be in a good position to attract other developed nations once its economy becomes stable. This CPEC will naturally enhance the Pak-China nuclear cooperation and defense mechanism. After the success of this project partnership, relationship with the Afghanistan may start on a positive note and the terrorism threat can be maintained. In the long-term SAARC, including nations may get attracted to the benefits of connectivity to this economic train. China has one of the largest foreign reserves of \$3.6 trillion and is the world's largest exporter with \$2.34 trillion in annual exports which provides strength to create its resources for investment.<sup>58</sup>

CPEC is the only project that will force Pakistan to balance its policies in many dimensions to extract maximum benefits. Strategically, Pakistan's geopolitical position would be strengthened with major world powers and equally balancing relations with other states enhancing diplomatic support. This will bring stability in the region by addressing security cooperation, counterbalance

<sup>57</sup> Whiting, A. S. (1996). The PLA and China's Threat Perceptions. *The China Quarterly*, 146, 596–615.

<sup>58</sup> IPRI, (2017 March). "CPEC: Macro and Micro Economic Dividends for Pakistan and the Region".

to regional issues, and promising long-term strategic and economic gains for Pakistan. Considering CPEC is the significant choice for swift development of a large-scale generation capacity in the short term.<sup>59</sup>

#### **4.4 Bilateral ties between Pakistan and USA:**

##### **4.4.1 Roller coaster partnership:**

After independence, Pakistan faced several hurdles and Challenges, especially arising from India in its security concerns and dilemma. After, the creation of Pakistan in 1947, to preserve and uphold the stability, composure, and dignity of the country, Pakistan opted for a Western block instead of a communist block and enjoyed financial assistance, diplomatic support, and military equipment. In, 1954 Pakistan signed (SEATO) and later signed (CENTO) in this way Pakistan tied itself with the Cold War agenda of the US and provided the CIA with airbases for surveillance purposes. US policymakers took advantage of Pakistan's weakness which relied on the US for economic, political, and security assistance.

The United States extensively provided weapons, ammunition, and arms to India during the Indo-China War of 1962. This situation brought to focus the bitter irony in Pakistan's relations with the US, despite their alliances, Pakistan came to realize that the US opted and offer assistance to India leaving Pakistan without support. Pakistan went to war with India in 1965 and 1971, and the suspension of military and economic assistance by the US was seen as a betrayal in Islamabad. Pakistan lost its half part now, Bangladesh. Pakistan realized that it needed to change its fate and covertly started pursuing the nuclear option, America got the intelligence and suspended the aid in 1977, after the coup by Zia and then later, after the death of Bhutto, the military aid was suspended due to nuclear option but was linked it to the execution of Bhutto.

The Cold War steadily approaching its end and the fragile relationship persisted between the United States and Pakistan. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and Americans realized the importance of Pakistan and offered Pakistan to join Us against the Soviets, Zia denied the offer because the assistance was just peanuts in front of the threat. Ronald was in the driving

<sup>59</sup> Erica, D. (2019, October 3). "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Power Projects: *Insights into Environmental and Debt Sustainability*,".

seat of America at that time and offered Pakistan F-16s and huge economic and military aid of \$540 million. Pakistan accepted the offer and 1980 saw the rebirth of the US-PAK security partnership.

The CIA and ISI joined hands to hunt the Soviets and defeated the Soviets with the help of Mujahedeen in 1985, the US Congress adopted the Presser Amendment to keep the flow of aid to Pakistan without undermining the core interest in the Afghan war. This certification provided Pakistan leverage to acquire nuclear weapons against, India Pakistan took advantage and exploited the situation in its favor, following the conclusion of the Afghan war. Sometimes, the US's promises contradict on one side US reiterated its willingness to improve the economic condition of Pakistan Alternatively, the US is responsible for the economic pain suffered by Pakistan through the imposition of sanctions.

Despite this, encountered the aftermath of the Afghan War, contending with an influx exceeding 3 million Afghan refugees. This influx brought about cultural and security challenges, leaving enduring implications for the host country Pakistan. The Taliban problem is the main reason for the fraught relationship between the USA. In 1996, US pressured Pakistan to situate and influence the Afghan Taliban to surrender Osama bin Ladin back. The US-PAK relationship suffered many ups and downs.

The US served Pakistan with carrots in many ways from economic, and military assistance, loans, credits, arms sales, and training to access to US market for export and on the other hand, threats and served Pakistan with penalties. The Pakistani's alliance with the US was to secure it from rival India, but, it was betrayed on many occasions, so it started its nuclear program and never abandoned it on the behest of American friendship. The relations were at their lowest point at the time of the 9/11 attacks. Post 9/11 started a new chapter of cooperation.

#### **4.4.2 Alliance Restored, Post 9/11:**

The United States initiated a worldwide campaign to eliminate terrorism aimed at itself and many allies in different forms due to the impactful event of 9/11 which shook the foundations of the invulnerability of US security. Musharraf pledges its support to the US war against terror. The decision was praised in Washington and considered as the way forward for strengthening the bilateral relation. Musharraf, nodded yes to all the demands made by the US administration

providing the airbases, use of Pakistani airspace, FBI and CIA given free hand to operate in Pakistan, operations with support from Pak-Army, the intelligence on Al Qaeda members, and closure of the border to stop the infiltration. Pakistan took a great opportunity at its door and in return got US aid, debt relief, and the elimination of US tariffs on Pakistani textile exports.

The financial assistance increased from \$188 million to \$ 2.1 billion. Musharraf asked for the F-16s upgraded version, AWACS, UH-1 helicopters, and C-130 cargo planes for the army. Pakistan got \$ 963 million in aid (food aid, humanitarian aid, and other assistance). Pakistan was given NON –NATO ALLY status. The war against terror forced both countries into strategic partnership after a fraught relationship for a long time. In 2004, the situation became deteriorating and it became difficult to pretend that both were fighting the common enemy. The US insisted that ISI is providing arms, money, and logistical support to the terrorists, whom the US is fighting and they enjoyed the haven in FATA and Quetta under the umbrella of ISI.<sup>60</sup>

Musharraf in an interview with BBC in 2006 made clear that without Pakistan's cooperation, the US would fail in Afghanistan and in this way, Pakistan outmaneuvered the mightiest country in the international arena. The geography of Pakistan holds significance and the US can't afford to move away from Pakistan, without Pakistan's help the US will sustain the war on terror for a longer time. Pakistan needed American support and assistance for its survival and US dependency on Pakistan forced the superpower to remain in contact. Here, the US failed to leverage its mightiest force and Pakistan has an edge or upper hand in this conflict. Islamabad reminded them that it was Washington who had come to Pakistan for help and assistance, not Pakistan, and Pakistan helped the US like a loyal friend not like the US who turned its back and suspended military assistance during the 1965 and 1971 wars, Carter sanctions of the 1970s, Presser amendment in 1990s, nuclear and democracy related sanctions.

America elected its first African-American President Barack Obama. The Mumbai attacks were also conducted in 2008 in India leading the situation towards the war and Pakistan was suffering pressure from all around the world. The newly elected president of the US unveils its new approach to cooperate with Pakistan to achieve goals otherwise, to use all other means. The

<sup>60</sup> Robert, M. H. (2017). *The Leverage Paradox: Pakistan and United States*.

other important strategy was the use of drone strikes on the hideouts of the Taliban. the new US administration in 2009 adopted legislation to provide \$7.5 billion in economic aid known as KERRY-LUGAR BILL to strengthen the democratic institutions, and rule of law, promote economic freedom, and improve the human rights situation.

#### **4.4.3 Pakistan-US Relations Post 2010:**

The year 2011 was annus horribilis in the US-PAK relation. The events that took place in 2011 deteriorated the relationship. In 2011, two uneasy partners unfolded the commencement of a challenging period characterized by various tough decisions. The CIA contractor Raymond Davis killed two Pakistanis and the CIA director falsely assured that he was not linked with the agency. The ISI retaliated and exposed the CIA station chief in Islamabad expelling the hundreds of US intelligence operators working in Pakistan. The other most important event that took place on 2-05-2011. The American helicopters penetrated 100 miles deep into Pakistan and killed Osama bin Laden the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks after completing the operation left Pakistan safely, the event stunned the Pakistani military and they suffered strong criticism.

An idea proposed by the US Congress to hinder the financial aid of Pakistan against the support to militant groups, where in response Pakistan notified the blockage of crucial supply routes for NATO forces in Afghanistan for the assertion of its sovereignty. the seeds of disagreement were planted between them and they were aware of the potential growth and future consequences even though both sides worked out to de-escalate the limitations and continued cooperating. After a soft apology by the US, supply routes were reopened after the remaining closing of seven months. Pakistan requested the transit fee per unit fleeting through its territory and under the coalition support fund US approved relief of \$1.18 in the upcoming seven years and two billion dollars to be fixed up under an occasional head for the coming month.<sup>61</sup>

In 2014, Pakistan launched an offensive operation against the militants in North Waziristan. The Americans believed it be designed in a way to let the Afghan Taliban escape to Afghanistan and other cities. The US complaint that ISI still retains ties with the Taliban. Pakistan

<sup>61</sup> Afp. (2012, August 2). Pakistan receives \$ 1.18 bln from US under coalition support fund. *DAWN.COM*.

complained about the TTP operating in Afghanistan and the US is not doing anything. In 2016, drone strikes killed mullah Mansour in Baluchistan, coming back from Iran on Pakistani documents, this further pushed the relationship towards a stalemate. Pakistan was upset due to the first drone strike in Baluchistan and the US may target the nuclear facilities in the future. Pakistan in response repeated the mantra that the US abandoned us and we need to reassess our relationship with the US. Donald Trump was sworn in as the new president of America and his previous tweets about Pakistan showed that he will surely adopt a tougher stance towards Pakistan.

Trump lambasted Pakistan that they are providing safe havens to the very terrorists, that Americans are fighting in Afghanistan and on the other hand got billions of dollars. In his Afghanistan policy, he adopted a tougher policy towards Pakistan, appreciated in India and Afghanistan. Trump vows to give a bigger role to India, which left Pakistan fumed. As a retaliation, Pakistan responded that Americans were scapegoating Pakistan for its failure in Afghanistan and urged the US to move away from relying on the false narrative of safe havens and work with Pakistan to achieve long-lasting peace in Afghanistan.

#### **4.5 Indo-US Strategic Nexus: Complications for Pakistan**

The Indian and American strategic ties, diplomatic and economic ties have been driven by common interests such as rising China, counterterrorism, and trade which have deepened over the years. During the Cold War period, India endorsed non-alignment with the US but was grooved by the Soviet Union and resultantly alienated from the US. The strategic and political shift took place in world politics after the disintegration of the USSR. The uni-polar world order introduced in the globe led by the US. Understanding the significant strategic, political, and economic shift in the world India made immediate changes in their foreign policy to make a close bond with the USA. The USA also started to pay attention to India for their interest worldwide due to the India geographical position it can attract worldwide consumers based market and the convergence of their interest in South Asia.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Abu-Bakr, M. (2023). Thriving US and India Relations: Implications for Pakistan and china. *Paradigm shift*.



#### **4.5.1 The US-Indo defense pact:**

Over the period, India and the USA have expanded and upgraded their relations with each other to enhance their policy goals in the political, economic, and strategic affairs which the USA described as the “lynchpin” of its global strategy. In South Asia, the encouragement of India as a leading nation is based on the US strategic plan to contain the strength of rising China. Clearly, due to China's growing economy and military might US views India as a counterforce against the People's Republic of China. On June 28, 2005, a new framework defense pact of ten years for defense cooperation, and a strategic partnership between the two was formally signed by India and the USA in Washington D.C.<sup>63</sup> The main objective was to achieve that was to provide help to India for the advancement of its strategic goals in Asia.

In the region, US yearly military cooperation now holds India more than any other country, the increasing sales of defense have flown up to \$8 billion and high-level exchanges on defense subjects have improved substantially.<sup>64</sup> In 2008, bilateral relations set another significant development which was the Indo-US civilian nuclear agreement which provided an opportunity for India to improve its nuclear structure which was a clear violation non-proliferation treaty. In 2015, the US president, Barak Obama, visited India regarding a strategic partnership where a joint declaration was once again alluded to as “Chalein saath saath” which translates as “forward together we go”.<sup>65</sup> After the disintegration of the USSR, almost all presidents Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump, and currently Joe Biden hinged their relationships with India under US foreign policy consistently.

#### **4.5.2 Implications for Pakistan and China, Indo-US nexus:**

In this regard, Pakistan's security concerns were ignored by the US and Pakistan views this Indo-US nexus against its national interest because Modi-led Indian policies made it clear that will remain hostile towards Pakistan. South Asia became asymmetric due to continued US defense expansion with India which disturbed the balance of power and dismayed Pakistan. This

<sup>63</sup> Noor, S. (2018). Ten years of the Indo-US civilian nuclear agreement: Implications for Pakistan. *South Asian Voices*

<sup>64</sup> Wadhvani, (2012, October 21). “Chair in U.S.-India Policy Studies, “U.S.-India Security and Defense Cooperation”, *CSIS*.

<sup>65</sup> Pti. (2015, January 25). India, US release “declaration of friendship”, to elevate strategic partnership. *The Times of India*.

geopolitical tension has heightened the competition in the region because of the military dynamics and close cooperation created a security dilemma for Pakistan and China. The Indo-US strategic partnership is a clear manifestation of containing China and enhancing the clout of the US in South Asia in the spheres of geopolitics, military, and diplomacy which have severe and direct implications for Pakistan.

President Bush was the first who call China a strategic competitor instead of a strategic partner which was further followed by President Obama termed a Pivot to Asia which enclosed to contain Chinese rise. President Trump in recent history led to the worst deterioration in china-USA relations by triggering the trade War, claiming China for the Covid-19 pandemic and closely aligned with Taiwan which shifted the regional dynamics. This China and US competition complicated the security environment of Asia which was already complex and fraught. Maintaining ties and relationships between the two great powers under this rivalry became difficult for Pakistan. Furthermore, the BECA agreement and arms deal signed by Trump and Modi in 2020 alarm bells in Pakistan which increased the strategic dilemma.

This Indo-US nexus has a comprehensive examination of security and politics-related matters by the policymakers which in results several security issues for Pakistan. Pakistan's focus must be to foster dialogue with the US and global community for peace, and strategic stability in the region. Global alliance can provide Pakistan a platform to speak up on Kashmir issues and the human rights violations by India in the South Asian Region. Regarding the true intentions of this partnership, Pakistan must seek an independent and balanced foreign policy to maintain its core national interest.

#### **4.6 Bilateral contours of US-china Rivalry:**

In the mid-20th century, after World War II, the containment of communism turned out as a priority for the USA. To curtail, the growing strength of the Soviet Union, the USA considered China an important player, which became an important member of the United Nations Security Council. Later, in the 1950s the China and Soviet alliance was restored which later in the 1960s, became an open conflict between both countries.<sup>66</sup> The global power politics considering the

<sup>66</sup> McDougall, D. (2007) "Asia Pacific in world politics". *Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers*, p.12-13.

Vietnam War and the Korean War in the Asia Pacific were ruled to a great extent by the encounter between China and the US.

The emergence of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement during the 1970s, s and 1980, s holds a significant position of growth at the regional and international level. In 1972, during the Cold War, a trip by US President Ricard Nixon to the PRC was a shifting moment that flagged a way for successful US relations in cooperation with communist powers. However, international balance due to this shift resulted in a convergence of the Chinese perspective and escalated the clash between China and the Soviets more threatening than ongoing against the US. China and the USA set aside their conflicts regarding security issues, including the Taiwan problem that had brought them into almost War in the 1950s, s and started sharing common interests against the soviet powers. Until the collapse of the USSR from Rapprochement, both China and the USA were allies of convenience. In 1989, China's severe repression at Tiananmen Square at the end of the Cold War again resurfaced unresolved strategic tensions and in the new world order US and China became strategic competitors, albeit with strong incentives for continued peaceful coexistence.<sup>67</sup>

#### **4.6.1 Era of emerging geopolitics of Asia Pacific:**

In 1997 and 1998, after the Asian financial crisis, the discourse of global politics re-entered with the notion of the Pacific Century or the Pacific Age. Asia was drastically changing than any other region more rapidly in the world. A matter of concern for China was a serious development that enhanced the importance of the US future regarding the South Asian region and also the role of containment of China with the help of countries like India, Japan, and Australia in the South China Sea, and Indian Ocean. Being a key state ninety percent of Pakistan's trade through the Persian Gulf cannot be forgetful and on the other hand where China and the US may have come up in two opposing states to the emerging security environment.<sup>68</sup> The 21st century became a flashpoint because of the Asia-Pacific politics of the region where the return of the US and also the surge for Japan backing rise with the simultaneous rise of China and India, has caused the matter of concern regarding uncertainties in the region.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Lim, R. (2012). "The Geopolitics of East Asia." *Routledge*, p.171.

<sup>68</sup> Vaughn, B. (2007). "US Strategic and Defense Relationships in The Asia-Pacific Region." *Library of Congress Washington Dc CRS*.

<sup>69</sup> Ali, S. M. (2008). Strategic Triangles." In *US-China Relations in the "Asia-Pacific" Century*. *Palgrave Macmillan, New York*.

#### 4.6.2 President Obama's Security Strategy (2011)

“In shaping the future of this region US seeks to play a substantial, enduring, and lasting role. This involves giving priority to the region in US military planning, foreign policy, and economic policy all while fostering robust partnerships with friends and allies partners.”<sup>70</sup> Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton describes the way for the US to shift focus toward the Asia Pacific by using the word Pivot in foreign policy. Further for the upcoming 10 years, he emphasizes that the US needs to focus on investment and energy time most smartly for the sustain leadership role, interest securing, and advancing values to put the US in a valuable position.<sup>71</sup> In Asia Pacific for more than a century, the USA played a balancing role by depending on forward-deployed forces to maintain stability both strategically and geographically.

Two major factors the US's forward-looking strategy rests upon were in peacetime to counter and control competition with China and provide convincing surety to China that you are not able to fight against the US and win this war shortly. The driving force and factor behind the shift was the US suspicion regarding the rise of China as an imminent threat to the US influence and hegemony in the region. Obama administration by calling capability rebalancing changed its idea of ground forces toward air and sea forces to counter China's anti-area access denial (A2/AD) plan based on maintaining a keep-out zone to limit US access. Therefore, the pivot to Asia strategy in the region is claimed as an important tool to serve the US interest - containing China's influence.<sup>72</sup>

Regional instability's major cause was the deployment of its forces around China's periphery, enhancement of the role of regional institutions, and strengthening of security ties with China's neighbors by the US implementing this strategy of containment as well as the worsening of China's strategic environment. Before the Pivot to Asia, China was already hemmed in an antagonistic neighborhood characterized by a time-tested rival Japan to the East and an emerging India in the South. China's policymakers view the US strategy as a serious geostrategic threat that needs to be addressed and needs a stable and resolute answer. To accomplish its geopolitical goals and counterbalance the Pivot to Asia strategy of the US, however, Beijing would resort to geo-

<sup>70</sup> Shaud, John A. & Kevin C. H. (2013). "Asia, the Pacific, and the US Air Force's Contribution to the Future of US National Security." *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 2: 3-9.

<sup>71</sup> Clinton, H (2011). "America's Pacific Century." *Foreign policy* 189: 56

<sup>72</sup> Sultan, M. B. (2013). "US Asia Pivot Strategy: Implications for the Regional States". *ISSRA Papers* 5, no. 7: 135-150.

economics.<sup>73</sup> Thus, Beijing seeks to meld all together with the South Asian, Central Asian, African, and European states into a "community of shared destiny and responsibility" with the assistance of its grand strategy BRI.<sup>74</sup> This project BRI appears to enhance China's clout and counterbalance and get rid of the US strategy pivot to Asia.<sup>75</sup>

Beijing crafted a strategy "String of Pearls" which was intended to increase and spread Chinese military, and economic engagement throughout South Asia by establishing a network of bases and building ports of friendly relations with countries. However, the important goals behind the string of pearls of China are to place the pearls in a chain across the IOR and increase its maritime clout. Secondly, to ensure its military presence and control the US influence in the region to further economic and geopolitical interests.<sup>76</sup>

#### **4.6.3 Trump Era: the complex dynamics of US-China relations:**

President Trump has marked China as the USA's main adversary and foreign conduct is based on the premise of America First Policy. His focus has been on promoting American values, domestically, with limiting the US role as a global leader. This saw the U.S. quitting multiple multilateral agreements, criticizing international organizations, and implementing trade tariffs and regulations that benefit U.S. workers. The US government of Trump defined China in some complex areas like China's quest for technological advancement, pursuits of technical benchmarks, China's control over the Indo-Pacific rim lands, and military dominance through modernization.

During his tenure, President Trump followed the policy of Isolationism; he openly criticized global institutions by pulling the US out of many deals. The major exists were from the Paris Agreement which showed he undermined the importance of environmental issues and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, which is also recalled as the Iranian Nuclear Deal. Trump projected himself as a populist leader who shaped the narrative under his famous slogan of "Make America Great Again".

<sup>73</sup> Zhang Feng. (2012). "China's Response to the US Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific", *Institute for Regional Security*. pp. 45-60.

<sup>74</sup> William A Callahan. (2016). "China's Asia Dream," *Asia Journal of Comparative Politics* 1, no. 3: 226-243.

<sup>75</sup> Chris, B. & Olivia. (2017, October 19) "Environment, Security, Power: What China's Changing Vocabulary Reveals about its Future?" *New York Times*.

<sup>76</sup> Miller, T. (2019). "China's Asian Dream: Empire Building along the new silk road", *Zed Books*.

President Trump's initiated ongoing trade war with China was a result of Mr. Trump's efforts to make imported goods more expensive to encourage consumers to buy more locally produced goods. The U.S. ended up imposing tariffs on more than \$360bn of Chinese products and China retaliated by imposing tariffs on \$110bn of US products. The Chinese administration saw this as a way of curbing the rise of China as a global power.

This was one example of President Trump's hostile economic policies towards China. He even opted out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership because he believed that "China will come in through the backdoor and take advantage". The increasing distrust of President Trump towards China was an expected part of his foreign policy, as he had always stressed providing a mandate to "do things differently," with predictions of sharp, decisive changes in U.S. policy towards China. The trump era of four long years remarked trade problems in complete swings which turned into a trade war resulting in sanctions on Chinese technology enterprises.<sup>77</sup>

With the COVID-19 pandemic shaking the foundations of the entire world, the Sino-U.S. took a further hit. The Trump administration was adamantly calling the coronavirus, as the Chinese virus, and a lot of questions were raised over the handling of the pandemic by China. Things took a favorable turn towards China, as the U.S. ended up handling the pandemic far worse and struggling to contain the damage.

Strategically, to counter the growing threat that the U.S. perceives from China, under the Trump administration, the U.S. has also initiated the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. This is an informal strategic forum between the U.S., India, Australia, and Japan, which took place in 2007 when the four countries took part in naval exercises. Now, the first phase of naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal has taken place, again, and is seen as a way of countering Chinese presence in its backyard. While reluctance to commit remains as states fear economic losses if a strain in relations with China is to occur, there is a sense of urgency on the part of the U.S. under the Trump administration. This came soon after the U.S. banked on India to counter China in the South Asian region. The U.S. deal with India on sharing geospatial intel was a way for Trump's administration to show their distrust of China. If we look at his policies toward China, they were aggressive. He challenged China over Trade, Technology, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Pandemic.

<sup>77</sup> CBT. (2021, March 22). "US-China Relations in the Biden-Era: A Timeline," *China Briefing News*.

#### **4.6.4 The recent tenure of Joe Biden:**

As the 46<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, Biden with his policies toward China continued with the Trump administration's aggressive outlook towards China. Biden set up an international alliance making his chief foreign policy initiative apart from his precursor the "America First" approach<sup>78</sup>. China remained the same in the US approach there is bipartisan consensus in the US against China. They consider China as a hostile and determined strategic competitor to American hegemony and interests. Biden has expressed his thoughts and concerns about the threat posed by China's security apparatus, and economic and government practices. In terms of the Military, there are chances of greater hostility.

China is flexing its military muscles and sharpening its military assets with state-of-the-art technology. The US is increasing its engagement with Quad countries and Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam and the Philippines to challenge China in the South China Sea. The US also openly supported Taiwan against China diplomatically and provided them with material support in terms of hard military hardware.

To counter the US strategies, Chinese policymakers recently strengthened their military, economic, and diplomatic ties with Russia and Iran. the U.S. as a state, rather than as a single government/administration, has decided to bank on India to hinder the influence of China. Albeit, Biden emphasizes the PRC and US relations in terms of "Stiff competition" denying Trump's approach "all-encompassing decoupling" policy towards China.<sup>79</sup>

#### **4.7 US-China Rivalry: Global & Regional Impact and Perspective:**

Global geopolitics with the rise of China has shifted the focus on Great power rivalry because of the relative decline in the hegemony of the US as a superpower. Global prosperity and wealth depend on economic exchanges which need transition through secure means of communication but the situation of US-China competition gave rise to the phenomenon.<sup>80</sup> Both at domestic and global

<sup>78</sup> Lau, S., & Gehrke, L. (2021, January 26). Merkel sides with Xi on avoiding Cold War blocs. *POLITICO*.

<sup>79</sup> Vivian, S. & Gordon, L. (2021, May 25). "Biden Says He Sees China as 'Stiff Competition,'" *WSJ*.

<sup>80</sup> Alex, A. (2013, November 20). "The Rise of Money Trading Has Made Our Economy All Mud and No Brick" *The Guardian*.

levels, international actors' key concern is to ensure this lane is safe and easily accessible. Despite the fact, that China and the US are cautiously building an asymmetrical bipolarity.<sup>81</sup> the outlines of U.S-China power struggles are being overlaid by globalization showing the realities that build a hard infrastructure of intersecting economic connectivity. To reform the primary economic bonds that work across national borders the U.S. and China geopolitical competition remained incapable.

**European Union** has immense strategic and economic interests because security partnership with the United States as and major trading partner to China. An agreement for joint venture cooperation with China has recently been signed by the European Union in Africa.<sup>82</sup> Major players of the European Union are also the part of Chinese project BRI, and her Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Between Asia and Europe, the significance of sea lanes is also important. the measures directed by the U.S. to compel European Union countries to review the EU-China economic agreements caused impactful reactions from the Chinese end.<sup>83</sup> Its be like a Cold War bloc dividing the world into two parts, dual trade and investment scenario, dual financial and currency measures, and political, and military camps duality also.

**Russia's** long-term interest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is reach to the new global market with safe and secure access to warm waters for its trade. From the post-Cold War era to the present, Russia has maintained its significant military and economic ties with many countries. Russia and India are important strategic allies with the largest supply of nuclear weapons and arms to India in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Recent political, economic, and strategic ties between China and Russia are also matters of significance. China's largest source of import and After the European Union China, 's largest trading partner in Moscow.<sup>84</sup> China, Russia, and Pakistan's 'Golden Ring of Security (PICTR)' is contributing to building an Eastern bloc more powerful than the US-led world Western bloc.<sup>85</sup>

In mid-April 2021, the nuclear incident at Natanz complex Biden sanctions against Russia and also referred to as “killer” by Russian President Vladimir Putin.<sup>86</sup> All these happenings have highly

<sup>81</sup> Ronielyn, B. (2009). “US-Taiwan Security Relationship”. *Undergraduate Dissertation*.

<sup>82</sup> “Joint Statement of the 20th EU-China Summit” - *EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission*.

<sup>83</sup> European Commission. (2022) “EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment: Milestones and Documents,” *policy.trade.ec*.

<sup>84</sup> Yang, J. (2016) “Chairs the 12th Round of China-Russia Strategic Security Consultation.”. p.2.

<sup>85</sup> Samreez, S. “US-China Relations: A Case Study in the Indian Ocean since Post-Cold War Era”, *ISSRA, NDU*.

<sup>86</sup> Assal, R. &Negar, M. (2021, March 10). “President Biden Must Follow the Advice of Candidate Biden on Iran,” *Foreign Policy*.



integrated China, Russia, and Iran to coalesce. Further, foreign ministers of Russia and China also emphasize foreign policy interactions to persist as a strategic force in world politics.<sup>87</sup> There are the last longing and unchangeable multiple interests shared between Sino-Russian relations. Also, the fact is that ongoing tensions between China and the USA are increasing the closeness between the Sino-Russian relations.

China and **Iran's** close ties over the last few decades have built deep and broad manners that are directly challenging to the objectives of the US. To discourage US sanctions on Iran a strategic cooperation agreement has been signed between Iran and China which cooperated the funding to Iran's energy needs and resources.<sup>88</sup> Iran's major oil customer and trading partner over the last few decades is China and China aided Iran in many domains to enhance its military and also built some railroads, dams, and bridges in Iran. Both regimes view each other as an ally against Western dominance and have shared trade, cooperation, and geopolitical interests on several issues.

Recently, US interference in **Taiwan** under the Biden policies has further escalated the problems about which China is concerned. Japan and Australia are some of the Major partners of the USA in strategic domains against China's mounting power in the international arena. US behavior of Conduct involves Japan and Australia's forceful military in the region, official dealing like signing a maritime patrol agreement between the US and Taiwan, in security affairs of the Indo-Pacific involving the Taiwanese military all these are directly challenging China's redlines.<sup>89</sup> Australia and China's shared economic interests are beneficial for both in the future and Australia's approach will remain balanced and mutual for both PRC and US. Vice versa, Japan sees China as an immediate hazard to its growing regional power and has inclined towards India and the US camp to counter Chinese in many aspects for example BRI project.

Many **Asian, African,** and South American states don't perceive China as a threat to concord and security at the domestic and global levels. Even they are satisfied by the economic prosperous approach of the BRI project towards their national interest no matter US cuts their aid. Joseph Nye in 2021 stated that in the future decade, China planned to lend \$1 trillion for

<sup>87</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2021, Septembeter 25) "Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Address at the General Debate of the 76th Session of the General Assembly, *New York*.

<sup>88</sup> Niu, Y. & Yang, Z. (2021, March 28). "RMB Settlement, Beidou, 5G——Iranian Media Said That the China-Iran Comprehensive Cooperation Plan Is Full of Dry Goods," *new.qq.com*.

<sup>89</sup> Shi, "The Biden Administration's China Posture: Focusing on Strategic Military."

infrastructure projects under its BRI project and almost 100 countries rely on China as their major trading partner in comparison to the US are 57.<sup>90</sup>

China has developed its economic and political relations more specifically with the **South Asian** states like Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh to make the PRC geopolitically stronger in the region. Moreover, India in the region has fewer economic ideal partners due to Chinese economic access in her neighborhood. The emerging and increasing strategic relationship between Bangladesh and China is also a substantial matter of concern for the Indian regime. China is the largest weapons and arms supplier to Dhaka, developing her port project, helping in the Chittagong project, and building an \$8 billion water-deep seaport.

Sri Lanka is geographically located at a very significant place where a port developed by the Chinese has direct maritime access and other developments by the Chinese will also have great significance in the future. Pakistan has traditional ties with Both the US and China which has created a tough situation for Pakistan to balance its policies and has an immense amount of geopolitical significance for both in the future. Afghanistan holds a central position vis-à-vis BRI and CPEC. The major threat to CPEC is instability in Afghanistan. The US used Afghanistan as a tool to counter the Chinese and keep an eye on it for 18 years by direct involvement. There is a need for a collective response mechanism against common security threats in the conception of emerging security complexes.

The US and China relations in the great power play dynamics exhibiting the power transition where the established power felt threatened by the emerging power of China. China is a vexing power and the US is the vanishing power and US wants to maintain its hegemony at any cost by making strategic moves to counter the threat by neglecting world peace and stability. With the relative decline in the strength of the US is losing its ground and China can assert its power as far as is concerned and will emerge as a global leader peacefully. Due to this instability caused by strategic rivalry, the globe has to pay for it until it doesn't end.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph S. Nye, (2021, March 11). "What Could Cause a U.S.-China War?" *China-US Focus*.

#### **4.7.1 China-US Rivalry and Pakistan: A Triangle Dilemma**

The geopolitical competition between the US and China is escalating at such a pace that, has generated a perilous condition for Pakistan. In the future, US and Chinese competition can complicate Pakistan's efforts to maintain the balance between the two great powers. However, China and the US both have vigorous relations with Pakistan historically. In Asia, Pakistan became the frontline state in the China and US contests. This competition opened a turn for Pakistan toward China by ending because Pakistan has maintained a juggled relationship with the United States and China successfully. The geographical location of Pakistan plays a significant role in fulfilling the geopolitical interests of both great powers. Pakistan has credible strength so neither China nor the US can afford to lose it.

In contemporary times, Pakistan has to play a more imperative and unpreventable role in the international structure of political order. Since the relations between nations are not natural but rather developed through divergence and convergence of interests. Throughout history, India has always remained a great factor in Pakistan's relations with the superpower. Indo-US alignment against China brings closeness to Sino-Pak relations. In the current situation, Pakistan needs to focus on its national interest in light of this rivalry. The US towards Pakistan remains unreliable most of the time but has the potential to harm Pakistan directly or through India. US support to India against Pakistan through cohesive policies like FATF, in political discourses, Kashmir human rights, India's terrorism involvement in Baluchistan, and Hindutva ideologies against Muslims in all manners US has turned a blind eye. The US investments, the US maintained institutions like IMF, and World Bank, Pakistan's dependence on them also remains a reality. The US factor would be consequential as Pakistan tilts toward China.

While China's unswerving contribution towards Pakistan is unmatched. China always supported Pakistan whether in security dilemmas or economic needs and sees Pakistan as an irreplaceable partner. China has increasingly become the reliable option in all domains, the largest arms supplier to Pakistan, and a major economic partner with an investment of 62 billion dollars in the CPEC project under the BRI.

Pakistan to better serve its interest to resort to open options rather than picking sides on the backdrop of such complexities. Thus for Pakistan balancing relations with great power may not be

an option suggesting an imbalance in favor of China. Pakistan and China both occupy the same vision to pursue such foreign which advocates respect for all and dictation for non and hold a significant part in Pakistan's foreign policy. In the overall global spectrum, it would render Pakistan stronger. As for the matter of concern, China is a rising power and the US is declining hegemony.

#### **4.7.2 Foreign Policy Choices for Pakistan:**

The foreign policy of Pakistan has been impacted by the country's military and civil elites but is mostly driven by its ideological ethos. The issue of Kashmir and India always remained at the center stage of foreign policy. all the while foreign policy of Pakistan remained security-centric because of geostrategic location liability. Due to security-centric foreign policy, it could not reach the depth of its economic potential. Pakistan has been struggling with an economic deficit situation and bad governance for many decades.

former prime minister Imran Khan in February 2022, affirmed that contingent on the government of China and Pak-China relations are the contours of the foreign policy of Pakistan. Both leaders of China and Pakistan emphasized regional relations and appreciated the full range of bilateral relations and the global political environment. Pakistan assured its commitment to a One-China policy and China support in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea. Also recognized the importance of CPEC for bettering Pakistan's economic stances. China ensured its independence, sovereignty, and security with a commitment to socioeconomic opulence and progress.<sup>91</sup> Prime Minister of Pakistan in this regard Imran Khan, said that Pakistan's future and its economic advancement are linked with China. Cherishing the long-standing iron brotherhood and deep-rooted Pak-China friendship.

Former prime minister Khan was questioned regarding Pak-China relations during an interview with China's global television network he desired to bring U.S. China on mutual grounds and working together in harmony would be fruitful. the strong Pakistan-China relations have brought forth regional stability.

<sup>91</sup> Estate Land. (2022, February 7). "Pakistan's Foreign Policy Is Dependent on China: Prime Minister," *Estate Land Marketing*.

At present, Pakistan policymakers are also seeming to build a new bloc with China and Russia and facing hardship to get out of the influence of America. In the future world politics is shifting and important changes are coming so Pakistan policymakers must take a bold step by making new alignments with countries around the world that are beneficial for the national interest of Pakistan. As we saw after many years economic and diplomatic ties between Russia and Pakistan are also improving. CPEC is the reason that countries are attractive to Pakistan now. Pakistan with its geopolitical significance and China with its ambitions both friendly states jointly can play an important role in shaping the future of world politics.

#### **4.8 Pakistan's geo-economics landscape:**

For any nation in the world, geo-economic and geo-political domains are two factors on which strategic significance relies and defines the nation's influence at both regional and global levels. Pakistan's geography has been its greatest benefit despite the fact history has been unkind to Pakistan. In the global arena, Pakistan always remains relevant to international politics because of its geo-strategic location which played a significant role. China, the US, and even India which never set Pakistan irrelevant because of its geo-strategic location.

This globalized world and changing dynamics of world politics have led Pakistan to focus on the geo-economics dimensions. Pakistan's strategies and policies in history are dictated by geopolitics, stanching from a geo-strategic position her policies are transfers towards the economy is imperative. Pakistan is not a poor country but exploited by bad governance, western dominance, and regional instability, which has shaken the economic condition of Pakistan. The political crisis in Pakistan deteriorated the Pakistan economy and Pakistan's heavy dependence on aid from IMF has destabilized the economy. For example, according to the State Bank of Pakistan in January 2023, Pakistan's current forex reserves were US\$ 10.19 billion.<sup>92</sup>

Due to instability in the region Pakistan's neighboring states India and Afghanistan also remain a Challenge to progress and development. The domestic political crisis and mass polarization in 2022 by Imran Khan led to a massive opposition movement that has driven the economy more toward hell. Pakistan's economy is now at its worst purely because it fails to provide more than it spends. the 2022 monsoon floods were so catastrophic that had left crop field destruction damaging

<sup>92</sup> SBP. (2023) "State Bank of Pakistan,"

homes and Killing more than 1,700 people. A civil-military relationship has also affected the Pakistan economy.

#### **4.8.1 Pakistan strides toward achieving geo-political and geo-economic success:**

Pakistan is steadily walking toward enduring and lasting peace at domestic, regional, and global levels. For the achievement of domestic peace Pakistan is curtailing terror activities and eliminating terrorism from the roots, raising the question of corruption and bad governess issues for political stability, and ensuring the harmonized relations among provinces and federation. Pakistan trying to improve relations with its coherent neighbor India and Afghanistan for regional stability and peace. Pakistan's interference in Afghanistan in the war on terror has cost a lot so non-interference in internal affairs is the strategy to achieve its strategic depth which is the new geo-strategic approach.

For progress and development in the future national security policy should focus on Intra-regional connectivity and Trade. Increasing plans towards initiative IP gas pipeline, CPEC, CASA-1000, and CARs.<sup>93</sup> All these projects are a way to achieve attraction from world politics and enhance economic activities and trade way with nations. Further to bring prosperity and alluring future investments in sectors like health, education, and care hub are key domains.

Among all the powerful states like China, Iran, the US, and Russia, Pakistan's vision is to maintain a friendly approach towards competitive connectivity. Multilateral alignment is Pakistan's grand geo-economic vision. In 2021, Pakistan's officials and policymakers proclaimed their willingness to keep an eye on the current rivalry that geo-economics will now establish a basis for all policy formulation going forward. Substituting geo-political motivation with geo-economic priorities to be a relevant state actor in the region to clinch mutually favorable policies.<sup>94</sup>

The ongoing world politics today, rely more on the relations based on economic circumstances between two countries. As a core of Pakistan's national and foreign policy, only the

<sup>93</sup> MOFA. (2023). "NOTICE: Pakistan North-South Gas Pipeline to Open New Market for Russia – Ministry of Foreign Affairs,".

<sup>94</sup> Korybko, A. (2022, October 20). "Pakistan's New Geo-economics' Grand Strategy Is Multialignment at Its Fine." *Russian Council. Russian International Affairs Council*.

economy can flourish the role of Pakistan in the global arena. China and Pakistan's friendship is also making a shift in the foreign policy of Pakistan whose agenda will be more inclined toward the economy rather than the geopolitics. In the contemporary era, geopolitical goals can be only achieved by the geo-economy. The world is so interlinked in aspects where politics and economy walk in to hand in hand. CPEC will boost Pakistan's economy with unmatched resources in the future.

## **4.9 Hurdles to Pakistan:**

The competition between two global powers is escalating complications for Pakistan to maintain a balanced approach among them. For strategic stability in the South Asian Region US and China present hazardous liabilities by initiating prospects for conflicts around the disputed frontiers and increasing armed races which may also badly impact Pakistan's security. Power transition theory in this research doesn't predict because of the peaceful rise of China but the US continued effort to dominate Pakistan directly through economic aid and indirectly providing a free hand to India which is a challenge to Pakistan's security in all aspects. Domestically, the terrorist groups, political instability, economic deficit, and Kashmir issues are also major challenges for Pakistan to overcome in the future.

### **4.9.1 Pakistan security threat Factors:**

Through the Durand line Pakistan at the west borders Afghanistan and India at the eastern border. These two states always being a matter of concern to Pakistan's national security and a front factor in the foreign policy of Pakistan. Pakistan and India are two power symmetries in the region and their border has a volatile nature. Territorial disputes, historical animosities, and Kashmir issues with ongoing geopolitical developments are factors that may play a role in shaping the security landscape.

In the growing rivalry between the US and China, strategic Indo-US partnership is becoming Pakistan's security concern.<sup>95</sup> The US and India's recent cooperation in such domains as airspace, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and joint military exercises may destabilize the peace in the

<sup>95</sup> Editorial Team. (2020, February 29). "Indo-US arms deal" *Dawn News*.

region. The US-Indo Pacific strategy was based on maritime collaboration against China but the 2+2 dialogue between Indians and US official elites has rung the alarm in Pakistan.<sup>96</sup>

India's hybrid warfare indulgence in the current decade through Non-kinetic ways is always threatening Pakistan which includes proxy war, yellow journalism propaganda through media, and domestic involvement like the Baluchistan Liberation Army, PTM, are anti-Pakistan agenda led by India.

Afghanistan is a porous border, for Pakistan, it's the Hub of smuggling (weapons, opium) and terror activities. Historically, both direct and indirect consequences faced by Pakistan and its policy against Afghanistan remain unsuccessful in offsetting India's menace. But the withdrawal of US forces after a long war has created a hope that China with the help of Pakistan can play a significant role in peace. The frequency of problems only increased after the Taliban took over in 2021 and the recent violation of the Kurram border by targeting the civilians and consistent refusal to claim as Durand line a border has heightened the security dilemma for Pakistan. The rising activities of Tehrik-e-Taliban in North Waziristan have escalated the terror in Pakistan. Therefore, two mutually conflicting issues India as a revisionist state and Afghanistan challenge the state's authorities, and solutions remain shaky as to how to stave off further crises.

#### **4.9.2 Challenges to Flagship Project CPEC:**

CPEC is an important project of BRI cooperation that connects China to Gwadar and Gilgit with all western and eastern routes for bilateral cooperation. In the geo-strategic game between China and US CPEC also become an important factor. The US contradiction against the project saying it's a debt trap is slowing the sustainable feasibility. Also, US involvement in the Indo-Pacific region is becoming a roadstone for the CPEC project and its trading routes with the aligned countries. By revoking article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir India whereas also invoking insurgencies and enhancing terror activities against Chinese working in Pakistan just to sabotage the project. Further, the frequent tussle between Hans Chinese and Uighur Muslims is a challenge when CPEC connects Gwadar to Xinjiang. If the rivalry goes hand in hand between the US and China it will severely blow Pakistan's economy. The tussle between the two superpowers not only threw a direct

<sup>96</sup> Adnan, A. (2020, November 2). "Pakistan alarmed by U.S.-India information-sharing pact", *Nikkie Asia*.



hurdle at Pakistan but also deteriorated regional stability which as a result affected Pakistan's security.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Policy Recommendations and Conclusions**

This chapter discusses the major findings and recommendations derived from this research. The previous chapter shed light on the key elements regarding to US and China rivalry and the significance of Pakistan for these superpowers. This chapter will discuss the future implications focusing on key areas such as global power dynamics, economic development, and possible security measures for Pakistan.

This study investigated the US and China Rivalry in light of emerging Geopolitical trends where Pakistan is significant to both countries. Neither the US nor China wants to lose it because of its geopolitical significance. The geopolitical importance of Pakistan is enhanced due to the interplay of great powers. China has expanded its presence in the world through resources, economic strategies and policies, peaceful relationships, and global trade. China has heavily invested to attain its ambitious goal of becoming a global economic power which is not able to be attained without Pakistan, 's prominent support to China. For a better future for Pakistan, China's consistent support in all domains i.e. economic (CPEC), political, and military, to Pakistan at global forums, is a clear indicator of the convergence of interests.

China seeks to enhance alignment with Pakistan whereas the US wants to maintain its hegemony. The US always has her involvement in Pakistan's affairs for her interest which has slowed down Pakistan's success and development. Pak-china alliance is a clear manifestation of a better future because uneasy relationship with the US as this study explained and China as a rising global power Pakistan would not be able to sacrifice its proximity and partnership with China in light of this rivalry under the US pressure.

In this research, I have examined and explored the benefits that Pakistan can attain through its geopolitical significance and adopt the policies by shaping its geo-economic domain to global politics in the US-China power competition. This rivalry shifting the global political dynamics where historically Pakistan has maintained its ties with the US. For Pakistan China becoming a global power makes it imperative to think and enhance policies toward China that can benefit in the future, especially economically. Further, CPEC's success can increase trade among the nations in the region and export globally. Pakistan by prioritizing diplomacy and emphasizing economic

integration can strengthen ties with nations and maintain peace and stability at domestic and regional levels. CPEC promises to give an economic advantage to Pakistan and China including regional countries.

This study tried to explain that in the emerging geopolitical competition between the US and China, Pakistan has a critical role to play. In this struggle for global preeminence between the US and China, if Pakistan is forced to choose sides it will be better for the future of Pakistan to opt or tilt towards China. History has proven that US and Pakistan relations remained a roller coaster ride. Therefore, the theoretical framework applied to power transition theory is truly evident in light of this rivalry because the strategies and policies by China have peaceful intentions and if China continues its rise at this pace it will surpass the US and economic integration will lead them both to protect their investment peacefully. With the growing interdependence between China and Pakistan, the structural changes in the region also support the theory of structural realism where structural changes in the region show that aligning with China against India is needed. The US should too understand that Pakistan won't compromise its strategic partnership with China.

## **5.2 Major Findings:**

The rivalry between the US and PRC may escalate in the future because the US would try to maintain its hegemonic power and China is rising peacefully according to the present geopolitical environment. Due to China's ambition of becoming an economic power and the declining hegemony of the US, there will remain a power race between them. The Chinese policy of economic advancement peacefully in the globe will not like to escalate the rivalry but maintaining global peace will be China's priority. Pakistan will play a significant role in balancing the situation and if tension is enhanced it may not compromise on its national interest.

The geopolitical importance of Pakistan for the US lies in its strategic location and major indicators include counterterrorism, Regional stability, trade and energy routes, and nuclear non-proliferation. The nuclear capabilities of Pakistan make it an important player for non-proliferation efforts. US engagement with Pakistan is important for ensuring responsible nuclear practices and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. Pakistan's cooperation with the US in counter-terrorism,

especially in the context of the Afghan war remained crucial. Strengthening relations with Pakistan allows the US to balance its influence in the region due to China's growing power.

The geopolitical significance of Pakistan for a neighboring country China includes its strategic location of Pakistan which is crucial for China's project BRI, infrastructure projects connecting Gwadar port in Pakistan to western China. The strong economic ties developed between China and Pakistan through the CPEC project which is enhancing economic connectivity. By partnering with Pakistan, China expands its influence in the South Asia region, supporting a counterbalance to India and contributing to its broader geopolitical significance. So all of these factors regional influence, strategic location, economic cooperation, security partnership, and diplomatic support contribute to advancing China's interest in the region.

US consistent support to India has brought China and Pakistan close as strategic partners so the regional balance has remained. Pakistan may attain the benefit of the situation and play a middleman role in the rivalry between the US and China. Pakistan's policies and strategies in the future can strengthen the global position of Pakistan

The major findings of this study are a growing rivalry between the superpowers US and China, a Shift in strategic alliances based on the convergence of their interest., Pakistan's increasing geopolitical significance and benefits for Pakistan. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century found that China's strong progress was seen as a challenge by American supremacy. The core strategic interest of the US is to maintain its hegemony even by exploiting the resources or escalating the scenarios that lead to confrontation. While US hegemony is also challenged in post 9/11 after a decade or two of post-cold War which clarifies its leadership role as a failure.

Pakistan at that time supported the US in the global war on terror without any hesitation which became chaos for its interest. Moreover, China also supported the US in GWOT. With a strategy of the US pivot to Asia intensified the competition and also built active alliances with India, Japan, and East Asia to counter China. The strategic Indo-US realignment abandoning Pakistan has proved beneficial to China. The Geostrategic location of Pakistan makes it important in any strategic power play. China came up with its Project BRI and invested heavily in infrastructural and economic developments in almost 100 states. In the region, CPEC is considered a major part of BRI, which enhanced Pakistan's Geo-strategic and Geo-political place. By providing Chinese access to two oceans to fulfill their ambitious project Pakistan become a central place for China.

Pakistan has maintained good relations with both the US and China. By deeply examining the Pak-SINO and Pak-US relations, China always supported and raised its voice for Pakistan while vice versa US always pressurized and manipulated Pakistan by threatening or economic aid pressure which made Pakistan more dependent on the US. Pakistan provides the US a gateway to central Asia and in the fight against terrorism Pakistan played its role as an ally. Pakistan is the only Muslim country with the nuclear power. Both the US and China value the geopolitical significance of Pakistan and that is the reason Pakistan is a matter of concern for them.

This study also found that intensifying competition has influenced many nations to review their security and foreign policy and reshape it according to the changing dynamics of geopolitics according to their national interest. Russia and Pakistan recently enhanced their diplomatic relations and also China and Russia the old rivals are today close allies to counter the US. The countries holding regional importance such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Iran have set their goals and enhanced their policies toward China.

Further, having geopolitical significance the challenges Pakistan is facing in the growing rivalry and which areas Pakistan should focus on to become a developed nation are also addressed in this study. The political instability, civil-military relations, economic deficit, non-governmental organizations (BLA, TTP, PTM), Kashmir issues, and CPEC challenges are the issues hindering the development of Pakistan. To overcome these issues how Pakistan's Geo-economics steps can shape the political structures in this globalized era is also found in this study. Pakistan can locus itself as a powerful state in the global economic landscape, and tight its position for a better future in light of this rivalry between the US and China.

### **5.3 Recommendations:**

Pakistan should make an independent and moderate foreign policy that guides full cooperation and collaboration with the regional countries, with emphasis on its relations with both the US and China as per national interests. Pakistan needs to strengthen its economy and infrastructure for the protection of its interests linked with CPEC. Maintaining a relationship with the US and countering India at the same time will be a challenge so Pakistan needs to convince them to play a fair role in

the stability and peace of the region. Through maintaining friendly relations with all states, Pakistan should increase its trade, which is a way to uplift Pakistan and flourish in the global system.

In the backdrop of the US tilt toward India, Pakistan policymakers should play a significant role in excessive alignment with China in terms of security matters to avoid the threat factor by the US and India. Also, Pakistan needs to make a connectivity hub in the region by aligning Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

The US and China both states need to enhance their export and import trade with each other to avoid conflict and the aim should be on strategic reassurance for the elimination of misunderstandings the statesmen's role should be to forge a strong relationship and less competitiveness for global peace. The US and China need to avoid a zero-sum power game and should focus on how to coexist and fulfill each other's interests in the long run.

Chinese policymakers need to prioritize open diplomacy and communication to resolve misunderstandings. China's role as a global power needs commitment and contribution to global institutions and structures where evolving geopolitical dynamics are addressed between the US and China.

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