



## Navigating Geopolitical Currents: US Strategies and Alliances in Containing China's Rise in the Indo-Pacific Region

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### Abstract

This research article explores the intricate web of strategies and alliances developed by the United States and its regional partners to counter the multifaceted challenges posed by China's ascension as a global power, with a particular focus on its expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Drawing on historical parallels with Cold War containment policies, we delve into contemporary initiatives and alliances shaping the current geopolitical landscape. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), exemplifying regional cooperation, addresses maritime security, cyber security, and broader economic and health concerns. "The Big Deal" between the United States and the Philippines underscores the imperative of safeguarding regional stability in the face of growing Chinese military activities. Parallel endeavors, including Super Garuda Shield joint military exercises and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), serve as platforms for military coordination and security cooperation. The Blue Dot Network (BDN) and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) offer alternative paths to infrastructure development and financial assistance, countering China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Build Back Better World (B3W) presents a collaborative approach to development, while the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) aims to address infrastructure needs in Central Europe, countering China's regional influence. AUKUS, a trilateral agreement, reflects growing concerns over China's Indo-Pacific activities. This article offers a comprehensive overview of these initiatives, highlighting their evolving dynamics in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape and their implications for the Indo-Pacific region.

**Keywords:** USA containment, Geopolitical currents, rise of China

### 1. Background

The contemporary world has gone through different regimes where a number of actors played key roles in shaping the destiny and future of the world. In the historical times, there was a different political system and all of the measures were taken accordingly. The political and economic power was divided among different competing forces. All of these powers had their strong deterrent influence over the others. This regime was known as multi-polar. There were powers during that era too, motivated to gain more politico-economic power than their counterparts were. In this regard, the most recent example can be noted of the great game of Central Asia where Russia and Britain made efforts to gain the supremacy of this region (Yapp, 2001). Later, after the end of World War II, the same war was started between USSR and US when both of these rose as two global powers. Both of them made alliances with different countries in order to portray their ideologies. This mutual war of USSR and US continued until 1991 when US rose as single superpower of the world.

The containment of China is a nuanced and dynamic geopolitical strategy rooted in historical precedent and emerging global realities. It draws parallels with the Cold War era containment policy directed against the Soviet Union but is shaped by distinct factors and contemporary challenges.

The post-World War II period witnessed the United States adopting an offensive strategy to counter the spread of communism. The U.S. formed critical political, economic, and military alliances such as NATO and the Marshall Plan, primarily targeting Europe but later expanding to encompass regions like Asia and the Middle East through SEATO and CENTO. These alliances played a pivotal role in containing communism, eventually contributing to the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Kennedy, 1987).

In the present era, China's rapid ascent as a global power has compelled a reevaluation of containment strategies. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an ambitious project aimed at connecting over 140 countries through extensive infrastructure development and trade networks, has raised concerns among U.S. policymakers. The BRI is perceived as a vehicle for China to extend its geopolitical influence and economic dominance globally (Lanteigne, 2018).

In response, the United States has adopted a multifaceted approach to contain China's influence and maintain its own global leadership. This approach includes initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), an alliance comprising the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia, aimed at preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region (Panda, 2020). Additionally, the Three Seas Initiative, Build Back Better World (B3W), and the AUKUS security partnership have been established to counterbalance China's growing influence (Mackenzie, 2021).

However, the U.S.-China relationship is characterized by unique dynamics. Unlike the Cold War, where the ideological chasm between the United States and the Soviet Union was stark, the current competition between the U.S. and China encompasses economic interdependence, technological rivalry, and leadership aspirations on the global stage. Both countries project themselves as champions of global development, but their visions and strategies differ significantly (Jisi, 2014).

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This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration into the containment of China, highlighting its historical roots, contemporary challenges, and the evolving strategies employed in the complex power struggle between the United States and China. It underscores the need for a nuanced and adaptive approach in managing this critical aspect of international relations.

## **2. US-led Major Alliances for Chinese Containment**

The making of alliances is not the recent US strategy to halt the power and progress of its opponents as the cold war era witnessed that US made so many alliances in the different regions to deter the Soviet Union's expansionism. By the same way, US also initiated different alliances for the containment of its counterpart China. Some of the important US-led military and economic alliances are as follow, which aim to tackle the Chinese-led BRI.

After making alliances in the American and European continents, US focused on the other parts of the world. In these areas too, the economic and military strategies were taken on the board. The special focus of attention was given to the Asian region as both China and Soviet Union had more influence over the Asian countries. In doing so Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was formed in 1954. SEATO was established under the leadership of US to contain the Soviet Union's influence over the region. It encompassed the members from North America, Asia and Australia including UK, Pakistan, New Zealand and Philippine. The US grants were given to the developing members to strive for the containment of communism. Later on, Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) was established in 1955, which included other Muslim countries i.e. Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Both of these organizations were incorporated to contain the communist expansion. Although these organizations could not flourish like NATO but a pressure on Soviet Union was built for a short period.

## **3. US perspective over BRI**

Every state has right to establish itself politically and economically in the modern international system. The game of power changes over the period as the global power of the day may be ordinary state in the future. All of the states try to make progress in the same way. The competitors give tough time in this process as US termed Chinese led BRI a threat to the sovereignty of the developing nations (Karni 2018). As in some of the cases, BRI is portrayed in negative way. According to the anti-Chinese block, it is a plan to control the different regions of the world under the authoritarian model while superseding the international norms and rules (Gertz 2018).

Its allies and USA believe that under the umbrella of different six corridors of BRI, China is going to impose its "Marshall Plan". Through this Marshall plan, China desires to dominate over the Eurasian continent (Thorne & Spevack 2018). China also desires to introduce new world order according to its requirements in order to promote Chinese version of globalization. In the same way, China is also seeking to establish "Digital Authoritarianism" through the "Digital Silk Road" (Patrick 2018).

### **3.1. Quad**

Quad officially Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is a group effort of four countries including US, Australia, Japan and India. The prime objective of this group is to coordinate in the maritime security, cyber security, economic and health issues. This is another US effort in the Indo-Pacific region to counter the Chinese growing expansion in the region (Smith, 2021). All of the member states have reservations regarding the growing influence of China and wish to work together in the above-mentioned fields. The maritime security concern is prominent for US mainly because it is also an important shipment route of US as in 2019 only the US trade of \$1.9 trillion passed through this region. Recently, the influence of China has grown marvelously in this region, which is threat to US and other member states' maritime security. This is the actual reason, which bound the above-mentioned states in Quad so that collective effort may be made for Chinese containment (Smith, 2021).

### **3.2. Big Deal between US and Philippine**

Philippine is a country in the Pacific region an important ally of US. Philippine like other the pacific countries is also against the growing economic and political dominance of China in this region. Although both of these countries are already engaged into different bilateral military and economic agreements but recently they again tied in another mutual, military agreement named as "The Big Deal". Under this deal, Philippine agreed to grant access to US forces to the four military camps. It does not mean that US will not have permanent deployment of forces rather it is for temporary basis whose aim is to counter the increasing military influence over the region of South China Sea (Gomez & Knickmeyer, 2023). The roots of the Big Deal can be traced back to Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951 under which both of the above-mentioned countries agreed to defend each other in any threat. In the wave of current Chinese expansion, Philippine urged US to help to defend it. The aim is to counter Chinese aggressive actions against Taiwan and South China Sea (Mansoor & Shah, 2023).

### **3.3. Super Garuda Shield**

Super Garuda Shield is a joint military exercise plan among the different states of Pacific region. The joint military exercise includes all those nations, which have fears regarding the Chinese dominance in this region. It was the first time that Japan, Australia and Singapore first time participated in this joint military exercise forum during

August 2022. It is also apparent that this joint military exercises is going to build pressure on China regarding its growing influence across this region (Nugroho & Nemoto, 2022).

### **3.4. US Indo-Pacific Command**

USINDOPACOM is a US led forum to protect and defend its allies through the different US government agencies. It helps the allies to provide the security to people and their interests. Under US Indo-Pacific Command, the US is intended to provide the military help in the Indo-Pacific region especially in promoting security cooperation, peaceful development and deterring aggression especially in the perspective of Chinese growing deterrence influence in this region. This integration is based on presence and partnership in the military cooperation (Pelham, 2022).

### **3.5. Blue Dot Network (BDN)**

Blue Dot Network (BDN) is a plan initiated primarily by three countries including US, Japan and Australia. The fundamental purpose of BDN was to encourage the joint investments of the public-private sectors for infrastructural developments. Its purpose is to enhance the employment opportunities, strengthening the economy and inter-connectivity. Currently, BDN has been included in the US-led B3W strategic plan to compete the Chinese-initiated BRI. The US and its allies consider that BRI is China's plan to achieve certain geopolitical interests in the different regions. The developing countries are being oppressed under the Chinese huge debts (Arha, 2021). To a neutral point of view, BDN is bid to counter the Chinese BRI to control the Chinese expansionism.

### **3.6. US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)**

US International Development Finance Corporation is a governmental finance institution of USA, which was established in 2019. Its objective is to provide financial assistance to the middle and lower economies of the world (Lo, 2020). The major areas under DFC include energy, healthcare, technology, infrastructure and to help in enhancing the employment opportunities in the wake of growing population. This US institution is also aimed to counter the Chinese BRI economic and developmental plans mainly in the Eurasian region. Although US made many commitments in the wake of financial assistance to counter the Chinese plan but unfortunately US is not successful in doing so (Roberts & Schaefer, 2021).

### **3.7. Build Back Better World (B3W)**

B3W is the US-led initiative with the assistance and cooperation of the G-7 countries. It was launched on June 12, 2021. Once again B3W's main aim is to provide the alternate way of the Chinese BRI so that the increasing influence of China may be tackled in the different continents especially in the Eurasia (Widakuswara, 2021). Like BRI, the aim of B3W is also to provide assistance to the middle and lower economic countries to foster infrastructure and human development. Comparatively, B3W is the most recent initiative whose ways of investment are unknown. It is also unpredictable to assure the validity of this initiative when it is compared to BRI, which is actually working since the middle of the last decade. Another aim of B3W is to motivate the private sector of the member states for investment, which requires the commitment of all members (Widakuswara, 2021).

### **3.8. Three Seas Initiative (3SI)**

Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is an initiative of the central European states to strive for their interlinked connections launched in 2015. It includes twelve participating member countries i.e. Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The basic idea is perceived that during the cold war era, the eastern and central states of Europe received plenty of aids from US and Soviet Union but the central part was ignored. Now mainly the central European states established this forum to help one another in the energy, transportation, and digital infrastructure developments. The US has special concern about 3SI to counter the Chinese expansion in this region. US also pledged to provide aid to the member countries and president Trump attended its summit (Garding & Derek, 2021).

### **3.9. AUKUS**

AUKUS is a trilateral agreement among UK, US and Australia. It was launched on 15 September 2021 with special concern to assist Australia for the containment of China in the Indo-Pacific region. Under AUKUS, both UK and USA committed to provide nuclear submarine to Australia. According to reports, the member countries of AUKUS agreed to cooperate each other in information technology, sharing of information, artificial intelligence, defense related industries, supply of chains and cruise missiles. This is perhaps a single agreement which created tension for China because China criticized this trilateral agreement (Gering, 2021).

## **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, these initiatives and alliances demonstrate the complex and evolving nature of global power dynamics, with China's rise at the forefront. The United States and its partners are actively pursuing strategies to safeguard their interests and counter China's expansion in the Indo-Pacific region. While the success and impact of these efforts remain subject to ongoing developments and challenges, they represent a significant aspect of contemporary geopolitics in this crucial region.

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