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The role of Internal Balancing in response to China's military rise in the Asia-Pacific

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Abstract: In Asia, alongside the increased power and threat of China as a rising power, the era of external balancing/alliance building and relying on the US is on the decline, and it is expected that states take care of their own security needs. Consequently, more states should rely on their internal and military capacities to balance against potential threats. A vast amount of realist literature has employed various theories in predicting state behaviour against powerful rivals and threats. Most such studies conclude with alliance building as their primary prescription and don't pay much attention to internal balancing. Yet, with the points illustrated previously, this study believes external balancing alone is not enough. With the US leaving, there will be a security vacuum and countries need to take care of themselves.

In a more recent iteration of neo-classical realism, the Dynamic Balancing model by Kai He and one of its hypotheses suggests that in a Uni-polar world, the current prevailing structure of the world we live in, if threats come from non-hegemonic states, the threatened states could seek help or ally with the hegemon. Still, such relations with the hegemon would be closer to bandwagoning rather than alliance building. Even if forged, this alliance would not last. Therefore, in a unipolar system, the primary strategy of non-hegemon states, the cases being studied here, would be internal balancing.

This study, by employing qualitative document analysis resources, wants to investigate and test this hypothesis further by looking at middle powers, as significant players and military spenders in the region and countries that enjoy deep security and economic relations with the US, and investigate how they have approached internal balancing, specifically its military side to balance against China, and if the hypothesis suggested in this model is correct. The contribution of this study would be its attempt to study and test the Dynamic Balancing model and see how each case has performed in relation to the hypothesis.

Key Words: Dynamic Balancing, Internal Balancing, South Korea, Australia, India, Rise of China

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Ever since Deng Xiaoping came to power in 1978, China has grown with great width and depth and has elevated its position in the international system. Perhaps the most significant leap happened with the economy, increasing in size from US\$202 billion in 1980¹ to US\$18 trillion in 2021², making China the world's second economy in terms of overall GDP, which also translated into millions being lifted out of poverty³.

Yet, this growth has not just been limited to the economy and has also been witnessed in China's military, soft power⁴, and increased influence and importance in the international realm and its surrounding region. With this rise and increase of significance and power has come worries in China's immediate neighbourhood about the road ahead and how to face this stronger than before neighbour. What adds to this worry is that China has extensive border disputes at sea and land and has fought numerous border conflicts since 1949 with countries such as India, The

¹ Lo, D., & Li, G. (2011). China's economic growth, 1978-2007: structural-institutional changes and efficiency attributes. *Journal of Post Keynesian Economics*, 34(1), 59–84. <https://doi.org/10.2753/pke0160-3477340103>

² Tang, F., & Wang, O. (2022, January 18). China GDP growth slows as population crisis, Covid-19 cloud economic outlook. *South China Morning Post*. <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3163720/china-gdp-growth-2021-beats-expectations-narrowing-gap-us>

³ Lugo, M. A., Raiser, M., & Yemtsov, R. (2021, September 24). What's next for poverty reduction policies in China? *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/09/24/whats-next-for-poverty-reduction-policies-in-china/>

⁴ Wong, J. (2016, March 25). China's Rising Economic Soft Power. *Asia Dialogue*; University of Nottingham Asia Research Institute. <https://theasiadialogue.com/2016/03/25/chinas-rising-economic-soft-power/>

Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Territorial disputes have been a significant source of armed conflict between states throughout history⁵, and it has also been more prevalent in Asia throughout history⁶.

The list is quite extensive, and China has always seemed to keep pushing in all directions to claim more land, or according to Chinese officials, reclaim previously lost territory. From about 2009 and 2010⁷, China has become more aggressive and possessive, publishing self-claimed maps and pushing its claims by force and its fleet. Although there have also been cases where China has willingly agreed to drop its claims⁸, it is very active in other areas with historical claims, such as the South China Sea and its numerous shoals and islands, Taiwan and some other regions of the East China Sea.

Moving away from China for a moment, in the Asia-Pacific region, some countries are members of the US Hub and Spoke system and rely on American military power and presence and their alliance with it as their primary security provider, like NATO and its arrangements in Europe, alongside their indigenous security and armed forces. Countries such as South Korea, Japan and Australia are examples of countries with such levels of relations.

⁵ Hongyi, N. (2009). Explaining Chinese Solutions to Territorial Disputes with Neighbour States. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2(4), 487–523. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48615735>

⁶ Pekkanen, S. M., Ravenhill, J., & Foot, R. (Eds.). (2014). *Oxford handbook of the international relations of Asia* (pp. 110–124). Oxford University Press.

⁷ Bloomfield, A. (2015). To balance or to bandwagon? Adjusting to China's rise during Australia's Rudd–Gillard era. *The Pacific Review*, 29(2), 259–282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2015.1013497>

⁸ Ibid 5

The question for such states is that with the new trends of isolationism and “America first”⁹ slogans chanted by President Trump and the perceived relative decline of American power¹⁰¹¹ and dubious desire to the continuation of the presence of its security forces in the Asia-Pacific despite previous attempts at creating a pivot/rebalancing policy¹², should these countries change their strategy and not rely so much on US military might as an external balancing factor and try to improve their military capabilities and balance internally against threats?

This study aims to look at and see if such a pattern of behaviour is happening.

My central thesis argument is that when another powerful actor threatens a lesser state, it might use a third party as an external balancer. Still, because such relations are always created on trust and perceptions, they might fall through; therefore, using internal means and building up their military power is a more full-proof way to gain some advantage vis-a-vis the threatening state. Kai He’s dynamic balancing theory has theorised such a scenario and will be my main theoretical framework to guide this study¹³.

⁹ Stoffer, H. (2016, November 14). What Trump’s “America First” Policy Could Mean for the World. Time. <http://time.com/4569845/donald-trump-america-first/>.

¹⁰ Jr, J. S. N. (2018, February 6). Donald Trump and the Decline of US Soft Power | by Joseph S. Nye, Jr. Project Syndicate. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/trump-american-soft-power-decline-by-joseph-s--nye-2018-02>

¹¹ Mishra, V. (2016). US Power and Influence in the Asia-Pacific Region: The Decline of “Alliance Mutuality.” *Strategic Analysis*, 40(3), 159–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2016.1156251>

¹² Nguyen, H. (2017). Donald J. Trump and Asia: From Campaign to Government. *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 44(4), 125–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00927678.2017.1387733>

¹³ He, K. (2009). Dynamic Balancing: China’s balancing strategies towards the United States, 1949–2005. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 18(58), 113–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560802431701>

Speaking of unreliable relations, with Trump's desire to undo all of President Obama's legacy, American Pivot to Asia, a key policy in giving Asia-Pacific allies assurance about the US seriousness about the region, was on the chopping block and got replaced by a very vague 'Indo-Pacific' approach with little substance, a strategy which at times clashes with the President's rhetoric¹⁴ and alienated allies¹⁵. It looks like the focus would be going back to the Middle East and focusing on Iran, as there are countries there who are willing to pay for an American presence in the Middle East and draw attention away from the Asia-Pacific.

Another factor brought up by President Trump in numerous tweets has been the fact, according to Trump at least, that US allies have not been spending enough on their military and the US single-handedly paying to provide security for its allies, 72 per cent in the case of NATO¹⁶, and called for them to change the situation. Asking to pay more for American security¹⁷, or they will be "dealt with"¹⁸. One author pointed out, 'the cheap ride is over, and the American cavalry

¹⁴ Harding, B. (2019). THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC APPROACH. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 61–68. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26939687>

¹⁵ Ford, L. W. (2020, May 5). *The Trump administration and the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."* Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-trump-administration-and-the-free-and-open-indo-pacific/>

¹⁶ Schwartz, I. (2017, December 9). Full Video: Trump Holds "Make America Great Again" Rally In Pensacola. Real Clear Politics. https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2017/12/09/full_video_trump_holds_make_america_great_again_rally_in_pensacola.html

¹⁷ Freeman, J. (2018, September 6). Opinion | Trump Eyes a Japan Trade Fight. *Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-eyes-a-japan-trade-fight-1536260141>

¹⁸ Gould, J. (2018, May 17). *Trump: NATO allies who miss spending defense targets will be "dealt with."* Defense News. <https://www.defensenews.com/global/the-americas/2018/05/17/trump-nato-allies-who-miss-spending-targets-will-be-dealt-with>

won't be riding to their rescue'¹⁹ if trouble arises. So, factors such as the budget sequestrations and cuts that affected the US military during the Obama years and isolationism during Trump and his questioning of the usefulness of American alliance networks could be the US decline many had talked about, and this could ultimately lead to the US being an unreliable security provider. The underlying theme is, can the US still be seen as the security guarantor in East Asia, and is the San Francisco system falling apart, to be replaced by what. Thus, insecurity for US allies is growing, whether real or perceived.

Thinkers employing a liberalist perspective were quite optimistic about US-China relations and believe China is getting more cooperative and responsible due to being socialised and trading with the west, assuming that as China's involvement with the international system and regional organisations in the Asia-Pacific gets deeper and ties increasing, its behaviour will be moderated by international norms and institutions under the theory of liberal internationalism and economic interdependence theory²⁰; therefore, China will become more cooperative, from a hypothetical cost/benefit view, with the dominant international system formed by the US²¹²² and the likelihood of conflict lessened.

¹⁹ Bandow, D. (2015, September 4). *Newsflash: The U.S.-South Korea Military Alliance Isn't Working*. The National Interest. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/newsflash-the-us-south-korea-military-alliance-isnt-working-13772?page=2>

²⁰ Cooper, R. N. (1972). Economic Interdependence and Foreign Policy in the Seventies. *World Politics*, 24(2), 159–181. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009735>

²¹ James, P. (2014). *Globalization and politics. 1, Global political and legal governance* (pp. 24–27). Sage.

²² Keohane, R. O. & Nye, J.S. (2012). *Power and Interdependence*. Boston: Longman,

What is economic interdependence? Richard Cooper asserted that “economic interdependence normally refers to the dollar value of economic transactions among regions or countries, either in absolute terms, or relative to their total transactions”²³ and according to theorists who believe in this phenomenon, once it has been established and built, states would not want to ruin this by conflict, or in Kenneth Waltz word, not a liberalist, it’s an “a trading link which is costly to break”²⁴.

As Ikenberry, a prominent political theorist and professor at Stanford University, puts it “the United States can make the liberal order so expansive and institutionalised that China will have no option but to join and operate within it”²⁵, and China would benefit as well. There is a strong point and argument at its time, but the evidence is mounting that such is not the case now.

Observing China’s growing military power and its assertive foreign policy acts, this research doesn’t agree with the liberalist perspectives on socialising China into the system, and the peace following it is happening and aligns more with realist theories that point out survival is a state’s end goal and relative power could be one of the ways to preserve their existence²⁶ and not wishful thinking about the positive repercussions of the liberal order on China. However, there

²³ Baldwin, D. A. (1980). Interdependence and power: a conceptual analysis. *International Organization*, 34(4), 471–506. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300018828>

²⁴ Copeland, D.C. (1996), “Economic interdependence and war: a theory of trade expectations”, *International Security*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 5-4

²⁵ G John Ikenberry. (2011). *Liberal Leviathan : the origins, crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (pp. 347–349). Princeton University Press.

²⁶ Baylis, J., Smith, S., & Owens, P. (2020). *The Globalization of World Politics : an Introduction to International Relations* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.

are bodies of research that have established in specific cases that such relations could lead to less conflict²⁷. This can mean one of two things. Either the original promise of socialising China within a liberal order was flawed, or China is reacting to the perceived erosion of the liberal order²⁸.

This research thinks Zakaria²⁹, a prominent realist, is correct when he outlines that, as states become wealthier, they would use the extra resources to build large armies and entangle themselves in issues beyond their borders and seek influence on a global international scale. This is what we observed about China and some Southeast Asian countries before the 1997-8 Asian economic crash³⁰. In both cases, economic expansion led to increases in military spending. In the case of Beijing, worries about the protection of assets abroad and conflicts with other states are also present.

This isn't an issue that has only started to show itself now; Aaron Friedberg, in his 1993 paper titled "Ripe for Rivalry", wrote ", While civil wars and ethnic strife will continue for some time to smoulder along Europe's peripheries, in the long run, it is Asia that seems far more likely to

²⁷ Tanious, M. E. (2019). The impact of economic interdependence on the probability of conflict between states. *Review of Economics and Political Science*, 4(1), 38–53. <https://doi.org/10.1108/rep-10-2018-010>

²⁸ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2019). Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order. *International Security*, 43(4), 7–50.

²⁹ Zakaria, F. (1999). *From wealth to power : the unusual origins of America's world role* (p. 3). Princeton Univ. Press.

³⁰ Zhao, S., & Qi, X. (2016). Hedging and Geostrategic Balance of East Asian Countries toward China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 25(100), 485–499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1132684>

be the cockpit of great power conflict"³¹ and whilst there has been conflict in other theatres, the economic importance of Asia has been growing, and old rivalries have made a situation that conflict could arise and prove Friedberg right.

1.1 The polarity of the system and its effect

One issue we have to settle is the system's polarity at this point in time, as it's a deciding factor in realism canon for different issues in the world³² and how a change in this element can affect the system and outcomes. This study believes we are still living in a unipolar system. However, there are emerging counterarguments, including bipolarity and the concept of a 'G-zero', which believes there is a growing vacuum in global governance³³ caused by the lack of a defined 'pole', where the US is still the only Pole and superpower in the system. However, a pole challenged for its position and a bi-polar or multi-polar order might not be too far away.

According to statistics published by the International Institute of Strategic Studies³⁴, the United States is still the biggest spender on its military by investing around US\$715 billion every year on it. This amount is roughly equal to the military budget of the following ten countries on the

³¹ Friedberg, A. L. (1993). Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia. *International Security*, 18(3), 5. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539204>

³² Goedele De Keersmaecker. (2018). *POLARITY, BALANCE OF POWER AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY : post-cold war and the 19th ... century compared*. (p. 14). Palgrave macmillan.

³³ Bremmer, I., & Roubini, N. (2011, February 21). *A G-Zero World*. www.foreignaffairs.com. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2011-01-31/g-zero-world>

³⁴ Chapter Three: North America. (2022). *The Military Balance*, 122(1), 26–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2022.2022928>

list combined. With this spending level, technological advancement and edge have come that is still not matched in many sectors by other contenders, like China. The same amount of money has enabled the US to have a global military presence, even go beyond earth and establish a space command, preserve vast alliance networks, and have immense power projection abilities that are unrivalled and experience newer contenders like China lack.

On the economic side, the US economy is still the largest and most valuable economy globally by around \$22.8 trillion in annual GDP, whilst the Chinese stand at \$18 trillion in 2022³⁵, although with a lower per capita income compared to the west. The US is still the economic Makkah of the world where all governmental and non-governmental actors would like to be present in and have a share from its market. The dominant currency used in trade and commerce is the American dollar.

So, by having a brief look at these two factors, one can still spot the superpower capabilities of the US and how none has been able to match them in absolute terms until this date, and this research assumes this status to undertake its testing.

1.2 What theory to select?

When it comes to selecting theories to explain reactions to Chinese political and military growth, realism offers many different options and sub-schools, including offensive, defensive, structural,

³⁵ Tang, F., & Wang, O. (2022, January 18). *China GDP growth slows as population crisis, Covid-19 cloud economic outlook*. South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3163720/china-gdp-growth-2021-beats-expectations-narrowing-gap-us>

or like Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat, Randall Schweller's Balance of Interest Theory³⁶, Ken Organski's Power Transition Theory³⁷, Kenneth Waltz's Balance of Power Theory or Mearsheimer's Theory of great power politics. Still, they all have their shortcomings which makes them unusable or insufficient for this study.

Walt, in Balance of Threat, whilst offering a distinction between the notions of Power and Threat, completely ignores internal balancing as a grand strategy choice and only talks about external balancing and alliance building³⁸.

Organski's Power Transition and Mearsheimer's great power politics theory specifically discuss and are biased towards Great Powers, not middle powers like the cases we are interested in. Middle power's aim is security, not predatory power like the great ones talked about and therefore would also be unsuitable³⁹. Schweller⁴¹, while denying what others like Walt and Waltz have said before about states being *Status Quo*, believes there are, in fact revisionist states out in the world and talks about Zoology of states in Bandwagoning, another form of alliance-building but with the threatening state. One factor shared amongst all the theories above is that they are all state-centric and do not reflect on sub-state actors.

³⁶ Schweller, R. L. (1997). New Realist Research on Alliances: Refining, Not Refuting, Walt's Balancing Proposition. *American Political Science Review*, 91(4), 927–930. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952176>

³⁷ Organski, K. (1968). *World politics : 2d ed.* A.A. Knopf.

³⁸ Walt, S. M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances* (pp. 5–25). Cornell University Press.

³⁹ Organski, K. (1968). *World politics : 2d ed.* A.A. Knopf.

⁴⁰ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of Great Power politics.* Norton.

⁴¹ Schweller, R. L. (1994). Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In. *International Security*, 19(1), 72–107. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539149>

In his work studying China's balancing strategies towards the US from 1949 to 2005, Kai He⁴², a Professor of International Relations, proposes a new model called Dynamic Balancing, based on Neo-Classical Realist for the study of balancing behaviour in countries and hypothesises different scenarios that might occur under different polarities of the system. Many researchers haven't employed this theory therefore a particular gap exists when it comes to studying or falsifying it. As Sørensen, another Neo-classical realist points out, If China continues with its growth in power, resources and influence, the United States' uncontested position at the top of the international system will be challenged, thus altering the established uni-polarity system⁴³, but as already illustrated, this research believes that we are still living in a unipolar world. One of He's hypothesis regarding the situation in uni-polarity states that:

“Under unipolarity, if threats come from non-hegemonic states, the threatened states could seek help from the hegemon, but such relations with the hegemon will be closer to bandwagoning rather than alliance-balancing. ... even if they could forge an ‘alliance’ with the hegemon to cope with their external threats, they would also eventually feel uncomfortable and insecure about the imbalanced relationship with the hegemon. Therefore, under a unipolar system, the primary balancing strategy of non-hegemon states will be internal balancing.”

But what is internal balancing? Balancing, as Schweller, a defensive realist, is a behaviour driven by the desire to avoid losses. Its final goal is self-preservation and the protection of

⁴² He, K. (2009). Dynamic Balancing: China's balancing strategies towards the United States, 1949–2005. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 18(58), 113–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560802431701>

⁴³ Sørensen, C. T. N. (2013). Security Multilateralism in Northeast Asia: A Lost Game or the Only Way to Stability? *Journal of China and International Relations*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.5278/ojs.jcir.v1i1.214>

values⁴⁴⁴⁵ or what realist theorists usually call self-help nature under anarchy. It could also be translated as a state's strategy to change the dynamics of power, its relative strength compared to a rival, to its advantage to pursue security in an anarchic world⁴⁶. A more classical definition by Morgenthau and Thompson defines it as "the attempt on the part of one nation to counteract the power of another by, increasing its strength to a point where it is at least equal, if not superior, to the other nations' strength"⁴⁷ or at the very least, makes the cost of aggressive behaviour too high. There are many different variations of balancing, and it's not limited to just internal or external. It can also be negative, positive or even asymmetrical⁴⁸ and could also be a successful or failed strategy.

Its internal variant means strategies used to increase military power and capability, conduct military mobilisation, develop clever strategies, and increase economic capability and growth to empower the country to stand against, or deter, a source of threat and protect its security. One factor that this study would consider differentiating between increasing military power as a source of balancing and a routine military modernisation would be to look at the discussion around specific projects and acquisitions.

⁴⁴ Schweller, R. L. (1994). Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In. *International Security*, 19(1), 72–107. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539149>

⁴⁵ He, Kai. "Dynamic Balancing

⁴⁶ He, K. (2012). Undermining Adversaries: Unipolarity, Threat Perception, and Negative Balancing Strategies after the Cold War. *Security Studies*, 21(2), 154–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2012.679201>

⁴⁷ Morgenthau, H. J., & Thompson, K. W. (1982). *Principles & problems of international politics : selected readings* (pp. 102–104). University Press Of America.

⁴⁸ Paul, T.V. (2004) "The enduring Axiom of Balance of Power Theory" in *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, Edited by T.V. Paul, James J, Wirtz, and Michael Fotmann. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

For example, India's search for Ballistic Missiles and underwater nuclear deterrents and increase of submarine power has been identified by different sources as a hard-balancing response to China's rise⁴⁹ in general and as a deterrent against its increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean region and rise in underwater capabilities⁵⁰. So, one cannot disqualify this plan and strategy as a routine modernisation of forces. Levy and Thompson have talked about this difficulty differentiating between regular military upgrades and Internal Balancing⁵¹.

Whilst He announces in his work that Dynamic Balancing, the model he proposes, is a road that could show the path and decision that states *may* follow⁵², he does not say it is always correct, stating that his framework shows "general tendency or grand strategy of a state's behaviour in different systems" and does not foretell detailed foreign policy of states at certain times.

This study aims to use case studies that match the details outlined in He's hypothesis and further test his theory, as he does not do this in his original work. Therefore a few cases have been selected that are not hegemons and are *de facto* medium powers and have high levels of military and economic cooperation with the United States and are alarmed at China's rise in military, economic, persuasive and relative power and assertiveness, and therefore feel threatened in their unique ways.

⁴⁹ Tellis, A. J. (2001). *India's emerging nuclear posture : between recessed deterrent and ready arsenal* (pp. 20–34). Rand.

⁵⁰ Wueger, D. (2016). India's Nuclear-Armed Submarines: Deterrence or Danger? *The Washington Quarterly*, 39(3), 77–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2016.1232636>

⁵¹ Levy, J. S., & Thompson, W. R. (2005). Hegemonic Threats and Great-Power Balancing in Europe, 1495-1999. *Security Studies*, 14(1), 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410591001465>

⁵² Kai He, *Dynamic Balancing*

China's role here would be the non-hegemonic state that is the source of threat. Therefore, the study is trying to replicate and build on what the hypothesis puts forward to build on what the theory proposes by examining different cases to identify unease about their security relationship with the US.

The cases, consisting of South Korea, Australia, and Japan, are all treaty allies of the United States. Based on the theory's prediction, out of concerns about US commitment and Chinese power, these states should be moving away from their relationship with the US and towards internal balancing as their primary strategy. There is also India included, a close partner of the US, but not a treaty ally, but also a state with its nuclear deterrent, which would help further evaluate and study the model and see if an independent nuclear deterrent could change the results.

Moving away from the United States here does not necessarily mean abandoning security relations with the US. Still, it could mean a broader diversification and desire to expand different capabilities, most important to this study, their military power.

The research employed case study and qualitative document analysis on primary and secondary sources to examine if the cases consider China a military threat and then their military expenditure and other policy documents to see if there is a trace of moving away from the alliance with the US, and using internal military capabilities to balance against China. As Zakaria points out, with the competition in an anarchical system, states will balance against a threatening and rising great power⁵³.

⁵³ Zakaria, F. (1992). Is Realism Finished? *The National Interest*, 30, 21–32.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/42896823>

Whilst some scholars such as William Wohlforth and Stephen Brooks claim that hard balancing has been outdated under American primacy because of “the stability of unipolarity⁵⁴⁵⁵, the question is whether with the rise of China and the threat it possesses to American Hegemonic rule and the unipolar system, alongside a new America under Trump which would not want to be the security provider for the world, hard balancing and the use of military power as a balancing tool should be revived again, as He theorises. Also, other research has shown that hard internal balancing still happens; for instance Steff and Khoo found it in the case of the Russian response to the United States Ballistic Missile Defense development and deployment during the Bush presidency⁵⁶ and classified the response from Russia as hard internal balancing.

Building up one military force is not such a far-fetched idea either. For example, Japan, a country with a Pacifist constitution since the end of the Second World War, is already revising its doctrine and constitution because of “Japanese perceptions of aggressive Chinese behaviour in the maritime domain and concerns relating to the changing distribution of capabilities in China’s favour”⁵⁷, and moving from its previous strategy of hedging⁵⁸, to explicit internal

⁵⁴ Brooks, S. G., & Wohlforth, W. C. (2002). American Primacy in Perspective. *Foreign Affairs*, 81(4), 20. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20033237>

⁵⁵ Wohlforth, W. C. (1999). The Stability of a Unipolar World. *International Security*, 24(1), 5–41. <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228899560031>

⁵⁶ Steff, R., & Khoo, N. (2014). Hard Balancing in the Age of American Unipolarity: The Russian Response to US Ballistic Missile Defense during the Bush Administration (2001–2008). *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 37(2), 222–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2013.866556>

⁵⁷ Grønning, B. E. M. (2014). Japan’s Shifting Military Priorities: Counterbalancing China’s Rise. *Asian Security*, 10(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2013.870157>

⁵⁸ a term meaning a middle ground between Balancing and Bandwagoning by both engaging and also denying. Hedging is a term which is very hard difficult to define and measure.

balance against China⁵⁹. The motivation for these changes was the 2010 Senkaku fishing boat incident. Japan is one of the cases that this study would look at.

1.3 RISE OF CHINA: LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarship on the rise of China has been able to contextualise to a large extent China's behaviour and growth into several theoretical paradigms. However, since China keeps reshuffling and reshaping the status quo, questions can be raised on whether it is possible to box the case of China into international relations theories? Scholars like Yan⁶⁰ and Acharya and Buzan⁶¹ are skeptical of the universality of international relations theory. Tang denies the universal claim of theories like realism and liberalism. He believes that international relations theory must accommodate a fusion of the Chinese perspective too and should not be just based on western history.⁶²

Scholars maintain that the case of China goes beyond the existing international relations theories because it broke the conventional political and economic ideologies. Despite being a political communist country, China adopted free-market capitalism. Yong Deng argued that a "Chinese conception of national interests should not be considered in terms of two mutually exclusive categories – *realpolitik* thinking and liberal values – but is best understood in terms of a

⁵⁹ Koga, K. (2016). The rise of China and Japan's balancing strategy: critical junctures and policy shifts in the 2010s. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 25(101), 777–791. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2016.1160520>

⁶⁰ Yan, X., Bell, D., Sun, Z., & Ryden, E. (2013). *Ancient Chinese thought, modern Chinese power*. Princeton University Press.

⁶¹ Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2007). Why is there no non-Western international relations theory? An introduction. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 7(3), 287–312. <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcm012>

⁶² Shiping Tang. (2013). *The social evolution of international politics*. Oxford University Press.

spectrum”.⁶³ Zhang identified China as an exceptional state. He argued that, at first China was predominately following the ideology of Confucianism. Then, it became Marxist and championed the cause of anti-imperialism. Now, China has advocated mutual cooperation, peaceful development, the harmony of interests, democracy, and economic interdependence. Zhang argues that “While America claims the superiority of its ideas about democracy and freedom, China professes respect for and tolerance of all political values and systems without putting its doctrines at the centre”⁶⁴ It goes without saying that in 2011 these might have been believable, but as time passes, China gets farther away from such benign ideas in its growth path.

1.3.1 Realism

Owing to the nationalist fervour, China’s rise has been essentially realist. The five principles of peaceful co-existence, introduced in the 1950s, discussed: 1) mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; 2) mutual non-aggression; 3) mutual non-interference in internal affairs; 4) equality and mutual benefit, and 5) peaceful co-existence⁶⁵. Many Chinese scholars have denoted these principles as China’s guidelines for an international order. Additionally, scholars have drawn attention to the fact that “sovereignty” forms a part of these principles, Chinese foreign policy has been touted as fundamentally realist.⁶⁶

⁶³ Deng, Y. (1998). The Chinese Conception of National Interests in International Relations. *The China Quarterly*, 154, 308–329. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305741000002058>

⁶⁴ Zhang, F. (2011). The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations. *European Journal of International Relations*, 19(2), 305–328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066111421038>

⁶⁵ Panda, A. (2014, July 24). *Reflecting on China’s Five Principles, 60 Years Later*. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2014/06/reflecting-on-chinas-five-principles-60-years-later/>

⁶⁶ Deng, Y. (1998). The Chinese Conception of National Interests in International Relations. *The China Quarterly*, 154, 308–329. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305741000002058>

Jean Kachiga asserts that China was a mighty empire during the Ming Period. Peace in China was based on hierarchical relations. When the hegemonic status was destroyed in the 19th century, China faced internal disturbances. In other words, peace in China was the product of hierarchy, a realist solution for anarchy.⁶⁷ Some scholars like Montgomery⁶⁸, Turcsanyi⁶⁹ indicate China's quest to modernise the People's Liberation Army is to protect Chinese territory from invasion and dominate the South China Sea.

China's rise is often a point of debate between defensive and offensive power. Building a military does trigger a perception of threat for others. Tammen notes that China has been growing rapidly.⁷⁰ Steve Chan states that “the danger of a war among the great powers is the greatest when a latecomer dissatisfied with the international status quo overtakes a once-dominant state”. However, Chan adds that China's rise can be deceiving in some ways. By its territorial size and economic growth rates, China is rapidly growing. But China is yet to replace US dominance in IT development. As a result, Chan argues that it is possible that China's population and territory can become challenging to manage. Therefore, the factors that were

⁶⁷ Kachiga, J. (2021). *The rise of China and international relations theory*. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

⁶⁸ Montgomery, E. B. (2014). *Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China's Rise and the Future of U.S. Power Projection*. Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/contested-primacy-western-pacific-chinas-rise-and-future-us-power-projection>

⁶⁹ Turcsányi R. Q. (2018). *Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea* (pp. 27–29). Cham Springer International Publishing.

⁷⁰ Tammen, R. (2008). The Organski Legacy: A Fifty-Year Research Program. *International Interactions*, 34(4), 314–332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050620802561769>

benefiting China earlier may become a cause of concern if China is not able to manage its enormous labor, provide low cost of living, and education to its people.⁷¹

On the contrary, Ross argues that the sphere of influence of China and the US do not overlap. Therefore, both China and the US are likely to continue being hegemons with no conflict.⁷²

Grosse et al. argue that “The United States and China are today acting as dual hegemons. Both have benefited from economic globalisation and now, to advance their national interests, both are committed to principles of free trade and open foreign investment, despite some deviations”.⁷³

Moreover, the system of dual hegemony means that both the US and China will prefer an open market to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and international trade⁷⁴. Friedberg adds that

China’s ambitions are such that the future of armed conflict with the America should be limited.⁷⁵ Similarly, Christensen claims that China’s growth will not interrupt the US unless the US objects.⁷⁶

⁷¹ White, L. T. (2009). Steve Chan, China, the U.S., and the Power- Transition Theory: A Critique. *China Perspectives*, 2009(1), 109–110. <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.4789>

⁷² Ross, R. S. (1999). The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century. *International Security*, 23(4), 81–118. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.23.4.81>

⁷³ Grosse, R., Gamso, J., & Nelson, R. C. (2021). China’s Rise, World Order, and the Implications for International Business. *Management International Review*, 61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-020-00433-8>

⁷⁴ Gamso, J., & Grosse, R. (2020). Trade agreement depth, foreign direct investment, and the moderating role of property rights. *Journal of International Business Policy*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42214-020-00061-x>

⁷⁵ Friedberg, A. L. (2005). The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable? *International Security*, 30(2), 7–45. <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228805775124589>

⁷⁶ Christensen, T. (2008). "Shaping China's Choices: Some Recent Lessons for the Next U.S. Administration". Making of US-China Policy. Lecture conducted from USCI, Los Angeles.

Nevertheless, China's military strength, population, geographical size, and economic growth necessitate a balancing game for others. Gilley argues that China is ideologically isolated from the international system. While China has risen materially, it is still "haunted by the China Threat Theory" where "the rise of an undemocratic China will pose a great threat to the western world and global stability."⁷⁷ Similarly, Kirshner believes that emerging China must be considered a threat.⁷⁸

Foot contends that from a realist perspective, China is using accommodation and hedging techniques. China is accommodating and cooperating with the multilateral global order and international law and trying to pursue its independence and maintain its interests.⁷⁹ Yan Xuetong suggests that China exudes "moral realism", a realist form of assertiveness grounded in morality, such as the legitimate defense of a nation's values and interests.⁸⁰ Zhang Tiejun puts forward a detailed analysis of China's rise. He argues: 1) China intends to apply socialism and participate in global economic chains. 2) To uplift the condition of underdevelopment and impoverishment of its large population, China seeks a peaceful environment wherein China can rise to the level of great power status and yet does not disrupt the international order or threaten its neighbours. 3) China's rise is tied to Asian history. Tiejun argues that the peaceful rise of China is for assuring

⁷⁷ Gilley, B. (2011). Middle powers during great power transitions: China's rise and the future of Canada-US relations. *International Journal*, 66(2), 245–264. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27976092?seq=1>

⁷⁸ Kirshner, J. (2010). The tragedy of offensive realism: Classical realism and the rise of China. *European Journal of International Relations*, 18(1), 53–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066110373949>

⁷⁹ Foot, R. (2006). Chinese strategies in a US-hegemonic global order: accommodating and hedging. *International Affairs*, 82(1), 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2006.00516.x>

⁸⁰ Yan, X., Bell, D., Sun, Z., & Ryden, E. (2013). *Ancient Chinese thought, modern Chinese power*. Princeton University Press.

its East Asian neighbours and the US that China will not pose a threat to the peace and stability of the international system and is open to doing business.⁸¹

1.3.2 Liberalism

Wohlforth (2009: 29) argues that “anarchy-induced security problems” are less because of the spread of democracy and declining conquests. The diminishing interstate wars, rising financial market, liberalised investment, and mobility in services and production triggered changes in globalisation. And this encouraged China to capitalise on the opportunities. China was consumed by economic development and interdependence and began robust participation in international gatherings and bilateral and multilateral agreements. Xinning Song and Chan assert that China’s integration in liberal international order was for changing the perception of Chinese identity internationally. China wanted to break its image of a non-democratic and communist state and mingle with liberal democracies. As a result, since the 1980s, China’s indulgence in active diplomacy with nations across the world increased remarkably⁸², although as other studies show, this socialisation of China in the liberal order and system did not lead to the goals that western nations had in mind of fully opening up China and transforming its internal systems and democratisation. Instead, China used this opportunity to buy time and advance itself economically by joining liberal initiatives such as the World Trade Organization (WTO)

⁸¹ Zhang T. (2011). “China’s East Asian Policy”, *Quaderni di Relazioni Internazionali*, 14:18-19.

⁸² Song X. & Chan G. (2000). “International Relations Theory” in: *China’s International Relations in the 21st Century: Dynamics of Paradigm Shifts*. Weixing Hu, Gerarld Chan, Daojiong Zha (eds.) Lanham, MD: University Press of America. p.19.

Gradually, China became a rising neoliberal power. Zeng and Breslin⁸³, Shifrinson⁸⁴, and Xuotong⁸⁵ argue that China is pushing for a renewed global power distribution and emerging as a global superpower.

De Barry studies the work of neo-Confucians like Huang Zongxi and Gu Yanwu. He argues that Confucius's values like self-worth and dignity were central to the Song and Ming Dynasties. And the concept of a liberal economy in China did not find a strong foothold. As a result, the benefits of liberalism did not transfer from monarchs to the people, like they did in western countries.⁸⁶ Schrecker writes, "They did not advocate a complete break with the Chinese past but were eager to import that dynamism and the sense of possibility that infused the Occident" and breath a new life into it.⁸⁷

Joshua Ramo believes that China's coming as an independent actor and breaking the constraints of the Washington Consensus, and forming what he calls the *Beijing Consensus*. He argues that China has devised a creative approach towards global economic policy and liberalism with its unique policy measures.⁸⁸ Wade asserts that China prefers a governed market model that is not

⁸³ Zeng, J., & Breslin, S. (2016). China's 'new type of great power relations': A G2 with Chinese characteristics. *International Affairs*, 92(4), 773–794.

⁸⁴ Shifrinson, J. (2018). Should the United States fear China's rise? *The Washington Quarterly*, 41(4), 65–83.

⁸⁵ Xuotong, Y. (2019). The age of uneasy peace: Chinese power in a divided world. *Foreign Affairs*, 98(1), 40–46.

⁸⁶ De Barry, W. (1983) *The Liberal Tradition in China*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp 68

⁸⁷ Schrecker, J. E. (2004). *The Chinese revolution in historical perspective* (pp. 158–159). Praeger.

⁸⁸ Ramo, J. (2005, April). *The Beijing Consensus - The Foreign Policy Centre*. The Foreign Policy Centre. <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/the-beijing-consensus/>

exposed to the vagaries of deregulation. Others like Fung argue that “From the start, the Chinese case was different from the European experience because of the nonexistence of clericalism”.⁸⁹

Looking at how China is developing and defending the liberal order, Wertime (2017) speculates that China may even be willing to lead the world because the US seems not interested. For this, China may abandon its “great power relations” (wherein the objective is to avoid conflicts).

Gartzke (2007) coined the term “capitalist peace” to describe the phenomenon of not wanting to compete in military competitions and disrupt the incentives. According to Gartzke, China has become a peace-loving state and has begun to consider the zero-sum game a riskier pursuit.⁹⁰

1.4 Cases and China.

1.4.1 Case selection rationale

- Extensive military/alliance relations with the US
- Extensive economic relations with US and China.
- Size and Classification of the cases selected
- Economic Capability to Balance Internally
- Least likely, most likely cases.

⁸⁹ Fung, E. S. K. (2015). *The intellectual foundations of Chinese modernity cultural and political thought in the Republican era* (p. 133). Cambridge Cambridge University Press.

⁹⁰ Gartzke, E. (2007). The Capitalist Peace. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(1), 166–191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00244.x>

This study will use four cases to test its hypothesis, and these cases were selected based on different factors outlined in the bullet points at the start of this section. A clear rationale was set to avoid any case selection bias.

As outlined by the selected Dynamic Balancing hypothesis that the threatened states would first forge relations with the Hegemon but later would feel uncomfortable, should they think that the hegemon is not going to address their security concerns, and then move away from that relation towards Internal Balancing against the source of threat⁹¹, therefore the cases selected all have profound economic and military ties with the U.S. to replicate the first part of the prediction of the hypothesis. Australia, Japan and South Korea are all treaty allies of the United States and members of the San Francisco system⁹², also referred to as Hub and Spoke system; India is also a close partner.

On the economic side, all cases are amongst the top twenty trading partners of the US⁹³ and have a high amount of trade with China and come in as its top fifteen trade partners⁹⁴. Apart from collective security and alliance relations, a high amount of trade is also important. This study would not want to select cases secluded from either China or the US as it might affect the study's validity.

⁹¹ He, Kai "Dynamic Balancing

⁹² Buszynski, L. (1982). The Soviet Union in Southeast Asia: Motives, Limits and Opportunities. *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, 4(3).

⁹³ " US Census Bureau Foreign Trade. (n.d.). *Foreign Trade: Data*. www.census.gov. Retrieved March 30, 2021, from https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/Press-Release/related_party/index.html

⁹⁴ Workman, D. (2021, April 2). *China's Top Trading Partners*. World's Top Exports. <https://www.worldstopexports.com/chinas-top-import-partners/>

Another critical factor is the size of the cases. Realism is a theory concerned with the more prominent actors, such as superpowers, hegemon and middle powers in the system; therefore, as this study employs Dynamic Balancing as its leading theory which has its roots in Realism when selecting the cases their size and classification in the international realm was considered. The chosen cases are all the more prominent actors in the region. Three of them have been classified as middle powers, so they are all on the same level. This adds another level of control to variables that might affect the outcome of this study. This research wants to focus on the more significant actors, all of whom are also relatively powerful when investigating their military.

As previously mentioned, India is not a middle-power but probably is the next level up. It is also nuclear-armed and has been building its deterrent; therefore studying it and comparing the results with the non-nuclear armed middle powers would present interesting findings and would further test if being a nuclear-armed state could affect the outcomes that the theory has predicted.

Another factor considered is the military budget of the selected cases. The specific hypothesis from Dynamic Balancing, which will be studied in this research, prescribes internal balancing to the threatened states to balance the threat they face. Internally balancing is taken and defined as military hardware and capabilities here, and it's a reality that such hardware and capabilities are expensive and considering the size of the Chinese armed forces building a force capable of standing in front of such an adversary, China, is not a task for states with weaker economic capabilities. All the cases selected are amongst the world's top 15 military spenders according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute⁹⁵ in 2020 and this is an essential factor that this

⁹⁵ Marksteiner, A., Silva, D. L. da, & Tian, N. (2021, April 1). *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2020*. SIPRI. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2021/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2020>

research seeks to examine. This means the cases would have enough money to build up their military forces to balance internally against China.

By looking at the criteria for case selection discussed before this, one can understand why cases such as Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam were not selected, as they are either not Middle Powers or do not have the economic power to choose internal balancing as their primary strategy.

Another guiding principle that was consulted when selecting cases for this study was what Bennet and Elman⁹⁶ refer to as ‘most likely’ and ‘least likely’ cases. This metric helps bring out different applications of the model and be more informative about the validity of the studied theory. Japan in this study is taken to be the most likely case and South Korea the least likely whilst Australia sits in the middle. As previously mentioned, by including India we would have two most likely cases as its position and primary balancing strategy is taken to be very similar to Japan. Still, the fact that it has its independent nuclear deterrent would contribute to the theory testing nature of this study. So it should be considered outside the most-likely, least-likely framework.

1.5 The originality of research and contribution:

One of the critical contributions of this research is to investigate further and test a theory that hasn’t been discussed much. Testing hypotheses and ideas are at the core of the process of science⁹⁷. The original article in which the Dynamic Balancing model was introduced is twenty

⁹⁶ Bennett, A., & Elman, C. (2007). Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield. *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(2), 170–195. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006296346>

⁹⁷ Lind, J. M. (2004). Pacifism or Passing the Buck? Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy. *International Security*, 29(1), 92–121. <https://doi.org/10.1162/0162288041762968>

pages. In those pages, the author elucidates his theory and uses one historical example to prove it partially, which is not enough.

This thesis uses extensive studies and more cases to apply the theory put forward by He to examine how it works in real life and if it is relevant to the current world. So, testing a theory is my main goal here.

One other important factor for this research is filling an identified knowledge gap. When studying the literature, what becomes apparent is that most of the scholarship is concerned with balancing⁹⁸, bandwagoning⁹⁹, hedging¹⁰⁰ or buck-passing and submission. They all talked about how states use external assets such as alliances to balance, bandwagon or hedge against power or threat, and rarely discussed the use of internal balancing. For example, Stephen Walt's *Origins of Alliances*¹⁰¹ only focuses on alliances to counter a threat and only attributes one sentence to internal means of balancing. Also, internal assets could be divided into Military, Economic and Civil assets, and with that, one would realise what little position of the research conducted would focus on each section.

It would not be unfair to state that the amount of research concerned with the use of military power inside a country to counter an external threat is minuscule, and Given the resurfacing (or

⁹⁸ Huang, D. W. F. (2016). *Asia Pacific countries and the US rebalancing strategy* (pp. 49–66). Palgrave Macmillan.

⁹⁹ Bloomfield, A. (2015). To balance or to bandwagon? Adjusting to China's rise during Australia's Rudd–Gillard era. *The Pacific Review*, 29(2), 259–282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2015.1013497>

¹⁰⁰ Zhao, S., & Qi, X. (2016). Hedging and Geostrategic Balance of East Asian Countries toward China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 25(100), 485–499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1132684>

¹⁰¹ Walt, S. M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances* (pp. 5–25). Cornell University Press.

resurgence) of geopolitical tension in the region, this research endeavours to partially fill this gap in the literature.

An example to further investigate this issue happened recently. The 2017 Doklam crisis near Bhutan put Indian and Chinese troops in a full head-on mode and was resolved after a two-month standoff by both sides agreeing to pull back their troops¹⁰². Some analysts believed that China did not push forward more and did not escalate the issue because of superior Indian Armed forces presence and facilities in the Doklam tri-juncture and the vitally strategic Siliguri corridor and states surrounding it¹⁰³, whilst Chinese presence and military infrastructures in the vicinity were comparatively light to what India had and could use if things further escalated. Many analysts believe the situations in Doklam could be used as a case study on how to counter Chinese assertion, and that's through Military and Diplomatic means¹⁰⁴.

1.6 Procedure of the Study

The procedure of the study is going to be, in the first phase, a qualitative document analysis of Japanese, Australian, Indian and Korean governmental policy and defence white papers and notes on the issue and articles by prominent analysts from those countries viewing China's

¹⁰² Reuters. (2021, February). *China, India agree to pull troops back from disputed Himalayan border*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/china-india-agree-pull-back-troops-disputed-himalayan-border-n1257432>

¹⁰³ Chellaney, B. (2017, August 3). *By refusing to buckle under China's threats on Doklam, India has called the bully's bluff*. Times of India Blog. <https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-edit-page/by-refusing-to-buckle-under-chinas-threats-on-doklam-india-has-called-the-bullys-bluff/>

¹⁰⁴ Gupta, S. (2017, September 1). *Resolution of the Doklam stand-off is a case study on how to deal with China*. Hindustan Times. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/resolution-of-the-doklam-stand-off-is-a-case-study-on-how-to-deal-with-china/story-IqDFXSg1ANE4GoRzoUEP6M.html>

military and hard power rise in the Asia-Pacific region. The time frame would be from Xi Jinping coming to power, and what we will look for is if in their discourse they consider China a threat to their national security and threat perception. Also, how do the states talk about China and its recent changes, such as the assertiveness it has been projecting in the region and, finally, the need to balance against it, and by what means?.

In the second phase of the study, the aim would be to study the internal efforts used to balance against China. While these countries' internal efforts do not classify to be an arms race like the Soviet-US one during the cold war, it is still significant and may be called an Arms Walk rather than a race¹⁰⁵. This section will study sources from the three cases on their weapon acquisition documents and strategies to determine the aim of their acquisition and whether they are internally balancing against China.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The earliest theory dominating the field of international relations is realism. Realism has a pragmatic approach to international relations and describes the world “as it is, not as it ought to be”¹⁰⁶ and is more about competition than cooperation. Opponents of the realist school of thought argue that realism has a pessimistic viewpoint.¹⁰⁷ The roots of realism can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosopher Thucydides and his work entitled *History of Peloponnesian War*, where he explores why war occurs. Thucydides argues that fear or threat is the leading

¹⁰⁵ Lanteigne, M. (2020). *Chinese foreign policy : an introduction* (pp. 135–139). Routledge, An Imprint Of The Taylor & Francis Group.

¹⁰⁶ Jørgensen, K. E. (2018). *International relations theory : a new introduction* (pp. 78–80). London Palgrave.

¹⁰⁷ Jackson, R. H., Georg Sørensen, & Jørgen Møller. (2013). *Introduction to international relations : theories and approaches* (pp. 58–61). Oxford University Press.

cause of war. The assumption that the enemy is stronger and can attack brings the states to war. When states assume that the balance of power is shifting, not in their favour, states increase their military strength for self-defence and to protect themselves from betrayal.

In the 16th century, realism was revived under Niccolo Machiavelli. In 1513, Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* for Lorenzo de Medici to present his political thought of the renaissance period.

Machiavelli believed that morals and politics are unrelated, as states are always competing, and the solution to war is preparation for another war¹⁰⁸. In the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes represented classical realism. He argued that man lives in a stateless nature that threatens survival. Hobbes considered a sovereign power or Leviathan an appropriate state authority necessary under anarchy. Anarchy refers to where there is no higher authority to regulate and resolve disputes between sovereign states.¹⁰⁹ Hobbes's *Leviathan* contends that a strong state is impossible because every state is fighting to become one¹¹⁰. classical realists, like Hobbes and Morgenthau, state that the permanent struggle for power stems from the fundamental

The human drive for power (Morgenthau, 1954).

The decline of the League of Nations led British historian E.H Carr to explore the significant mistakes after World War I and present a realist critique of liberalism. Carr believed that individual errors do not lead to world wars. It is the systematic contradiction of interests that causes conflict. Carr prioritised the study of power balance and the interrelationship between

¹⁰⁸ Horowitz, I. L. (2004). Book Review: Art of War. *Armed Forces & Society*, 31(1), 141–145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327x0403100107>

¹⁰⁹ Julian, K.-K. W. (2010, July 26). *Political Realism in International Relations* (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Stanford.edu. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/realism-intl-relations/>

¹¹⁰ Kavka, G. S. (1983). Hobbes's War of All Against All. *Ethics*, 93(2), 291–310. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2380421?seq=1>

ethics and politics.¹¹¹ Later, Hans Morgenthau systematised the study of realism with his six principles in his book, *Politics Among Nations* and combined the realist ideas of 2000 years up to World War II and became a logical textbook on realism. Morgenthau's political realism summarised theory in statism (international relations are state-centred), survival (the primary goal of the state is survival in an anarchical situation), and self-help (save the state from external threats).¹¹²

In the late 20th century, realist thinkers were regarded as positivists with a scientific approach to studying international relations. Neorealism or structural realism developed under Kenneth Waltz, who argued that politics must be analysed through systems and structures and not through state behaviour.¹¹³ Waltz argues that neo-realism is not a theory on foreign policy and instead explains the broader patterns of systematic outcomes.¹¹⁴ According to Waltz, a system is an interacting group of states that influence and generate counter-reactions. The distribution of power, relative or absolute, determines the outcomes.¹¹⁵ Waltz calls it “defensive realism” because the system is motivated by security and not a thirst for power.

Similarly, scholars like Robert Jervis and Charles Glaser opined those states could become cooperative under defensive realism.¹¹⁶ Stephen Walt and his Balance of Threat Theory advanced a sub-field of structural realism. Walt argued that through alliances and military

¹¹¹ Cox, M., & Carr, E. H. (2016). *The twenty years' crisis, 1919-1939*. Palgrave Macmillan.

¹¹² Morgenthau, H. J., & Thompson, K. W. (2014). *Politics among nations : the struggle for power and peace*. Kalyani Publishers.

¹¹³ Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics* (pp. 39–48). Waveland Press.

¹¹⁴ *ibid*

¹¹⁵ Frankel, B. (1996). *Realism : restatements and renewal* (p. XIV). F. Cass.

¹¹⁶ Jervis, R. (1997). *System effects : complexity in political and social life*. Princeton University Press.

cooperation, soft balancing could restrain the actions of a powerful state¹¹⁷, so alliance-building or external balancing was sought as an ideal means of providing security for a state under threat. Walt was also the proponent of using threat instead of power, stating that the most powerful nations do not necessarily threaten everyone, and the most threatening country should be a cause of concern. Contrarily, other realists like John Mearsheimer propounded “offensive realism”, wherein power drove state behaviour and the search for domination caused conflicts. Offensive realists argue that states do not know when power is in excess because they do not know the accurate measurement of other states’ power. In other words, states are in a constant Security Dilemma. Increasing their power and sense of security, they cause the other party to feel insecure and aim to improve their power and security, ultimately getting stuck in a spiral mode. As Steff and Khoo have found out, we see such relations between the US, Russia and China in relation to the nuclear sphere and ballistic missile defence.

Neorealists saw that superpowers aim to create a secure environment that can preserve the status quo. Structural realism means that any change in the structure of the international system imbalances power relations, and the reorganization of the system happens again. Neorealists do not attribute importance to institutions because they are not actors equivalent to states and cannot impact the power distribution. According to Kenneth Waltz, the balance of power is crucial in an anarchical system. Either through internal balancing, that is, through domestic mobilisation and military build-up, or external balancing, that is, through forming alliances to counterbalance rivals and threats. Stephen Walt argues that a state’s threat perception is determined by relative

¹¹⁷ Walt, S. M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances* (pp. 5–25). Cornell University Press.

power, geographical proximity and offensive-defensive balance of power.¹¹⁸ Realists confer importance on great powers who can create international regimes and structures to either leverage their national interests or counter others.¹¹⁹

However, structural realism could not explain the end of the Cold War and the crumbling of the Soviet Union. On the one hand, liberalism was best equipped to explain post-Cold War conditions and the rise of non-state actors; realism, for most, was an outdated theory. Yet, realism continued to explain the concept of the state, which non-state entities cannot substitute. Realism also explains the interrelationship between conflict and cooperation. National security remains the fundamental interest of the state. Military issues are important in world politics and not irrelevant to economic power. Simply put, realism is relevant to the current multipolar system.

Therefore, Waltz's theory of structural realism began to be challenged by other scholars who did not wholly reject their predecessor's theories but emphasised systemic and domestic-level variables.¹²⁰ As Fareed Zakaria has remarked, "a good account of a nation's foreign policy should include systemic, domestic, and other influences, specifying what aspects of the policy can be explained by what factors".¹²¹ As a revival of classical realist writings, American scholar Gideon Rose propounded "neoclassical realism" to suggest that role of both states and non-state

¹¹⁸ Walt, S. M. "Containing rogues and renegades: coalition strategies and counterproliferation", in V. A. Utgoff (ed.) *The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, U.S. Interests and World Order*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹⁹ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of Great Power politics*. Norton. P 15-20.

¹²⁰ Schweller, R. L. (2004). Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing. *International Security*, 29(2), 159–201. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4137589>

¹²¹ Zakaria, F., & Snyder, J. (1992). Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay. *International Security*, 17(1), 177. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539162>

actors leads to “dynamic balancing” in international relations.¹²² Rose argued domestic politics must be taken into account to analyse state behaviour, national interests, and other systemic factors.

This argument of Gideon Rose was in stark contrast to other realists like Morgenthau and Waltz, who did not consider domestic politics in their study of foreign policy. Taliaferro points out that neoclassical realism expounds on foreign policy strategies of individual states as opposed to neo-realism, which explains the goal of international outcomes, future and likelihood of international cooperation, and aggregate alliance patterns. Rose’s neoclassical realism has helped to remove the ignorance of domestic politics that rendered realism incapable of explaining issues such as why the Soviet Union collapsed. The study of domestic politics, the culture of a state, the decision-making process, etc., allowed foreign policy analysis to explain state behaviour which was sometimes irrational to other realist thinkers. Neoclassical realism argued that perceptions matter and are an essential variable in the international system. In this manner, there is an element of constructivism in realism. However, neoclassical realism is not considered as complete an explanation of the origin of war and peace as classical realism. Neoclassical realism only helps analyse particular state behaviour.

This research explores the various military doctrines and strategies of different states through the prism of neoclassical realism. The study hypothesises that non-state actors and other variables matter in great power engagement, and structural realism is insufficient in explaining the dynamics between China and its neighbours. This research also explores Kai He’s Dynamic Balancing model and tests its theoretical assumptions.

¹²² Rose, G. (1998). Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. *World Politics*, 51(1), 144–172. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25054068?seq=1>

1.7.1 Dynamic Balancing Model

Kai He contends that there is a marked difference in the approach of international relations theorists and area studies. The international relation theorists provide generalised explanations and predictions of foreign policy or systematic effects, whereas the area specialists focus on a particular country's foreign policy. He voices a similar concern previously raised by David Shambaugh, a distinguished expert in area studies. The latter argues that international relations theorists do not consider area studies and are only using the deductive method to a situation.¹²³ Therefore, He's Dynamic Balancing Model seeks a middle ground between the two approaches to study the trends in world politics. The Dynamic Balancing model combines Kenneth Waltz's balance of power (determines consequences of state behaviours) and Stephen M. Walt's balance of threat (predicts state behaviour) theory to reformulate balance of power theory and explain interstate alliance formations.¹²⁴¹²⁵

Dynamic Balancing by Kai He integrates theories such as the balance of threat and balance of power because he believes that states balance against each other when faced with external threats to achieve security and survival. However, since He does not believe in power maximisation and pessimistic outcomes, the theory is more inclined toward defensive realists and not offensive realists. Moreover, unlike Offensive Realism, Dynamic Balancing does not focus on great power

¹²³ Shambaugh, D. (2005). China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order. *International Security*, 29(3), 64–99. <https://doi.org/10.1162/0162288043467496>

¹²⁴ Walt, S. M. (1985). Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power. *International Security*, 9(4), 3–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538540>

¹²⁵ Walt, S. M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances* (pp. 5–25). Cornell University Press.

politics. This research particularly seeks to examine the behaviour of middle powers who cannot rise to great power status.

The dynamic Balancing model is centred on two main theoretical pillars – a) polarity in the international system determines the strategic choices of the states and whether the state should be balancing through internal or external efforts, and b) the perception of external threats of the state leaders governs when and how the state will pursue its balancing strategies. In this way, the model synthesises two main realist theories and treats the changing threat perceptions of state leaders as a dynamic transmission belt to decipher the state behaviour.

Kai He's Dynamic Balancing Model essentially examines major strategic orientation of states and the trends they follow in coping with external threats. He argues that the combination of polarity and threat perception moulds the behaviour of states. The Dynamic Balancing model asserts some of Gideon Rose's neoclassical realism tenets, where he says that "domestic variables, such as power perception, domestic political structure, and regime nature, are introduced as transmission belts to connect systemic effects and state behaviours".¹²⁶

Like classical realism, the Dynamic Balancing model believes in the lawless state of the international system and the self-help nature of states in which states invariably choose to balance. However, the theory diverges when it tries to find a middle ground between international relations theorists and area studies specialists. He uses polarity of the system to explain which kind of balancing a state is inclined to use, external or internal and adds threat perception to designate which target the state should balance against. In addition, He notes that power plays a significant role in the international system. Big states are powerful and seldom

¹²⁶ Rose, G. (1998). Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. *World Politics*, 51(1), 144–172. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25054068?seq=1>

perceive small states as a threat. This contradicts classical realism, which argues that all states are a threat to each other in an anarchical international system. He contends that in reality, all states (big or small) may or may not be a threat to each other. Factors like territorial size and distance, cultural ideology, history, and religious aspects determine the perception of states about external threats.

Kai He's theory asserts that both forms of balancing – external and internal – account for self-preservation and enhancing economic and military power. The varieties of balancing, such as buck-passing, hiding or bandwagoning, etc., are all different types of state behaviours that different scholars have categorised as internal or external efforts. According to He, internal balancing means managing external threats by using internal resources like mobilisation of the military, increasing economic growth, political strategy, etc. And external balancing means dealing with external threats through external resources like making alliances or opposing ones. He argues that polarity determines threat perception and the possible state behaviour to manage that threat. However, polarity is a variable concept; that is, balancing strategies under unipolarity, bipolarity and multipolarity change the way states perceive threats.

Under a unipolar system, the hegemon is most powerful and therefore, there is an imbalance in power distribution.¹²⁷ The hegemon mainly relies on internal balancing to strengthen itself further. Rising powers may be a threat, but rising powers do not pose as potential challengers to the hegemon due to power asymmetry. He argues that in the post-Cold War era, America emerged as a hegemon and yet to slow down rising powers like China and Russia. American

¹²⁷ Wohlforth, W. C. (1999). The Stability of a Unipolar World. *International Security*, 24(1), 5–41. <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228899560031>

foreign policy was geared towards increased defence budget and securing military pacts with the European Union and Japan. After the Cold War, China began to perceive the US as a significant threat to its national interests, especially when the US imposed economic sanctions against China and arms sales to Taiwan to support Taiwan's independence movement. A scholar points out that the Chinese government perceived the world as unipolar and became reluctant to oppose the US unilaterally.¹²⁸

Under unipolarity, the balancing strategy for small or non-hegemonic states is also internal balancing. For example, Khoo and Steff found Russia to be hard balancing against the US during the Bush administration by boosting and strengthening its nuclear and conventional capabilities instead of building alliances.¹²⁹

There are two superpowers under a bipolar system, so there is a clear distinction of capabilities. According to Waltz, superpowers are not threatened under bipolarity and therefore do not align with other states for security.¹³⁰ However, the Cold War depicted that the superpowers used an external balancing strategy by creating blocs to balance the other. The small states also chose to ally with either of the blocs for ensuring security.

¹²⁸ Qingguo, J. (2005). Learning to Live with the Hegemon: evolution of China's policy toward the US since the end of the Cold War. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(44), 395–407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560500115036>

¹²⁹ Steff, R., & Khoo, N. (2014). Hard Balancing in the Age of American Unipolarity: The Russian Response to US Ballistic Missile Defense during the Bush Administration (2001–2008). *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 37(2), 222–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2013.866556>

¹³⁰ Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics* (pp. 39–48). Waveland Press.

Finally, the multipolar system is most unstable because all states have varying capabilities, and therefore their behaviour is most unpredictable. States under a multipolar system use both external and internal balancing strategies.

1.7.2 Rubric to measure and describe internal balancing

Literature is abundant on realist international relations theories, including approaches to ‘balance of power’. The majority of the theory schools focus on external balancing and alliance-building behaviour amongst states from a historical viewpoint. Many of these studies ignore internal balancing altogether or define it in a sentence or two and then move on. There could be a good reason for this evasion by scholars. One could be the problem in differentiating between internal balancing as a strategy to stand against a threat/power with regular arms build-ups resulting from bureaucratic politics or just typical military modernisation.¹³¹ Looking at pure numbers will not help study and analyse this sort of balancing.

Of all the definitions of internal balancing, few of them assist with the scientific study of this concept better than others. Colin Elman defines it as “a countervailing policy designed to improve abilities to prosecute military missions to deter or defeat another state,”.¹³² According to this definition, a regular military modernisation could also be called internal balancing, as it could help deter or defeat another state. With the advancements in technology, military modernisation programs have caused an increase in capability. A modern frigate can have three times more firepower and ability than a 30-year-old vessel that it might replace.

¹³¹ Levy, J. S., & Thompson, W. R. (2005). Hegemonic Threats and Great-Power Balancing in Europe, 1495-1999. *Security Studies*, 14(1), 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410591001465>

¹³² Elman, C. (2002) Introduction: Appraising Balance of power theory” in Vasquez, J. and Elman, C, “*Realism and the balancing power*”. New York. Prentice Hall, P.8

In his extensive work studying internal balancing, Thomas Bendel also sought to provide a distinct definition of internal balancing. He categorises it as strategies employed and activated to increase military power and capability, conducting military mobilisation and relocation, developing “clever” strategy and increasing financial ability and growth, to empower the country to stand against, or deter, a source of threat and safeguard its security.¹³³

Internal balancing has focused on military power, and therefore that is what this study will use as a starting point, but the concept as it stands remains excessively ambiguous. Bendel’s definition offers a new perspective by introducing the dimensions of military mobilisation and relocation that previous studies haven’t discussed. Therefore, relocation of current assets, or the location of future capabilities, will assist in better isolating the definition of internal balancing. For example, to use a hypothetical, if India moves its armoured divisions from its border area with Pakistan to the Siliguri Corridor and near-border highlands with China, this could be defined as one case study of internal balancing. Also, India might opt to position new military capabilities alongside a specific border area, as it did so in 2014 by establishing two mountain divisions in areas close to the Chinese border.¹³⁴

Levy and Thompson, in another work, define internal balancing in an interesting way that assists in the development of new dimensions of the concept. They define internal balancing as a “form of substantial expansion of military power, potential or capacity.”¹³⁵ The keyword here is

¹³³ Bendel, T. (1994) “*On the Types of balancing behaviour.*” Masters Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1994.

¹³⁴ Sakhuja, V. (2009, September). *Military Buildup Across the Himalayas: A Shaky Balance*. The Jamestown Foundation. <https://jamestown.org/program/military-buildup-across-the-himalayas-a-shaky-balance/>

¹³⁵ Levy, J. S., & Thompson, W. R. (2010). Balancing on Land and at Sea : Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power? *International Security*, 35(1), 7–43. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40784645>

substantial. This refers to the increase in power, which has to be significant or highly visible to count as internal balancing. Therefore an expansion of already attained or replacement of older systems with a more significant number of newer systems or even fielding new capabilities should be defined as internal balancing.

To build on the previous points and provide another example, the Australian Navy currently has plans to replace its fleet of six *Collins*-class submarines with twelve French *Attack-Class* subs.¹³⁶ In this case, we are witnessing an expansion of a capability already attained, which also has elements of a regular military modernisation, meaning replacing older systems and increasing power by going for higher numbers than before.

There are also examples of obtaining capabilities that haven't existed in a state's inventory before. Japanese Self-Defence Force (JSDF) announced at the end of 2018 it will be upgrading its fleet of two helicopter carriers, the *Izumo* and the *Kaga*, to be able to accommodate and support F-35B fighter jets, essentially re-designating them as *de facto* aircraft carriers. This would represent a capability that Japan hasn't had in its inventory ever since World War II, which was also banned in its constitution¹³⁷ As aircraft carriers were considered offensive weapons, going against the spirit of the Self-Defence Force and its post-world war mandate.

Another point worth mentioning should be military budgets. While almost eighty per cent of a nation's military budget is spent on upkeep and salaries, it signifies a trend worth studying, as its

¹³⁶ 2016 Defence White Paper. (2016). Australian Government, Department of Defence. <http://www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/Docs/2016-Defence-White-Paper.pdf> - P 19

¹³⁷ Childs, H., & Choong, W. (2019, January). *Japan's aircraft carriers – white elephants or all-purpose Swiss knives?* IISS. <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2019/01/japan-aircraft-carriers>

increase could mean the state is trying to extend and increase its capabilities and resources. Therefore, it should not be ignored.

Although, as previously mentioned, internal balancing is a topic not studied to a great degree, the factors discussed here aren't that revolutionary either. For example, Andrew Davies, in a taxonomy he developed, talks about the same characteristics. Firstly, the modernisation of existing fleets, as newer systems have more capabilities than their predecessors. Secondly, obtaining capabilities prevalent elsewhere but not by the nation of study. He uses examples of submarines in Southeast Asia, which have been highly sought after, after increased Chinese submarine activities and capabilities during the last couple of years, and thirdly, obtaining new capabilities by any standards.¹³⁸ Such as Anti-Satellite capabilities.

1.8 Research Question:

Is Hypothesis No. 1 of the Dynamic Balancing Model a useful framework to understand and predict regional responses to China's rise in the context of unipolarity?

Hypothesis No 1: “Under unipolarity, if threats come from non-hegemonic states, the threatened states could seek help from the hegemon, but such relations with the hegemon will be closer to bandwagoning rather than alliance-balancing. ... even if they could forge an ‘alliance’ with the hegemon to cope with their external threats, they would also eventually feel uncomfortable and insecure about the imbalanced relationship with the hegemon. Therefore, under a unipolar system, the primary balancing strategy of non-hegemon states will be internal balancing.”¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Davies, A. (2008). *Asian military trends and their implications for australia*. Australian Strategic Policy Institute - Strategic Insights. https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/import/SI42_Asian_Military.pdf?VEJVYGLhOR.e06wt3AvTn3iOuWHHXVmx%20%20%20He

¹³⁹ He, Kai. *Dynamic Balancing*

This thesis will attempt to test the outcomes and behaviours predicted in this hypothesis and see if we see cases of this happening and states selecting internal balancing as their primary balancing strategy.

It is essential to point out that the theory predicts the *primary* strategy of states under such conditions. Therefore there might be other secondary strategies employed, so it does not say internal balancing is the only strategy.

1.9 Methodology:

The primary methods this research will employ to falsify and test its theory will be case studies and document analysis, which is qualitative.

In our comparative case study section, we will study a number of cases through a qualitative manner, 4 here¹⁴⁰. The use of the comparative method with a small number of case studies allows us to employ a controlled, structured, and focused analysis of the topic¹⁴¹. However, at time it can be a bit less structured, such as the way it was employed by the likes of Katzenstein¹⁴² in his seminal work. As moravcsik points out, this method has many advantages, such as “operationalisation of qualitative variables, attaining high levels of conceptual validity” and “identification of new variables or hypotheses, and the test and refinement of existing ones” which is an essential goal of this study.

¹⁴⁰ George, A. L. (1997) The Role of the Congruence Method for Case Study Research. 38th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Toronto, Canada

¹⁴¹ Sprinz, D., & Wolinsky-Nahmias, Y. (2002). *Cases, numbers, models* (pp. 119-125). University of Michigan Press.

¹⁴² Katzenstein, P. (1996). *The culture of national security*. Columbia University Press.

As with any method, comparative case study has its disadvantages such as case selection bias, but I have tried to address this by clearly stating the criteria for selecting the cases.

Apart from a comparative case study, this research will also employ Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA) is an important research method of analysing documents in a systematic manner to assess the treatment of particular 'themes' or issues¹⁴³, or as outlined by another author “document analysis is a systematic method for studying or evaluating printed or electronic documents and (computer-based and Internet- transmitted) material. Like other empirical research methods, they require that textual data encapsulated in relevant documents be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge.”¹⁴⁴. It is employed in some social sciences and sometimes international relations to help produce an impartial and dependable analyses of written policies¹⁴⁵¹⁴⁶.

In QDA, researchers analyse the contents of documents, analysing the meaning and implications of the text, which distinguishes it from quantitative word analysis (e.g., using computer software such as WordStat or Cirilab, which analyses the frequency of keywords or even by hand and manually). QDA’s specific focus on written documents also distinguishes it from other forms of political science research, which analyses spoken or written discourses. QDA can provide essential

¹⁴³ Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/qrj0902027>

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ Altheide, D. L. (2000). Tracking discourse and qualitative document analysis. *Poetics*, 27(4), 287–299. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0304-422x\(00\)00005-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0304-422x(00)00005-x)

¹⁴⁶ Wesley, J. J. (2014) "The Qualitative Analysis of Political Documents." From Text to Political Positions Discourse Approaches to Politics, *Society and Culture*, 2014, 135-60. doi:10.1075/dapsac.55.07wes.

insights based on the documents used and serve as one data source that can be triangulated with others and a platform for discussion and further analysis.

Ahmed¹⁴⁷ believes that qualitative document analysis is an important tool for research and should be utilised by social scientists with complete confidence. Similarly, other scholars also explained that document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies, i.e. intensive studies aimed at producing extensive descriptions of a single phenomenon, event or organisations. Another positive factor about documents is that they can track change and development in a specific topic as different drafts become accessible and are studied and compared¹⁴⁸.

1.10 Limitations of the Study:

As this thesis would focus on the rise of China and its responses, it could be studied through different theoretical and methodological perspectives with other variables, such as employing an Offensive Realist, Power Transition or Economic Peace Theory. However, this study investigates the military's role in keeping China at bay instead of the usually explained option of relying on foreign alliances or the role of economic integration. So few explanations would be given to factors outside the military realm, although there would be some critical explanations of the economic relations existent between the cases and China.

As for a time frame, this study sets to limit its data and it does so by selecting the start of Xi Jinping coming to power in China at the end of Hu Jintao's term in 2012 as its start point and mid-2018 as its endpoint.

¹⁴⁷ Ahmed, J. U. (2010). Documentary Research Method: New Dimensions. *Indus Journal of Management & Social Science (IJMSS)*, 4(1), 1–14.
https://econpapers.repec.org/article/iijournal/v_3a4_3ay_3a2010_3ai_3a1_3ap_3a1-14.htm

¹⁴⁸ Bowen, G. A. (2009) "Document Analysis

Another limitation factor is selecting the military side of hard power and selecting it as a point of focus. The resources of hard power are straightforward. Historically, hard power has been measured by such criteria as population size, territory, natural resources, military force, and social stability¹⁴⁹.

As discussed in the introduction and in more detail, later on, this new era has shown itself as a time for China to flex its muscles and show its strength. There have been numerous attempts in such manner, and China is viewed as more assertive than before. Therefore the military factor will be an important one for countries bordering or proximate to the dragon as if they do not possess the required might, there is the chance of coercion. So, the study will be limited to investigating the military factor in the cases during the Xi Jinping era.

Another limiting factor in this study is the military perspective on Internal balancing. There are two kinds of balancing: balancing with internal efforts and balancing with external efforts. Internal balancing means dealing with external threats or powers by using internal resources, such as conducting military mobilisation, accelerating economic growth, increasing military capabilities, and pursuing clever strategy and political leverage. Internal balancing can have financial and other dimensions. Still, to limit the research to a possible level, it has been decided to study internal balancing by limiting it to its military dimensions.

¹⁴⁹ Cohen, C., Nye Jr., J., & Armitage, R. (2007, November). *A Smarter, More Secure America*. [Www.csis.org](https://www.csis.org). <https://www.csis.org/analysis/smarter-more-secure-america>

Chapter 2: China's rise in hard power

This section and its sub-sections will be dedicated to discussing China's rise in hard power, as in military and material capabilities, and highlighting its credibility and how it has led to it being a more aggressive and assertive actor in the region. China has been increasing its military and hard power means, specifically in the area of power projection, and has become more assertive in its foreign policy and attitude towards neighbours and this has caused it to be perceived as a threatening factor toward countries in its vicinity since China is now seeking to redress what it sees as territory under threat in places like Taiwan, South China Sea and the Himalayan theatre.

This huge jump in capability and assertiveness has caused a ripe opportunity for other countries to react to such a change in the regional dynamics by either balancing against it, bandwagoning or hedging, or even more realistically, a mixture of all.

Here, we will go over some motivating factors for this assertiveness and what has helped China, capability-wise, rummage in the region and achieve its foreign policy goals. Actions need motivation and also capability.

2.1 Budget and Military spending

China began its rise in power in 1978 and has been expanding its economic and military power ever since¹⁵⁰. China now has the second-largest total GDP, and experts anticipate its economy will

¹⁵⁰ Buzan, B., & Cox, M. (2013). China and the US: Comparable Cases of "Peaceful Rise"? *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 6(2), 109–132. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pot003>

eventually reach the United States¹⁵¹ soon, at least in terms of overall economic output. China has always been a country with an eye on hard power and a more robust economy. The higher GDP and financial muscles give policymakers more room to roam when it comes to spending on the military, the same way the US has been doing for decades now with backing from its strong economy and industry. Having had restrained relations with both the poles during the Cold War, separately and both simultaneously, having a strong military has always been an important objective to achieve.

Offensive Realists view military expansion as an indicator of a state's desire to arm itself for territorial conquest¹⁵² and exercise hegemonic behavior. Offensive realists are not alone, and proponents of the Power Transition Theory also state that '*extraordinary growth of military expenditures* is a sign of dissatisfaction of power and desire to change things in its favour. Possessing the necessary tools for such power projections in its vicinity, China has been increasing its military budget drastically to be able to upgrade its capability and capacities, currently second to the United States in spending, standing at approximately \$US 183 billion Dollars in 2021¹⁵³, and closing the gap with the US spending levels. This has made America anxious and worried because of the rapid pace of this development. The amount might still be distant from what the US is spending but considering that China doesn't have many security burdens, is focused on its regional periphery. No alliances, makes the amount considerable and more focused. Unlike other

¹⁵¹ Jung, S. C., & Lee, K. (2017). The Offensive Realists Are Not Wrong: China's Growth and Aggression, 1976-2001. *Pacific Focus*, 32(1), 86–108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12088>

¹⁵² Christensen, T. J. (2006). Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia. *International Security*, 31(1), 81–126. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2006.31.1.81>

¹⁵³ Funaiole, M., & Hart, B. (2021, March). *Understanding China's 2021 Defense Budget*. www.csis.org. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-chinas-2021-defense-budget>

countries that resort to inflating figures, China downplays its budget. For example, while the Chinese government publicly presented the 2017 annual budget as \$151 billion for military expenditure, experts believe their actual budget is more than \$214 billion¹⁵⁴, and discrepancies have existed ever since 2008 to date. The chart on the next page shows how different institutes perceive China's defence budget. The current level of spending is almost three times what other big spenders such as the UK, France, and Japan spend on their armed forces¹⁵⁵ combined.

What's important when looking at the numbers is that, as already mentioned, compared to the US, China is still quite focused on power projecting in its surrounding area to secure its near waters and neighbourhood before heading out¹⁵⁶, having just recently secured its first foreign base, referred to as a 'logistics supply centre' in Djibouti¹⁵⁷, and therefore, does not have the US global presence. This makes its military budget and power being more focused than dispersed.

China is also moving away from being a traditional army with heavy reliance on high troop numbers and ground forces to obtaining and putting into use modern weaponry, including nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, ballistic missiles, and intelligence¹⁵⁸ and acquisition programs of high-tech weapon systems are highly visible in both the air force and navy. Undoubtedly, having

¹⁵⁴ Jung, S. C., & Lee, K. (2017). The Offensive Realists Are Not Wrong: China's Growth and Aggression, 1976-2001. *Pacific Focus*, 32(1), 86–108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12088>

¹⁵⁵ Bitzinger, R. A. (2015, March 19). *China's Double-Digit Defense Growth*. Foreign Affairs. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-03-19/chinas-double-digit-defense-growth>

¹⁵⁶ Cole, B. (2000) "China's Maritime Strategy," in Susan M. Puska, ed., *People's Liberation Army After Next*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute of the Army War College, P 296

¹⁵⁷ China formally opens first overseas military base in Djibouti. (2017, August 1). *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-djibouti/china-formally-opens-first-overseas-military-base-in-djibouti-idUSKBN1AH3E3>

¹⁵⁸ Jung, S. C., & Lee, K. (2017). The Offensive Realists Are Not Wrong: China's Growth and Aggression, 1976-2001. *Pacific Focus*, 32(1), 86–108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12088>

a high military budget and deep pockets helped this change and modernisation and sophistication of technology and correction of flaws such as weak power projection or naval assets. The change has been happening with great speed.

Back in 2006, Dinshaw Mistry¹⁵⁹ talked about PLA Air Force's weakness and low quality and the Navy's lack of solid power-projection tools; this was a legacy of Mao's preference for ground forces over the other PLA branches, but now in 2021, a lot has changed, the Navy is amongst the most powerful and modern in the world, and the Air Force has been retiring its old airframes and introducing newer systems, like 5th generation fighters into service. The PLA Navy has also started to increase its footprint in farther places, such as the Indian Ocean, to project its power and secure its critical maritime lines of communication and trade¹⁶⁰.

This change in the weapon acquisition, research & design and construction trend shows a shift in strategy and importance of the different forces in Chinese policymakers minds¹⁶¹.

The following chart shows the rising trend of the Chinese defence budget from the 90s compared to the US and Russia. What can be observed is that it has been rising steadily. A study conducted by the Rand Corporation and authored by Heginbotham¹⁶², states that the annual real growth in China's defence spending averaged out at 11 percent per year between 1996 and 2015 which is impressive and concludes by stating that US dominance is a "receding frontier".

¹⁵⁹ Mistry, D. (2006). Military Modernization in Asia. *Asian Security*, 2(1), 58–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799850600579308>

¹⁶⁰ Lim, Y.-H. (2020). China's rising naval ambitions in the Indian Ocean: aligning ends, ways and means. *Asian Security*, 16(3), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2020.1721469>

¹⁶¹ Erickson, A. (2012, July). *China's Navy and Air Force: Advancing Capabilities and Missions*. The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR). <http://nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=276>

¹⁶²Heginbotham, E. (2015). *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard : Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996-2017*. Rand.

2.2 Century of Humiliation as a push factor for a stronger China

One other factor that could help explain China's change in attitude and increased assertiveness is its history and the effect of history on China's present actions. There is a period between the 19th century up to the 20th century that is referred to as 'the century of humiliation' by Chinese officials.

In a speech on the occasion of the founding of the People's Republic of China, 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong famously proclaimed, "Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up." With those words, Mao explained that a new era had begun for China under CCP leadership¹⁶³.

Half a century later and Xi Jinping defines this period as a time when China "plunged into the darkness of domestic turmoil and foreign aggression; its people were ravaged by wars, saw their homeland torn, and lived in poverty and despair"¹⁶⁴. This period is still mentioned by modern Chinese policymakers, as we just saw Xi doing it, and partially explains China's acute sensitivity towards perceived containment¹⁶⁵ and is a key element of China's modern narrative¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶³ Metcalf, M. (n.d.). *The National Humiliation Narrative: Dealing with the Present by Fixating on the Past*. Association for Asian Studies. <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/ea/archives/the-national-humiliation-narrative-dealing-with-the-present-by-fixating-on-the-past/>

¹⁶⁴ Sattarupa, B. (2017, November 11). *chinadaily.com.cn: Connecting China Connecting the World*. China Daily. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/regional/2017-11/11/content_34472444.htm

¹⁶⁵ Modongal, S. (2016). Development of nationalism in China. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2016.1235749>

¹⁶⁶ Kaufman, A. (2011). *The "Century of Humiliation" and China's National Narratives*. U.S.-China Economic AND Security Review Commission. <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/3.10.11Kaufman.pdf>

Why is this period and its reoccurrence in China important? because during this period, China was humiliated and forcibly colonized by colonialist powers such as Europe and Japan¹⁶⁷. In this period, China forcefully lost territory and its natural resources plundered, and unfavorable deals forced on to the country¹⁶⁸.

Whilst these events might be insignificant events in western history books, they are indeed important for policy makers in China. Current Chinese nationalism is greatly preoccupied with the past, specifically the period mentioned here, which it is constantly reworking. There are numerous museums and books devoted to this topic in China¹⁶⁹, as they would like to make up for this period and return China to the status it had before this period, as a great and regional power, and the narrative is that only a strong China can deter similar calamities from happening again in the future¹⁷⁰. The growth of the People's Liberation Army – Navy (PLAN) and China's ever increasing maritime aggression indicate that the country has learned lessons from its history, and the oceans will be its battleground of choice in the future¹⁷¹. This is where the motivation and capability come hand to hand.

2.3 Strategy and Assertiveness

¹⁶⁷ Luo, Z. (1993). National Humiliation and National Assertion: The Chinese Response to the Twenty-One Demands. *Modern Asian Studies*, 27(2), 297–319. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/312771>

¹⁶⁸ Tischler, M. (2020, August 18). *China's "Never Again" Mentality*. *The Diplomat*.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/chinas-never-again-mentality/>

¹⁶⁹ Callahan, W. A. (2004). National insecurities: Humiliation, salvation, and Chinese nationalism. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 29(2), 199–218. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540402900204>

¹⁷⁰ Lee, A. S. (2018, February 18). *A Century of Humiliation: Understanding the Chinese Mindset*. *The McGill International Review*. <https://www.mironline.ca/century-humiliation-understanding-chinese-mindset/>

¹⁷¹ Childs, N., & Waldwyn, T. (2018, May). *China's naval shipbuilding: delivering on its ambition in a big way*. *IJSS*. <https://www.ijss.org/blogs/military-balance/2018/05/china-naval-shipbuilding>

On the leadership and strategy front change has been visible too. Whilst Hu believed in Deng Xiaoping's strategy of 'Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; make a contribution and never claim leadership'¹⁷² implying keeping a low profile and moving ahead and economic development, , whilst out of sight and producing confrontations, Xi is completely different¹⁷³ and aspires for a more ambitious foreign policy¹⁷⁴.

Some experts have called it a cult of personality towards Xi¹⁷⁵ as he tries to consolidate his power in the society through his anti-corruption campaign, which has also led to commanders in the PLA being targeted unlike previous attempts, and the re-shuffling of the Central Military Commission (CMC)¹⁷⁶ and owning its loyalty towards himself¹⁷⁷. He has initiated a major PLA reform and restructuring to increase its effectiveness and to use its power when required.

¹⁷² Jianyong Yue. (2018). *China's rise in the age of globalization myth or reality?* (p. 190). Cham, Switzerland Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁷³ Masuda, M. (2016, February 20). *Why has Chinese foreign policy become more assertive?* East Asia Forum. <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/02/20/why-has-chinese-foreign-policy-become-more-assertive>

¹⁷⁴ Poh, A., & Li, M. (2017). A China in Transition: The Rhetoric and Substance of Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping. *Asian Security*, 13(2), 84–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2017.1286163>

¹⁷⁵ Mulvenon, J. (2015). *The Yuan Stops Here: Xi Jinping and the "CMC Chairman Responsibility System."* Hoover Institution. <https://www.hoover.org/research/yuan-stops-here-xi-jinping-and-cmc-chairman-responsibility-system>

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁷ Zhiyue, B. (2016, January). *Is China's PLA Now Xi's Army?* Thediplomat.com. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/is-chinas-pla-now-xis-army>

In a rare event, he appeared in PLA's 90th anniversary in military uniform and observed a significant military parade, compared to the usual Tiananmen Square march¹⁷⁸ which his predecessors were used to hosting, in inner Mongolia where many new instruments and high-tech never before seen weapon systems were shown and paraded, put this alongside the visit to Hong Kong by PLAN Aircraft carrier the *Liaoning* after some hard discourse on Hong Kong's relations with the Mainland¹⁷⁹ and you can see how China is now more relaxed to flex its muscle and show the world its capabilities.

On the external side of matters, China has become more aggressive in different frontiers, such as the East China Sea and South China Sea. It has started building man-made islands in the disputed territories in the South China Sea and has been using its military to enforce its claims. In the case of Paracel islands disputed with Vietnam, China has been basing its SAM systems on the islands¹⁸⁰ and is actively upgrading its military infrastructures. The islands now have the capability to host large number of ships, military and civilian and helicopters¹⁸¹. The installation of point defense

¹⁷⁸ Chan, M. (2017, July 24). *Xi picks war games over parade for Chinese army's 90th birthday*. South China Morning Post. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2103616/xi-jinping-picks-war-games-over-military-parade-chinese>

¹⁷⁹ Haas, B. (2017, July 7). *Chinese aircraft carrier sails into Hong Kong in show of naval power*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/07/chinese-aircraft-carrier-liaoning-sails-into-hong-kong-show-of-naval-power>

¹⁸⁰ Heydarian, R. J. (2016, February). *Requiem for pax Asiana*. Wwww.aljazeera.com. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/02/china-aggressive-posture-south-china-sea-160221074036883.html>

¹⁸¹ *China's Continuing Reclamation in the Paracels*. (2017, August). Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative. <https://amti.csis.org/paracels-beijings-other-buildup>

systems in the Spratly region has been a source of worry as well in the region¹⁸² and has prompted the United States to attempt freedom of navigation (FONOPS), with limited results.

Grand strategies evolution is a result of the passing of time. Previous generations of leaders have all made their own unique contributions to China's strategic direction and now it's Xi's chance to leave his touch on China¹⁸³. Debate exists over whether China's increasingly assertive behavior in its maritime periphery including the deployment of an oil rig in disputed waters off Vietnam's coast in 2014,¹⁸⁴ and land reclamation by creating artificial islands that house an airfield and supply bases in the South China Sea –is part of China's new grand strategy¹⁸⁵ and the change in behavior is quite visible with the transition in leadership in China happening from Hu to Xi.

Chinese officials in more recent years have also been more vocal about the need for the reunification of Taiwan to mainland China, ever asserting they would be open to the idea of using force to make this happen or punishing those that might block it. Suggesting Taiwan should be reunified with mainland is not a new phenomenon in Chinese history since the take over of the CCP, but more vocal push for assertion and physical response is certainly a more recent move and in line with Xi's more assertive and forceful grand strategy. + some quotes and references to forceful reunification.

¹⁸² Panda, A. (2017, March). *South China Sea: China Continues Construction Work on North Island in Paracel Group*. TheDiplomat.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/south-china-sea-china-continues-construction-work-on-north-island-in-paracel-group>

¹⁸³ Norton, S. (2015). *China's Grand Strategy*. University of Sydney China Studies Centre.

¹⁸⁴ Green, M., & Hicks, K. (2017, June 12). *Counter-Coercion Series: China-Vietnam Oil Rig Standoff*. Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative. <https://amti.csis.org/counter-co-oil-rig-standoff>

¹⁸⁵ Jakobson, L. (2014). *China's unpredictable maritime security actors*. https://www.lowyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/chinas-unpredictable-maritime-security-actors_3.pdf

Some academics like Lee¹⁸⁶ have looked at China's rise through different theories, and specifically Lee, through the lens of Social Identity Theory (SID). He states that respect and disrespect has an important role in Chinese foreign policy, and the country would not hesitate to respond militarily if its sovereignty and territorial integrity are disrespected. He finally concludes that China's rise would be more peaceful than threatening. What makes this assessment untrue currently is that a majority of China's aggression assertive acts have not been in response to another actor but were rather starters of a small-scale conflict. Its recent initiation of conflicts in the Doklam area, or general military activity in the South China Sea have not been reactive.

These assertive actions also fall in line with what Tian Boon calls two-pronged foreign policy. The SCS, ECS, Doklam are all part of the Chinese core interest, and that's why we witness such uncompromising and assertive approach towards them¹⁸⁷.

Lee is not alone in making such claims. Ciu Liru¹⁸⁸ writes in the *International Spectator* that "China's peaceful rise will mean vigorous efforts to open up new vistas for general prosperity and a win-win outcome together with all the parties concerned" but China's rise has been anything but win-win and rather a zero sum game that China should be the only actor coming out victorious, which is quite evident in China's approach to the South China Sea conflict and how it wants everything, but is not willing to give other actors anything meaningful in return, quite similar to

¹⁸⁶ Lee, J. J. (2016). Will China's Rise Be Peaceful? A Social Psychological Perspective. *Asian Security*, 12(1), 29–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2016.1140644>

¹⁸⁷ Boon, H. T. (2016). Hardening the Hard, Softening the Soft: Assertiveness and China's Regional Strategy. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 40(5), 639–662. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2016.1221820>

¹⁸⁸ Liru, C. (2012). Peaceful Rise: China's Modernisation Trajectory. *The International Spectator*, 47(2), 14–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2012.683272>

the US neo-conservatives approach to foreign policy¹⁸⁹,. And such an outlook should not be surprising, whilst some academics claim China is a status-quo power and happy with its current position others have pointed out that such assessments are inaccurate and in fact China is a strongly dissatisfied power¹⁹⁰¹⁹¹. In fact, the roots of its expanding military power and desire to change the regional security architecture and aggression lies in such dissatisfaction and desire to change¹⁹².

2.4 New Weapon Systems

Twenty years ago, China's armed forces were equipped with outdated and obsolete Soviet made weaponry or their Chinese clones and were much older and technologically inferior to what the United States had¹⁹³. The main strategy was that higher numbers on the battlefield would cover the shortcomings in technology and it stayed the same for years.

two events that helped change this number vs quality mentality. The first being the third Taiwan crisis where the PLA was bound to face the far technologically superior US Navy. Secondly China also observed the US armed forces, more specifically the US Navy, superior logistics, firepower and power projection during the First Gulf War in 1991 which helped it further realize its

¹⁸⁹ Ding, S. (2010). Analyzing Rising Power from the Perspective of Soft Power: a new look at China's rise to the status quo power. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 19(64), 255–272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560903444207>

¹⁹⁰ Kastner, S. L., & Saunders, P. C. (2011). Is China a Status Quo or Revisionist State? Leadership Travel as an Empirical Indicator of Foreign Policy Priorities1. *International Studies Quarterly*, 56(1), 163–177. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00697.x>

¹⁹¹ Lim, Y.-H. (2014). How (Dis)Satisfied is China? A power transition theory perspective. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 24(92), 280–297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2014.932160>

¹⁹² Cheng, D. (2021, October). *China*. The Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/assessing-threats-us-vital-interests/china>

¹⁹³ Hanlon, M., & Gill, B. (1999). China's Hollow Military. Brookings Institute. Retrieved 29 March 2018, from <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-hollow-military/>.

shortcomings. What China witnessed was that in less than two months, the American lead coalition destroyed and humiliated Saddam's military and expelled it from occupied Kuwait. Before this, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) was perhaps aware of its shortcomings relative, but the war showed the magnitude of the problem. The similarities between the People's Liberation Army and Saddam's armed forces—an army-centric force organized for a defensive campaign and using mainly Soviet made weaponry and tech—created a sense of urgency, as Beijing realized its armed forces were not prepared to face an advanced and strong foe like the United States. The transformations in Chinese military strategy and technology born out of the Gulf War have been colossal.¹⁹⁴

The other significant event was the third Taiwan crisis. During this confrontation with Taiwan and its major ally the U.S., China witnessed a major power projection from the U.S. Navy with two nuclear aircraft carriers, *USS Nimitz* and *USS Independence*, and numerous other auxiliary navy vessels heading towards the Taiwan strait to coerce the Chinese towards stopping their missile test and redistributing the force they had stationed near across the strait and relive Taiwan from the fear of an offensive¹⁹⁵.

This show of force from the Americans in support of Taiwan and their performance in Kuwait and Iraq and unilateral missions and their powerful power projection force, their aircraft carriers, thought the Chinese a lesson that they implemented for their future defense policy, and deterred them from further escalating the issue. This was the clearest example to date of the so-called

¹⁹⁴ Dahm, M. (2021, March 1). *China's Desert Storm Education*. U.S. Naval Institute. <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2021/march/chinas-desert-storm-education>

¹⁹⁵ Thies, W. J., & Bratton, P. C. (2004). When Governments Collide in the Taiwan Strait. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 27(4), 556–584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362369042000314510>

‘revolution in military affairs’ (RMA) which centered on the use of high technology, and yes it was a jarring wakeup call for the PLA that its people-centric approach was even more outdated than previously thought¹⁹⁶.

The lesson was that China needs to modernize its armed forces, especially their navy and air force¹⁹⁷, power projection, if they wanted to play a bigger role in their own regional waters and abroad and the Chinese learnt and implemented what they got out of this. Nowadays, the PLA and its forces, such as the Air Force, Navy and the Strategic Support Force are very technologically advanced and amongst the top four or five compared to rivals.

Bates and O’Hanlon¹⁹⁸ talk about the PLA and its power projection tools in their 1999 article and say:

The PRC’s power projection capabilities, too, are constrained by huge weaknesses—especially in areas such as aerial refueling, electronic warfare, command and control, and amphibious and air assault assets. China owns considerably less top-level military equipment than medium military powers like Japan and Britain; it owns even less than smaller powers such as Italy, South Korea or the Netherlands. Nor has it embarked on a concerted effort to purchase sophisticated new weapons

Twenty years has passed since this article was published and a majority of these weaknesses have been tackled. For example, ever since 2019, China has introduced three 40,000-ton Type 075 landing helicopter dock (LHD) ships, with four more to be added in the future. The Type 075 will

¹⁹⁶ Cordesman, A. (2014). *The Real Revolution in Military Affairs*. Csis.org.
<https://www.csis.org/analysis/real-revolution-military-affairs>

¹⁹⁷ Grant, R. (2013, January 1). *Meet the New PLAAF*. Air Force Magazine.
<http://www.airforcemag.com/magazinearchive/pages/2013/january%202013/0113plaaaf.aspx>

¹⁹⁸ Gill, B., & O’Hanlon, M. (1999, June). *China’s Hollow Military*. Brookings.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-hollow-military>

be complementing the eight Type 071 landing platform dock (LPD). All these vessels have been introduced into service since 2007, showing a massive jump in capability in less than 15 years¹⁹⁹.

Another example is in the air, China has gone from over reliance on third generation fighters, towards 4.5 generation and attempts at gaining stealth, which is referred to as fifth generation, in which China has made good advances. It has increased the quality of its airforce, by building indigenous models such as the J-10 C, or buying new and capable Russian platforms such as Sukhoi Su-35s. Senate Armed Services Committee member James Inhofe (R-Okla.) said in a confirmation hearing Oct. 5 that “Our commanders tell us that by 2025, the Chinese will have more fifth-generation stealth fighters on the front line than we do.”²⁰⁰ Displaying the speed and progress of China’s fifth generation fighter program and desire for air superiority, in number and technology.

The biggest transformation has been witnessed at sea. The tonnage of the PLA navy has gone through the roof over the past decade. In some years, such as the Q1 2021, the PLA Navy has introduced 90,000 tons worth of new ships into its service. China is also perhaps the biggest new contender in the Aircraft carrier race. It used Varyag, an ex-Soviet carrier as a testbed and floating academy. Built a second improved clone of the Varyag, and now is on path at its third AC which is much bigger, more advanced and much more capable than the Varyag, sporting catapults and allowing it the PLAN to launch fixed-wing aircraft with heavier payloads and more fuel, as well as larger aircraft²⁰¹. This is a major capability boost compared with the two older vessels with

¹⁹⁹*Expansionist China: Upgrading Amphibious Capabilities.* (2021, July 28). Chanakya Forum. <https://chanakyaforum.com/expansionist-china-upgrading-amphibious-capabilities>

²⁰⁰ Tirpak, J. A. (2021, October 8). *China Likely Stepping Up Stealth Fighter Production.* Air Force Magazine. <https://www.airforcemag.com/china-likely-stepping-up-stealth-fighter-production/>

²⁰¹ Funaiole, M., & Hart, B. (2021, March). *Understanding China’s 2021 Defense Budget.* Wwww.csis.org. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-chinas-2021-defense-budget>

skyrams. The increased number of Aircraft carriers means “Therefore, in the future, Chinese aircraft carriers will definitely appear on the high seas of the world. The training for our aircraft carriers in the Pacific Ocean is going further and further, and has gone beyond the first island chain.” One retired colonel of the PLA said²⁰² allowing China to meander farther away and secure its interests and project power on a global scale, similar to the United States.

Apart from the AC’s, the crown jewel in the PLAN isn’t some Russian frigate anymore, such as the sovreigmany class, but the indigenous built type 54 and type 55, which are far superior in technology and firepower to their respective Russian built systems. Since 2008. China has commissioned around 30 type 54s and 3 type 55, with more in the pipeline and some conducting sea-trials awaiting commissioning²⁰³.

Indeed, China has surpassed Russia when It comes military shipbuilding, capability, speed and firepower.

2.5 New bases and overseas expansion

Overseas bases are an important component of power projection. A Rand institute study mentions that “military facilities used primarily for power projection are not defensive strongholds but rather launching pads and logistical hubs that support operations beyond their immediate vicinity”²⁰⁴. An

²⁰² Ng, T. (2021, December 27). *China eyes international waters with bold plan to develop aircraft carriers*. South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3161170/chinas-aircraft-carriers-will-operate-worlds-oceans-ex-colonel>

²⁰³ Dangwal, A. (2022, January 14). *China’s “Largest & Most Advanced” Destroyer Gets Combat-Ready; PLA Navy Set To Receive More Of Type-055 Warships*. Latest Asian, Middle-East, EurAsian, Indian News. <https://eurasianimes.com/china-destroyer-gets-combat-ready-navy-to-get-more-of-type-055>

²⁰⁴ Pettyjohn, S. (2012). U.S. global defense posture, 1783-2011 (p. 12). RAND, CA

internal Pentagon memo also states that a country with military bases abroad is “convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests”²⁰⁵ and if we believe China is trying to replicate the American way of power, it was within reason to expect it to try and copy and maintain its own bases abroad.

The continuous engagement in anti-piracy missions off the Somalian coast since 2008 would have compelled the PLA Navy to look for creation of a full-fledged naval base to meet its long-term needs. Also, such operations can be a dry run for more complex operations overseas in the future, but not having a base close-by could be a hamper to such efforts²⁰⁶. One can easily draw parallels with the Diego Garcia which serves the need of the US Navy in the Indian Ocean Region.

For a long time, there was speculation that China is scouting for naval bases in the Indian Ocean to protect its maritime interests. When it funded and after failure in payment received the Hambantota deep water port in Southern Sri Lanka for 99 years, and similar arrangements with Maldives and the Seychelles are possible to, it was indicated that it was purely a commercial venture and Bangladeshi officials have mentioned numerous times that they would be the sole security provider of the facility²⁰⁷. The fact that such a facility can be used easily for turning around

²⁰⁵ “Excerpts From Pentagon’s Plan: “Prevent the Re-Emergence of a New Rival.” (1992, March 8). *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/excerpts-from-pentagon-s-plan-prevent-the-re-emergence-of-a-new-rival.html?pagewanted=all>

²⁰⁶ Kardon, I. (2020, October). *China’s Geopolitical Gambit in Gwadar* | *Wilson Center*. The Wilson Center. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/chinas-geopolitical-gambit-gwadar>

²⁰⁷ Hillman, I. (2018, April). *Game of Loans: How China Bought Hambantota*. *Csis.org*. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/game-loans-how-china-bought-hambantota>

of Chinese vessels and providing of logistic support, rest and recreation for crew on long voyages did not escape the attention of naval observers in India and worldwide²⁰⁸²⁰⁹.

Yet the start to the foreign base section was announced in 2017 and that was the opening of China's military base in Djibouti, the first of its kind for China. Djibouti's strategic geographic position could be used for a variety of missions for anyone based there, giving it access to the Bab-el-mendeb, the Hormuz Strait and a base close to the Indian Ocean region and Africa. Whilst under construction it was mentioned that 'It will be used to resupply navy ships taking part in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions off the coasts of Yemen and Somalia'²¹⁰ and also United Nations Peace Keeping Operations in Mali and South Sudan, but currently Chinese military is based there and recently staged their first firing mission from this base. The move to establish Djibouti also has more symbolic values too, Cabestan states that such a move is a true turning point for the country's security and foreign policy and is a good showcase for Xi's new international ambitions. He states that "Djibouti PLA base personnel is highly likely to eventually take part in combat operations, potentially compelling the Chinese government to instill additional flexibility in its non-interference principle"²¹¹.

²⁰⁸ Kanwal, G. (2018). Pakistan's Gwadar Port: A New Naval Base in China's String of Pearls in the Indo-Pacific. Csis.org. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/pakistans-gwadar-port-new-naval-base-chinas-string-pearls-indo-pacific>.

²⁰⁹ Pattanaik, S. (2017). *New Hambantota Port Deal: China Consolidates its Stakes in Sri Lanka*. Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis. from https://idsa.in/idsacomments/new-hambantota-port-deal-china-consolidates-its-stakes-in-sri-lanka_sspattanaik_140817.

²¹⁰ *China opens first overseas base in Djibouti*. (2017, August). Wwww.aljazeera.com. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/china-opens-overseas-base-djibouti-170801104040586.html>

²¹¹ Cabestan, J.-P. (2019). China's Military Base in Djibouti: A Microcosm of China's Growing Competition with the United States and New Bipolarity. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 29(125), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1704994>

As for Gwadar in Pakistan, this has provided another base close to the choke point, Strait of Hormuz from which PLA Navy units can launch surveillance missions to protect ships carrying energy to China and merchandise from China in to the lucrative markets of the west. Pakistan considers China as its all-weather friend and vice versa, the recent China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a project underway between the two sides and this would make it easier for China to use the deep-sea port of Gwadar, where it is investing millions, without any restrictions as and when warranted and news surfaced recently that China is planning to construct a military base close to Gwadar. This would be China's second foreign military base and geographically is very close to Indian funded port of Chabahar in Iran and could give China its first military base in proximity of the Persian Gulf region and its oil rich fields, ports and sea routes²¹².

2.6 Conclusion

With all that was mentioned in this section, it seems the once topic of China's "strings of pearls", a geopolitical theory about China's attempts to build 'nodes' of influence to gain and build ports in the Indian Ocean Region²¹³, which had its supporters and rejecters²¹⁴ is now fully in action and countries across the Asia-Pacific should take note of it, especially the cases being studied here, as they are all Maritime powers.

²¹² Conrad, P. B. (2017). China's Access to Gwadar Port: Strategic Implications and Options for India. *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 13(1), 55–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09733159.2017.1317123>

²¹³ Brewster, D. (2014). Beyond the "String of Pearls": is there really a Sino-Indian security dilemma in the Indian Ocean?. *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 10(2), 133–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2014.922350>

²¹⁴ Khurana, G. S. (2008). China's "String of Pearls" in the Indian Ocean and Its Security Implications. *Strategic Analysis*, 32(1), 1–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160801886314>

What this chapter aimed to illustrate was that China is slowly building up its military power and has patched up its shortcomings over the years. It has also taken a page from American and is busy building Aircraft carriers and a powerful navy, and foreign military bases to be able to project power abroad and outside of its geographical area of influence. This gives China the material capacity needed to be a powerful nation.

Alongside material power, China has also become more threatening, coercive and assertive towards its neighbors, and with discourse of a reemerging China, and a country that would not like to see another 'Century of Humiliation' dictated on to it, China is also gaining the motivations to be a threat. Capability, without motivation and desire to threaten doesn't mean much, but when they come next to each other, it then gives neighbors a cause of concern.

Chapter 3: Challenges to US alliance system

Alliance is a formal and legal agreement or contract among a group of states. US has a history of forming alliances and creating networks since the Cold War era. After signing innumerable trade and defence pacts, US has bind itself with different countries and continents. US has partnered with many states over shared interests and respect for mutual cooperation through bilateral and multilateral engagements. However, scholars argue that many times alliances for US have acted

as a risk roping over wars that US itself does not need to fight.²¹⁵ The theory of entanglement asserts that alliances pull states into conflicts, risk their reputation, makes them adopt interests and norms, and provokes adversaries.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, US has been the world's most advanced democratic country and has exuberating military power with soft negotiation tactics that has given the state its moral leadership skills which its allies admire.

The US Pivot to Asia strategy, with its military engagement, Indo-Pacific linkage, multilateral and bilateral diplomatic processes, had its focus on reordering America's relations with East Asia, a region that witnessed China's rise, multiple regional institutions and transitions on leadership. Guided by mutual cooperation and liberal norms on international order, America sought to cultivate cooperative zones wherein US would have its diplomatic, security, and economic investments. But speculations are rising over whether the commitments can be fulfilled by the 45th President of US Donald Trump or not. Trump has put a question on America's ability to champion human rights, free trade or even democracy.

Trump proudly resonated America First in his national interest. And while his vision did find supporters from those that are disgruntled by the impact of globalization and its diminishing expectations, Trump's security regime has been rather complex and ambiguous. So much so that the US allies have lost their confidence in US as their security provider. Whether it is the issue of power-balancing between US-China or denuclearization of North Korea or withdrawal from

²¹⁵ Lind, J. (2013). Keep, Toss, or Fix? Assessing U.S. Alliances in East Asia. *APSA 2013 Annual Meeting Paper*. p. 20.

²¹⁶ Scholarly works arguing "entanglement theory are: Gholz, E., Press, D. G., & Sapolsky, H. M. (1997). Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation. *International Security*, 21(4), 5–48. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.21.4.5>

Mcmahon, R. J. (1991). Credibility and World Power: Exploring the Psychological Dimension in Postwar American Diplomacy. *Diplomatic History*, 15(4), 455–472. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1991.tb00142.x>

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) or withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal or inability to pressure Russia to withdraw from Crimea, US has not only undermined its role of a security provider in the Asia-Pacific region but also dampened the hopes of a strong multilateral order.

3.1 Perceived Isolationism & rise of nationalism

Trump's vision coincides with Alexis de Tocqueville's belief in the concept of "American Exceptionalism" which preaches that Americans must believe in their potential to become economically, politically and religiously better through values like democracy, liberty, equality, and social mobility.²¹⁷ Decades later, Ronald Reagan also expressed his views on America by stating that "it was a tall city built on rocks stronger than oceans, windswept, God Blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace"²¹⁸, such discourse might sound like a fable to outsiders, but it certainly has support in the United States.

Trump's political campaign has persistently highlighted the views of American Exceptionalism. His "Make America Great Again" seeks to place America under a positive light that cherishes patriotism and nationalistic fervour. In this manner, President Trump is seemingly following George Washington and his advice of steering "clear of permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world" and Thomas Jefferson's words – "Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations; entangling alliances with none".²¹⁹ The "America First" catchphrase has been Trump's strategy to place the American welfares above anything else. While Trump has garnered love from

²¹⁷ Martin, D. (2007). *Rebuilding brand America : what we must do to restore our reputation and safeguard the future of American business abroad*. American Management Association.

²¹⁸ Transcript of Reagan's Farewell Address to American People. (1989, January 12). *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/01/12/news/transcript-of-reagan-s-farewell-address-to-american-people.html>

²¹⁹ Quoted in Fromkin, D. (1970). Entangling Alliances. *Foreign Affairs*, 48(4), 688. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20039476>

those who support his ideas, Trump has also incurred disapprovals from many. For instance, a survey by Pew Research Center reports that 70 percent of international respondents did not support Trump's leadership. Most Canadians, Germans, Swedes, Dutch, and UK respondents said that US is not addressing global problems at all.²²⁰

Trump has boldly attacked immigrants, racial minorities, and refugees. In his political campaigns Trump stated that his presidency would build a border wall to keep the "bad hombres" out. He assured to ban Muslim immigrants from entering US.²²¹ He has criminalized refugees as asylum seekers entering America and stated that they are terrorists and mistreatment to refugees would serve as a deterrent for those planning to come to America.²²² Expressing his views on immigration, Trump has on many occasions appreciated world leaders who have either restricted immigration or planning to do so. For instance, Trump praised Israel on using border walls for stopping illegal immigration and claimed that if done in US it would bring similar results.²²³ He supported the anti-asylum posters in Australia.²²⁴ And, on European immigration law stated that

²²⁰ Wike, R., Stokes, B., Poushter, J., Silver, L., & Fetterolf, J. (2018, October). *Trump's International Ratings Remain Low, Especially Among Key Allies*. Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project; Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/10/01/trumps-international-ratings-remain-low-especially-among-key-allies/>

²²¹ Giorgis, H. (2019, January 14). *The Faulty Logic in Trump's Travel Ban*. The Atlantic; The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/01/trumps-travel-ban-logic-flaw/579631/>

²²² Kanno-Youngs, Z. (2019, July 3). Trump Says Migrants Are "Living Far Better" in Overcrowded Border Facilities. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/03/us/politics/trump-border-patrol.html>

²²³ Booth, W. (2017, January 29). Israel's Netanyahu applauds Trump's plan for wall; Mexico not pleased. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/01/29/israels-netanyahu-applauds-trumps-plan-for-wall-mexico-not-pleased/>

²²⁴ Withers, R. (2019, July 3). *Trump Is Right That "Much Can Be Learned" From Australia on Immigration. Mostly, What Not to Do*. Slate Magazine. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/07/trump-morrison-australia-immigration-manus-nauru.html>

“Allowing the immigration to take place in Europe is a shame ... So I think allowing millions and millions of people to come into Europe is very, very sad ... I think you are losing your culture”.²²⁵

Trump’s attitude towards immigrants, pro-white nationalist, and his responses to humanitarian crisis across the globe has termed his political stratagem as isolationist and authoritarian. His famous “Make America Great Again” slogan endorses isolationism and white nationalist sentiments that demands Americans to proudly support authoritarian leaders who are pro-nationalists come what may. He has expressed support and liking for undemocratic, and authoritarian leader like Vladimir Putin, and Kim Jungun.

The pardoning of three military personnel convicted of war crimes by Trump signifies the current isolationist policy of America and his disregard for what the world thinks of the US, and further enlightens the Zero-sum nature of Trumps policies and patriotism. In 2019, Trump signed the Executive Grant of Clemency for Army First Lieutenant Clint Lorance, Army Major Mathew Golsteyn, and an order for promoting Special Warfare Operator First Class Edward R. Gallagher to the grade of E-7. An official statement claims that President Trump is “ultimately responsible for ensuring that the law is enforced and when appropriate, that mercy is granted. For more than two hundred years, presidents have used their authority to offer second chances to deserving individual, including those in uniform who have served our country. These actions are in keeping with this long history”.²²⁶ Contrarily, the public argues that not only Trump’s actions undermined military code of justice and set a bad example for troops in the field, “the moves signalled that as

²²⁵ Dunn, T. N. (2018, July 13). *I told May how to do Brexit but she wrecked it — US trade deal is off!* The Sun. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6766531/trump-may-brexit-us-deal-off/>

²²⁶ *Statement from the Press Secretary – The White House.* (2019, November 15). Trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-press-secretary-97/>

commander in chief, Mr. Trump intends to use his power as the ultimate arbiter of military justice in ways unlike any other president in modern times”.²²⁷

Whilst these may seem like an insignificant event, but they could affect the alliance relations and the trust of the other party towards the United States because of President Trumps numerous pardoning’s, especially of US serviceman who were often sentenced or under investigation due to committing war crimes abroad in favour of notions of conservatism, patriotism and heroism. all of which are used as themes in his *Make America Great Again* slogan, and could signal to an ally that if US servicemen do something against the law in your territory, they will not face justice at home and is another blow to the credibility of alliances.

Upon further introspection, it is clear that the isolationist policy of Trump is not new and has rather re-emerged after George Washington and Woodrow Wilson embraced the concept. Isolationism draws its inspiration from the realist theory of international relations in which Hans Morgenthau propounds a stark response to idealism. Isolationist strategy leaves the partners and opponents of a state to their own actions, and it has been evident in many of the Trump’s speeches where he lays emphasis on - “doing it alone”, “America first”, and “the others left behind” mottos.

Now one might argue that with Trump gone and his administration over, his way of thinking would also leave US politics. But it is important to remember that the Republican Party is considered isolationist at this moment in time, something that former President George W Bush also pointed

²²⁷ Philipps, D (2019 November) “Trump Clears Three Service Members in War Crimes Cases. (2019, November 15). *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/15/us/trump-pardons.html>

out in an interview²²⁸ stating that current the party is “I would describe it as isolationist, protectionist and, to a certain extent, nativist,”²²⁹. So, Donald Trump might go away, but his ideas will not and in another election cycle, himself or someone believing in the same ideas could come conquer the White House. To round up, whilst Trump has been the agent of a lot of such ideas and actions, he is not the only one believing in them in the United States.

3. 2 Transactional Foreign Policy

Transactionalism is defined as “the will to cut deals with any actor that share American interests, regardless of it being for or against the American values and how transactional that relationship is”.

Rachman argues that Trump sees military and security commitments as part of a connected set of issues that can be used as a bargaining chip in a broad range of negotiating topics and that he would use these tickets as tokens in his zero-sum game.²³⁰ In his book *The Art of the Deal*, Trump argues that negotiators must seek their interests, make use of their maximum options, use BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement), protect your downside, improve offer, and weaken opponent’s BATNA.²³¹ While, Zartman notes that “Trump is a hard bargainer, who sees the negotiation as a competition against opponents and also as an effort at maximum achievement at lowest cost, and who sees playing alternatives and even withdrawal as the central negotiation

²²⁸ Jackson, D. (2021, April 20). *George W. Bush: Republicans have turned “isolationist” and “to a certain extent, nativist.”* USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2021/04/20/george-w-bush-gop-has-turned-isolationist-and-nativist/7305569002/>

²²⁹ Ibid

²³⁰ Rachman, G. (2018). *Easternization Asia’s rise and America’s decline : from Obama to Trump and beyond*. New York Other Press.

²³¹ Trump, D. and Schwartz, T. (1987) *Trump: The Art of the Deal*, Penguin Random House,

dynamics”, he maintains that Trump’s negotiating skills do not leave room for incentives or reciprocity or any diplomatic bilateralism as he aims to be the sole person winning, or what we call a zero-sum game rather than a win-win situation where all parties could leave the negotiations with something.²³² *The Economist* writes that Trump is an unqualified American leader because “he promised to run the country as he ran his family business, which would logically mean with nepotism, autocratically, with great regard for his personal interests and little for the rules” or anyone else²³³, which sounds vastly different to the announced value-centred and ethical approach of Trump’s predecessors.

A recent example of transactional foreign policy of Trump is the demand made to Japan in 2019 regarding an increase in their cost-sharing for continued military presence by 300 percent from \$2 billion to \$8 billion²³⁴, a sentiment not liked by Japan which already shares a big portion of the cost of American presence on its soil²³⁵.

Besides Japan, US has also demanded South Korea to make similar increase of payment for continued protection from American troops a.k.a. cost+50, meaning that South Korea should pay for all the costs of US basing in the country as well an extra 50 percent because the US has decided to be there and as a royalty. In a speech delivered on 27 April 2016, Trump stated that “countries

²³² Processes of International Negotiation Program (PIN), C. I. (2016). *PINPoints Network Perspectives 43, December 2016*. JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05521>

²³³ *The Mueller probe is as much about the rule of law as Russian meddling*. (2018, April 14). *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2018/04/14/the-mueller-probe-is-as-much-about-the-rule-of-law-as-russian-meddling>

²³⁴ Gramer, L. S., Robbie. (2019, November 15). *Trump Asks Tokyo to Quadruple Payments for U.S. Troops in Japan*. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/15/trump-asks-tokyo-quadruple-payments-us-troops-japan>

²³⁵ *EDITORIAL: Trump’s “Cost Plus 50” strategy could undermine its own security | The Asahi Shimbun: Breaking News, Japan News and Analysis*. (2019, June 16). *The Asahi Shimbun*. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13067329>

we are defending must pay for the cost of this defense. And if not, the U.S. must be prepared to let these countries defend themselves”. Therefore, while the Trump administration justifies its move by stating that for long America’s allies are free-riding the security that US provides, this form of transactional policy can possibly make the allies “rethink their agreements to host U.S. forces (and) reduce the U.S. military’s ability to operate globally, if the United States is later unable to obtain permission to use foreign bases in times of crisis”.²³⁶

By stating that allies are free-riding, America is possibly trying to say that allies should also take their own defence power seriously and not complement it to American military force. But the allies are “attuned enough to the vagaries of international politics not to take it for granted”.²³⁷ Simply put, the move is bound to exacerbate anti-American sentiments between US and its Asian allies. Also, such discussions and public disagreements over costs, goes against the soul of alliances and partnership and makes the US a security contractor, and not an ally.

Trumps’ election in 2016 brought trade and international regulations under a heated debate, especially because the current American stance is about renegotiating trade deals. Scholars argue that the “aggressive stance of the Trump Administration with the imposition of tariffs, the invocation of national security exception, and the attacks on the global rule-based trade system have led many to raise serious concerns about the isolationist policies and trade wars of the United

²³⁶ Pettyjohn, S. L. (2019, March 15). “*Cost Plus 50*” Explained. RAND Institute. <https://www.rand.org/blog/2019/03/cost-plus-50-explained.html>

²³⁷ Lanoszka, A. (2015). Do Allies Really Free Ride? *Survival*, 57(3), 133–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1046229>

States under its current leadership”.²³⁸ Zartman remarks that Trump is a risk-taker, offers few to none concessions, and focusses on his position.²³⁹

The “America First” approach and “Make America Great Again” slogan are both boosting of unilateralism and transactional foreign policy of America. Consequently, Trump has given leverage to protectionism and undermined liberal economic order. This has not just diminished America’s credibility as a reliable economic partner but also led to the loosing of the confidence of allies in US.

Trump declares himself as a “tariff man”. He uses tariff to pressurize countries to grant US concessions. Tanaka (2019) notes that “Trump administration has imposed tariffs on over US\$360 billion worth of Chinese goods while China has retaliated with over US\$110 billion of tariffs on US goods. Trumps’ tariffs have also been aimed at allies, including steel and aluminium tariffs against Canada, Japan, Mexico, and the European Union. The threat of tariffs against the Japanese automobile industry cast a shadow over negotiations for the recently concluded US-Japan trade deal”²⁴⁰. Allies and enemies getting the same treatment in economic matters also doesn’t look great for the US or its allies.

In addition, Trump has chosen to ignore world leaders who violate human rights on the grounds of the matter being an internal issue. When Saudi Arabia’s Prince Mohammed Bin Salman

²³⁸ Galizzi, P. (2019). International Trade: Isolationism, Trade Wars, & Trump. *Fordham International Law Journal*, 42(5). <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2754&context=ilj>

²³⁹ Zartman, I. W. (2019). International Diplomacy after Trump, with Antecedents. *Negotiation Journal*, 35(1), 111–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12284>

²⁴⁰ Tanaka, H. (2019, October). *East Asia Insights | The Crisis of US Credibility in East Asia*. Japan Centre for International Exchange. <https://www.jcie.org/analysis/east-asia-insights/east-asia-insights-the-crisis-of-us-credibility-in-east-asia/>

allegedly ordered the murder of a Washington Post and US green card holder journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Trump never commented on the issue.²⁴¹ And was rather seen to support Salman's claim to innocence despite United Nations reporting that Salman was responsible²⁴², although later on he did state he would not endanger billions of weapons deals between the two countries for the life of a US green card holder. Similarly, when the Israeli government violated human rights of Palestinians, Trump ignored and did not issue an official response. In fact, Trump's meetings with Kim Jong Un reflected his legitimacy to dictatorial and authoritarian regimes.²⁴³ While, North Korea ceased the testing of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles for a period, it had not stopped the testing of short-range ballistic missiles and launching of submarines or the progress of its military nuclear program.

In a speech to US Secretary of State personnel, Rex Tillerson stated that the US should not let human rights get in the way of its national interests, and human rights should be used against hostile nations like Iran and US repressive allies should be given a pass²⁴⁴. This sounds contradictory to the previous paragraph, but such is the nature of politics and policy making under the Trump presidency.

Moreover, there have been instances wherein a shift in Trump's human rights values been marked. Trump supported torture of accused terrorists despite US being the signatory of United Nations

²⁴¹ Landler, M. (2018, November 20). In Extraordinary Statement, Trump Stands With Saudis Despite Khashoggi Killing. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/20/world/middleeast/trump-saudi-khashoggi.html>

²⁴³ Simon, S. (2018, October 6). Opinion: Donald Trump "Fell In Love" With Kim Jong Un. *NPR.org*. <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/06/654857533/opinion-donald-trump-fell-in-love-with-kim-jong-un>

²⁴⁴ Toosi, N. (2017, December 19). *Leaked memo schooled Tillerson on human rights*. POLITICO. <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/12/19/tillerson-state-human-rights-304118>

Convention against Torture. A review of all these cases reveal that regional defence mechanism has become vulnerable and US as a security provider has not acted responsibly.

As one author pointed out for Trump “solidarity of the West is a liberal myth...the old world order is dead, and Trump’s foreign policy will be driven by short-term deals, even with dictators”²⁴⁵

3. 3 Condescending approach towards allies

Trump’s foreign policy has been that of “America First” which speaks volumes about the superior status of America. As a result, Trump’s foreign policy has embraced unilateralism, that is, without any consultation with allies US takes decisions, even at times if it related to them and their security, witnessed in Trump and Kim Jung’s direct negotiations. The withdrawal from Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Paris Agreement on climate change, and from the Iran nuclear deal exemplifies the condescending approach of US over its allies and unilateral American action. Tanaka (2019) asserts that unilateralism has undermined “trust in US participation in future agreements, undercuts the future leadership role of the United States in multilateral initiatives, and damages the US national interest and shared regional and global interests”.²⁴⁶

It is crucial to understand that the post-Cold War leadership status of America is passing away, especially when US is not spearheading world’s leadership and other regional powers like China, Japan, India, etc. are rising to the status of leadership. US needs to work within the framework of

²⁴⁵ Hitchcock, W. I. (2018, July 13). *How the GOP Embraced the World—And Then Turned Away*. POLITICO. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/07/13/gop-isolationism-trump-eisenhower-219003/>

²⁴⁶ Tanaka, H. (2019, October). *East Asia Insights | The Crisis of US Credibility in East Asia*. Japan Centre for International Exchange. <https://www.jcie.org/analysis/east-asia-insights/east-asia-insights-the-crisis-of-us-credibility-in-east-asia/>

a coalition and not antagonise neighbours and allies. Trump administration needs to devise a strategy that is built on multilateral cooperation.

The Japan-South Korea conflict, both old and strong US allies, for instance, needs intervention and assistance from US to fix it. The age-old historical, territorial and trade conflict between world's two economic giants - Japan and South Korea - has negatively impacted security cooperation between Japan, US, and South Korea. However, US has not been able to help fix the current tensions and there is a need for a trilateral cooperative approach and quite diplomacy to normalize the relations²⁴⁷. Kathryn Botto (2020) states that “Trilateral cooperation is more than a force multiplier – to ensuring the United States, South Korea, and Japan can prevent catastrophic conflict, loss of life, and widespread destruction on all sides”.²⁴⁸ Most importantly, both Japan and South Korea have vested interests in cooperation with US. Firstly, they want to group against China's dominance in the region. And secondly, there is the looming security concerns regarding North Korea's long- and short-range ballistic missiles. Both South Korea and Japan fear that they are on the target of North Korea's nuclear weapons.

Kathryn Botto (2020) adds that “United States can successfully help its two allies communicate better; exchange data and intelligence; align training priorities; and adopt shared terminology, procedures and doctrines”.²⁴⁹ But what is hindering a response is their ability to jointly operate

²⁴⁷ *RESOLVED: The United States Can Fix the Japan-South Korea Problem*. (2021, July 9). CSIS. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/resolved-united-states-can-fix-japan-south-korea-problem>

²⁴⁸ Botto, K. (2020, March 18). *Overcoming Obstacles to Trilateral U.S.-ROK-Japan Interoperability - Korea Net Assessment 2020: Politicized Security and Unchanging Strategic Realities*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/03/18/overcoming-obstacles-to-trilateral-u.s.-rok-japan-interoperability-pub-81236>

²⁴⁹ Botto, K. (2020, March 18). *Overcoming Obstacles to Trilateral U.S.-ROK-Japan Interoperability - Korea Net Assessment 2020: Politicized Security and Unchanging Strategic Realities*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/03/18/overcoming-obstacles-to-trilateral-u.s.-rok-japan-interoperability-pub-81236>

and remove mutual mistrust. Until now US efforts has not generated any optimism for both the governments, who are witnessing the spread of tensions from security to economic realm. On the one hand, Japan and South Korean bilateral relations is damaged by rivalry, colonial rule and war, the US interests are also at stake. As a regional security provider, US is not able to be guarantee restoration of cooperation and reconciliation.

3. 4 Ability to stand up to China

It cannot be denied that the international financial institutions such as, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the World Trade Organization overtly reflect policy prescriptions of US and echo continued influence of American values. The fact that China devised an alternative financial institutional order through Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) communicates that China is seeking a dominant position like America²⁵⁰.

China is also aggressively moving ahead with its One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. OBOR is a long-term flagship project of China that ties China with several countries and improves China's bilateral and multilateral relations. is no secret that ASEAN nations are highly dependent on China for trade and therefor do not wish to balance China. A scholar notes that Asia Pacific region is dominated by China and this fact questions America's status as a regional member.²⁵¹ Furthermore, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a Eurasian alliance that is much larger than any

²⁵⁰ Weiss, M. (2017). *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)*. Congressional Research Service. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R44754.pdf>

²⁵¹ Kang, D. C. (2010). *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute*. In *Columbia University Press*. Columbia University Press. <http://cup.columbia.edu/book/east-asia-before-the-west/9780231153188>

other multilateral grouping in the world. Through SCO, China means to gain political and economic influence. It is argued that “Chinese expeditionary operations and military presence in Central Asia and Afghanistan may present operational challenges for the U.S. military”.²⁵²

As a result, US and its allies need to manage their relations with China and unilateral measures to manage trade wars might damage global economy and liberal international order for all. Scholars note that China can become a key beneficiary to the changes in the international system.²⁵³ Some argue that China’s foreign policy or OBOR is like Chinese Marshall Plan and that it is clear that the scale of Chinese ambition, and the willingness of its leadership to experiment with an new institutional order, one that favors them, and position itself as the unlikely champion of economic liberalisation²⁵⁴and the US doesn’t seem to have a plan to counter this economic flexing of muscles from China.

3. 5 US crumbling commitment to defence and of allies

The US Pivot of Asia since its inception remained focussed on extending security and stability through US military to Asia-Pacific region. In 2012 in his address to Shangri-La Security Dialog in Singapore, US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta stated that “while the US military will remain a

²⁵² Southerland, M., Green, W., & Janik, S. (2020). *November 12, 2020 The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Testbed for Chinese Power Projection*. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organization-Testbed_for_Chinese_Power_Projection.pdf

²⁵³ Beeson, M. (2016). *China’s Place in Regional and Global Governance: A New World Comes Into View*. *Global Policy*, 7(4). https://www.academia.edu/26531457/Chinas_Place_in_Regional_and_Global_Governance_A_New_World_Comes_Into_View.

²⁵⁴ Kellogg, T. (2017, January 24). *Xi’s Davos Speech: Is China the New Champion for the Liberal International Order?* *The Diplomat*.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/xis-davos-speech-is-china-the-new-champion-for-the-liberal-international-order/>

global force for security and stability, we will of necessity rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific region". The pivot planned new military deployments, access to US air force facilities and Indian Ocean navy base, and conduct joint exercises for Australia, Philippines and Singapore. Perhaps The most important announcement was Secretary Panetta's commitment that the U.S. would deploy sixty percent of its air and naval forces to the Pacific theatre and increase the number of military exercises²⁵⁵.

However, the pivot did not lead to any rebalancing as envisioned. Scholars maintain that US pivot to Asia has de-balanced relations between US and East Asian countries. Initially, US offered a leadership to the Asia-Pacific, a region with largest economies and a competitor called People's Republic of China. But as Wei Ling argues "U.S. security commitment and increased U.S. military deployments and joint military exercises were interpreted by the Philippines, Vietnam, and Japan as U.S. commitment to defend the disputed waters, reefs, and islands, hence adding oil to the fuel of their nationalism" when in fact US had no intention to go to war (Ling 2013:152). Ling argues that this created "a side-taking dilemma for ASEAN countries" and they thought that US is trying to counterbalance China²⁵⁶.

The Pivo did not last long and even during the final years of the Obama administration it was already dwindling. with the Obama administration still focused on the West Asia and Russia, Asian

²⁵⁵ Alexander, D. (2012, June 2). U.S. will put more warships in Asia: Panetta. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asia-security-idUKBRE85100Y20120602>

²⁵⁶ Ling, W. (2013). Rebalancing or De-Balancing: U.S. Pivot and East Asian Order. *American Foreign Policy Interests*, 35(3), 148–154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920.2013.799416>

allies found America's attitude and focus neglectful towards them and began to question its commitment to the region in the first place.²⁵⁷

The illegal annexation of Crimea is an example of degrading security order and dwindling power of West, especially America, in discouraging other world powers in challenging sovereignty of the Asia-Pacific region. In 2021, Russian annexation of Crimea turns 18 years and yet Ukraine has not gathered the strength from its allies to resolve the issue of Russia's seizure of Crimea, the biggest land annexation in Europe after the end of World War II. In 2014 when Crimean Supreme Council conducted a referendum to either join Russia or return to Crimea's 1992 constitution, no international observers were present. Amidst the chaotic circumstances, the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Crimea to Russia was signed between Russian and Crimean officials. Ukraine along with many countries condemned the act because not only the Ukraine's territorial integrity was hindered but Belavezha Accords, Helsinki Accords, Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, and the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, And Partnership between Russian Federation and Ukraine got violated. Since then, Crimeans complain of oppression and have moved out of the state, and Russian military presence has increased with new submarines, combatants (both surface and aircraft). Russia has also been funding massive infrastructure projects such as, a railroad linking Kerch Strait to Russia. In such a scenario, the Ukrainian government is mustering support for getting Crimea back. In 2018, Trump imposed sanctions on individual and companies tied to the conflict as well as approved anti-tank weapons to Ukraine.

²⁵⁷ Premesha Saha. (2020, February 19). *From "Pivot to Asia" to Trump's ARIA: What drives the US' Current Asia policy?* ORF; Observational Research Foundation.
<https://www.orfonline.org/research/from-pivot-to-asia-to-trumps-aria-what-drives-the-us-current-asia-policy-61556/>

The same year, Ukraine joined North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for large-scale air exercises.

While, both Europe and US maintain sanction on Russia and hold on to the policy of non-recognition of Crimea annexation, they are not able to dissuade Kremlin from grabbing lands. This particular issue has disrupted the US-Russia relations. But most importantly destroyed the reliance on US as the sole security provider for Asia-Pacific region and globally. Such inactions destroy credibility of the US commitment and allies would naturally question if the US would come to their rescue if such a thing happens to them. For example, would the US endanger its troops and assets if China decides to take over some Japanese Islands?!

3. 6 Examples of US withdrawal of commitments and weakening of multilateralism

Michael Beckley (2015) points out a difference between alliance and alignment. He says “an alignment is a confluence of interests among states. An alliance, on the other hand, is a formal agreement among states to cooperate militarily. Whereas alignment emerge and dissolve as state’s interests change, alliances often outlive the conditions that initially spawned them and persist in the face of clashing interests”.²⁵⁸ He also remarks that previously American policies were driven by interest alignment and not by obligations of alliance. This argument is in tandem with what Jack Levy regards is the reason for alliance formation. Levy (1981) says that “political decision makers come to believe that support for one’s allies, regardless of its consequences, is essential for their national prestige, and that the failure to provide support would ultimately result in their diplomatic isolation in a hostile and threatening world”.²⁵⁹ Similarly, Robert Keohane argues that

²⁵⁸ Beckley, M. (2015). The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts. *International Security*, 39(4), 7–48. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00197

²⁵⁹ Levy, J.S., (1981) Alliance Formation and War Behaviour: An Analysis of the Great Powers, 1495-1975, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 25 no. 4 582-583.

international institutions have a life of their own. They shape the behaviour of states by placing reputation of states in line with compliance to regulations.²⁶⁰

However, Trump is a political outsider but has a unique ability to address the neglected policy issues of the state, a characteristic feature which was loved by his supporters. Yet, he has not followed through many of his promised campaigns leading to the loosing of his support base. The regional multilateral cooperation is in a need for revitalization. The key aspects to Trump administration that has led to the declining of American leadership is decaying US morality, retreating from multilateralism, embracing unilateralism, undermining liberal order, and weakening of alliance system.²⁶¹ There have been many instances wherein Trump skipped multilateral meetings and flouted America's commitment to constructive dialogue and leadership in summits. For example, Trump was absent in 2017 East Asia Summit, 2018 APEC Summit, and 2018 EAS Summit.

US's withdrawal from international agreements is a concern and hampers efforts for the growth of multilateralism. In 2017, Trump withdrew America from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). TPP is a massive trade alliance with nations such as Japan, Australia and New Zealand and was at the centre of the previous president Barak Obama's US Pivot to Asia strategy. However, Trump's decision has jeopardized America's geopolitical interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Experts remark that the US abandoning the TPP substantially increases uncertainty among its allies about

²⁶⁰ Robert Owen Keohane. (1984). *After hegemony : cooperation and discord in the world political economy* (pp. 67–74). Princeton University Press.

²⁶¹ Tanaka, H. (2019, October). *East Asia Insights | The Crisis of US Credibility in East Asia*. Japan Centre for International Exchange. <https://www.jcie.org/analysis/east-asia-insights/east-asia-insights-the-crisis-of-us-credibility-in-east-asia/>

the reliability of the U.S. across a range of foreign and economic matters, and marks the first time the U.S. has withdrawn from an agreement that it championed itself from the start.²⁶²

In 2018 when Trump announced America's withdrawal from the 1987 arms control treaty called the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), the decision indicated a condescending approach of US towards its allies. Prior to withdrawing US should have consulted its Asian partners and not surprise them through unilateral actions, as such a withdrawal requires the positioning of US weaponry previously banned by the treaty in its allies territory. Despite US justifying its actions by stating that China is not a party to this treaty and is therefore expanding its missile arsenal indefinitely while US is restricted under the agreement, Trump administration's decision has not gone down well with those who believe that the choice reflects US's aggressive nuclear posture and quest for military balancing and also the general disregard of the neo-conservatives for international agreements.²⁶³ Others assert that with no limiting constrains from the INF treaty, the U.S. may begin to coerce Japan, Taiwan, Australia and other allies to deploy U.S. ground-based intermediate-range missiles on their territory ... Increased numbers of conventionally-armed missiles kept on high alert will create dangerous uncertainties that increase the risk of rapid escalation in a future military conflict²⁶⁴ and offers are already flying to Australia

²⁶² Solís, M. (2017, March 24). *Trump withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership*. Brookings; Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/unpacked/2017/03/24/trump-withdrawing-from-the-trans-pacific-partnership/>

²⁶³ Stockes, J. (2019). *China's Missile Program and U.S. Withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty*. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China%20and%20INF_0.pdf

²⁶⁴ Kuo, M. A. (2019, March). *US Withdrawal From INF Treaty: Impact on Asia*. TheDiplomat.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/us-withdrawal-from-inf-treaty-impact-on-asia>

and some other allies to host such capabilities, but the appetite for it has been very little, showing the disconnect between Washington and its allies.

Similarly, in 2018 Trump announced withdrawal from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as well as imposed sanction on Iran that were previously lifted. Trump stated that the reason behind moving away was the failure of the treaty to curtail Iran's missile program along with other breaches of the accord by Iran²⁶⁵. This was another attempt and blow to weaken the US' Asian allies and appease its rich Middle Eastern allies. Other parties to the JCPOA did quietly criticise Trump as they were seemingly happy with the curtails the JCPOA put on Iranian nuclear aspirations.

The US has been tangled down in the Middle East since the 9/11 attacks trying to fight terrorism. Its invasion and involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq had been going on for many years and was costing the taxpayer billions of dollars every year and there was not an end to this presence and involvement at sight. Apart from fighting terrorism, another goal of US presence in the Persian Gulf region was pressuring Iran, whom had become more troublesome than ever since its secret nuclear program was revealed to the public in 2001.

This goal, which was enunciated before Obama took office in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, reflected US concern about a rising China, the huge costs of the Iraq and Afghan wars, as well as a desire to benefit from more interaction with the fastest growing economies in the world. essentially, the US was faced with a conundrum, focus mainly on the Middle East and target Iran

²⁶⁵ Landler, M. (2018a, May 8). Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html>

and Terrorists, or focus back to the Asia-Pacific where two major rising power, China and Russia, both nuclear armed and with much more potent capabilities than Iran.

China had profited from the US obsession with the Middle East, using the four decades of US entanglement there to grow economically and militarily. This rise in power and influence was not very alarming at the start since Chinese policymakers couched it in the language of “peaceful rise” and co-existence with pro-US neighbours. Unfortunately, those trends have changed, and the discourse is now about a Thucydides Trap and how China could be on a collision course with the current world hegemon, the United States.

As discussed in the Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower²⁶⁶ or a more recent report published by the United States Studies Centre (USSC) in Perth²⁶⁷, the United States cannot remain powerful across the globe without carefully selecting areas of focus. The US should not distract itself with Iran while China is rising, and Russia is flexing military power in Ukraine and Syria. The USSC report claims that at the current status in 2019, the US would lose a conflict with China in the area’s surrounding the country, the Obama administration and US DoD had realized this earlier that a selection of strategic focus should be made as the US would not be able to fight on all fronts.

Therefore, two major policies were set forward, the “Pivot to Asia” or Rebalance so that the US could focus more of its assets to the Asia-Pacific theatre, and secret negotiations with Iran were

²⁶⁶ *U.S. Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*. (2015, March 13). USNI News; U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. <https://news.usni.org/2015/03/13/document-u-s-cooperative-strategy-for-21st-century-seapower-2015-revision>

²⁶⁷ Townshend, A., Noone, B., & Stewart, M. (2019). *Averting Crisis: American strategy, military spending and collective defence in the Indo-Pacific — United States Studies Centre*. United States Study Centre. <https://www.ussc.edu.au/analysis/averting-crisis-american-strategy-military-spending-and-collective-defence-in-the-indo-pacific>

started in Oman, which eventually lead to the signing of the JCPOA and at-least temporarily defusing the Iran situation so US could more strategic focus with ease.

The Obama administration, understanding these trends, realized that China was a potentially much more serious threat to the rules-based order than Iran, a regional power lacking even a tenth of China's capabilities and still not nuclear-armed, but Trump exiting from the JCPOA signalled its re-focus back to the MENA region and away from the Indo-Pacific theatre where China is flexing its muscle.

Conclusion

After the end of Cold War, America emerged as the largest and dynamic economy of the world, playing a major role in shaping the liberal world economic order. However, American dominance is being challenged and the supremacy that America enjoyed has faded with time. China's rise has challenged and undermined America's influence world over. Scholars argue that the fall in bilateral territorial conflicts have robbed America of its influence.²⁶⁸ Trump's relations with Asia-Pacific nations are weakened by not just the presence of China but by Trump's own approach to foreign and strategic policies. The transactional approach to policy-making in negotiations may enhance China's ambitions in the region.²⁶⁹ The condescending approach of Trump is also destroying the faith in America. The zeal for multilateralism seems to have faded ever since Trump began to be absent from important meetings. By not turning up in summit meetings, other regional

²⁶⁸ Dimock, M., & Gramlich, J. (2021, January 29). *How America Changed During Trump's Presidency*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/2021/01/29/how-america-changed-during-donald-trumps-presidency/>

²⁶⁹ Beeson, M., & Watson, N. (2019). Is International Leadership Changing Hands or Disappearing? China and the USA in Comparative Perspective. *Asian Perspective*, 43(2)

heads like China and Russia are getting the leverage in shaping the Asian security architecture that is devoid of American presence. It

The evolution of American foreign policy under President Donald Trump has been a reflection of his personal business style and erratic policy administration. The focus on national interests to bring America at the dominant position has undoubtedly put ahead American interests. But the danger looms over the departure that his administration took in economic, political and security domains, leading to seizure of traditional ties, escalation of regional tensions, and collusion of rivals with incompatible nationalist goals. Despite, the institutional guarantees and treaties that US previously signed (binding commitments of US) that assures allies of US's intention, questions are still rising over how the Trump administration plans to secure ties and commitments to allies in the Asia-Pacific region.

Going back to the *Averting Crisis* report by the US Centre in Perth, it states that the United States is no longer the number one military power in the Asia-Pacific and it is becoming increasingly uncertain if it would be able to uphold a favourable balance of power in that theatre. This is the result of continued presence and engagement in west Asia, budget austerities and political actions²⁷⁰. This all leads to a weaker US and one that should not be counted upon.

²⁷⁰ Townshend, A., Noone, B., & Stewart, M. (2019). *Averting Crisis: American strategy, military spending and collective defence in the Indo-Pacific* — United States Studies Centre. United States Study Centre. <https://www.ussc.edu.au/analysis/averting-crisis-american-strategy-military-spending-and-collective-defence-in-the-indo-pacific>

Chapter 4 – state responses

In the two previous chapter we tried to establish two facts. The first was that China is a threat, and not just a powerful nation. It has material capability and also motivation to desire change. It has married the two and has already shown its desire for change and increasing of its footprint in the region, using its size and power to push around other nations and its claims.

The second point that we established in the previous chapter was about the position of the United States in the regional security architecture. We elaborated on how the United States got the unipolar moment and was on the top of the system for a long time, but is now declining. Not in real terms, but in comparison to other players, namely China.

Donald Trump and his transactional way of politics was also discussed and how his actions and words damaged the alliance and the trust of allies in US willingness to help them. Trump's transactional foreign policy and discourse also relegated the US to the level of a security contractor rather than a partner and advocate for liberal internationalism. All of these factors could support He's point about why states balancing the threat with the Unipole, could desire to pull themselves away from such a relationship and build up their internal assets and balance internally.

In the follow chapter, we will briefly look at the cases selected and their balancing strategy and efforts and see if they are using internal balancing.

4.1. India

Since the 1962 Sino-India border war, China has become a ‘fixed source of perceived threat’²⁷¹ for India. While the border conflict in 1962 built at idealistic ‘*bhai-bhai*’²⁷² framework²⁷³, ever since, the India-China relations were constrained with a mutual trust deficit and Indian Policy makers are very pessimistic²⁷⁴ when it comes to the topic of Rise of China as they are worried how the future would look for them²⁷⁵.

This threat of China, and its close relations with India’s other enemy, Pakistan, grow so much that forced India down the Nuclear Proliferation path to gain a nuclear deterrent and increase its security vis-à-vis China and Pakistan. As Rodney puts it India was militarily weaker than China and could not stand a chance in a conventional war, so they added the nuclear capability which would “add a major increment of deterrence against external military aggression to its defensive position”²⁷⁶ and to further strengthen this asset, India has been working on its nuclear triad.

²⁷¹ Fang, T.-S. (2014). *Asymmetrical threat perceptions in India-China relations*. Oxford University Press.

²⁷² Radchenko, S. (2014, September 18). *The Rise and Fall of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*. Foreign Policy. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/18/the-rise-and-fall-of-hindi-chini-bhai-bhai/>

²⁷³ Acharya, A. (2008) “Dealing with a Rising Power: India-China Relations and the Reconstruction of Strategic Partnerships,” in Mitchell D. ed., *Bridging Strategic Asia: The United States, Japan and India*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, US, December 2008, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/090201_bsa_acharya.pdf

²⁷⁴ Pant, H. V. (2013). Rising China in India’s vicinity: a rivalry takes shape in Asia. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 29(2), 364–381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.734781>

Kapoor, D. (2012). India’s China Concern. *Strategic Analysis*, 36(4), 663–679. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2012.689538>

²⁷⁵ Menon, S. (2014, March 4). *What China’s rise means for India*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/03/04/what-chinas-rise-means-for-india/>

²⁷⁶ Jones, R. (1998). Pakistan’s Nuclear Posture: Arms Race Instabilities in South Asia. *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 25(2), 67–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00927679809601444>

India currently poses nuclear tipped ballistic missiles, the longest range of which is the the Agni-V intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), first trialed very recently in 2021²⁷⁷. Pakistan, India's other nuclear armed enemy is relatively close and does not require ICBM capability to be hit and India can do it with its current arsenal of ballistic missiles. What this means is that India's development and investment in intercontinental ballistic missile capability, such as the Agni-5, and also its work on submarine-launched ballistic missiles are oriented at China and its has noted it²⁷⁸, which is expanding its own nuclear arsenal and has developed a capable and long-range missile force²⁷⁹²⁸⁰.

The second leg of the triad, and perhaps most important when it comes to survivability and technology are submarines. The Arihant class is India's attempt at building its own nuclear propelled submarine, capable of launching nuclear armed ballistic missiles. The third of which was launched in 2021. Four ships are planned, giving India the capability to always have at least in nuclear armed submarine at sea and ready to respond. Indian think-tanks and strategic community label the undersea nuclear capability a direct response to China²⁸¹ and rising conflicts in the region.

²⁷⁷ Wright, T., & Decis, H. (2022, January). *Assessing India's nascent nuclear triad*. IISS. <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2022/01/assessing-indias-nascent-nuclear-triad>

²⁷⁸ *China Brings Up UNSC Resolution Again Ahead of Agni V Test*. (2021, September). The Wire. <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/china-brings-up-uns-res-resolution-again-ahead-of-agni-v-test>

²⁷⁹ Davenport, K. (2021, December). *India Tests Missile Capable of Reaching China | Arms Control Association*. www.armscontrol.org. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2021-12/news/india-tests-missile-capable-reaching-china>

²⁸⁰ *Why India's ICBM Tests Rile China | India and China*. (2017, January). www.delhipolicygroup.org. <https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/media/opinion/why-indias-icbm-tests-rile-china.html>

²⁸¹ Rajagopalan, R. P. (2022, January). *India Launches 3rd Arihant Submarine*. ORF. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-launches-3rd-arihant-submarine/>

Singh, A. (2016, May). *India's Submarine Modernisation Plans | Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*. Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis. https://idsa.in/idsacomments/indias-submarine-modernisation-plans_asingh_050516

This is gaining a new and expanded capability by India. Before, India leased nuclear powered, but conventionally armed vessels from Russia.

One might think the nuclear deterrent would bring stability to the bi-lateral relations and there will not be any escalations amongst the two sides. In support of this argument Basrur and Kartik²⁸² point out too that nuclear-armed states do not fight each other, not even in full-scale conventional wars because the risk of escalation is unacceptable. This might seem correct at first sight, as China and India would probably not engage in full scale conventional war, but as history has shown in the past, in the case of the Falklands war and Kargil, states would face the stability-instability paradox²⁸³, where they would face stability at the higher level, Full out war, but instability in the lower level like border skirmishes or limited wars²⁸⁴.

In an article published in 2013 in the Hindustan Times,²⁸⁵ Rahul Singh states that “India is years behind the Chinese military with the Communist neighbor currently outnumbering the country’s combat power by a 3:1 ratio” and whilst around a decade has passed, this still seems to be the case and catching up with China is on the forefront of Indian generals and policy makers mind, add to

²⁸² Basrur, R., & Kartik, B. (2011). The India–China Nuclear Relationship. *Strategic Analysis*, 35(2), 186–193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2011.542914>

²⁸³ Jervis, R. (1979). Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn’t Matter. *Political Science Quarterly*, 94(4), 617. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2149629>

²⁸⁴ Ganguly, S. (1995). Indo-Pakistani Nuclear issues and the stability/instability paradox. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 18(4), 325–334. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576109508435989>

²⁸⁵ Singh, R. (2013, December). *PressReader.com - Digital Newspaper & Magazine Subscriptions*. The Hindustan Times. <https://www.pressreader.com/india/hindustan-times-amritsar/20131212/281732677295700>

this the increased number of Chinese naval vessel entering the Indian Ocean region²⁸⁶ and you could understand why New Delhi is worried and acting.

India has progressively been building its air force, navy and ground forces. It has also invested in ABM systems. India is the third other naval power in Asia, apart from the US and China, that has an aircraft carrier in its active fleet. The Indian Navy formerly had only one 50 year old ex-RAF Aircraft carrier, INS Viraat, but it was replaced in 2013 by a relatively younger, ex-soviet vessel INS Vikramaditya , and sea-trials are underway for INS Vikrant, India's indigenous Aircraft carrier giving the nation a boost in number and capability, going from one to two more capable vessels. This new capability would give India more power projection and ability to better police the Indian Ocean, a region where China is also slowly starting to show its face²⁸⁷ and to team up with likeminded nations like the United States, Australia and Japan.

Whilst the power race in the region is primarily described as Maritime, India is a nation with a long and troublesome border with China. A border with a long history of conflicts and limited wars. In order to further strengthen its position along the Himalayan line of control and in direct response to China, the Indian Army has created two mountain strike corps²⁸⁸ to give it more capability in that theatre to stand against China and its usual intrusions. The positioning of such a capability alongside the Himalayan border with China shows its aim.

²⁸⁶ Gosh, D. P. (2016, May). *Chinese submarines in the Indian Ocean: Some inherent strategic hurdles*. Indian Defence Review. <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/chinese-submarines-in-the-indian-ocean-some-inherent-strategic-hurdles/>

²⁸⁷ Tanchum, M. (2014). *India Advances in Naval Arms Race With China*. JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep04408>

²⁸⁸ Rajat, P. (2017, May). *Army kicks off raising of 2nd division under Mountain Strike Corps, plans exercise in Ladakh | India News - Times of India*. The Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/army-kicks-off-raising-of-2nd-division-under-mountain-strike-corps-plans-exercise-in-ladakh/articleshow/58884540.cms>

The Airforce is another front that India has been aiming to build-up its power and it is very important considering China's advancement and speed. The Chief of the Indian Airforce (IAF) in an interview stated that "China continues to display its economic and military might and its assertiveness is bound to grow" and added later that "Beijing's aggressive intent is most visible in the rapid enhancement of the PLAF operational infrastructure, such as additional airfields in the Tibet Autonomous Region"²⁸⁹ and stated the need for the IAF to rapidly modernise, expand its fleet of combat aircraft and improve indigenous manufacturing capability to be able stand against China and Pakistan. This shows the desire to expand military power as a balancing tool.

One example of the effort to expand was the competition to buy 128 fighters under the Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) with a budget of \$ 8 billion that started in 2008 but was cancelled in 2015. Although India later on went ahead and purchased 36 Rafale's directly from France with options for another 56 for the Navy, much smaller than the MRCA project numbers. India also has an indigenous fighter project which has been going on for a long time, but hasn't resulted in a reliable and mass-produced type, but still shows desire to boost this capability.

Anti-submarine capability has also seen a massive expansion and boost over the years. India has invested in the procurement of platforms such as Boeing P-8I and MH-60R Seahawk maritime helicopters, the first replacing its aging and Tu-142M fleet and one of the many new acquisitions from the United States, also a new as India was traditionally a buyer of Russian/Soviet weaponry. The P-8 Poseidon program started with a contract to acquire four aircraft in 2010, there are currently 12 aircraft in service with an additional 8 on order, much larger than what

²⁸⁹ *Must expand fleet to counter China, Pakistan: IAF chief.* (2021, December 9). Hindustan Times. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/must-expand-fleet-to-counter-china-pakistan-iaf-chief-101638990804607.html>

initially was projected. This new asset is also newer, larger in number and much more capable than what it is replacing. Anti-submarine capability is an important asset as it is projected that China will become more active in the Indian Ocean region as time passes²⁹⁰.

Today, the Indian foreign policy decisions, policies and strategies have an indirect influence of China. India's foreign policy strategies like that of building a strong Act East Policy along with actively engaging with ASEAN are aimed at creating a counter-balance with China. To counteract the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's mega which focuses on connectivity and cooperation between Eurasian countries, primarily China through its land and maritime belt, India is engaging in parallel connectivity projects with ASEAN like the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway.²⁹¹

Though India and China have moved far beyond the 1962 crisis to a path of common order-building endeavors²⁹² that have highlighted positivity in Sino-India relations, the stubbornness of the relationship still exists. Recent events of India's opposition towards BRI, as it infiltrates its area of influence in South Asia and India not being capable to compete with Chinese money, China disallowing India's entry to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)²⁹³ and the Doklam Crisis portray a highly damaged and weakened India-China relationship.

²⁹⁰ Colley, C. (2021, April 2). *A Future Chinese Indian Ocean Fleet? War on the Rocks*. <https://warontherocks.com/2021/04/a-future-chinese-indian-ocean-fleet>

²⁹¹ Singh, S. (2018 January) "New Delhi Shies Away from Confrontation with Beijing" *Global Times*, , <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1087115.shtml>

²⁹² Bajpae, C. (2017, September). *Coming full-circle in the Sino-Indian relationship*. The Lowy Institute. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/coming-full-circle-sino-indian-relationship-0>

²⁹³ Times of India. (2021, November). *Nuclear Suppliers Group and India's membership bid: Key points | India News - Times of India*. The Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/nuclear-suppliers-group-and-indias-membership-bid-key-points/articleshow/87471341.cms>

China's military rise and increasing cyber space capabilities threaten India and with the expansionist foreign policy that China has been pursuing, there might be a greater elevation of threats in the future²⁹⁴. As pointed out by Lamb and et. Al. (2014)²⁹⁵ China's assertive military has prompted India to build up its conventional forces in response to that, since Indian policy maker's see China as their priority in balancing and source of security.

In older studies such as Bommakanti (2012)²⁹⁶, the author believes that the source of instability in South Asia has been Pakistan's military defeats against India and Pakistan's military apparatus not accepting this fact, the significance of Pakistan in China-India relations is a reality to all observers. Bommakanti analyzed the history of Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Chinese border disputes and concludes that absence of force since the 60s and 70s in Sino-Indian border disputes has rendered it more stable and has resulted in a cold peace, whilst instability looms over Indo-Pakistani border disputes. Whilst by looking at recent events on the Himalayan borders and more specifically the Doklam Issue, we see that the India-China border is the source of instability whilst the Pakistan side has been quite silent and peaceful recently.

India closely analyses China's military modernization especially in the missiles, nuclear weapons, fourth generation aircrafts and "blue water" navy capabilities sectors.²⁹⁷ There is a large power

²⁹⁴ Wojczewski, T. (2016). China's rise as a strategic challenge and opportunity: India's China discourse and strategy. *India Review*, 15(1), 22–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2015.1092748>

²⁹⁵ Lamb, R., Mixon, K., & Hameed, S. (2014, January). *South Asia Regional Dynamics and Strategic Concerns*. www.csis.org. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/south-asia-regional-dynamics-and-strategic-concerns>

²⁹⁶ Bommakanti, K. (2012). The Use of Force—Stability and Instability: India, Pakistan, and China. *India Review*, 11(3), 161–190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2012.707905>

²⁹⁷ Brown, H., Prueher, J. W., Segal, A., & Greenberg, M. R. (2003). *Chinese military power : report of an independent task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations Maurice R. Greenberg Center for Geoeconomic Studies* (p. 36). Council On Foreign Relations ; [Washington, D.C.

imbalance between New Delhi and Beijing and it is likely to increase with time.²⁹⁸ It is also closely paying attention to China's infrastructure developments in the India-China border areas as it enjoys a terrain advantage along the border and has superior transportation and communication systems installed there. China's aggressive behavior of assertion of territorial claims in Arunachal Pradesh, claiming it to be the southern part of Chinese occupied Tibet and its pressure on the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction proclaims that China is a graver threat than Pakistan. In addition to this, China's nuclear and missile assistance to Pakistan and China's increasing role and presence in the Indian Ocean region further add tensions and acts as a more immediate threat.²⁹⁹

Beijing, in order to strengthen its hold in the region has been working on further improving its relationships with India's neighboring countries. Since December 2014, China increased its official aid to Nepal more than five times from \$24 million to \$128 million between 2015 and 2016.³⁰⁰ It heavily invested in road construction and hydroelectric projects. China played its "debt-trap diplomacy" and Sri Lanka leased out 70% stake of the Hambantota Port for 99 years. Beijing is also involved in several infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka and is an important military partner with Sri Lanka. China is also the largest trading partner of Bangladesh and Myanmar.

4.2. Japan

Japan is currently an important actor in the Indo-Pacific and probably comes after China in the degree of importance and power or to be more specific, soft power where Japan is ranked as the

²⁹⁸ Rajesh Rajagopalan. (2017, September 14). *India's Strategic Choices: China and the Balance of Power in Asia*. Carnegie India. <https://carnegieindia.org/2017/09/14/india-s-strategic-choices-china-and-balance-of-power-in-asia-pub-73108>

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Shah, F. (2016, February 28). *Nepal's Balancing Act*. www.foreignaffairs.com. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2016-02-25/nepals-balancing-act>

world's fifth³⁰¹ and coercive power. Japan's economy used to occupy the number two spot after the US right until 2008 when it was overtaken by China and relegated to the third spot on the list of world's biggest economies. Japan has also been one of the hubs of technology and innovation in the world³⁰² with big names such as Sony, Panasonic, Toyota, Honda and many more hailing from it and occupying their place in every household.

However, it has not always been number two in the Asia-Pacific. During the Second World War, Japan was the primary power of the region, invaded parts of China, South Korea, and attacked the US in the Pacific, and even after the war and up to the 1990s and the end of the cold war Japan was number one in the region. This past colonialist and offensive foreign policy of Japan still has its effect in the modern-day society and politics of the country, due to concerns about how the country has addressed its war time record, and addition of article IX to its constitution is probably one of the most significant remnants of Japan's past colonialist history, which established a constitutional pacifism under pressure from the US. This article in the constitution calls for:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

³⁰¹ *Global soft power ranking 2019*. (2019). Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/726921/top-30-portland-soft-power-index/>

³⁰² Stiller, S. (n.d.). *Japan Is a Technology and Innovation Leader*. Foreign Policy. Retrieved March 31, 2022, from <https://foreignpolicy.com/sponsored/japanus/discovery>

In line with article IX and the policy that followed it, since the end of the 1970s, scholars and the Japanese government have used the term Yoshida Doctrine to describe Japanese Grand Strategy and foreign policy for several years.

This doctrine refers to the policy followed by Yoshida Shigeru, Japan's prime minister for seven of the first postwar years and summarized by Kenneth Pyle³⁰³ in three tenets that Japan must endeavor to rebuild its economy, and this should be its number one goal. Japan should only be lightly armed, have only moderate defensive capabilities and not acquire platforms and weaponry such as aircraft carriers and avoid involvement in international political issues and struggles and also to gain security in the long term, as a way of guarantee it should provide bases for US armed forces to station in Japan and protect it from any threats to its security and this allowed Japan to focus on economic growth. These bases were the frontline positions in Asia where the US maintained troops and assets first against the Soviet Union during the cold war and later against China.

According to Richard J. Samuels³⁰⁴, the Yoshida Doctrine became the mainstream position supported by different political groups, in particular pragmatic conservatives who gave priority to economic growth and desired to move away and beyond Japan's previous war records. However, restrictions on Japan's use of military force were modified after the end of the Cold War and the limitations of this doctrine became apparent during the Gulf War period where Japan was criticized by the US for just offering fiscal assistance and not actual troop deployment³⁰⁵ or more recent

³⁰³ Pyle, K. B. (1996). *The making of modern Japan* (p. 236). D.C. Heath.

³⁰⁴ Samuels, R. J. (2008). *Securing Japan : Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia* (p. 40). Cornell University Press.

³⁰⁵ Hiroshi, N. (2011, December 6). *The Gulf War and Japanese Diplomacy*. Nippon.com. <https://www.nippon.com/en/features/c00202>

problems such as North Korea, and non-traditional security threats such as terrorism and extremist organizations.

Perhaps the biggest shift in policy and Re-interpretation of the constitution came during the second coming into power of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe when his cabinet decided on 1 July 2014 to reinterpret the article in a way that would allow for limited collective self-defense. Although this change and re-interpretation hasn't been met with ease either inside or abroad. Hiroshi Nakanishi credited Prime Minister Abe with undertaking 'more security and defence reforms than any previous Prime Minister', and said that he has 'changed the doctrinal, institutional, and legal frameworks of Japanese security and defence policy'³⁰⁶. Yet before Abe's comeback, Japanese Prime Ministers and administrations had extremely erratic and varying policies towards China, ranging from friendly policies of Yukio Hatoyama who wanted to move Japan away from US towards Asia to the more hostile policies of Prime Minister Taro Aso during his short term.

It is believed that the Abe government accelerated the policy of many of Abe's predecessors of making Japan into a power with a military force commensurate with its economic strength, largely as a reaction to China's military build-up³⁰⁷ which had upset the balance power in China's favor. Bjørn E. M. Grønning³⁰⁸ finds that Japan shifted to actually hard balancing China's rise before Abe came to power, due to perceptions of aggressive Chinese intentions and of stronger Chinese capabilities alongside concerns about long-term US commitments, such as pressure during the

³⁰⁶ Hiroshi Nakanishi (2015), 'Reorienting Japan? Security transformation under the second Abe cabinet', *Asian Perspectives* 39: 3,

³⁰⁷ Sakaki, A. (2016). Keeping the Dragon at Bay: The South China Sea Dispute in Japan's Security Strategy. *Global Power Shift*, 425–440. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-26152-2_20

³⁰⁸ Grønning, B. E. M. (2014). Japan's Shifting Military Priorities: Counterbalancing China's Rise. *Asian Security*, 10(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2013.870157>

Obama administration on Japan to be more active in its own defense due to budget cuts, sequestration, in the US to the current Trump administration's policy of pressuring allies to buy huge amounts of US weaponry and using it to defending themselves. Lin Hsien-sen writes that Abe has tried to both reassure and deter China. However, China has not responded to the reassurance measures, and the policy implemented by Abe has therefore been to strengthen Japan's own ability to use military force as a strong internal balancing component, tighten alliance ties with the US, and establish military cooperation with Australia and India to offset the military might of China³⁰⁹ through cooperation.

The reasons for these interpretations and Japan becoming a normal country, with an actual army that can have offensive capabilities and is not hand cuffed by the constitution or any other limitations, again is reflected in Official documents published by the Government and changes in structure. In December 2013, the Japanese Diet passed a bill presented by the Abe government establishing a National Security Council (NSC) and secretariat³¹⁰ to further help with policy making in defence and strategy in response to perceived threats from China³¹¹. The Secretariat is divided into six sections, the following three of which dealt with specific countries: one for friendly countries and allies, one for North Korea, concerned with its ballistic missiles and nuclear capabilities, and China, and its more colonial looking strategy and assertiveness in the region, and one for countries in other regions. This division indicated that the Japanese government viewed

³⁰⁹ Lin Hsien-sen (2014) Japan's hedging strategy against China under second Abe Cabinet. *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2

³¹⁰ (2014) *Chapter 2 Organisations Responsible for Japan's Security and Defence.*" Japan Ministry of Defence.. http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2014/DOJ2014_2-2-1_web_1031.pdf.

³¹¹ Fukushima, M., & Samuels, R. J. (2018). Japan's National Security Council: filling the whole of government? *International Affairs*, 94(4), 773–790. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iyy032>

China as at least a potential threat³¹² and on the same level as North Korea, a country which has directly threatened Japan with ballistic missile strikes and threat of a nuclear bomb.

To ensure the security of the seas and air surrounding Japan and, in particular, of the Nansei Islands, the NDPG included plans for acquiring an amphibious rapid deployment force, establishing surface-to-ship and surface-to-air missile units, increasing the number of destroyers from 47 to 54, including some that would be equipped with Aegis technology giving higher air-defence and ballistic missile defence capability, and increasing the number of submarines from 16 to 22, all in direct response to Chinese activities in the region.

To follow up some of these plans, the national budget for fiscal year 2015 included funds for setting up an amphibious force of 3000 soldiers in the Western Infantry Regiment in Sasebo city, Nagasaki prefecture³¹³. In addition, the number of fighter planes in Naha, Okinawa prefecture, was doubled to 40 in 2016. Further, according to statistics released in 2017, Japan has acquired extensive anti-submarine and anti-sea access capabilities that would be critical to its defense and deterring China. The Maritime Force currently deploys more than 10 advanced anti-submarine patrol aircraft and two mine sweepers in the Southwest Islands in vicinity to areas with Chinese activities and presence³¹⁴.

³¹² (2013) *Section 4, Establishment of National Security Council.* Japan Ministry of Defence. http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2013/24_Part2_Chapter1_Sec4.pdf.

³¹³ Gady, F.-S. (2016, January). *Japan's Elite Amphibious Assault Force Trains With US Marines.* TheDiplomat.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/01/japans-elite-amphibious-assault-force-trains-with-us-marines/>

³¹⁴ Yoshitomi, N. (2022, March 23). *How Japan Can Help Save Taiwan: Securing the First Island Chain.* War on the Rocks. <https://warontherocks.com/2022/03/ukraines-lessons-for-japan-securing-the-first-island-chain>

Perhaps the biggest and most important acquisition program of the Japanese defence force is the plan to convert its two helicopter carriers the *JS Izumo* and *JS Kaga* into light aircraft carriers armed with F-35Bs³¹⁵. The two vessels will be the first of their kinds in the Japanese Navy after a 75 year pause and ever since the second world war³¹⁶. It is also a symbolic project as the Japanese Constitution forbids the Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) from fielding offensive weapons and in 1998 the government of the time issued a statement in 1998 declaring that ‘offensive aircraft carriers’ are prohibited by the constitution³¹⁷, but the changes in the region have called for such a drastic desire to obtain this capability and upgrade the country’s power projection assets and tools.

What needs to be stated is that the Japanese built these ships specifically as a response against the rising blue water capability of the Chinese Navy, who is currently building a carrier task force capable of even challenging the U.S. Navy in the region³¹⁸. When the vessels complete their conversion and receive their air assets, it will mark a new direction in which Japan may involve itself in the region. Whether it be to enhance ties between allies and likeminded nations such as Australia and India, deter enemies, or project power, the Izumo-class, with the F-35B, will be a powerful combination ready to secure Japan’s interest and defend its sovereignty.

³¹⁵ Takahashi, K. (2020, June). *Japan begins refitting first of two Izumo-class carriers to support F-35B operations*. Janes.com. <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/japan-begins-refitting-first-of-two-izumo-class-carriers-to-support-f-35b-operations>

³¹⁶ Wakatsuki, B. L., Yoko. (2018, December 18). *Japan to have first aircraft carriers since World War II*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/18/asia/japan-aircraft-carriers-intl/index.html>

³¹⁷ Radford, P. (2013, August 12). *The ship that dare not speak its name*. Australian Strategic Policy Institute. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-ship-that-dare-not-speak-its-name/>

³¹⁸ Damar Shafy, M. (2020, September 23). *The Izumo Class Modification: A Game-Changer in Western Pacific [English]*. Kontekstual. <https://kontekstual.com/the-izumo-class-modification-a-game-changer-in-western-pacific-english/>

Another major internal balancing effort has been Japan's plans to modernize its airforce. In its most recent Defence Whitepaper, it is mentioned that with the regional countries making "remarkable progress" in air power modernization, the country needed to respond in kind and has therefore placed the F35 at the forefront of Japanese acquisition. Japan has extensively seen its airforce being used to scramble foreign jets entering its Air Identification Zone, in 2019, around 960 sorties were flown in such missions. The majority of which were to intercept and identify Chinese aircrafts³¹⁹.

In 2011, Japan only planned to acquire forty-two F35s to replace its old F4 Phantoms, dating back to the 1960s, but currently the order has ballooned to around one hundred and five F35A's and forty-two F-35B's to be operating from its two under-conversion aircraft carriers³²⁰ giving the country stealth, vertical take-off technology and a boost in capability and numbers. The total number of aircraft desired has more than tripled since the inception of the program in 2011 showing its correlation with the geopolitical situation of the region.

Alongside the acquisition of the F35, Japan is also investing in its own indigenous industry to build and operate its own fifth generation fighter, the Mitsubishi X2³²¹ showing a dual path program if buying capable foreign built systems and also its own internal and indigenous built models making

³¹⁹ Yeo, M. (2019, March 26). *Japanese jets intercept Chinese anti-submarine aircraft, says Tokyo*. Defense News. <https://www.defensenews.com/global/asia-pacific/2019/03/26/japanese-jets-intercept-chinese-anti-submarine-aircraft-says-tokyo>

³²⁰ Yeo, M. (2020, July 15). *Japan highlights F-35 acquisition, military ops amid pandemic in new whitepaper*. Defense News. <https://www.defensenews.com/global/asia-pacific/2020/07/15/japan-highlights-f-35-acquisition-military-ops-amid-pandemic-in-new-whitepaper>

³²¹ *Japan's New 5th Generation Stealth Fighter Jet*. (2016, June). Wwww.aerotime.aero. <https://www.aerotime.aero/articles/23148-japans-new-5th-generation-stealth-fighter-jet>

Japan more capable and less-risk prone. It is expected that the JSDF will be acquiring around 90 Mitsubishi X2s to operate³²² and replace its older F2 jets³²³.

Anti-ship missiles have been another area where the Japanese defence establishment has focused and worked on. With increasing number of Chinese vessels, investing in such a capability is crucial and Japan is doing so. In 2020, Japanese defence officials announced that work will commence in increasing the range of its Type 12 missile from its current 200km to 900km and 1500km in the future, giving it an incredible capability to deter hostile ships from coming close to Japanese shores³²⁴ and also allowing it to be used on Japanese aircraft for operation. There were also plans to establish batteries of T12 missiles in the country's southwest island chain³²⁵. In 2022 it was also announced that Anti-ship and Anti-Air missiles will be placed on Ishigaki-jima island near Taiwan allowing Japan to better control the air and sea round such a critical piece of geography³²⁶.

Capabilities aside, there is a variety of opinions amongst experts on Japan's strategy towards China. Majority of studies conducted before 2014, and some newer ones, use Kuik's definition of

³²² Roblin, S. (2020, Autumn 15). *Japan Plans To Spend \$48 Billion To Field F-X Stealth Fighters By 2035 That Would Outperform F-35 And Chinese Fighters*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sebastienroblin/2020/12/15/japans-mitsubishi-to-deploy-48-billion-f-x-stealth-fighters-by-2035-with-boost-from-lockheed/?sh=73a1f5712036>

³²³ *Lockheed to back Mitsubishi Heavy-led Japan fighter project*. (2020, December 11). Nikkei Asia. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Aerospace-Defense/Lockheed-to-back-Mitsubishi-Heavy-led-Japan-fighter-project>

³²⁴ Inaba, Y. (2021, January 21). *Japan to greatly extend range of Type 12 anti-ship missiles, modify it for F-15J*. Naval News. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2021/01/japan-to-greatly-extend-range-of-type-12-anti-ship-missiles-modify-it-for-f-15j/>

³²⁶ Stashwick, S. (2021, August 6). *Japan Confirms New Missile Deployments to Ryukyu Islands*. TheDiplomat.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/japan-confirms-new-missile-deployments-to-ryukyu-islands>

hedging³²⁷ and categorize Japan as hedging against China. Samuels (2007),³²⁸ believes Japan to be hedging, keeping to a middle strategy of not balancing or bandwagoning, between Chinese power and American decline whilst Vidal and Pelegrin (2018)³²⁹ believe Japan is following suite with other middle powers strategy of hedging against a rising power and Mochizuki (2007)³³⁰ agrees that the response coming from Tokyo is indeed hedging. However, Koga³³¹ talks about critical turning points in policy and this research agrees with him and his conclusion that Japan has constantly been engaged in hard balancing behavior rather than hedging since the end of the cold war, and Grønning³³² comes to the same conclusion and categorizes Japan's response as hard balancing with strong internal balancing components. The constant re-interpretation of the constitution and increase in size and capability of the Japanese Self-Defence Force and acquiring top-notch assets such as Aircraft carriers, submarine and anti-ballistic missile systems and ships are strong evidence and components of this hard-balance.

Koga believes Japan, since the end of the Cold War, has been maintaining a balancing behavior vis-a-vis China, but after China's assertiveness in 2010 around the Senkaku/Diaoyu boat collision

³²⁷ Kuik, C.-C. (2016). How Do Weaker States Hedge? Unpacking ASEAN states' alignment behavior towards China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 25(100), 500–514. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1132714>

³²⁸ Samuels, R. J. (2008). *Securing Japan : Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia* (p. 123). Cornell University Press.

³²⁹ López i Vidal, Ll., & Pelegrín, À. (2017). Hedging Against China: Japanese Strategy Towards A Rising Power. *Asian Security*, 14(2), 193–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2017.1333983>

³³⁰ Mochizuki, M. M. (2007). Japan's shifting strategy toward the rise of China. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30(4-5), 739–776. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390701431832>

³³¹ Koga, K. (2016). The rise of China and Japan's balancing strategy: critical junctures and policy shifts in the 2010s. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 25(101), 777–791. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2016.1160520>

³³² Grønning, B. E. M. (2014). Japan's Shifting Military Priorities: Counterbalancing China's Rise. *Asian Security*, 10(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2013.870157>

incident, transformed Japan's dormant balance of before years to become more explicit and continued with the Government purchasing and nationalizing the islands in dispute. Koga continues by stating that Japan has attempted to engage in both external and internal balancing by taking more security burden sharing from the US by relaxing of Japan's constitutional and political constraints on its military and this is in response to China which was not seen as benign anymore.

Military responses to this shift in policy is clear and can be better explained by examples of actions taken by Japan. In 2014, Japan began relocating more of its air and naval assets to the southwest areas to respond to any contingencies arising from the East China Sea and the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands region. In addition, to further fortify its defensive capabilities over the islands at dispute in the sea, the SDF began to develop amphibious operation capabilities³³³ and especially budget was set aside to strengthen Japan's defensive posture in the East China Sea. The geographic focus of changes happening in capabilities being focused on Japan's southwest region is a very bright signal that Japan is concerned about China and allocating its capabilities to balance against it.

Although the US alliance plays an important part in Japanese security thinking, Japan moved away from just 'buck-passing' to the US for its security and as already stated, started pursuing an alliance burden-sharing by enacting the 2014 'cabinet decision on development of seamless security legislation to ensure Japan's survival and protect its people'. Which allowed Japan to exercise a right of collective self-defense with a 'foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan'³³⁴.

³³³ Nakano, R. (2015). The Sino-Japanese territorial dispute and threat perception in power transition. *The Pacific Review*, 29(2), 165-186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2015.1013493>

³³⁴ Cabinet secretariat

Essentially these movements and policy changes are needed for Japan to maintain its security and there has been calls from Japan's allies such as India, for Japan to bolster its security or risk coming under siege, and that US security interests will be better served by a more confident and secure Japan that assumes greater responsibility for its own defense. Chellaney finishes off by saying that US should encourage Japan to undertake a greater national-security reform and strengthen its self³³⁵.

To summarise, what this short section wanted to highlight was although there are still disagreements on how to classify Japan's response to the rise of China. What this study believes at this stage is that with China becoming more assertive and the balance of power significantly shifting towards China and an alliance that cannot fully provide for Japan's security needs, shift in strategy has happened, such as budgetary increases, geographical shifting of capabilities and newer systems that are more geared towards China's capabilities and threats in the system, therefore we can say Japan is hard and internally balancing against China.

1.2.3. South Korea

According to optimists in South Korea, the country sees China as an economic opportunity more than a military threat.³³⁶ China is South Korea's biggest trade partner since 2004 and as East Asia's reemerging power, the South Koreans see China as a regional stabilizer. Jae Ho Chung³³⁷, a respected Korean academic, on the other hand states that Seoul does also see China's assertiveness

³³⁵ Chellaney, B. (2018). Japan's Pivotal Role in the Emerging Indo-Pacific Order. *Asia-Pacific Review*, 25(1), 38–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13439006.2018.1475714>

³³⁶ Kang, D. C. (2009). Between Balancing and Bandwagoning: South Korea's Response to China. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 9(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1598240800002794>

³³⁷ Chung, J. H. (2012). Korean Views of Korea-China Relations: Evolving Perceptions and Upcoming Challenges. *Asian Perspective*, 36(2), 219–236. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42704789>

as an economic and security threat but through a strategically ambiguous policy, it does not discuss the issue publicly.

South Korea is one of the countries that has seen the changing face of the new US President and realities that have come with it. Trump has questioned not only international organizations, but also military alliances. He appears skeptical about the value to the US of military and coalition alliances and questions the amount of budget spending allocated to these alliances. President Trump's presidential campaign heavily criticized traditional allies like Japan and South Korea for allegedly relying on the goodwill of Washington with no reciprocal benefit for the Americans. His campaign underscored the unsustainable costs of continuing to station US troops abroad and promised to withdraw forces if Tokyo and Seoul refused to pay more for their own strategic defense³³⁸. Trump at one point suggested Japan and South Korea might be better off acquiring nuclear weapons, to conduct their own defense against the rising threat of North Korea³³⁹ and China as a mean of deterrence. Such comments were unparalleled in the way they portrayed US alliance commitments as negotiable deals, challenging decades of stable bipartisan security policy in Asia³⁴⁰ and push the countries, South Korea and Japan, to get used to an America that would not provide for their security. But this rhetoric isn't completely new and unheard of either.

³³⁸ Phillips, T., McCurry, J., & Holmes, O. (2016, November 10). *"An epochal change": what a Trump presidency means for the Asia Pacific region*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/10/an-epochal-change-what-a-trump-presidency-means-for-the-asia-pacific-region>

³³⁹ Weissman, S. (2016, March 30). *Trump Interested in Arming Japan, South Korea with Nukes*. Washington Examiner. <https://www.weeklystandard.com/shoshana-weissmann/trump-interested-in-arming-japan-south-korea-with-nukes>

³⁴⁰ Wainwright, E. (2016, July 26). *The fears of US allies, the benefits of US alliances*. The Strategist. <http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/fears-us-allies-benefits-us-alliances/>.

South Korea and US alliance whilst very close, has been facing some other important challenges as well. As outlined back in 2011 by Sung-Joo³⁴¹, differences of policy regarding the North Korea issue would be a critical threat to the Alliance, and now in 2018 we are seeing this threat materialize, as South Koreans fear President Trump might sacrifice them and their security needs to just get an agreement from North Korea, the postponement of the US-ROK military drills which Trump outlines as ‘very expensive and provocative’³⁴² and talks of US withdrawal from the Korean peninsula are some of the sacrifices that the South has seen recently.

One of the main detriments of the Sino-ROK relationship is the maintenance of a regional balance and keeping the US away from containing China³⁴³. Given the economic dependence of South Korea on China, it is imperative to note that the former cannot risk a punitive measure from the latter. As happened during the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) crisis caused by President Park’s decision to station the system under pressure from the US³⁴⁴ and upsetting the balance, when China imposed sanctions on South Korea which resulted into a loss of US\$7.5 billion in the first 10 months which was about the 0.5 percent of South Korea’s GDP. Henceforth, South Korea has tried to maintain an amiable relation with China to keep its economy running smoothly but also to ensure a potential check on North Korea.

³⁴¹ Sung-joo, H. (2011, October). *The State of the U.S.-ROK Alliance*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/report/state-us-rok-alliance>

³⁴² Gabuev, A. (2018, June 13). *Everyone Wins: Russia, China, and the Trump-Kim Summit*. Carnegie Moscow Center. <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/76591>

³⁴³ McGuire, K. (2018, February 27). *China-South Korea Relations: A Delicate Détente*. TheDiplomat.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/china-south-korea-relations-a-delicate-detente>

³⁴⁴ Kim, H. (2016, September 9). *South Korea’s THAAD crisis*. East Asia Forum. <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/09/09/south-koreas-thaad-crisis>

On the other hand, South Korea also needs to maintain its relationship with the US for security purpose; specially to deter a threat from North Korea and Japan or even China. Since the Korean War, the US has been the traditional ally of South Korea and provides it with security. Besides the security aspect, the US and South Korea entered into a trade agreement for better trade opportunity through the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) announced on February 2, 2006 and signed on June 30, 2007³⁴⁵, which President Trump nearly came to tear apart.

However, it is also important to note that China is concerned about the growing power of Japan and North Korea and it wants to impede their powers. To achieve that end, Beijing maintains a good relationship with Seoul so that the Sino-ROK relationship deters the growing threat from Tokyo and North Korea. Since North Korea is also an old friend of China and they maintain good diplomatic ties with either side, China possesses a crucial role in maintaining a balance of power in the Korean peninsula. It is due to the considerable power of China that Seoul stated that it would study the geopolitical impact and diplomatic ramifications of its role in the Indo-Pacific region as stated by the US President Trump in his “free and open Indo-Pacific” vision, wherein he called the US-ROK relationship “linchpin for security, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific”³⁴⁶ and South Korea is nervous about the potential for being forced to choose sides.

China and South Korea share the bad memory of World War II invasion and atrocities committed against them by Japan, but being an American ally, like Japan, balancing its relations between the

³⁴⁵ Lester, S., & Manak, I. (2008, May 27). *USTR - United States and the Republic of Korea Sign Landmark Free Trade Agreement*. Web.archive.org.
https://web.archive.org/web/20080527150515/http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2007/June/United_States_the_Republic_of_Korea_Sign_Lmark_Free_Trade_Agreement.html

³⁴⁶ Lin, Q. (2018, January 8). *China, South Korea reset bilateral ties*. Global Risk Insights.
<https://globalriskinsights.com/2018/01/china-south-korea-bilateral-reset/>

three sides has been a bit problematic, and that's without bringing into calculations the constant threat of war and of recently, nuclear annihilation, from North Korea, now add to this the ingredient of a US that does not have the prior desire to provide for everyone's security for free³⁴⁷, and already talking of removing forces from the Korean peninsula in exchange for North Korean denuclearization³⁴⁸, leaving a power and security provider vacuum, one would expect South Korea to try to improve its hard power capabilities, to deter China and provide a moderate denial capability. Although a majority of South Korean military aspirations are aimed primarily at North Korea, but this would not make them unusable against a potential China threat in the future.

South Korea is currently busy with a massive and expensive modernization and increase in capability of its military that aims to provide the country with a more robust and self-sufficient defense³⁴⁹. One of the first steps in gaining and improving its military capability to counter threats but also maintain the stance towards China is taking over command of war time operations known as OPCOM, away from American commanders and giving it back to South Korean generals³⁵⁰. Recently, there has been talks of a South Korean three pillared system for national defence which consist of 'kill chain preemptive strike system; the Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD); and

³⁴⁸ O'Hanlon, M. (2018, June 4). Is the U.S.-South Korea Alliance Worth It? *Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/is-the-u-s-south-korea-alliance-worth-it-1528152773>

³⁴⁹ Feffer, J. (2009). *Ploughshares into Swords: Economic Implications of South Korean Military Spending*. Korea Economic Institute. <https://keia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/aps-feffer.pdf>

³⁵⁰ Choe Sang-Hun, & Gladstone, R. (2017, September 28). South Korea Says It's Speeding Up Arms Buildup to Counter the North. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/28/world/asia/south-korea-military-north.html>

the Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation Plan (KMPP)³⁵¹ is going to be deployed earlier than proposed and would increase South Korea's defensive and offensive capabilities.

Alongside these developments, South Korea is rumored to have an eye on the Aircraft carrier race, which China is leading in the Asia-Pacific, and would be interested in deploying F-35B to its helicopter carrier fleet³⁵² but hasn't been confirmed yet, which is a big development, and something Japan is also following and would increase both parties war fighting capabilities at sea and ashore hostile lands, with the close proximity of North Korea, it is dubious such capability would be used in that case and must be more China centered. Therefore, we are witnessing a South Korea that is focusing greatly on strengthening its military abilities which can be used to deter aggression from China or North Korea.

Whilst the rumors about the Dokdo class vessels being retrofitted to allow F35 operation has not been confirmed, South Korea has started work on another project, an indigenous carrier, with completion expected to be around 2030. This will be based on the Dokdo class but double in size and will house around twenty F35B's³⁵³. South Korea has recently announced plans for three additional 7,600-tonne Sejong the Great Class Aegis guided missile destroyers, it already has three in service, worth around of US\$3.3 billion, to be completed by 2028 – these vessels are expected to serve part of Korea's broader integrated air and missile defence capabilities with a

³⁵¹ Parameswaran, P. (2016, December). *South Korea Boosts Defense Budget Amid Rising North Korea Threat*. TheDiplomat.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/south-korea-boosts-defense-budget-amid-rising-north-korea-threat/>.

³⁵² Fish, T. (2021, December 1). *South Korea's Navy Growing to Counter More Regional Threats Beyond North Korea*. USNI News. <https://news.usni.org/2021/12/01/south-koreas-navy-growing-to-counter-more-regional-threats-beyond-north-korea>

³⁵³ Perrett, B. (2021, March 2). *South Korea aims to build aircraft carrier the country doesn't need*. Australian Strategic Policy Institute. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/south-korea-pushes-ahead-with-aircraft-carrier-only-its-admirals-want/>

secondary focus on anti-surface and land attack capabilities³⁵⁴, further strengthening South Korea's blue water navy and ballistic missile defence capabilities.

The focus does seem to be on the navy and maritime forces in South Korea, but size wise it still is miniscule compared to Japan and India. Also, the existence of North Korea as an imminent threat and closer relations with China makes the South Korean response less internal and hard, at least towards China.

4.4. Australia

Australia is surely one of America's most reliable and closest allies. America and Australia not only share common strategic interests but also have very similar linguistic, cultures, socio-political systems and structures and are both members of the 'Five Eyes' intelligence network. Being a long time US ally and having enjoyed the peace in the region, policy makers in Canberra are worried with the power dynamics of the region changing and China threatening US hegemonic status in the region³⁵⁵, as one former PM of Australia painted Australia-China relations as of "fear and greed"³⁵⁶. A fear of Chinese money, influence and military power, and even diaspora but also the

³⁵⁴ Kuper, S. (2019, July 23). *South Korea joins regional aircraft carrier race with "Lightning carrier" announcement*. www.defenceconnect.com.au. <https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/maritime-antisub/4461-south-korean-joins-regional-aircraft-carrier-race-with-lightning-carrier-announcement>

³⁵⁵ Dibb, P., & Braben-Smith, R. (2017, November). *Australia's management of strategic risk in the new era*. www.aspi.org.au. <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/australias-management-strategic-risk-new-era>

³⁵⁶ Garnaut, J. (2015, April 16). *"Fear and greed" drive Australia's China policy, Tony Abbott tells Angela Merkel*. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/fear-and-greed-drive-australias-china-policy-tony-abbott-tells-angela-merkel-20150416-1mmdty.html>

greed for more of it³⁵⁷. Australia is also economically very close to China and relies on the export relations it has with China. Statistic wise, China is Australia's biggest trading partner³⁵⁸.

The notion of self-reliance in defense has a long tradition in Australian Grand Strategy³⁵⁹ stating that the ability to defend the continent without relying on foreign combat forces is critical, the 2009 Defence White Paper explains further what this self-reliance really means.

“Australia would only expect the United States to come to our aid in circumstances where we were under threat from a major power whose military capabilities were simply beyond our capacity to resist ... the United States would reasonably expect us to attend to our own direct security”³⁶⁰.

But will this alliance always be there to protect Australia from an aggressor? The only potential aggressor right now could be China.

The increasing Chinese military power and desire to project its “Sharp Power” has brought about a debate in Australian circles with talks going on about how Australia should stand defend the ruled based order against China. The 2016 Australian defence white paper also highlighted this need to defend the rule-based order as a core interest of Australia and stated that Australian armed

³⁵⁷ Brown, K. (2015, April 20). “*Fear and Greed*”: A Closer Look at Australia's China Policy. TheDiplomat.com. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/fear-and-greed-a-closer-look-at-australias-china-policy/>

³⁵⁸ Thirlwell, M. (2017 June) "Australia's Export Performance in 2016." Australian Trade and Investment Commission. <https://www.austrade.gov.au/News/Economic-analysis/australias-export-performance-in-2016>.

³⁵⁹ Layton, P. (2018, April). *Australia's Chinese ballistic missile problem*. The Lowy Institute. <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/australia-s-chinese-ballistic-missile-problem>

³⁶⁰ “*Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030 (2009 Defence White Paper)*. (n.d.). Australia Ministry of Defence. https://www.apf.gov.au/About/Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1516/DefendAust/2009 - P 50

forces should be ready to fight to defend this³⁶¹³⁶², and this notion of fighting for the system was reiterated also by the then-Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop³⁶³. It should be pointed out that whilst the notion of fighting to defend the order is apparently a theme many agree on in Canberra, it also has its skeptics³⁶⁴.

The rise of China and its military power also has deep geographic implications for Australia. This Country is an island/continent nation with no road link to any other country, therefore heavily reliant on sea routes for trade, and a rising China, escalating issues in the Malacca Strait, South China and East China Sea and in the Indian Ocean, would make Australia worried about the future of itself and its trade with the outside world. Therefore, we witness an Australia alarmed about the recent dynamics of China's increased military power and projection and there have been talks about the need to better think about the expansion of the Australian Defence Force and its capacity to take part in Conflict in Australia's own defence and better protect its maritime trade routes.

In its 2009 White Paper³⁶⁵, China's rise was described as a security concern for Australia and in direct response to this sense of threat, outlined the need to buy 12 new submarines to be able to

³⁶¹ Bisley, N., & Schreer, B. (2018, April 17). *Will Australia defend the "rules-based order" in Asia?* The Australian Strategic Policy Institute. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/will-australia-defend-rules-based-order-asia>

³⁶² *2016 Defence White Paper*. (2016a). Australian Government, Department of Defence. <http://www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/Docs/2016-Defence-White-Paper.pdf>

³⁶³ "La Trobe University Lecture and Conversation." Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. April 11, 2018. Accessed May 13, 2018. https://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/Pages/2018/jb_sp_180411.aspx.

³⁶⁴ White, H. (2018, April 26). *Defend the "rules-based order" in Asia at any cost?* The Strategist. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/defend-rules-based-order-asia-cost>

³⁶⁵ *"Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030 (2009 Defence White Paper)*. (n.d.). Australia Department of Defence. https://www.apd.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1516/DefendAust/2009

stand and balance against this threat. Now this direct language, is an explicit point in favor of Internal Balancing and one cannot rule it out as routine military modernization. Although this specific acquisition plan has changed a lot it still exists, and will be discussed later, and shows a desire to gain a novel capability and increase the country's power.

The aforementioned paper also claims that US will still be the Biggest Military power up until 2030 but will be stretched thin because of preoccupations elsewhere and might seek help from allies such as Australia, therefore they should be ready too, so capability-wise they should have the strength to help the US and not just be free-loaders.

In line with the sea-based threat from China, Australia has vamped its other Naval capabilities, and will be spending around US\$140 billion in the next decade and around one quarter of it will be spent on the twelve submarines that be acquired over the next years. On the surface side there has be requests for its frigates to be armed with Ballistic Missile Defense systems to help further in defending mainland Australia which now feels threatened because of the militarization of the South China Sea and islands that China has been working on, as one author stated "China's latest ballistic missiles, combined with its new island bases, are steadily undercutting Australia's ability to defend itself"³⁶⁶, this would be alongside the acquirement of three Hobart-class Air Warfare Destroyers, nine new future frigates optimized for anti-submarine warfare, and 12 new offshore patrol vessels alongside other Airborne Anti-Submarines capabilities such as the P-8 Poseidon³⁶⁷. So, responses to China's increased power, and naval capabilities, are starting to surface.

³⁶⁶ Layton, P. (2018, April). *Australia's Chinese ballistic missile problem*. The Lowy Institute. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/australia-s-chinese-ballistic-missile-problem>

³⁶⁷ 2016 Defence White Paper

The submarine project to replace the 8 Collins class in service is perhaps the best example of replacement, gaining a novel and new capability and enhancement. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) currently has 6 Collins class diesel electric submarines in service. In 2019, the French short-fin barracuda, a redesign of the originally nuclear propelled French ship, was announced as the winner of the replacement tender with 12 being built over the next years. Even at this stage, we witnessed a doubling of the numbers, irrespective of the fact that newer systems would intrinsically be more capable. But in 2021, a new revelation came out being that Australia, the UK and the United States announced an enhanced trilateral security partnership between the said states forming (AUKUS)³⁶⁸. The first phase of this partnership would lead to the cancellation of the French deal³⁶⁹, and giving Australia the ability to acquire at least eight conventionally-armed nuclear-powered submarines for operation by the its Navy. Needless to say, that Nuclear propelled submarines have superior characteristics of stealth, speed, manoeuvrability, survivability, and almost limitless endurance, when compared to conventional diesel electric submarines such as the Collins and Short-fin barracuda and acquiring them would give Australia a “substantial capability leap”³⁷⁰.

The nine new frigates, called the Hunter-Class, will replace eight aging Anzac class frigates. The new vessels will be around three times in size compared with the older Anzacs. The new vessels

³⁶⁸ Department of Defence. (2021, August). *title / Nuclear-Powered Submarine Taskforce / About / Defence / Department of Defence*. [Www.defence.gov.au](https://www.defence.gov.au).
<https://www.defence.gov.au/about/taskforces/nuclear-powered-submarine-task-force>

³⁶⁹ *Australia to pursue nuclear-powered submarines through new trilateral enhanced security partnership / Prime Minister of Australia*. (2021, August). Prime Minister of Australia.
<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/australia-pursue-nuclear-powered-submarines-through-new-trilateral-enhanced-security>

³⁷⁰ Department of Defence. (2021, August). *title / Nuclear-Powered Submarine Taskforce / About / Defence / Department of Defence*. [Www.defence.gov.au](https://www.defence.gov.au).
<https://www.defence.gov.au/about/taskforces/nuclear-powered-submarine-task-force>

displace around 8800³⁷¹ tons compared to the 3600 tons of the Anzac³⁷². The Hunter-class is expected to enter into service by 2030, and when completed the Royal Australian Navy, will witness a one-for-one replacement of its older vessels and an extra one, alongside a massive jump in capacity and capability and a more advanced anti-submarine warfare capability. The Hunter's would also be armed and protected by the Aegis combat management system giving them advanced capability to control the aerospace around them³⁷³ and will be much more powerful than the systems on an Anzac vessel.

Apart from major projects, some other significant acquisitions and investments were also recently announced and would further fortify the argument that Australia is balancing China. Those being long-range anti-ship and extended range surface-to-air missiles with range of above 370km; advanced lightweight torpedoes; and maritime ground strike missiles with a 1,500-kilometre range³⁷⁴ all leading to Australia gaining the capability to hit an enemy and protect its borders and interest from farther than before.

Another front where there has been talks that Australia should be more active has been on Nuclear Weapons. One of the main benefits of the alliance with the US has been the presence of American nuclear umbrella and protecting its allies from nuclear attack by other countries promising to attack

³⁷¹ Royal Australian Navy. (n.d.). *Hunter Class FFG*. [Www.navy.gov.au](http://www.navy.gov.au). <https://www.navy.gov.au/fleet/ships-boats-craft/future/ffg>

³⁷² Royal Australian Navy. (n.d.-a). *ANZAC Class*. [Www.navy.gov.au](http://www.navy.gov.au). <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-anzac-iii>

³⁷³ *SEA 5000 Hunter Class Future Frigate - Defence Connect*. (n.d.). [Www.defenceconnect.com.au](http://www.defenceconnect.com.au). <https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/major-programs/sea-5000-hunter-class-future-frigate>

³⁷⁴ Defence, D. of. (2021, January 25). *Morrison Government boosts maritime security*. [Www.minister.defence.gov.au](http://www.minister.defence.gov.au). <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/lreynolds/media-releases/morrison-government-boosts-maritime-security>

the aggressor. But recent talks by top Australian strategic thinkers, such as Hugh White³⁷⁵, Paul Dibb, Richard Brabin-Smith³⁷⁶ and Andrew Davies³⁷⁷ has brought this issue to the surface asking for Australia to think more seriously about acquiring a Nuclear Deterrent or sharing UK's³⁷⁸, similar to how some NATO allies have access to US nuclear bombs, because of the worsening security outlook for Australia. The talk of this issue is a big step and could highlight the worsening security relationships with the US and the need to acquire a native deterrent for the future and security of the country.

Recently, a rumor about an alleged Chinese military base in Vanuatu brought about major panic in Australian circles and was mentioned that “the strategic consequences for us would be serious” and Australia should “If Australian ... were to detect the development of such a military base by China, it would be vital that we possessed the military capability—if required—to deny it”³⁷⁹, whilst this rumor was later denied, it showed the possible ugly face of China's increasing military presence and power to Australia and a development that might happen in the future.

This is also part of a larger concern that Chinese policy in the Pacific Islands, including aid politics, are undercutting Australia's perceived dominant role in that region. In line with all the

³⁷⁵ White, H. (2017, September 11). *Without America - Australia in the new Asia*. Quarterly Essay. <https://www.quarterlyessay.com.au/essay/2017/11/without-america>

³⁷⁶ Dibb, P., & Braben-Smith, R. (2017, November). *Australia's management of strategic risk in the new era*. Wwww.aspi.org.au. <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/australias-management-strategic-risk-new-era>

³⁷⁷ Davies, A. (2017, December 8). *Wrestling a nuclear-armed 800-pound gorilla*. The Strategist. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/wrestling-a-nuclear-armed-800-pound-gorilla>

³⁷⁸ Layton, P. (2018a, January 17). *Why Australia should consider sharing nuclear weapons*. The Lowy Institute. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/why-australia-should-consider-sharing-nuclear-weapons>

³⁷⁹ Dibb, P. (2018, April 13). *If China builds a military base in Vanuatu, what are the implications for Australia's defence planning?* The Strategist. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/china-builds-military-base-vanuatu-implications-australias-defence-planning>

developments, there seems to be a strong voice amongst Australian thinkers that want to push the government to gain more defensive and military capabilities to be able to balance against China and defend Australian mainland³⁸⁰³⁸¹. So, although the geographical situation is not as acute as the other two cases, there are nonetheless balancing concerns and efforts.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

One of the trends we have seen during the course of this research has been a reinvention of military balancing as an option. The states we looked at are under the threat of a greater and more powerful state, China. One that is economically, technologically and militaristically powerful. What is more important, and to paraphrase Stephen Walt, power alone is not the issue here, but it's a power that has translated to threat and coercion.

Ever since China has risen, it has pushed its neighbors, started territorial conflicts and transformed them into power struggles and has changed the security architecture of the region. Its ever increasing military arsenal has translated into a more assertive foreign policy, and one of a state

³⁸⁰ Dibb, P. (2017, June 28). *Implications for Australia of the Crisis in the West and the Threat from China and Russia*. ANU Strategic & Defence Studies Centre. <https://sdsc.bellschool.anu.edu.au/experts-publications/publications/5491/implications-australia-crisis-west-and-threat-china-and>

³⁸¹ Layton, P. (2017, November). *How should Australia defend itself against a rising China?* [Www.lowyinstitute.org](https://www.lowyinstitute.org). <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/how-should-australia-defend-itself-against-rising-china>

that is not happy with the status quo and would like to change it, in a zero-sum manner and to its own advantage.

Alongside this, the US, has been in a relative decline. The gap, in all areas, between the United States and the next big power, China has been decreasing. A relative decline doesn't necessarily mean the US is losing capability or leaking power, but its just the fact that the gap has been closing the speed of progress and increase has been higher in other places. Alongside this relative decline, the US desire to be a security provider, at least within one of the two major parties, has been shrinking. We saw this transactional approach towards security providing show its face during the cost + 50 negotiations and the presidents numerous tweets stating the US is being taken advantage of, and rich countries should pay up. Degrading alliance relations to a mere security providing relationship for cash where there is no sign of partnership for a cause, or the maintenance of the rules-based order. This attitude towards allies is not just seen in President Trump, but it's also visible in other Republican politicians, so thinking with the removal of Trump, this issue will go away is naïve.

It should also be kept in mind that, Donald Trump can always run again for the presidency, or can have some of his other deputies, like Mike Pompeo or Nikki Haley follow the same path, so the threat of transactional Foreign Policy with allies can make a comeback.

Another contributing factor has been the US, and more specifically, the neoconservatives, desire to exit agreements and pacts. Believing the US is above other states and should not be bound to lesser ones with agreement and that they, the neoconservative, administrations should be free to do as they please³⁸². Whilst a lot of agreements left were with 'hostile' nations, like the ABD

³⁸² McGlinchey, S. (2009, June 1). *Neoconservatism and American Foreign Policy*. E-International Relations. <https://www.e-ir.info/2009/06/01/neo-conservatism-and-american-foreign-policy/>

during W. Bush era, but many have also had friendly nations in them. Such as the Paris climate accord, the CTTTP with Asia-pacific nations, the open skies treaty and the JCPOA which included countries like the UK and France alongside Iran, Russia and China, undermining the reliability of the US sticking to its word and promises. Essentially meaning, deals are made with administrations and parties, rather than the US as a country and if the political party in power changes, so could US commitments.

With all of this in mind, it is not surprising that states are diversifying their strategies to strengthen their position visa-vi China. Whilst no member of the US alliance system in the Asia-Pacific is breaking off its relations with America, they are heavily investing in their military capability. Navies and Air forces are getting heavily invested and overhauled.

One part of the naval race is the reemergence of the Aircraft carrier as a power projection tool and the sudden increase of its numbers in the region. China has built around 3 of such, one better than the other.

India, a traditional holder of AC's in the region is also building its own and increasing their number in its active service, going from a solo 50 years old vessel, to 1 ex-soviet and 1 new and indigenous vessel with the vision of building more in the future.

Japan is also busy converting its helicopter carriers to be capable of operating F35s and essentially giving themselves Aircraft carriers. Japan is perhaps the most significant one, as AC's were an important taboo capability after WW II, but one that has been put aside for the good of the country and gaining more capacity to stand against a threat.

South Korea is also thinking about this capability and toying with the idea of its own indigenous built version, but it hasn't come to fruition yet.

This sudden jump in the number of Aircraft carriers in on region is significant evidence of a military build-up or internal balancing happening. Many states have not had one, such as Japan, South Korea and China for a very long time or ever, and others that did, like India, are modernizing their fleet and increasing their numbers all giving themselves a jump in power projection capability.

Another theatre where we witness massive investment and hike in capability is in the aircraft and air force section. The F-35, a fifth-generation fighter which has had a troubled and difficult development, has taken a lion share of the acquisitions. It gives its owners a big jump in capability and interoperability amongst allies. As previously mentioned, F-35bs have been critical in the aircraft-career race for some countries, but the A variants have also been replacing older and fourth generation airframes in Japan, South Korea and Australia. Given the slow pace of China's introduction of its own fifth-generation fighter programs, the F-35 has given its owners a technological edge at the moment, although its important to point out that the F-35 is still plagued with problems.

Japan has been the most significant buyers of the Thunder going way above the numbers it had initially signaled would acquire and added the F-38B career capable version to its shopping list. Apart from the F-35 Thunder program, many countries like Japan and South Korea are also pursuing their own indigenous fifth-generation stealth fighter programs, showing the desire to have this capability independent of the US, or at least parallel to it. Giving them more options in case any relationship strains show themselves.

In case of Australia, perhaps another witness to its Internal Balancing effort has to be the AUKUS arrangement which would give Australia the ability to build and acquire nuclear powered submarines, in essence an external balancing that has led to hard balancing efforts and capabilities. A novel capability which would result in colossal jump in capability and power for the country.

India has also been working in this sphere and stopped relying on leasing old Russian vessels and started building its own nuclear armed and powered submarines, another massive jump in capability and deterrence for the country and its rivalry with China.

Of the cases studied here, South Korea perhaps shows the least signs of Internal balancing. While the country maintains an advanced and powerful military, there aren't too many novel and big projects that can be realized in the shorter term. Also, the constant threat of nuclear annihilation from North Korea, the need of closer relations with China to moderate North Korea, and also generally closer relations, compared to China-Japan relations, with China has made South Korea the outlier here and one where we cannot say is internally balancing China.

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