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Strategic Competition between United States and China in the Indo-Pacific: Implications for Pakistan's Security and Foreign Policy

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Abstract

This article examines the strategic competition between the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific region and its multifaceted implications for Pakistan's security and foreign policy, utilizing the theoretical framework of Structural Realism. The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the central arena of twenty-first-century great power rivalry, driven by its concentration of vital maritime trade routes, strategic chokepoints, and dynamic economies. As China's rapid economic growth, military modernization, and expansive initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative challenge the post-Cold War dominance of the United States, Washington has responded with a containment strategy involving deepened alliances with India, Japan, and Australia through mechanisms such as the Quad and AUKUS. This intensifying rivalry directly impacts Pakistan, a state of unique geostrategic significance due to its location at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, and its proximity to the Arabian Sea. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project granting China direct access to the Indian Ocean via Gwadar Port, solidifies Pakistan's role as a crucial node in Beijing's regional design, while its history of security ties with the U.S. remains a complex factor in its strategic calculus. The study finds that the burgeoning U.S.-India strategic partnership and the resultant regional militarization pose significant security dilemmas for Pakistan, compelling it to deepen defense cooperation with China to maintain a strategic equilibrium. Simultaneously, Pakistan's foreign policy faces the intricate challenge of balancing its robust all-weather partnership with China against the imperative of sustaining functional and non-confrontational relations with the United States to avoid economic pressure and diplomatic isolation. Consequently, Islamabad is compelled to pursue a policy of strategic neutrality, focusing on geoeconomics, regional connectivity, and the diversification of international partnerships to navigate the volatile power dynamics. The article concludes that Pakistan's future stability and strategic autonomy depend on its ability to deftly manage the opportunities and threats generated by the U.S.-China rivalry without becoming a direct theater for great power confrontation.

Keywords: Strategic Competition, Indo-Pacific, Pakistan Foreign Policy, Structural Realism, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Security Dilemma.

Introduction

The 21st century international system has experienced a dramatic shift in international politics with the growing importance of China as a major economic, military and political power and the

United States' resolve to maintain its dominance in the global arena. This shift has exacerbated the strategic rivalry between the two powers, especially in the Indo Pacific, where most of the geopolitical and economic activity of the world is concentrated. The Indo-Pacific is a region from the eastern coast of Africa to the western Pacific Ocean, and it includes some of the world's most vital sea lanes, key chokepoints and rapidly expanding economies. Regional security dynamics, alliances and foreign policy agendas have been altered in many countries, including Pakistan, due to the rising rivalry between the United States and China in this region (Allison, 2017). The U.S.-China strategic competition is based on the changing power dynamics in the international political landscape. Following the end of the Cold War, the United States became the world's only superpower and retained strong influence over economic and political institutions around the world. But the fast growth of China's economy, technology, military strength and foreign policy engagement have tested the supremacy of the USA. Washington's concern is how the post-World War Two international order will be affected by China's rise as the second largest economy and its increased role in Asia, Africa, and Europe (Mearsheimer, 2014).

The Indo Pacific area is the key battleground of the contest due to its tremendous strategic significance. The area is home to the main routes of global sea trade and a significant share of the world's trade and energy supplies. The South China Sea, Malacca strait and the Indian ocean are vital to international trade and energy security. Any disruption in these maritime routes could have a tremendous impact on global economy. As a result, the United States and China both want to have influence and a strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific to guarantee their economic and geopolitical interests (Kaplan, 2010). The USA has implemented a number of strategic measures to check China's rise in the Indo-Pacific region. During the Obama administration, the U.S. "Pivot to Asia" policy sought to expand alliances and partnership with regional countries like India, Japan, Australia and South Korea, which were later extended to include the "Indo-Pacific Strategy." Washington's goal of countering Beijing's regional ambition and safeguarding a rules based international order in Asia is evident in the creation of strategic arrangements such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and AUKUS (Pant & Rej, 2018). The U.S. efforts are viewed in China as an effort to surround and limit the Chinese rise, however. Beijing has responded to this by pushing ahead with military modernization, naval expansion and economic connection via the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition, China has also enhanced its strategic cooperation with nations in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor, China's direct access to the Arabian Sea and how to improve the connectivity of the region, are the goals China is trying to achieve.

China aims to use the China Pakistan Economic Corridor to connect directly with the Arabian Sea and to strengthen the connectivity of the region, thus minimizing its vulnerability towards the Strait of Malacca and other maritime routes (Rolland, 2017). The strategic location, security significance and proximity to China makes Pakistan a very significant player in this emerging geopolitical scenario. Pakistan is a strategic location where South Asian countries, Central Asian countries, Middle East and the Indian Ocean meet each other, and is a vital trade and connectivity corridor to the region. In addition to its geographical location, it is close to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, which makes it more strategic in the Indo Pacific context. The significant importance of Pakistan has been felt since the launching of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is believed to be a flagship of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Small, 2020). The strategic relationship between China and Pakistan has been enhanced in various areas such as economic, military, and diplomatic fields. China is now Pakistan's biggest economic and strategic partner, providing support for infrastructure development, energy projects, defence modernization, and diplomatic efforts.

The project of building Gwadar port under CPEC is especially noteworthy as it opens a door to the Arabian Sea for China and deepens Beijing's strategic foothold in the Indian Ocean. As such, Pakistan is acquiring a greater significance in China's wider Indo-Pacific design (Wolf, 2020). Meanwhile, Pakistan has always had security ties with the United States, counterterrorism relations and relations on regional stability. Pakistan was a pivotal player in American strategic thinking in South Asia and Afghanistan both during the Cold War and after 9/11. But the relationship between Pakistan and the United States has been marked by ups and downs driven by differing strategic interests, lack of trust and evolving geopolitical circumstances. With the deepening strategic ties between the United States and India in recent years, Pakistan is worried about an imbalance in regional security and the stability of geopolitical order (Haqqani, 2013). One of the most significant developments in Indo Pacific politics is the emergence of the strategic partnership between the United States and India. Washington sees India as a strategic balance to China in Asia, and has stepped up its cooperation with New Delhi in defense, technology development, intelligence sharing and maritime security. The changing strategic landscape of South Asia has been brought about by defense agreements and the heightening of military cooperation between the United States and India. These developments are perceived as potentially destabilizing for Pakistan as it fears they will give India the edge on conventional military strength and will bring about more assertive regional policies (Tellis, 2008).

The competition between the two leading nations of the world, the USA and China, has posed several opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. Pakistan, on the other hand, sees economic and strategic advantages from the strategic cooperation with China in the CPEC and military cooperation. Meanwhile, Pakistan wants to keep its ties with the U.S. stable and cordial to prevent it from being isolated, subjected to economic pressure, and facing strategic confrontation. With tensions between Washington and Beijing on the rise, this balancing act has become more difficult to pull off. (Siddiqi, 2019). The Indo Pacific contest has also caused some implications for Pakistan's security landscape. Regional instability has been brought about by the rising militarization of the region, strategic alliances, naval expansion and arms competition. Pakistan is facing some problems with India because of its military modernization, strategic cooperation and changing defense policies. Pakistan has then intensified defence cooperation with China and prioritised strategic deterrence in South Asia. This larger geopolitical contest between the United States and China has, therefore, a direct impact on the Pakistan's national security calculations (Fair, 2014). In addition to this, the Indo-Pacific competition affects Pakistan's foreign policy outlook and diplomatic agenda. Pakistan aims to follow a policy of balance in its foreign policy, which strives for stability and economic cooperation in the region without any direct involvement in the great power rivalry. Islamabad has increasingly been focussing on geoeconomic policies, regional connectivity, and multilateral policies in its foreign policy.

Pakistan also wants to diversify its foothold in other countries like Russia, Turkey and the Gulf states to create strategic flexibility in the changing international environment (Akhtar, 2020). This study's theoretical underpinning is drawn from Structural Realism theory which sees international politics as a struggle for power, a balance of power, and a struggle for survival in an anarchic international system. Roughly speaking, according to Structural Realism, great powers attempt to increase their influence and to stop other great powers from becoming hegemonic. In a bipolar world, the United States and China compete for supremacy in the international system, and regional states, like Pakistan, strategically tailor their policies in response to a changing power balance (Waltz, 1979). The objective of this study is to try and understand the strategic competition between the United States and China in the Indo Pacific

and investigate its implications for the security and foreign policy of Pakistan. The study discusses the changing geopolitical landscape and its implications for Pakistan's strategic outlook, geographic location and foreign policy options. It also covers the opportunities and threats that are arising out of Pakistan's relations with China and the United States in the Indo-Pacific rivalry. Knowing about these dynamics is very important because the trajectory of US China competition will have a significant impact on regional security, economic interdependence and geopolitical dynamics in South Asia and the region.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the theory of Structural Realism to examine the strategic rivalry between the United States and China in the Indo Pacific and how it affects Pakistan's security and foreign policy. It is called Structural Realism or Neorealism and was developed by Kenneth Waltz; it emphasizes the structure of the international system as the main influence on state behavior. This theory suggests that the international system is anarchic because it lacks a central authority to impose rules or ensure security over the sovereign state system. In this context, states are interested in survival, security and power to ensure their national interests (Waltz, 1979).

The theory of Structural Realism is that the balance of power in the international system determines international politics and affects the behaviour of states. States are rational actors who want to maximize their security as uncertainty about what other states want will result in insecurity. Great powers try to assure or extend their influence so that they are not overwhelmed by other great powers. Competition, balancing behaviour, the formation of alliances and military modernisation are therefore normal processes of international politics (Mearsheimer, 2014).

Structural Realism can provide a useful lens in which to understand the contemporary strategic dynamics between the United States and China. The United States became the world's dominant power after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and continued to have a strong influence in various areas of the world, both militarily, economically, and politically. But China's rapid development and the military modernization have upset the balance of power. In a Structural Realist view, the rise of China is viewed as a threat from the United States to its current international system domination and therefore, the U.S. tries to contain or limit the growing influence of China, especially in the Indo-Pacific region (Allison, 2017).

Likewise, the policies of China can also be understood under Structural Realism. China aims to strengthen its regional and international position to serve its economic, economic trade and security interests, as well as to mitigate strategic risks. China's military modernization, extension of naval power and strategic initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative are all a part of Beijing's national power-building and regional dominance efforts. According to Structural Realism, as the capabilities of the rising powers grow and they are able to exert a more significant influence, they will naturally attempt to exert more influence and challenge the established powers (Rolland, 2017).

The Indo Pacific area is the primary strategic competition zone as it houses critical maritime routes, strategic chokepoints, as well as economically important areas. The Indo-Pacific is very important to both the United States and China for maintaining economic security and geopolitical influence. The United States has enhanced its strategic ties and partnerships with countries like India, Japan and Australia through strategic forums such as the Quadrilateral security dialogue. Such balancing tactics are indicative of the Realist thinking of not allowing the rise of a single power in Asia (Pant & Rej, 2018).

Structural Realism also offers an insight into the strategic actions taken by smaller and middle powers like Pakistan. The theory suggests that weaker states may form alliances with other stronger states in order to achieve security and to preserve the state's national interests. The

close strategic partnership of Pakistan with China is in this context. Pakistan's security concerns with India and the balance of power in the region have led to an increase in political, economic and military ties with China. Balancing behaviour in the face of regional and strategic pressures is reflected in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, defence cooperation and diplomatic coordination between Pakistan and China (Small, 2020).

Meanwhile, Pakistan's efforts to keep its functional ties with the United States remain on-going despite being an ally of China. According to Structural Realism this is due to the ability to stay flexible and not be overly reliant on a single great power. Through constructive relations with Washington, Pakistan is looking to secure economic and diplomatic support as well as regional stability, while maintaining strategic relations with Beijing. Balancing is a strategy that middle powers will adopt to gain the utmost security and strategic autonomy in a competitive international system (Siddiqi, 2019).

The theory also helps to provide an explanation for the security dilemma brewing in the Indo Pacific area. A situation where a state takes steps to make itself more secure, but those steps are seen as threatening to another state, thus creating more tension and increased arms competition is called the security dilemma. The U.S. sees China's military buildup and maritime expansion as aggressive, and China sees the containment efforts by America's military presence and alliances in Asia and its military modernization as aggressive. This distrust fosters strategic competition and can lead to regional tensions (Jervis, 1978).

The concept of structural realism is especially important for this work as it offers a comprehensive approach to the understanding of the great power rivalry, alliance building, the politics of balance of power, and the strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region. It helps to understand the dispute for regional dominance between the United States and China and why Pakistan's foreign policy and security policies change according to the dynamics of international power structures. The theory emphasises that states act mainly in accordance with their national interests and survival considerations, rather than ideology and moral concerns.

Hence, Structural Realism provides a way to understand the changing geopolitical landscape of the Indo Pacific, and how Pakistan has acted in it. The theory shows that the overall rivalry between the United States-China has a significant impact on Pakistan's foreign policy, diplomatic alliances and security policies. Structural Realism continues to be a valuable tool to analyze Indo-Pacific politics and Pakistan's role in evolving international political order.

Strategic Importance of the Indo-Pacific Region

The Indo Pacific region is one of the most strategically important regions in the current world political landscape as it is a location, economic, maritime trade and military significance. The concept of Indo-Pacific is about the integrated and shared strategic geography from the east coast of Africa, through the Indian Ocean, to the west coast of the Pacific Ocean. The region is home to key powers like the United States, China, India, Japan, and Australia, and is a central battleground in the global strategic competition. The region is now the hub of international power politics in the twenty first century because of the growing political, economic and military involvement in the area (Kaplan, 2010).

The economic importance of the Indo-Pacific is one of the key strategic factors of the region. It is home to some of the world's largest and fastest-growing economies, and it has a high concentration of global trading and economic activity. Oceanic maritime trade routes along the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean are vital to the transport of oil, natural gas, manufactured goods and raw materials. The Strait of Malacca, the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean are all choke points that are of vital importance for a significant portion of the world's energy supplies

and commercial goods to flow through on a daily basis. If these sea lanes become compromised, they could greatly affect the international trade and global economy (Brewster, 2016).

Strategically it is significant as well as the Indo-Pacific region as maritime and naval. Seafront control has always been linked with the power and influence of a country in the world. The deployment of naval forces and military presence by the major powers has risen in order to ensure trade routes and strategic interests. The United States has a large military presence and naval forces throughout the Indo-Pacific to safeguard freedom of navigation and world balance of power in the region. Likewise, China has been building up its navy and maritime infrastructure to protect sea lanes and strengthen its regional influence (Till, 2018).

The South China Sea is one of the most disputed waters in Indo-Pacific. China is claiming a vast share of this sea under their "Nine Dash Line" policy and a number of countries in Southeast Asia have territorial claims, such as Vietnam and the Philippines. It's important that the South China Sea is a source of valuable natural resources and also vital to world shipping. China's military build-up on its artificial islands and military bases in disputed waters has raised tensions among regional countries and with the United States. Washington sees the South China Sea as central to upholding international law and peace in the region, and freedom of navigation is key to this (Fravel, 2011).

The emergence of the Chinese nation as a global power is another critical enabler of the strategic significance of Indo-Pacific. The rise of China's power, its swift economic development, its army's modernization and its increasing outreach in diplomacy have changed the regional balance. China is promoting Asia, Africa and Europe connectivity, infrastructure projects and economic relations, in part via the Belt and Road initiative. The rise of Beijing's influence in the Indian Ocean and Pacific regions has raised the alarm of other great powers like the United States about China's long-term ambitions (Rolland, 2017), as it is seen that Beijing has enough leverage in the area. It has been observed that Beijing has enough leverage in the area and has raised the alarm for the other major powers, including the United States, regarding its long-term plan in the region of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean (Rolland, 2017).

The United States is trying to counter China's rising influence by implementing the Indo-Pacific Strategy, which aims to build alliances and cooperation with countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The policy focuses on the importance of cooperation with India, Japan, Australia and the Southeast Asian nations to ensure a free, open and rules-based regional order. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSDS) and AUKUS are strategic partnerships, designed to check the growing influence of China and maintain America's presence in Asia (Medcalf, 2020).

India's footprint in the Indo Pacific has also grown considerably. India is playing an important role in the region because of its condition in the Indian Ocean region and its expanding military and economic power. The U.S. and its allies are increasingly considering India as their strategic partner to counter China's influence in Asia. The inclusion of India in the regional security organizations and in the Indo-Pacific naval cooperation highlights its increased role in the Indo-Pacific geopolitics (Pant & Joshi, 2016).

The Indo Pacific is also significant for region connectivity and development initiatives. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are two examples of the strategic significance of maritime and land transport links. The Gwadar Port in Pakistan provides China with direct access to the Arabian Sea and enhances Beijing's strategic presence in the Indian Ocean region. This has enhanced Pakistan's geopolitical significance in the context of Indo-Pacific (IP) framework (Small, 2020).

The area is also being militarized because of strategic competition between big powers. Armed forces are being modernized, budgets are being raised and naval forces are being improved in

countries. This militarisation exacerbates security issues and also gives rise to tensions about stability in the region. Strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific extends beyond the power dynamics of the great powers to smaller states wanting economic opportunities but without being drawn into great power competition (Mearsheimer, 2014).

In addition, the Indo-Pacific region has increasingly gained importance in molding the future international order. This race between the U.S. and China highlights the broader contest for global influence, tech supremacy, economic power and political control. The result of this competition will shape international institutions, global trade systems and security structures in the next decades (Ikenberry, 2018).

The Indo-Pacific region is therefore pivotal in the modern political world for its economic potential, strategic maritime links, geopolitical importance and gathering of key powers. Rivalry has risen between the United States and China, further underscoring the significance of the region and making it the main battleground for global strategic competition. The changing dynamics of the Indo Pacific offer security, economic and foreign policy implications to countries like Pakistan.

US China Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific

There are military, economic, technological and ideological aspects to the U.S.-China competition. From a military perspective, both countries are strengthening their naval forces and enhancing strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific region. Both countries are strengthening their navies and boosting their presence in the Indo-Pacific strategically. The United States has increased its military cooperation with India, Japan, Australia and South Korea to maintain regional balance of power. The creation of AUKUS and the resurgence of the Quad show that Washington is trying to reduce Chinese influence in the region (Medcalf, 2020).

China has been speeding up the process of militarization and deepening its footprint in the South China Sea. Beijing has built fake islands, bolstered naval presence and developed anti access capability to rival America's military dominance in Asia. The modernisation of the PLF is a clear indication of China's desire to become a great power in the region (Mearsheimer, 2014).

On the economic front, the United States and China are involved in trade wars, technology competition and competition for global markets. China's economic ascendance based on manufacturing, infrastructure, and technological progress is threatening America's economic dominance. Washington has begun putting tariffs and restrictions on Chinese technology companies to dampen China's technological progress (Nye, 2015).

The competition also has ideological aspects, as both countries advocate different visions of governance and international order. The USA is based on liberal democratic principles and a rules based international system while China believes in state centered development and non interference principles. It has shaped the dynamics of regional dynamics and diplomatic relations in Asia (Ikenberry, 2018).

Indo-Pacific, Pakistan plays a strategic role

Pakistan's strategic significance in the Indo-Pacific region. The geographical location and proximity of Pakistan to China make it a central strategic location in the Indo-Pacific. The Gwadar Port under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor gives China access to the Arabian Sea, and it lessens reliance on the Malacca Strait. This has contributed to Pakistan's importance in China's regional policy (Small, 2020).

A further factor which makes Pakistan strategically important for the USA is its role in Afghanistan, cooperation in counterterrorism and regional security. In spite of ups and downs in bilateral ties, the US still sees the relevance of Pakistan in South Asian security landscape. But, as

the US India relationship began to grow in strategic terms, concerns were raised in Pakistan about the balance and security threats in the region (Tellis, 2008).

China Pakistan Economic Corridor has enhanced the strategic relationship between Islamabad and Beijing. The project encompasses infrastructure, energy and transportation networks which are expected to enhance Pakistan's economic growth and regional connectivity. For Pakistan, CPEC is a key project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and for China, it is a focal point of the economic development and strategic partnership between the two countries (Wolf, 2020).

Implications for Pakistan's Security

The US China strategic rivalry has also increased the regional security rivalry and is impacting Pakistan's security environment. The United States and India are increasingly collaborating on a strategic partnership, changing the regional power dynamics. Pakistan sees escalating U.S. support for India as a threat to strategic stability in South Asia, not just in terms of military modernization but also defense cooperation (Fair, 2014).

As India grows more prominent in the Indo-Pacific, Pakistan has grown more security conscious. Cooperation with India is also proliferating in the field of defense; for example, the United States has recently signed various military agreements, shared intelligence with India and made advanced military sales to India. The developments in this regard could make India more aggressive in the region, which Pakistan is worried about (Ganguly & Kapur, 2012).

Thanks to the strategic support by China, Pakistan has been able to balance military forces in the South Asian arena. China has supported Pakistan in the regional conflicts by giving military equipment, defense technology, and diplomatic support. This strategic cooperation between China and Pakistan has been growing stronger, as India's relations with the United States (Garver, 2004) have increased.

The conflict also raises the threat of regional instability and proxy war. The Indo-Pacific rivalry could impact Pakistan's national security by imposing economic pressures, polarization in diplomacy, and geopolitical rivalry. Therefore, Pakistan needs to adopt 'balanced security policies' to prevent itself from turning into a direct space for great power confrontation (Rizvi, 2019).

The implications for Pakistan's Foreign Policy

The foreign policy is facing some serious difficulties in maintaining a balance between Pakistan and China and Pakistan and the U.S. China is Pakistan's most strategic partner and biggest investor in CPEC. At the same time, Pakistan is striving for a sustainable relationship with the USA to develop economy (commerce), military (defence) and diplomatic (political) cooperation. Strategic rivalry is getting stronger, making it even more challenging to maintain balanced relations with both powers (Siddiq, 2019).

Pakistan is trying to follow a policy of strategic neutrality, in which it stays out of the competition between the United States and China. Islamabad puts special focus on region peace, economic cooperation and multilateral diplomacy. Pakistan is also promoting regional connectivity projects for trade and development without aggravating geopolitical tensions (Khan, 2021).

The evolving regional context has brought Pakistan to pay greater attention to its connections with other regional countries, such as Russia, Turkey and the Gulf nations. Diversification of foreign policy partnerships helps Pakistan to minimize its reliance on one power and enhance diplomatic flexibility in the Indo Pacific context (Akhtar, 2020).

The policy of Pakistan is more and more geared towards economic diplomacy and regional integration. The nation aims to turn its geopolitical significance into geoeconomic opportunities by improving the trade corridors, energy cooperation, and connectivity projects. As Pakistan is

trying to cater to the changing power struggles in the international arena (Haqqani, 2013), this method is a step in the right direction.

Conclusion

The strategic rivalry between the United States and China has reshaped the Indo-Pacific region's political, security, and international dynamics. The Indo-Pacific is the main battleground of the global power game, as it is economically significant, has maritime connections and geopolitical importance. While the U.S. strives to maintain its regional influence and to keep China from becoming a regional hegemony, China wants to assert its strategic reach and protect its economic interests.

Pakistan is playing a pivotal role in this dynamic geopolitical landscape, owing to its geographical significance, strategic relationship with China and contribution to regional security. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor has played a great role in making Pakistan a valuable ally for China whereas Pakistan's geographic position still has drawn the attention of the United States. But, the developing U.S. India cooperation and the rising militarisation of Indo-Pacific have created security concerns for Pakistan.

This Structural Realism Approach provides answers for the competitive relations amongst major powers and strategic balancing policies of Pakistan in the Indo-Pak region. Balancing the relations with the USA and China while safeguarding the sovereignty, economy and security of Pakistan is a challenge for Pakistan. Islamabad needs to go for an economic diplomacy, regional cooperation and pragmatic foreign policy based on strategy of neutrality.

Pakistan's foreign policy priorities should include regional stability, economic growth, and a diversified approach. For Pakistan, as long as it is not about great power rivalry, but is about maximizing economic opportunities, it will be crucial to avoid direct involvement. The new competition in the Indo pacific region will continue to influence the security scenario and foreign policy options of Pakistan in the foreseeable future.

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