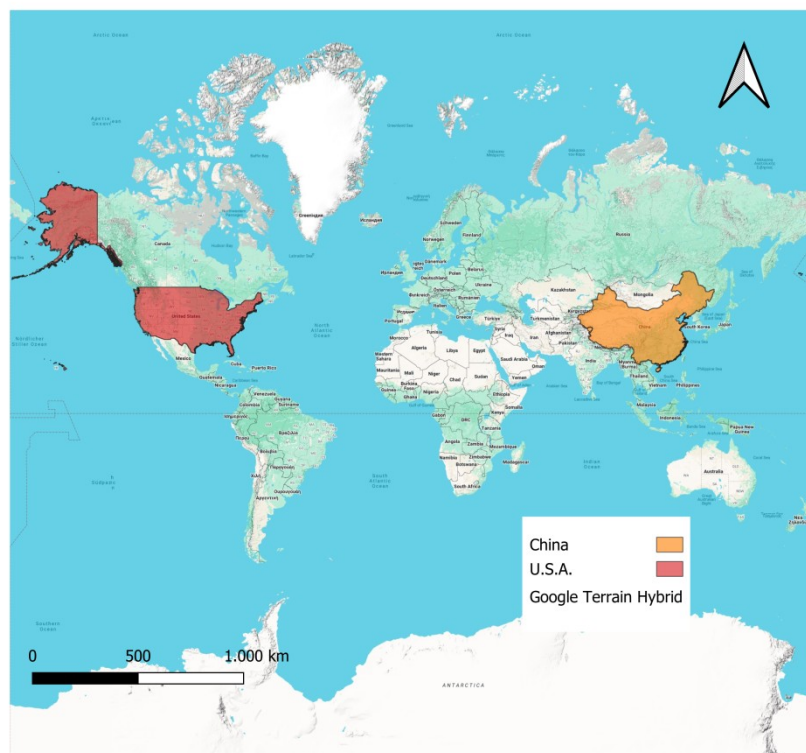


## ***Middle Eastern Instability and U.S.-China Competition: Implications for the Global Balance of Power and the Indo-Pacific***

### **Introduction**

In the contemporary arena of international politics, the competition between the United States and China plays a primary role. Rivalry between the two manifests in various aspects and arenas of global affairs, despite the fact that the two powers are geographically distant (Lu, 2024).



*Figure 1: Geographic Distance between the United States and China*  
*(Author's Processing)*

On one hand, the U.S. is a country geographically advantaged, as it is bordered by two vast oceans that separate it from other continents, “while bordering largely friendly states” (Hassler & Rollins, 2019). On the other hand, China shares borders with 14 “problematic” countries, as Robert D. Kaplan characterises them (Kaplan, 2012, p. 356), while at the same time it is

bounded by the Yellow Sea and the South China Sea, facing countries such as Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines (Chan & Franke, 2019).

Today, the competition between the two powers is evident from the Indo-Pacific to Latin America; furthermore, regarding issues such as Artificial Intelligence and trade, as well as the general perception of the international system, their perspectives and narratives diverge (Perthes, 2021).

The recent escalation in the Middle East, primarily centred on the conflict between Israel and Iran, does not constitute a regional dispute, as its repercussions affect the entire international chessboard. This event acts as a catalyst in the U.S.-China competition, at a time where Washington is promoting the "Pivot to Asia" strategy and Beijing is attempting to strengthen its autonomy as much as possible.

This report analyses the two distinct approaches and strategies of the two competitors in the Middle East region, as well as their positions regarding the conflict between Israel and Iran. Following the aforementioned analysis, the broader implications for the Indo-Pacific region are evaluated, examining the impact on maritime corridors (chokepoints) and the supply chain, as well as the extent to which the emerging security gaps lead to strategic opportunities for China.

Ultimately, the central research question of this study is: "How does the escalation of instability in the Middle East affect the global balance of power between the U.S. and China, and what are the secondary implications for stability in the Indo-Pacific?".

## **1. Methodology**

The study adopts a qualitative approach. The analysis draws on existing literature, encompassing scholarly journals, academic texts, official government documents, as well as analyses from think tanks.

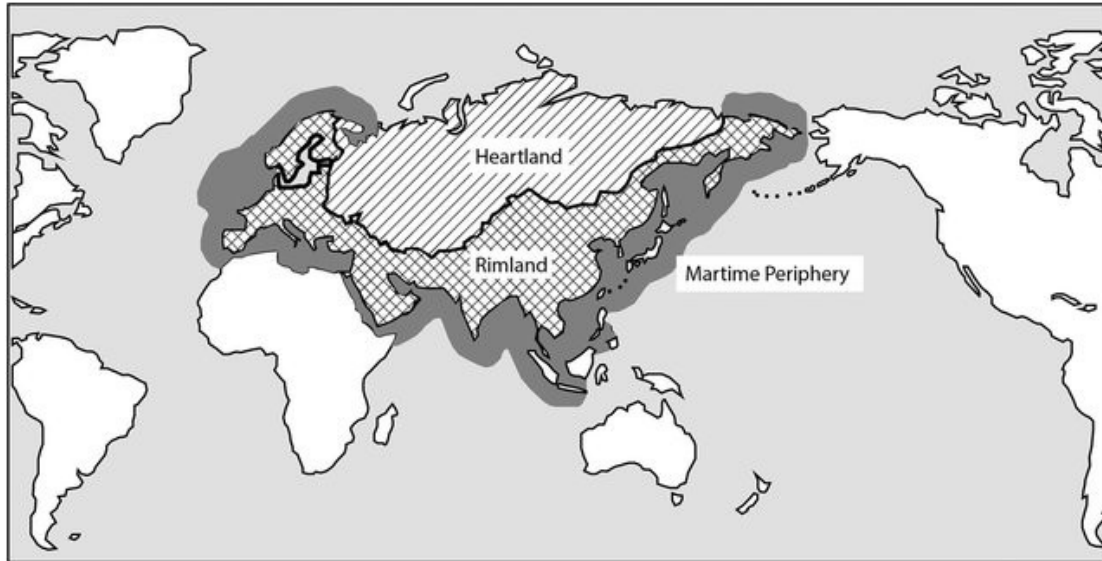
Furthermore, rather than employing structured case studies, the analysis draws on selected empirical examples, such as developments in the Strait of

Hormuz, Sino-Iranian agreements, and U.S. regional practices, in order to illustrate broader strategic patterns and support the comparative assessment. Finally, the research employs the comparative method. To form a comprehensive picture of the differing strategic approaches of the two powers, a comparison of their policies and the tools of influence at their disposal is undertaken. The objective is to highlight how these distinct approaches affect both the situation in the Middle East and their impact on the Indo-Pacific region.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical component of the analysis is based on both classical geopolitics and the ideological dimension of the competition between the United States and China.

From a geopolitical perspective, the analysis draws primarily on Nicholas Spykman's Rimland theory. According to this theory, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific do not constitute two disconnected regions, but rather two interconnected parts of the Rimland (Nicholas John Spykman, 1969). Control over these areas, including the maritime routes passing through them and the vital chokepoints, plays a significant role in securing global hegemony. Consequently, the strengthening of China's presence in the Middle East is analysed by several researchers as an attempt to surpass the naval role of the U.S. in the Pacific (Popescu, 2017).



*Figure 2: Spykman's Rimland*

*Source: Mitchell (2020), Comparative Strategy*

In addition to the geopolitical dimension, emphasis is placed on the ideological dimension of the U.S.-China rivalry (Stephanie Christine Winkler & Björn Jerdén, 2023). According to the theory of Constructivism, international reality is determined by norms, ideas, and social constructions created by actors (Heywood, 2015). Thus, according to official sources, the United States supports a Liberal International Order in which they serve as the guarantors of security and democracy (Vinjamuri et al., 2025). Conversely, China advocates for non-interference in the internal affairs of third states, as well as cooperation with any actor regardless of their regime (Jie, 2020). Furthermore, the study examines the extent to which a gap exists between official rhetoric and the practices that are ultimately implemented

### **3. Analysis**

#### **3.1. China's Strategic Approach to the Middle East**

China's grand strategy reveals that its foreign policy operates through a sophisticated tri-tier hierarchy of engagement with its partners: "strategic," "cooperative," and "friendly" (Bhole, 2023). These tiers reflect Beijing's varying strategies, priorities, and perceptions regarding different international actors. These diplomatic manoeuvres are defined as "partnerships" rather than formal "alliances," a distinction that allows China to avoid direct entanglement in

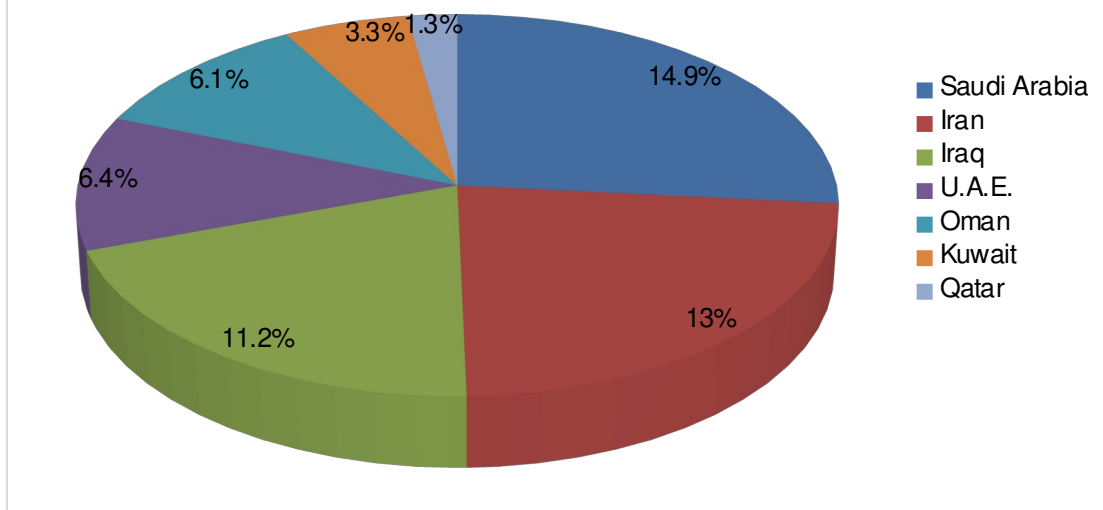
conflicts involving the interests of its allies. Notably, key regional states, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), are positioned at the highest level, the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (Fulton, 2019).

For decades, particularly following the end of the Cold War, Beijing viewed the Middle East as a “chaotic region, a graveyard where empires are buried,” as noted by Professor Li Shaoxian (Şimşek, 2020). However, this perception has shifted, especially since 2013, as the region acquired pivotal importance for China.

Beijing’s priorities and strategy in the Middle East are now anchored in five fundamental principles: absolute respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (The State Council , 2016). In 2016, President Xi Jinping outlined the “1+2+3” cooperation model, establishing a clear hierarchy: energy cooperation as the primary pillar, infrastructure construction for trade and investment enhancement as the second, and high-technology and new energy cooperation as the third (Matamis, 2024).

Driven by its rapid economic expansion, China’s demand for energy imports from diverse providers has intensified to ensure national energy security. Currently, the Middle East accounts for over 50% of China’s total energy imports (Downs, 2026).

## China's oil imports from the M.East



*Source: Author's own elaboration based on Downs, E. (2026), Center on Global Energy Policy, Columbia University SIPA*

Beyond energy, the region is vital for the completion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), serving as a bridge between the Chinese economy and the markets of Europe and Africa (McBride et al., 2023). Through investments in strategic maritime hubs such as the Port of Duqm in Oman and Jask in Iran, China asserts its role in critical trade corridors (Nedopil, 2024). By utilising the BRI as a geopolitical tool, specifically a network of infrastructure along Eurasia's southern coast, Beijing is actively implementing Nicholas Spykman's Rimland theory (Karpathiotaki et al., 2021).

China's strategy of non-interference and mutual benefit has produced notable diplomatic outcomes, most notably the 2023 rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran (International Crisis Group, 2024), and the 2021 25-year Strategic Accord with Tehran (Rashid, 2022). Iran plays a vital role in China's vision, serving both as a primary energy provider and as a strategic nexus between the Indo-Pacific and the Persian Gulf. Consequently, the 25-year agreement is not merely a diplomatic gesture but a structural tool for Iran's full integration into the BRI.

To realise the "1+2+3" model and secure its investments, China requires regional stability. Frequently, Beijing's official stance of neutrality is

characterised as a “free rider” strategy (KENNEDY, 2015), as it benefits from the security environment provided by the United States to conduct its commercial activities undisturbed (Aluf, 2024). In times of acute crisis, such as the current escalation, Beijing capitalises on its non-interference policy to act as an “honest broker,” maintaining close ties with Tehran while preserving investment interests in Tel Aviv.

Ultimately, China’s objective extends beyond the geographical confines of the Middle East. The region functions as an energy lever to consolidate China’s role in its own periphery, the Indo-Pacific, and as a counterweight to U.S. influence (He & Li, 2020). Finally, China’s urgent need for alternative routes and uninterrupted trade flows is driven by the “Malacca Dilemma”, the existential fear of a maritime blockade at the Strait of Malacca, which remains a vital chokepoint for Chinese survival (Lane, 2025).

### **3.2. The United States’ Strategic Approach to the Middle East**

For years following the end of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy was guided by the logic of a liberal world order, evolving from “liberal internationalism” to what Professor John Mearsheimer describes as “liberal hegemony” (Mearsheimer, 2018). This involved a systemic effort to integrate other major powers, such as Russia and China, into a liberal reality through their membership in international organisations. However, in recent years, it has become evident that the United States often employs liberal rhetoric to legitimise its global hegemony (Acharya, 2020). This shift has resulted in significant “credibility gaps,” which are particularly manifest in the contrast between U.S. rhetoric regarding human rights in the Ukrainian conflict and its stance on the war in Gaza and, more recently, Iran (Asala Mayaleh et al., 2024).

Historically, the Middle East served as a catalyst for validating American primacy, first through the control of energy flows and subsequently through the support of the petrodollar (Zazai & Jamili, 2025). Although the U.S. has now achieved energy autonomy and no longer depends on the region for its

own energy needs, its role as a security guarantor makes a full disengagement difficult. To maintain its hegemony and regional balance, Washington maintains a military presence in over 12 countries in the region, with eight permanent major bases (Gouasmia & Elaggoune, 2025).

With the rise and economic expansion of China in the Indo-Pacific, the centre of gravity of U.S. foreign policy has shifted. As early as 2011, under the Obama administration, the U.S. realised after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that the future of the global economy lies in the Indo-Pacific rather than the Atlantic or the Middle East (Zafar, 2022). Consequently, the “Pivot to Asia” was announced, aiming to reorient foreign policy towards East Asia and gradually reallocate resources and personnel away from the Middle East (McBride, 2026).

During the first Trump administration (2017–2021), the Abraham Accords were signed in 2020 by the UAE, Israel, and Bahrain, aiming at the normalisation of relations, the formal recognition of Israel by Arab states, and cooperation across various sectors (Kurd, 2023). Within the framework of these agreements, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) was announced at the 2023 G20 Summit (Rizzi, 2024). The IMEC aims to connect India with Europe via the Arabian Peninsula while simultaneously serving as a strategic counterweight to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In the current strategic climate, the U.S. has largely abandoned the rhetoric of the liberal international order in favour of a rigorous cost-benefit logic characterised by intense diplomatic and economic pressure—a form of transactional realism (Flint, 2025). A core feature of this policy is the logic of Containment and Decoupling, which is firmly rooted in Nicholas Spykman’s Rimland theory (for, 2019). By identifying China as its primary competitor in the modern international system, the U.S. goal is to prevent Chinese dominance over the Indo-Pacific periphery and the wider Rimland (Wyne, 2020).

The fear of Chinese control over ports and maritime routes along Eurasia's southern coast drives the U.S. to strengthen its alliances (such as QUAD and AUKUS) and promote the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) (Tan, 2020). This logic is reflected in the U.S. stance towards Iran, which serves as China's primary partner in the Middle East in terms of both energy and trade, particularly due to the Strait of Hormuz (Saleh & Zakiyeh Yazdanshenas, 2023). Continuous sanctions, economic exclusion, and the ongoing confrontation with Iran serve a fundamental purpose: the decoupling of China from its primary gateway into the Middle East.

### **3.3. The Indo-Pacific as a Strategic Theatre of U.S.-China Competition**

The Indo-Pacific is defined as the vast maritime space encompassing the Indian and Pacific Oceans. A relatively recent term, it was introduced by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007 to underscore the strategic convergence between Japan and India, in partnership with the U.S. and Australia, aimed at ensuring maritime security and trade stability (Wirth & Jenne, 2022). Notably, Russia and China reject this terminology preferring the traditional "Asia-Pacific." The region is of paramount importance, as approximately 80% of global trade transits through its waters, crossing key Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) such as the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and the Strait of Malacca (Heiduk & Wacker, 2020). Furthermore, the Indo-Pacific hosts critical supply chain components, including rare earth elements and semiconductors.

The Middle East and the Indo-Pacific represent the western flank and nearly the entire eastern stretch of the Rimland, respectively. A profound interdependence exists between the two; major Indo-Pacific powers, such as China and Japan, are fundamentally reliant on Middle Eastern energy exports (Ajami, 2019). Simultaneously, this maritime arc contains three of the world's most vital chokepoints for global economic viability: the Straits of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb in the Middle East, and the Strait of Malacca in the Indo-Pacific (Shepard & Pratson, 2020). Consequently, any instability in the Middle

East translates into immediate geopolitical pressure on the Indo-Pacific, with the security of maritime routes serving as the primary strategic stake (Verschuur et al., 2025). The region's geopolitical significance is further underscored by its role as yet another theatre of competition between the two superpowers.

The recent conflict in the Middle East has highlighted a stark economic asymmetry. While the United States allocates immense budgetary resources to guarantee maritime security and contain Chinese expansion, Beijing maintains functional diplomatic channels with Iran (Mishra, 2026). This allows Chinese vessels to navigate these straits with relative safety, while U.S. allies—including Japan, South Korea, and European nations—confront prohibitive freight costs and insurance premiums (The Institute for Economics & Peace, 2026).

This systemic rivalry underscores the critical importance of connectivity networks, whether maritime or terrestrial. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) seeks to institutionalise this connectivity to secure trade and energy flows under Beijing's aegis. Conversely, the IMEC serves as Washington's strategic counter-response, establishing a network that originates in India—acting as a regional counterweight to China—and extends to Europe (Singh et al., 2024). Ultimately, the confrontation with Iranian influence highlights the urgent necessity to secure balanced, resilient, and continuous commercial networks.

### **3.4. Implications for the Balance of Power and Indo-Pacific Stability**

The preceding analysis demonstrates that developments in the Middle East must be understood within the broader context of U.S.-China strategic competition. China's approach emphasises economic engagement, diplomatic flexibility, and limited security exposure, allowing it to expand its regional influence while avoiding the costs of direct military involvement (Sajadi & Ahmad, 2025). In contrast, the United States remains deeply embedded as a

security guarantor, bearing significant economic and military burdens in maintaining regional stability (Mordechai Chaziza, 2024).

This asymmetry contributes to a gradual shift in the balance of power. While China benefits from access to critical energy resources and strategic corridors at relatively low cost, the United States faces increasing constraints on its strategic flexibility and resource allocation (Sela & Friedman, 2025). At the same time, China's reliance on a security environment largely sustained by the United States highlights structural limitations in its approach.

These dynamics extend into the Indo-Pacific, where disruptions in energy flows, rising transportation costs, and pressures on maritime security directly affect regional stability and alliance cohesion. Despite these challenges, the United States continues to maintain significant military capabilities and alliance networks. Ultimately, instability in the Middle East acts as a force multiplier in the U.S.-China rivalry, shaping both the balance of power and the broader security environment of the Indo-Pacific.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The analysis shows that the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific are no longer separate theatres, but intrinsically linked components of a global geopolitical chessboard. Consequently, escalation in the Middle East profoundly impacts the U.S.-China rivalry across both regions.

The crisis in the Middle East has emerged as a strategic opportunity for Beijing. By positioning itself as a "broker of stability" and a neutral mediator, China enhances its diplomatic capital. Conversely, the United States suffers from both economic and military attrition, as it remains unable to fully decouple strategically from Middle Eastern entanglements to focus entirely on the Pacific.

The confrontation with Iran introduces severe economic insecurity for U.S. allies, disrupting both supply chains and energy flows. While Western-aligned states face heightened risks and prohibitive costs, China operates with

significantly lower exposure. This inability of Washington to function as an effective security guarantor at a sustainable cost undermines its broader objectives of deterrence and decoupling. It creates a "credibility gap" among allies, who increasingly fear that American security guarantees may carry an unbearable economic price.

In this context, the U.S. approach can also be understood as part of a broader effort to constrain China's access to critical energy flows and strategic corridors. By maintaining pressure on key actors such as Iran and ensuring influence over vital chokepoints, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, Washington seeks to limit China's ability to secure uninterrupted energy supplies and expand its trade connectivity with Europe and Africa.

Instability in the region inevitably delays Western-led initiatives such as the IMEC, while simultaneously creating openings for the expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). If Beijing can guarantee secure and sustainable energy and trade corridors between the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific, it possesses the potential to fundamentally reshape the geopolitical reality of the region.

As the global order continues to evolve, the competition between the two superpowers remains in a state of constant flux. The rescheduling of the summit between President Xi and President Trump, along with the agenda of their forthcoming discussions, will serve as the next critical arena of this systemic rivalry. The outcome of these high-level diplomatic engagements will determine the new parameters of global power in a post-liberal era.

### **References**

- Acharya, A. (2020, January 14). *Hegemony and Diversity in the "Liberal International Order": Theory and Reality*. E-International Relations.  
<https://www.e-ir.info/2020/01/14/hegemony-and-diversity-in-the-liberal-international-order-theory-and-reality/>

- Ajami, R. A. (2019). Global Oil Supplies and Asia Pacific Economies: Dependencies and Challenges. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Business*, 20(3), 163–165.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10599231.2019.1647075>
- Aluf, D. (2024, February 26). *China's Influence in the Middle East and Its Limitations*. TheDiplomat.com; The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2024/02/chinas-influence-in-the-middle-east-and-its-limitations>
- Asala Mayaleh, Bilal Hamamra, & Gould, R. R. (2024). The Hierarchy of Victims: Media Coverage and the Limits of Euro-American Solidarity. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2024.2374557>
- Bhole, O. (2023, July 7). *CHINA'S "PARTNERSHIPS" WITH THE WORLD*. Orcasia.org. <https://orcasia.org/article/347/chinas-partnerships-with-the-world>
- Chan, H., & Franke, H. (2019). China | Culture, History, & People. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/China>
- Downs, E. (2026, March 4). *Implications of the Conflict in the Middle East for China's Energy Security - Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University SIPA | CGEP* %. Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University SIPA | CGEP. <https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/implications-of-the-conflict-in-the-middle-east-for-chinas-energy-security/>
- Flint, C. (2025). Hegemonic retreat: Transactionalism as foreign policy. *The Geographical Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.70007>
- for, I. (2019, November 20). *Decoupling—A Pursuit of Economic Protectionism or National Pride?* Georgetown.edu.

<https://uschinadialogue.georgetown.edu/responses/decoupling-a-pursuit-of-economic-protectionism-or-national-pride>

Fulton, J. (2019, March 15). *Friends with Benefits: China's Partnership Diplomacy in the Gulf*. Project on Middle East Political Science. <https://pomeps.org/friends-with-benefits-chinas-partnership-diplomacy-in-the-gulf>

Gouasmia, S., & Elaggoune, A. (2025). Understanding the Middle East's Centrality in US Foreign Policy. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 52(3), 6890. <https://doi.org/10.35516/hum.v52i3.6890>

Hassler, W. W., & Rollins, R. C. (2019). United States. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States>

He, K., & Li, M. (2020). Understanding the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific: US–China strategic competition, regional actors, and beyond. *International Affairs*, 96(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz242>

Heiduk, F., & Wacker, G. (2020). [www.ssoar.info](http://www.ssoar.info) From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific: significance, implementation and challenges Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP). *Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut Für Internationale Politik Und Sicherheit*. <https://doi.org/10.18449/2020RP09>

Heywood, A. (2015). *Key concepts in politics and international relations*. Palgrave, , Cop.

International Crisis Group . (2024, June 13). *Great Expectations: The Future of Iranian-Saudi Détente* | *International Crisis Group*. [Crisisgroup.org](https://www.crisisgroup.org).

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/brf/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran-saudi-arabia/b92-great-expectations-future>

Jie, D. (2020). The emerging ideological security dilemma between China and the U.S. *China International Strategy Review*, 2(2).  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-020-00059-3>

Kaplan, R. D. (2012). *The revenge of geography : what the map tells us about coming conflicts and the battle against fate* (p. 356). Random House, Cop.

Karpathiotaki, P., Tian, Y., Zhou, Y., Huang, X., FINDLAY, C., & TANGKITVANICH, S. (2021). China's Belt and Road Initiative: Contributions to connectivity. In *New Dimensions of Connectivity in the AsiaPacific* (1st ed., pp. 41–90). ANU Press; JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv23hcdsw.10>

KENNEDY, A. B. (2015). China and the FreeRider Problem: Exploring the Case of Energy Security. *Political Science Quarterly*, 130(1), 27–50.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/43828513>

Kurd, D. E. (2023, August 31). *Assessing the Abraham Accords, Three Years On*. Arab Center Washington DC. <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/assessing-the-abraham-accords-three-years-on>

Lane, G. (2025, March 4). *Navigating the “Malacca Dilemma” in 2025 | Atlas Institute for International Affairs*. Atlas Institute for International Affairs.  
<https://atlasinstitute.org/navigating-the-malacca-dilemma-in-2025/>

Lu, X. (2024). Analysis of Strategic Competition Between China and the United States in the New Cold War Era. *Advances in Economics, Management and*

*Political Sciences*, 124(1), 219–226. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754->

1169/2024.17733

Matamis, J. (2024, May 10). *China's Strategic Facilitation in the Persian Gulf*

*Security Crisis • Stimson Center*. Stimson Center.

<https://www.stimson.org/2024/chinas-strategic-facilitation-in-the-persian-gulf-security-crisis/>

McBride, J. (2026, February 24). *15th Anniversary of How President Obama Pivoted*

*to Asia | Atlas Institute for International Affairs*. Atlas Institute for International

Affairs. <https://atlasinstitute.org/15th-anniversary-of-how-president-obama-pivoted-to-asia/>

McBride, J., Berman, N., & Chatzky, A. (2023, February 2). *China's Massive Belt and*

*Road Initiative*. Council on Foreign Relations.

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2018). *GREAT DELUSION : Liberal Dreams and International*

*Realities*. Yale University Press.

Mishra, M. K. (2026, Autumn 2). *China Benefits On The Side-Lines Of US*

*Entanglement In The Middle East – OpEd*. Eurasia Review.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/23042026-china-benefits-on-the-side-lines-of-us-entanglement-in-the-middle-east-oped/>

Mitchell, M. D. (2020). Using the principles of Halford J. Mackinder and Nicholas

John Spykman to reevaluate a twenty-first-century geopolitical framework for

the United States. *Comparative Strategy*, 39(5), 407–424.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2020.1803709>

Mordechai Chaziza. (2024). The US-China Rivalry in the Middle East: Confrontation or Competitive Coexistence. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/23477989241240899>

Nedopil, C. (2024). *China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Investment Report 2023*. Christoph Nedopil.

[https://www.griffith.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0033/1910697/Nedopil-2024-China-Belt-Road-Initiative-Investment-report.pdf](https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0033/1910697/Nedopil-2024-China-Belt-Road-Initiative-Investment-report.pdf)

Nicholas John Spykman. (1969). *The geography of the peace*. Hamden, Conn.] Archon Books.

Perthes, V. (2021). Dimensions of rivalry: China, the United States, and Europe. *China International Strategy Review*, 3, 56–65.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-021-00065-z>

Popescu, A. I. C. (2017). Control of Key Maritime Straits ' China's Global Strategic Objective. *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, V(Issue 1), 92–119. <https://doi.org/10.35808/ijeba/121>

Rashid, Y. (2022, April 18). *The Latest Status of the 25-Year Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement Between Iran and China - IRAM Center | Center for Iranian Studies in Ankara*. Iramcenter.org. <https://iramcenter.org/en/the-latest-status-of-the-25-year-comprehensive-cooperation-agreement-between-iran-and-china-737>

Rizzi, A. (2024, April 23). *The infinite connection: How to make the India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor happen*. ECFR. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the->

infinite-connection-how-to-make-the-india-middle-east-europe-economic-corridor-happen/#the-complex-birth-of-imec

Sajadi, D. M. D., & Ahmad, W. (2025). China's Economic Engagement in the Middle East: A Comprehensive Analysis. *Cihan University-Erbil Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*.

<https://doi.org/10.24086/cuejhss.vol9n1y2025.pp%2061-68>

Saleh, A., & Zakiyeh Yazdanshenas. (2023). China-Iran strategic partnership and the future of US hegemony in the Persian Gulf Region. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 51(2), 1–24.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2023.2215188>

Sela, O., & Friedman, B. (2025). China and the Arab Gulf States, post-Covid: Through the Sino-American looking glass. *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 80(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00207020251320894>

Shepard, J. U., & Pratson, L. F. (2020). Maritime piracy in the Strait of Hormuz and implications of energy export security. *Energy Policy*, 140, 111379.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2020.111379>

Şimşek, M. (2020, May 4). *China and the Middle East – A priceless pivot - Central Banking*. [www.centralbanking.com](http://www.centralbanking.com). <https://www.centralbanking.com/central-banks/economics/4738091/china-and-the-middle-east-a-priceless-pivot>

Singh, S., Raja, W., kumar, S., Uppal, A., & Rani, N. (2024). India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor: A Strategic Energy Alternative. *Energy*

*RESEARCH LETTERS*, 5(Early View). <https://doi.org/10.46557/001c.123649>

- Stephanie Christine Winkler, & Björn Jerdén. (2023). US foreign policy elites and the great rejuvenation of the ideological China threat: The role of rhetoric and the ideologization of geopolitical threats. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 26(1), 159–184. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-022-00288-6>
- Tan, S. S. (2020). Consigned to hedge: south-east Asia and America’s “free and open Indo-Pacific” strategy. *International Affairs*, 96(1), 131–148. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz227>
- The Institute for Economics & Peace. (2026). *The Great Fragmentation: The rise of Middle Powers in a fractured international order*. <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/The-Great-Fragmentation-web.pdf>
- The State Council . (2016, June 13). *Full text of China’s Arab Policy Paper*. English. [www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn). [https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/publications/2016/01/13/content\\_281475271412746.htm](https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/publications/2016/01/13/content_281475271412746.htm)
- Verschuur, J., Lumma, J., Hall, J. W., Verschuur, J., Lumma, J., & Hall, J. W. (2025). Systemic impacts of disruptions at maritime chokepoints. *Nature Communications*, 16(1), 10421–10421. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-025-65403-w>
- Vinjamuri, L., Aydın-Düzgit, S., Bajpae, C., Cooley, A., De Hoop Scheffer, A., Emmers, R., Fravel, M., Lind, J., Nasr, V., Quencez, M., Stelzenmüller, C., Della, O., Stuenkel, C., Vakil, S., & Zarakol, A. (2025). *Competing visions of international order Responses to US power in a fracturing world*.

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025-03-27-competing-visions-international-order-vinjamuri-et-al.pdf>

Wirth, C., & Jenne, N. (2022). Filling the void: the Asia-Pacific Problem of Order and Emerging Indo-Pacific Regional Multilateralism. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 43(2), 213–242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2036506>

Wyne, A. (2020). How to Think about Potentially Decoupling from China. *The Washington Quarterly*, 43(1), 41–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2020.1735854>

Zafar, A. (2022, February 15). *US–China Tit-for-Tat Politics in the Asia-Pacific: Beyond Thucydides Trap to Multipolarity and Complex Interdependence* > Air University (AU) > Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs Article Display. [www.airuniversity.af.edu](http://www.airuniversity.af.edu). <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2935030/uschina-tit-for-tat-politics-in-the-asia-pacific-beyond-thucydides-trap-to-mult/>

Zazai, A. K., & Jamili, F. (2025). U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Strategic Goals, Oil Interests, and the Promotion of Democracy. *Journal of Progressive Law and Legal Studies*, 3(01), 55–68. <https://doi.org/10.59653/jplls.v3i01.1330>